

Chapter 9

Ado(red), Abhor(red), Disappea(red)

Fashioning Race, Poverty, and Morality under Product (Red)TM 1

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Giving a new twist to neoliberal narratives on the redemptive possibilities of global capital, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has partnered with transnational companies to market and sell a product line called Product (Red)TM, in order to raise funds for women and children affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa. Significantly, the Global Fund is eschewing notions of charity in favor of "doing business differently." This business model encourages style-savvy and socially-conscious ethical consumers to buy (Red), with the claim that "the shopper has a cool, new T-shirt and has helped save a person's life."² What does it mean to link social justice with shopping for fashion? A feminist analysis of (Red) that considers its marketing campaigns as commentary on consumers opens possibilities for thinking about (Red) outside its potential for poverty alleviation or caring at a distance.³ The (Red) campaign is an example of a larger "ethical consumerism" trend, a social and economic phenomenon encouraging first-world shoppers to buy products that claim to make the world a better place for everyone by addressing issues of environmental preservation, gender equity, poverty eradication, and disease prevention in poor communities, most often located in the Third World.

I argue that (Red)'s advertising sets up a continuum of human valuation whereby certain gendered, racialized, and geographically located bodies are offered access to commodified social justice while others are ignored or left off the spectrum completely. The story being told by (Red) is a tale of virtuous style-conscious consumers who bestow life on deserving ghost-like recipients of shoppers' fashionable "good deeds." The problem is that while deploying an ostensibly well-intentioned marketing campaign, it is one that simultaneously erases from our sightline the workers who make (Red) products.

The imagined locations of consumers and recipients (as well as the now-invisible workers) are significant to the marketing of (Red), with consumers presented as living and shopping within *unnamed* geopolitical spaces that have visual and discursive linkages to the First World, while the recipients of (Red) aid, the "African women and children affected by HIV-AIDS," are conceptually part of the Third World. Consumers of (Red) occupy and exist in a space that is not-Third-World, the unnamed geopolitical space of the First World that by going unnamed, can also go unquestioned. My aim in naming this un-named space of (Red) consumers follows that of critical development scholars: to draw attention to normally invisible hierarchies of power upon which countries such as the United States or the United Kingdom depend.

The marketing emphasis on needy "African women and children affected by HIV-AIDS," combined with the erasure of workers who manufacture (Red) products, serves to reconstruct a class of North American "ethical" consumers that echoes old colonialist narratives of "the burden of the West." The (Red) campaign's take on this discourse asks consumers from industrialized nations to use their shopping power to address the devastating social and economic effects of HIV-AIDS in Africa. The distinction here is one of "hipness" in two realms: the fashion commodity itself and the act of buying a product associated with social justice. "Voting" for social justice by spending money on (Red) products is hot; boycotting companies for labor violations or unfair pricing on HIV medications is not. While it is possible for consumers of (Red) to engage both in ethical consumerism and in activism that is non-consumerist, (Red)'s practice has been to actively discourage the links between buying (Red) and the underlying causes of the HIV-AIDS pandemic. For example, (Red) has offered a (Red) Vision Film Contest at the Vail Film Festival in both 2008 and 2009. The instructions for filmmakers have consistently encouraged a "fun" and "uplifting" take on (Red). In 2008, filmmakers were given a list of instructions that included "Don't Be Sad" and "Don't Be Political."⁴ In 2009, filmmakers did not receive such explicit "do" and "don't" instructions, but were guided by these words,

We aren't looking for documentaries or pieces that highlight the crisis of AIDS in Africa, but rather, pieces that capture the spirit

of what (RED) is about: saving lives and bringing together desire and virtue by uniting our collective power with our innate urge to help.⁵

By guiding filmmakers away from critiques of the HIV-AIDS pandemic, and toward a feel-good combination of desire and virtue achieved via shopping, (Red) is influencing the ways consumers (and non-consumers) relate to and understand the crisis of AIDS in Africa. So while purchasing (Red) is not mutually exclusive from being an engaged activist, I suspect that this happens despite (Red)'s marketing and not because of it. (Red) T-shirts, bags, shoes, iPods, and computers are a visual representation of one's style and class; (Red) consumers sport an awareness of HIV-AIDS in Africa as a social and economic injustice and flash the ability and willingness to spend money to change it. In this way, both the (Red) product and its attendant practices of ethical consumerism are fashionable.

The emphasis on the moral goodness of consumers in (Red) advertising serves not only to make specters of the African women and children who receive aid from the Global Fund, but also highlights differences between shoppers who buy (Red) and shoppers who do not. (Red) as fashion trend reinforces notions that differences in material and social benefits can be conflated with differences in moral reasoning, effectively erasing histories of racialized and gendered discrimination in which people of color and women of all races have been socially and legally restricted in areas of wealth and property ownership.⁶ (Red)'s marketing serves to fashion class along lines of race, poverty, geography, and morality.

Shopping for Change in the Twenty-First Century

There has been a steady increase in "ethical consumerism" following the introduction of certified fair trade coffee on the world market in 1994. Some scholars argue that the creation of fair trade labeling and certification standards has strengthened its economic components at the expense of its social goals, a critique that has bolstered the popularity of non-certified ethical consumerism options such as (Red).⁷ Mainstream shoppers now have access to a wide variety of "ethical" products such as hybrid vehicles, fair trade coffee, and organic cotton T-shirts. This type of shopping differs from "typical" consumption in that consumers aren't merely buying coffee or a T-shirt; they are also buying the message of moral goodness associated with the coffee or T-shirt. The social marketing of such products explicitly references the "ethical transformation" or "political agency"⁸ of shopping, implying that buying these products serves as a political act that directly improves or solves

social problems such as poverty, HIV-AIDS, worker exploitation, and cultural or environmental destruction. The advertisements make both the products and the act of buying them seem infused with an aura of moral superiority, whether the item is marketed as organic, fair trade, bird-friendly, child-labor-free, or linked to a social cause, as in the case of (Red).

What is interesting about recent trends promoting shopping as a means for social change is that they very deliberately set themselves apart from notions of charity and, in the case of (Red), use celebrity endorsements to infuse an element of cool.⁹ An early 2007 (Red) plug by the Gap claimed, "This isn't charity; it's a new way of doing business. Gap Product (Red)TM takes what we do best—creating great products that people love—and channels it into positive change. In addition to sharing profits from Gap Product (Red)TM with the Global Fund, we're also investing in Africa by making some of our products there."¹⁰

This statement is remarkably similar to promotional claims made by fair trade companies about the value of fair trade products for creating social justice, not as charity projects, but as legitimate business ventures. Penny Newman, chief executive of Cafédirect coffee in the UK, highlighted the importance of businesses in creating social change when she said that fair trade coffee is "not just about giving a fair price . . . it is also about being a business, not about being a charity. You've got to be a business to be able to change the rules."¹¹ Although Newman represents certified fair trade products, which differ in production mechanisms from (Red) items, these two statements are a fascinating indication of how capitalist business practices have absorbed elements of charity, while verbally distancing these practices from the term "charity." Fair trade has a long history of setting itself apart from the kinds of labor, environmental, and other business practices associated with large multinational companies such as Gap, yet these statements indicate that those promoting fair trade and those promoting (Red) agree that social justice is important and capitalist markets are the venue through which to make social change.

The triangulated connections between consumerism, citizenship, and social change are complicated and contested in this neoliberal moment. Justin Lewis, et al. demonstrate that mass media in the United States and the UK encourage passive consumerism rather than active, engaged citizenry.¹² In a slightly different take on the relationship between consumerism and political engagement, Sarah Banet-Weiser suggests that consuming products marketed as having political significance acts as a substitute for political action.¹³ (Red) likely falls under both rubrics. The framing of ethical consumption as both more moral than other forms of economic exchange and a worthy political act is deliberate; this framing is a form of "social marketing," which Kristy Golding and Ken Peattie describe as marketing that "utilizes the tools, techniques and concepts derived from commercial marketing" in order to "change

behavior to increase the well being of individuals and/or society."¹⁴ Michael Goodman critiques social marketing for openly fetishizing the location and lives of producers (e.g., "poor Third World women") in order to sell an idea.¹⁵ I propose that the (Red) campaign's focus on consumers as fashionable heroes shifts the tone of ethical consumerism by encouraging consumers to think of themselves as "better" global and national citizens through advertising that uses visual and discursive cues of race, gender, poverty, and geographic location. (Red)'s advertising explicitly emphasizes differences between the gender-neutral ethical consumer and the feminine/feminized (Red) African beneficiary, while implying ethical consumers are superior to nonparticipants in ethical consumerism.

Who Are the Needy Ones?

(Red)'s marketing campaigns encourage new understandings of "worthy" and "unworthy" citizens by building on shifts in discourse over the last 70 years that have linked particular human valuations to Western scripts of economic development. Arturo Escobar notes that discourses build upon each other in layers,¹⁶ in that (Red)'s promotion of a particular brand of "ethical" consumption emerges from neoliberal discourses concerning economic and social power, which in turn arose from development discourses following post-World War II global political and economic restructuring. Just as fashion trends might contradict themselves from season to season (one season short sleeves are "in," the next season long sleeves are the rage), so too do economic discourses appear to have contradictions over time. Economic discourse favors particular economic players—consumers, producers, or businesses, for example—depending on the hegemonic ideologies and political landscapes of the era. We might consider that trends in economic discourse reflect their own social appeal, changing when it becomes fashionable to think about economic relationships differently.

(Red) seductively suggests that it is possible and desirable for fashion-conscious first-world consumers to save the lives of HIV-positive women and children living in sub-Saharan Africa. A chart called "How Red Works" starts with: "1. Shopper notices that GAP (Product) RedTM Ts are cooler than any other Ts" and finishes with: "5. The result? The shopper has a cool new T and has helped save a person's life."¹⁷ The first indication of the potential ethical consumer is his or her eye for style; this good fashion sense is heightened by choosing to purchase the T-shirt that also helps save the lives of African women and children affected by HIV.

The (Red) campaign draws upon layered understandings of "Africa," "women," "children," and "HIV" as verbal and visual signifiers of Third

World need for First World consumers. Arturo Escobar has linked this sense of responsibility to development discourse, which created the idea of the First and Third Worlds, marking the Third World as "backward" with regard to technology, medicine, agriculture, and cultural practices. In this narrative, women, the environment, peasants, and indigenous people were the origins of such supposed backwardness, and therefore "problems" to be "fixed" by a benevolent West. Post-World War II first-world political and economic leaders invoked this "backwardness" as the cause of overwhelming levels of poverty and disease in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—grouped together as "the Third World."¹⁸ (Red) shifts the consumer's gaze from a colonialist understanding of women/indigenous people as the *cause* of illness to one of seeing this group of people *in need of rescue* from illness (in this case, HIV) by socially aware first-world shoppers. These themes run through most social marketing of ethical products, and reinforce the ethical consumer's sense of a self who is different from, though empathic with, those whom she or he sees in the social marketing of ethical products.

The idea that first-world citizens have a responsibility as consumers of goods made by poor women and children in the Third World is not new. Frank Trentmann has traced the ways women homemakers in Britain participated in the 1925 "Buy Empire Goods" campaign, which linked the well-being of citizens in Britain to economic exchange with persons living and working in British colonies.¹⁹ What makes contemporary ethical consumption different from that of earlier eras is the sense of responsibility toward third-world Others who are not understood in terms of productivity. Western development discourse promoted the transformation of third-world men, women, and children, understood in this discourse as lazy, backward, and hopelessly mired in pre-capitalist modes of social and economic exchange, into presumably "superior" rational, democratic, capitalist producer-citizens. This totalizing discourse mocked the political, cultural, and economic processes that contradicted its free-trade prescription for addressing perceived poverty and illness.²⁰ The ideal producer demonstrated a sense of the profit motive, while traditional social safety nets for the poor, practiced through "economies of affection," were denigrated as culturally backward, inherently feminine, and dangerously incompatible with modern development.²¹ Catharine Scott links the gendering of development discourse to the ways different types of states and economies are viewed. The "soft" African state is juxtaposed to "hard" U.S. economic policy, with the latter upheld as "universal, integrationist and rational."²² Scott argues that the gendered language of development "is more than just a stylistic quirk. Metaphorical language uses gender subtly to establish the superiority of capitalist modernity to pre-capitalist traditions. The repeated metaphorical gendered pairings produce a powerful definition of modernity

that is purportedly 'value-free' but which consistently treats pre-capitalist/tradition as inferior."²³ The neoliberal structural adjustment programs of the late 1970s, many of which eliminated government-sponsored programs for charitable assistance, further bolstered these values.²⁴ Ethical consumerism represents the latest trend in economic discourse, which weaves elements of charity and care into a discourse of "rational" economic behavior.

Where (Red) Comes In . . .

(Red) was founded by Bono, the lead singer of U2, and Bobby Shriver, a Democratic politician sitting on the Santa Monica, CA City Council, and launched at the World Economic Forum in January, 2006.²⁵ (Red) is being hailed as a "sustainable" fundraising and marketing campaign in which nine "iconic brands known the world over" (Gap, Armani, Converse, Dell, Apple, American Express, Starbucks, Hallmark, and Motorola) donate a certain percentage of their profits from specific (Red) product lines to The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.²⁶ North American and European consumers can buy Red T-shirts, purses, cell phones, tennis shoes, bracelets, computers, and iPods, as well as use an American Express (Red) credit card that donates money to the Global Fund regardless of what the shopper purchases. (Red) products have been in stores in Britain since February 2006, and in the United States since October 2006. The share of profits raised for the Global Fund to date is more than \$100 million, which has gone toward financing testing and treatment of HIV-positive women and children in Rwanda, Swaziland, Lesotho, and Ghana.²⁷

The marketing of (Red) items echoes the language of marketing used by alternative trade organizations for more than 50 years; in short, that social and economic justice for the world's poor can be achieved via carefully constructed capitalist economic trade, and that mindful first-world consumers have a critical role to play in redressing social and economic disparities. However, (Red) isn't new in terms of promoting consumption for social justice causes. Feminist geographer Joni Seager has noted the trend of a "green consumer" movement for environmentally sound products that began in Europe in the 1980s, and moved into North America during the 1990s. Fair trade products from the global South were first introduced into Northern markets in 1946.²⁸

(Red) is significant to contemporary ethical consumption because it represents a cultural shift in what counts as good—and fashionable—capitalism. Whereas fair trade was once the realm of fringe consumption, and still holds a relatively small portion of the market, (Red) has made ethical consumerism

mainstream, and is reaping mainstream profits.²⁹ Additionally, (Red) signifies an acceptance that larger, transnational companies can acceptably engage in large-scale social marketing of ethical products. Néstor García Canclini has said that "to consume is to make more sense of a world" that is otherwise unstable.³⁰ By linking profits with "doing good," (Red) functions as one type of response to critiques of hegemonic political and economic power, simultaneously shaping and being shaped by cultural understandings of the links between economic exchange and social justice. Canclini's work illuminates (Red)'s appeal as both a fashion garment and an ideological statement. Consumption, particularly buying objects to wear or display, contributes to the ways we integrate and communicate social order. "Ethical" fashion commodities such as (Red) create shared meanings across social classes even as they create hierarchical distinctions between the racially unspecified male, female and child bodies of economically privileged First World consumers who buy (Red), the unnamed consumers who don't buy (Red), and the African women and children who benefit from (Red).³¹

The Wheel of Ethical Consumerism

The marketing of "ethical consumerism" relies on four interrelated actors to tell a convincing story that prompts shoppers to purchase a specific item linked to a social justice project: third-world producers of goods, first-world owned businesses that sell those goods, first-world consumers, and third-world recipients of profits or material goods.³² I think of them collectively as the "wheel of ethical consumerism," because they are connected to one another and to economic processes like spokes on a wheel. At least two—and sometimes all four—of these actors are present in the marketing of ethical products. Marketing of so-called ethical goods under social marketing involves filtering images from each category in order to present not only certain goods as being most desirable, but also particular types of consumers, businesses, producers, and recipients as well. When analyzing ethical consumerism, I find it useful to think about these relationships, because while all of these characters are potentially available for selling an ethical product, very often, one or more are deliberately left out at the expense of hyper-emphasizing another. In the case of fairly traded products, the third-world individuals who produce particular goods are the same people who receive the profits of that original labor. Whereas (Red)'s recipients of the malaria tents, HIV medications, or housing and shelter provided by the Global Fund to African women and children are rarely the producers of (Red) T-shirts, shoes, watches, and cell phones.³³

Missing: Productive Workers

The workers who make (Red) items are missing from the story told by the marketing campaigns. The implications of this include diverting attention from issues of workers' rights, environmental destruction, and the fair distribution of resources. One key difference between (Red) and many fair trade items is that while producers who wish to attain fair trade certification for their products are required to uphold particular ethical standards in regard to wages, working conditions, and environmental preservation, the Global Fund recommends but does not require its partner companies to engage in ethical production. An example is that the Gap produces some of its (Red) T-shirts in Lesotho, employing African workers and using only African cotton, but is not required by the Global Fund to pay these workers a living wage, nor to provide safe working conditions.³⁴ The workers who produce (Red) items aren't included in this narrative of "ethical" first-world consumers delivering justice to "deserving" third-world recipients. This is an important distinction. Why have the workers who make (Red) goods been disappeared? Why, at this historical moment, are producers not held up as the "rational" and "deserving" recipients of the benefits of global capitalism?³⁵ (Red)'s particular style adds value to the "ethical" purchase, commodifying the very act of consumption. Purchasing (Red) therefore becomes a kind of consumer fetishism that boosts the standing of consumers over any other actor in the wheel of ethical consumption.³⁶

Creating the Deserving Ones: African Women and Children

One could argue that the purpose of erasing producers from (Red)'s narrative is to shine a spotlight on the African women and children who are cast as the "deserving" recipients of (Red) aid, and avoid creating a conflict in the minds of consumers about which gendered and racialized bodies are most in need in this particular context. Yet it is interesting to note that for the first 15 months of the (Red) campaign (October 2006–December 2007), (Red) promoters made very little information available to consumers about the extent of the HIV pandemic in Africa. (Red) advertising invoked "African women and children," but these very people were curiously absent from the advertisements and news stories about (Red).

(Red)'s commercials have made the recipients of (Red) aid invisible through hyper-visibility of the "cool consumer," one example of which can be seen in a Superbowl commercial for a (Red) Dell computer, first aired on February 1, 2008.³⁷ This commercial features a white man, perhaps in

his 20s or 30s, leaving a building in Buenos Aires with a red-colored computer tucked under his arm. To his astonishment, he becomes the focus of increasing attention, receiving hundreds of nonverbal affirmations from a wide spectrum of people. A traffic cop reaches to smack the man's derrière, and people with white, brown, and black skin applaud him from balconies, buses, cars, and motorcycles, smiling and pointing as he passes. This sequence is highlighted by Mick Jagger's "Charmed Life" playing in the background; the music swells as crowds swarm the young computer-holder. The climax of the commercial occurs when a beautiful woman runs up to the man and kisses him passionately. The commercial concludes with the man sliding into a café table alone, smiling as he connects the attention he just received with the (Red) Dell computer in front of him. The commercial flashes to a series of phrases: "Buy Dell," "Join (Red)™," and "Save Lives."

The commercial doesn't indicate what (Red) is, or how joining (Red) saves lives. There certainly is no reference made to Africa or to HIV. Indeed, viewers watching this commercial are given the impression that purchasing a relatively inexpensive computer could lead to being treated like a rock star, admired by men, women, and children of all ethnic backgrounds and ages, while increasing one's chances of being kissed by a beautiful woman. Not being mugged while carrying a computer in plain sight on an urban street is simply an unremarkable bonus of his white skin privilege. Who *wouldn't* want this computer?

This placement of a young white man as the protagonist of consumer consciousness is fascinating, in part because it emphasizes the absent or peripheral manner in which African women and children—the intended beneficiaries of the purchase—are displayed in the advertising of (Red) products. Other (Red) commercials—such as a thank-you commercial titled "Because You Chose (Red)"—highlights the role of the consumer in making a difference in the lives of distant others. This commercial, issued during the American Thanksgiving holiday in November 2007, tells consumers that their choice to purchase (Red) has generated over \$50 million, and touched more than one million lives affected by HIV in Africa. African tribal music plays in the background as statistics flash across the screen, concluding with a request to "do even more" in the next year.³⁸ In this commercial, as with others, only after hearing the consumer-focused praise do viewers have the option to click away from this visually appealing feel-good screen for more information about Africa or specific African women or children recipients of aid from the Global Fund.

(Red) has had tremendous economic success selling T-shirts and other (Red) items, simply referencing Africa as a space of need. (Red)'s advertising tactic may rely heavily on consumers' existing knowledge of the extent of the HIV pandemic in Africa. Joseph Roach's concept of *effigy* is useful here

for understanding how "African women and children" stand in for the role of "helpless third-world Others" in the minds of first-world consumers who have constructed the (Red) aid recipients as both feminized and racialized. Such a move reinforces consumers' sense of their own worth as non-racialized or "white" consumers.³⁹

The "Ethical" Consumer

(Red) serves as a catalyst for the creation of a new type of global citizen in the contemporary ethical consumer. While there is a long history of first-world citizen-consumers making purchases based on a sense of morality and duty to selves and distant others,⁴⁰ the most recent manifestation of this "responsible first-world citizen" emerges as the fashionably "ethical" consumer, who purportedly fulfils his or her duty to uplift the Third World's poor while simultaneously stimulating economic growth and prosperity in First World nations. This image of coolness is achieved not through charity, but through shopping and self-stylization, and is reinforced in (Red)'s borrowing of the advertising tactics used in fair trade with the business practices of its affiliated multinational companies not engaged in fair trade production. The discourse of (Red) and of campaigns like it suggests that ethical consumption is an easy, painless way to "do good," while being an ethical consumer is a fantastically hip way to "be good," all while aiming to "look good."

The (Red) campaign calls for socially-aware consumers to use their dollars to "help" those people considered most in need. This echoes what feminist scholar Grace Hong has described as "liberal white male possessive individualism, demonstrated through benevolence toward racialized subjects."⁴¹ This benevolence serves to reinforce the subjectivity of the "benevolent" individual consumer, over and against a racialized other. In the case of (Red), while these "ethical" consumers are racially unspecified and gender-non-specific, the ethical consumer category creates class distinctions based not only on income and the ability to spend on the latest fashions, but also on social class distinctions based on a sense of reason and morality—thus setting up (Red) consumers as more thoughtful, mindful, and moral than other types of consumers. What remains unacknowledged in (Red)'s narrative are the ways women and people of color have had differing degrees of access to economic resources, including expendable income.⁴² This rendering of the new social elite under Product (Red)™ serves to reinforce notions of an upper echelon who not only make choices based on "superior" reasoning, but who also have the ability to make ethical choices about consumption on the basis of economic class.⁴³ This creates the potential for conflating those who economically cannot afford to make elite "ethical" purchases with those

who morally choose not to make "ethical" purchases—aligning poverty not only with a lack of fashion sense, but also with a racialized and gendered "lack of morality." This effectively shifts focus away from those who hold hegemonic economic and political power, while highlighting multiple ways poverty "looks bad."

One Gap (Red) men's T-shirt reads: "Da(red)" on the front. The back holds a portion of the (Red) manifesto: "All things being equal, they are not. What we collectively choose 2 buy or not 2 buy can change the course of life and history on this planet."⁴⁴ This T-shirt calls on an ideology of equality and then emphatically refutes its existence, calling the consumer to a sharp awareness of her or his relative economic and political privilege as a first-world citizen vis-à-vis the African women and children whose lives will be saved by a simple T-shirt purchase. Putting this kind of moral weight on a T-shirt, literally and ideologically, marks the ethical consumer who purchases it as being within a first-world racial hierarchy, and implicitly, as having both the moral and the economic privileges of first-world consumers.

Ethical consumerism is shifting racial formations in the United States through emphasizing geographic location, economic status, and moral reasoning. The ethics of "ethical consumerism" include the idea that being marked by race is potentially to be marked as "in need," while being unmarked by race (or having one's race be unremarkable) indicates being un-needy. (Red) highlights this in focusing consumers' attention on the medical, housing, and other needs of presumably black and brown Africans affected by HIV while remaining silent on the devastating effects of HIV on black and brown Americans.⁴⁵ Despite advertising that is explicitly multiracial in its portrayal of consumers and decidedly tilted toward blackness in their portrayal of recipients, the (Red) campaign avoids frank discussions about the ways racism has perpetuated global inequities in areas of economic exchange and health, and how this is significant to the HIV-AIDS pandemic.

(Red)'s advertising would appear to expand the category of upper/middle class in the United States by emphasizing that consumers could be of (almost) any race; advertising has showcased individuals who identify and are identifiable as black, white, Latino, Asian, and multiracial. Additionally, many (Red) products are not luxury items; T-shirts, Hallmark cards, shoes, and even iPods are considered "affordable" purchases for many Americans. Clearly, expendable income is not the realm only of wealthy white people. However, in opening the possibilities for being upper/middle class in the United States through this type of ethical consumerism, (Red)TM solidifies racial and gender differences between first-world consumers and third-world recipients—in this case, ethical consumers in the United States can make distinctions between themselves and the African women and children who

receive medicine or preventive care from the Global Fund, without necessarily having to confront the racial, sexual, class, and gender hierarchies still at play within the United States.

The Fashionable Morality of Ethical Consumerism

(Red) has re-popularized ethical consumption by making it fashionable to shop our way to social justice, engaging in a pleasurable activity currently so socially infused with moral goodness that many first-world consumers can avert their eyes and minds from evidence to the contrary, such as violations of workers' rights, manufacturing practices that harm the environment, or agreements ensuring that drug companies' profits take priority over affordable HIV medications. (Red)'s cool factor comes both from the desirability of the products and from the social cache attached to this fashionable act of consumption.

Ethical consumerism reflects trends in economic discourse, currently favoring those perceived as the most helpless and in need of assistance, ignoring the needs of productive workers in favor of those who are outside this particular producer-consumer loop. As long as it is considered acceptable and desirable to channel social justice through market forces, companies will utilize familiar and compelling images and ideas of race, gender, location, poverty, and morality to sell their products. (Red) strengthens global racial hierarchies by invoking a geographically gendered and racially tinged mythology of African dependence on American consumers' shopping habits; explicit (Red) images link ethical consumerism, expendable income, and morality to form the "non-racialized" ethical consumer.

At the same time, the emphasis on individual American consumer choice ignores the privileges of wealth, race, and gender needed to engage in (Red)'s form of ethical consumerism. The fashionableness of ethical consumerism compels participation, yet this phenomenon is dependent upon its very inaccessibility for so many. This risks assuming those who are economically unable to participate in ethical consumption's latest trend have failed, morally, to shop for change. The selective shifting between the extreme "worthiness" of those who purportedly benefit from (Red) and the "unworthiness" of those who fail to redeem themselves through buying (Red) highlights only the value of the ethical consumer. This marketing tactic creates a hierarchical distinction that focuses only on the power of potential consumers—both those who consume, and those who do not—and serves to further dehumanize the vaguely described "African women and children" who are relegated to the status of dark specters who haunt the landscape of charity in the imaginations of first-world "ethical" consumers.

Notes

1. This essay is one of many interdisciplinary scholarly publications on the social significance of Product (Red)TM. See the special (RED) issue of *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2, no. 6 (2008): 1–133, for its wonderfully nuanced engagement with Product (Red)TM.
2. Gap, "Gap.com: Products that help women and children affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa," <http://www.gap.com/browse/division.do?cid=16591&tid=gpvan011>.
3. Jo Littler, *Radical Consumption: Shopping for Change in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Open University Press, 2009); Clive Barnett et al., "Consuming Ethics: Articulating the Subjects and Spaces of Ethical Consumption," *Antipode* 37, no. 1 (2005): 23–45; Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte "Better (Red)TM Than Dead: Celebrities, Consumption and International Aid," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2008): 711–729.
4. Join(RED), www.joinred.com/vail.
5. www.vailfilmfestival.org/2009_RED_Vision_Entry_Guidelines.pdf
6. Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
7. Kristy Golding and Ken Peattie, "In Search of a Golden Blend: Perspectives on the Marketing of Fair Trade Coffee," *Sustainable Development* 13 (2005): 160; William Low and Eileen Davenport, "Postcards from the Edge: Maintaining the 'Alternative' Character of Fair Trade," *Sustainable Development* 13 (2005): 143–153.
8. "Ethical consumerism" is defined as "practices that explicitly aim to reconfigure ordinary practices of commodity consumption as sites of ethical transformation and political agency." Clive Barnett et al., "Consuming Ethics," 25.
9. Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte, "Better (Red)TM Than Dead: 'Brand Aid,' Celebrities, and The New Frontier Of Development Assistance," *Danish Institute for International Studies Working Paper* 2006, no. 26 (2006): 1–33.
10. Gap, Product Red, www.gap.com/red.
11. Jane Martinson, "The ethical coffee chief turning a fair profit: The head of Cafédirect has demonstrated how to lift sales while maintaining Fairtrade values," *The Guardian*, March 9, 2007, Environment section, Food section.
12. Justin Lewis, Sanna Inthorn, and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, *Citizens or Consumers?: What the Media Tell Us About Political Participation*. (New York: Open University Press, 2005).
13. Sarah Banet-Weiser, "The Business of Representing," *American Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2006): 496.
14. While social marketing has generally been used to promote behaviors rather than products (i.e., campaigns to stop smoking, discourage littering, or encourage voter participation), the marketing of ethical consumption weds the two concerns by suggesting that altering one behavior—shopping—can serve two purposes: obtaining a product and addressing a social concern. See Golding and Peattie, "In Search of a Golden Blend," 160.
15. Michael Goodman, "Reading fair trade: political ecological imaginary and the moral economy of fair trade foods," *Political Geography* 23 (2005): 891–915.
16. Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
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24. See Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, and Charles Gore, "The Rise and Fall of the Washington Consensus as a Paradigm for Developing Countries," *World Development* 28, no. 5 (2000): 789–804.
25. Join(RED), "Bono and Bobby Shriver Launch Product Red to Harness Power of the World's Iconic Brands to Fight AIDS in Africa," January 26, 2006, http://www.joinred.com/News/Articles/ArticleDetail/06-01-6/bono_and_bobby_shriver_launch_product_red_to_harness_power_of_the_world_s_iconic_brands_to_fight_aids_in_africa.aspx.
26. Join(RED), "JoinRED—Fight Aids," www.joinred.com.
27. Ibid.
28. Joni Seager, *Earth Follies: Coming to Terms With the Global Environmental Crisis*, (New York: Routledge, 1993).
29. Fair Trade's share of global trade is relatively small, accounting for between .05 and 5 percent of sales in its product categories in European and North American markets. Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (2007), www.fairtrade.net.
30. Néstor García Canclini, *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts*, *Cultural Studies of the Americas* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 42.
31. Ibid., 41.
32. As it falls outside the scope of this paper, I won't elaborate here on the debates about which kinds of businesses have the right to redistribute resources via capitalism.
33. Each participating brand manufactures Product (Red)TM items in their regular factories, few of which are located in Africa. One exception is the Precious Garments clothing factory in Lesotho, where the Gap sources some of its (Red) T-shirts. The employees of Precious Garments receive counseling and are encouraged to be regularly tested for HIV and to seek treatment at on-site clinics. Lesotho is one of the African countries receiving funds from the sale of (Red). "(Blog) Red," http://blog.joinred.com/2008_05_01_archive.html.

34. Shriver explains the reason for this is that the partner companies of (Red) understand that the reputation of Red is at stake, and they will therefore voluntarily make ethical choices aligned with (Red)'s reputation and that of their companies branding image. Louise Story, "Want to Help Treat AIDS in Africa? Buy a Cellphone," the *New York Times*, October 4, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/04/business/media/04adco.html>.

35. The Global Fund could insist on standards of production similar to fair trade. The Global Fund could also shift profits from (Red) back to all its producers, rather than a select few who fit the profile of racialized, gendered, "deserving" others. However, even if these were elements of (Red)TM production, this narrative still serves to recycle familiar tales of the redemptive possibilities of global capital.

36. When the labor and labor conditions of a commodity are erased and the value of a commodity is seen only as existing within the commodity itself, Marx calls this "commodity fetishism." (Red) is interesting in that the consumption act is also fetishized, such that consumption itself becomes part of the commodity's appeal, and therefore, part of the commodity fetish. See Karl Marx, "Capital, Volume One" in *The Marx-Engels Reader second edition*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 319-329.

37. Dell Product (Red) Superbowl Commercial, *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUEzHCdWQzM>.

38. "Because You Chose (Red)," *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=195BT3rPE>.

39. Joseph Roach, in writing about a trans-Atlantic gendered performance of whiteness, says, "To perform as protagonists of gendered whiteness, they must rely on an unnamed black antagonist, who . . . remains forgotten but not gone." Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 31.

40. See Trentmann's arguments in "Before 'fair trade;'" and Seager, *Earth Follies*, chapters 2 and 6.

41. Grace Hong, *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 12.

42. Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995).

43. George Yudice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era, Post-Contemporary Interventions* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

44. Gap, www.gap.com.

45. The silence around the impact of HIV on Americans may shift soon, as significant cuts to services for HIV-positive people are being made in many U.S. states, including a July 28, 2009 proposed \$52 million cut to services for HIV prevention and treatment in California. See "Gov. Signs Calif. Budget, Makes New Cuts," *CBS News*, <http://cbs5.com/politics/california.budget.signing.2.1104656.html>.

Chapter 10

The Lady Is a Vamp

Cruella de Vil and the Cultural Politics of Fur

Catherine Spooner

Cruella de Vil, serial dog-napper and fashion diva extraordinaire, is among the most visually spectacular villainesses of the twentieth century. First appearing in Dodie Smith's classic British children's novel *The Hundred and One Dalmatians* in 1956, her reputation was consolidated by the animated Disney adaptation from 1961, and Glenn Close's flamboyant performance in the two live-action films *101 Dalmatians* (1996) and *102 Dalmatians* (2000). These texts have, between them, achieved extraordinary levels of exposure in Western culture: Smith's novel was a worldwide bestseller before the film rights were bought by Disney; the 1961 film has the eleventh-highest box office returns of all time when ticket prices are adjusted for inflation; and the 1996 film was the sixth-highest earner in the year of its release.¹ Each is dependent on the visual impact of both the Dalmatians' celebrated coats and Cruella de Vil's outrageous personal style. Yet Cruella's image is familiar even to those who have neither read Smith's novel nor seen its screen versions. A brief search of the Web will reveal more images of people dressed up as Cruella than of the character herself. Premanufactured fancy dress costumes based on Cruella's appearance in the animated Disney film are readily available to purchase. The key to this success is her distinctive look: through all her different incarnations, Cruella remains instantly recognizable, an iconic concatenation of furs, bold black-and-white color scheme, and parti-colored hair.

Fashion TALKS

Undressing the Power of Style

Edited by
Shira Tarrant and Marjorie Jolles

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