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COMPASSIONATE CONSUMERISM: MASS MOVEMENTS, YOUTH MARKETS, AND THE EVOLUTION OF AN ETHIC FROM BAND AID TO *IDOL AID*

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COMPASSIONATE CONSUMERISM: MASS MOVEMENTS, YOUTH MARKETS, AND THE EVOLUTION OF AN ETHIC FROM BAND AID TO *IDOL AID*

By

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ABSTRACT

COMPASSIONATE CONSUMERISM: MASS MOVEMENTS, YOUTH MARKETS, AND THE EVOLUTION OF AN ETHIC FROM BAND AID TO *IDOL AID*

By

Helen Louise Davis

The 1983-85 Ethiopian famine was one of the most specularized scenes of suffering in the history of the moving image. As a result of the production of and public response to famine representations, a new ethic of compassionate consumerism emerged. This ethic altered the ways that coverage of famine and charitable calls to provide famine relief were produced, disseminated, interpreted, and received by diverse viewing audiences. It evolved and spread as more news reports of famine and famine relief texts were produced and disseminated. And, as a result of its emergence and evolution, a new type of philanthropic, consumer based social movement was born.

Through an analysis of the production and reception of the first compassionate consumer media texts—specifically the 1984 Buerk/Amin famine footage; the famine relief Ethiopia singles "Do They Know Its Christmas," "We Are the World," and their accompanying videos; and the globally disseminated Live Aid benefit concert—I determine how and why the ethic of compassionate consumerism inspired the 1984-85 famine relief movement, the context and climate in which the ethic and the movement evolved, and the multiple effects of both upon existing hegemony in the United States and Great Britain.

In tracing the emergence, evolution, and diffusion of the movement in both nations, I identify the multiple economic, cultural, and material benefits that participation in famine relief had for consumers, donors, celebrity participants, and multinational

corporate sponsors. I illustrate how the movement provided a voice to the new generation and constructed new sites in which consumers could enact socio-cultural subversion. And, I argue that the production of new socio-cultural sites not only altered the ways media and charity organizations constructed and organized around Third World catastrophes, but also allowed for a politicization of compassion and consumerism that empowered innumerable famine relief participants.

To Ryan, for all your support.

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> You can be absolutely sure, on the day you die, somebody is alive in Africa because one day you bought a record or a book or watched a pop concert. And that, at once, is a compliment and a triumph, and on the other hand, it is the ultimate indictment of us all (Bob Geldof).

In the early 1980s, less than ten years after drought had devastated regions throughout the Horn of Africa, millions were once again faced with the prospect of starvation.[1] By the summer of 1983, as a result of civil war, government mismanagement of resources, changes in US and UK foreign aid policy, and environmental degradation, food and water had become scarce commodities in both Ethiopia and The Sudan.[2] Consequently, hoards of desperate refugees left their isolated villages in the provinces and migrated toward feeding centers and refugee camps. The camps, not being designed either to house or help so many, were quickly overrun by refugees needing food, clothing, shelter, and protection from disease.[3] Due to the limited resources available at such camps, alongside the unpredictability of food shipments, many refugees were denied

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[1]The Ethiopian famine of 1983-86 was the worst in recorded history according to the findings published in Stanley Siegel, Harvey Gutman, Tania Romashko, Louis Connick, *The U.S. Response to the African Famine, 1984-1986: An Analysis of Policy Formation and Program Management.* vol. 2. Aid Program Evaluation Report 17 (Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, 1986) 1.

[2]For more information on the complex causes of famine see Freedom House, *Ethiopia: The Politics of Famine* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990) 45. For detailed discussions regarding the economic factors (national and global) that led to the famine see both Alexander DeWaal, *Famine That Kills: Darfur, Sudan 1984-89* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) & Kurt Jansson, Michael Harris, and Angela Penrose, *The Ethiopian Famine* (London: Zed Books, 1987) 113-26. For further information on the idea of famine as genocide in Ethiopia, see Michael Maren, *The Road To Hell: The Ravaging Effects Of Foreign Aid And International Charity* (New York: Free Press, 1997) 116; & Gebre-Ab Barnabas, *The Trek: An Ethiopian Family's Struggle Against Famine* (Manchester: Manchester Free Press, 1989) 15.

[3]In "What the Media Saw," *Surrender or Starve: The Wars Behind the Famine* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 5. Robert D Kaplan describes how diseases such as dysentery were a major contributing factor to deaths in the camps. In *Breakfast in Hell: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account of the Politics of Hunger in Ethiopia* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1987), Myles F. Harris describes the ramifications of such as disease when he points out how the price of one pint of blood was equal to feeding a whole shed of children (10-13).

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the aid they required.[4] By the time the famine had reached its height in the summer of 1984, the daily death toll in almost every camp was in the hundreds.

Despite numerous stories printed in the press,[5] the disaster in the Horn was for the most part ignored by Westerners. In an era of compassionate conservatism,[6] US and UK governments, in particular, enforced foreign aid policies that only exacerbated an already dire situation there. In July 1984, almost by accident, BBC foreign correspondent Michael Buerk suddenly realized the enormity of the famine upon a visit to a refugee center in Northern Ethiopia. Three months later, he returned to Korem with film-maker Mohammed Amin to produce what can now be described as an exposé of the famine that shocked the world and led to the first global aid movement.

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[4]In Kurt Jannson, Michael Harris, and Angela Penrose, *The Ethiopian Famine* (London: Zed Books, 1987), Angela Penrose provides a stunning example of the inadequacies of the camps when she states that by October 1984 nearly 100 people were dying daily in Korem. She also states that, "2,612 out of 7,200 died between 29 October 1984 and the end of January 1985" (157). Arguably, these rates improve once, as a result of the Buerk/Amin documentary and the ensuing public response, aid starts to pour into the worst affected regions. Pleas for aid had been ignored up until the BBC took measures: see Richard W. Solberg, *Miracle in Ethiopia: A Partnership Response to Famine* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991) 5; and Barnabas, *The Trek* 13, for references to denied requests. For further explanation detailing why and how the US and the EEC denied aid to Ethiopia see David A Korn, *Ethiopia: The Politics of Famine* (Lanham, MD. & London: University Press of America, 1990). See Penrose in *The Ethiopian Famine* for further information regarding conservative US policies on Ethiopia and how US refused to provide aid to a Soviet regime (149-50) but provided support to Somalian guerillas opposing the Ethiopian Marxist government (213) and reference to the EEC's claim that, despite surpluses, there was no grain to spare for Ethiopia (151).

[5]For more detailed information on reactions to the famine in the print media see Kaplan, "What the Media Saw" 31-54; & Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sells Disease, War, Famine and Death* (New York, Routledge, 1999) 112.

[6]In her introduction to *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), Lauren Berlant describes how, in the United States, compassion—more than any other emotion such as "pleasure, fascination, hopelessness, or resentment"—is the emotional "response to suffering's scene" (7). But, as Berlant explains, in the US (and I would argue, also the UK) during the late capitalist era, compassion has undergone a process of conservativization. In societies that validate individualism, laissez faire attitudes, and "pull yourself up by you bootstraps" logic, compassion has deteriorated into pity, an emotion that elicits contempt for figures of suffering. This pity-compassion can be described as an emotion, according to Berlant, influenced by right-wing notions of social obligation and conservative morality. It is an emotion of the privileged who determine the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor without acknowledgement of how structural inequalities affect those suffering from economic deprivation. According to this paradigm, only a minority of sufferers are deserving of compassion. This is because suffering, at least according to the logic of compassionate conservatism, is a condition that most often occurs, not as a result of structural inequities, but due to bad personal choices made by the one suffering.

Viewers in the West in the 80s were not strangers to such images of suffering and atrocity. Since the invention of the moving image, philanthropic organizations had been utilizing shocking images to raise funds and awareness. American Studies scholar Kevin Rozario describes in "'Delicious Horrors'": Mass Culture, The Red Cross, And The Appeal Of Modern American Humanitarianism," as early as the 1920s, charities such as the Red Cross were disseminating and displaying horrific moving images to movie audiences in order to raise awareness and funds for those in need. News accounts of the horrors of mass starvation in Volga (1929),[7] the Spanish Civil War,[8] Nazi death camps,[9] and the Vietnam War (to name but a few, significant examples) were often graphic.[10] Western audiences were even familiar with suffering in the Horn of Africa because, in 1974, British journalist Jonathon Dimbleby had produced a similar documentary to Buerk and Amin's that highlighted the plight of starving peoples in Ethiopia during the Ethiopian revolution and the overthrow of dictator Haile Selassie.[11] Dimbleby's film exposed the horrors of famine, the emaciated walking corpses of starving people and the devastation to the over-burdened land.

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[7]Arthur Ransome, "Famine on the Volga," *The Guardian* 11 Oct. 1921, *Guardian Century: 1920-1929*, 2008, Guardian News and Media Ltd., 5 Jan. 2008 <http://century.guardian.co.uk/1920-1929/Story/0,6051,126591,00.html>.

[8]For a detailed discussion of Woolf's response to contemporary representations of the Spanish Civil War, see Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003) 9.

[9]Cornelia Brink, "Secular Icons: Looking at Photographs from Nazi Concentration Camps," *History & Memory* 12.1 (2000): 135-50.

[10]R. Hamilton, "Shooting from the Hip: Representations of the Photojournalist of the Vietnam Era." *Oxford Art Journal* 9.1 (1986): 49-55.

[11]For further information on and descriptions of Dimbleby's "The Unknown Famine" see Paul Harrison & Robin Palmer, *News Out of Africa: Biafra to Band Aid* (London: Hilary Shipman, 1986) 40-51; & Peter Gill, *A Year In The Death Of Africa: Politics, Bureaucracy And The Famine* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1986) 4-5; see Solberg *Miracle* 6-7 for discussion of apathetic public response to "Unknown" in the US and Penrose *The Ethiopian Famine* for information regarding Canadian generosity in response to "Unknown" (100).

Despite the fact that viewers were so familiar with representations of suffering, and, as a result, knew how to read and respond to images of suffering, the coverage of the 1983-85 Ethiopian famine can be described as unprecedented and unique.[12] What was so different about coverage of the famine? First, the images of suffering presented primarily by news coverage in the mid 1980s and, later, as part of famine relief texts/commercials differed from previously aired famine footage because they were read through what Kevin Rozario describes as the 'hyperreal imagination',[13] they inspired the ethic of compassionate consumerism which in turn led to the famine relief movement. Second, the images were more excessive and graphic—partially because they were televised. And, third, famine images of the mid 1980s were produced by, disseminated among, and received by more diverse global markets than ever before.

By the mid 1980s, the means by which such scenes were produced and disseminated had also altered dramatically as a result of advancements in the fields of visual and other communications technologies and the evolution of new markets interested in witnessing suffering.[14] The new visual, communication, and transportation technologies available in the 1980s made the Ethiopian and Sudanese famine one of the most specularized scenes of suffering in the history of the moving image. The Buerk/Amin report alone was disseminated via television to almost five hundred million people worldwide and had a huge global impact. Like previous footage of suffering, the coverage of the famine was simultaneously horrifying and fascinating. It seemed to evoke

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[12]As a result of Western apathy to the famine and a lack of famine coverage on the television prior to the Buerk/Amin report, the dates of the famine (1983-86) differ to those of movement dates (1984-86).

[13]Rozario, *Calamity* 178-9.

[14]For information regarding the implementation of new technologies in news coverage of Africa see Christopher Paterson, "Who Owns TV Images from Africa?" *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 22.1 (1994): 15-18.

conflicting emotions within audiences who, upon viewing images of the dying, both expressed a sense of compassion for the victims and a desire to consume more famine texts.[15] But, in response to the Buerk/Amin report, encouraged by celebrities and the media, UK and the US audiences for the first time rallied together, en masse, to help feed starving in Africa.

Through both the production and consumption of famine relief texts, celebrities and members of the general public alike raised millions to provide food and clothing to the needy. Out of the famine coverage, and as a result of viewer responses to images of suffering, a new ethic emerged: an ethic of compassionate consumerism. This ethic evolved and spread as more news reports of famine and famine relief texts were produced and disseminated. And, as a result of its emergence and evolution—the desires the ethic fulfilled and the actions it inspired—a new type of philanthropic, consumer based social movement also emerged and evolved.

Compassionate consumerism can be described as a new social logic that challenged the compassionate conservatism of the Thatcher-Reagan era.[16] The ethic, inspired by a mix of both compassionate emotions and consumer impulses, changed the ways that both coverage of famine and charitable calls to provide famine relief were produced, disseminated, interpreted, and responded to by members of a viewing audience. The ethic originally emerged as a result of depictions of suffering presented in

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[15]After the Buerk/Amin report, a number of exposés were produced by various media producers. For example PBS produced "Cry, Ethiopia, Cry," *Frontline*, Prod. Nicholas Claxton and Andre Liebman, 27 Nov. 1984, the *Times* funded David Blundy and Paul Vallely, *With Geldof in Africa* (London: Times Books, 1985), the BBC produced "Live Aid's Desert Gamble," *Panorama*, 2 Sept. 1985, a special on famine and aid in the Sudan.

[16]As I illustrate in detail in chapter 1, the Thatcher-Reagan era was more conservative than previous years as both leaders preached a return to a golden age of family values, traditional morality, and laissez-faire attitudes towards labor, industry, and charity.

famine texts, and evolved as a result of the production and dissemination of subsequent famine relief texts that relocated and re-inscribed the loci of suffering (subsequent texts that are produced as part of a compassionate response to the footage and that encouraged further consumption of famine as well as relief texts). The unique mix of emotions and impulses evoked by the footage, the timing of the Buerk/Amin report, and the social-political milieu in which the footage was received, allowed the ethic of compassionate consumerism to take hold in the hearts and minds of the British and US public. The ethic not only resulted in changing the ways the famine was constructed and received in Western societies, but also continually perpetuated and intensified both compassion and consumerism (thus the ethic endlessly reproduces itself).

The feelings of compassion evoked by representations of suffering, and the consumer impulses inspired by a philanthropic call, were by no means new emotions and impulses for 80s audiences.[17] What was new in the 80s, however, was the ways in which emotion and impulse inspired by images of suffering were combined to create the ethic of compassionate consumerism, the intensity and potential for self perpetuation that resulted from this combination of emotion and impulse, and the existence in the 80s of a potential philanthropic oriented market that, trained in the art of consumerism, was looking for new modes of feeling and expression.

This project, and indeed this introductory chapter, begins with an attempt to identify the emergence, evolution, and eventual diffusion of the ethic of compassionate consumerism in Britain and the United States during the mid-1980s. While recognizing how compassion was not an emotion unique to the 1980s and philanthropy had been a

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[17]Kevin Rozario, "'Delicious Horrors': Mass Culture, The Red Cross, And The Appeal Of Modern American Humanitarianism," *American Quarterly* 55.3 (2003): 417-55.

market venture since the invention of the moving image,[18] I illustrate how and why, when in combination, compassion and consumerism created a new social logic that not only affected immense change in a number of cultural sites, but informed the emergence of a new type of philanthropic social movement. Through an analysis of compassionate consumer texts—specifically the Buerk-Amin famine footage that precipitated an immense public response to the Ethiopian famine, the Ethiopia singles and accompanying videos produced by concerned celebrities, and the global Live Aid benefit concert that raised millions of dollars for the starving—I demonstrate how compassionate consumerism inspired the famine relief movement, why the organization of aid and public and/or celebrity support of famine aid can be defined as a social movement, and the reasons why the famine relief movement was both unique and specific to its time and location.

In tracing the emergence, evolution, and diffusion of the movement—which is influenced but does not necessarily coincide with the emergence, evolution, and diffusion of compassionate consumerism—I aim to determine how both the movement and the ethic that inspired it provided a voice to the new generation and constructed new sites in which youth could enact socio-cultural subversion.[19] In addition, I argue that the production of new socio-cultural sites not only affected changes in the ways that the media and charity organizations constructed and organized around Third World

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[18] ibid.

[19] In *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Michel De Certeau describes the possible ways to subvert the "rituals, representations, and laws imposed upon them" simply by using them (xiii). He argues that, through everyday acts, in *borrowing* or *using* that which is produced by (and for) others, the human subject can become an agent in the sense of both time and space. Throughout this project my use of the term subversion is intended to mirror Certeau's. when I use 'subversion' I am referring to the small yet significant socio-cultural changes that occur when new cultural sites for everyday activity and expression are created.

catastrophes, but also allowed for the development of new, complex relationships between multinational corporations, governments, celebrities, media producers, charities, and—most significantly—communities of youths.

My examination of the content, appeal, and address of famine relief texts—in particular the charity rock texts and events produced by Band Aid, USA for Africa, and Live Aid—shows how, through the gratuitous and excessive commodification of suffering and the constant promise of scopophilic and fetishistic pleasures, famine and famine relief texts produced different multi-faceted forms of 'compassionate consumerism' that ultimately offered young people (the group most affected by the New Right's exclusionary policies) with multiple opportunities to negotiate alternate definitions of identity and community at a time when traditional modes of youth protest were disintegrating.

Consuming Compassionately

To feel compassion is to feel humility and empathy, to acknowledge a shared vulnerability with the object of compassion. Texts that evoke compassion do so by exposing images of excessive human suffering so that viewers are not only able to sympathize and empathize with the victims, but also borrow (and perhaps even appropriate) the trauma of the experience of suffering. The famine images produced by Buerk and Amin evoked mass concern among audiences in both the US and the UK. This is arguably because viewers did not only feel compassion for the desperate figures on screen, but because—through the act of viewing—viewers were also able to borrow from and share (no matter how vicariously or prosthetically) in the famine experience.

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Compassion is connected to altruism, as it is often a stimulus for altruistic expression and behavior. As a result of the evocation of compassionate emotions, consumers of famine and famine relief texts are often incited to perform good acts of compassion. These acts were most often related to financial transactions: they involved performing services in order to raise awareness and funds for famine relief, donating money to the cause, and/or purchasing famine related texts, products, and merchandise. The images of famine that inspired viewers in the mid 1980s to consume more famine coverage (by early 1985 even local news stations and newspapers in both the US and the UK were producing reports on the famine), also encouraged them to purchase celebrity endorsed famine relief texts, the proceeds of which were to be donated to the aid movement.

The famine relief texts from which compassionate consumerism emerged, commodified suffering.[20] Primarily this suffering was that of the Other, located elsewhere. However, as viewers paradoxically and simultaneously expressed an interest in the suffering of the Other and a sense of fatigue due to the over-saturation of suffering in popular culture texts, the media shifted its focus away from famine toward the relief effort.[21] Originally (in late October of 1984) the images of suffering tended to depict desperate and dying Ethiopians, mainly women and children. As public and celebrity interest in the famine grew, such images gave way to representations of compassionate celebrity figures that 'suffered' on behalf of famine victims and coverage of concerned

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[20]For further discussion on the commodification of suffering see Michael Maren, *The Road To Hell: The Ravaging Effects Of Foreign Aid And International Charity* (New York: Free Press, 1997) 213; Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, "The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times," *Social Suffering,* ed. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1997).

[21]For detailed explanation regarding the shift in focus see Moeller (9, 35-6).

consumers mimicking celebrity behavior and purchasing celebrity endorsed famine relief merchandise.

The more images and texts evolved, shifting focus from famine victims to celebrities performing compassionate acts on screen, the more concerned US and UK citizens purchased famine related texts and merchandise, and the more compassion inspiring texts were produced for consumption. Each act of purchase or donation seemed to inspire further acts as, through 'acting' in a compassionate manner, compassionate emotions could be momentarily intensified. This intensification became intoxifying, particularly when it occurred en mass, among groups of like-minded consumers (e.g. news viewers or MTV audiences) and crowds of many who were similarly stimulated (as is the case with benefit concerts).

The fact that consumers of famine images and famine relief texts experienced and openly expressed their compassion in an era of compassionate conservatism makes the ethic of compassionate consumerism a resistant ethic. In fact, the active shift away from compassionate conservatism toward compassion can be described as a subversive socio-cultural shift. This shift coincided with shifts in the socio-cultural and political role of the consumer and consumerism in advanced technological societies. Not only were there more commodities (i.e. experiences, images, distant locations) made available to Western consumers as a result of advances in visual, communication, and transportation technologies by the 1980s,[22] but, arguably, throughout this period and as a result of their access to information, consumers were also gaining more awareness of their potential

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[22]For a discussion of the ways in which the African body has been of interest to Westerners and presented in still photography as a commodity since the invention of the camera, see Paul S. Landau, "Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Imagination in Africa," *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Paul S. Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin, (Berkeley: University of California, 2002).

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power and rights as consumers. The increased production and reception of texts and commodities within the West resulted in the creation of more socio-cultural sites for consumer activity and expression that, in turn, allowed for an increased mobility between sites.

These shifts in consumer roles and consumerism had numerous benefits for US and British youths. In the Thatcher-Reagan era any expression of compassionate sentiments could be read as a resistant act of expression. Similarly, for many disenfranchised groups, consumer activity could be said to be an attempt to gain agency or to express resistance. The role of the consumer became a politicized role of potential subversion because, as consumers, youths could affect socio-cultural change within and through the creation of new cultural sites of production and reception.

In *Changing Cultures: Feminism, Youth and Consumerism* youth studies scholar and activist Mica Nava provides a most effective definition of consumerism. She states: "[c]onsumerism is far more than just economic activity: it is also about dreams and consolation, communication and confrontation, image and identity. Like sexuality, it consists of a multiplicity of fragmented and contradictory discourses" (167). Here Nava links consumerism to desire, expression, and identity formation. She succinctly intimates how, like the sexual object and sexual act, the consumer object and act of consumption have the potential to not only to provide the consumer pleasure, but also with a sense of self. Nava argues that in their capacity as consumers, as a market force, youth are not only provided with modes of expression and agency, but with the power to affect change on the individual, communal, and global levels. I assert that, by consuming famine and famine relief texts, by donating time and money to the famine relief effort, youth not only

showed their propensity for compassion for the Other, but they also elicited pleasure, and carved out for themselves the new socio-cultural role of compassionate consumer, of self-reliant philanthropist, of worthy citizen.[23] By embracing the ethic of compassionate consumerism, through their good deeds and consumer habits, youth challenge their governments' rationale for reducing the rights of youth as well common, negative representations of youths as delinquents or victims.[24] In essence, as a result of compassionate consumerism, they became both worthy citizens and consumers.[25]

In challenging cultural theorists and economic commentators as diverse as Herbert Marcuse and Betty Freidan, by arguing not only against the notion of the "passive victim" and the mainstreaming of the idea of "'brainwashing'—by communists and advertisers alike" (163), Nava indicates how the status and power of marginalized groups has been "enhanced by consumer society" (166) and thus empowers the consumer. With specific reference to women, Nava notes that consumption offers "new areas of authority and expertise, new sources of income, a new sense of consumer rights: and one consequences of these developments has been a heightened awareness of entitlement outside of the sphere of consumption" (166).

As Nava herself indicates, youths—like women—are also potentially empowered within consumer society and in their role as consumers. This becomes most apparent when looking at the ways in which their consumption of famine and famine related texts

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[23]In the next chapter I illustrate in detail how youth in the US and UK were denied their rights in the Reagan-Thatcher era.

[24]For information regarding ways in which youths dealt with as victims or delinquents see Christine Griffin, *Representations Of Youth: The Study Of Youth And Adolescence In Britain And America* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1993) 3.

[25]For a discussion of the ways in which young people in the UK saw themselves as neither 'legitimate citizens or consumers' see Hilary Nunn, *Thatcher Politics and Fantasy*, *Thatcher Politics and Fantasy: The Political Culture of Gender and Nation* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2002) 117.

and merchandise empowered and educated youth consumers. Through consuming famine text youths gained experience and expertise in the field of suffering. Their compassionate reception and responses to such texts led to the production and consumption of more famine and famine related texts that not only diversified and extended the suffering experience, but infinitely altered and expanded the number of famine related texts. The increase in texts did not necessarily increase youth income or job opportunities but it did (as I explain in detail) lead to economic growth in various private and public sectors that benefited youth. As the backlash against famine relief agencies originally supported by youths indicate, many involved in acts of compassionate consumerism on behalf of the starving in Ethiopia quickly became aware of both their consumer rights,[26] as well as the often ineffectual policies and methods of aid organizations and charities.[27] But, most importantly, as a consequence of all of the above, many youths in the US and the UK

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[26]The following comment was made by a young man attending the Live Aid concert in London. His statement, made during an interview aired on the Band Aid documentary, "Food, Trucks, and Rock 'n' Roll: The Band Aid Story," dir. Ian McMillan, St. Pancras Films, 1985, indicates an awareness of consumer rights. The man states: "I find it incredible that the mass of people probably feel something should be done and yet their own government just don't do anything... [the] very fact that it has to be done by people giving their own money is ridiculous. We've given enough money into government, why can't they spend some of that money giving it back?" On the one hand this comment shows how youth saw participation in Live-Aid as the right thing to do: the urgency in the speaker's voice, the imperative that "something should be done" is clear. And yet, the young man quoted above does not specify exactly what the problem is, what it is that should be done, and to whom. That which is to be done is defined as "it," an "it" that should be funded by the government to which common people pay taxes, not out of the common man's pocket. What is most significant about the quote is not the young man's sense of outrage at the famine in Ethiopia, but the fact that, in order for the famine crisis to be avoided or halted, the British public have to spend money; it is not the fact that children are starving in the latter part of the Twentieth century that he considers ridiculous, but the fact that he is footing the bill. Of course, the speaker's notion that the government is "doing nothing" is inherently flawed, and is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the ways in which Western governments interact, interfere, or exacerbate political and social situations (oftentimes leading to catastrophe) in foreign nations. Not only was the British and American government not "doing nothing," in relation to the Horn of Africa; their actions can be read as detrimental to the problem. However, the quote serves as one example of how young British and Americans were able to see their contributions to the Band Aid projects purely in consumerist terms (while being incapable of articulating what it is their exactly donating money and time for), that is, to understand their roles and rights as consumers.

[27]According to Robert D. Kaplan news reports in late 1985 started to focus on the public backlash against aid agencies and public anger at being 'duped' by both the media and newly emerged aid organizations such as Band Aid. (7,11).

were provided the opportunity to heighten their "awareness of entitlement outside of the sphere of consumption" and to alter the system by which many youths had lost their rights.

In their capacity as both consumers and producers of cultural texts and products, youths had the opportunity to make political statements. Consumer impulses lead to actions that not only intensified compassion (that is because many of the consumables represented, on some level, a new or intensified aspect of suffering), but also encouraged further consumer acts. As Nava suggests, consumer impulses and actions were, by the mid 1980s, politicized impulses and actions (197). And, because compassion was also politicized emotion in its very resistance, it is possible to assert that compassionate consumerism was a politicized ethic. As such, it is no surprise that the ethic inspired a politicized social movement.

According to social movement theorist T.V. Reed in *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle*, social movements can be defined as "sites for the production and reception of cultural texts" (xvii). Reed locates social movements within what Pierre Bourdieu coins as the *cultural field*, arguing that social movements are part of and encompass "the social space where cultural texts exist in relation to each other and in relation to texts in other social, political, and economic fields" (xvii). For Reed, dramatic action—"repeated public displays"—occur within the site of each social movement, and this dramatic action has the power to affect not only political, but also cultural, change (xvi).

Arguably, it is through this repetitive dramatic action and display that both the frame of each social movement becomes apparent and evolves, and a multitude of

interrelated cultural texts that allude to the movement's frame are produced, disseminated, and received. I suggest that the underlying frame for what I describe as the famine relief movement, that is, the sentiment expressed through and as a result of the cultural texts produced and received in the famine relief site, was heavily influenced if not defined by the ethic of compassionate consumerism. T.V. Reed argues that social movements emerge, evolve, and then go through a process of diffusion (296)—I assert that the ethics that paradoxically and simultaneously inspire and are born out of mass movements go through the same processes of metamorphosis, but not necessarily at the same rate of growth or in the same ways as within the movement. In the case of famine relief, the ethic of compassionate consumerism was integral in shaping the movement, but was not necessarily defined or limited by it.

The organization of food aid for the starving in Ethiopia did not begin as a mass movement (no movement ever begins en masse). Rather, food aid was organized in response to the same horrific images of the starving disseminated in the US and the UK that inspired the ethic of compassionate consumerism. As a result of compassionate consumerism, consumers rallied behind celebrity figure heads and media messages that called them to help "feed the world." Images of both celebrities and the media that presented them alongside images of starving children were repeatedly produced, disseminated, and received by millions in both nations. As more celebrities, members of the public, media producers, and aid organizations became united under the banner of Band Aid in the UK and, later, USA (United Support of Artists) for Africa in the US, the more repeated dramatic actions were performed and the more cultural texts were produced and received en masse for mass consumption.

The organization of food aid became a famine relief movement because, within the site of famine relief (as with all the social movements Reed describes) participants produced and received cultural texts influenced by a unified yet evolving frame of compassionate consumerism, because participants repeatedly responded to texts produced within the famine relief site by participating in dramatic action and display, and because the mass organization famine relief affected mass socio-cultural change and proved to be a transformative experience for both individuals and communities of participants.[28]

What makes the famine relief movement distinct, however, is not simply the ethic of compassionate consumerism that inspired it, or the ways in which the ethic evolved and diffused over time as more texts were produced. The movement was unique because it was a philanthropic social movement that tapped into the needs, desires, and social motivations of a newly emerged, available youth market. Arguably, the famine relief movement was the first philanthropic, consumer movement of its kind. And the manner in which it, and the ethic that inspired and guided it, evolved forever altered the social purposes of consumer-based philanthropy.

In the introduction to *What Makes Charity Work* Myron Magnet describes how methods and philosophies of charity have changed in the United States and Britain over the past seven hundred years. He identifies a specific shift in attitudes towards those in need of charity in the 1960s: "Philanthropy...became wholesale rather than a retail enterprise, concentrating not on individuals but on an abstract Mankind and on the all-embracing systems that purportedly misshaped so many lives. Charity projects became gigantic in scale and ambition" (vii-x). This shift in emphasis from individual suffering to

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[28]T.V. Reed, *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) xvi.

structural inequity becomes evident when considering the youth movements of the 60s, the Civil Rights movement, and women's movements.[29] While none of these movements were centered around philanthropic issues, they all, in some way, attempted to expose and fight to rectify structural inequities and turned away from antiquated notions that distinguish between deserving and undeserving recipients of charity or representation. The sentiments expressed by Boomer radicals in the 60s were challenged in the 1980s by individualist rhetoric and compassionate conservatism, but were upheld by the famine relief movement.

The philanthropic focus of the movement made it distinct from prior social movements in a number of ways. First, no prior mass movement had focused specifically upon rectifying the problems of a group of people who were neither involved in nor aware that a movement had been organized in their aid. As the movement progressed, the distance between the movement participants and the intended recipients of famine aid grew larger until, at the point just before the movement diffused and dissipated, most references to famine victims were minimal or confused.

Second, while other movements and philanthropic calls relied on the location of an Other elsewhere, no prior mass movement either organized solely around an external locus of suffering, nor shifted the loci of suffering to such an extreme. Third, as a result of the externalization and constant shifts in the location of suffering, both organizers and participants in the movement had to rely upon the media and second hand accounts in order to experience and understand the famine. This led to numerous, unforeseen

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[29]While the movements to which I refer here are not philanthropic movements, Myron's recognition of the shift in charity (from individual to structural) coincides with a similar recognition among social and civil rights movement activists of the effect of structural inequities and systems of power upon the marginalized.

problems, but most specifically resulted in a complete misunderstanding of the causes of famine (not to mention the potential solutions) and in the constant reaffirmation of ethnocentric stereotypes (often exacerbated by sensationalized and generalized media coverage) by texts produced and received within the famine relief site. The potential for such misunderstanding in other movement is, arguably, less as suffering is not located elsewhere in other types of movements.

Fourth, because the suffering of both the famine victims and the compassionate consumers attempting to help the victims was mediated by the media—by the television screen—the movement can be defined as a media movement. The movement's frame, its guiding ethic, its emergence, evolution, and diffusion were all captured on film and disseminated around the world. As a result, the famine relief movement expanded beyond the borders of the US and the UK, becoming the first globally televised movement.

And, fifth, the famine relief movement differed from previous movements because it was a consumer movement that required participants to organize around and communicate through consumption, to donate via acts of consumption, to perform compassionate good acts of consumption, and to develop a consumer based philanthropic community. While the early famine and famine relief texts did not necessarily show an awareness or speak to any specific, organizing community; the more the movement evolved, the more evolved and specialized the movement's community became. This is reflected in the fact that early appeals for aid were disseminated via televised news texts to mass populations, whereas later appeals for aid typically came in a televised musical format that appealed to specified rock communities and youth markets. The fact that the movement took musical and televised form explains why it was so easily marketed not

only to diverse groups of youths in the US and the UK, but to youth consumers worldwide.

Music has always been a valuable part of social movement. It has been used as a tool of protest, a way to rally moral among like-minded communities, and to help provide definition and identity to specific movements. Music has become so ingrained that for some movements certain lyrical phrases have become synonymous with the repeated public display and dramatic acts of the movement. One of the most prevalent example of this in the late Twentieth Century is the civil rights chant, "we shall overcome." Similarly, as a result of their use as protest songs during the Vietnam War or as media sound tracks on fictional representations of the conflict, certain rock songs such as "Blowin' in the Wind" and "Fortunate Son" have become synonymous with the anti-Vietnam War protests. In the same way, the Ethiopia singles and videos—"Do They Know Its Christmas" and "We Are the World"—have become a significant part of the cultural memory of the famine relief movement in both the US and the UK.

Despite the similar uses of music as both a theme and motivator in movements of the 60s and the famine relief movement of the 1980s, many Boomer theorists and critics (particularly left-wing writers and journalists) condemn the famine relief movement for its commercialism, pursuits of pleasure, and excessiveness. While many criticisms are valid to some extent, critics such as Will Straw, Marcus Greil, and Stan Rijven (to name but a few)[30] neither acknowledge that the famine relief movement was, by necessity, a media mediated consumer movement, nor recognize the importance of pleasure as a motivating component and consequence in *all* social movements.

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[30]See Marcus Greil, "Rock for Ethiopia," Third International Conference on Popular Music Studies, Montreal, Canada, July 1985.

For Reed, part of the function of social movements is to provide participants pleasure. The last of Reed's ten primary functions refer to the fact that movements "[m]ake room for pleasure. Provide respite from the rigors of the movement through aesthetic joy" (300). It would seem that in the case of famine relief, movement texts and activities that provide pleasure do so in order to provide participants with respite from the horror of mass famine and starvation.

The respite provided by aesthetically pleasing famine relief texts, and by the pleasure garnered from being a member of a compassionate consumer community, also provides a form of relief from the rigors of daily life in Thatcher's Britain and Reagan's America.[31] For Reed, other significant functions of social movements are to "empower" participants and "set a new emotional tone" (299-300). In affirming the ethic of compassionate consumerism, the famine relief functioned as Reed would assume. And this empowerment and new tone served to provide individuals and communities in the UK and the US with alternatives to the disempowering narratives of exclusion and non-compassion endorsed and espoused by right wing governments and institutions in both countries.

Challenging Hegemony

In challenging dominant, conservative narratives of exclusion and individualism, in providing the marginalized with new modes of expression and new ways to demonstrate a disapproving reaction to conservatism, and in stimulating consumer activism compassionate consumerism paved the way for the construction of new modes

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[31] For a discussion of the potential subversive powers of 'pleasure' see Neal Ullestad, "Rock Rebellion: Subversive Effects of Live Aid and 'Sun City,'" *Popular Music* 6.1 (1987): 67-76.

of resistance, community building, and allowed for atypical alliances to develop between markets and corporations, sectors, individuals and celebrities.

While challenging certain arenas of social conservatism, however, compassionate consumerism and the famine relief movement it helped stimulate national economies in the US and the UK. According to James Douglas in *Why Charity? The Case for a Third Sector*, the late capitalist era saw the emergence of "voluntary and philanthropic organization as the Third Sector" (11). By the 1980s, charity had not only become business throughout the West, but a growth industry in numerous parts of the world, and a sector that influences the compassionate nature of Westerners. Douglas states:

> US and American societies are shaped by non-profit...quite apart from the quantity of resources distributed without either the compulsion of law or incentive of profit, the qualitative contribution of the Third Sector has been and remains significant and... distinctive of what we call a free society (13).[32]

Significantly, while having an effect upon the 'shape' of Western societies, the Third Sector was integral in affecting change in the Third world, both through the supplementation and distribution of non-governmental and government aid, and by sharing the experience of Third World catastrophe with concerned Westerners. Such charities have as much effect upon Western assumptions of the Third World as the media

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[32]Douglas refers specifically to the American continent, however, it is possible to argue that charities such as Oxfam—now not only one of the most active UK based charities in the Third World but also a significant chain of charity shops in Britain (stimulating on a large scale both economic exchange and the exchange of goods)—have had on British culture as the Third sector has had upon US and Canadian cultures. In *The Road to Hell* former aid worker Michael Maren describes how NGOs have become big business throughout Third World nations as well. Using Somalia as a prime example, Maren states that "relief and development are the most dynamic growth industries" (166).

and are as integral to commodification of Third World bodies and experiences as media texts.[33]

The ethic of compassionate consumerism and the movement it inspired had a resounding effect upon the ways in which the media not only represented catastrophe in the Third World (Africa in particular), but it also resulted in the creation of a new socio-cultural role for the media in the UK and the US. As the famine relief movement illustrates, the media became a most convenient tool for socio-cultural subversion. Despite the motives of media producers, or the obvious biases exhibited by media texts, it is possible to identify the media (at least in the context of the famine relief movement) as a vehicle that precipitated, mediated, and perpetuated a mass social movement that—in turn—altered public perceptions and roles of US and British youths.

In a world full of visual images, full of consumable images and products, the line between image and product is no longer clear. And, as Mica Nava argues, there is often no distinction between the cultural product and the commercial that advertises it.[34] What this means for the famine relief movement the commodities to be consumed in support of the movement, be they images of famine victims or a celebrities in the Ethiopia videos, are indistinguishable from the text that advertises the movement (i.e. the news footage and music videos simultaneously function as both adverts for movement consumables and consumables). There is almost little or no way to distinguish between actual scenes and representations of suffering, between the famine footage and the commercials that advertise the relief merchandise, and between the commodified celebrities performing

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[33]For a discussion of the ways in which NGOs perpetuate media constructions of Third World catastrophe see Maren's enlightening critique of sponsorship campaigns such as Save the Children in *The Road to Hell* (137-158).

[34]Nava, *Changing Cultures* 174.

suffering on screen and the similarly commodified intended aid recipients. In effect all experiences connected with famine relief—from experiences of famine to experiences of participation in a global social movement—are prosthetic, mediated by media texts, and commodified. In effect, to experience famine relief is to contribute to and participate within what Kevin Rozario describes as a "hyperreal imagination."[35]

To perceive of famine relief in this way may appear to be cynical, however, I suggest that the hyperreality of famine relief opens up a realm of possibilities for potential participants. Primarily, in being able to contribute to the hyperreal imagination, participants prove themselves to be active in the production and reception of texts and, simply as result of their activeness, affect socio-cultural change. Secondly, the fact that the movement was mediated by the media and read through the hyperreal imagination meant that the movement could be experience vicariously, at a distance, by potential participants located outside of the movement's epicenters (these epicenters being Ethiopia in the famine footage, London and Burbank CA when the Ethiopia singles were produced, and London and Philadelphia during the Live Aid concert). The dissolution of barriers between the real and the simulated meant, most significantly, that members of the public could participate fully in the famine relief movement simply by viewing events and consuming consumables/commercials. If there are no distinction between the actual and the represented, then the famine relief movement activities and gatherings, the producing and receiving of famine relief texts and consumables, could all be accomplished vicariously. The famine relief movement was, in effect, as much a virtual movement as it was a hands-on affair.

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[35]Rozario, *Calamity* 178.

In *The Culture of Calamity*, Kevin Rozario points out that the "idea of the hyperreal, in particular, can help us to understand the emotional and political responses" to catastrophe and mass, cultural devastation. While in this particular comment Rozario is referring specifically to responses to terrorist attacks such as 9/11, he argues that—much like in DeLillo's *White Noise*—calamity is read through a ""postmodern" imagination of disaster" or a "hyperreal" imagination (178). Rozario states:

> ...we in the West have been programmed by unrelenting exposure to media sights and sounds to become sensation-seeking consumers, we have been conditioned to respond to actual events in the same ways we respond to simulated ones, as passive and disoriented spectators, and we have exchanged critical awareness for an unthinking... trust in technology, experts, and heroes—in those authorities whose job it is to keep us safe, to "set the world right" (178).

While I would argue that there is a difference in the level at which consumers were sensation-seeking in the 80s consumer exposure to disaster (actual or simulated) and by 9/11, Rozario's point remains valuable when considering the ways in which consumers responded to media texts of mass starvation in the Horn of Africa and borrowed the experience of suffering depicted on their television screens. The hyperreal imagination also accounts for what might seem to be the excesses and the artifice presented in famine and famine relief texts. However, as I show throughout the dissertation, such excess and artifice is exactly what makes the famine relief consumables and texts so accessible and appealing.

The fact that the famine and famine relief is experienced as part of the hyperreal imagination might imply that there is no longer a need for famine relief participants to undergo any form of visceral experience. However, I would argue that the visceral aspect of the famine experience is the compassionate emotions that are both evoked and

intensified by famine media texts and as a result of the consumption of famine commodities. Arguably, the fact that the commodities are produced and received in the name of philanthropy, only promises to further intensify the feelings of elation and self-worth that accompany compassionate emotions and compassionate good acts. The visceral is once again intensified by the representation of excess in a number of the famine relief texts and by the fact that famine relief commodities (that is, the experience of famine and famine relief, the images depicting starving children and famine relief participants, and the imagined suffering of all involved) are converted into merchandise. This conversion occurs when, for example, a depiction of famine is isolated, digitally, reformatted as cover art, printed, and transformed into a tangible piece of merchandise that, like the black vinyl single it covers, is possessible, touchable—visceral.

As is evidenced by the famine relief movement, the media's new role (specifically television's) as advocate for social and global change was extremely complex and multi-faceted and, at times, even contradictory and self-defeating. While on one hand media texts raised consciousness and funds to alleviate the suffering of famine victims, on the other hand they simply played to the desires and fears of Western audiences. Rarely did popular media texts indict Westerners for their roles in the suffering of the starving in Africa, nor did they shy away from ethnocentric stereotypes or the glorification of the capitalist enterprise.[36] Unfortunately, because the screen mediated the nature of the famine relief movement, the media's reliance on stereotypes and generalizations served to undermine the famine relief cause (its goals and its efficacy), to misinform members of

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[36]For further discussion on exceptions to this rule, particularly regarding the ways in which broadsheets did attempt to indict governments and/or show larger structural inequities see Kaplan, *Surrender or Starve*.

the public involved in the famine relief movement, and to reinforce neo-imperialist attitudes towards Africa in the West.

The television screen mediated the ways in which famine and famine relief was experienced (prosthetically and through the wonders of new technology), disseminated, and received. Yet, despite its influences and mediation, the media cannot be said to be completely responsible for the failings or short-comings of the famine relief movement. Despite all appearances, the media did not *control* the famine relief movement nor the meanings and connotations produced either by famine texts or the ethic of compassionate consumerism. This lack of control over the representations and meaning produced and received within the site that was the famine relief movement result from the fact that such representations and meaning were open to interpretation, fluid, and available for incorporation by any dominant or subordinate group (to argue that the media has the power to dominate all actions and meanings is not only to undermine the role and efficacy of social movements, but to disempower the viewer who—no matter how manipulated—has the potential to read and react to texts as she sees fit).[37]

The change in the media's role and the emergence of compassionate consumerism out of famine relief texts had a major effect upon a number of political, social, cultural, and economic institutions in the UK and the US. Media coverage of famine and famine relief not only inspired the US and the UK governments to revise their policies regarding aid in the Horn of Africa,[38] but it also altered the marketing strategies and fundraising

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[37]As Baudrillard argues, media texts "carry meaning and countermeaning, they manipulate in all directions at once, nothing can control this process, they are the vehicle for the simulation internal to the system and the simulation that destroys the system...." See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation,* trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006) 84.

[38]Jansson, et. al., *The Ethiopian Famine* 154.

techniques of NGOs (many of which became synonymous with multi-national corporations in the 1980s),[39] as well as the role of youth markets and the cultural value of celebrity.

The ethic of compassionate consumerism also had an immense effect upon the strategies, campaigns, and products of both non-governmental organizations (such as CARE and OXFAM) working with catastrophe in the Third World and mass social movements. Seemingly influenced by the media's success in both 'advertising' famine and building alliances between impoverished famine sufferers and multinational corporate sponsors of famine relief (such as Pepsi, AT&T and Kodak Eastman), many NGOs became more savvy about their own marketing techniques. At the same time, borrowing strategies and models from multinational corporations resulted in many NGOs becoming multinational corporations themselves.[40]

The emergence, evolution, and diffusion of global social movements also provided new roles and new means to make profit for celebrities concerned with national and global issues. As activists or ambassadors on behalf of Third World 'victims', celebrities inspired youth to become involved in famine relief.[41] In essence, such celebrities inspired the famine relief movement. However, through their involvement celebrities not only furthered the cause of the movement and thus change among youth communities and within youth cultures; they also gained free advertising and, perhaps more significantly, were able to enhance the appeal of what they were advertising and selling. If celebrities rely on the commodification of their own images—their images

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[39]Maren, *Road to Hell* 166.

[40]Consider the international reach of Save the Children and Oxfam.

[41]For a detailed discussion on the changing role of celebrity see Mark D. Alleyne, "The United Nations' Celebrity Diplomacy," *SAIS Review* 25.1 (2005): 175-85.

often being their only commodities for sale—then producing images of themselves as compassionate and altruistic only served to make the celebrity commodity more desirable to youths interested in altruism and guided by the ethic of compassionate consumerism. Numerous celebrities profited even further by capitalizing on their connections to the famine relief movement by being paid to advertise non-famine relief related products at various points throughout the famine relief movement.

Most significant to this project is, however, the ways that the ethic of compassionate consumerism and the famine relief movement also had considerable affect on the lives of young people in the US and the UK. Because subcultural resistance was not as powerful a form of socio-cultural subversion for youths in the mid-1980s as it had been in the 50s, 60s, and 70s,[42] young people in both the US and the UK were in search of new ways to affect socio-cultural change and to re-define their generation. Arguably, mass social movements provided new opportunities for youth expression and subversion as social movements have a similar socio-cultural effect as subcultures.

Arguably, the famine relief movement provided the outlet that British and American youth needed. In consuming famine and relief texts and products, feeling compassion, and donating funds and time to the famine relief cause—in becoming a new, compassionate consumer market—young people developed new (somewhat subversive) social roles and new mutually beneficial relationships with multinational corporations and global market forces. Their involvement in famine relief challenged stereotypical representations of youth as inactive or futile members of US and UK society. In their capacity as compassionate consumers and donors young people developed new ways to

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[42]For detailed discussions of the evolution and semiotics of subcultures, see Dick Hebdige *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 2002).

conceive of youth identities, communities, and sites—and allowed for profusion of new ones. Ironically, in embracing hyperreality and the multiple and diverse nature of signs, young people were integral in the disintegration of youth subcultures. If signs no longer had any fixed meaning, and if youth markets, multinational corporations, governments, and NGOs alike could appropriate any sign or symbol and imbue it with a specifically individualized meaning, then the very grounds upon which subcultures were built are undermined. Subcultures, as Hebdige so eloquently argues, rely on the construction of certain symbols and signs that have a fixed meaning for subcultural participants (1-3). The famine relief movement showed that such fixity in popular signs was destabilizing.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter one identifies how the rights, activities, and mobility of UK and US youths in the Thatcher-Reagan era became undermined and regulated by leaders that perceived youth as little more than potential threats to social and moral order. In this chapter I determine why, when the possibilities for socio-cultural resistance or protest are greatly diminished, youths in both nations search for alternative sites of expression and activity. I argue that, while the famine relief movement provided youths multiple new sites, the activities performed and texts produced and received in said sites did not threaten to destroy hegemony. Rather, the famine relief movement allowed youths to subtlely challenge common social assumptions about the nature of youth, while contributing to the grand narratives espoused by their leaders and to their nations as both rightful citizens and compassionate consumers.

Chapter two pinpoints the emergence of the ethic of compassionate consumerism in October 1984, with the release of the Buerk/Amin documentary. The chapter examines

the conditions that led to the production of the news report that inspired a global relief movement, and focuses on the ways in which Buerk and Amin construct Africa and Africans using the trope of the Ethiopian Madonna with Child. I argue that the Madonna is an extremely effective icon as it is a figure of suffering that is, on the one hand, located elsewhere, but, on the other hand, evokes empathy among the viewing public that shares the famine experience prosthetically through technological apparatus. I determine how these images, as both horrifying and fascinating, evoke compassion and inspire further consumption of famine texts. In chapter three I expand on my analysis of the constructions of famine, Africa, and the famine body by analyzing the appeal of televised scenes of suffering. I argue that one of the main attractions to such scenes comes from the fact that, through the act of consuming images via the television medium, Western viewers can both borrow and appropriate the famine experience, suffering in their own rights as witnesses of the horror. In other words, I show how the images of suffering are attractive because they evoke extreme and volatile emotional responses and consumer impulses.

Public response to the Buerk/Amin footage was immense. Outraged, numerous British celebrities gathered under the name of Band Aid to raise further awareness of the suffering in Ethiopia. With the production of the Ethiopia single, "Do They Know Its Christmas," and its accompanying video, the famine relief movement emerged in the UK. Four months later, celebrities in the US (USA for Africa) released a similar Ethiopia single, precipitating the emergence of an aid movement in the States. Following the change in media representations, chapters four and five shift focus away from the starving in the Horn to the celebrities that became integral in the emergence of the famine

relief movement. Through an analysis of the Ethiopia singles and their videos as both visual and audio texts, I illustrate how famine celebrities simultaneously reinforce the ethnocentrism inherent in news coverage of famine and relocate the loci of suffering, away from the bodies of famine sufferers onto the bodies and voices of compassionate celebrities.

These chapters identify why the famine relief movement appealed to US and UK youth in search of alternate ways to define and represent themselves, express themselves, and construct positively defined youth-centered communities. They also demonstrate how the ethic of compassionate consumerism evolves as more famine related commodities are produced and received, and as more sites are created for the further production and reception of texts and commodities. But they also illustrate the distinct ability of both audio recording and the music video to tap into the desires of youth markets and construct specific compassionate consumer audiences. Through a discussion of the use of the music video format at the Live Aid concert and the merchandising of Band Aid, USA for Africa, and Live Aid products, I also determine how music video allows for the easy translation of commodities into material capital.

Chapter six continues discussions regarding commodities and capital presented in chapter five. With specific focus on the climax of the famine relief movement, the benefit concert Live Aid, the chapter identifies the multiple benefits and beneficiaries of the mega-event. Live Aid, in creating an infinite number of intersecting cultural sites and presenting a multitude of commodities, marks both the evolution of the famine relief movement and the diffusion of the ethic of compassionate consumerism. The chapter identifies the specific benefits of the creation of such sites and commodities for youth

markets, as well as for the celebrities and corporate sponsors involved in the event, the organizers such as Geldof and Harvey Goldsmith, and the cities and nations that hosted the event.

While this project recognizes both the problematic and beneficial aspects of aid for Ethiopian and Sudanese famine sufferers, aid workers, and aid sponsors, its main focus is to determine why the aid movement and the ethics and ideologies it affirmed had such an immense impact, specifically upon youth cultures in the UK and the US (the epicenters of famine relief and, arguably, of the global community).

My identification of the ways in which compassionate consumerism consistently replicated and reinvented itself in order to continuously elicit compassion and encourage audience expenditure and consumption, allows me to hypothesize how the famine relief movement and its impulses of charity precipitated immense change within the United States and Britain that was extremely beneficial for youths (those that identify as youth and young people), as well as for the celebrities, media industries, and corporate sponsors that encouraged the movements' global expansion.

While failing the intended recipients of aid to a large extent,[43] the famine relief movement continued to perpetuate and evolve to the point that compassionate consumerism is clearly ingrained in contemporary US and UK consciousness. Because the famine relief movement became the blueprint for all future aid movements situated in the West, my analysis of said movement—its practices, experiences, discourses, and identities—is highly transferable. I provide a model for the theorization of more

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[43]For further discussion of the supposed failures of Band Aid see Michael Scott and Mutombo Mpanya, *We are the World: An Evaluation Of Pop Aid For Africa* (Washington, DC: Interaction, 1994); "Food and Trucks and Rock 'n' Roll;" and "Live Aid's Desert Gamble."

contemporaneous or spin off movements, for the ways compassionate consumerism now informs a number of new texts and traditions in the West.

The famine relief movement has shown how young people can become agents and part of compassionate communities through their involvement in media driven and corporate sponsored mass movements. Rather than simply criticizing such movements for the ways in which they provide pleasure for consumers without concern for the 'authentic',[44] we need to show consumers how representation function while, at the same time, allowing them to enjoy that which they consume. Rather than simply dismissing mass movements, those of us on the left need to get involved. Only then, as participants, can we provide a more accurate, "better description of the gestures, practices, and statements of contemporary youth" (Grossberg, "Rockin' with Reagan,"124) and help those who suffer as a result of global inequities. Only, as participants, can we help avoid the mistakes made by participants and organizers of previous relief movements.

[44]Greil "Rock for Ethiopia."

Chapter One
Compassionate Consumerism and Youth Markets: The Emergence and Cultural Significance of a New Ethic in an Era of Nationalism

A hungry child knows no politics (Peter McPherson).

At the end of the politically tumultuous 1970s the New Right took power in both the UK and the US. Promising to bring peace and prosperity on the domestic front, to re-establish a sense of national identity and pride, both new leaders challenged the principles of social democracy espoused by their left-leaning predecessors and argued for a return to more conservative definitions of national identity.[45] Through the rhetoric of family values and self-reliance, using narratives and slogans that dichotomized good and evil, both Thatcher and Reagan attempted to win the "battle of ideas" and reunite their nations under one leader and one God.[46]

The definitions of nation and goodness espoused by both leaders were both exclusionary and restrictive. However, as the choices of the voting populace indicate, they were also highly attractive to citizens of nations suffering not only from an identity crisis, but economic hardships.[47] Both the national identity crises and economic recessions had arisen in the UK and the US in the 70s as a result of a number of socio-economic and cultural shifts. The processes of globalization that resulted in shifts in the location of financial power had an immense effect on British and American economies

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[45]For a more detailed analysis of Thatcher's attempts to deal with "the trauma of instability that characterises contemporary British times" (22), see Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy*. For a comparative discussion of the ways in which Thatcher and Reagan together, as 'right-wing crusaders', "attacked the pervasive sense of national decline" in both their campaign speeches and upon coming to power see Geoffrey Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher* (London: Bodley Head Ltd, 1990) 23-6.

[46]The phrase "battle of ideas" is apparently common usage among Tories according to Dixon (161, 174). For a discussion of Thatcher's "endorsement of social authoritarianism, morality, and the 'traditional' nuclear family" (21) see Nunn, *Thatcher Politics and Fantasy*. For a comparative discussion of the similarities between Thatcher and Reagan's views on morality, family, and tradition with regards to domestic policy, see Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher* 19.

[47]For a summary of the concerns of the electorate that voted Thatcher and Reagan into office, see Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher* 26-28.

(as well as upon previously colonizing/imperialist nations.)[48] The emergence of postmodernism within the cultural sphere— in particular the death of omniscience and absolutes—contributed to the fragmentation of identity and community on local and national levels.[49] Arguably, the New Right appealed because it provided a strong sense of nation and nationhood (albeit illusory) in a postmodern world where literal boundaries of nations and the more constructed boundaries of identity and community disintegrating.

Thatcher's government and the Reagan administration both promised a return to a past where, once again, the United Kingdom and the United States would function as the world's most stable, financial and cultural epicenters. To achieve their goals, each leader implemented a series of conservative foreign policies, imposed limitations on immigration, reformulated (legally and culturally) definitions of citizenship, and employed measures to guarantee law and order. The effects of the New Right's policies upon both Westerners and famine victims in the Horn were monumental.

To establish identity and community, and to re-establish the convenient, old boundaries, the New Right in both nations employed narratives of exclusion that relied on nostalgic visions of Britain and America's past, and reinforced a neo-imperialism specific to Reagan's America and Thatcher's Britain.[50] The effect of nostalgic, exclusionist, neo-

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[48]For a detailed discussion of the ways in which all national identities come under attack and how local and national cultures are diluted by the processes of globalization, see Harry Redner, *Conserving Cultures: Technology, Globalization, and the Future of Local Cultures* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

[49]For a discussion of the relationship between postmodernism and globalization see Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," *Culture, Globalizaton and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1991).

[50]The most dramatic example of Thatcher's attempt to reclaim an imperialist past is the British military's retaliation to the invasion of the Falkland islands by Argentine soldiers in 1982. Despite advice to remain neutral, Reagan eventually ended up supporting Thatcher's campaign both through rhetoric and by supplying military equipment to the British. For a more detailed discussion see Geoffrey Smith, "The Falklands," *Reagan and Thatcher*, 76-94. Nunn also provides an enlightening analysis of Thatcher's use of imperialist metaphor and imagery during the conflict.

imperialism was to deny millions of citizens within the US and the UK the right to a national identity.[51] Immigrants, single mothers, young people, leftists all were denied the right to consider themselves members of a national community as, according to Reagan and Thatcher, they were the reason for the disintegration of national identity and community. The New Right's tight grip upon the nation's psyche, and their denial of the actual causes of national disintegration (globalization making power more diffuse) proves that the destabilization of national power and nationhood was of grave concern.[52] Both Reagan and Thatcher established numerous Others against which they defined national subject-hood; the disenfranchised and marginalized became easy targets in nations comfortable with the racist, misogynist, and age-ist ideologies of colonialism and isolationist nationalism. Arguably, youth became one of the many convenient targets.[53] In being positioned, however, as nothing more than the hope for the future or the locus for anxiety in the present, young people had little room to develop a sense of self or community.[54]

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[51]For a discussion of the widening gap between adult populations and youth in the US, and the subsequent denial of youths' rights as citizens see Lawrence Grossberg, "Rockin'," 126-7. See Nunn for a discussion of the ways in which young people in the UK saw themselves as neither 'legitimate citizens or consumers' (117).

[52]According to David Dixon, Thatcher's rhetoric re-legitimized racism, and nationalism, and the open exclusion of marginalized groups. As Dixon states: "In this battle, the populist appeal to nation, people and race has been a vital and effective weapon" (161). For a discussion of the ways in which the poor suffered most significantly under the Reagan administration see William Julius Wilson and Robert Aponte, "Urban Poverty," *Annual Review of Sociology* 11 (1985): 231-58; for the effects on one-parent families and people of color, most significantly in the education system, see F. J. Hunt, "U.S. Education and the Constrained Economy: From the Melting Pot to the Excluder?" *Comparative Education*, 19.1 (1983): 5-19; for a detailed account of racism and its use against youth in the US see Henry Giroux, *Fugitive Cultures: Race, Violence, and Youth* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

[53]See Nunn (95-133), and Grossberg "Rockin'."

[54]British youth as anxiety and hope, see Nunn (95-133); youths as anxiety and hope in the US and around the globe, see Sunaina Maira and Elisabeth Soep, *Youthscapes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) xv.

In this chapter I determine why, as a result of their marginalized positions in US and UK societies (resultant of negative definitions of youth and anxieties arising from the destabilization of the nation state) youths in both nations were looking for ways to both re-define and empower themselves. I identify how and why youth were marginalized as a result of decisions made and policies implemented by Thatcher's government and the Reagan administration, and I determine that, in their capacity as a compassionate consumer market, they developed alternative identities, discourses, experiences, and communities that allowed for a redefinition and socio-cultural empowerment (all within the confines of already existent social systems). I argue that these youth alternatives became possible not only because the emergence and evolution of the ethic of compassionate consumerism and the famine relief movement provided youth with a new site for action and expression, but also because the ethic and movement provided youth with access to a *global* community of like-minded consumers.

Redefining Nation

In May 1979, conservative party leader Margaret Thatcher became British prime minister.[55] Having won the election by a significant majority, Thatcher promised to put an end to what is now commonly referred to as Britain's "Winter of Discontent."[56] In late 1978, a series of simultaneous strikes by petrol tanker and lorry drivers, sanitation workers, hospital staff and ambulance operators brought Britain to a standstill.[57] In the aftermath of massive, nationwide industrial action, Thatcher promised—among other

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[55]Thatcher's rise to power and consequent negation of youth in Britain seems ironic considering that 1979 was the U.N.'s 'year of the child'.

[56]Paul Wilenius, "Enemies Within: Thatcher and the Unions," *BBC News: International Version*, 5 Mar. 2004, British Broadcasting Company, 13 July 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3067563.stm>.

[57]ibid.

things—a turn away from social democracy and the re-establishment of law and order throughout the United Kingdom.[58]

Over the years she was in power (1979-1993), Thatcher not only passed numerous laws restricting disruptive union activity and outlawing strikes among teachers, nurses, and, miners; she also passed laws designed to curtail the activities and mobility of any individual or group perceived as a threat to law, order, and British common decency. Such domestic laws were designed to target youths, immigrants, the unemployed, unmarried mothers, among others that Thatcher considered 'undesirable' or in need of control. What Thatcher could not accomplish legally, she achieved through the implementation of conservative economic policies and social programs. In the course of her leadership, educational grants and scholarships were cut,[59] unemployment benefits denied to 16-18 years old that refused to participate in the exploitative Youth Training Schemes,[60] and social welfare programs for children and youths were denied funding. Thatcher's foreign policies followed similar lines of logic. They were as unabashedly racist and neo-imperialist as Thatcher's domestic policies.

Thatcher's government stood behind their election promise to restore law and order, proposing a number of measures to reform the judicial system, to survey public space, and to criminalize certain everyday activities. As Phil Scraton notes in "'If You Want a Riot, Change the Law': The Implications of the 1985 White Paper on Public Order," it was less than a month before "the then Home Secretary, William Whitelaw,

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[58]Dixon 161.

[59]David Brian Robertson, "Mrs. Thatcher's Employment Prescription: An Active Neo-Liberal Labor Market Policy," *Journal of Public Policy* 6.3 (1986): 275-96.

[60]The Youth Training Scheme was introduced into Britain in 1983 after Thatcher's government cut unemployment benefits for 16-18 year olds. It was considered an alternative to welfare dependency for the government, but as forced labor by many youths and critics. For more information regarding the nature of the Scheme see Robertson (290).

announced a long-promised review of Public Order" (387). Whitelaw's findings culminated in the 1985 White Paper that proposed the prohibition of public gatherings or marching of more the 12 people without prior police permission, and provisions that allowed the police discretionary rights to disperse crowds and arrest anyone who may potentially threaten violence (388). The paper explicitly proposed to criminalize all manner of public behaviors. In a report compiled by the Police Committee Support Unit in response to the White Paper, the following statement was made:

> The end result of such a power would be to make high spiritedness a criminal offence and further damage police-public relations, particularly amongst black youth who are likely to be singled out in the enforcement of it. It could also be used readily against demonstrators and pickets . . . The effect of any extension of Sec.5. of the 1936 Act (which is already disturbingly wide) by creating such an offence as 'disorderly conduct' would be to criminalise conduct merely because certain sections of society may disapprove.[61]

The response above pertains specifically to White Paper recommendations restricting youth mobility and action under the 'disorderly conduct' laws. Youths caught "pestering people waiting to catch public transport or to enter a hall or a cinema" would be liable to prosecution.[62]

If any organized protest is considered to be "against the interest of the wider community" (the nature of this community being necessarily vague and undisclosed), when any unsanctioned activity within public space can be deemed an act of "hooliganism, thuggery, militancy and terrorism" (Scraton, 386), then it comes as no surprise that youth had to look for alternate types of state sanctioned sites within which to express themselves and enact *both* conformist behaviors or resistance. Arguably the

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[61] Stated by the Deputy Head, Police Committee Support Unit, 28 June 1985 (Scraton 389).

[62] See Paul Corrigan, "Doing Nothing," *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, 1975, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: Routledge, 2002), for an example of why youths need outlets and how, for many, there is nothing to do.

famine relief movement provided Britain's youths the outlet they needed.[63] As part of a sanctioned, organized group fighting against problems beyond the border of the United Kingdom, participants in famine relief were above reproach. As compassionate consumers, famine relief participants proved to be model citizens who helped revitalize the British economy and present the British public is a positive light.

The White Paper on Law and Order was neither the first nor last limiting the mobility and activities of young people, nor was it the first or last measure proposed by Thatcher's government limiting the rights of people of color located within Britain's borders. In 1981, Thatcher's cabinet passed the "Nationality Act" which repealed the rights of citizenship to large groups of immigrants from previously colonized or commonwealth nations. The act was openly racist and exposed the New Right's commitment to excluding all those that did not fit into the ideal of a model citizen.

In "Thatcher's People: The British Nationality Act 1981," David Dixon argues that "[t]he crucial irony of the 1981 Act is that it is designed to define a sense of belonging and nationhood which is itself a manifestation of the sense of racial superiority created along with the Empire, while simultaneously it cuts the ties of citizenship established in that same historical process" (173). For Dixon, the act espouses isolationist, supremacist, chauvanist, and racist ideologies that exclude any claim on British nationality made by individuals from decolonized nations.

The act's restrictions upon citizenship had as much effect upon British residents as it did on potential immigrants. The language, once again relying on the rhetoric of

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[63]Dixon discusses how the 1981 White Paper proposed an extension of regulations from the public to private sphere: "The White Paper proposes that Sec.5. should be extended to include private as well as public places and that 'breach of the peace' should be changed to, 'conduct intended or likely to cause fear or provoke violence" (389).

family values, set the white Briton in opposition to non-whites and, as Dixon claimed, scapegoated " the welfare scrounger, the disruptive school child, the abuser of the N.H.S. as well as, of course, the criminal" (174) as people that, as Stuart Hall suggests, are 'of an alien culture' and do not share the 'right' values. [64]

For Dixon, the argument outlined in "the British Nationality Act 1981 was no mere peripheral modernization, but rather the formalized expression of a reconstructed national identity which was a vital and central objective of the Thatcher programme's racial and ideological politics" (175). This type of explicit racism, combined with Thatcher's belief in self-reliance may provide some explanation as to why the state funding of foreign aid programs was cut throughout Thatcher's reign.

Like many of her counterparts in the EEC,[65] Thatcher's attitude toward the provision of aid was conservative. As former head of the UN Relief Operation in Ethiopia (1984-86) Kurt Jansson suggests, conservative policies toward aiding the starving in Ethiopia did not change until the media frenzy took hold after the first Buerk/Amin report was aired in October 1984.[66]

It had not only been the Thatcherite principle of individualism, non-state intervention, and self-reliance that affected the distribution of aid to Ethiopia. Both the UK and US governments were wary of providing aid to communist nations in the Horn, as they feared that the Ethiopia government would misappropriate both funds and food

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[64]Stuart Hall, "The Empire Strikes Back," *New Socialist* July/Aug. 1982: 6.

[65]The European Economic Community.

[66]Note that the US and the UK each had a very different relationship with the Sudan concerning aid, partially because the Sudan was a former British colony, but mainly because both the US and the UK perceived of the Sudan as a potential ally against the Marxist Ethiopian government (the US funded the Sudanese army). For more discussion on the relationship between the Sudan and the West see Berkeley, *The Graves*. For an account of the relationship between Sudan and Ethiopia in the early to mid 1980s, see Nega Mezlekia, *Notes from a Hyena's Belly* (Toronto: Penguin, 2000).

aid sent from the West. Aid budgets were minimal and the aid that was sent was often sent via other relief organizations (for instance, the British government sunk funds into the Norwegian Church Aid and the US into the Catholic Relief Services).[67] Attitudes and policies changed, however, in November 1984 after the airing of the Buerk/Amin report. The power of public opinion—and indeed of compassionate consumerism and the famine relief movement—became evident at that point. Such conservative policies were immediately overturned when, as a result of media pressure, "20 fixed-wing aircraft and 30 helicopters form the UK, USA, USSR, FRG, and GDR, Italy and Libya were involved in airlifting supplies" (Jansson, 154).

There are parallels between the British government's treatment of famine victims in the Horn and youths in the UK. Both famine sufferers and youths suffered as a result of exclusionary nationalist and racist doctrine, conservative economic policies, and the assumption that social problems arise from a lack of self-reliance. It is therefore not surprising that youths in the United Kingdom (a group often represented negatively in the media and by the government) would share empathy with the sufferers of famine in Ethiopia and the Sudan. At the same time, however, it is also not surprising that youths desiring access to definitions of citizenship proposed by Thatcher's government would join a consumer movement that did little to challenge racist and ethnocentric assumptions considering the fact that, to be a good Briton, to fit into the limited definition of British subject, one also had at least partially buy into racist ideologies, conventional morality, and support the free market economy (even if buying into such ideologies and supporting the free market meant going against ones' own economic interests).

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[67]Randolph C. Kent, *Anatomy of Disaster Relief: The International Network in Action* (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1987) 70.

In November 1980, less than one year after Thatcher's victory in Britain, Ronald Reagan was elected as president of the United States. Like his British counterpart, Reagan promised to bring his nation prosperity and to rid it of all undesirable elements.[68] He preached family values, called for a return to a more traditional morality, and reinforced binary logic that determined all that was not good to be evil. Like Thatcher, Reagan perceived of the world in black and white terms, however, it seemed that on both the domestic and foreign policy front, Reagan's dichotomous logic was more extreme. This reliance on binary logic was problematic because, as political scientist Betty Glad argues in "Black-and-White Thinking: Ronald Reagan's Approach to Foreign Policy," Reagan's view of the Soviet Union show how "the black-and-white thinker is apt to exaggerate the evil and power of his enemies, while at the same time inflating his own virtue and capacity to defeat them if he is strong and so wills it" (33).

Throughout his presidency, Reagan used speeches, economic policy, and legislation, to establish which groups of Americans were on the side and virtue and which were not. Like Thatcher, he dealt in dichotomies, often alienating, denying, and/or scape-goating those groups most negatively effected by structural inequities. As in Britain, all potential delinquents—the unemployed and poor, people of color, unmarried mothers, criminals, and youths—became targets for social and cultural control & surveillance.[69] Like Thatcher, Reagan primarily used an incident of industrial action to illustrate his no-tolerance policies regarding law and order. Reagan sent to the American people the

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[68]Smith, 26.

[69]For detailed examination of the types of surveillance used to contain ghettos in the US, see John Fiske, *Media Matters: Race and Gender in U.S. Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 217-255. For a detailed analysis of the ways in which children and youths in the US are restricted economically, culturally, and legally, see Lawrence Grossberg, *Caught in the Crossfire: Kids, Politics and America's Future,* Cultural Politics and the Promise of Democracy, ed. Henry A. Giroux (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005)

message that social disorder and insubordination would not be tolerated within the first year of his presidency when he ordered air traffic controllers to return to work or risk being fired.[70]

In another move similar to that of his British counterpart, Reagan passed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981. Like Thatcher's budgets cuts and law and order policies, the act that had dire consequences for already marginalized groups of people in the US resulted in numerous social welfare programs for the poor, students, and women being under-funded and numerous programs, such as Job Corps, Head Start, and women and children's feeding programs, being 'zeroed-out'.[71] Reagan had appealed to voters because he had promised throughout his presidential campaign to substantially decrease income tax. At the same time, however, Reagan promised to protect the nation from the 'evil' empire, the USSR. His quandary was how to decrease taxes while increasing the military budget. He assigned the difficult task of balancing the budget, that is, of finding $40 billion to newly appointed Director of the Office of Management and Budget, David Stockman. Stockman's solution was to reduce any number of federally funded programs but, as Reagan had promised not to touch "the main benefit programs of Social Security, Medicare, veterans' checks, railroad retirement pensions, welfare for the disabled—the so-called 'social safety net',"[72] Stockman was forced to look for the opportunity to budget elsewhere.

Stockman's cuts ultimately had most effect upon welfare recipients. While Reagan

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[70]For a recording of the speech Reagan gave before firing over one thousand striking workers, see "The Life of Ronald Reagan: A Timeline," *npr.org*, 2008, National Public Radio, 13 July 2008 <http://www.npr.org/news/specials/obits/reagan/timeline.html>.

[71]The term zeroed-out comes from Reagan's Director of the Office of Management and Budget, David Stockman. See William Greider, "The Education of David Stockman," *theatlantic.com*, 2007, The Atlantic Monthly Group, 13 July 2008 <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/198112/david-stockman/2>.

[72]ibid.

justified the cuts by arguing that it was necessary to reduce welfare dependency, evidence suggests that the cuts harmed more people than they helped. According to journalist David Whitman "OBRA cut off the wrong families. According to a 1984 study by The Urban Institute, it removed from the welfare rolls "those at and near the margin--those most likely to leave anyway...Leaving behind a relatively 'hard core' group of recipients."[73]

At issue in among Reaganites hungry for budget cuts was the cost of dependent "welfare deadbeats," in particular teenage mothers, mothers of illegitimate children, and welfare mothers.[74] What neither account for, however, is the fact that during the first few years of his presidency unemployment among poor (particularly urban blacks) skyrocketed leaving many youths, young mothers, and urban poor without any resources or safety net (apparently, only the elderly, veterans, disabled people, and fetuses required a safety net according to Reagan and his followers). As a result of Reagan's black and white logic, and the liberalist theories of self-reliance espoused by the Right throughout the US, many affected by the cuts in welfare, food stamps, and social programs were blamed for their position and, as political scientist Ronald King suggests, potentially made "the poor in society the victims of their own vulnerability."[75]

Reagan's attitude toward famine sufferers in the Horn was a cutthroat and merciless as his attitude toward America's welfare recipients. Like welfare recipients, the

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[73]David Whitman, "The Key to Welfare Reform," *The Atlantic Monthly,* June 1987, The Atlantic Monthly Online, 13 July 2008 <http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/flashbks/welfare/whitmaf.htm>.

[74]For more discussion of the ways in which mothers were under surveillance in the 1980s and the sudden interest in the notion of 'bad mothers', see Susan J. Douglas and Meredith W. Michaels, *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined All Women* (New York: Free Press, 2005).

[75]Ronald F. King, "Capping Entitlements: Budget Rules and the Food Stamp Program," *Journal of Public Policy* 18.2 (1998): 133-61.

Ethiopians were considered to be a scourge of the earth. This was because their government was both Marxist and supposedly backed by Reagan's archenemy the Soviet Union.[76]Reagan had established himself as an anti-communist in the 1950s when he collaborated with the House of Un-American Activities against his fellow actors. He came to power promising to win the "war of ideas," claiming that he would protect the American people from both the ideological and nuclear threat posed by the USSR.[77] The Ethiopian government was on Reagan's blacklist of evil-doers and Reagan, along with his conservative followers in congress, feared that providing aid to famine victims would be tantamount to supporting Mengistu's Marxist regime. Up until the release of the Buerk/Amin report in the United States, Reagan's government had sanctioned a massive reduction in aid to Ethiopia,[78]

With Thatcher in office in the UK and Reagan in office in the US, the future looked grim not only for UK and US youths, but for any nation in need of UK or US aid. While there appeared to be very little that youths could do to alter their situation, or that foreign governments could do to persuade their potential benefactors to increase aid, change did occur. This change was as a direct result of the emergence and evolution of both the ethic of compassionate consumerism and the famine relief movement.

I believe that it is possible to argue that famine relief movement, despite certain conservative elements, was one way for young people to both challenge absolutist notions of nationhood and citizenship espoused and enforced by Thatcher's government

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[76]The fact that the Ethiopians starving tended to be rural, and not supporters of the Mengistu regime, rather victims of it (Mengistu was found guilty of genocide by international courts in 2006) seemed an unimportant fact to the Reagan administration.

[77]See Betty Glad, "Black-and-White Thinking: Ronald Reagan's Approach to Foreign Policy," *Political Psychology* 4.1 (1983): 33-76.

[78]Jansson, et. al., 148.

and Reagan's administration. As participants in famine relief, youths were not only able to challenge the logic of compassionate conservatism that ultimately harmed them as society's most vulnerable members; their participation also allowed them to expand national exclusions to allow for their own inclusion, and provided them the opportunity to show themselves to be valuable members of society—to be compassionate not violent—and to be actively productive consumers not scroungers relying on the state (fn exclusion within this paradigm). Their actions supporting the famine relief movement also resulted in significant changes to UK and US foreign policies regarding famine in the Horn of Africa.

Because youths' compassion and consumerism led to both a change in socio-cultural policies and in the conditions of famine sufferers in the Horn, it can be described as a subversive movement. However, despite the successes of famine relief, oftentimes the power of the movement has gone ignored by both cultural critics and youth studies scholars. This is, in part, a result of the narrowness of youth studies as an academic field in the 1980s. Since the 1970s, youth studies had tended to be confined to two specific spheres: the first examined youth in the contest of subcultures, the second were studies performed in the 80s that served the agenda of the far right. This study offers an alternative, not only calling into question Right-Wing youth scholarship, but also arguing that subcultural theories cannot fully account for youths 'subversive' activities and for a recognition of what T.V. Reed argues is a similarity between subcultural activity and social movement activity.

While my study is somewhat distinct from its predecessors in the 80s, it—like many theories on both youth subcultures and youth delinquency—also deals with the

ways in which youths enact subversion through fashion, style, and music. However, at the same time, my work recognizes how, through their subversive everyday activities (such as listening to music or watching television), youth gain voice, power, and pleasure by performing more mainstream activities such as consumerism. As I will show momentarily, the new elements of socio-cultural youth subversion result from youth's relationship with the newly advancing media and the rise of the celebrity as social figurehead as well as figure of entertainment.

However, before dealing with the manner in which youth emotions and impulses affected socio-cultural change in Britain and the United States, it is necessary to contextualize my work within the field of youth studies and acknowledge the work of prominent scholars (such as Lawrence Grossberg and Christine Griffin) without whom this study would not have been possible. Before demonstrating how youths enact subversion, it seems pertinent to determine both who the youths enacting socio-cultural change in the 1980s were, and why such change was necessary.

Studying Youth

Youth Studies arises as a field in the 1920s, around the same time that the notion of youth as something distinct from adulthood began to emerge.[79] Over the next 80 years, the study of youth evolved into an interdisciplinary field that borrows from sociology, criminology, psychology, and various disciplines in the humanities. However, despite this, and despite the ever changing definitions of both youth and culture, youth studies tends to remain wedded to the limited and limiting definitions of youth as either victims

[79]Youth was non-existent category prior to the late 19th Century. See Neil Campbell, *American Youth Cultures* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 4.

or deviants. This is, in part, a result of the fact that many academics and pop scholars alike wish to define youth in terms of the now defunct theory of subcultures.

In his introduction to *Youth Culture: Identity in a Postmodern World* Jonathon Epstein suggests that there are three distinct periods of youth studies scholarship. The first is that of the Chicago School in the 1920s. As a result of their sociology and criminology studies of one particular youth gang in the Chicago slums the school became the first not only to consider youth in terms of subcultures, but to develop "a more 'scientific' approach to subculture complete with its own methodology" (*Subcultures*, 75).[80]

The second period of youth studies scholarship arose out of the Birmingham School (the CCCS) in the 70s. The school consisted of scholars trained in both sociology and literary theory. While continuing to focus on subcultures, the CCCS attempted to avoid the positivist assumptions of their predecessors in Chicago by taking class into account. Informed by Gramscian theories of class dynamics, theorists such as Tony Jefferson, Stuart Hall, and Angela McRobbie attempted to account for the ways in which poverty and unemployment led to subcultural divisions.

Epstein defines the third period of youth studies by naming significant figures working in the field since the 1980s. In mentioning major figures in the field, such as Henry Giroux and Douglas Kellner (both contributors to his anthology) Epstein, however, glosses over the tension between scholars that still attempt to identify youth and youth culture in terms of subcultures by naming some of the few scholars to have moved beyond limiting definitions of youth and a seeming obsession with subcultural activity.

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[80]Dick Hebdige describes how these studies were positivist, had flawed methods, and failed to consider class (75-6). For a detailed explanation see *Subcultures*.

What Epstein also fails to mention is how, by the 1980s, youth studies had become so comfortable in its definition of young people as passive victims or nascent revolutionaries, that, as a field, it performed the work of the New Right.[81] Youth studies scholars Lawrence Grossberg and Christine Griffin both point to how youth studies scholars in the 80s, mainly those working within the fields of sociology and psychology, have not helped youth to find more positive roles and definitions. On the contrary, many studies worsened the situation for youths in both the US and the UK as they failed to see or examine those structural inequities that disenfranchised large bodies of youth. Grossberg and Griffin argue that, throughout the 1980s, scholar employed the 'moral panic' model in the US (Grossberg, 82) and the 'common sense' model in the UK (Griffin, 4) both of which are aligned with the policies and ideologies of the New Right and reinforce negative assumptions about youth by adopting. Griffin goes as far as to say that "[t]he ideological force of British and US youth research during the 1980s was also strengthened by the political partnership between the Thatcher and Reagan administration" (4) and thus insinuates that youth research and politics cannot be separated during this era.

By the mid-1980s, subcultures no longer functioned as the most efficient or effective form of social resistance because, as Lawrence Grossberg argues, "what might have once been presented as subcultural or typical adolescent explorations of boundaries is now taken to be the shocking norm" (*Caught in the Crossfire*, 17). And yet, scholars in a number of fields continued to define youth in terms of subcultural activity or, more

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[81] Sociologists and psychologists studying youth have been integral in defining youth and, unfortunately, such models have been employed worldwide. In fact, according to Tyyskä and Griffin, US and UK youth models have and continue to dominate the field globally.

specifically, as oppositional. In *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescents in Britain and America*, Christine Griffin illustrates the ideological purpose of defining youth as oppositional when she argues that such studies, in the 1980s, served to justify the harsh socio-economic restrictions that the New Right in both the United States and Britain placed upon young people.[82]

The bigger problem with subcultural theories is that, in attempting to define youth in opposition and as marginalized, they construct problematic definitions of youth. While this was seemingly possible up until the 1970s, definitions of both youth and culture become extremely slippery by the 1980s. Studies that dichotomize youth, even in attempts to recuperate deviancy or expose victimhood, not only rely on outmoded assumptions (often setting themselves up in support of or opposition to the CCCS's work in the 70s), but they fail to acknowledge how youth has—like culture—changed. According to Hebdige, subcultures are not "independent organism[s] functioning outside the larger, social, political and economic context" (76) because they rely on the parent culture for both their existence and definition even though "subcultures express what is by definition an imaginary set of relations" (81). However, it is no longer possible to argue that a homogeneous parent culture exists and, therefore, the notion of subcultural resistance that relies upon the parent culture for its definition falls apart. By the 1980s, subcultural resistance was no longer effectively possible nor, for the most part, was it desirable.[83]

Despite scholars attempts to reclaim the notion of subcultures in the 1990s (and re-define it using terms such as tribes), it is clearly evident that subcultural resistance had

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[82]Griffin 4.

[83]See Bennett and Kahn-Harris, *After Subculture*, for recent debates in subcultural theory.

lost its socio-cultural clout by the early 1980s. Subcultural resistance (unless taken to the extreme, as is the case of terrorism) was not necessarily a viable way for youth to contest their socio-cultural and economic marginalization in either the US or the UK. David Chaney explains this in "Fragmented Culture and Subculture" that subcultural difference is lost among everyday differences because diffusion of culture removes almost all meaning from subcultural resistance.[84] He states that, "the idea of subculture is redundant because the type of investment that the notion of subculture labeled [sic] is becoming more general, and therefore the varieties of modes of symbolization and involvement are more common in everyday life" (37).

In his afterword to the anthology *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture*, Simon Frith argues that, despite the decline of subcultures and the inapplicability of subcultural theory to the study of youth in the late capitalist era, "youth studies must continue to treat issues of power and inequality whatever the limits of the subcultural concept of resistance" (176).

This study is designed to illuminate issues of power and inequality that affect young people without relying on flawed and dichotomous definitions of 'youth' that simplistically position the young people as oppositional or resistant to mainstream

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[84]This generalization of culture is a result of what John Tomlinson describes, in "Globalization and Cultural Analysis," *Globalization Theory: Approaches and Controversies* (Cambridge & Malden MA: Polity Press) as the deterritoralization of culture. Deterritorialization is a process resultant of globalization's "complex connectedness across distance" (152) that, in Chaney's mind, makes a "simple and unique cultural identity no longer ... feasible" (46). In line with Chaney, Tomlinson argues that because they cannot account for globalization's "weakening of ties of culture to place", subcultural theories, do "nothing to disturb th[e] identification of culture with territory" (152). Subcultural theories assume that there are fixed geographical boundaries, such as the physical borders of a nation-state, within which subcultural activities have specific meanings. Such theories posit notions of resistance and rebellion that are no longer applicable to youth cultures in the late capitalist era. This does not mean that subversion and change are no longer possible, just that traditional categories no longer apply. Youth have avenues for rebellion, but these ultimately are resultant of ties to consumer markets, the media, and multi-nationals. Consequently, such avenues are not limited by national boundaries, and youth and youth cultures should not be conceived of as limited or tied down to any specific local or national location.

culture. Rather, through an analysis of youth involvement in mass movements during the 1980s—specifically the media motivated, consumer driven famine relief movement of 1984-85—I illustrate how youth are integral in the construction and nature of mainstream culture and how, through their involvements in mass social movements, young people push the boundaries of hegemonic systems of control in a positive and inspirational manner.

But, before attempting to analyze the ways in which youth, in their capacity as consumers and donors, affect socio-cultural change, it is necessary to define exactly what 'youth' is. This is no easy task, as any definition must not only account for the slippery nature of the term and the heterogeneous nature of young people in the US and the UK, but also with the multiple ways in which youth scholars not bound by subcultural theory (those to whom Epstein is referring in his description of the third period of youth studies) have attempted to conceptualize of 'youth' as a sign, commodity, and site, as well as a category occupied by actual people.

Defining Youth

What most definitions of youth reveal is that 'youth' is more a useful concept than a category occupied by young people. This is because, as Charles Acland illustrates, the category is occupied by adults as well. In "Fresh Contacts and the Concept of Generation," Charles Acland argues that the category 'youth' is not exclusive to young people. He argues that youth has expanded "well into adulthood":

> The manner in which a Baby Boomer generation has been able to occupy the very idea of youth, with an associated set of styles and activities, even as its members push well along in the life-cycle, is a striking example of the non-essential articulation between age, 'youth' and cultural expression... the increasingly 'permanent' quality of the supposedly

> transitional stage of youth is partly explained by increasing youth unemployment and lengthening periods of education (35).

Acland illustrates that, while the term youth is disintegrating, the idea of youth is expanding to incorporate adults as well as young people. In "Rockin' With Reagan, or the Mainstreaming of Postmodernity" Lawrence Grossberg supports this notion of the simultaneous expansion and disintegration of the category when he complicates the chronological definition of the category 'youth'. He argues that while there exists a generation of 'new youth' that is "too young to believe in the counterculture and too old to believe in the computer utopia," the category youth chronologically "extends from the baby-boomers ... to the younger generations of computer literate, MTV watching politically naïve youth" (125).

But if youth no longer refers to young people, then why does it remain a persistent category? In "Rockin'" Grossberg explains why:

> ...we can't take for granted the relations between the lived reality of youths, its social identities, *and* particular cultural representations. This leaves us with a paradox. Even in the diversity of audiences determinations, and interpretations make a sociology of culture impossible, we still want to understand the significance of these cultural texts and practices and their relation to the social body of youth (128).

While youth is impossible to define, while the category is either a useful social concept or sign, it is still desirable to comprehend the culture of youth. However, as youth is a category occupied by a range of peoples of different ages (adults and young people), classes, and ethnicities, how is it possible to perceive of any coherent notion of youth culture? Grossberg again provides the answer. In "Rockin'" he argues that "it may be more appropriate...to think of youth as a field of diverse and contradictory practices, experiences, identities, and discourses" (126). Famine relief is one such site within the

field of youth. Within this site "meanings and representations are produced and expressed."[85] These meanings and representations have the potential to effectively affect change within hegemonic systems of control in the sense that they "do not conform to the imperatives of adult or mainstream culture," but are not necessarily oppositional (Giroux 11).

While it is obviously not possible to make distinctions between the adults and the young people participating in famine relief (that is, in the perpetuation of the culture of charity) without performing expansive ethnographic studies, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is still an imbalance of power within the cultural site that is famine relief. This imbalance results from the fact that boomers are more likely to be involved in the organizing and instrumentation of the famine relief movement—in the production of discourses and control of experiences—than their younger counterparts.[86]

Even though all those occupying the category 'youth' (as described by Acland) are subject to the socio-economic and psychic effects of Reagan and Thatcher's implementation of New Right policies, I assert that young people, on the whole, suffered most.[87] I suggest that the positive consequences of involvement in mass movements are therefore more important for young people (those under the age of 18) than for adults,

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[85]Giroux 10.

[86]Boomers greatly involved include people such as Bob Geldof, Harvey Goldsmith, and Ken Kragen, all of whom are established adults with enough resources, expertise, and connections to NGOs to make a difference. As much as I would argue that youths become empowered through their involvement in Live Aid, I confess that young people would not have been able to create such an effective global movement without the guidance of Boomer activists, celebrities, and producers.

[87]For a discussion of the ways in which young American people since the 80s have been marginalized and controlled, see Lawrence Grossberg, *Caught in the Crossfire*. For a convincing discussion of the distinctions between Baby Boomers and Generation X in the US, see Charles Acland, "Fresh Contacts: Global Culture and the Concept of Generation," *American Youth Cultures*, ed. Neil Campbell (New York: Routledge, 2004): 31-52. And for a discussion of the ways in which young people were targeted as potential delinquents in the UK, see Dixon; see also Scraton; and Clive Unsworth, "The Riots of 1981: Popular Violence and the Politics of Law and Order," *Journal of Law and Society* 9.1 (1982): 63-85.

even when those adults participate in mass movements for the same reasons and in the same way as their young counterparts. This is because young people (as opposed to youth) are, simply as a result of their age and the era into which they were born, more marginalized than their adult counterparts[88] (the irony is that, even though the young share so much with adults, it is adults that collude to disenfranchise the young).

Despite their shared condition, the young suffered more so than other 'youths' because of their disenfranchised social position, a position that both benefited and was oftentimes reinforced by the actions and assumptions of the baby boomers (proving that, despite sharing in the construction and reproduction of certain sites, boomers benefit more from distinguishing themselves from the young than from identifying with them).

As Acland's comparisons between UNESCO's 1968 and 1981 report on global youth indicates, conditions considerably worse for the *young* while they are young (worldwide) than they had been when the boomers were emerging into adulthood. In his description of the 1981 UNESCO report on global youth in *Youth, Murder, Spectacle*, Charles distinguishes between Generation X and Thatcher's Children and the previous generation. He states that:

> the 1981 report suggests that "the key words in the experience of young people in the coming decade are going to be: 'scarcity,' 'unemployment,' 'underemployment,' 'ill-employment,' 'anxiety,' 'defensiveness,' 'pragmatism,' and even subsistence' and 'survival'"... The terms chosen by UNESCO to characterize the youth of the then-approaching decade of the 1980s demonstrate a striking prescience. UNESCO predicted correctly that "if the 60s challenged certain categories of youth in certain parts of the world with a crisis of culture, ideas and institutions, the 1980s will

[88] ibid.

> confront a new generation with a concrete, structural crisis of chronic economic uncertainty and even deprivation" (3).[89]

According to both Lawrence Grossberg and Christine Griffin, it is the New Right that are responsible for such a denial and positioning of youth. Grossberg describes implicates the right when he states that during the 1980s and 90s, "a highly politicized and largely conservative agenda ... emphasized the threats to children and the ways the "system," having failed the children, was producing a generation of monsters" (37). But, as Griffin indicates, rarely is the 'system' implicated in the failure of youth. She argues that "[t]he everyday operations of international capitalism or patriarchal power relations are seldom represented as a source of the problem" (10). While Grossberg criticizes assumptions about globalization, arguing that the 'inevitable forces' of the global are used as convenient excuses for youth exploitation by the far right, his argument in *Caught in the Crossfire Kids, Politics and America's Future* essentially supports Griffin's notion: he illustrates how few solutions have been offered to remedy the system; instead, youth are 'remedied' by constant surveillance, monitoring, and discipline (25-36).

Due to unreasonable assumptions, representations, and stereotypes surrounding the idea of both youth and young people, the young have been subjected to harsh social and economic restrictions, institutional discrimination, and constant adult surveillance; in addition, many were denied the right to national identity. In addition, as Grossberg argues, young people are often blamed for their condition.[90]

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[89]Acland indicates how the 1968 UNESCO study used keywords such as "confrontation-contestation," "counter power," and "youth culture," in *Youth, Murder, Spectacle: The Cultural Politics of Youth in Crisis*, ed. Janice Radway and Richard Johnson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

[90]Grossberg 23.

In her essay "Conceptualizing and Theorizing Youth: Global Perspectives" global youth researcher Vappu Tyyskä provides a cogent and expansive explanation as to why and when young people in the West became disenfranchised and disillusioned (7). She states:

> Employers and the state have created, over more than a century, a system in which youth are deprived of full access to economic and political rights. They are processed through an education system that creates credentials, while the jobs in the labour [sic] market do not require the kind of extensive education that young people are made to believe they need... Rather than having access to economic institutions, youth are exploited as an underpaid working mass, and form a convenient 'target-market' for goods that are sold to them as part of a ready-made package of corporate driven youth culture. This process has escalated since the 1970s with the neo-conservative and neo-liberal state policies in Western industrialized countries (7).[91]

Unlike many mainstream studies on the young that employ "the victim-blaming thesis in the search for causes of specific phenomena" (Griffin, 3),[92] Tyyskä's argument points out how youth are disenfranchised as a result of national structural inequities. In essence, she explains how young people are tricked into believing in a social and political system that negates and demonizes them for not being able to fulfill the false hopes of adults. While she describes the problem as existent throughout the century, her argument defines contemporary youth—those that have been young since the 1970s—as specific and located within a specific position.

Statistical evidence compiled in the US and the UK during the 1980s further supports UNESCO's findings, proving how during the late capitalist era, social, cultural,

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[91] For further discussion of neo-conservative and neo-liberal state policies in the US and their effects on youth see Grossberg, *Caught in the Crossfire*.

[92] Christine Griffin distinguishes between mainstream youth studies that are conservative, positivist, and apolitical, and "characterized by the tendency to investigate young people as both the source and the victim of a series of 'social problems';" and radical youth studies that deconstruct youth as a category and the 'social problem' hypothesis (3).

and economic conditions for youth have worsened.[93] For instance, unemployment figures in the US show that, despite the decrease in youth population in the United States, in the 1970s unemployment stood at around 19% for 16-19 year olds, increasing to an all time high of 23% by 1982 and a gradual decline to 15% by the end of the decade. As Christine Griffin argues, it is difficult to establish unemployment rates for teens in Britain as the data is not available, however, she does point to studies—such as Paul Osterman's *Getting Started*—that show how "the characteristics of the British and US youth labour [sic] markets are remarkably similar" (36). Mica Nava points out, there were "widespread cuts in most areas of the social services" (91) in the UK that led to a reduction of social programs and amenities for youth, including unemployment benefit. Hilary Nunn describes education was reduced to a commodity (115). In the US poverty among children and youths increased by 40% between 1979 and 1993, as access to healthcare and adequate education declined (Grossberg 62).[94]

Tyyskä argues that the 'perpetuation' and 'disenfranchisement' of young people proven by such statistics prevents the young "from attaining full civil, political, and social citizenship rights" (11). This is of central concern to my project because I speculate that one of the reasons why young people are drawn to the famine relief movements of both the 80s and today is that such movements allow them to renegotiate the ways they are defined and identify, and to prove themselves worthy of both the responsibilities and rights that national subject-hood entails. However, I am also

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[93]Like Christine Griffin, I am wary of the use of statistical data as it cannot only be misleading, and like youth studies and pedagogy scholar, Henry Giroux, I am also aware that statistics often appear 'abstract'. Nevertheless, in this instance they prove insightful for a number of reasons. Firstly, such statistics indicate why young people during the 1980s needed to establish voice and agency. And, secondly, these statistics show us, if only in a superficial manner, how the US and the UK were so closely aligned in terms of ideology and policy during this period.

[94]See Grossberg 62.

cognizant of the fact that global movements do not 'provide' for all young people and, even those that gain through their participation still have time to wait until their efforts are fully recognized by the nation state.

Youth scholar Susan Littwin's study, *The Postponed Generation: Why America's Grown Up Kids are Growing Up Later* argues that "American adolescents now require over 10 years after the onset of puberty (usually the early teens) to become adults" (Shary, 22). In both the United States and Britain the possibility of maturing to adulthood, of gaining the right to citizenship becomes less likely for many, especially the poor, youth of color, and girls. John Fiske in *Media Matters* and Henry Giroux in *Fugitive Cultures* extensively illustrate that many African American youths never attain equality or the rights to citizenship. Mica Nava explains in *Changing Cultures: Feminism, Youth and Consumerism* that "most women never acquire 'adult' status and the social power that accompanies it" because women's "state of prolonged dependency and infantalization—of femininity—may be disturbed in early adulthood only to be recomposed at the moment of marriage" (82). And Griffin indicates how non-heterosexual youths are denied adult status (20).[95]

What these youth studies and statistics indicate is that youth throughout the United States and Britain were in desperate need to find new ways not only to express and define themselves, but also to affect definitions of social responsibility and citizenship to allow for their own inclusion. And, the unforeseen consequences of their participation (in their capacity as a compassionate consumer marker) still have positive

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[95]For instance, in the UK the 1988 Local Government Act forbade local authorities from "promoting teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (the act was repealed by New Labour Parliament in November 2003). For further information regarding this act see: http://www.dg.dial.pipex.com/history/timeline.shtml

ramifications for both today's youth and those experiencing hardships in the developing World. As a result of philanthropic urges and compassionate consumer impulses, NGOs worldwide raise considerable amounts of supports and funds for those in need, and do so in a way that provides compassionate youth consumers with a sense of purpose and a global role.

Benefiting Youths

The famine relief movement was a politicized movement that hailed participants as compassionate consumers and allowed said participants to establish themselves as active, functioning, social assets. As people that not only contributed to their national economies, but also supported the notions of moral order and capitalist pursuits espoused by their leaders, youths proved themselves worthy citizens. However, unlike their leaders, such youths presented themselves as cosmopolitan as opposed to being isolationist. This is because the famine relief movement offered youths the opportunity to be a part of a global community while, at the same time, supporting their national economies. Youths could perceive of themselves as active within a world scene because they empathized with and shared experiences with famine victims in Ethiopia, because they were integral in the alleviation of a shared suffering, and because—as a rock community and market force—they were in part responsible for choosing which UK and US popular culture texts were to be marketed around the globe.[96] The illusion of a one-world community (emphasized in the early 21st Century by campaigns like the One

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[96]For a discussion of the Anglo-American dominance of the 'international' music industry that challenges outmoded notions of US and UK cultural imperialism—providing as much agencies to those foreign markets that receive texts as the Anglo-American producers that create them and Anglo-American audiences that influence the market—see Desmond Hesmondhalgh, "Globalisation and Cultural Imperialism: A Case Study of the Music Industry," Globalisation and the Third World (London & New York: Routledge, 1998) 164-84.

campaign) was further solidified when, among others, the both the organizers and sponsors of the famine relief movement (the main sponsors being Pepsi, AT&T, Kodak-Eastman, and Chevrolet) used the promise of a global community to appeal to potential consumers.

While the famine relief movement was commercialized, and the notion of a one-world community proved as fruitful to multi-national corporations as it did to youthful psyches in the US and the UK, it would be dismissive to either view the movement as apolitical or to assume that famine relief had an impact only on a global level.

The famine relief movement can be described as a cultural site in which compassionate consumer texts and commodities were produced and received. It was, however, a postmodern site where multiple, contradictory ideologies intersected. The site can be described as informed by and constructed by a combination of Christian and colonial ideologies (hence the consumerism, the compassion, and the production of texts that rely upon Christian imagery for meaning and use Africa as a convenient space in which to play out Western fantasies), as well as by the left and right, but with no real allegiance to any one in particular.

The consequence of these intersections was not only the creation of the new youth site in which ideological contradictions and paradoxes were accepted, but also a shift in nature of the ideologies that intersected there. For instance, practices, experiences, discourses, and identities through which compassionate consumerism was inscribed, enacted, and reproduced challenged Right-Wing notions of compassionate conservatism to such an extent that led both Reagan himself, and Thatcher's Trade and Industry Secretary Norman Tebbitt, to commend the movement. Another example of the ways in

which established ideologies were altered by the famine relief movement would be the fact that, as a result of the emergence and ethic of compassionate consumerism, British and US youths had the ability to develop complex relationships the Ethiopian famine victims, that is to experience a shared vulnerability with those positioned as Other, instead of the simplistic hierarchial relationships advocated by traditional colonial ideologies. While colonial ideology informed the ethnocentrism apparent in famine relief texts such as "Do They Know Its Christmas" and "We Are the World," such ideologies do not remain static within the famine relief site.

In having an effect upon the ideologies that intersected throughout the movement, both the ethic of compassionate consumerism and famine relief movement can be described as politicized and subversive. The creation of the famine relief site and the shifts in ideologies intersecting there not only affected change, but allowed youth a renewed mobility and agency between sites and within the confines of changing ideological positions. This mobility and activity allowed youths to become involved in and empowered simultaneously within local, national, and the world scenes.[97]

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[97]For example, when young Americans watched "We Are the World" on MTV, they not only had the potential to belong to a local scene (as Jennifer Hurley explains in "Music Video and the Construction of Gendered Subjectivity (Or How Being a Music Video Junkie Turned Me into a Feminist)" watching music video provides youths with "a sense of belonging...and can even promote identification within particular subcultures" (332). Watching video also provides viewers the potential—as receivers, producers, and consumers of commodities and merchandise—to act within their national scene by contributing to their national economies and their national cultural repertoire of 'borrowed' memories, and to act within the global sphere by helping to determine which US commodities are exported and becoming part of a larger, global community of compassionate consumers.

Chapter Two
Compassionate Consumerism and the Famine Logo: The Ethiopian Madonna with Child as Iconic Advertisement

> "We shall control the forces of nature!" Ethiopian Govt. slogan circa 1984

Although major newspapers throughout the West had predicted the Ethiopian famine in 1983, it was not until BBC correspondent Michael Buerk accompanied VisNews cameraman Mohammed Amin to a refugee camp in Korem (a northern province of Ethiopia), in October 1984, that the extent of the famine was exposed to over 470 million television viewers worldwide.[98] Aired in the fall of 1984, the film became a blueprint for all future representations of African famine, by beginning what was to become a continuous stream of atrocious images of dying Africans within Western popular culture texts. The report is seminal in the history of media famine coverage. It not only precipitated a global famine relief movement and cemented images of Ethiopians as frail and starving in the minds of Western viewers; but it also set the precedent for future media coverage of African famines (among other "natural disasters" in the Third World), by constructing appropriate symbolic victims and establishing dichotomous logic that defined and separated the good players from the evil-doers, as well as the African 'victims' from the Western donors.

While images of emaciated and dying Third World bodies were not novel for Western audiences, the ways in which the famine was constructed, even created, differed from either previous news depictions or fictional portrayals of Third World catastrophes. This was in part due to the advances in visual, communication, and satellite technologies

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[98] In *The Ethiopian Famine* Angela Penrose (administrator of the University Relief and Rehabilitation organization) provides the viewing figures for the Buerk/Amin documentary; the report was seen by over 30 million viewers in the U.K. and the U.S. in October and, according to the BBC, "was later shown by 425 of the world's broadcasting organisations with a total audience of 470 million" (154).

during the 1980s, advances that allowed for a wider dissemination of more instantaneous news stories and images. Such technologies provoked a shift in media dominance away from print media.

In this chapter, I examine the first major television 'exposé' of the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine in an attempt to uncover the ways in which scenes of suffering were commodified and famine victims were constructed in Western consciousness. I ask why the television media chose to report on the famine in October 1984? What were the local and global conditions that allowed for the famine to take precedence over news of other Third World nations and peoples afflicted and suffering from natural and man-made catastrophes at the same time? What made the Ethiopian famine images grab the hearts and minds of the Western media and television viewers in late 1984 when, only a few months before news and print news agencies in both the U.S. and the U.K had turned down pictures produced by photojournalists such as Denver's Tony Suau? And, why did the ethic of compassionate consumerism, an ethic that helped to motivate the famine relief movement, emerge out of the televised Buerk/Amin report?

I suggest that Ethiopia became a site of media interest for a multitude of reasons, as a result of global politics and economics, local coincidences, and Western audience needs and desires. And I show how, as a result of its mass appeal and impact, Buerk and Amin's treatment of the Ethiopian famine—like the ethic of compassionate consumerism that emerged out of their film—helped set the precedent for almost all future depictions and coverage of famine in Africa, in the same way that aid organizations' treatment of the Ethiopian famine lay the groundwork for future Third World aid programs.

Through an analysis of one particular trope common in the Buerk/ Amin famine

documentary (and many later depictions of famine), the Madonna with Child icon, I illustrate how the individual, starving victim depicted in such coverage functions as a veil that conceals, on one hand, the causes and conditions of famine, and on the other, reinforced existing political ideologies and ethnocentric assumptions of the media and media audiences. And, through an examination of the ways in which the footage was disseminated and displayed—in particular the role of television news in the 1980s and the practices of dominant news agencies—I attempt to account for the major impact that the footage had upon viewers around the world; and identify how, like almost all major human rights movements, the global famine relief movement spawned activism on national levels (Tsutsui & Wotipka, 588).

Television became the primary media outlet that shouldered "the heavy responsibility for deciding what is, and what is not 'news'—in effect, for creating the news" (Brauman, 153). Television functions in ways different than still photography and cinema; its format, the fact that it could be accessed from almost every U.S. and U.K. home on a daily basis, and the speed at which news and images could be displayed and disseminated, altered the ways in which famine was specularized and famine viewers were interpellated. More diverse audiences could be reached more easily than, say, ten years before, when British reporter Jonathan Dimbleby produced a documentary—"The Unknown Famine"—exposing a prior famine in Ethiopia.

Television has the ability to present news items that appealed to many; as John Fiske argues, "the television text has to be read and enjoyed by a diversity of social groups, so its meaning must be capable of being inflected in a number of different ways. The text is therefore more polysemic" (*Television Culture*, 66). However, the polysemic

nature of television also allows for the ideological underpinnings of Western news items to be veiled in new and more diverse ways. Although he does not refer specifically to television, or the results of the shift toward television's dominance, Edward Said provides insight into how this particular veiling of ideology can be read as specific to the era of late-capitalism. He argues that "in our age of media-produced attitudes, the ideological insistence of a culture drawing attention to itself as superior has given way to a culture whose canons and standards are invisible to the degree that they are 'natural', 'objective', and 'real' (9). Arguably, television—the pace at which images are produced, disseminated, and blur together—most effectively deflects attention away from the means of production, the discourses that inform, and the ideologies that underpin the 'news'.

Discovering Famine/Suffering

Under the rule of Haile Selassie (1930-36 & 1941-1974) Ethiopia established itself as an empire, unhindered—for the most part—by the interference of European imperial powers and thus by colonial rule.[99] Despite the brutality of his reign and his willingness to use of famine as a tool to prevent peasant insurgence, the U.S. government financially and ideologically backed Selassie. According to writer Nega Mezlekia, in *Notes from a Hyena's Belly*, Ethiopia received more than one half of U.S. foreign aid to black Africa during the 1970s; U.S. military aid to the regime was over $270 million; and

[99]Italy occupied Ethiopia for a brief period, from 1936-41. For detailed discussion of Italian and British maneuvers in the Horn see David A Korn, *Ethiopia: The Politics of Famine* (Lanham, MD. & London: University Press of America, 1990) and Berkeley, Bill. *The Graves are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe, and Power in the Heart of Africa.* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

economic aid amounted to over $350 million, (121).[100] The coup of 1974 felled Selassie. He was replaced by a Marxist, Mengistu Haile Mariam, leader of the Workers Party. Mengistu's secession resulted in a shift in alliances. No longer in league with the U.S., Mengistu turned to the Soviet for economic and ideological support.[101] The shift from U.S. to U.S.S.R's influence, Ethiopia's prime position as gas route to the Red Sea, and Ethiopia's ongoing conflict with US and UK backed regions of the Horn of Africa, made the former empire a highly contested space.[102] Western governments, whose support of human right initiatives and aid distribution decisions were tied to "domestic politics" (Tsutsui & Wotipka, 594), withdrew aid from Ethiopia in an attempt to show the public at home that they were tough on communists. Ethiopia, as a newly formed Marxist state, thus functioned as a pawn, always keenly observed and manipulated by both sides of the

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[100]In *Notes From a Hyena's Belly* Ethiopian writer, Nega Mezlekia, describes not only the amount of aid Western governments (in particular the US) provided Ethiopia throughout the 70s, but the inappropriate ways in which much of the aid was channeled, and the insufficiencies of foreign aid distribution during the 1970s (122). He describes how, in 1974, international aid agencies in Ethiopia, like international governments involved in Ethiopian politics, did little to help those in need, being faced, that is, with the quandary: "whether to save lives or save face for the Emperor." As Mezlekia states, "The decision was to do nothing" (122). The aid community was not so reticent to react to the famine in 1984, although it is questionable whether or not famine aid actually helped famine victims. Mezlekia explains how, during the mid -1980s famine, food supplies were either left to rot at ports or sent to support Ethiopian military campaigns, not to people in need (347). However, according to Richard W. Solberg in his idealistic narrative *Miracle in Ethiopia*, relief agencies were not apathetic to the famine, but suffered aid setbacks due to the "ineffectiveness of the information networks that possessed the tragic facts and made diligent efforts to report them (7). For a detailed discussion of the successes and failures of aid in Ethiopia, see *Ethiopia: The Politics of Famine*. (Lanham, MD. & London: University Press of America, 1990).

[101]See David A Korn, *Ethiopia: The Politics of Famine* (Lanham, MD. & London: University Press of America, 1990) for more detailed statistics and information pertaining to Soviet involvement in Ethiopia.

[102]In the introduction to *Ethiopia: The Politics of Famine*, David A. Korn implies that—as both Britain and France abandoned their interests in Ethiopia, and Italy failed to maintain the colony, Ethiopia did not suffer the same affects of colonialism as any other colonized African nation (2). Although Korn's assumption that there is, somehow, an 'authentic' African nation untouched by colonialism is somewhat narrow and naïve, his point is valid. The fact that Ethiopia was not a colony, except for its brief occupation by Mussolini's Italy (1936-41), but still suffers the long term effect of colonial rule proves that colonialism is more than occupation; this either complicates tidy theories of First and Third World interactions, limited distinctions between the colony and the postcolonial nation state (and simplistic dialectic theories that posit the West as dominant, and the Third World as non-participant); or implies that Africa no longer under the 'rule' of former colonies, but, as a result of late capitalism, suffers under and participates within the processes of globalization that affect all nations in the Horn—previously colonized or not—in similar ways.

Cold War conflict. As a contested political space, Ethiopia suffered from often made headline news throughout the late 70s and early 80s. However, this semi-politicized news did not necessarily reach mass audiences in either the U.S. or the U.K. as it was often presented by less popular broadsheets such as *The London Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* and not by the tabloid or television news media.[103]

In *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity*, aid worker turned journalist Michael Maren explains how media coverage of famine typically progresses in five steps.[104] The first step, where brief news items are unaccompanied by images of famine, the "stories warn of huge populations in danger of famine if something is not done" (205), had already been reached prior to Buerk and Amin's trip to Ethiopia. The broadsheets had printed the predictions, but these 'predictions' of famine were of little interest or consequence to more popular news producers. As pointed out by a number of critics—including Maren—predictions are not really considered news. Journalist and media critic Susan Moeller indicates "the problem with famine... is that they [starving people] just aren't considered newsworthy until the dying begins" (34). In *Surrender or Starve* travel writer and journalist Robert D. Kaplan reinforces Moeller's notion that famine footage must present dying in order to appeal to Western audiences when he describes how the not-yet-dying people of Tug Wajale B (a camp with 50,000 Oromo refugees) were not worth airtime:

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[103]See Robert Kaplan, *Surrender or Starve: The Wars Behind the Famine.* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988) for specific examples.

[104]The coverage of the Ethiopian famine in the mid-80s does not accurately follow these steps; rather, it acts as the blueprint for further famine coverage. By the time of the 1991 Somalian famine, the famine Maren writes most of, these steps were fully established.

> Not beautiful and not starving, these people made no impression. They were just a large mass, significant only in their numbers. Television could do nothing with them (Kaplan, 2).

Despite their plight, the refugees of Tug Wajale B were not spectacular or desperate enough to be photographed or filmed. Economist Alexander De Waal stresses how for Westerners famine is not news until the dying starts when, in *Famine That Kills*, he emphasizes how, in order to appeal—to be palatable for consumption—famine sufferers, must be remarkable.[105] Seemingly, only death makes Ethiopians remarkable on U.S. and U.K. television. It was not until the starving started to die in droves that the Western popular media paid them much attention. By the time that Buerk and Amin arrived in Korem, over one hundred Ethiopian refugees were dying each day.[106] However, Buerk and Amin had not been the first to arrive in Ethiopia or to photograph the famine; nevertheless, it was their film that made the headlines globally and sparked the famine relief movement.

Another reason why both print and television news of Africa was sparse during the 1980s was the fact that, since the 1960s, "as part of a general reduction in coverage of all foreign news" (Palmer, 242), there had been a decline in press coverage of Africa and African events and a severe reduction in the number of foreign correspondents housed in Africa. In his synopsis of presentations at the 1986 African Studies of the United

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[105]In fact, as Alexander De Waal illustrates in *Famine That Kills*, the nature and conditions of famine are radically misunderstood in the West. De Waal argues that the term itself is inaccurate as, for those used to famine, the word does not necessarily signify death, but a dry season. H argues that "[e]ven when a famine does kill, it does not follow that killing is the central experience of the famine: the focus need not be on death. In part it is an experience: famines remain landmarks of suffering in the consciousness of peoples (13).

[106]Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sells Disease, War, Famine and Death*. New York & London, Routledge, 1999 (112).

Kingdom sponsored symposium in "Africa in the Media," award winning filmmaker Robin Palmer describes how "[u]ntil Gary Strieker opened a bureau for CNN ... in Nairobi recently, there had not been a single staff correspondent or cameraman from a British or American television network resident in Black Africa, though all were present in South Africa" (246). As a result, much of the coverage of Africa shown around the globe in the 80s and even the early 90s—coverage that rarely focused on anything other than violence in South Africa, famine in drought stricken areas, or visits from foreign dignitaries—was made up of stock footage. Which stock footage was acceptable for general consumption was, according to film and media scholar Chris Paterson, determined by a handful of editors who see "the pictures and sound they provide as wholly objective representations of news events, commodities to be sold to anyone who will pay, to use as they wish in their nightly newcasts.[107] It is true that the Buerk/Amin documentary was aired in the U.K. and then the U.S. simply because the images Amin produced shocked, horrified and elicited sympathy among newscasters and editors at both the BBC and NBC head quarters (Harrison and Palmer 123). However, as academic Paul Harrison, filmmaker Robin Palmer, and Chris Paterson indicate, it was a feat that the footage was even filmed.

In *News Out of Africa: Biafra to Band Aid*, Paul Harrison and Robin Palmer, provide some insight into why Buerk and Amin's portrayal of the famine, unlike that of their predecessors, suddenly received popular televised coverage. In their discussion of the Buerk/Amin film, Palmer and Harrison demonstrate that the story behind the film's

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[107]For information regarding how the South African government used the film as proof of the failures of a black government see , see Paul Harrison & Robin Palmer. *News Out of Africa: Biafra to Band Aid.* (London: Hilary Shipman, 1986) 133.

production and dissemination was the result of a series of individual motivations, local events, coincidences, and moments of compassion. The history of famine relief movements is certainly littered with compassionate acts and startling ingenuity of numerous male journalists and celebrities, the actions of whom precipitated significant and permanent changes in aid campaigns, policy, and media coverage and, ultimately, changed the face of the aid industry. Palmer and Harrison's combined narrative emphasizes how this change was precipitated as much by a series of local coincidences and the individual assumptions of a number of media producers, as it was by larger global factors. The visual, narrative, editing, and production/distribution choices made by just a few men in the media industry had such an impact on both representations of Africa and Western assumptions.

According to British journalist Peter Gill, the only reason why BBC correspondent for South Africa, Michael Buerk had leave to visit Ethiopia was because there was little going on in South Africa that week. And, as Harrison and Palmer describe in *News*, Buerk stumbled upon the Ethiopian famine when, in July of 1984, he realized that he could not go as planned to Mozambique to "put together a five-minute BBC appeal... in some area where famine was a particular problem" (107). Because the "request [for the appeal] had come in ridiculously late" and because "the logistics of trying to get into northern Mozambique and out again on the time scale were just impossible" (107), Buerk—under the advisement of Paddy Coulter, the head of communications at Oxfam—decided to visit Ethiopia where "things were getting desperate" (108). Through Coulter, Buerk was paired with VisNews cameraman Mohammed Amin, but Amin could not travel to Ethiopia due to prior engagements.

Buerk traveled with a crew to Wolaita in South Eastern Ethiopia to film an appeal that was aired in the U.K., on the BBC and Channel 4, at the end of July. The appeal raised £10 million but, as implied by Rony Brauman (President of Médecins Sans Frontières, 1982-94, and co-founder/director of Liberté sans Frontières, 1984-88), the effort paled in significance to Buerk and Amin's documentary film. As Brauman states, "the first film of the 1984 famine in Ethiopia fail[ed] to send more that a slight shiver down the spine of the U.K. while the second, broadcast three months later, galvanized the entire Western world into action" (149).

With the aid of Amin's crew, Buerk gained an entry visa and returned to Ethiopia in October of the same year to help make the film that "galvanized" the West to act on behalf of the starving.[108] Buerk and Amin traveled to Korem, in Northern Ethiopia, where they filmed the dying on Betacam cameras, fearing that their batteries would run out "before they'd finished filming" (Harrison & Palmer, 119). Buerk flew with the footage overnight to London, writing his commentary on the way. The footage was aired the following day on the BBC's Nine O'clock News and, a day later, on NBC in the U.S. In an atypical move, NBC decided to keep Buerk's voice as commentary, however, Tom Brokaw provided a new name for the shortened US version of the documentary: he called it "The Faces of Death."

Arguably, the Buerk/Amin film, unlike any of its predecessors, "galvanized the entire Western world" for a number of reasons. First, the combined skills of Buerk as a narrator and Amin as a filmmaker resulted in the creation of a profound, visually

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[108]For full account of how Amin was instrumental in Buerk's return, the problems with obtaining visas, and the rivalry between Amin's Viz-News and Buerk's BBC, see Harrison & Palmer. *News Out of Africa: Biafra to Band Aid.*

compelling film. Second, the famine had reached epic proportions, the situation has surpassed the point of "getting desperate," and the dying had begun. Such images of famine made captivating televised news: few viewers could witness such excessive suffering (the likes of which had not been shown on television) without experiencing some kind of sympathy or pity. Third, the types of images Buerk and Amin produced tended to render the unfamiliar familiar and unthreatening, providing viewers with safe access to that which is typically ritually expunged: the abject. Fourth, unlike in July, when the Olympics dominated the news (particularly in the United States), the October film happened to be produced and aired at a time when there was little else worth watching.

Constructing Suffering

The content of the Buerk/Amin film was both shocking and familiar: shocking because of the scale of the famine, the unbelievable amount of people affected, and the vivid quality images that transported the viewer to the site of the catastrophe; familiar because they are rendered so by Buerk's commentary that not only places the famine within a Christian framework that Western viewers can understand, but also because both his words and Amin's images clearly demarcate the victims, the "only familiar landmark[s] in [this] merciless, anachronistic landscape" (Brauman,152), and transform said victims into readable symbols, into significations of famine.

The predominant symbol of famine footage is, of course, the starving child. As Moeller states, "starving babies are the famine icon... the media's coverage of the famine

is distilled down into the simple iconic image of the starving infant" (98).[109] Whether pictured as crying or dying, as an emaciated skeleton with a swollen belly or with a smile and a plastic bowl in hand, the starving child is a sympathetic image that evokes both outrage and pity in the Western viewer. However, I argue that the impact of the Buerk/Amin famine footage cannot be simply reduced to the evocative nature of images of dying children—previous footage had relied on such aged symbols.[110] And, because the starving child image has been analyzed in relative detail, I'd like to focus on an image that is less prevalent in earlier footage of Third World catastrophe: the Madonna and Child symbol. Through the analysis of this iconic image, it is possible to expose the ideologies underpinning the production of famine footage and the construction of the famine victim. Despite it uses in earlier reform movements, the Madonna with Child symbol is an under analyzed symbol that is as prevalent today as it is in the Buerk/Amin documentary. Through an analysis of the Madonna with Child pairing played upon and parodied both in Buerk's narrative and Amin's footage, I expose the ways in which famine symbols are constructed and speculate as to their intrinsic appeal for Western audiences, and I attempt to unravel the implications of how, at least in the context of famine coverage, "television provides [for the viewer] a common symbolic experience and a common discourse, a set of shared formal conventions that are so important to a

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[109]The starving child functions not only as a symbol of famine, but comes to stand for Ethiopia as a nation. This is made most evident when, even after the famine, when the Marxist government of Ethiopia had been overthrown and general elections were to be held, the British publication *The Economist* used an image of a lone (motherless) dying child to accompany the story. The absence of the mother is telling: why depict a starving orphan—devoid of parental or institutional support—to represent an election?

[110]For detailed analyses of the role of the child in famine footage see Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue:How the Media Sells Disease, War, Famine and Death.* New York & London, Routledge, 1999. & Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, "The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Time." *Social Suffering* Ed. Kleinman, Arthur, Veena Das, & Margaret Lock. Berkeley, L.A. & London: University of California Press, 1997.

folk culture" (Fiske, 80).

Apolitical, playing on both the fears and voyeuristic desires of Western audiences, the Buerk/Amin documentary brought to light (for Western audiences) the severity and symbolism of mass famine in Ethiopia. In his narrative, Buerk humbly describes the famine as 'biblical', an adjective that not only speaks to the way in which Amin captures images of dying Ethiopians, but also influences Western viewers interpretations of the images they see. As an establishing shot reveals a dirty, dusty plain filled with ragged starving people, Buerk narrates: "... the sun breaks through the piercing chill of night on the plane, it lights up a biblical famine." In the same way, both Amin's footage and Buerk's narrative will shed light upon, expose, the famine as an *event*. And, for any Western viewer likely to forget the biblical analogy, if the image of the donkey in the opening wide shot did not impress it enough upon the viewer, both filmmaker and journalist continuously reiterate the biblical nature of the scene by producing images and narrative, of biblical proportions, that replicate the iconic Madonna with child image.

The Madonna with Child construction proves to be a useful visual symbol, not only because it immediately renders the unfamiliar familiar; but because it also strengthens the impact of the shocking footage while containing the psychical threat that the abject and emaciated African woman poses to the Western viewer. In such footage, the abject mother is not simply contained within the boundaries of the refugee camp, or simply within the frame of the camera or screen, but also by Western mythology.[111] She

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[111]She may be contained and rendered unthreatening, but that is not to say that she is never under threat. In "Refugee Camps as Conflict Zones: The Politics of Gender," Jennifer Hyndman describes the dangers of refugee camps for women, and the types of strategies being employed by the International community and aid agencies to help make women more safe in camps such as those populated by Somali refugees on the borders of Kenya during the mid-90s. In Giles, Wenona & Hyndman. Ed. *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2004.

becomes meaningful and comprehensible when positioned as a Mary-like figure. She is reduced to an age-old symbol, so layered with ideological meaning, that she is no longer allowed to exist as a woman, as a mother, as a citizen, or as a subject.

Buerk and Amin's reliance on the Madonna with Child image to tell part of the story to the viewers is not necessarily an innovative idea. The iconic image had been evoked at the turn of the Twentieth Century by social reformers/ photographers Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, who took a series of photographs of women and children in the Madonna with Child pose to arouse sympathy and elicit charity for the poor of New York City.

Fig. 1. Jacob Riis, "Italian Mother and Baby, Ragpicker" ca. 1889-90; rpt. in *The Complete Photographic Work of Jacob A. Riis,* Ed. Robert J. Doherty (Boston: G K Hall Publishers, 1987).

Fig. 2. Lewis Hine, "Ellis Island Madonna" 1905; kept in George Eastman House Still Photograph Archive, New York.

Fig. 3. Lewis Hine, "Italian Madonna" 1905; kept in George Eastman House Still Photograph Archive, New York.

Fig. 4. Lewis Hine, "Madonna of the Tenements" 1905; kept in George Eastman House Still Photograph Archive, New York.

It is no accident that Amin/Buerk would rely on such obvious imagery to illicit sympathy for famine victims. Due to its religious connotations, the image was recognizable; it had proven fruitful in other, unrelated social movements; and it allowed for the construction of the ideal victim. The Madonna image proves effective because it draws on a long tradition of depicting female humility and suffering. When looking at her, potential donors are exposed to an image of an innocent victim that appears (because she is constructed to appear so) too ashamed to look at the camera or to beg for help. She is the deserving poor—the humble and meek victim of circumstance. Rony Brauman argues, it is this type of 'pure' victim that Westerners prefer to see. He states that, within famine footage, "the only familiar landmark in this merciless, anachronistic landscape is this image of the victim," and that, in order for the media to pay said victims any attention, they must appear to be "100 per cent victim, a non-participant" (154). Since the Fourteenth Century she has been depicted as humble and meek; much like the Ethiopian

women in Buerk/Amin's documentary. [112]

Fig. 5. Duccio Di Buoninsegna, "Madonna and Child," ca. 1300, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 6. Andrea Solario, "Madonna with Green Cushion," 1507, Museum of Fine Art, Budapest.

In none of the Madonna with Child examples above, in neither those images painted by renaissance artists or those constructed by social reform photographers, does the Madonna look directly at the viewer. Her gaze is almost always directed downward at her child or her face betrays a blank look of quiet contemplation. Of course, the implications of the religious icons differ greatly to the work of Riis and Hine. The former images present a virgin worthy of God's praise, but humble in her greatness. The latter play with the humble virgin image in order to elicit compassion and financial support from wealthy Christian (specifically protestant) benefactors.[113] Riis and Hine produce what can be described as modified replicas or parodies of the Madonna with Christ designed that play on the notion of humility: they raise awareness and knowledge by presenting the immigrant mother as a deserving victim of circumstance. The Madonna of

[112]Due to the ways in which it has aged and its location in the Palace of the Popes, Avignon, the first recorded painting of the Madonna with Child, Simone Martini's 1341 fresco "Madonna of Humility.", cannot be reproduced here. For a detailed description of see Millard Meiss, "The Madonna of Humility" *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 18, No. 4. (Dec., 1936), pp. 435-465.

[113]For a detailed discussion of Riis' use of religious imagery to elicit support for social welfare see Gregory S Jackson, "Cultivating Spiritual Sight: Jacob Riis's Virtual-Tour Narrative and the Visual Modernization of Protestant Homiletics." *Representations*, No. 83. (Summer, 2003), pp. 126-166.

famine footage differs, however, from the Madonnas of the Renaissance or the New York social movements: she can be described as more of a dangerously hybrid 'bad copy,' than a 'humble' parody.

In "Bad Copies: The Colonial Aesthetic and the Manjaco-Portuguese Encounter" Eric Gable describes how the 'bad copy', which "V.Y. Mudimbe notes is the objectification of the colonialist disgust" (297), is a slippery concept that, in its ambivalence, creates anxiety within the colonialist and informs "how Westerners come to imagine people like the Manjaco in the Western Cultural Universe" (299). In his discussion of Manjaco art, Gable indicates that it is the 'native' that chooses to imitate the European colonials who are, in turn, never sure if they are being honored or being made fun of. In some respects, and as Gable wishes to stress, this form of "copying" so undervalued in the West, empowers the colonized individual. In contrast, when I describe female Ethiopian famine sufferers as evocative of the Madonna figure, as bad copies of a Western icon, I am not suggesting that Ethiopian women are empowered by being positioned thus or that they have any control over their construction as Madonna (their silence suggests they have no control over being filmed). I am asserting, however, that as "bad copy" the Ethiopian Madonna can easily be deplored by Westerners as an inferior version or an inauthentic replica of the famous religious icon, in the same way that the 'natives' who imitated their 'colonial masters' were also deplored.

In positioning her as bad copy, Buerk and Amin make it possible for the viewer to locate her as victim and to sympathize while simultaneously viewing her with disgust. She is 100% victim, but she does not—in her state of victim-hood—implicate the viewer. Unlike the Fourteenth Century Virgin Marys, Buerk and Amin's Madonnas do not

necessarily inspire humility among Western viewers, even when said viewers are inspired toward acts of Christian charity upon witnessing the famine. And Buerk and Amin's Madonnas are distinct from both those of the Renaissance and the New York social reform movement, not only as a result of the way in which Amin's shots and editing techniques distance the viewer of famine footage from the victim (such distance is not possible with stills), but because the women depicted in famine footage are black Africans.

Amin's first close-up is of a veiled mother holding her child. While the shot holds their images, and the child tries to suck on the cheek of the mother with dry gums, Buerk describes the scene we are witness to; the images are punctuated with words such as "hunger," "desperation," and "wasted people." The camera zooms out slightly to reveal the child's body, skeletal with ribs protruding. The implication is obvious; unlike Solario's fertile, luscious, and bountiful "Madonna with Green Cushion," this mother cannot produce milk for her child. Her body is "desperate," it is her child that suffers from "hunger," these are the "wasted people." Seconds later, in a line of people waiting for admittance to the camp, another mother with child is made visible. As the camera tracks down a line of new refugees it lingers upon them if only for a moment. She holds her child who, in turn, holds her breast. The breast lies limp in the child's hand, unproductive and ungiving. The image again implies that African women cannot feed their children; it insinuates that, in the words of African feminist, Ama Ata Aidoo, the African woman "is breeding too many children she cannot take care of, and for whom she should not expect other people to pick up the tab. She is hungry and so are her children" (39). The repetition of the image, now (in the early Twenty-First Century) a

photojournalist cliché, only serves to affirm the common Western assumption that this is not an anomaly, but the norm.

Despite being immediately recognizable, despite its usefulness as a symbol, there are times when this Madonna-esque image is not employed, perhaps because it is deemed inappropriate. The next mother and child pairing offers a stark contrast to the previous Madonnas presented. Approximately one-third of the way through the film Amin focuses the camera upon the head of a child in distress.

At first the child appears as peaceful as the previous, recovering child. However, both the camera movements and Buerk's narration soon rids the viewer of this misconception. The camera, which primarily focuses upon the child's head, quickly zooms out to present an almost full shot—an establishing shot—of a dying body. The mother of the child sits at the edge of the bed, unmoving. She is unable to touch her daughter because of the medical tubes and doctors that surround and separate the child. On one hand, the space between the mother and child—the replacement of the mother by Western medical apparatus—serves to reaffirm the stereotypical notion that the unproductive African mother cannot care for her offspring; on the other hand, the space is indicative of the gulf that separates life and death. Buerk narrates: "This 3-year-old girl was beyond any help. Unable to take food, attached to a drip, but, too late. The drip was taken away." As a way of distancing the audience, giving them time to digest the implications of the image, the camera then cuts to an image of a doctor removing medical tubes from the scene; as Buerk states, the child no longer needs them. Seconds later, the camera cuts back to a medium shot of the child's body. Buerk informs us that "only minutes later, while we were filming, she died." The mother remains still. She does not

touch the child even when the tubes have been removed.

As Buerk tells of the girl's death, in a hushed tone, Amin re-establishes the scene with a cut back (medium shot) to the upper half of the girl's body. The camera pauses there only for an instant before beginning a simultaneous slow tilt downward and zoom outward, moving from her head to her knees. The purpose of the camera's maneuvering is to expose the child's whole body, to show corporeal death in its entirety. But, as the camera moves over the warm corpse, an almost unnoticeable white hand (reminiscent of a "hand of God" perhaps)—anticipating this movement—reaches in from the lower right side and carefully removes the blanket from the child's lower half. The result is a full shot in which the dead child lies almost completely uncovered. Her emaciated legs and her immature genital area exposed for the whole world to see. Ironically, while they refuse to depict the act of dying in the Ethiopian refugee camp, Buerk and Amin seem to have no qualms displaying the genitalia of a dead three year old! One wonders if Western photojournalists would ever depict a white European or American child thus.

The invasion of the camera's gaze and the white man's hand into the dying child's space, onto the child's body, robs the child of all dignity, and yet the offensive nature of this pornographic image received little comment when aired. This footage is intended to horrify and shock, to elicit sympathy from Western audiences unfamiliar with the rigors and tragedies of mass famine. However, the psychic distress such an image may cause for the viewer is minimalized both by the distancing camera techniques and the ways in which the mother and child pairing is framed and staged. The rapid zooms and cuts not only serve to provide the observer with a more complete view of the dying child and her surroundings; they also serve to literally distance the viewer from the abject body that she

or he is so desperate to see. This distance—like the intrusion of the doctor with his tubes—anesthetizes the image, making it palatable. Buerk's white hand and hushed voice, the medical tubes and the doctor's exit, disrupt the biblical narrative and change the overall tone of the documentary, if only for a moment. What we see on screen is no longer biblical tragedy, but the transition of a living female to abject corpse. This image presents the worst fears of viewers, the closeness of death and abjection, while maintaining it safely within the camera frame, within an Ethiopian refugee camp. Despite the presence of the mother at her daughter's makeshift bedside, the image does not evoke the iconic Madonna with Child image. The living mother (even if she is on her last legs) is kept separate from her daughter and remains isolated in her grief. Buerk tells us that this has happened to her before, that "the mother had lost all her four children, and her husband." But, as Aidoo implies, what else do we Western viewers expect in Africa?

The fact that the Madonna with Child framing is not used in this instance is particularly revealing; it proves the limitations of Christian iconography as sanitizing. The icon is not replicated here because, to do so, would be to create psychic distress for the Western viewer. Even in a refugee camp in Northern Ethiopia, during the worst famine and drought in recorded history, the boundaries between life and death must be consistently established and reinforced. To display a mother holding her dead child would violate the taboo that separates the living from the dead. In addition, to present a live Madonna holding a dead child would also cause irreparable damage to the Madonna with Child icon.

The final image of mother and child in the documentary is again reminiscent of the Madonna with Child icon, not because it visually mimics the iconic image, but

because of the shared bond implied between the mother and the child and the relationship between the mother/child pairing and the earth. It differs with previous parodies in the sense that the mother and child depicted are dead and both are completely veiled, wrapped in a shawl. Their faces are not visible; all that the viewer sees is the feet of both, intertwined, as Buerk notes "This mother and the baby she bore two months ago, wrapped together in death."

There is an air of peace and tranquility to the image of the feet; the covering over of the bodies implies a respect for the dead. The viewer is again reminded that, even in Korem, there is a ritualized discarding of that which is abject; order is maintained with funeral rites and burial rituals. Death is rendered familiar and acceptable through this ritual. The same ritual of shrouding the dead that enables Ethiopians to maintain civilization in the face of such trauma is mimicked by the camera's refusal to invade and prod beyond the death shroud. This image is possible because it does not violate the boundary between life and death, but it does serve to reaffirm, once again, the inadequacy of Ethiopian mothers to provide sustenance for their children. The succeeding shot of a man crying, a man we assume to be husband and father to the dead, further strengthens the inferiority of the Ethiopian family unit, implying that the grieving father is as impotent and incapable as the dead mother, his wife.

Through the rituals of the media and of Western viewing habits, the African woman (and thus Africa) as abject, desirable, and taboo, is sanitized. Through careful mastery of the camera and the editing process, and as a result of the repetition her image receives, she is rendered unthreatening. As nothing more than a conduit or symbol, a bad copy of an ideologically heavily-loaded icon, as one that has no subjectivity, agency, or

control over her own specularization, the African woman—despite her potential to thrill or even titillate—becomes nothing more than a corporeal marker to be inscribed as the viewer sees fit. In essence, she is an empty signifier, to be used as Western image producers and consumers deemed appropriate, and to be provided meaning only through the context and composition of the image itself.

Chapter Three
Compassionate Consumerism and Generic Entertainment: The Sensationalism of Televised Images of Famine.

> Crushed hopes, youth antics, colonial wars, and winter sports are alike—are equalized by the camera (Susan Sontag).
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> I must have asked about the food that they as a family had had to eat. In response, the farmer lifted his daughter's ragged dress over her head. A pathetic, almost skeletal skinniness was revealed. The shock of her nakedness on the Korem road seemed to shame the little girl into stopping her tears, it shamed us into silence (Peter Gill, *A Year in the Death of Africa*).

During the 1980s numerous disasters, catastrophes, and atrocities were displayed on television screens throughout Britain and the U.S.. The bodies of captured and wounded freedom fighters in Sri Lanka, Grenada, and Northern Ireland; of earthquake victims in Mexico City and cyclones in Bangladesh; of the unlucky inhabitants of the cities of Bhopal and Chernobyl; of gay men and hemophiliacs dying of AIDS, all made major headline news during the era. However, perhaps none more so than the bodies of Ethiopian famine victims received such expansive and constant media attention.

In *Life, Death, and Aid: The Medicins Sans Frontiers Report on World Crisis Intervention*, former president of Médecins Sans Frontières, Rony Brauman argues that by the 80s the distinction between television new content and the content of other mediums was rapidly disappearing.[114] Brauman explains:

> Since the early 1980s, headlines in the press have largely reflected those of the television news, and the latter now shoulders the heavy

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[114]Ironically, the very technologies that enabled the television to dominate also made it impossible to determine how far television actually dominated other media forms. As Moeller indicates: "Since the 1980s, changes in computer and satellite technologies, mergers and acquisitions among the media and the creations of institutions such as CNN and *USA Today* have made it difficult, if not impossible, to extrapolate meaningful comparisons and conclusions over a long period of time" (4).

responsibility for deciding what it is, and what is not news—in effect, for creating news 153).

Brauman perceives of this shift in media dominance as a "heavy responsibility," a burden for television news. In contrast, Robert D. Kaplan sees television's take over as a "disturbing trend." He argues that "television's increasing ability to control the direction of a story and, by this very power, to *intimidate* the print media into following television's lead" (my italics, 34). This becomes a problem for popular journalist, Robert D. Kaplan, because television's domination results in "even the newspapers, which should have been less visually oriented, [becoming] fixated with the drama of mass starvation, while the historical and political context in which the famine belonged went largely unexplored (34). Part of the reason for the de-historicization and de-politicization of the print media has to do with what Moeller describes as a reduction of the news to images (16). Moeller goes on to state that the "right images can seize and audience's attention, but only the words can teach an audience the meaning of those pictures" (99). However, as the Buerk/ Amin documentary shows, often the words that accompany famine footage are stock phrases, so heavily loaded with multiple religious, cultural, an social meanings, that they could be interpreted—as John Fiske would imply—in a multitude of ways by diverse audiences.

By the 1980s, for the print media to keep up (never mind compete with television news) it had to focus less upon the politics of famine aid, and more upon sensationalist

aspects of Western aid intervention.[115] Western photojournalists and TV journalists, alike, tended to rely on stereotypical images of the famine and generalize about conditions in Ethiopia. And, like the television news, many popular newspapers, for instance, implied through omissions that all Ethiopians were affected and that all areas of the country were in trouble as a result of the famine.

Coverage of the famine relief movement was dominated by television news. As a result, representations of the famine tended to generalize and stereotype events throughout the Horn and relied on easily accessible and readable images—such as the Ethiopian Madonna with Child—to display and disseminated the famine experiences to mass, diverse audiences. Once the famine hit the news with Buerk and Amin's seminal report, media producers realized that famine sells, that a market for famine existed. They scurried to produce more coverage, quickly saturating the market with reports of the catastrophe and of the work of foreign aid workers attempting to limit the damage.

In the previous chapter I identified the local and global conditions that allowed the Ethiopian famine to take precedence over other news and I illustrated how television coverage constructed specific famine icons to garner the attention of Western television audiences. In this chapter, I attempt to interweave two separate yet connected theories in order to explain both the appeal and staying power of famine footage. First, I look at the

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[115]Moeller argues that the reason for the de-politicized shift from narrative to image, and the relatively new tendencies of the media to generalize events—or completely omit pertinent information—is a result of the Americanization of the media. This argument is, however, as flawed as arguments that equate globalization and Americanization. While it is true that the US produces a lot of news that is disseminated throughout the globe (in formats such as CNN and *USA Today*), the US is not the only producer of news for international markets, nor does the US have the monopoly on producing news that rely on a "repertoire of stereotypes" (43), to "distill" the news "down into the simple iconic image" (98), or to "have a vision of famine as something simple, huge, and apocalyptic" (100). Throughout the West, news producers relied on similar iconic images and responded to the famine as if to feed the starving would solve all the problems in the Horn of Africa.

ways in which the vehicle of television, by necessity, sensationalizes famine footage; and using Linda Williams' work on 'low body genres', I position the footage within the context of other genres of excessive entertainment. I argue that the famine footage appeals because it not only horrifies and shocks the viewer, it also affirms and entertains the viewer in similar ways as colonial era photographs of Africa, ethnographical film, and a number of popular genres of Hollywood movies. Second, borrowing from the work of cultural theorists Lauren Berlant, Susan Sontag, and transnational feminist Ranjana Khanna, I argue that famine footage also appeals on another level, in that it also provides an active role for the compassionate consumer who can appropriate trauma. My aim is to illustrate how and why, despite a certain lack of originality and tendency toward 'compassion fatigue', the televised footage of suffering became integral in inspiring youths in the United States and Britain toward activism. I argue that, had the famine coverage not been televised, then interest in the famine would have dwindled quickly. However, because of the ways in which television has the capacity to provide entertainment to diverse audiences and the manner by which televised famine coverage positioned the viewer as both active witness and compassionate sufferer, the famine remained of major focus for months after the first Buerk/Amin documentary was aired.

Televising Entertainment

According to Christian Lahusen and John Fiske, television must employ sensationalist techniques and rely upon un-narrativized or undernarrativized icons and symbols to present its stories. In his description of popular culture's focus upon the individual in *The Rhetoric of Moral Protest: Public Campaigns, Celebrity Endorsement and Political Mobilization*, Christian Lahusen describes how in which singularization and

personalization of political issues are often considered sensationalist; however, he points out that this is also the way in which pop culture texts can appeal to multiple viewers from diverse class, gender, ethnic, and national backgrounds. He claims that while there are problems with the sensationalization of news coverage, "independent, distanciated and comprehensive analytic focus" oftentimes detaches listeners and readers from the subject at hand (*The Rhetoric of Moral Protest*, 147). This explains not only why famine coverage focuses specifically upon individual starving figures as opposed to masses of refugees, but why it is a problem if most members of the general populace garner news from televisual sources.

In *Television Culture* John Fiske provides a strong rationale for the sensationalist tendency of television news when he describe how television interpellates diverse reading subjects (66) in diverse and partial ways (57). He argues that on one hand "the [television] viewer's response to interpellation is impartial, not total" because "the power of the text to position the reading subject is much less than cinema" (57); and on the other hand, television "to be popular, must not only contain meanings relevant to a wide variety of social groups, it must also be capable of being watched with different modes of attention" (73). Here Fiske indicates that television has the capacity to be read from multiple perspectives and can be read without paying full attention to the text. It is for this reason that television must, by necessity, generalize—even sensationalize—news; and because of the sensationalism and generalizations, television can evoke multiple interactions between viewer and text.

While I agree with Lahusen and Fiske's assertions, I argue that it is not simply the individualization and sensationalism that results in televised catastrophe's appeal to

diverse audiences. The reason why footage such as that shot by Amin and narrated by Buerk appeals to such large groups globally and continues to be reproduced in more contemporaneous exposés of Third World disaster is because it focuses on the body of the Third World victim. And the ways that said bodies are presented and displayed, the ways in which catastrophe texts and atrocity images reference numerous other (more conventional) viewing codes, accounts for the array of extreme and conflicting responses such texts and images evoke.

To comprehend how the body is depicted and functions in the Buerk/Amin piece it is useful to turn to Linda Williams' discussion of the three low body genres. In "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess" Williams explains that even though notions of corporeal excess have been thoroughly theorized in relation to 'mainstream' film, few analyses account for the excess presented in the low body genres of pornography, horror, and melodrama. Williams argues that excess needs to be theorized in these genres (1). In line with this, I would argue that the effect and function of portraying that which should be excluded in mediums other than film needs to be further examined; especially if, as Fiske indicates, television interpellates viewers in different ways to film. Television also differs from the films Williams describes because of its ability to combine elements of all three low body genres and, as a result, appeal to multiple and diverse audiences. In a sense the famine footage under consideration here serves as an almost perfect example of television's excessive show of excess.

Because famine footage, in my opinion, borrows elements from all three of the low body genres but presents them as one long continuous flow of somewhat forgettable images, Williams' theorization of these genres allows for a sophisticated reading of the

function, address, and appeal of televised famine footage. Her work provides insights into the diverse ways in which multiple viewers can witness (and thus interpret and appropriate) the famine; how depictions of famine bodies provide insight into Westerner's understanding of their own selves and cultures; and the ways in which Ethiopian women and children—the most abjected bodies in ethnocentric Western news texts—*function as sites for the playing out of erotic fantasies*. In addition, conceptualizing the footage as a mix of genres or as a text referencing numerous generic codes, provides insight into the specific ways in which television functions as a visual medium and the experiences and expectations of audiences in the 1980s.

Famine footage shares conventions from all three low body genres because of the ways in which it depicts famine bodies as excess and in the throes of ecstasy, its "apparent lack of proper esthetic distance [and] a sense of over-involvement in sensation and emotion" (5), and the fact that the "audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen" (6). Williams describes the bodies in each thus:

> Visually, ... [the] ecstatic excesses [in porn, horror, and melodrama] could be said to share equally a quality of uncontrollable convulsion or spasm—of the body "beside itself" with sexual pleasure, fear and terror, or overpowering sadness. Aurally, excess is marked by recourse not to the coded articulations of language but to inarticulate cries of pleasure in porn, screams of fear in horror, sobs of anguish in melodrama (4).

The same could be said for the Buerk/Amin documentary, a film that presents starving Ethiopian bodies as bodies that cannot control themselves, that spasm involuntarily, and that fail to maintain the boundaries that separate the internal from external because "[t]he limits or borders of the body are not fixed by nature or confined to the anatomical

"container," the skin."[116] Like the bodies of the three low body genres, excess is marked aurally by cries that could potentially be read as a type of perverse pleasure (as experienced in the throes of death), extreme fear, or mourning. However, whereas the three body genres are marked as somewhat distinct (all borrow elements from melodrama) by the ways in which they each separately present the excessive female body as that of "the sexually ecstatic woman, the tortured woman, the weeping woman" (5), the Buerk/Amin famine documentary exposes the presence of all three women in the refugee camps at Korem.

Various critics of the media's coverage of famine and NGOs use of sensationalist images (such as Kevin Carter's Pulitzer prize wining image of a dying girl being watched by a vulture) have described famine images as "hunger porn."[117] But how can such images be described as pornographic if, as Williams argues in *Hardcore: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible*, pornography is "the visual (and sometimes aural) representation of living, moving bodies engaged in explicit, usually unfaked, sexual acts with the primary intent of arousing the viewer" (30)?

Famine coverage does not represent the sexual act, but I believe that it is appropriate to designate films such as the Buerk/ Amin documentary as pornography—not necessarily because they expose and fetishize female breasts and the genitalia of women, girls, and young boys—but because they have the potential to arouse and offend the viewer, they are constructed and displayed purely for the gratification of the viewer, and they depict something akin to pleasure. What could be more pornographic than

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[116]Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) 79.

[117]Maren, *Road to Hell*, 158.

depicting death for the pleasure of the viewer? Amin's shots of the moving, dying, and then dead three year old girl—with her legs spread open and her clothing removed—are indeed akin to the pornographic.[118] And the fact that the documentary only alludes to but will not show the actual moment of death, the fact that the camera cuts to immediately before and immediately after, simply serves to emphasize the pornographic nature of the text. The final death throes of the child are unrepresentable on screen in the same way that the female orgasm, the "invisible pleasure of the insatiable woman" (*Hardcore* 180) is invisible (inferred) in all pornographic texts. Buerk's hushed voice over and the 'inarticulate cries' of the mother are the only proof we have of her death or that the moment of climax, of life, has passed. Like the female orgasm, the viewer can only presume that what she sees (or cannot see) is 'unfaked'. The pleasure comes, however, not simply from the suspension of disbelief, but from the curiosity the invisible 'arouses' in the viewer and the knowledge that looking provides.

While in some ways the naked women of famine footage evoke function as pornographic images, the Buerk/Amin documentary also draws from the horror genre through its representation of the starving Ethiopian as abject body or, more specifically, as Phallic Mother. The Madonnas of the Buerk/Amin documentary are, in the abjected state, reminiscent of what Julia Kristeva deems the archaic mother or the monstrous feminine who, in her very abjection, reminds us of the fragility of those boundaries that separate life from death, the clean and ordered bodily exterior from the filthy, defiled bodily interior. They are the ones who function upon the peripheries of the Symbolic, that threaten order, and must be rendered unthreatening. The black female body in particular

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[118]Barbara Ehrenreich asks if white child would be represented similarly in the Western press? Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue*, 22.

is presented as a liminal space that divides order from filth, excess from logic; there is a thrill when one occupies a position on the edge of excess; there is a thrill and fear when one risks being engulfed by abjection. And yet, because of the processes by which the African woman—in footage or fiction—is constructed and displayed, because we view her behind a glass screen and her excess is contained within the confines of said screen, the risk is minimal. That is, because she is contained within the image, both the filming and consuming of her purifies her. Thus, in the same ways as the monsters of horror—or the final sexually ambiguous girl that, according to Carol Clover, banishes the demon and redeems those at risk from the monster's clutches—the Ethiopian Madonna and her naked, dying child, is contained within the frame and rendered impotent or innocent by the narrative. The threat posed by the Other must be always be averted for the viewer to remain comfortable with her own illusory subject position as not-Other. The positioning of starving women as Madonna figures and the children as innocent children weak in the face of evil (mainly environmental disaster) have the power to disrupt but are always made safe.

The repetitive nature of famine footage, the ways in which the actual images are re-displayed multiple times and the iconic images are reproduced as stock images also aligns famine footage to horror films. In *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Clover argues that part of the appeal of horror is that the horror sequel is always expected to be the same.[119] Thus, even though critics of famine representations are correct to assert that popular cultural saturation of such images leads

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[119]Carol J. Clover *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, 10.

viewers to a state of compassion fatigue, Clover's notion of the repetitive appeal of the sequel explains how and why famine specific famine images are always in circulation.

It is the excess of physical emotion displayed by both the starving bodies and the viewer that renders famine footage akin to melodrama. According to Williams, melodrama can be defined as a genre "marked by "lapses" in realism, by "excesses" of spectacle and displays of primal, even infantile emotions, and by narratives that seem circular and repetitive (3). The Buerk/Amin documentary serves as a prime example of famine footage as melodrama because within the text the real lapses into the mythical as actual dying bodies become 'biblical' icons; the primal is specularized to the extreme as the camera captures humans in all states of extreme emotional distress; and, throughout the film, the narrative and the camera constantly returns to sensationalist symbols of famine and sites of death in Korem.

Williams' description of the spectacle of the body in all three low genres further emphasizes the connection between the three body genres and famine footage or, in other words, famine footage's reference to and borrowing of the generic codes of pornography, horror, and melodrama. Williams states:

> The body spectacle is featured most sensationally in pornography's portrayal of the orgasm, in horror's portrayal of violence and terror, and in melodrama's portrayal of weeping (4).

In presenting the body as spectacle, in visually alluding to orgasm, to terror, and to weeping, and in evoking similar reactions within the viewer, the Buerk/Amin documentary mimics all three genres. The body becomes spectacular in famine footage

through the physical portrayals of pain and death (akin to orgasm), of physical violence, and the crying or wailing of mourners.

According to Williams, in each low body genre are targeted toward and seemingly appear to appeal to very different segments of the population. She claims that porn is aimed at men, melodrama at women, and "gross-out horror" at "adolescents careening wildly between the two masculine and feminine poles" (4). If, as I have indicated, famine footage borrows characteristics and references codes from all three genres, then it is possible that it can (and does) appeal to men, women, and adolescents. Indeed, famine footage potentially offers something for everyone (at least in terms of Western audiences).

While no evidence exists to prove the effects of such images upon viewers or the demographic make-up of those exposed to the Buerk/Amin film, we know that the film was disseminated throughout the First and Second Worlds and precipitated huge responses among viewers globally. Figures on whether the death was witnessed prior to or after the emergence of the celebrity driven famine relief campaign are also unavailable. What is known, however, is that the documentary was aired on the BBC and (after some editing) on NBC in late October of 1984. It is equally as impossible to determine if youth audiences saw the original showings of the report, if they were inspired to support the famine relief movement because of the report, or if youth and adult responses to the film differed. What is known, however, is that by the time that the relief movement gained momentum and the first Ethiopia music single was produced by Band Aid in mid-November, millions of viewers in the U.S. and U.K. had been exposed

to Brokaw's "Faces of Death." Because the relief movement was born out of responses to the Buerk/Amin film, it is clear that the images had an impact.

To think of the Buerk/Amin documentary in terms of the low body genres is useful because it allows for a better comprehension of how—once the medium has gained the attention of the audience by sensationalizing, individualizing, and generalizing coverage of the famine—said audience looks, continues to look, and responds to the catastrophic and 'biblical' famine. Arguably, such footage appeals to audiences because they know how to interpret it. This is not simply because, having been saturated by the visual image, television audiences in the UK and the US have learnt how to read the low body genres, it is also because—since the colonial era—viewers have been effectively trained in ways to read Africa and each individual African.

Specularizing Africa

Since the colonial era images of Africa have played a specific role in the appropriation of African spaces, bodies, and signs. In "Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Imagination in Africa" Paul S. Landau explains how, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "[c]inema and still photography carried messages to and from Africa and the West, and their images were repeated and reproduced in ever new and distant contexts" (150). Landau explains why such images have always been fascinating for Westerners and the ways in which Western audiences use Africa and Africans as the Other against which they define themselves when he states that "the history of the European view of non-European peoples has always reflected European's history of imagining themselves" (2).

In "An Amazing Difference: Pictures and Peoples in Africa" Landau lists the typical ways that Africans are presented in photographs and via the moving images:

> Stanley and his bearers, Livingstone in a cauldron, the wise Bushman squinting in the Kalahari sun, bronze bodies, spears, lions, wild-eyed rites and wildebeest on the plains, all hang in front of Africa like a theatrical scrim. They reproduce themselves over and over again, fade into the dark, the squalid, the starving child and the refugee camp, the irrational war cry, before returning home in fresher forums: Saturday morning cartoons, *Star Wars* movies, and television commercials (5).

Here Landau indicates that there is little difference between depictions of Africans as noble savages and starving refugees. In listing the various ways in which Africa had been imagined in the Western consciousness in such a way, Landau indicates that there is little difference between these representations of Africa and Africans. Because it is decontextualized Africa, which "lives on almost solely in picture form" (5), becomes an empty signifier to be used in any way that media and visual culture producers see fit. The amalgamation of all types of Africans (of all African stereotypes) is worsened when such representations are televised because then each image is "easily subsumed into the flow of time, bypassing the mind" (Moeller, 44). As Moeller states, in agreement with Susan Sontag's notion that television is a series of underselected images each of which cancels its predecessors (18), "[t]he electronic images on television blur and melt away, while the still photograph stubbornly resists dissipation" (44). As a result of the function of television, Stanley's bearers become one in the same as the famine victims.

In *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology* visual anthropologist Jay Ruby supports Landau's assertions about the nature of representations of Africa and argues that such sensationalist and stereotypical representations of Africa

have, no matter what format the moving images are presented in, varied little over the past few centuries. Ruby describes early ethnographic films:

> Western spectators were as intrigued now by the exoticized African Other in the early 20s, when ethnographic films about culture were first created for public edification (Ruby, 8) and in the late 40s when Hollywood "saw the potential for productions that featured exotic locations and starred native people" (Ruby, 9).

The sterile woman of the dried African plains constructed in such images is placed within a narrative that misrepresents her as much as any Hollywood movie would; she continues the theme of the "human struggling with a hostile environment to eke out a living" established in early ethnographic films; she becomes—in the words of Paul S. Landau—a "decontextualized vision-bites" in the same way as almost all other popular cultural representations of Africa and Africa in the West since the advent of the camera.

Decontextualized, the African woman's image is subsumed easily into Western cultural repertoires upon which viewers draw in order to make sense of both new images and their own relationships to Africa. The cycle repeats itself: every new image of Africa displayed (even if said image is produced by indigenous peoples as Ruby suggests ethnographic films in the Twenty-First Century should be) is read through the lens of unconscious memories of images viewed previously.

> The Western public's assumptions about the continent and its peoples are informed by "decontextualized vision-bites" that all "replenish the tableau in an unending spectacular cycle of images" (5).

This cycle involves fiction as much as non-fiction texts. The cycle is, however, worsened in the 1980s as a result of the resurgence of action adventure film that used Africa as a backdrop for Western exploits. In such films, Africans tend to be represented in the

stereotypical ways that Landau describes and Africa becomes an empty space within which Westerners can enact their fantasies and discover their true sense of self.[120]

In *Artificial Africas: Colonial Images in the Times of Globalization*, Ruth Mayer illustrates how colonial imaginings of Africa continue to be replicated, particularly in popular texts produced for youth audiences. Mayer argues that the in the 1980s Hollywood produced a number of 'imperialist action adventures' within which Africa, as an exotic background "as cut off from the historical and political realities of imperialism as [H. Rider] Haggard's Kukuanaland" (35), that "provides not only a mass of easily impressible bystanders or easily dismissible victims but is eventually totally integrated into the logic of Western technology" (37). In many ways, the famine relief movement performed similar imperialist maneuvers to Hollywood blockbusters like the Indiana Jones trilogy or *Romancing the Stone* because it too depoliticized Africa and treated the continent as little more than a background with dismissible victims that, in famine relief texts, was totally integrated into and elided by Western technology.

It is perhaps not surprising that ways of both appropriating African spaces and representing African peoples when one considers how, as Stuart Hall argues, it has been difficult for Westerners to visually conceive of Africans in any other way, even in the post-colonial era. In *The Road to Renewal* Hall states:

> It has been argued that, although the famine movement is beginning to highlight these deeper aspects of the problem [of Third World debt], it has, like the older aid and emergency agencies, portrayed Africa simply as victim, linked to the charity of the West in what is essentially a paternalistic relationship. Again, there is something in this: it could hardly

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[120]This is still the case! Consider the ways in which Africa becomes a space for the Western man's adventure in Fernando Meirelles' *The Constant Gardener*. For further discussion of the use of space in this film see H. Louise Davis "Watch Them Suffer, Watch them Die: Depictions of African Mothers & Motherhood in Famine Footage & in Fernando Meirelles' *The Constant Gardener*." *Mothering and Popular Culture*. Ed. Elizabeth Podniek. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen University Press) *2008*.

> be otherwise, given the way our imperial history has shaped our political and cultural traditions (256).

Stereotypical representations of Africa have thus become part of the Western cultural repertoire. They are reproduced and reinforced over and over again by both fiction and non-fiction texts that, in claiming to represent Africa and Africans, do little more than present Africa as a backdrop for Western adventure and Africans as the Other against which Westerners can define themselves as active subjects.

What is interesting about famine footage, however, is the fact that on one hand Ethiopians (and later the Sudanese) function as representative of the typical one-dimensional, passive African figure; and on the other hand, Ethiopians stand apart from the rest of the continent. While in many ways they are not that dissimilar to Stanley's bearers and Bushman as all function in the same way for many Western viewers, the Ethiopian famine victims have their own specific location and ideological function. They may be as one-dimensional as the Africans presented in action adventure, but they have come to specifically represent Ethiopia (as distinct from other African nations) in Western consciousness. The famine victims are, paradoxically, at once figures the represent the whole continent Africa and that are specific to one region of Africa.

The fact that this image of Ethiopians has become set in the Western imagination is made most clear in a 1987 cover of *Time Magazine* and a 1994 image in *The Economist.*

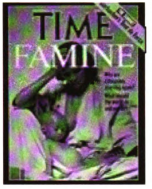

Fig. 7. Cover Photo for "Famine in Ethiopia," *Time* 21 December, 1987.

Fig. 8. Accompanying photo to "Ethiopia, Voting of a Sort," *The Economist* 4 June 1994: 44.

The cover of *Time* relies on this now worn out icon of the Madonna with Child to immediately cue the viewer—the potential reader—as to the nature of the cover story. Yet, unlike in the famine footage, this mother/child pairing has been removed of all context except for the brief narratives provided by the ethnocentric captions. The background has been airbrushed to make the pair appear in a vacuum—as if the "Ethiopian problem" itself occurred in a global vacuum. The caption indicates that, only three years after the Buerk/Amin documentary caused worldwide sensation, the starving Ethiopian woman and her emaciated child, iconic as they may be, are considered passé. The caption that accompanies the image reads "Why are Ethiopians starving again?" The sense of Western boredom, of "compassion fatigue" is made evident by the use of the word "again," and perhaps explains why now, in the Twenty-First Century, images of starving Africans seem to have little effect upon Western audiences.[121] The second caption, "What should the world do—or not do?" is typical of the Western need to deny responsibility for occurrences in Africa. Despite Ethiopians' potential to bore Western

[121] The one exception to this rule is Chris Carter's picture of Vulture with Child, an image that caused so much controversy and personal agony that Kevin Carter killed himself. In light of this, one must ask if Carter is really to blame. Indeed, he is a product of a Western society that advocates the non-interference policy, not only when photographing an Othered human being, but when observing photographs. Carter's image was designed to shock, to affect change. What it succeeded in doing was displacing the blame for the girl's death away from either Africans or the vulture, and onto one white man acting as messenger.

audiences, the starving child is once again referenced in the image accompanying *The Economist*'s report on the first democratically held Ethiopian elections in 1994. Susan Moeller explains how this particular image of a child standing next to a container of water that, in shape and size, looks surprisingly similar to a ballot box leads Susan Moeller to exclaim that "[d]espite the Ethiopians' success at averting famine in 1994...they are still often represented as the helpless victims they had been in 1984" (104).

Like the Buerk/Amin documentary, such tabloid-esque images suggest that there is nothing more to Ethiopia than refugee camps, that nothing exists beyond the camps, and that all that is 'outside' is death. This death is, as the documentary shows, either contained within abject women's bodies by the woman's skin or (if that fails) the camera's frame or shrouded at the edges of the camp in designated gravesites. The cover of *Time* and the image presented in *The Economist* present different sentiments to the Buerk/Amin famine documentary; the stories are generated at different times and have different aims and audiences in mind. Nevertheless, the editors/producers of both magazines choose to use the same methods as Buerk and Amin to attract the attention of potential viewers and readers.

For Christian Lahusen, the tendency to highlight the plight of the individual has a specific ideological function. Lahusen argues that in popular media depictions of tragic events:

> The individual becomes the primary symbolic and narrative device to capture and represent political issues. These are then communicated in terms of concrete individual experiences and actions: e.g., singular experiences of inequalities and acts of discrimination, experiences of environmental problems or acts of pollution. These problems are

> symbolized by individual actions and hardships and narrated in terms of individual biographies and testimonies (147).

The Buerk/Amin documentary provides no exception to this rule. The hoards are depicted only to be reduced to "this girl," "this group of children," and "this mother." The personal stories of the worst afflicted, of the most photogenic become representative of the famine as a whole. The dying three year old and her mother, who has already lost her husband and four children, function as metonymic, as the part that represents the whole.

For Christian Lahusen the individualization of catastrophe intensifies the sensationalism. In the case of the famine, such sensationalism results in the generalization of both the famine experience and of Ethiopia in general. All Ethiopians are perceived as suffering the same fate as the ones depicted on the television news. This not only has the effect of provoking outrage among audiences in the West and eliciting support for the humanitarian agencies working in the Horn; but it also reifies assumptions about Ethiopians as unproductive and helpless. As Ama Ata Aidoo suggests in "The African Woman Today," such footage results in the 'setting' of an image of the "African woman in the mind of the world" (39). She states that the starving African woman:

> ... has become a cliché of Western photojournalism that the African woman is old beyond her years; she is half-naked; her drooped and withered breasts are well exposed; there are flies buzzing around the faces of her children; and she has a permanent begging bowl in her hand (Aidoo, 39).

The image Aidoo describes is, as the Buerk/Amin documentary and its successors prove, a commonplace image. The African woman is, like the unyielding African earth, 'old', 'withered', and 'well exposed'. These types of images, of starving Africans dying in their

thousands, along side the formulaic narratives of sympathy that accompany them, were perfected during the mid-80s through the specularization of emaciated bodies in Ethiopia and the Sudan. On the Ethiopian planes of Tigray and Wollo, and the Sudanese regions of Darfur, Kordofan, and Port Sudan, the black African became the emblem of a failing continent; an Other whom—in her most abjected state—Westerners could define themselves in opposition. The black African mother with child, in particular, would be a figure used over and over again to represent the problems of Africa—later in the Twentieth Century, she would also become a symbol of the latest African plague, AIDS.

As the focus on the individual is so typical to news coverage in general and, more specifically, ethno-entertainment featuring Africa, it comes as no surprise that Western viewers would know how to read the individuals depicted on screen. If this is the case then it is possible to assume that viewers, already aware of the cues that call for humanitarian action, responded to the Buerk/Amin documentary in such a manner because they had been trained to do so. But how does this notion account for the fact that prior calls for action had been ignored or that an unprecedented number of viewers responded? When, as Lilian Brandt argued, "[t]ragic photographs of starved children and skeleton babies fail now to bring the response which could have been counted on a few years ago?"[122] Could it be that the Buerk/Amin film was more effective at providing said cues, at reaching mass audiences, at evoking compassion? While it is necessary to acknowledge how the Buerk/Amin documentary surpassed previous footage of starving Africans in terms of both quality and sensational evocativeness, I would argue that the impact of the film had as much to do with the "constantly shifting matrix of unconscious

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[122]Rozario, "Humanitarian" 420

memories" (Silverman, 4) shared by audiences in the 1980s was more expansive than the repertoire of cultural images of previous generations. In other words, I am arguing not only for the specificity of the Buerk/Amin documentary or the medium upon which the famine was displayed (the television), but also of the audience that watched it. Audiences in the 1980s not only drew experiences from an excessively large repertoire of cultural images, but they had experience in viewing the excessive human body—bodily excess—in a number of contexts.

Responding Appropriately

In her introduction to *Compassion* Lauren Berlant makes a distinction between her own reading of viewers' responses to images of pain and horror, and that of Susan Sontag. While Sontag asserts such images arouse a sense of compassion and helplessness or, more specifically, feelings of 'impotence', Berlant argues that such images of pain empower Western audiences. This empowerment is possible because the images elicit compassion, which in turn encourages the performance of compassionate 'good acts'. For Berlant, these 'good acts' not only provide the actor with agency (9), but also allows them access to "social membership" or even citizenship in a climate of compassionate conservatism. According to Berlant, in a climate of compassionate conservatism, one's good acts determine one's rights to citizenship—those youth that performed acts of charity performed good acts and, as a result, were no longer necessarily excluded from the right to be a citizen. Their good acts also proved that they were responsible consumers (spending their spare cash on 'charitable' goods for compassionate reasons).

Elements of both Sontag and Berlant's arguments seem correct; it would seem that the images do render the viewer impotent (perhaps as a result of unconscious

identifications), but, in an attempt to combat said impotence, the viewer tries to perform compassionate 'good acts'. These acts indeed provide the viewer with agency, thus empowering her. The images inspire not only a sense of impotence, but also—potentially—a sense of superiority. Through the processes of interpellation, the viewer is hailed as a subject in response to the object on screen. This subjectivity (illusory as it may be) is contingent upon the figure in the image functioning as Other and, subsequently, as lacking non-subject. In anthropocentric societies, the human subject can read herself as more significant, as of more value than the de-humanized object on screen.

The subject- viewer also has the potential to feel morally superior to the famine 'victim' on screen: after all, the famine victim is, at best, a woman failing to live up to Western notions of effective motherhood, and at worst, an agentless victim who (at least in the depoliticized context in which she is presented) can be held responsible for her own victimhood. The possible sense of superiority developed by the viewer also spurs her into action, encouraging her to perform compassionate 'good acts' (such as further consumption, activism, and donating) as said acts have the potential reinforce her illusions of subject-hood, her sense of agency in contrast to the agentless victim, her sense of moral superiority over the Ethiopians that have—unlike her—failed to function as productive and active citizens of their nation.

Arguably, the famine images, the starving Madonna as bad copy, inspire both psychic reaction and compassionate good acts, both of which allow the viewer-actor to feel a sense of worth and encourage an awareness that her local actions can have a global effect. This process of turning the painful image into an empowering compassionate act is

a very effective way to disavow the pain of the image. The process distances the viewer exponentially from the 'victim', allowing her to deny any of the ways in which she might be marginalized like the impoverished Ethiopians on screen (many of whom were suffering in the mid-1980s as a result of their religious or political affiliations or social class), and, at the same time, enables her to develop connections with others who behave similarly, as compassionate actors. In *The Road to Hell*, Michael Maren supports the idea that providing aid helps both individuals and nations develop a sense of self worth when he states that "aid is an offering, an act of compassion and sacrifice" (23). Rony Brauman connects the idea of sacrifice and community when he states: "What we face here is a problem in society: compassion, otherwise known as solidarity, is tending to degenerate into pity, when it should be growing into calls for justice" (158). Brauman's comment is particularly interesting because it explains how the viewer is able to develop a sense of moral superiority over the victim and then justify compassionate behavior on behalf of the victim; pity is obviously a deciding force. Perhaps pity, rather than solidarity, is the mobilizing goal of Christian iconic imagery.

It is possible to conclude that, in order to believe in the validity of compassionate good acts, the actor-viewer must never consider the means by which either the bodies or the images that inspire said acts are *constructed.* Thus, the viewer invested in compassionate acts does not seek out more information pertaining to the famine, or attempt to understand it on a more complex level; she remains happy with the images she sees on the television and feels gratification when she sees images of people providing aid because, in these images, she sees a reflection of herself; and she feels anger when she see images that expose how, as a result of aid distribution problems and corruption,

her good intentions have gone awry. Berlant explains how it is necessary for many viewers to maintain the illusion of 'social optimism', to deny that such 'optimism' has costs because "we do not like to be held responsible for consequences we did not mean to enact."

In "Remedying Globalization and Consumerism: Joining the Inner and Outer Journeys in 'Perfect Balance'," Judith Simmer Brown describes compassionate consumerism in more negative terms than Berlant; in her critique of unintended consequences, she argues that compassionate consumers perform acts based on "idiot compassion." She states:

> It is called idiot compassion for two reasons: First it is an impulsive response based on insufficient understanding of the true nature of reality. Second, this impulsive compassion quickly becomes ineffective, exacerbating suffering and confusion in others, and precipitating discouragement and depression in oneself (41).

Simmer Brown goes on to discuss the ways in which compassion is a response to despair and how, at least in the United States (and I would argue equally in the U.K), consumerism allows for the repression of said despair while continually perpetuating consumerism. She claims that "[w]hile we may be aware of the damage consumerism is doing to our own culture and to the exploited "supplier" cultures, it is threatening to look closely at the entire pattern and to compassionately act" (43). Thus, according to this argument, it is possible to conclude that consumerism relieves psychic threat in much the same way as the containment of Ethiopian Madonna. Consumerism is a way to both distance oneself from the unspeakable, the unrepresentable abject. To consume is to

empower oneself—the act of consuming (particularly when consumerism is inspired by compassion) allows the consumer to conceive of herself as an agent with the potential to solve the world's problems. At the same time, however, consumerism simply continues the same patterns that are responsible for global strucutral inequities in the first place. This is, of course, the case with the famine relief movement—news agencies and charities encourage consumption to 'aid' those in need, but such consumption only serves to encourage further consumption (compassionate and idiotic as that may be) and often fails to effect the real conditions of the Madonnas and their children exposed to the hardships of famine and the dangers and diseases of refugee camps.

It is impossible to determine exactly how viewers react to the images presented in the Buerk/Amin documentary, to decipher how far consumers of images of famine or famine relief products are aware of the ways in which they perpetuate patterns of inequity, or to ascertain how far the western viewer is simultaneously and paradoxically rendered impotent and empowered through the act of looking at African bodies in pain. However, it is clear that western viewers were affected, if not traumatized, by the famine footage displayed on their television screens. While we cannot be sure exactly what about the images inspired viewers to start or support famine relief, I have offered possible explanations for both the documentary's appeal and viewers' charitable responses. I would add, however, that the film's appeal and the response it precipitated is also resultant of the feminization and Christian contextualization of the victim which, I suggest, allowed viewers to appropriate not only the victim's image and experience, but the trauma of famine. And it is this appropriation of the trauma of famine that ultimately explains how and why the famine relief movement and the ethic of compassionate

consumerism grew out of one eight-minute news documentary.

In her presentation given recently at the "Feminist Publics: Mapping Difference, Building Coalitions" conference at Michigan State University, Ranjana Khanna described the problematic nature of narratives of genocide and ethnocide (within the framework of trauma studies) that often place emphasis on the pain experienced by the witness as opposed to the 'disposable' human victim. While she does not discount the trauma caused by witnessing horror and pain—by watching the Other suffer—Khanna asked for trauma studies to refocus attention away from the witness and challenge studies that posit the witness as victim. While I recognize Khanna's plea, it seems impossible to shift attention away from notion of witnessing and traumas, at least when considering how the Ethiopian famine was specularized, its appeal, and the consequent evolution of media representations of catastrophe. This is because, if one attempts to understand how Third World catastrophe affects the West, it is absolutely imperative to take into account how the West *views* catastrophe. Any reading of famine relief would be incomplete if one did not account for viewer reaction.

First, as demonstrated by the movement's evolution further and further away from the victim toward the donor, the witness of famine footage is positioned as the privileged player in the Ethiopian famine: the one starving is elided by the very people attempting to put an end to famine. This becomes more evident in later, in famine relief (as opposed to famine) texts. Capitalizing on the advent and usability of new visual, communications, and satellite technologies, both aid agencies and the media produced an excess of images of desperate and dying Ethiopian women and children in attempts to raise funds and support for global aid programs. At the same time, in response to the types of narratives

and images produced by Buerk and Amin, popular famine relief texts such as the Ethiopia songs and videos "Do They Know It's Christmastime" and "We Are the World," and the televised Live Aid benefit concert footage marked a shift away from the specularization of starving Ethiopian as victim. Such popular "charity rock" texts focused upon celebrity and youth famine relief donors throughout the U.S. and U.K. They provided viewers with idealized figures with which to identify, and with positive reflections of U.S. and U.K. consumers as compassionate citizen figures. In their attempt to raise mass amounts of money, appeal to diverse audiences and markets, the famine relief texts, ironically, tended to elide the intended recipient of famine aid and interpellate viewers as youthful consumer-donors.

Second, through the act of witnessing, the U.S. or U.K. viewer appropriates the trauma presented on screen and, to some extent, takes possession of the famine as the culture's chosen trauma of that moment—as if Westerners had no trauma of their own to claim or to work through. As I illustrate throughout this dissertation, the 1983-85 Ethiopian famine became a chosen trauma for members of the general populace (particularly youths) throughout the U.S. and the U.K. In witnessing the trauma on the television news, the viewer ultimately took control of the famine by consuming and interpreting the images of abject Ethiopian Madonnas in Buerk/Amin documentary as she saw fit. In essence, the footage provided the witness, aroused by sympathy and a sense of superiority, a cause around which to unite and build community. Witnessing became an act. And, through their shared experiences as witnesses—as active consumers and donors—famine relief participants became part of a community, proved their right to citizenship and as a community of compassionate viewers, and reinforced retrograde

values at the expense of those denied the right to citizenship in both the First and Third World.

Chapter Four
Compassionate Consumerism and Celebrity Outreach: The Evolution of Famine Relief Texts and Merchandise.

> The famine fashion turned into a safe political issue for the pop aristocracy that all of a sudden heard a new melody: swing low, sweet chariot.[123]

Outraged by the images of emaciated children and their desperate parents, singer-songwriter Bob Geldof called the British public to act. With friends and like-minded supporters, Geldof established Band Aid, a charity to help prevent famine in Africa, and produced the first of a number of Ethiopia singles designed to raise funds and awareness of the plight of Ethiopian (and later Sudanese) refugees. The Band Aid single "Do They Know It's Christmas," released in November 1984, featured numerous best-selling British artists and became the fastest selling single to hit the U.K. charts, selling three million records and holding the Christmas Number 1 position in the charts for five weeks. The single raised over ten millions British pounds. On the 5th March 1985, recording artists in the United States followed suit. Guided by Geldof and Harry Belafonte, forty-five recording artists joined together under the banner of 'United Support of Artists for Africa' (USA for Africa), and recorded "We Are the World." Like its British counterpart, the song raised millions,[124] staying at number 1 in the U.S. for four weeks and the U.K. for two.[125]

The Ethiopia singles can be described as anthems for the famine relief movement. in line with the famine footage, they set the tone for the movement and become integral

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[123]Rijven "Rock for Ethiopia" 199

[124]According to Roy Shuker, with merchandise, "We Are the World" grossed over $50 million (*Understanding Popular Music*, 237).

[125]Both "Christmas" and "We Are the World" were international hits; in addition, they inspired similar Ethiopia singles such as Germany's "Nackt Im Wind," Canada's "Tears Are Not Enough," and South Africa's "Operation Hunger."

to the movement's frame. The songs mark the moment of the famine relief movement's emergence, which allowed for the evolution of the ethic of compassionate consumerism. Because the ethic of compassionate consumerism emerged out of the famine footage that inspired but also preceded the famine relief movement, and because the movement would not have gained momentum or definition without the ethic's prior emergence, it should not be assumed that the ethic of compassionate consumerism and the famine relief movement developed at the same rate. The ethic that informs the movement always seems to be one step ahead of the movement itself. This chapter determines how the ethic of compassionate consumerism shifted as the movement emerged, how the texts produced by the movement affected the role of the compassionate consumer, and the ways in which famine relief texts became pivotal in defining the limits of compassion and widened the number of potential sites for and objects of compassionate consumption.

Celebrity response to the famine precipitated a shift in both famine coverage and kick started what was to become the first global relief movement. The media quickly shifted gear, choosing to focus on the more aesthetically pleasing celebrities banding together to fight hunger, rather than upon those dying. In the news, images of the famine were replaced by images of celebrities gathering together record the Ethiopia singles and advertise the famine relief movement. On the radio, reports of mass starvation were juxtaposed with the sounds of celebrities singing to "feed the world." And in homes, schools, and communities throughout Britain and the United States, youths banded together to support their favorite celebrities in their fight to alleviate hunger in Ethiopia.

Both the UK song "Do They Know It's Christmas" and the US equivalent "We Are The World," recorded four months later, reinforced the ethnocentrism evident in the

famine footage previously discussed, but they did so in such a way that made each song culturally specific. The songs encourage their audiences to identify both with the celebrity singing and the culturally specific sentiment expressed in each song. With "Christmas" UK audiences were hailed by a variety of extremely popular 80s white male pop stars singing lyrics that supported traditional British imperialist assumptions and praying on charitable sentiments specific to the Christmas period (like the famine footage, "Christmas" was timely). With "We Are" US audiences were hailed by a diverse group of popular and established musicians from a variety of eras and genres.[126] The song spoke to the US's diverse population, asking them to come together as a diverse yet universally connected community. It played on emerging ideas of multicultural unity and political correctness that were simultaneously produced by popular US television shows such as *The Cosby Show* and *Different Strokes*. Despite their cultural specificities, however, and like many other popular culture texts, both songs traversed and translated well on the other sides of the Atlantic.

In the same way that it is possible to argue not only for the specificity of the Buerk/Amin documentary or the medium upon which the famine was displayed (the television), but also of the audience that watched it; it is possible to argue that the Ethiopia singles were the first social movement anthems of their kind and that an already existent and anticipant market of compassionate consumers was waiting for this kind of text to be produced. The songs share many similarities with the footage that they reference through the lyrics. In addition, they too represent excess both in the mind's eyes images the lyrics inspire and the emotions expressed through the singers' voices and the

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[126]The diverse group of artist participants included Harry Belafonte, Michael Jackson, Ray Charles, Cynid Lauper, Kenny Loggins, and Willie Nelson, to name but a few.

words they sing. However, the ethic of compassionate consumerism inspired by the footage alters as a result of the songs because, while the famine footage positioned viewers as active witnesses, the Ethiopia singles provided them an even more active role by interpellating them not only as members of a compassionate community but also as potential donor-purchasers of famine relief products and accompanying merchandise.

While many scholars have provided valuable insights into the problematic assumptions and effects of the famine relief texts (in particular T.V. Reed, Will Straw, and E. Ann Kaplan) no one has, as yet, positioned the UK and US Ethiopia singles, cover art, and merchandise within their cultural context *and* simultaneously performed a content analysis of "Do They Know It's Christmas" and "We Are the World." In order to fully comprehend both the material and ideological currency of such texts—and, ultimately, the way in which compassionate consumer driven movements have become part of a Western tradition—it seems pertinent to deconstruct the type of language and metaphor used by the movement. Without a thorough comprehension the content of famine relief texts and the ways they potentially 'train' the viewer/listener, analyses of the movement (its texts, appeal, address, and failures) are incomplete.

While I am cognizant of the fact my placing of emphasis on the donor and charity rock merchandise has the potential to elide Ethiopian (and later Sudanese) famine sufferers, I believe that, in order to comprehend and remedy the problems of popular famine coverage and famine aid in the West, it is necessary to examine and expose the substitutions and ideological slippages in coverage of the movement as much as it is necessary to reveal the veil of famine footage. Thus, my work demonstrates the fruitfulness of examining not only how the African 'victim' is quickly displaced in

Western media texts and public consciousness alike, but also what she is displaced by.

The media's shift in focus not only aided the famine relief course. Indeed, it was an extremely savvy maneuver on the part of media producers, especially when one acknowledges the cost of filming in Africa versus the cost effectiveness, profit, and opening up of new markets that result from filming and displaying the famine relief movement. For this reason it is also pertinent to consider the role that the media played in constructing the suffering commodity in music video: Will Straw's point about the role of the industry should not be taken lightly, particularly when the "waiving of record label, distributor and retailer profits is much more unprecedented and spectacular than the gathering of artists for charity purposes" ("Rock," 204). Arguably, it is as a result of the media and music industries that the shift in focus from depicting the starving in Ethiopia to portraying those celebrities involved in famine relief occurred so quickly. Chris Paterson, Robin Palmer, and Paul Harrison's have all indicated in their discussion of media agencies in Africa that providing coverage of most regions outside of South Africa is both expensive and difficult. Thus, it is not surprising that news providers looked for alternatives. Not only did the celebrity outrage at famine and ensuing movement provide a cheaper, more local alternative, it was hot, new, and provided follow-up stories on almost a daily basis. Such stories reinforced the appeal of the famine and the discourse of compassionate consumerism that the movement relied upon.

Substituting Famine

The Buerk/Amin documentary elicited compassion from viewer/listeners by presenting images of dying people (specifically women and children) that were both fascinating and repulsive. Because these emotionally charged images were so shocking

but offered audiences access to experiences they would not otherwise have, they encouraged audiences not only to consume further but to act on behalf of the starving represented. However, such images can—as Susan Moeller indicates—only maintain consumer interest for so long before they lead to compassion fatigue (2). Therefore, in coverage of the famine relief effort, images of starving people are limited, and are often replaced by celebrity fundraisers. In the press and television news coverage, rock stars functioned as substitutes emblematic of famine victims, but more pleasing and entertaining to look at and listen to. At this point, the suffering of the famine body (which is often appropriated by the witness who suffers upon viewing the images) was co-opted and altered by the rock star that performed suffering in an attempt to display or prove his or her sincerity. Compassion was elicited through possible identification with a star, as opposed to through the objectification of a famine victim. As the celebrity moved from the role of witness to activist, audiences of the Ethiopia singles identifying with the multiple singers also (if only vicariously) shift from witness to activist.

Susan Moeller describes compassion fatigue simply as the point when audiences are bored with representations of catastrophe and suffering. I believe that it is this sense of fatigue (which Geldof himself suffered) along with the industry's fear of audience's short attention span, which led to the series of shifts in focus and substitutions of famine bodies by depictions of celebrities responding to the call to act. This shift in focus from Third World to British and US celebrity bodies, from the plains of Africa to studios in London and Burbank, was accompanied by shifts in the type of media used to 'advertise' famine and famine relief and the invention of new campaign strategies specific to famine relief. In addition, media emphasis shifted from the specularized to the consumer: no

longer were audiences asked simply to consumer and witness the trauma on screen. They were hailed as potential actors, donors, and participants. At the same time, however, they were still encouraged to both watch and listen to their television screens.

Media agencies quickly took advantage of public interest in celebrity altruism and charity rock consumables; the US and UK press covered hundreds of stories about Band Aid in the first weeks after the Buerk/ Amin documentary was aired; news channels produced stories about the movement for diverse audiences; and music programs and channels on both the radio and television repeatedly aired the songs, interviews with participants, and advertisements for the Band Aid cause. As a result of the extensive public and industry interest in the movement, campaigners attempting to raise money and awareness for those affected by catastrophe in the Third World were offered an array of new opportunities to fundraise and advertise. Their interests became increasingly tied up with those of media agencies and corporate sponsors who, working together, had the capacity to reach wider donor pools. The combination of music and television appealed to a certain segment of youth that may not have been interested in the nightly news.

According to Rob Latham, television had been the chosen media of the Baby Boomers when they were young(15). Latham argues that it was not until the emergence of music television that the younger generation, Generation X and Thatcher's Children, became attached to the television screen.[127] The fact that famine relief produced music texts and relied upon the television to transmit said texts only served to make famine relief more appealing to a diverse and broad audience base. This combination of music

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[127]I think this assertion is too simplistic and is complicated by John Fiske who argues, in *Media Matters*, that radio was the Boomers chosen media format (15). However, Latham is correct in his assumptions about music television because it did appeal to younger segments of the population—the young among youth.

and television, under the banner of famine relief, had the potential to unite the Boomers with Generation X and Thatcher's Children. They were not only coming together as the result of a specific cause, but because their preferred medias were being combined and advanced.

Feeding the World

In a presentation given in 1985, Stan Rijven provided an overview of the numerous singles produced throughout the West in aid of the starving in Ethiopia.[128] He labeled the series of 'opportunistic' and 'positivist' pop songs the "Ethiopia Singles" and describes their evolution thus:

> In less than nine months [after the release of Band Aid's "Do They Know It's Christmas?"] the Band-Aid phenomenon had grown from an incidental seed to a baby fostered by hundreds of pop parents; in no time Band-Aid became a word in the international *pop-vocabulaire*. As a new tropical disease, or to put it more precisely, a new philanthropic disease, Band-Aids spread all over the pop world (199).

We can surmise at least two reasons why the concept of charity rock spread so wildly throughout the West, producing a total of at least fourteen Ethiopia singles. Firstly, it is possible that, as Rijven argues, both celebrities and donors in various Western nations wished to jump on the bandwagon, so to speak. And secondly, as most of the songs share the same naïve ethnocentric assumptions (having built on the "Christmas?" prototype), it would be safe to assume that the Ethiopia singles are born out of a shared Western culture of paternalism and pity.

And, indeed, almost all of the Ethiopia singles draw upon already existent cultural knowledges and assumptions. This is particularly the case for the original Band Aid

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[128]Rijven, along with Will Straw, presented on the "Rock for Ethiopia" panel at the Third Annual International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) Conference.

single and its US cousin "We Are the World," both of which were produced in extremely conservative climates that allowed citizens little opportunity to show compassion or ability to resist the stone-cold rhetoric of individualism. Arguably, the songs appealed to audiences because they worked on a dual level—the sentiments expressed were, on the one hand, typical of mainstream conservative values and, on the other hand, resistant to Reagan and Thatcher's unsympathetic laissez-faire attitudes. The songs and videos fitted into what Kaja Silverman might describe as an already existent 'cultural repertoire' of sounds and images while, simultaneously, pushing the boundaries of rock music and rock culture.[129] Despite their similarities—despite the similarities in their success in both the US and the UK charts—the songs themselves, and the actions of those involved in their production, reveal a cultural specificity that, although it translates well across international borders, proves a distinct difference in the ways that British and US celebrities and youths position themselves in the global scene.

In his discussion of the British Band Aid single T.V. Reed describes how the song supports not only Western traditions, but Westerners conceptions of themselves, when he describes how "Christmas" was "perfectly conceived to play into those seasonal spasms of humanist "good will toward men" that get engraved on Christmas cards and fill the buckets of armies of salvation of various sorts every holiday season in both the United Kingdom and the United States" (159). Reed accurately implies that purchasers of the song feel the same sense of satisfaction and self-gratification when buying Band Aid records and memorabilia that they might feel when they support any other charitable endeavor.

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[129]Silverman, *Threshold of the Visible*, 3-4.

The song itself has all the makings of a typical Christmas hit single: not only was it a song that unified many artists who would typically compete for the number #1 spot, but it had a catchy tune, constant reminders of the joys of the season, and somewhat banal but sentimental references to Christianity. The success of the single becomes obvious when one considers the statistics: it sold over ten million copies and raised eight million pounds. This is not surprising, however, as not only was the timing perfect "in marketing terms" (Rijven, 200) but, as Stan Rijven points out rather caustically, "[i]n Britain, Christmas singles, even if they are sung by Barry Manilow and Julio Iglesias in duet, sell like Christmas trees" (200).

The song's positivist lyrics are, primarily, indicative of Geldof's lack of awareness of either the realities of the famine in the Horn or of Ethiopian culture in general (a lack that, to his credit, he soon made up for), as many contemporaneous popular culture and academic critics accurately illustrate, it is littered with imperialist overtones. Reed suggests that the song "typifies the narcissistic self-importance and ethnocentric disregard for cultural differences that permeate much of this [Band Aid/ Live Aid] project" (159). I would argue that the main problem with the single is, however, the fact that it simply and uncritically reiterates exactly the same sentiments and imagery that the U.S. and U.K. media had relied upon—and developed—in order to represent the famine since the beginning. As I have explained previously, the use of religious iconography and metaphor to describe the famine made it both palatable and comprehensible to American and British viewers; the fact that Band Aid (and later USA for Africa) rely on the same time of worn out visions of Ethiopia is not only a result of the fact that Geldof saw the Buerk/ Amin documentary at the end of October and

managed to rally the celebrity troops to produce a single by Christmas. Tired Christian imagery has been conveniently used, again and again, to depict all manner of problems in the Horn; the same type of images are still in use—although they are now often stock footage—not only representing famine, but the AIDS epidemic. Such Christian sentiments seem somewhat integral to the ethic of compassionate consumerism. And while, to a large extent, the Christian metaphor in both famine and famine relief texts is both sanitizing and distancing, the Christian references somehow allow for the sensationalism that underpins the ethic of compassionate consumerism.

The overall tone of the single is sensationalist, like the images presented in the media; over-dramatic phrases that connote the desperate emotions of "Africans," phrases such as "bitter tears" and the "clanging chimes of doom" form the substance of the song which, ultimately, offers little comment on the conditions of the starving or causes for the famine. Geldof's words simply reaffirm Western assumptions about the homogeneous nature of "Africans" and Africa—as if the whole continent was suffering the same plight, Geldof writes that there is no water, no snow; in fact, he states, "the only water flowing is the bitter sting of tears" and, as a result, "nothing ever grows/ No rain or rivers flow." Such lyrics not only position the starving as representative of the whole of Ethiopia and, consequentially, Ethiopia as indicative of the whole African continent; but insinuate that the whole of Africa has always been a desperate and sterile wasteland, thus negating the rich and vibrant cultural and economic history of the continent as a whole. This assumption seems even more ironic when one considers that Ethiopia itself was once a vast empire, and that the country boasts some of the most fertile regions in the world.

Like the starving in Africa, the British are also identified as a homogeneous

group, as a community of compassionate consumers. Not only are all listeners assumed to identify as Christian, hence the call for one and all to "say a prayer/ pray for the other ones," but the song assumes that all British people are in the position to celebrate Christmas cheer in the same way—as if there are no poor, hungry, or homeless people in the U.K. experiencing the "bitter sting of tears."

In his well-balanced criticism of the song (and of the movement in general) Reed draws attention to the "virtual absence of black artists from the British recording session *and* from the British half of the concert" (159, my italics). Reed argues that, considering the prominence of black artists and performers in Britain during the mid eighties, such an absence is "especially unforgivable." What Reed fails to mention, however, is the similarly apparent lack of female artists involved in the recording of "Christmas" an absence that is equally unforgivable. As the Band Aid recording session video demonstrates, both women and black artists were present at the recording, but not one was given a line in the song. One wonders if either women or artists and audiences of color are involved in the 'we' that intends to "feed the world" or the 'them' that the white man should pray for and take care of. One also wonders if non-Christians are really considered acceptable members of the compassionate consumer community. This is because compassionate consumerism, while not defined by Christianity, certainly evolves in a way that shows its allegiances to a Christian tradition.

The song's line-up could be read as yet another example of the ways in which the white man is presented as the savior of Africa. Such depictions have been typical in US and UK pop culture texts since the invention of not only the moving camera. According to Ruth Mayer, the positioning of white man as savior was reinforced in the 1980s in both

countries by blockbuster hits such as *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* and *King Solomon's Mines*. "Christmas" relies on similar notions. The same old systems of power are reinforced when the white man visibly acts to save Africa from itself. The fact that this Africa is constructed in such a way as to fit the stereotypical imperialist definition of the continent is never dealt with. In the same way that the white man will expose the failing of the continent and the people—literally as Buerk's white hand uncovers death and abjection—the white man will redeem the continent. The message to British and American youths audiences is clear; global charity—that is, paternalism/neo-imperialism—is part of the male domain.

The consumerist impulses elicited by the songs (and the movement's frame and texts in general), and the fact that Christmas is the season of excess (in terms of consumption and expenditure), ultimately led to an abandonment of conservatism and an embracing of excess. As numerous news stories indicate, "Christmas" sold out almost as quickly as it hit the shelves in record stores. Individual consumers purchased singles in excess of 50 a piece. And, in addition to their purchases, consumers joined the famine relief movement in droves, happily participating as donors as well as compassionate consumers.

Being the World

It is not possible to attack the USA for Africa single's line up for the same reasons as they criticize the British single and concert line up, since "black artists took the initiative and headed the organisation of a big musical event" (Rijven, 201). The song was produced by Harry Belafonte, and written by Lionel Ritchie and Michael Jackson. It was sung by a wide range of American artists, representative of a wide cross section of

both the American population and American musical genres. Nevertheless, USA Aid was as much under scrutiny, for its imperialist assumptions and assertions, as its British counterpart.

"We Are the World" sold over seven and a half million copies in the US alone, immediately taking the number 1 spot in the charts. It received four Grammys in 1986, including 'Song of the Year' and 'Best Music Video'. Its success came, arguably, not only from the fact that the diverse cast appealed to a diverse audience, but that the song—as Christian influenced as it was—played yet again into an already existent set of cultural values and, as Rijven states, appealed "[a]gain [to] that nineteenth-century charity idea" (200).

"We Are the World" is as reliant on Christian sentiment and guilt as television pictures depicted starving mothers and the British Band Aid single; however, its ethnocentric overtones were more pronounced that any of the other Ethiopia songs. Unfortunately, in an attempt to establish a sense of community, to define the world as a human collective where all men are brothers, the writers chose lyrics that "play back and forth between identity and difference in such a way as to make it impossible to see Africans as capable social actors, while simultaneously pretending "they" are just like us" (Reed, 160). For Reed, such empathy actually results in the erasure of Ethiopian famine sufferers who were noticeably absent from the music video which "visually reinforces a sense of *in*activist self-containment" (160), and results in the saving of "the singer's and the audience, saved from having to think seriously about an "unpleasant thing" by simply giving a few dollars for famine relief" (161). There is a dialectic tension in the song that results from the vague nature of the address and the problematic usage of non-referential

pronouns. It is never clear exactly who is being addressed in each verse, who the 'we' that are the world might hope to save.

There are certain aspects of the song that hold a certain amount of truth; for instance, it is true that "we can't go on pretending" that someone else "will make a change" on behalf of the Ethiopian people, particularly when that someone happens to be either Western or corrupt Ethiopian government officials. And yet, as happens throughout, the song contradicts the very statement it attempts to assert because it ultimately re-establishes and supports the very 'pretense' it is supposedly designed to affect. One could expect that, when Kenny Rogers opens the second verse with "We can't go on pretending day by day/ that someone, somewhere will soon make a change" the audience is being asked to take action, rather than expecting nameless others to solve the world's problems. The song, somewhat indirectly implicates the audience member who remains blissfully but willfully ignorant of the struggles faced by others and asks her not to "pretend" any longer. However, as Reed's comment insinuates, donating to charity actually allows the donor to pretend that the problem is solved, that there is no longer any cause for self-reflexivity or guilt. This pretense results in the passing over of responsibility: someone else, more informed, is given the duty of providing for the less fortunate while American donors go back to thinking about their "own lives."

The pretense is continued further in the third verse when song-writers imply that all Americans need support the USA for Africa is to "send me your hearts." The implication here is that, if the American people show love and compassion, Africans will "know that someone cares;" and, once they are aware of this love and compassion for them—in quite an astounding leap—Africans will supposedly experience lives that are

"stronger and free." It is not quite clear either how the starving in Africa will ever become aware of the American peoples' 'hearts' or how the knowledge that the American people sympathize with them, will break the Ethiopians' shackles, stop war, genocide and ethnicide, and feed millions of starving people! And yet, the song implies that American compassion can solve all of the world's problems, or at least all of America's problems (not that the existence of any social or economic problems within the US are acknowledged at any point in "We Are").

Perhaps this 'miracle' is possible because American donors are supposed to follow in the footsteps of God. God's possible intervention is assumed; the fact that the listener should do as God has done is, on the other hand, made explicit in the lines that follow in which the song-writers tell us that God has shown us ways of compassion by "turning stone to bread." Like Him, we listeners too should "lend a helping hand." Not only is this verse overly sentimental, it is infused with the assumption that all listeners (all charitable and loving people) are, in opposition to many of those worst affected by ethnic cleansing in Ethiopia and later in the Sudan, Christian.

Again "We Are" hails the listener as a member of a homogeneous community of Christians. Both the sentiment expressed in the song and the references rely on a certain familiarity of Christianity and this emphasis could, potentially exclude or render resistant non-Christians audiences. The Christian emphasis partially undermines the subversive power of the ethic of compassionate consumerism in that it presents alternative identities and communities for youth, but only within the confines of already established dominant ideological frameworks. Must one be a Christian to fully participate in the famine relief movement? What does it mean if one wants to participate within the famine relief

movement, if one feels compassion and consumer urges as a result of the famine footage and the celebrity response they elicit, but one is not a Christian? Is one always, to some extent, excluded? And if so, does this mean that—no matter how radical—it will never be possible to construct or embrace a completely alternate identity or community.

"We Are the World" does not ask audiences to question how Christian ideologies—religion in general—has played a part in both the devastation of rural Ethiopia or global inequities. Similarly, the lyrics fail to question structural inequalities that have led to such poverty in the Third World. On the contrary, they imply that listeners should continue to support capitalist systems that rely on the commodification of the Other and support a free market economy that benefits the most powerful nations on the globe. However, it is possible to read the song as a text that is very honest in its representation of famine relief and the ways in which the famine relief movement benefits the West. The song indicates not that 'we' are saving 'their' lives, but that 'we' are saving 'our' own—that famine relief will help us, not them. And yet, there is a disparity between the 'we', whose lives are being saved, the 'we' who are doing the saving, and the 'you' that needs to send your heart and the 'you' that, according to the fourth stanza, must have more faith. The vagueness that results from such confusion in pronoun usage serves to undermine the song's assumptions in a number of interesting ways.

In the last verse the composers make it clear that, through belief, all obstacles can be overcome; that even "when you're down and out" and completely hopeless, "if you just believe, there's no way we can fail." But who is this 'you', exactly, that needs more faith to overcome hardship? For obvious reasons, one cannot really assume that it is the

Ethiopian people being addressed in this last stanza, unless the idea is to address the Ethiopians in an attempt to make the actual listener empathize with those starving. But there is no indication of this. Ethiopians are never referenced directly, in fact, they are never even mentioned once (they are as invisible in both the "We Are" music video and accompanying documentary). It is more likely that the 'you' addressed in this instant is an American—not an American that saves, but an American that does not deserve to be an American.

The use of pronouns in the last verse again causes confusion, as is unclear to whom the 'certain call' is addressed. There is again an implicit distinction between the 'you' that can help by sending 'your hearts' and the 'we' (perhaps the strong and free 'we', the privileged celebrity 'we') that sings the song "We Are the World." While it is insinuated that the 'you' to whom the line is addressed has a social a responsibility to act on behalf of others less fortunate in the world, it is the 'we' that sings the song that makes up the collective that is the world. 'We' are the ones is the limelight, the ones that all attention alights upon, the ones that "make a brighter day." From the very beginning the song, through the establishment of a compassionate collective united against famine, has tried to elide this implicit division between 'you' and 'we', between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', between the ones with enough privilege to be compassionate and those who fail as citizens. In this last verse, the 'you' that is addressed appears to be the hopeless down and out 'you', the one that needs to believe, not simply because belief alone can alleviate one's own suffering, but, more significantly, because suffering is caused by the lack of belief. Belief will not only make the Ethiopian people find strength and freedom, but it will also 'save our own lives', the lives of those Americans who believe (does one

need to believe to be an American?). In essence, the ones that don't believe—the 'you' to whom the stanza addresses, the 'you' that is not excluded because of structural inequities, but because 'you' don't have enough faith in the very system that impoverishes and discriminates against 'you'—could potentially destroy the American nation by not saving "our own lives." 'You' could end 'our' privilege.

Thus, the last two lines of the song call together those who do not have enough belief, asking them to join with the 'we' who do believe enough. The lines thus ask those without privilege to ignore their own lack of privilege and unite with those who have privilege. The potential effects of such a call are frightening. The under-privileged are being asked to de-politicize, to accept that they are not under-privileged because of the structural inequities of capitalist systems but because they lack faith in the very system that impoverishes them. They are being asked to deny their own social position and the problems of their nation, and to identify with a group of privileged people intent on helping women, men, and children in a foreign country; the focus on foreign catastrophe and the pressure to 'save' either the starving abroad from starving or the privileged at home from falling, shifts the focus away from domestic problems of the under-privileged.

In deflecting attention away from the problems of poverty and discrimination rife in America under Reagan (and Britain under Thatcher), the song (and indeed the famine relief movement) locates suffering elsewhere. Locating suffering in an 'other' place depoliticizes suffering. "We Are the World" asks the under-privileged not to take up their own cause, because the 'other' suffers more.

It is perhaps this deflection away from the social problems at home that leads both the UK and the US government to support the famine relief movement, even when the

movement potentially challenges each state's foreign policy on famine relief and domestic policies regarding the role of youths. This is because the famine relief movement, while challenging certain aspects of state, does not do so in a way that is threatening to the status quo. The ethic of compassionate consumerism, while going against the rhetoric of compassionate conservatism sanctioned by Thatcher and Reagan, does not challenge the West's political decisions beyond the arena of aid distribution. And it does much more to support the ideologies underpinning ideas of free-trade, the free market economy, and consumer politics that it does to undermine them. It is for this reason that, despite their original hesitancy, figures such as Norman Tebbit, Thatcher's President of the Board of Trade, ultimately congratulate the organizations behind famine relief for their immense success in terms of profits and revenue.

Unlike the Right, which, having realized its potential, quickly jumped on the famine relief bandwagon; the left were slow to recognize the potential socio-cultural power of the famine relief movement.[130] For the most part, the left remain aloof from the movement because, on the one hand, of a snobbish disregard for mass culture and, on the other hand, because of concerns over the movement's ethnocentric and imperialist underpinnings. While the criticisms of ethnocentrism and profiteering lodged at Geldof and his co-activists are indeed grounded in accuracy, it is possible to move beyond such narrow critiques and recognize that, for all its downfalls, the movement did have a number of positive outcomes for some Ethiopians and for many participants and sponsors in the West. When considering the failures and successes of famine relief, one must

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[130]For a discussion of how the left has failed youth and misunderstood the importance of movements such as the famine relief movement, see Stuart Hall "Crisis and Renewal on the Left" *The Hard Road to Renewal*, (London: Verso, 1988.) 257.

acknowledge how, as a *mass* movement, the famine relief movement could only affect a certain amount of change, within the confines of the culture that produced it. While we may be disheartened by the apparent conservativeness of results, we should not discount the movement for failing to affect a revolution.

For me, one of the biggest problems that arises from the left's critique of mass movement and popular culture in general, is critics inability to either acknowledge or account for the pleasure that popular texts—especially those inspired by the ethic of compassionate consumerism—can elicit from audiences *and* the subversive power of pleasure itself. Through their involvement in the famine relief movement, the participants gained both a voice and a sense of agency. Unlike the leftist intellectuals that critiqued their behavior, they recognized that, through the consumption of mass culture and their collusion with media and multinationals, they could simultaneously garner pleasure and become active global subjects or agents of change.

Imag(in)ing the World

In *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture*, musicologist Andrew Goodwin persuasively illustrates how music is (even prior to its accompaniment by music video) a visual as well as an aural text. He argues that pleasure arises from the combination of sound and image, from what he describes as the phenomenon of "synaethesia, the intrapersonal process whereby sensory impressions are carried over from one sense to another, for instance, when one pictures sounds in one's 'mind's eye'" (50). After conducting informal interviews with artists and audiences, Goodwin comes to the conclusion that "[l]isteners, as well as composers, "see" images when music is heard" (52) and argues that this combination of simultaneous visual and

aural experience—synaesthesia—leads to a sense of heightened pleasure for the viewer/listener.

Obviously the lyrics for both the UK and the US Ethiopia singles have the potential to conjure specific images in the minds of the listener. In "Christmas" Geldof uses somewhat stereotypical imagery to draw comparisons between the 'smiling joy' of Brits at Christmas and starving Ethiopians. His lyrics ask that listeners visualize 'raising a glass' for those less fortunate. For many listeners, having seen the Buerk/Amin documentary (or similar, sensationalist footage of the refugee camps in Korem and elsewhere) prior to hearing the song, already have a repertoire of embedded images from which to draw when Geldof—via the voices of Simon Le Bon and Sting—reminds the viewer (no matter how inaccurately) that "the only water flowing" in Africa is "the bitter sting of tears." How hard is it for the viewer not to cast her mind back to the image of a starving child crying for food, or a father crying for his dead wife and child? The imagery for "We Are the World" is much less mundane, more grandiose—rather than raising a glass, listeners are asked to visualize God "turning stone to bread" or the whole world "stand[ing] together as one."

The lyrics guide the viewer's visual imagination; however, the music itself also potentially provides the viewer with an image. Perhaps the most effective example of this is in "Christmas" when Bono tells us of how the Christmas bells that ring in Africa "are the clanging bells of doom." We have heard such bells as the beginning of the single, and perhaps we associate them with Christmas (as the song's title indicates), with a church scene, with bells of hope, or even a musician playing a synthesizer that imitates the clang of church bells. It is not until half way through the song that the lyrics tell the listener

how to interpret the sound. Having once heard the song, the opening takes on a new meaning—the conscious listener knows what the clangs are meant to represent and may visualize death bells as a consequence. It is possible that the music itself may have already set an image in the mind of the viewer that the lyrics find hard to shake.

For the consumer-donor (or even the casual shopper) the audio-visual text is altered, not only because is it now owned and tangible, but because the cover or packaging provides new layers of signification that on one hand reinforce the same ideas expressed in the song and, on the other hand, alter the nature of the text itself. To illustrate the power of cover art even in the 80s—the era of music video—I want to refer briefly to an anecdotal example described by Jennifer Hurley in her ethnographic study. In order to illustrate the relationship between album art and gendered subjectivity, Hurley tells the story of a well-informed, intelligent female study participant's decision to wear a sexist Guns 'n' Roses T-Shirt, despite her knowledge that the sexist message undermines her own self-interest and self-image (332). Hurley hypothesizes that the reason for this is because "her fandom [rules] out any criticism of the band, even if this compromises her integrity as someone who would normally consider [the message] abhorrent" (332); thus illustrating that allegiance to a band, set of rock music ideals, or a certain rock community is more important to many listener/viewers than their own sense of individual identity. The reason why Hurley's point is significant to my argument is that her observation indicates how the cover art or packaging of a song, album, or other musical text is vital to influencing and maintaining the ethos and/or ideology that inform lyrics, band/artist performance, and audience participation.

Fig. 9. Cover art for the single release of "Do They Know It's Christmas," Phonogram Records, 1985.

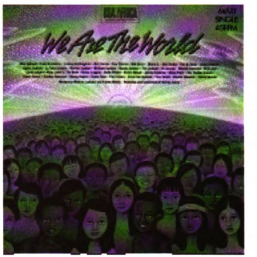

Fig. 10. Cover art for the 12-inch single release of "We Are the World," Columbia Records, 1985.

The cover art for "Christmas" and "We Are the World" differ significantly. The former is a collage that juxtaposes color illustrations of children and domestic pets participating in festive activities with a black and white photographic image of two starving African children. The cover art is reminiscent of a Christmas card. Happy families from a variety of eras (the Georgian and Victorian eras, the 1920s and 1950s), smiling parents and their joyous well-fed children, play with toys. Common symbols of Christmas—including a Christmas tree, brandy, and Christmas cake—litter the frame. Father Christmas stands outside the window looking into the frame or, more to the point, into the warm and welcoming Christmas room isolated from the cold outdoors. The starving African children, however, disrupt the sense of Christmas cheer. They function as that which Roland Barthes would describe as the punctum in that the eye is always drawn to them.[131]

In the same way that the images of starving Africans in the famine coverage are

131 For discussion of the complex nature of the 'punctum' see Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* (Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill & Wang, 1981) 51-60.

supposed to interrupt the viewer's everyday life—to momentarily question the holiday cheer—and encourage the viewer to donate, the image of the children in the cover disrupts the image of holiday cheer in the fake Christmas card. Yet, despite the effectiveness of the centered children, the way in which the starving are positioned, specularized, and rendered in Black and White raises a number of implications.

First of all, unlike the illustrated children and Father Christmas who spies on them from afar, neither of the African children look toward the camera. Unlike the two girls sat on the sofa in the middle, left-hand side of the frame, the African children do not appear to be aware that they are being photographed. The image of the girls, which seems as if it is a color enhanced manipulation of a family snapshot, is obviously posed; whereas the image of the African children (which is equally timeless and has become as much of a 'traditional' image of Africa as the Dickensian-esque children at play has become a 'traditional' image of Christmas in the UK) is—in its monochrome format—more akin to a seemingly 'objective' journalistic image. The white children (can we assume that, based on their dress, they are all British?) are clearly gendered and representative of specific historical moments: the starving Africans, generic as they are, seem both genderless and timeless. As a result, the artwork presents famine, deprivation, and abjection in Africa as a constant in the same way as the Buerk/Amin footage and the Ethiopia singles. The viewer is once again positioned as both Sontag and Berlant argue, as impotent and all powerful because while the viewer is not physically part of the charity rock community on screen, she can aspire towards becoming compassionate consumer—a valid member of a global society. At same time, however, the viewer is presented with ideal images with which to identify. In this respect the cover art functions in the same way as the

music videos that accompanies both "Christmas" and "We Are the World."

The cover of "We Are the World" differs greatly from that of "Christmas" but reinforces the Ethiopia single it accompanies in the same way. The notion of a one-world community expressed in the song is once again represented in the artwork. Children of all races (all seem to be of color) fill the cover from the foreground to the horizon. Unified, they stand together under a large blue sky, the sun shining behind and over them. Unlike the Ethiopian children at the front of the Band Aid, these children look at the viewer. Are they asking the viewer to be part of their community? Or are they implying that all children of color, no matter where in the world, are the same (are 'them')? Whereas the "Christmas" image was reminiscent of a Christmas card the "We Are the World" is reminiscent of a Christian pamphlet or an image of peace. Is this accidental or are we to assume that, because the single is released near to Easter time, the art is produced in such a way to implicitly remind Americans of Christian notions of compassion?

Despite the distinctions between the cover art for both "Christmas" and "We Are the World," in both cases a substitution occurs. The purchaser is presented with a piece of plastic, a black vinyl object that functions for a substitute for the now forgotten Ethiopian Madonna of famine footage. With the exception of the small photo, the image of the starving Ethiopian has been replaced by idealistic images of Westernized Christian charity and hope. The cover art illustrates how the relief movement continuously removes itself from the cause it was designed to raise funds and awareness for. As we shall see, the 'them' of the songs, the small reference to 'them' in the cover art, dwindles as celebrities and donors become more and more involved in the movement. The question then arises: if the Ethiopian famine sufferer is no longer visible, how does the

viewer/listener continue to develop a sense of identity and subjectivity in opposition to the Othered victim on screen? Arguably, references to 'them' is sufficient to allow the viewer/listener to establish self as distinct to the abject Ethiopian. However, I would also assert that the psychic capital that viewer/listener gained by consuming the images of dying Ethiopians is increased through the act of purchasing (spending money) on the behalf of the helpless, passive victims of famine. In other words, the purchase of charity rock and rock related products (such as magazine articles, T-Shirts, posters, and other merchandise) results in consumer amelioration—the consumer proves her compassion in the act of exchanging money for product. In purchasing the song, the purchaser also becomes part of the purchasing community (one both familiar and spurred on by the references to national pastimes and symbols illustrated in the songs and on their covers), and as a member, arguably experiences even more amelioration.

Chapter Five
Compassionate Consumerism and Commodity Synergy: The Relocation of Suffering in Famine and Famine Relief Music Videos.

> With crocodile tears to irrigate this ground
> Make Ethiopia a fertile paradise
> Where everyone sings Beatles songs and buys shares in EMI.[132]

The production and release of the Ethiopia singles marks the emergence of the famine relief movement and an evolution in the ethic of compassionate consumerism. The movement emerged at the point where suffering was replaced by more aesthetically pleasing commodities, that is, where suffering was transferred from famine sites in Ethiopia onto famine relief sites in the West and, perhaps more specifically, onto the voices, bodies, and faces of famine celebrities. As a result of the substitution of suffering and famine sites by celebrity commodities and sites of performance, compassion was redirected away from the famine victim toward the celebrities singing on behalf of the victim and, later, toward the donor that identifies with the celebrity. Consumer impulses were also redirected as the number of texts and commodities increased, and, as more diverse texts and commodities were produced.

This chapter examines the ways in which the famine commodity was replaced by celebrity commodities in the Ethiopia music videos. I determine how, as a result of both the 'one world' sentiment expressed in the songs and the synaesthetic qualities of music video, the substitution of famine victim by celebrity appears natural and occurs with ease. I illustrate how the combination of visual and audio in the Ethiopia singles music videos smoothes over celebrity substitutions and covers over any inconsistencies in the famine relief text and, by extension, the ethic that inspires the famine relief movement. I explore

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[132]Chumbawamba, "How to Get Your Band on Television," *Pictures of Starving Children Sell Records*, Agit Prop, 1986.

how and why compassion and consumer impulses were redirected as the number of texts and commodities increased and as more diverse texts and commodities were produced. I also demonstrate how such substitutions not only lead to the elision of the famine victim, but ultimately allow for the easy translation of non-tangible commodity into material capital.

The substitution of victim by celebrity and the redirection of compassionate consumer impulses resulted in an elision of the famine sufferer who soon seemed insignificant in motivating the public to support the famine relief movement. Seemingly, the famine victim became somewhat dispensable not simply because the celebrity commodities that replaced her were more aesthetically pleasing and familiar to US and UK audiences, but because the commodities of suffering, experience, and image constructed and produced by the famine footage were—once celebrities, record companies, and multi-national corporations became involved in the organization of famine relief—were easily translated into capital in a real world marketing game.

Eliding Victims

The famine victim was replaced with ease for a number of reasons. Susan Moeller would argue that both compassion fatigue and the assumptions media producers were part of the cause. Moeller states:

> Compassion Fatigue is the unacknowledged cause of much of the failure of international reporting today. It is at the base of many complaints about the public's short attention span, the media's peripatetic journalism, the public's boredom with international news, the media's preoccupation with crisis coverage (2).

Despite the compelling nature of Moeller's argument about the media's ulterior motives, the public's need to see themselves reflected in the news, and the function of compassion

fatigue, it is impossible to determine what either producers or receivers of famine texts felt or believed about the commodities they consumed. I would assert that compassion fatigue did not necessarily occur, not because Moeller is incorrect about the motives of the media or the public's potential attention span, but because the public was constantly presented with by alternative representations and coverage of both the famine and famine relief events, and with a multitude of famine related commodities and adverts for famine merchandise.

Once the public expressed concern over the famine, the media did not limit coverage of famine events to representations of Ethiopians starving. On the contrary, news stations, newspapers, and charities presented the public with stories regarding the politics of relief agencies, with reports on celebrities involved in famine relief, and representations of famine in a the form of numerous different visual media and genres (e.g. print news reports and video texts). The variety of texts and media available prevented compassion fatigue from inhibiting the movement's momentum, but—as I show in my analysis of the music videos—it also resulted in further elision of the famine victim.

The famine victim was easily replaced because of the unintended consequence of the 'one world' sentiment expressed not only in the songs but also throughout the texts produced and received within the famine relief movement site. While the 'one world' sentiment was naïve and simplistic, and failed to allow for a recognition of the ways in which global systems of inequities function, the notion that Westerners shared a vulnerability with Ethiopian famine victim that results from the 'one world' logic (a notion that, in attempting to show empathy, serves to equates all oppression) actually

allowed not only for the process of substitutions to occur, but made the substitutions profitable. It comes as no shock to the viewer that the famine victim has been replaced by an image of Bono or Michael Jackson because the celebrity performing on behalf of famine relief becomes, through a process of synergy, synonymous with the famine victim. In a similar move, products and merchandise either produced by or indirectly connected to such celebrity figure became synonymous with the famine.

A number of interlaced questions arise as a result of this synergy and the insertion of celebrities into the world of famine. What happens when the famine victim replaced, and why is the celebrity commodity more likely to encourage Western involvement in famine relief and raise funds and awareness? Does this process of substitution occur because celebrity holds more cultural capital in the West, because certain forms of commodity (like celebrity) are more valuable than others (such as starving Ethiopian Madonnas), and because the celebrity commodity is more marketable according to media producers and can be more easily translated into real capital? In other words, can we put a price tag on experience, suffering, and imagination and, if we do, how does the hierarchization of famine and famine relief commodities undermine the 'one world' vision expressed in the Ethiopia singles?

Arguably, the commodity of suffering in its celebrity form has more value in the West than suffering in its Ethiopian form. In other words, the suffering, experience, and image of celebrity is more valuable within the Western imagination than that of the Ethiopian starving to death in a refugee camp in Korem. The fact that Bono or Jackson's suffering is more aesthetically pleasing and more likely to generate capital than the suffering of the Ethiopians—the fact that viewers appear to want to share in Bono and

Jackson's pain more than that of the Ethiopian Madonna with Child—implies that there is a distinction in value between types of suffering and that the shared vulnerability upon which the ethic of compassionate consumerism and the notion of 'one world' rest is perhaps illusory.

Constructing Authenticity

In order for the celebrity to replace the victim with ease, famine relief texts had to present the celebrity's suffering experience as authentic. In the case of the music videos, the key to building this illusion was to construct the stories of the famine celebrities as authentic truths and the stars' compassionate pleas to help save the starving in real time, as *live* events. Adding this illusion of authenticity not only further inspires viewers that identify with the celebrities on screen to become more involved (more compassionate and more extravagant with their consumer-donations), but also arguably makes the videos texts more visually and aurally appealing. In the videos, a series of compensations and substitutions of the visual and aural is employed to create an illusion of authenticity. And, part of the pleasure of watching is identifying with sincere community of artists.

As a result of the music and the videos produced on behalf of famine relief, the movement was able to raise awareness and funds globally. The increase in new famine commodities (i.e. new scenes of suffering, rock music, celebrity images) and related merchandise, added to the fact that such commodities were presented or advertised via the television, meant that famine relief had the potential to reach even more broad and diverse audiences than the famine footage. The more commodities and the broader the reach, the more successful the famine relief movement, its ethic, and its underlying ideologies appeared to be.

Few scholars dispute the synaesthetic characteristics or potential of music or music video, however, debates still rage regarding which holds supremacy: the visual or the aural. When on considers how, in the Ethiopia videos, the famine is only referenced aurally, then it is important to consider the relationship between the lyrics and sounds of the Ethiopia singles and the ways in which they are visually narrated by the Ethiopia videos. For Andrew Goodwin, the image supports the sound: he argues that this is the case for both songs and visual music texts, such as video. For scholars such as Will Straw, Carol Versallis, and Marsha Kinder, the aural (specifically the lyrics) is subordinate to the visual. My own position is that the subordination of sound by vision, or vice versa, is specific to each video text and that it is possible for different aspects of the aural and the visual to dominate at various points throughout a video. This is particularly the case with music videos that do not employ a metaphorical storyline, but appear to present an impromptu live performance.

In line with French scholar, Michel Chion, I assume "the reality of the audio-visual combination—that one perception influences the other and transforms it" (xxvi). Chion, in moving beyond typical debates between screen theorists and musicologists, argues that "[w]e never see the same thing when we hear; we don't hear the same thing when we see as well. We must therefore get beyond preoccupations such as identifying so-called redundancy between the two domains and debating inter-relations between forces..." (xxvi).

Through an analysis of the "Christmas" and "We Are the World" videos, I hope to show how sound and image in music video function in unison—how each influences the way in which the viewer/listener responds to the text—in order to illustrate how and

why charity rock music videos appeal to the listener/viewer to such an extent that the movements that they represent (Band Aid and USA for Africa) are monumentally successful. My analysis of the function of music video also illustrates how, without the availability of newly advanced aural and visual video technologies that allowed for the reloction of suffering and commodity transference to appear part of a 'natural' process, the famine relief movement might not have garnered the global response that it did!

The Band Aid video opens with Geldof's hands opening a newspaper to the center page. The images revealed is a double page photograph depicting the artists involved in Band Aid. No sound accompanies the opening of what can be described as a new story in the history of consumer based relief programs, charity rock, and media coverage of charitable events. The screen fades to black for a moment and then fades in to reveal a medium shot that tracks Geldof walking (from right to left) behind other artists, presumably toward the studio to record "Christmas." As the camera presents him in profile, suddenly, the first clanging bell of doom is heard. The camera lingers for a moment on other celebrities that mill around (newspapers in hand) outside of the studio, and then the camera cuts to a close up of Paul Young as he starts to sing: "It's Christmas."[133] For the rest of the video, the camera either follows the men singing their lines and playing their instruments, or cuts to scenes of the wives and children of celebrities socializing and artists relaxing between their lines.

The story presented to the viewer by the video serves to emphasize the sentiment obvious in both the lyrics and the cover art for the single: in their own unique way, each of the three presents the ethnocentric assumptions of a unified group of white saviors,

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133"Do They Know It's Christmas?" comp. Bob Geldof and Midge Ure, perf. The Live Aid Assembly, Phonogram Records, 1985.

"us," who will save the passive and starving Africans (not Ethiopians), that is, "them." White, British families are presented as having fun, drinking, and singing—as is the tradition in the UK at Christmastime. As is now typical of coverage of famine relief, the Ethiopians are only referred to briefly. They are never shown, only mentioned—their appearance would disrupt the representation of holiday cheer, of compassionate Brits gathering together on the behalf of others less fortunate (and less attractive). The Ethiopians are nothing more than the implied reason for the gathering of celebrities; however, it is possible to imagine that the celebration may have occurred even if the famine had not.

According to Will Straw, "[t]he narratives of how each of the Ethiopia singles came to be are essential to the meanings of those records..." (205). And it is the stories presented by the video's visual montage, combined with the lyrics and sounds, that guide the listener/viewer in how to both read and respond to the Ethiopia singles. The narrative presented by "Christmas" is one of cohesion and compassion. However, the opening of the video reveals a temporal discontinuity. How is it possible for Geldof to open a newspaper to reveal a photograph of the Band Aid artists gathered together *prior* to their gathering? Either the opening scene occurred after the recording was made, and the video was edited in such a way to make it seems as if the newspaper was opened before the recording; or, the newspaper scene was added, post recording in order to emphasize a specific narrative—to guide the viewer/listener in her reading of the text. The newspaper is opened like a storybook at the beginning of the fairytale. It is reminiscent of the storybook opened at the beginning of films such as Disney's *Snow White* or *Sleeping Beauty*. The Band Aid celebrities (remember, only the men sing individual lines or play

instruments) are knights in shining armor, working together to save a damsel in distress—the damsel being Africa (the silent Ethiopian Madonna who has no agency to save herself).

The depiction of the newspaper spread functions on another level, as it also illustrates how producers of different media work together to present the Band Aid story. The tabloid press provides potential video viewer/listeners with a preview of what is to come; it informs readers of the Band Aid project, and shows—once again—a cohesive group of musicians united for one cause. The newspaper shot functions as an example of what Rijven might mean when he states that all Ethiopia projects share "a high media sensibility that feeds on itself—charity open all doors" (203). One text leads to the production of another; the song leads to the video that is advertised by the photo-shoot; the video and photo-shoot influence sales of the song (when presented as part of larger text or programs such as *Top of the Pops*) and of the "making of" the video; the combined appeal of which leads to the production and consumption of related merchandise, the US version, and ticket sales at the Live Aid concert. Print, audio, and audio-visual texts work together to continue to promote and sell the cause—the feeding of the world.

"We Are the World" borrows the "Christmas" formula in a number of ways. The video opens with a few seconds of footage that are particular to the video, but are neither made audible or implied on the recorded single. A synthesized tune, akin to a tune used to introduce an instructional video or a European radio news program, is played as a small spinning globe enlarges as it rushes toward the screen and the viewer. The globe is a digital image of the world. It continues to grow. A chime sounds (a clanging bell, a

reference to Band Aid perhaps). The globe fades to white and, as it turns, the USA Aid logo is revealed. The globe takes up the full screen, and—through the wonders of technology—the signatures of celebrities involved in USA Aid are written (handless) in unison across the screen. The news-theme continues and is incorporated into the beginning of the song, as the logo screen fades to an image of Lionel Richie as he prepares to sing "There comes a time, when we heed a certain call." From this point onward, the camera traces the singers delivering their lines, and only shifts from close-ups and medium close-ups of singer's faces in order to depict the USA Aid group singing the chorus in unison.

In contrast to "Christmas," the sound and images of the USA for Africa's performance are disrupted, not by images of happy families of singers "smiling joy" and "having fun" back stage or during rehearsal breaks, but by other musical performances. As a result of availability issues and technical difficulties, a couple of artists, including Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson were required to return to the studio the day after all forty-five celebrities originally gathered to sing "We Are the World." Their re-recorded performances were then combined with the original recording to present a sense of unity and cohesion. The fact that the re-recordings are presented in sequence make them appear less disruptive than those in "Christmas," despite the fact that "We Are the World" is as constructed.

Despite their difference, both videos attempt to construct an appearance of live-ness. The narratives are constructed in such a way that they appear to occur in real time. This is most evident in the Band Aid video that, of course, must have been edited in a way that distorted time in order for the news photo of the event to be revealed to the

event participants as they arrived for the event (this is temporally, an impossibility). The illusion of real time has a double effect; it not only helps to stress the urgency of the campaign (all the stars took time out of their busy schedules to come together at one place and time to raise money for Africa) but also emphasizes the authenticity and realness of the recording event. This helps to solidify the idea that the artists are not performing—this is not a show—but are banding together as part of a compassionate and concerned community, a community that they hope the viewer will become a part of.

The videos for "Christmas" and "We Are the World" appear most 'real' because they are constructed so as to occlude the act that what is seen is not a live performance. The pretense of the live is emphasized not only by the main focus on performance of a community of stars, but by the exposure and display of technical equipment and cameramen. The realistic aspect of the video is also implied by the camera's revelation of the means of production. In both videos, the technological equipment (cameras, microphones, cords, lights) is exposed for the viewer to see. What is not exposed, however, is the mixing, editing, or retakes of each sequence. It is strange that, on one hand, the videos attempt to veil their construction, the fact that what we see and hear is as much a constructed performance as any other, when on the other hand, aspects of production are made visible. However, in making visible the cameraman, the existence of editors, and behind the scenes footage of the recording studios, the producers of both videos ironically only reinforce the sense of reality and urgency that the videos intend to create. For instance, "Christmas" ends in such a way that the editing process is acknowledged—the editors write a letter explaining the time it has taken them to produce the text and expressing thanks to the organizers of Band Aid—but this does not spoil the

illusion of a linear narrative. "We Are The World" also ends with the printed word, as a verse from the song fades onto the screen in a white font. This also fails to disrupt the illusion of linearity—the only effect of the words is to emphasize the sentiment expressed by the song's lyrics, to provide the lyrics with visual accompaniment, and to make the viewer/listener part of the community of readers—like the singers of the US Ethiopia single, the viewer/listener can also read the lines assigned them.

The illusion of realness of the videos comes, in part, from the combined effect of the sound and image. When the visual text presents a disparity—a temporal or spatial interruption, the soundtrack smoothes over the disparity. This is made most evident in the "We Are the World" video when the images and soundtrack cover over the fact that numerous USA for Africa artists either could not make the first recording session after the music awards or had to return to Burbank to re-record their segments. Although the video appears to be free of a storyline, to present a live performance, it is a constructed narrative in much the same way as music videos that present a metaphorical storyline. In line with Kinder's definition of music videos that are dominated by performance, "[p]erformance dominates both the sound and image" in USA for Africa's "We Are The World," but the performance is also interrupted by "a subordinate narrative [and] visual fragmentation that disrupts the temporal and spatial unity" (7). The discontinuity in time and space is, however, covered over both by the fact that there are no breaks in the song (the sound having been edited and mixed) and by the editing of the music video. Sound compensates for any visual inconsistencies. At various points the images of Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, and Bruce Springsteen—images recorded the day after the 45 celebrities first gathered—are superimposed onto pre-recorded images. This

superimposition is obvious if one looks, but it is also very easy to ignore when the continuous soundtrack is played over the images (and even if the viewer-listener notices the edits and cuts in film, there is no way to know when the shots were filmed or the temporal and spatial discontinuities of the visual text). Sound helps to smooth over visual disruption.

Because the song sounds like an organically constructed, complete, and linear text, the video also looks like an organically constructed, complete, and linear text. The video emphasizes the impression of linear progression that the viewer-listener hears as it too shifts from one singer to another in correct order and succession. This linearity helps create the notion of a unified and joined community and undermines notions of artists as individual. The potential that constructing the famine relief community thus has when interpellating potential compassionate, consuming viewer-listeners is immense.

Any gaps in the illusion of realness are covered over by the effect of synaesthesia; they are also hidden through a display of excess enacted through the voices, gestures, expressions, and emotions of famine relief artists. While constructed, the actions and tone of the performers appears authentic enough to encourage viewer-listeners to identify with the suffering star on screen and, consequentially, they interpellate viewers into comfortable compassionate consumer subject positions. The videos provide ideal figures for both identification and empathy—this allows viewer-listeners to experience the pleasure of connection, of unified identity, and community.

Celebrities in the West became the ones that suffered as a result of the famine. The suffering of the famine-celebrity is intimated, not only through the lyrics of the Ethiopia singles as previously discussed, but is also expressed through the excessiveness

of the tone and gestures of the singers. Will Straw argues that the voices in the US Ethiopia single are more distinct and identifiable than those in the Band Aid single, in part because USA Aid involved many male and female singers from a range of musical genres. However, while my own experience would support his assertion, I think his observation about the voices "We Are the World" could be effectively applied to the UK single too. Straw states that:

> The aesthetic success of the song ... is that while these voices [Michael Jackson's, Bruce Springsteen's, Cyndi Lauper's and Lionel Ritchie's] are expressive, that expressiveness is exploited for its narrative value, rather than a succession of individual moments of testimony. The recognisability of these voices is such that the normal harmonic tensions are doubled by the tensions attendant upon the identification of the successive voices (205).

Straw does not elaborate on what he means exactly when he describe how the combination of different or diverse voices has a certain "narrative value" or that "the normal harmonic tensions are doubled." However, his comments appear to affirm my own hypothesis that the song—the apparent natural and smooth transition from one voice to another—creates the illusion of both an aural and a visual linear narrative. The discordant voices of Springsteen and Lauper, or even Boy George and Bono, do create a sort of tension between individual lines—but I would argue that, in both songs, this tension is released upon viewing the video when not only is it possible to clearer identify each singer in succession, but the smoothness of transition (as well as the knowledge provided by the visual) relieves tension.

Most interesting about Straw's statement is his idea that the narrative overcompensates for, and dilutes, the 'testimony' of each artist. His choice of the word testimony is significant here as, particularly in "We Are the World" the singers appear to

be testifying: testifying to the greatness of God, and testifying as witnesses to the horrors in Ethiopia (horrors they do not present visually, horrors that we can only assume either as a result of the singer's testimony or our own memories borrowed from famine coverage in the news). The testifying nature of the lines may be minimized by the narrative transitions, but they are emphasized clearly by the gestures of the performers (some more than others—Bono and Springsteen, for example, appear to be very moved and very passionate.)

According to Goodwin, gestures have the potential to elaborate upon both rhythm and tempo in music video (68-9). Arguably, in the case of the Ethiopia singles, gestures emphasize (albeit illusory) a constant rhythm, a continuousness of tempo; the gestures of singers both veil the narrative discontinuity and draw attention away from the fact that what is presented as 'real' and live is, in fact, a constructed illusion. The passion that singers such as Bono and Springsteen exhibit not only allows the viewer/listener to easily identify them when singing, it also has the potential to impassion audiences and encourage them to join the donor community that the Ethiopia singles and videos both represent and advertise.

In "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," Stuart Hall argues that there is no equivalence between enunciation and true meaning. Therefore, it is impossible to determine meaning simply by hearing sounds. One can only make assumptions about meaning. The visual representations of the gestures of those singers 'testifying', however, guides the ear and influences meaning. The viewer-listener is guided to see sincerity. This visual emphasizes the words, but the words also emphasize the visual. For example, when Springsteen looks like he really cares for famine victims (for those that are part of

the "World" that we are) he also sings like he cares.

The combination of visual and aural sincerity implies that there is a 'true' or specifically identifiable meaning applicable to each song. However, this sense of 'truth' created by the singer's visual and audio expressiveness is as false an illusion as the realness of the live performance. At the same time that the audio compensates for visual lack, it is possible to consider that the visual compensates for an aural lack; that is, the something indefinable and inexpressible in the aural. We think we know the intentions of the singer because they are implied visually, through gesture, expression, and movement.

Despite the distinctions in genre, audience address, and medium, the documentary footage produced by Buerk and Amin, and the Ethiopia videos, have a common appeal and effect. The illusion of liveness in the videos makes the music videos analogous to the famine footage that inspired them and the famine relief movement at large. The Buerk/ Amin famine footage denies its own constructed nature both because it exposes the means by which it is produced and because the audio narrative Buerk provides (and the visual edited narrative) smoothes over the relatively rough transition from images of the plains to the feeding centers, from the hoards of starving to individuals in pain, from the living to the dying. In this respect, in its exposure of the means of production and the use of narrative to create an illusion of the unconstructed real, the footage functions like the videos—they are different text and media but they serve the same ends. They share similarities in the ways that they both sensationalize events, placing both the camera and onus on the suffering of the individual.

Merchandising Video Texts

More so than news footage, the music video functions as an extremely effective advertisement for famine relief because it had the ability to sell multiple commodities and products at once. In other words, the Ethiopia music videos enabled an easy translation of screen commodity into material capital. Because of the famine videos potential to advertise, many celebrities, sponsors, and producers could be persuaded to donate their talents and equipment. Each video potentially advertises the video itself, the song, the album, the artists performing, each artist's image, other works performed by each artist, other products endorsed by the artist elsewhere, the clothing and accessories worn by celebrities and extras, the location of the video, the technologies and production equipment used, the musical instruments used, the video's director and production company, and the record company with whom the artist is signed.[134]

The potential for the music video to advertise commodities and associated merchandise is increased exponentially when more than one artist or group is depicted. For instance, forty-five artists participated in the "We Are the World" video. The video not only advertised the USA for Africa single (and, by association, the British equivalent "Do They Know It's Christmas") and accompanying famine relief merchandise (such as T-shirts, books, and the making of video); but also the image, music, and endorsed merchandise for each of the forty-five celebrities involved. In addition, in becoming a substitute for the famine victim, each celebrity—and by extension their clothing, accessories, music and merchandise became associated with famine relief by association,

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[134]Arguably, a good video does all of the above without exposing itself as a commercial while distinguishing itself from the other commercials and videos that precede and succeed it.

simply because the celebrity was depicted in the famine relief video and—became (if only temporarily) synonymous with the famine and the famine relief effort.[135]

The Ethiopia videos, alongside the famine footage in its video form, helped to advertise both the famine relief movement and—by association—a range of famine relief merchandise: this was the point at which the commodities represented in the famine videos were easily translated into material capital. And, I would argue that they were most successful in selling themselves as famine relief texts and associated famine relief merchandise because audiences knew how to read the music video as a sophisticated commercial for a multitude of products. The videos (both of the Ethiopia singles and the CBS documentary) hailed their audiences as consumers, active and empowered in their role as consumers. The videos, because of the ways they depicted and commodified suffering, also encouraged compassion among consumers and were, thus, arguably, highly effective in evoking compassionate consumer impulses and help the movement succeed.

Arguably, as a result of the videos and later the Live Aid concert which functioned as a long video text, famine relief movement organizers sold famine merchandise worth millions. While the proceeds of each supplementary text and product went to the famine relief cause, each visual text—particularly the videos—once again advertised the celebrities involved (including extra celebrities such as Jane Fonda that weren't involved in the recording of the Ethiopia singles but introduced the *Making of* video), their endorsements and record companies, all the accoutrements necessary to

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[135]Various critics focusing on the intentions of artists have condemned those involved in both the famine relief videos and the Live Aid concert (which, as I illustrate in the next chapter also functions like a music video, each performance and advert being part of a continuous text). For instance, Straw and Rijven argue that celebrities became involved simply to gain free advertising, that is, to capitalize on what I have described to be compassionate consumerism.

maintain their celebrity image, and the producers and distributors of each text (be they producers and distributors such as RCA/Columbia Home Videos that produced and distributed *Making of "We Are the World"* or Bob Geldof's Ten Alps that has produced and distributed the Live Aid DVD compendium).

The merchandise that accompanied the Live Aid concert not only economically benefited the movement but private citizens, various writers, publishers, and publishing/production companies. Merchandising included not only footage (which was only been available on DVD when), but concert programs, a series of books including the not-for-profit *World Wide Concert Book* (proceeds of which went to Band Aid) and *Live Aid* (a for-profit text published for children by Cornerstones of Freedom/ Children's Press Chicago), clothing,[136] and, souvenirs such as press passes and tickets (the revenues for which is not guaranteed to go to the famine relief cause).

Whether or not the profit for merchandise went to the famine relief cause, what is clear that sales were made as a direct result of the advertising capabilities of the Ethiopia video texts, video footage of famine the Horn, and the Live Aid concert disseminated to an estimated 1.5 billion people around the globe. To participate in the famine relief movement, the public had to actively consume famine and famine relief texts. Participants became united both in their shared knowledge of how to read famine relief texts and their roles as consumers. The youth market was both identified and unified through acts of consuming and purchasing within the famine relief site, and through the

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[136]Arguably the Live Aid logo was also a valuable commodity. Organizers fearing that, prior to the concert, pirates would create bootleg merchandise, kept the logo under wraps. "Live Aid Faces Rip-Off," Scottish Daily Express, 11 July 1985: 15.

evocation of compassion that each consumer text and act of purchase enabled and intensified.

There are other significant consequences of using music video formats. Not only are music videos an effective way for advertisers to sell commodities and merchandise, but they are also effective in unifying a specific type of community. Both the Ethiopia singles' videos and other music video texts produced in the name of famine relief successfully hailed audiences as both compassionate consumers and as members of youth market and rock community. Perhaps the reason why famine footage was presented in music video format at the live aid concert is because the music video form speaks to youth consumers, savvy in the art of advertising and the consumption of music video texts. The effectiveness of this format in reaching youth markets with expendable income might explain why the famine relief movement became a music movement.

Pop-ifying Famine

As I have indicated, the similarities between footage and videos are relatively apparent. However the parallels between famine footage and famine relief texts became stronger when famine texts began to take the music video format. This is exactly what happens with the most significant famine footage presented during the Live Aid concert. According to *The Glasgow Herald*, the CBC coverage was aired at the behest of global pop star, David Bowie.[137] Under the headline "Yesterday's Rock Heroes and Stars of Today," the anonymous reporter notes "Bowie ... had insisted on cutting his stage time short to allow the screening of a particularly moving film taken recently by a Canadian

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[137] *Glasgow Herald* 15 July 1985: 7. The *Live Aid: World Wide Concert Book* also credits Bowie for the idea (Hillman 128).

film crew in Ethiopia."[138] Had Bowie not donated a certain amount of time from his own musical set to the footage, there may have been very little visual reference to the famine during the concert. Of course, the reduction of sensationalist images of starving Ethiopians and Sudanese on the television would not necessarily be something to mourn, however, as I have previously illustrated, such images appeal to compassionately minded audiences and inspire them to perform 'good acts'. Can we assume that, in presenting such images, Bowie encouraged viewer/listeners to donate more money and buy more merchandise than they perhaps might have done without the abject reminder?

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporations's documentary short is typical of televised news coverage of famine: a seemingly omnipresent cameraman films individuals or small groups of starving people. However, this report differs from the typical footage and, more specifically, from the Buerk/Amin piece because a pop song accompanies it. The song, The Cars' "Drive," while a major 80s hit, seems inappropriate in theme. After all, what relevance does a song entitled "Drive," with the chorus line "Whose Gonna Drive You Home?," have to the famine? More than one would imagine,

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[138]It seems pertinent to consider Bowie's performance leading up to the presentation of the clip on both the concert telescreens and the televisions of at-home viewers. Of the three songs that Bowie sings, the titles and lyrics of two—"Rebel, Rebel" and "Heroes"—seem particularly pertinent to my discussion of the Live Aid concert. The second song Bowie sings, "Rebel, Rebel," interpellates youths in the audience to perceive of themselves as subversive in some way, as rebellious, either as a result of their listening to rock music or their compassionate consumerist acts. It is no surprise that Bowie, a man who was a sub-cultural icon for many youths throughout the 70s, would choose a song that spoke to a group of people that feel at worst, disenfranchised, at best, different. Bowie's third song, "Heroes," speaks more specifically to the event itself, hailing the audience to be "heroes" if "just for one day." The crowd is extraordinarily animated during this set—cameras span the crowds to show thousands of raised hands clapping. Bowie ends the song with the line "God bless you. You're the heroes of this concert." And indeed, all those involved in Live Aid—whether or not their beliefs are "self-congratulatory" as Marcus Griel implies (29, Rockin' the Boat, Garofalo)—could conceive of themselves as heroes of the famine relief movement, as heroic in their attempts to 'feed the world' (Bowie's other part in the concert is to sing the opening lines to "Do They Know Its Christmas?"). While Bowie should be commended both for applauding the audience, and not his fellow superstars, as the heroes of the day; his statement is simply indicative of the ethnocentric nature of the event and of the perception that the British audience (the stadium and the crowd) is somehow located at the epicenter of the globe.

perhaps. It would seem that the song was picked because other lines hold resonance with the famine and the famine relief movement's call to act. The film is edited in such a way to emphasize the relevance of specific lines. For instance, when The Cars sing "Who's gonna pick you up/ When You fall?" the screen displays an image of a mother lifting a child. When The Cars sing "And who's gonna plug their ears/ When you scream?" the screen shows a child violently crying. For a moment the song fades out so that the diegetic sound, the actual scream of the child, can be heard. Other lines seem relevant to the cause, in particular the statement "You can't go on pretending nothing's wrong." Perhaps it would have been more appropriate, however, to show Westerners in the audience when this line is pronounced!

The Madonna with Child image is, not surprisingly, once again replicated as well. However, the footage is distinctly different to that produced only a few months before by Buerk and Amin. Madonna depicted picking up her child (as The Cars narrate) shows both an awareness of and a distrust of the camera that captures her image and that of her child. Her eyes look toward what we assume to be a cameraman and, although he is never shown, his presence is implied through her look. The presence of the camera, or perhaps of the cameraman, creates an anxiety that is clearly marked upon her concerned facial expression and rapid, flustered eye movement. Her eyes dart quickly back and forth from the implied cameraman to within the frame. This mother has the strength and awareness to silently protest her own objectification. But, rather than confronting the cameraman who invades her space without her consent, she covers over the image he wishes to film. The camera holds with her while she literally struggles to gather her blanket and cover

herself and her child prior to feeding her child. As soon as she is covered, there is an abrupt cut to another image of desperation and despair.

The CBC footage shows people who are receiving aid. It illustrates how, once women regain strength, it is possible for them to confront the gaze that captures and contains them. But at the same time, the short demonstrates how African women are aware of the necessity of being filmed, of having such images disseminated around the world. On one hand the mother attempts to maintain her dignity, but on the other, she does not refuse depiction.

On one hand the report differs from most narrative music videos because the band singing is never shown spliced in with the CBC footage (The Cars do, however, play later in the concert). It is, on the other hand, similar to narrative music videos because there appears to be little relation between narrative and song, except at the few points when the images appear aligned with the lyrics. In "Look! Hear!" Frith describes explains that there are a number of reasons for using music as an accompaniment to documentary footage. He notes that, firstly "Music is used to aestheticise the reality we see," secondly "music is used to ground what we see," and thirdly, "to distance viewers from the action and make them feel more knowing" (282). In specific reference to the use of pop songs, Frith states:

> Pop songs are being used ... not just to indicate a place or time or even to tug on emotional memories (as on film soundtracks) but to make historically important or dramatically intense scenes mundane (just as advertisers use pop songs to imply that fantasy is routine) (282).

Frith raises a number of interesting points here. Not only does he provide yet another

way to connect both the CBC report and music videos, in general, to commercials—in the sense that all three combine music and fantasy—but his argument also suggests that the use of music with the footage of starving Ethiopians tends to render the image mundane and distance the viewer from the abject images she is presented with (this leads one to question if the viewer, in being distanced, then latches back onto the lyrics in a way that alters their subordinate position). Therefore, watching death in the form of a music video makes it palatable.

Empowering Videos

The music video format does more than simply unites audiences as rock communities it also provides the viewer/listener a certain amount of pleasure and, according to certain music video theorists, this pleasure (even when combined with the traumatic pain that might be evoked by videos representing suffering) is empowering. Perhaps, then, this provides another explanation as to why the music video was the format and vehicle of choice for famine relief organizers and participants: not only did consumers know how to read music video, but they were empowered by it.

According to recent studies, music videos—above other visual and aural texts—are effective and appeal to diverse audiences because they provide pleasure for viewer-listeners by interpellating them into clearly identifiable music communities[139] and, in strengthening memories, add richly to already existent cultural repertoire of visual images. According to Marsha Kinder in "Music Video and the Spectator: Television, Ideology and Dream," music videos appeal not only because they intensify the

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[139]Kinder argues that these communities are mass audiences unified through unification of private and public identities (11).

viewer/listeners pleasure through the combination and interplay of the audio and visual sensations; but because they also allow for the simultaneous act of identifying with and objectifying the bodies on screen (11), they are hypnotic (5), and they have an unprecedented effect in the memory because they function like REM sleep.

Kinder explains that one of the reasons why music video has such an immense appeal because it functions in very much the same way as dreams. She explains how, as a result of structural discontinuities, montage, and the effects of video on the memory, music video had a privileged position in the cultural psyche during the 1980s. She states:

> Although the triggering of sounds of the song come from external sources (unlike the internally generated signals in dreams), the music video fan has been taught to identify with the external receiving apparatus, so some degree of internalization occurs. This process of retrieving prefabricated video images from memory may help train viewers to retrieve them more readily during REM sleep. In other words, the structural reliance on memory retrieval shared by MTV and dreams may give these music video images a privileged position within the dreampool (14).[140]

Kinder's theory proposes that visual music texts had the potential to enter into levels of the unconscious that other texts could not, purely because they could be described as akin to dreams and were presented on television, as part of a continuous television line-up.[141] While Kinder's argument presents a hypothesis, and arguably different videos could have a different effect on memory retrieval during sleep, it is frightening to think that the type of ethnocentric propaganda espoused in the Ethiopia videos has the potential to ingrain itself on both an individual and cultural psyche. In essence, the argument that Kinder presents implies that, because they are presented in music video format, the Ethiopia singles have the potential to maintain a privileged place in the cultural repertoire of

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[140]My own experiences would indicate this is correct—I wake up almost every morning with an Ethiopia single in my head since the beginning of this project.

[141]The theory is based on the Hobson-McCarley activation-synthesis model of dreaming.

images, and I would argue also in the repertoire of sounds. Videos provide pleasure in the same way as dreams because, in both, there is a sense of omnipresence that is empowering.

This sense of viewer omnipresence is emphasized not only by direct address and discontinuous narrative of music video (Kinder, 11), but also by the fact that the viewer/listener has been trained to "focus on one's powers of personal choice and reception while ignoring the remote sources of transmission—the true Remote Control—whose ideological determinants and manipulative strategies remain mystified" (Kinder, 14-15). How far can this remote control transmit?

Kinder suggests that the viewer/listener's believes in the fact that she makes choices while watching/listening (rather than being manipulated by both the text and its mode of transmission). This sense of choice lead to an illusory sense of control that further helps to veil the ideologies underpinning not only each individual texts, but the means of media production that produce the texts. The illusion of omnipresence veils in the same way as the Ethiopian Madonna—in neither case is the viewer a party to the actual mechanisms that produce either famine or famine and relief texts.

Arguably, the famine relief videos were even more effective than the average music video, not simply because they were designed and marketed specifically to raise funds (all videos do that) but, because of the ways in which the videos create the sense of the authentic through the illusion of linearity, exposure of modes of production, and gesture. That is not to say, however, that the subversive aspects of the videos are capable of overcoming either the ethnocentrism expressed in the lyrics or the ramifications of celebrity appropriation of suffering. Nevertheless, I suggest that, subversive or not,

without the production of the Ethiopia singles videos (without the visual accompaniment to the songs) the famine relief movement would not have extended its scope beyond small, adult communities in the US and the UK. Through the use of innovative audio-visual and communications technologies, Band Aid and USA for Africa reached massive, diverse audiences worldwide. [142] And, once they'd reached the audiences, they hailed them as consumers and encouraged the consumption of both famine related and non famine related merchandise.

If one in doubt as to power of videos, or of charity rock in general, one only needs to consider the evolution and possibilities of next step of famine relief, the famine relief benefit concert Live Aid. Without videos, without commodification of bodies of artists, the famine as cause; without synaesthetic appeal of famine relief texts, the Live Aid concert would probably not have seemed viable to organizers and producers. The new tradition of non-radical, consumer-based global social movements would not have been born. And, compassionate consumerism would have diffused before it did, perhaps never becoming such an ingrained part of our culture (perhaps even of our cultural dreampool). In essence, the Ethiopia videos set the groundwork for the global, technological phenomenon—the largest benefit concert to have ever been planned.

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[142]Any consumer with satellite television, no matter where they may be located, had the potential to access the Ethiopia videos as they were played on MTV to excess. The songs hit the charts in numerous countries and inspired numerous national equivalents. For more information regarding the international Ethiopia singles see "Food and Trucks and Rock 'n' Roll," and Rijven. For information concerning the number of countries that had access to the concert footage and the channels covering Live Aid, see Esnault.

Chapter Six
Compassionate Consumerism and Global Enterprise: The Multiple Benefits of Live Aid.

> Television has flexed its muscles as a world power, a new unified force to be reckoned with, sweeping aside government and politicians in a dynamic drive for action to save the starving and the dying. We must allow the singers and the minstrels their heavy moment of triumph. They might even be right. If they can rouse the world's conscience and raise over £40 millions with one 12 hour international TV concert, it gives them a voice that must be listened to.[143]

In July 1985, Band Aid and USA Aid joined forces to produce what can be described as the climax of the 1984-5 famine relief movement, the Live Aid benefit concert. The star-studded concert was performed simultaneously in two separate cities linked by satellite, London in the UK, and Philadelphia in the US, 162,000 attended the concert at the two venues (70,000 at Wembley, London and 92,000 at Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia). The 16 hour event was broadcast live, via seven telecommunications satellites, to an estimated one billion television viewers in over 150 countries worldwide. Over the course of one weekend, Live Aid raised over seventy million dollars to "feed the world."[144]

Live Aid was heralded as "The Greatest Show on Earth" by newspapers around the world.[145] In the US and the UK countries national news programs and local papers alike reported how Live Aid on the technological components of the event, describing the ways in which satellite feed works, the amount of cable laid at each stadium, and the amount of energy needed to hold the event.[146] Consumers and donors were enticed by

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[143]James Murray, "The Pictures You Didn't See," *Scottish Daily Express,* 15 July 1985: 10.

[144]Shuker 237.

[145]"The Greatest Show on Earth," *Scottish Daily Express* 12 July 1985: 19.

[146]e.g. "Build Up to Live Aid," *News Round*, BBC, 12 July 2008; and Lindsey Gruson, "Global Concert Gives Philadelphia A Chance To Introduce Itself To The World," *New York Times*, 13 July 1985, late city final ed., sec. 1: 5.

descriptions of the event as a never before seen feat of 'technological wizardry', a 'global jukebox', and a charity rock 'triumph'.[147]

The technological extravagance of the concert culminated not only in the live satellite feed that connected countries around the globe, but also in the supersonic transportation of transatlantic star, Phil Collins (live feed from on board the aircraft). Collins was the only performer to play on both stages at Wembley and Kennedy. Due to the miracle of the Concorde (and the generosity of British Airways for donating the flight), Collins was able to commute between the two venues during the course of the 16-hour event. When asked why he was undertaking the journey, Collins responded thus:

> We thought that if it could be done, wouldn't it be good to do it. And then we went into the logistics and we found out it was possible. ... Eric Clapton's on tour out there, so is Robert Plant, and so I rang them up to see if I could play with them so it would give me something to go for. And, um, it's just nice to be involved as much as possible, really. I'm a lunatic, you know, really.[148]

Collins' rationale here could be applied to the concert as a whole. Live Aid was also done because it could be done, because it was "nice" for artists to be involved, especially as other artists and friends were involved. Bette Midler and Jack Nicholson's introduction to Collins at Kennedy further supports this notion that the concert, an unabashed celebration of excesses and extremes, was held simply because it was possible. As Midler states: "Everything is possible. We can beat time...we can beat hunger...if we just pull

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[147]L. Stevens, "Global Concert Gives Philadelphia A Chance To Introduce Itself To The World," *New York Times*, 13 July 1985, late city final ed., sec. 1: 5; L. Stevens, "72,000 Fans Flock To Live Aid," *Sunday Mail* (Queensland), 14 July 1985, 20 Aug. 2007 <http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu:2047/us/lnacademic/results/docview/docview.do?start=7&sort=RELEVANCE&format=GNBFI&risb=21_T4397198806>; Richard Harrington and Geoffrey Himes, "Rock Around the World:
Live Aid Concerts Raise Millions For Africa," *The Washington Post*
14 July 1985, final ed.: A1; Richard Harrington, "The Greatest Show On Earth, Tomorrow: 'Beatles' May Reunite for the Global Concert," *The Washington Post* 12 July 1985, final ed.: D1.

[148]See concert footage on *Live Aid*, dir. Vincent Scarza, 1985, DVD, Warner, 2004.

together."[149] Here Midler implies that it is through community, through pulling together, that the possibilities of Live Aid become a reality. As a community banding together, hunger can be eradicated.

But, ultimately, the global extravaganza was not attempted simply to "beat hunger." The global spectacle was attempted because it could be attempted. As much as one might like to assume that its appeal to participants was the sole result of the ethic of compassionate consumerism, the newspapers tend to imply that the event appealed because of its technological uniqueness, the fact that communities around the world could be involved, that involvement in the concert located its audience at an important point in history, and the fact that hundreds of globally recognized 'super' stars had agreed to perform.

The show arose out of a search for possibilities: the possibilities of advanced visual and communication technologies, of popular culture texts and performances, and of global social movements. While ultimately it offered few new options to those starving in Africa, Live Aid offered up a myriad of opportunities for a number of its organizers, sponsors, and celebrity participants as a result of their involvement in the event. For many of those involved, the possibilities that Live Aid provided have been boundless.

Celebrities, record companies, instrument and equipment manufacturers, and telecommunications companies all benefited from unprecedented advertising. Corporate sponsors, particularly those endorsed by famine celebrities involved in the concert benefited not only from the advertising gained through product placement (note for instance the paper Pepsi cups perched on amplifiers and keyboards throughout the

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[149] ibid.

concert) and commercial airtime, but also through their connection to a compassionate consumer movement. The cities of London and Philadelphia (and the nations where these cities are located) gained revenue and positive promotions for hosting the event. Most significant to this project, however, are the ways in which youths benefited as the famine relief movement created more sites for youth activity, expression, and production; as a result of the new definitions they gained as a 'new generation' of compassionate consumers and through their identification with famine-celebrities; and through their multi-faceted relationships with compassionate corporate sponsors such as Pepsi.

This chapter examines some of the multiple benefits of famine relief, specifically the Live Aid benefit concert. It attempts to outline how the evolution of the famine relief movement and the subsequent diffusion of the ethic of compassionate consumerism resulted from the creation of an interwoven web of connections, associations, and relationships that—even though at times contradictory in nature—provided numerous opportunities to Western individuals, groups, companies, and evens youths, while continuing to elide the famine sufferer in Ethiopia.

Disseminating Globally

Through the miracle of television, millions of people were able to attend the concerts at Wembley and Kennedy stadiums.[150] The experience of the rock concert—the rock spectacle—was no longer the privilege of a fortunate few as it was at Woodstock for instance, nor was it limited by the audience's physical location. The implication of this global reach was enormous. The fact that billions could view the concert was not only a

[150]The concert was aired in countries as far flung as Yugoslavia, Australia, and China. For detailed information on the concert's reach see Esnault.

testament to the miracle of television, and indicative of the productive, synaesthetic relationship between music and television; it emphasizes the 'possibilities' for the global transmission of compassionate consumerism.[151]

In the UK, the BBC was the only television channel to broadcast the concert.[152] As the BBC is available to all who have a television without extra cost (excluding the television license fee necessary to even own a television), any UK television viewer (and most of Europe) could access the BBC version (which, by all accounts, was the most extensive). Segmented between live performances, the BBC broadcast interviews with famine-celebrities, Bob Geldof appealing to fans to "give us your money," views of the stadium and famous audience members, the comings and goings of stars, references to foreign contributions, and segments of Live Aid events held around the globe.[153]

In the US, however, coverage was less extensive, but was offered at different times by different channels. ABC aired a range of live and pre-recorded Live Aid segments from

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[151]The movement was vicarious, the choices made by youths here influence what is marketed abroad global markets. Youths in the US and UK were integral in the determination of global demands and the construction of global sites (even if such sites remain illusory). Arguably, as such texts spread, so did the American and British ideals and values expressed in said texts. That said, as Geroge Lipsitz indicates, The choices made by Generation X and Thatcher's children appear to have more of a global resonance, being transported worldwide and gaining popularity in remote places. In *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism, and the Poetics of Place* (London: Verso, 1994), George Lipsitz illustrates both the positive and dangerous aspects of using music to mobilize bodies and voices through time and space. He describes the abilities of music to transcend local and national boundaries whilst still retaining elements of the original location in which is was produced (3-4), as well as the ways in which transcendence and transmission of musical forms (and literal music texts) alter music(s) and place(s) by creating diffuse cultural meanings in different places (4, 17). This results in the creation of new scapes or "geopolitical and economic realities" (6) and in the problematization of place (5). Despite the utopian aspects of such new creations (19), and the possibilities they may present to disenfranchised groups, Lipsitz warns of the dangers that arise out of the production of new spaces and alterations of meaning is said spaces at the crossroads. He states, "collisions occur at crossroads; decisions must be made there" (7).

[152]A limited number of satellite customers in the UK could also access MTV.

[153]For detailed description of Live Aid line up see Esnault.

London.[154] MTV provided the most extensive coverage in the US, but was only available to satellite customers and cable subscribers (thus, only those with the means to pay for extra services could see the concert in its entirety). MTV also interrupted the concert with pre-recordings, commercials, and VJs.[155]

Concert audiences in the US were reliant upon corporate sponsors to determine their Live Aid experiences. And in return for the services they offered, such corporate sponsors demanded either space in the arenas or television airtime to advertise their products, and profited greatly from their association with the famine. Due to the processes of synergy, corporations such as Pepsi and AT&T were able to rely on compassionate consumer sentiment to sell products (such as soda) and services (such as long distance phone service) unrelated to the famine. The fact that the concert functioned like a lengthy music video also served well the corporate sponsors and US advertisers promoting products throughout the concert's duration.

The concert can be described as akin to the music videos that preceded it because it also appears to function as a continuous text. In her discussion of music videos presented on MTV in *Rockin' Around the Clock*, E. Ann Kaplan describes how music television "takes over the history of rock and roll, flattening out all the distinct types into one continuous present" (29). Kaplan also argues that the MTV station functions as a 24-

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[154]ABC's decision to prerecord was based on the fact that important and upcoming acts performing at primetime in London were too early to be seen in primetime in the US. Madonna requested London primetime and was aired later on ABC, much to the disappointment of Led Zeppelin fans (Esnault).

[155]As a result of the adverts (the specifics of which I will deal with momentarily), different ones being played at different times on different channels, the Live Aid concert text was again altered in nature. Thus the concert text was unstable as a result of what George Yudice describes in his article, "We Are *Not* the World," as 'uneven networks of dissemination' (204). While scholars often assume that such unevenness is felt most harshly in poorer nations throughout the world, evidence reveals that the unevenness of networks has as much effect in the US, particularly among communities unable to pay for cable.

hour continuous text that distinguishes as little between adverts and video texts, as it does between music genres (13). Arguably, the concert does the same thing, flattening out not only the generational distinctions, i.e. between 60s acts such as the Beach Boys or Paul McCartney and newly emerging mega-stars like Madonna, but also distinctions between performances, famine footage, and advertisements for non-famine related texts and services. As I explained in the previous chapter, the blurring of the line between music video text and advertisement serves corporate advertisers well. This is particularly the case at the Live Aid event where many of the famine texts and famine relief performances are intended (in their various ways) to evoke compassionate consumer impulses. Having sodas and services associated with compassionate consumer commodities and products could do corporate sponsors of Live Aid no harm.

The most obvious examples of flattening distinctions between texts are both the Pepsi and AT&T commercials presented in the United States. Throughout the course of the US broadcasts, channels carrying the event repeated the same Pepsi and AT&T adverts. Both companies sponsored the Live Aid extravaganza and, in doing so, gained airtime and space. Despite the fact that both Pepsi and AT&T benefited from their association with the concert and ran adverts throughout the day, the advertising strategies they used differed.

The Pepsi commercials are worth mentioning because they very clearly illustrate the interwoven relationships between sponsors and celebrity participants and between commercial texts and the concert text. Journalist Tom Shales caustically explains how, for instance, Lionel Richie and Pepsi worked together as a mutually beneficial advertising unit. Shales states:

> Less charitably minded was the Lionel Richie spot for Pepsi-Cola informing viewers they were part of a new generation (newer than the one in April, when the commercial first aired?). Richie, mercifully absent from most of the program, appeared at the very end in Philadelphia. One couldn't help thinking that this appearance had to be worth a million bucks to Pepsi after the rigorous reinforcement of its Richie ties all through the day.[156]

Shales' comments here are perhaps even more astute than he realizes. Richie not only shared connections simultaneously with the famine relief movement and Pepsi, he made the connection obvious in the text of "We Are the World," a song that he co-wrote with fellow Pepsi celebrity promoter, Michael Jackson.[157] The chorus-line of Richie's song in the Pepsi commercial is "We made our choice/ Make it a Pepsi."[158] This line sounds rather strongly reminiscent of the chorus-line, "There's a choice we're making," in the "We Are the World" single. According to the end of the Richie Pepsi commercial, Pepsi is the "choice of a generation." Could it possibly be that the choice "we're making" when listening to "We Are the World" is not only the choice to help feed starving Ethiopians, but also to become part of a consumer-savvy, philanthropically minded generation—a generation that, according to the end of Richie's Pepsi commercial, drinks Pepsi?

In a rather cynical remark Marcus Greil sums up the potential consequences of the Pepsi, Richie, and Live Aid connection. He states:

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[156]Tom Shales, "After the Music, The Memories; On TV -- Hype, Hoopla And the Whole World," *The Washington Post* 15 July 1985.

[157]Interesting connections abound. For instance, EMCI (Entertainment Marketing & Communications, Inc.), "a Stamford, CT based agency that links consumer companies with music and entertainment properties" not only "handled such landmark entertainment alliances as Pepsi-Michael Jackson," but handled the corporate sponsorship for Live Aid. For more information, see "Rocketing To Success," *PROMO Magazine*, May 2000.

[158]Lionel Richie, perf., Advertisement for Pepsi, 1985, 20 May 2008 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fentTLsWhw>.

> ...the true result will likely be less that certain Ethiopian individuals will live, or anyway live a bit longer than they otherwise would have, than that Pepsi will get the catch phrase of the advertising campaign sung for free by Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen, and all the rest.[159]

In using Richie and the music video format, the Pepsi commercial easily blends with the Live Aid performances that also appear in the style of music video. It is at this point, where Pepsi and the famine become virtually synonymous, that the ethic of compassionate consumerism begins to diffuse. It is no longer possible to determine why consumers watch, listen, or consume. It is no longer possible to identify if their interests lie in philanthropic impulses or in being part of a community that is both philanthropic and corporate. And it is no longer necessary to be a compassionate consumer in order to participate as a member of the famine relief youth market. But, it is also not necessarily important to determine the exact stimuli that led to famine relief participant donations and good acts of compassion, what is important is to note that the stimuli were multiple and successfully resulted in raising awareness and a huge amount of funds for the famine relief effort.

As the Pepsi commercial clearly illustrates, the Live Aid benefit concert is inherently tied to corporate and celebrity interests. And, admittedly, those corporate interests result in a downplaying of the famine: why give the victims airtime (when, supposedly, everyone already knows what they look like) when airtime can be devoted to advertising more saleable products? Here Pepsi is relying upon Richie's association with the movement, his image as compassionate and as a member of the compassionate

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[159]See Garofalo, *Rockin' the Boat* 29.

consumer community (an image produced by the "We Are the World" video), to sell their soft drink products.

Rather than employing a superstar to advertise their phone service, AT&T employed a cheaper alternative. Shales points out that, in their advertisements, "[p]hotographs of the victims of famine were melded together while new lyrics to the company's old 'Reach Out' theme were sung: 'Reach out, reach out and touch someone/ Someone whose only hope is you'." Again, AT&T constructs a symbolic relationship between its service and the service provided by aid agencies in order to sell phone lines. They, like Pepsi, rely on the association of their product with the ethic of compassionate consumerism and the famine relief movement to encourage audiences to buy what they have on offer, despite the fact that their phone service has nothing to directly connect it either to the famine or the famine relief movement.[160]

Both Pepsi and AT&T are relying on the fact that their captive audiences in the stadiums (ads were also posted on billboards and merchandise available at the concert) and at home were members of a new generation of rock community. Pepsi relied on the fact that audiences would see Richie and identify him as a famine relief figure and, by a process of transference, see Pepsi not only as a refreshing drink, but a famine related product (one need not mention the irony of a soda company endorsing an event intended to raise money and awareness for a group of people dying as a result of famine and drought). AT&T also capitalizes on the rock community, assuming that the audience will know how to effectively read the music video advert on screen. And, no doubt, audiences familiar with both music video in general and the Ethiopia videos in particular, would be

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[160]It is quite possible that AT&T's decision to sponsor the Live Aid event may have been an attempt to elide criticism of its monopoly, criticism that led to its breakup into the "baby bells" in 1984.

able to read the text appropriately, allowing the process of synaesthesia to cover over any gaps between image and sound, between phone service and famine relief, between compassionate consumerism and simple consumerism.

The fact that adverts and performances all assume a rock community audience is evidence of the fact that the famine relief movement had evolved. No longer simply trying to appeal to a soon-to-be homogenous youth market through the ethic of compassionate consumerism, the Live Aid texts were designed to appeal to a now existent rock community market. This community consisted of both 60s rockers and 80s poppers who—despite their potentially different music genre tastes and different relationship to the medium of television, rock performances, and music television—were unified both by their attendance at the concert and commodities they consumed (or would potentially consume).

Because of the sheer number of texts and the diverse nature of each text's meaning, the ethic of compassionate consumerism could not be restricted or confined within any one particular frame. As with brands and branding, the practices, experiences, identities, and discourses surrounding the ethic of compassionate consumerism could not be absolutely controlled by those that produced famine or famine relief texts. And, as a result of their sensationalized content, and the fact that they were for the most part televised, famine and famine relief texts could be read and received in a multitude of ways. As the number of famine and famine relief texts produced and disseminated increased throughout the course of the Live Aid concert, so too did the number of potential textual interpretations and emotional evocations. Consumer impulses became as varied as their options were varied. Like the compassion that was originally evoked by

the famine footage, consumer impulses were no longer confined to famine and famine relief texts.

Corporate sponsors, the rock industry, and the rock community benefited immensely from participation in the Live Aid event. The Live Aid concert was also an extremely beneficial event for a number of groups, corporations, cities, and nations outside of the rock community. For instance, both the cities of London and Philadelphia gained financially as a result of hosting the event.

Benefiting Locally

During set changes at the concert, television audiences are treated to images of the stadiums within which the following act will be presented.[161] The overhead images of the stadiums and the surrounding urban sprawl (presumably shot from a blimp) are not only a way to situate every performance, but also relocate the global to specific urban locations. That which is global is, in other words, also situated locally. The fact that the cities being specularized are first world cities of historical note—London being the capital of the United Kingdom (the capital of the former British empire) and that Philadelphia was once the capital of what is now the United States—indicates how the event also functions on a national level. And, indeed, the global spectacle was extremely profitable for the economies and images of the concerts' host nations and cities.

In "Mega-Events and Micro-Modernization: On the Sociology of the New Urban Tourism," sociologist Maurice Roche demonstrates how mega-events encourage tourism and investment. He states that, although "TV rights is usually the single biggest item of

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[161] Live Aid, DVD, 2004.

income to the organisers of premier mega-events," the "media presentation of the event also inevitably provides a certain amount of free and generally positive publicity for the host city" (586-7). As one *New York Times* writer pointed out after the concert, this free publicity was particularly useful for the city of Philadelphia: "officials grabbed the Live Aid concert as a way of rehabilitating the city's image in the aftermath of the Move tragedy." As well as improving a city's image and encouraging tourism, Roche argues that mega-events result in what he describes as 'pre-event levering':

> The pre-event levering effect of mega-events on other capital investments has been noted in recent research... Armstrong demonstrated that pre-event, the preparation of a mega-event often encourages both public and private sector to bring forward plans that they may have been going to proceed with anyway (588).

Thus, it can be assumed that both the Live Aid mega-event and the pre- and post-event levering that it may have precipitated was highly profitable for the cities of London and Philadelphia, that is, profitable in a way above and beyond the revenue generated by audience spending on transport, parking, accommodation, food and beverages, and other tourist merchandise. Because Margaret Thatcher refused to wave the 17.5% value added tax (VAT) on tickets or concert merchandise, the British government also benefited directly from the concert.

The fact that the Live Aid concert benefited two major cities within two of the most affluent nations in the world (and therefore, by default, benefited the nations too)

leads me to two further points. First, it proves that, despite the shifts in economic power resulting from the processes of globalization, the U.S and the UK still maintain a position at the epicenter of the globe. Second, in this position (supported by the media, consumer markets), both countries (and the people within them) enjoy a certain amount of privilege. It might have been more beneficial to those suffering from famine (and the countries in which they were located) had the concert been held and transmitted from a location in Africa. However, as the following anecdote illustrates, this was never an option for the organizers of Live Aid. Without the already existent privilege of being viewed within the global scene as a cultural and economic epicenter, African counties had—at least in Geldof's entrepreneurial mind—no potential to lure superstars to perform or foreign companies to invest in a concert event located in African capitals. Arguably, music videos and adverts that located suffering elsewhere were much more effective ways to raise money for Africa than investing in, exposing, and promoting the positive aspects of Africa.

In the fall of 1985, following the success of the concert, Bob Geldof visited seven countries in the Horn of Africa with members of the international media to draw further attention to the plight of the most famine stricken regions of the continent (*Geldof in Africa*, 10). The second country that the crew of reporters and Band Aid representatives visited was Burkina Faso. Much to Geldof's chagrin, he received a warm welcome from multiple groups of singers and dancers upon his arrival at Ouagadougou airport. He was disturbed because he had asked for no fuss of him to be made.[162] He was as equally

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[162]Blundy and Vallely 40.

displeased when asked to meet with the Minister of Sport and Culture of one of the poorest nations in the world. The following is an account of the interchange between the two men provided by David Blundy of the London *Sunday Times*. In this narrative, not only does Blundy unwittingly inform the reader of Geldof and Band Aid's ethnocentric attitudes towards the nations they had randomly decided to visit on their consciousness raising tour,[163] but he also outlines the model that Geldof used to execute a thoroughly successful, global benefit concert that had a much more marked effect upon U.S and UK cultures than famine regions in the Horn. This model is still employed to some extent today. Blundy recounts:

> The Minister who had heard about the stunning success of the Live Aid concert, wanted Geldof's advice on arranging an international festival of music in the Burkinan capital the next spring. Geldof was incredulous. "What, you mean live from Ouagadougou?" That is exactly what the minister meant. "I thought of getting all our traditional singers and dancers to perform and then inviting international stars like you." "Yes, well, I'm very tied up this spring as a matter of fact," said Geldof. "But I will tell you what to do. . . . You want to scrap the ethnic crap and get in some of the American superstars like Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie... It isn't very revolutionary but it works and you'll make money. First you ring up the TV companies. You've got to have TV, that's where the money is. You tell them that you have Michael Jackson playing and do they want live satellite feed. . . . Then you ring up Jackson's agent and you tell him the television companies are taking a live feed from Ouagadougou. Does he want to come? Of course he wants to come. Then you ring up other rock stars and say 'We've got everyone else.' Then they'll come. You make a lot of money, they make a lot of money. Got it? ..." [S]aid the Minister[,] "We look forward to 'Live from Ouagadougou'." "Yeah, great," said Geldof. "I'll watch it on the TV."[164]

Geldof's response to the minister is not only dismissive, but also sarcastic. He shows little interest in repeating the Live Aid event elsewhere because the event would no

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[163]According to Blundy, none of them knew where Burkina Faso was prior to landing—in repeating the anecdote Blundy obviously doesn't think that this is anything to be embarrassed about (36).

[164]Blundy 47-9.

longer be under his control. Blundy claims that Geldof's reaction is due to his dislike of political officials (especially ones working for dictators in the Third World, which was the case for the minister of culture in Burkina Faso). What is most interesting in this account, however, is not Geldof's arrogance, but his inability to see how such an event would benefit famine stricken regions. It is shocking that his understanding of how to organize a global spectacle is so sophisticated, while his understanding of its multiple consequences is so naïve.

But perhaps Geldof is not as naïve as he seems. Arguably, to host the event in Africa would be extremely beneficial if it worked. But whether or not the event would work in such a location is debatable, not because Burkinans are incapable of hosting 'Live From Ouagadougou', but because locating the event in Africa would undermine the discourses and practices of compassionate consumerism upon which such charitable events depend for their success. If an African nation were to become the epicenter of the globe, even for one day, Western consumers might not be so inspired to sympathize with starving Africans. The premise of compassionate consumerism is that the consumer 'saves' the victims, not that the supposed victims own their suffering (thus disallowing it to be appropriated by celebrities or witnesses) and show an ability and desire to solve their own problems. 'Live From Ouagadougou' would provide Africans too much agency, African cultural practices with too much visibility. Compassionate consumerism of the West is dependent upon Westerners saving Africans (as Geldof does) and the domination of Western cultural practices. [165]

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[165]Even in 2005 at the twenty-year anniversary benefit concert, Live 8, African artists were excluded on the grounds that only musicians with more than four million records sold could play, otherwise people in

Geldof's statements dismissing 'Live From Ouagadougou' imply that the idea of an African concert is ridiculous. And, to some extent, the idea of hosting the event in a country so impoverished that people cannot feed themselves seems delusional. And yet, I cannot help but think that Geldof's biggest problem with such an idea betrays an assumption so inherent to not only the famine relief movement, but to global aid movements in general: this assumption being that, while it is acceptable for Africans to observe and consume global culture, it is not acceptable for them to appropriate or (re)produce culture (as in Geldof's song, "Christmas," Africans remain passive in this narrative). Is this because they do not have either the funds or the knowledge to create a Live Aid concert, or because, in replicating Live Aid, they might be verging on producing a bad copy of a Western text?[166]

In the course of his explanation of how to host a successful mega-event (the formula for which is impeccable), Geldof describes a format for future aid extravaganzas (future 'aids'). It is no mistake that part of this formula involves employing British contractors, using Western made equipment, and inviting Western superstars. After all, a significant impetus behind the mega-event is the potential to make profit. While the proceeds of the event go to charity (for the most part), numerous corporations and individuals profited from advertising and production rights. As pointed out in a 2006 article in *The New Internationalist*, Geldof has profited immensely from his role as savior to Africa (perhaps why he is so adamant to prevent any appearance of African agency in the Live Aid and later Live 8 concerts). He has become a figure relied upon not only by

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China would 'switch off'. See "Bob Geldof," *New Internationalist* 386, 2006, New Internationalist Magazine, 4 March 2008 <http://www.newint.org/columns/worldbeaters/2006/01/01/bob-geldof/>.

[166]For further discussion of the concept of the bad copy see Eric Gable, "Bad Copies" 297.

the British government on issues concerning Africa, but he also owns the company that produces the videos and DVDs of Live Aid and Live 8 for home sales. His company, Ten Alps, also produced spin off products, such as the DVD series *Geldof in Africa.* Perhaps more significant, however, are the connections that Geldof has developed with multinational corporations as a result of his re-found fame during the famine relief movement and his involvement in multi-national charity organizations.[167] Like Geldof, other organizers and sponsors involved in Live Aid have enjoyed major successes in the corporate and entertainment world. Harvey Goldsmith, promoter of Live Aid, as of 2007, had his own television show *Get Your Act Together*, also produced by Ten Alps.

Benefiting Youth

As Jean Baudrillard clearly illustrates, any form of cultural expression or resistance to hegemonic systems in the late capitalist era is easily and quickly co-opted by dominant institutions. However, despite this process of cooption, it is not possible to conclude that the masses are simply manipulated by the institutions appropriating and reproducing cultural items, activities, and movements. It seems dismissive to assume that youth were simply media dupes, completely unaware of either the processes by which the media and corporate sponsors profited, or the fact that the concert shifted focus away from Africa (after all, the young were the ones watching and listening most intently. They could just as easily see the Pepsi cups on stage and the lack of Africans as much as more established critics).

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[167]The anonymous writer of *The New Internationalist* article entitled "Bob Geldof" explains: "One of [Geldof's] company's subsidiaries – Ten Alps Events – specializes in creating 'branded environments' and has worked for some of the world's most powerful corporations, including BP, Glaxo Smithkline and Microsoft, not to mention the British Foreign Office." All of the above have a vested interest in African poverty and disease.

In *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements*, Reebee Garofalo challenges conventional criticisms of charity rock, Live Aid in particular, that condemn the benefit concert for its seeming lack of 'authenticity' and 'sincerity'. Garofalo explains how typically comparisons between 60s protest/ folk movements and 80s rock movements are employed in order to undermine not only mass (or global) culture, but also those individuals involved in mass movements. He describes the tendency of the left to dismiss mass culture—"a debased culture produced only for profit and manipulated from above"—because it is "seen as vacuous culture of an undifferentiated mass whose only function is consumption, as opposed to folk culture which expresses values and ideals of an identifiable group of real people" (2).

As Roy Shuker points out in *Understanding Popular Music*, much of the criticism of the famine relief movement, specifically the mega-events, revolves around the idea that rock music has been ousted by apolitical, consumerist muzak:

> There was ... criticism that ... the majority of the recordings reflected 'the same muzak characteristics, transparent frameworks built on the conventions of pop song writing that only sell because of the Band-Aid connotation (237).

The notion that 80s charity rock is muzak is problematic and presumptuous. For Shuker, such yearning for more authentic or sincere conscience rock is typical of the 'left's moral high ground' (a sentiment that both Frith and Hall support). He states that such morality results from the left missing the point of the famine relief movement, in essence, that such

criticism "misses the point that Band Aid was not about music, and popular music as a focal point for youth, but rather about raising money and consciousness. The critics' preoccupation with credibility and ideological purity is accordingly misplaced" (Shuker, 238).

Shuker is correct to assert that the left speaks from a moral high ground. And his notion that, oftentimes, critics miss the point of the charity rock phenomenon is also refreshingly observant. However, his assumption that the movement is not about music or youth is flawed. The contrary is in fact the case; the famine relief movement is more about music and youth than anything else. Shuker's assumption arises from his inability to recognize how the Left's problem with famine relief music texts is generic, nostalgic, and espoused by a group of 60s counter-culturalists with an interest in maintaining the label 'youth' for themselves. He thus fails to see how, tied up with politics and political protest, are issues of both music and youth. The Live Aid concert was a youth site (within the youth site of famine relief) where numerous ideologies, practices, discourses, and identities intersected.

The compassionate consumerism of Live Aid (in its various forms) inspired mass donations because the events spoke to a sense of youthfulness.[168] The music texts, through their entertaining excess, inspired both emotion and consumer impulses that are both typical of youth and integral in the construction of youth. As Deena Weinstein states in "Rock is Youth/Youth is Rock," youth defines itself through music. She states

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[168]For a discussion of the relationship between youth and youthfulness, and the appeal of youthfulness to older generations, see Acland, "Fresh Contacts" 35.

"[t]he relation of youth to rock music is reciprocal; each one defines the other, but they are not identical" (91). The Live Aid event was political because it allowed youth, through music, new avenues through which to define themselves, new identities as compassionate (or at least emotionally savvy) consumers, and entry to a newly emerged community of compassionate consumers. By participating in Live Aid youth are, as Reebee Garofalo argues, actively involved in seriously challenging the "existing hegemony in the most conservative political period in decades... in one arena [music] where, at least for the time being, progressive forces seem to have real power (16).

In "Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life," Lawrence Grossberg argues that rock music, as a result of "the emotional articulations that form the rock 'community', tend[s] to disrupt the hegemonic control of the corporate power brokers over the community's desires and pleasures" (Ullestad, 69). Grossberg implies that music texts are potentially counter hegemonic because media and music producers cannot necessarily control the products, brands, or commodities they produce: they do not have complete control over the ways in which pleasure is evoked by a text or the consumer's individual desires to see and hear music. In other words, music texts (and the communities that are constructed around them) have the potential to subvert because, both as stand-alone texts and as part of one continuous televised text, they evoke pleasure that is uncontrollable and desires that are undetermined by those that produce the texts.

In "Rock Rebellion: Subversive Effects of Live Aid and 'Sun City'," Neal Ullestad not only suggests how pleasure affects change subversively, but insinuates that music is one of the most effective mediums to perform this subversion. He states:

> Subversion of satisfaction is the name of the game in pop rock music, the constant changes in artists and sounds perpetually subvert conventional meanings of desire and pleasure, and we 'can't be satisfied'. Consumer mythologies of style and fashion work to condense the fulfillment of our desires into the act of buying that which is 'new', now. Clearly such change seldom includes any significant disruption of everyday acceptance of the 'natural' order of things. Since meaningful change is a threat to corporate control, it is the superficial change of the subversion of satisfaction—vital to the increasing of profits, it seems—that has been institutionalised (67).

At the end of this excerpt Ullestad points to the fact that change has been institutionalized. In doing so he explains how the media and corporations collude with the mass movement and its participants to affect change because such change is profitable. However, simply because it is profitable, simply because such change results of the combined efforts of curious bedfellows, it does not mean that this change is not apparent or challenging to hegemonic systems of control.

Live Aid may not have been inspired by the same idealism as Woodstock, but it was no more commercial than its seemingly anti-establishment predecessors.[169] Unlike the benefit concerts that preceded it, Live Aid ignored fantasies of a world without Western over consumption. It was not idealistic, it was precipitated by a drive for possibilities.

While it is necessary to acknowledge that there may be national differences between the actions, motives, and movements of American and British youths during the 1980s (differences that are not simply the result of being exposed to either nationalist narratives or different types of images but also result from differences in aid and in the nature of corporate and celebrity sponsorship in both countries), the ways in which

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[169]For further discussion on the similarities and differences between Woodstock and Live Aid, see Samuel G. Freedman, "Live Aid and the Woodstock Nation," *New York Times* 18 July 1985, late ed.: C19; "From Woodstock to Philadelphia," editorial, *New York Times* 16 July 1985, late ed.: A22; and Harrington, "The Greatest Show on Earth."

famine relief aid plays out in the US and the UK indicates that said differences may be more superficial than at first assumed. This is made most evident by the ways in which the "Charity Rock" phenomenon—the hype and consumerism—is transmitted back and forth across the Atlantic; as well as the distinct ways in which youth activism and charitable campaigns encourage nationalism (albeit somewhat distinct types of nationalism) in both countries.[170]

Despite their regional and ethnic specificities, youth culture in Britain and American becomes more and more synthesized throughout the 1980s, partially as a result of the transmission of musics, and partially as a result of the shared desire for youth in both countries to develop a sense of community, national identity, agency. The local choices made by those youths privileged enough to participate or consumers in the US and the UK had global effects. Not only did youth consumers, through their buying power and role as a market force, participate in the ebbs and flows of worldwide economies; but also their desire to consume (as well as their desire to give, to make a difference, and to help those less fortunate) resulted in Western intervention in foreign nations. This intervention may have taken the form of US or UK government aid convoys (convoys put together as a result of public pressure upon both governments), or the intervention of Western press officials, journalists, and catastrophe tourists but, nevertheless, there is a direct correlation between Western youth and such intervention.[171] To some extent youths are aware of the fact that their actions have an actual psycho-physical effect (sometimes positive, other times negative) upon people in the Third

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[170]See Shuker on donationalism (237).

[171]Penrose 154-5.

World, and, as a result, youth are able to gain and comprehend a sense of self worth and agency.

American and British young people—in their role as consumers, as a specialized market—not only gained more agency, but had an effect upon global markets.[172] The consumer choices made by young people in the US and the UK had a direct effect upon the types of consumables produced and distributed for international markets. This is made evident by the American and British Ethiopia singles that not only exceeded sales expectations worldwide, but also spawned a wave of Charity Rock music produced by artists in other Western and non-Western nations. The distribution of Western texts worldwide also results in the distribution of Western ideologies affirmed by such texts; youth, in having an effect on the market, were also integral to deciding which types of texts were to be exported.

The youth/ multinational corporation relationship had added bonuses for both partners. By the late capitalist era it was no longer voting that was the citizen's most effective method of expressing values and concerns; rather, consumerism became perhaps the most significant avenue for the (global) citizen to make himself heard. This correlation between citizenship and consumerism is suggested by cultural theorists, Lauren Berlant, who suggests in *Compassion* that citizenship is often contingent upon one's ability to consume responsibly and act compassionately (8). In essence, in perceiving of youth as viable consumers and in redefining them (more positively) as a market, multinational corporations not only profited economically, but they also

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[172]Anglo American consumer choices had an immense effect on global markets. For further discussion of how US/ UK influence is inherently present within global musics see Frith *World Music, Politics, and Social Change,* 5. For further discussion of rock music as Western see Garofalo 6-7. Garofalo also notes that "Anglo-American pop [...] catapulted to new heights in the phenomenon of mega-events" (21).

empower youth, providing them with the agency associated with consumerism as well as a new consumer identity.

Being an audience, a potential market, is (like watching music videos and concert footage) empowering in many ways. And, while it may be true that corporations benefit most from the benefit concert, it is not plausible to argue that corporate involvement necessarily devalues Live Aid, the intentions and successes of the young people involved, or the 'unreadable' subversions of youth participants. Yet, it is also plausible to argue, as Marcus Griel does, that corporate influence does tend to distract attention away from the benefit cause. This is, however, not that surprising considering how every one else, the media in particular, performs similar moves, as proven in the previous chapter; but also when one considers that the movements are always more about the donors, without whom, there would be no movement.

The Live Aid event was a natural progression from the Ethiopia singles and videos. While they may have been motivated by altruistic intent, both the videos and the concert were clearly about the possibility of global spectacle and consumer pleasure much more that the recipients of aid. However, neither should be condemned simply for that reason alone. The problem with both sets of music texts, as leftist critics correctly suggest, comes both from the nature of (or the lack of) representations of Africans and the fact that celebrity participants profited exponentially from the event when they could simply have donated money themselves.

Conclusion

It is perhaps hard to imagine that an emotion can be subversive, that compassion can lead to subversive acts. However, the famine relief movement of 1984-85 illustrates that compassion can function as a motivating force for activism, and, that the expression of compassion through consumerism can lead to significant socio-cultural change within even the most conservative and regulatory nations. In expressing compassion, in responding to their interpellation and in defining themselves as compassionate beings, famine relief consumers effectively pushed the limits of existing hegemony in the US and the UK during the compassionate conservative Reagan-Thatcher era.[173]

The famine relief movement challenged compassionate conservatism, not only by opening up the range of people who were considered to be *deserving* of compassion,[174] but by redefining compassion for widely diverse audiences. The movement helped to construct compassion in terms of humility, a shared vulnerability, empathy, and altruism. This reformulation of compassion simultaneously affected the lived conditions of thousands of starving people in Ethiopia and empowered consumers in Britain and the US.[175] Through their acts of compassionate consumption, purchasing, and donation, participants in the famine relief movement not only raised enough money and awareness to help send food aid to refugees throughout the Horn of Africa, they also found a new way to make political statements.

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[173]Garofalo 16.

[174]See Berlant for discussion of the limits to 'appropriate' levels of compassion in a compassionate conservative climate (3-11).

[175]For further proof that the movement provided aid for Ethiopians see Geldof's 1985 documentary, *Food, Trucks, & Rock n Roll.*

The compassionate consumer actions of famine relief participants eventually forced Reagan's administration and Thatcher's government not only to reconsider their limitation of aid to Ethiopia,[176] but also made the US and UK governments recognize compassionate consumers as productive consumer-citizens and active agents of socio-cultural change.[177] The fact that there were multiple, positive consequences of the famine relief movement for both donors and intended aid recipients illustrates the power of consumerism, and illustrates that consumerism is politicized, especially when similar consumer acts are performed, simultaneously, en mass.

Famine relief consumerism was politicized in three ways. Firstly, it was politicized because it was motivated by and reflected a type of compassion that challenged compassionate conservatism in the West. Secondly, it was politicized because consumerism and activism became synonymous within the newly created famine relief sites. And thirdly, it was politicized because famine relief consumerism allowed for the creation of an infinite number of new sites within which participants could prove themselves productive citizens, create new communities, and develop mutually beneficial relationships with celebrities, multinational corporations, and advertisers.

In the case of the famine relief movement, compassion was first evoked by the horrific and fascinating representations of starving Ethiopians produced by Buerk and Amin. By consuming the Buerk/Amin images, viewers garnered an altogether unique experience of famine. As a result of both its use of Christian iconography and its play on

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[176]See Penrose 154-5.

[177]For example, according to Garofalo, British minister of Trade, Norman Tebbit, commended the Live Aid as "the triumph of international marketing" (27). Reagan presented Geldof the Congressional Arts Caucus Award declaring July 13, 1985 Live Aid Day. For more information see Richard Harrington, "Geldof's Plea for the Starving: On the Hill, the Live Aid Organizer Lobbies Congress," *Washington Post*, 24 July 1985: 10.

the low body genres, the documentary functioned as a contradictory text. It had the propensity to position viewers as both witnesses and vicarious sufferers of famine, to interpellate viewers as subjects that identified with famine and as subjects that defined themselves in opposition to the abject Other on screen, and to function as both a Christian allegory and site of fantasy and entertainment.

In the Buerk/Amin documentary Africa functions as a dual site, as an empty space available for the enactment of Western fantasies, and as a location where biblical events happen. As a result of the combination of Christian iconography and low body genre techniques the famine footage appears paradoxical; it is Christian pornography, Godly horror, biblical melodrama. It is the contradiction inherent in such footage that not only rendered the text unique and a product of its time (the late postmodern era), but also explains its mass appeal and its ability to simultaneously repel and compel viewer attention. In other words, the iconography used and the generic conventions applied made the film more easily consumable for Western audiences. The shocking nature of the footage would seem to encourage a compassionate response for various audiences.

In its use of traditional, Christian iconography to familiarize the Western viewer and contextualize the famine within a framework that Westerners could respond to, the footage appears to play into conventional Christian and colonial narratives. The people depicted are portrayed as humble figures, reminiscent of biblical figures such as the Virgin Mary and the 'Baby Jesus', upon whom charity should be bestowed. They are however, also presented as incompetent Africans who cannot fend for themselves nor feed their children. The footage, however, paradoxically challenges Christianity, particularly the type of Christian values espoused by Reagan and Thatcher because it

implies that the very people deemed unworthy of Western aid—that is, Ethiopians living under a Marxist regime—are, in fact, deserving of Western consideration and charity. More significantly, however, the documentary simultaneously undermines the Christian notions of propriety and modesty it supports by presenting images in a way that is reminiscent of soft-core pornography, contemporary horror, and gratuitous melodrama.

Because the documentary drew on numerous Western icons and presented the scene of suffering in the style of a number of popular genres, the text had the potential to appeal to diverse audiences. The fact that is was televised also resulted in the text reaching mass audiences. The impact of the Buerk/Amin film was ultimately felt worldwide. And while it is estimated that almost half a billion people saw the documentary, it is impossible to determine how many viewers witnessed shots filmed by Amin and narrated by Buerk because the footage was often appropriated, cut, and shown repeatedly in a variety of formats (for instance, not only were segments of the documentary shown as part of other news reports, including an episode of the British children's news program *News Round*, which aired the day before the Live Aid concert, but it was also added to the DVD version of the Live Aid concert).

The combination of Christian iconography, on one hand, and filmic techniques borrowed from contemporary low body genres, on the other, allowed the text to speak to a variety of politics, to challenge absolutist and dichotomous logic, and affect a set of diverse consequences. However, perhaps the most significant and, seemingly, most common consequence of the footage was that viewers responded with a display of non-conservative compassion, a literal show of feelings of empathy and a shared vulnerability that was demonstrated, primarily, through their consumption of subsequent famine texts.

This consumption of more famine texts demonstrates that compassionate consumerism is self-perpetuating. It is a self-propelling, self-(re)producing, cyclical force, which functions in the following manner: consumers consume texts that evoke compassion, this compassion inspires a desire for further consumption, and further consumption intensifies compassion, due to the evocative content of the texts. It is the self-propelling force of compassionate consumerism that is politicized because this force motivates and requires the production and reception of new texts: texts that challenge both Right-Wing narratives of compassionate conservatism and Left-Wing notions that downplay the politicized potential of consumerism; texts that through their production and reception construct new youth sites for activism and compassion; texts that, simply through their production and reception, precipitate socio-cultural change.

The Buerk/Amin documentary was unique, not just because of the ways in which it hailed multiple diverse audiences by referencing various ideologies and discourses through its combination of Christian iconography and the excess of the low body genres, but also because of the unprecedented response it garnered from the multiple audiences that viewed it both when it was originally aired, and in its various, repeated forms. However, the significance of the first famine coverage to be aired was not so much a result of its content nor its reach (even though both were impressive), but more so in the ways in which the text was received after its first broadcast in late October 1984, and the subsequent response of impassioned Western viewers.

The fact that viewers felt a sense of concern and compassion is made evident not only by the fact that viewers consumed more famine texts, but also because masses embraced the famine relief music texts, "Do They Know It's Christmas" and "We Are

the World," produced by famine-celebrities soon after the famine came to light. Without consumer demand, such texts would not have been successful. But because, like the famine footage, the relief texts also borrowed from a range of ideological frameworks and genres, they also spoke to diverse audiences (some of which were already existent and others that had been constructed by the famine relief texts). In addition, because the Ethiopia songs and videos were aired on both radio and television, and were purchasable in single, LP, and video format, they had the ability to reach mass audiences throughout the US and the UK. The success of famine relief texts was a direct result of the postmodern composite of ideologies, iconographies, and genres as well as the ways in which the texts were transported and disseminated.

My readings of the famine relief texts, specifically the Ethiopia singles and videos, attempt to show how, like the Buerk/Amin documentary that inspired them, these famine relief texts also borrow from a range of ideological frameworks and generic conventions. Like the famine footage, the songs and videos express neo-imperialist sentiments, but do so in the style of rock music, gospel, country music, and new wave pop (this is particularly the case for the "We Are the World" single and video).[178] In this respect the texts are unique. And, they appeal to diverse audiences not only because they present something for everyone, but also because they are part of a new set of philanthropic texts that speak to compassionate consumer impulses. The Ethiopia singles in their various forms simultaneously inspire compassionate emotions (both real and performed) within viewer/listeners and justify the pursuit of material products like the LPs and VHS cassettes. This justification comes from the fact that, in purchasing, each

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[178]For a discussion of the mix of voices in the Ethiopia singes and the effect of this combination see Straw 205.

buyer becomes a donor; each act of consumption is simultaneously an act of activism and philanthropy. The effect of constructing the famine relief texts and accompanying products as compassionate consumables is that the act of purchase is transformed into an act of altruism.

The famine relief movement not only emerged out of and resulted in the production and reception of new philanthropic texts that had mass appeal. It altered the role of the consumer, positioning consumers as activists, organizers, and donors. New communities were constructed around the acts of purchasing, consuming, and duplicating/ pirating the Ethiopia singles which—like all popular songs and videos—held a certain amount of cultural cache for interested audiences. Arguably, the songs and videos hailed pre-existing philanthropic and rock audiences. However, partially because the Ethiopia singles were disseminated via relatively new technological mediums such as MTV, the songs also constructed new audiences. They spoke to youths that may not necessarily have been interested either in Africa or philanthropy, because they presented Africa and philanthropy in a format that appealed to youths, that is, via popular music, using low body genre conventions. The songs and the Live Aid concert showcased a variety of stars from a range of genres and eras. Diverse stars such as Cyndi Lauper, Bob Dylan, and Spandau Ballet banded together to help feed the world. And, in doing so, they produced a postmodern text that helped to flatten out not only musical distinction, but also generational distinctions between audience members, and distinctions between already established audiences and new compassionate consumers. Through the act of consuming the same texts as adults, young people were able to emulate and bond with their elders. In joining adult created communities, and in being partially responsible for

the maintenance and reformulation of such commercially viable and profitable communities, young people proved themselves valuable members of society. They participated in the creation of new famine relief sites within which they not only expressed counter-hegemonic emotions such as compassion, but also supported existing hegemonies by embracing and expressing consumer desires. While the agency accorded to youths through their participation in the creation of new sites, and the production and reception of new texts, may have been illusory, the sense of agency inspired through their involvement had the potential to empower compassionate consuming youths.

Arguably the reformulation of compassion and the politicization of consumerism had a marked effect on the lives of the young people. While people of all ages participated in the famine relief movement, young people made up a considerable portion of the famine relief audience. As caring and compassionate members of local, national, and global communities fighting to alleviate world poverty, such disenfranchised young people proved incorrect the common Right Wing assumptions of youth as citizens in training.[179] Through acts of consumerism (i.e. watching, listening, tape-recording, and purchasing the Ethiopia singles, videos, and accompanying merchandise) and as a result of their activism (i.e. collecting food and monetary contributions, participating in sponsored events to raise money, organizing famine relief events to coincide with Live Aid, volunteering at Live Aid, and otherwise donating time and money) young people showed that—even before reaching adulthood—they could function as productive members of society. By consuming and producing cultural texts, and through acts of purchasing that help produce revenue and stimulate national economies, young people

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[179]Griffin 3.

became active citizens. And by broadening the category of people *deserving* of compassion through their consumer acts they also showed that, with the help of both celebrities and like-minded adult communities, they (the potentially undeserving) could develop ways to find a voice.

As a result of the production of new sites and new texts, compassionate consumerism evolved at the moment when the famine relief movement emerged. New texts, sites, communities, and audiences, meant new ways to express compassion and the production of multiple, diverse texts for both consumption and the expression of compassion. At the Live Aid concert, however, compassionate consumerism became diffuse because of the infinite ways in which compassion could be expressed and the number of commodities to be consumed and merchandise to be purchased. While it impossible to determine the ways in which compassionate consumerism was manifested or was a motivating factor at Live Aid, simply because of the size of the event and the fact that the famine relief community came to encompass millions of people in a global mass movement, I would argue that the event—in appearing as a compassionate consumer event and encouraging compassionate consumerism—was politicized through the ethic of compassionate consumerism and affected substantial change for both Ethiopian famine sufferers and diverse groups of participants.

Since the Live Aid concert, compassionate consumerism appears to have permeated many aspects of society in the United States and Britain. But, like the ethic that inspired it, the famine relief movement eventually diffused. This was partially because of a loss of momentum among organizers and participants, and partially because energies were directed into spin-off movements. In addition, the Band Aid/Live Aid trust

turned its attention to distributing aid and sending Geldof to Africa. USA Aid, because of its built-in obsolescence, disbanded altogether, leaving organizer Ken Cragen to focus upon the equally successful Hands Across America event.[180]

The methods for raising consciousness and making a politicized statement that developed throughout the famine relief movement have proven to be invaluable for a number of spin-off campaigns. Since the mid-1980s an infinite number of 'Aids' (e.g. Fashion Aid, Sport Aid, Ferry Aid, and *Idol Aid*) have garnered public support and raised funds by employing similar techniques to Band Aid and USA Aid; by designing campaigns that are spearheaded by celebrity figures and provide consumers multiple ways to enact activism through compassionate consumerism. While not all campaigns are as successful, and not all relief or 'Aid' sites are equal, such consciousness and fund raising techniques continue to prove effective throughout the West. Compassionate consumerism has become such a way of life, that it is now not only a way to justify almost any extravagance Westerners can conceive of, it has also become habitual.

Despite the quick diffusion of the famine relief movement, latter movements and campaigns have successfully employed many of the methods used to encourage activism. The benefit concert format, for instance, has proven itself to be a valuable tool for organizing the masses well into the early Twenty-First Century. In 2005 Geldof helped organize the Live 8 benefit concerts to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Live Aid. Live 8 was a series of concerts that were held in the eight G8 nations and coincided

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[180]Despite the similarities in their names, the spin-off movements often had different aims and slightly different modes of raising funds and awareness. Farm Aid, for instance, used the benefit concert format, but aimed to donate money throughout the US as well as in Third World countries. Hands Across America—an event where participants paid to hold hands in a line across the US—was designed to raise money to fight poverty and homelessness in the US. And, Sport Aid raised money for Africa, not through music, but through sponsored walks and runs.

with the G8 summit held in Gleneagles, Scotland. Rather than being asked for donations, concert participants were asked simply to contribute their names, via text message, to the list of concerned global citizens.[181] 2007 saw a rash of similar events, once again designed to raise awareness for specific social causes. Al Gore was integral in arranging Live Earth, a series of concerts held on all seven continents and aimed at raising awareness of global warming. The same week, at the Princess Diana concert—an event to honor the Princess ten years after her death, was held in Hyde Park, London, and transmitted to an estimated 140 countries around the globe, as well as being streamed over the Internet. Throughout the event, video spots were shown to showcase charitable organizations that Diana or her sons, Harry and William, had found to be worthy of support.

Similar to the benefit concert, the music video has proven itself to be a valuable philanthropic and political tool. A number of entrepreneurial democrats have recently produced music videos in support of Barack Obama's presidential campaign. The most famous of these is perhaps the "CNN Ba Rock Obama" song that has, up to the present, had 12,212 viewers on youtube alone. A slightly more risqué ode to Obama, "I Gotta Crush...On Obama" was released on youtube in June 2007. The producers of the video, in which a scantily clad young woman dances seductively alongside superimposed images of the presidential candidate, subsequently raised over $1,000 for the Philadelphia Committee to End Homelessness by auctioning clothing worn in the video.

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[181] Geldof profited from the concert by, once again, producing the Live 8 DVD. He also benefited and/or exercised influence through his role as advisor to the British government during the summit. For more information see "Bob Geldof," *New Internationalist.*

Arguably, compassionate consumerism has become an established part of contemporary culture. For the most part, however, compassionate consumer texts—much like the "I Gotta Crush...On Obama" video—take the form of parody, while still relying on low body genre conventions. Numerous parodies of the "Christmas" and "We Are the World" videos also abound in popular culture. Highly popular youth shows such as *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, and *Family Guy* have all at some time or other shown skits that either reference or play on the Ethiopia videos. Perhaps the most effective parodies of the Ethiopia singles are the recent videos "I'm Fucking Matt Damon" and "I'm Fucking Ben Affleck" created for the Jimmy Kimmel show. While amusing, these videos serve as key criticisms of the Ethiopia videos. For instance, at the end of "Ben Affleck" a group of celebrities staged on choral risers in the same way as the USA Aid for Africa celebrities in the "We Are the World" video sing "I'm Fucking Ben Affleck" in the style of a charity rock song. While singing the line "we all hope, we all hope Matt will understand," actor Robin Williams exposes the pornographic nature of such video texts (and simultaneously the masturbatory motives of the celebrities involved in the Ethiopia singles) by squirting himself with water in way that is reminiscent of the 'money' shot in video pornography, smiling as if in ecstasy, and further emphasizing the generic conventions by a momentary freeze frame.

What these videos do is criticize the sensationalist and gratuitous nature of famine relief and celebrity philanthropy while still providing pleasure and a sense of community to their audience. They hail the same audience as the Ethiopia texts, an audience aware of the tropes of philanthropic music videos, reinforced by the appearance of celebrities such as Huey Lewis in both "We Are the World" and "Ben Affleck" (without this awareness,

the videos would lose their humor). And much like the Ethiopia videos, the Kimmel videos position the knowing listener/viewer as a member of a 'knowing' community that shares "a sense of belonging"[182] as a result of shared knowledge.

Arguably the parodies of philanthropic music videos abound because youths have found more attractive, alternative sites for resistance and outlets for their compassionate consumerism. I would argue that one significant alternative site is reality television: in particular, programs such as *Pop Idol* and *American Idol*, *Survivor*, and *Big Brother*. These types of shows (franchised in the US and the UK as well as numerous other countries) are part of a television genre that—like the famine relief movement—provides viewer/listeners both with pleasure and with a sense of agency and community (oftentimes a global community). In asking them to actively participate in the 'plot' of the show, by identifying with and voting for their favorite contestant, such shows create new media-sites within which youths can help in the production of a cultural media text and express themselves.

Certain reality television shows are so similar to the famine relief movement that certain shows even run charity drives in the style of a famine relief charity drive. For example, once a year *American Idol* 'donates' a show to help raise awareness of poverty and AIDS in Africa and the US. The show's format is similar to that of the Live Aid concert—celebrities perform live and then appeal for monetary donations to major charities. These appeals are often accompanied by footage of the most desperately impoverished. (Shows such as *Survivor*—the rights to which are partly owned by Geldof—are also reminders of the movement because, as a result of their overt

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[182]Hurley 332.

ethnocentrism and colonial overtones, they seem reminiscent of the famine footage produced by Buerk and Amin in 1984). Like the famine relief movement, 'American Idol's' *Idol Aid* relies on the same ethic of compassionate consumerism.

Ultimately, the most important aspect of compassionate consumerism—whether evoked by the famine relief movement or more recent reality television programs—is the fact that it allows for the creation of socio-cultural sites within which youths can experience pleasure and a sense of community. If it accomplished nothing more in the 80s, the famine relief movement and the ethic that inspired it helped to construct a community of youths that shared knowledge and a sense of belonging. In doing so, the ethic and movement set a precedent for compassion that is still seen in US and British culture today.

That said, despite the major accomplishments of the Band Aid charities since the mid-80s, famine remains a major problem in the Horn of Africa. But, unfortunately, few youths or media producers seem concerned with the fact that people are dying daily as a result of famine in the Horn.[183] The famines continue unhindered by Western public aid. Therein lies the problem with the parodies of famine relief texts and the shift of youth markets away from social movements to reality TV. As a result of the successful and amusing comedic criticisms of famine relief parodies, as a result of the pleasure provided and community building potential of reality television, the famine relief movement and the struggles of the 80s seem almost comical and outdated. But, ignoring both the

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[183]There are notable exceptions here. Starvation comes to world's attention, not surprisingly, when celebrities visit affected regions in Africa. If Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, or George Clooney spend time in refugee camps in the Third World, then the plight of those nations suddenly hits the shelves in the form of spreads in *Hello Magazine*. For a discussion of celebrity involvement in contemporary famine, and the West's subsequent response, see Julie Flint & Alexander Dewaal, *Darfur: A New History of a Long War* (London: Zed Books 2008) 167-199.

problems youth faced and the solutions they found to combat their marginalization in the 80s seems particularly naïve and foolish when one considers the fact that conservatism, especially concerning youths, still dominates the political arena in the US, and will most likely return to the UK with a vengeance if and when the Tories are voted back into power. Despite the progress made by the famine relief movement and the ways in which compassionate consumerism provides youth with agency and mobility, the future for US and UK youths and the future for famine sufferers in the Horn will continue to look bleak unless we try to further identify the ways in which compassionate consumerism can be employed for the greater good.

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