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Gender and Global Restructuring
Sightings, sites, and resistances
Second Edition

Edited by
Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan
4 “Where the streets have no name”

Getting development out of the (RED)TM?

Michelle V. Rowley

« C’est à ce prix que vous mangez du sucre en Europe »
Le nègre de Suriname à Candide (Voltaire)

Introduction

In this chapter I draw on an anti-capitalist, transnational feminist praxis to analyze the global political economy and the emerging symbolic economy that have become integral to the glamorization of philanthropy within development campaigns such as the (RED) campaign to provide AIDS medication in Africa and the ONE campaign to reduce world poverty championed by pop stars Bono and Bobby Shriver. This is transnational feminist praxis in which I do not give the category “gender” a priori primacy. I am offering, rather, a transnational feminist critique in which the salient analytical markers must, above all else, be determined by the fields of play in which power reveals itself. This is not to suggest that gender does not matter, nor should it suggest that gender is not always-already at work in the co-constituted nature of subjectivity. Rather, I am suggesting that any effective critique of power must, above all else, be determined by the fields of play in which contextual valences manifest, rather than serve as a priori designations or the manipulation of an additive primacy. As such, my anti-capitalist, transnational feminist critique is one which is guided, as indeed it should be, by the ways in which contextual valences manifest, rather than serve as a priori designations or the manipulation of an additive set of identity markers (e.g. race, gender, class). In the analysis that follows, I show how race, masculinity, femininity, and geopolitics manifest and are variably deployed as categories of seduction in the (RED) campaign, aimed at consumer encounters the laboring body, it is still an instrumentalized encounter in that the slave’s dismembered, laboring body is positioned in the text primarily to advance Candide's knowledge and critical awareness of himself.

What, then, does Voltaire's Candide have to do with a piece that aims to interrogate the upsurge of celebrity-driven “development” campaigns that claim to address the spread of HIV/AIDS on the African continent? To make these connections, I draw on an anti-capitalist, transnational feminist praxis that builds on Chandra Mohanty’s critique of capitalism as a “foundational principle of social life” (2003: 183). Such a critique requires an engagement with how colonized, racialized, and gendered laboring bodies are deployed in the processes of profit-making. This engagement must disrupt colonizing narratives and imaginaries that guide the logic of neoliberalism, a logic which itself has infected and animated even seemingly “progressive” campaigns for human rights, including feminists’ rights.

Thus, I draw on such anti-capitalist, transnational feminist praxes to analyze the global political economy and its emergent symbolic economy that have become integral to the glamorization of philanthropy within development
campaigns, such as (RED) and ONE. These campaigns have been lauded as offering a new and sustainable model of corporate engagement (Asongu 2007). I argue, instead, that this adulation is premature and, in turn, suggest that these campaigns produce new and problematic intimacies between the concepts of globalization and development. Using these two concepts as consorts, I argue, these campaigns draw heavily on the marketing and dissemination principles and practices of globalization, with the intent of producing “profit philanthropy” as the new haute couture of development.

However, I argue that for these practices to work, they must deploy an age-old erasure of an African body-politic analogous to what I have described in Voltaire’s treatment of Le négre de Surinam. In similar ways, contemporary moves toward “philanthropy as development” render the unknown laboring/ailing body as familiar, but this is a tropological familiarity. This familiarity is confined by signs and symbols, which draw on a set of legitimated colonial narratives that hide much more than they reveal about the bodies that labor and pain. These signs and symbols do not centralize or visualize the laboring/ailing body; they foreground the realization of a new “First World consumer” in need of greater awareness of herself and the politics of her purchasing power in service to these “profit philanthropy” campaigns that (re)present the colonial encounter.

What might these sightings and sites mean in contextualized African locales? I challenge the repetitive forms of African erasure in the emerging “philanthropy as development” through a reading of Abderrahmane Sissako’s film, Bamako (2006). I draw on Sissako for the ways in which his work does “sell” the “new” development mandate as a means of countering the ill-effects of globalization. This new mandate is characterized by a number of rights-based claims, increasingly taken up by intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) over the past decade or two, in part as a result of nongovernmental organizations’ (NGOs) pressure. These rights-based claims, while always in negotiation with a neoliberal logic, prioritize the improvement of the human condition and are characterized by some degree of resistance to economic fundamentalism. These claims remain varied, multi-tiered, and far-reaching. Among other aims and objectives, they encompass concerns for environmental degradation (the 1989 Brundtland Report); a commitment to incorporating women into national and global accountings of progress (the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the 1995 Human Development Report); a strategy-oriented approach to reducing global poverty (the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)); and apparatuses to arrest population growth and improve reproductive well-being (forums such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)).

Expectedly, globalization scholars, depending on their theoretical and methodological locations, emphasize either the potentials or the deleterious effects of increasing deterriorialization, expansion of neoliberal market ideology and practices, and the transnational flows of cultural products, symbols, and bodies (Yüdice 1995; Org 1999; Sassen 2007a). While the hegemonic aspect of globalization—variously characterized as the Washington Consensus, neoliberal empire, or economic or market fundamentalism—is largely undisputed by its critics, there is studied caution in equating “hegemony” with “homogeneity”—or the culturally, politically, and economically homogenizing forces of global capital. When hegemony is reduced to homogeneity,”local” political spaces are left bereft of “agency” or possibilities for resistance (Appadurai 2001: 5–7).

“Development” practices and theories are often deployed as the analytical antecedents to neoliberal “globalization.” Yet, despite decades of contestations over, and reformulations of, the idea of development, it has not shaken its colonial or economistic origins (Escobar 1995a). Hence, the persistent shadow of the modernization paradigm remains, despite conceptual and political challenges to built-in assumptions of upward, linear progression. Modernizing development has undergone, instead, a re-glossed resurgence because of the neoliberal pressures that globalization has placed on the development agenda.

These colonizing antecedents notwithstanding, practitioners attempt to “sell” the “new” development mandate as a means of countering the ill-effects of globalization. However, this new mandate is characterized by a number of rights-based claims, increasingly taken up by intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) over the past decade or two, in part as a result of nongovernmental organizations’ (NGOs) pressure. These rights-based claims, while always in negotiation with a neoliberal logic, prioritize the improvement of the human condition and are characterized by some degree of resistance to economic fundamentalism. These claims remain varied, multi-tiered, and far-reaching. Among other aims and objectives, they encompass concerns for environmental degradation (the 1989 Brundtland Report); a commitment to incorporating women into national and global accountings of progress (the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the 1995 Human Development Report); a strategy-oriented approach to reducing global poverty (the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)); and apparatuses to arrest population growth and improve reproductive well-being (forums such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)).

Yet, achieving these rights-based claims within nation-states and through inter-state formations has been severely compromised by the neoliberal exigencies of the globalization of currency devaluations, privatizations, and struggles to balance accounts (Jaquette and Staudt 2006: 18). The intersections of development and globalization produce an ever-expanding range of vulnerabilities, rather than synergies. It might, therefore, be more appropriate as a distanceless and borderless phenomenon (Schole 2005: 1251).
to refer to the relationship between globalization and development not as a co-habiting intersection, but rather as a condition in which development becomes affected and inflected by the geopolitical and economic exigencies of globalization. These effects and inflections are multifold. At the conceptual level, globalization has produced what William Robinson refers to as a "paradigmatic quagmire" for development (2002: 1047). Central to this quagmire are the ways in which the processes of globalization have limited the explanatory value and policymaking potentials of development models that depend heavily on the nation-state as their primary focus and agent. Nevertheless, when one foregrounds state politics in the Global South, one still finds robust local deployments and manipulations of development discourses and models. For example, the nature of party politics, such that it is in a number of territories within the Global South, ensures that the rhetoric of development, particularly in the newer, more rights-based form, remains a powerful script in the survival strategies of state managers. This does not negate the reigning conceptual quagmire, however, but I am more concerned with the ways in which globalization has inflected development models with neoliberal priorities.

These neoliberal priorities have been responsible for much structural violence and, thus, have presented development practitioners in the Global South with an even more uphill battle when arguing for the legitimacy of rights and equity for vulnerable citizens as part of the new development mandate. This is, in part, due to the increasing alignment, if not conflation, of development goals with consumption and production practices under neoliberal globalization. Vulnerability in this frame is explained as the condition of a failed market that is potentially alleviated through the immediate and efficient use of vulnerable bodies in and by the market. Though crassly reductionist, my point here is that there is a disembodied logic that attends neoliberal discourses, a point to which I return later in this chapter. There are, however, hopeful sightings of "expert" contestation to this logic, most notable of which is Amartya Sen's (2000) now well-known argument that expanding an individual's rights and capabilities holds both intrinsic as well as instrumental value. This potentially brings bodies into view, but neoliberal orthodoxies continue, even under what some call the post-Washington Consensus (see Bergeron, this volume).

I have asked us to consider the conceptual conundrum that globalization presents for development and the infusion of neoliberal priorities, which have compromised the legitimacy of arguments centering on the body, rights, and capabilities. I will later argue that this constellation of effects and inflections presents a global environment that facilitates the increasing turn toward "profit philanthropy as development" and simultaneously serves to produce disturbing erasures of the very bodies that should be the beneficiaries of this philanthropy. However, do these effects and inflections mark the end of the state-sponsored development paradigm? Robinson argues that the future of development should be based "not on territories but on social groups" (2002: 1048). This is certainly a judicious call, since such an approach can potentially account for national identities that are being reconfigured not only across geopolitical boundaries (as a result of migrations, remittances, and so on), but also through transnational networks of resistance (such as feminist NGOs and anti-globalization movements) that present no harm in that it would be wonderfully subversive were we finally able, in the words of Audre Lorde (1984), to "dismantle the master's house" with "the master's tools." However, my growing concern is that this
Bonoization also brings with it the same acts of erasure and disembodiment that attend to globalization practices. In addition to Cooper's claim that Bonoization is the quintessential formulation of celebrity influence, we might also understand Bonoization as an approach to development wherein the celebrity's persona morphs into a marketable product and a political process. For the rest of this chapter, I will explore how this has taken place through Bono's (RED) campaign to treat HIV/AIDS on the African continent so as to reflect on the inherent dangers that result when persona as product and process is aligned to territorial and global crises. As both product and process, Bonoization occurs through two primary means of operation: the first is through political influence; the other through product alignment. Bono's unquestionable political reach runs the gamut from high political and economic officeholders to the gurus of popular culture. Through these relationships, he blends and mixes these spheres in ways that make popular culture of unparalleled importance to global political events through popularizing policy-related matters. For example, in a Rolling Stone interview conducted with music critic Anthony DeCurtis (2007: 61) during the final year of the Bush administration, Bono punctuates his skepticism about the capacity of a US-driven model of democracy to bring about peace in the Middle East with repeated references to his access to powerful global leaders (then-US President Bush, then-World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, and past and present Republican strategist Karl Rove) and the terms of familiarity by which he addresses them (e.g., the use of "Condi" to refer to then-US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice). Bono's expressions of political sentiment in a popular magazine highlight his iconic merging of cultural, political, and economic spheres. But, Bono's credibility is not merely one of political access. His association with development economist Jeffery Sachs, and his own improved fluency in development rhetoric, both have lent significant credibility to Bono's advocacy for, and invocation of, the MDGs when meeting world leaders. For his humanitarian work alongside Bill and Melinda Gates, Bono has graced the covers of Time Magazine in 2002 and 2005 and, in 2006, he again entered the ranks of Time's "100 Most Influential People." An overview of a Bono photo gallery often leaves the observer wondering, disguised by his casual style. Bono's expressions of political sentiment in a popular magazine highlight his iconic merging of cultural, political, and economic spheres. But, Bono's credibility is not merely one of political access. His association with development economist Jeffery Sachs, and his own improved fluency in development rhetoric, both have lent significant credibility to Bono's advocacy for, and invocation of, the MDGs when meeting world leaders. For his humanitarian work alongside Bill and Melinda Gates, Bono has graced the covers of Time Magazine in 2002 and 2005 and, in 2006, he again entered the ranks of Time's "100 Most Influential People." An overview of a Bono photo gallery often leaves the observer wondering, disguised by his casual style.

"Where the streets have no name"

Bono's blending of the political with the popular reconfigures the issues that have come to matter in the teaching of development studies - a popularization of the domain, as it were. Arturo Escobar, pointing to the already blurred boundaries of the discipline, observes: Development was chiefly a matter of capital, technology and education and the appropriate policy and planning mechanisms to successfully combine these elements. Resistance, on the other hand, was primarily a class issue and a question of imperialism. Nowadays, this transparency has been muddled ... (Escobar 1995a: 205)

At the very least, I argue, (RED) has consolidated existing spheres of signifying "Others" and has ushered in a perverse moment where consumption is offered as subversion. With respect to the signification of "Others," development discourses have long circulated images that either denigrate or romanticize peoples of the Global South, constructing them either as lazy and backward and in need of capitalist stimulus from the West or as heroic resisters of Western capitalism and imperialism. The "Third World Woman" has become a particular trope in these fantasies with the rise of feminist development studies, some of which are implicated in constructing "her" as the site of hyper-patriarchal oppression, impoverishment, and disease, and/or the site of hyper-resistance to that oppression and its outcomes. In both cases, "she" is rendered as a symbol of both inequity and redemption and, thus, seen as most worthy, at least rhetorically, of the most development assistance (Escobar 1995a; Mohanty 2003). In the recent past, Western students of development interested in alleviating global poverty identified with these renderings of the quintessential "Third World Woman" without ever having met anyone from the Global South or questioning the roles that neocolonial - and more recently neoliberal-infected - development policies play in impoverishment and disease. In similarly problematic ways, such students (often with "well-meaning," "progressive" agendas) are coming to identify consumption as the appropriate response to global poverty and disease: buy (RED) and support ONE, since (RED) and ONE afford at least a psychic (as opposed to experiential or first-hand, visual) awareness of global inequity. This increasing psychic awareness of the campaigns have brought to the campuses of some 1,300 universities and colleges has produced a profound sense of accomplishment among the organizers of the two campaigns. In an interview with Rolling Stone to commemorate the magazine's fortieth anniversary, Bono lauds his college-based constituency: "Those college kids are redefining their country through the prism of the fight against poverty. Issues like that afford a chance to (sic) America.
to redescribe itself to the world. But they also afford America a chance to redescribe itself to its citizens. That's what's going on.” (DeCurtis 2007: 62)

This perceived sense of student politicization arguably popularizes and democratizes the field of development studies. It contributes to the ongoing challenge to the idea of the “development expert” by placing decentralized responsibility for development into the hands of individuals. However, those individuals are constructed by these campaigns as scattered, individual, global consumers. The very emphasis of (RED) on identity formation through consumption and product alignment facilitates a less than accidental transition from one disembodied “Other” (the “Third World Woman”) to another disembodied “Other” (“Africa”). At the heart of this chapter are concerns about the reinvention of the “development expert” as a decentralized, unknowing, consuming agent and the implications of this reinvention for those laboring bodies that continue to be extracted from and managed by the shifting sites of developmentalism.

**Profit philanthropy sites: the new haute couture of development**

Much of Bono’s activity as actor and institution coalesces around his ONE and (RED) campaigns, respectively, to halve the number of the world’s poor by the year 2015, and to raise funds to provide anti-retroviral medication for people in “Africa.” Among Bono’s successes is a petition in support of debt forgiveness, signed by 21.2 million people globally (Cooper 2008: 43). In addition to the eradication of poverty, ONE’s vision includes reducing infant mortality among the world’s poorest and reversing the spread of diseases that are particularly virulent on the African continent (e.g., HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis). Similarly, the (RED) campaign is a business partnership, which acts in concert with an increasing number of mega-brands, such as Gap Inc., Giorgio Armani, Converse, Nike, Apple, American Express (UK), Hallmark, Dell, Starbucks, and Windows. The Global Fund serves as its trustee, and the campaign promotes itself as a commercial initiative that aims to raise funds to fight the AIDS pandemic in “Africa” (which, at the point of writing, refers to Swaziland, Rwanda, and Ghana) by providing anti-retroviral medication. When designated (RED) products are purchased, between 5-40 percent of the profits are donated to the Global Fund. It aims, therefore, to create awareness and facilitate a “sustainable flow of private sector money ... to fight the AIDS pandemic in Africa.” (RED)’s manifesto is clear: it is not a charity; it is a “business model.”

This mode of profit philanthropy is an example of what I refer to elsewhere as “globalized developmentalism.” I use this term to refer to the practices and ideologies that are involved in the differentiated “marketing” of prescriptive notions of “development” by transnational organizations to the world’s population. The emphasis here is on the “marketing” of “development” as a branded product, which, despite the difference in language, resonates in very similar ways within populist (for profit) NGOs, such as ONE, and in IGOs, such as the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Unlike traditional modes of philanthropy, (RED)’s multi-million dollar marketing strategy promotes a range of highly stylized products. If product selection includes toys for the technologically savvy, as well as fashion for both high-end sophisticates and the middle-tier cosmopolitan chic. Through very strategic advertising placement, the marketing power of (RED) is exponentially enhanced by its cachet, brand recognizability, and the deployment of a high-powered list of celebrities by its corporate partners. (RED)’s model of philanthropy is unique by virtue of its own brand recognizability, as separate from its corporate partners – an unusually collaborative corporate structure, wherein already-established brands have attached their own identity to the (RED) philosophy – and in its potential for becoming a philanthropic monopoly, because of its malleable boundaries, which allow for an expanding base of new corporate members. The resulting synergy is a curious inversion of accepted notions of sustainability in development, positing in its place notions of consumption meeting the wants of future generations without compromising the profits of the present.

(RED)’s branding process comes to suggest more than a commodity. Rather, it deploys a tried and trusted marketing strategy; it offers a relationship, an experience, and an identity to global consumers (Klein 2000). Adherence to fashion might be seen as an individualized pursuit in response to social and cultural trends; (RED) builds on the individual display and maintenance of social status that fashion makes possible. In addition to the maintenance of social status, (RED) also interpellates fashion and lifestyle into a range of “glocalized” expressions of political economy.

However, the connection between consumer identity formation and product alliance is premised on an additional set of neoliberal assumptions. (RED) depends on and promotes a steady belief in the inevitability and “naturalness” of the market. The naturalization of consumption itself requires a “modernist model of human nature (read: elite male nature) as competitive, self-interested and acquisitive” (Peterson 2003: 143). (RED) manages to keep its brand equity by maintaining a finely-tuned balance between the acquisitive, self-interested aspect of neoliberal consumption and the redemptive, as reflected in its manifesto: “As first world consumers, we have tremendous power, what we collectively choose to buy, or not buy, can change the course of human history and the maintenance of social status. (RED) also interpellates fashion and lifestyle into a range of “glocalized” expressions of political economy.”

Adherence to fashion might be seen as an individualized pursuit in response to social and cultural trends; (RED) builds on the individual display and maintenance of social status that fashion makes possible. In addition to the maintenance of social status, (RED) also interpellates fashion and lifestyle into a range of “glocalized” expressions of political economy. However, the connection between consumer identity formation and product alliance is premised on an additional set of neoliberal assumptions. (RED) depends on and promotes a steady belief in the inevitability and “naturalness” of the market. The naturalization of consumption itself requires a “modernist model of human nature (read: elite male nature) as competitive, self-interested and acquisitive” (Peterson 2003: 143). (RED) manages to keep its brand equity by maintaining a finely-tuned balance between the acquisitive, self-interested aspect of neoliberal consumption and the redemptive, as reflected in its manifesto: “As first world consumers, we have tremendous power, what we collectively choose to buy, or not buy, can change the course of human history and the maintenance of social status. (RED) also interpellates fashion and lifestyle into a range of “glocalized” expressions of political economy.”

At the forefront are the redemptive possibilities of economic fundamentalism, framed by the steady juxtaposition of consumption and redemption as the preferred mode of addressing global disparity. The narrative progression of the (RED) manifesto places custodial responsibility for (RED) in the hands of the consumer, and, by extension, brown and black bodies in pain.

You have a choice ... If you buy a (RED) product ... at no cost to you, a (RED) company will give some of its profits ... to our brothers and...
sisters dying of AIDS in Africa. We believe that when customers are offered this choice … they will choose (RED) … and more lives will be saved. You buy (RED) stuff, we get the money, buy the pills … If they don’t get the pills, they die … All you have to do is upgrade your choice. (The (RED) Manifesto)

The ultimate aim of this narrative structure is the generation of profit, for which achieving the development-related goal of buying anti-retroviral medication is a by-product. In order to achieve this, the narrative invokes an empathetic relationship between the consumer and the product, whereby responsibility for the corporate soul is placed squarely in the hands of the consumer (Klein 2000: 23). The interplay between commodification, consumption, and concern is always at work in a textual analysis of the (RED) and ONE websites, culminating in a kind of Orwellian interchange between the product and the person. One of the many descriptors attached to discussions of globalization is the encroaching deterritorialization of the world. This idea, when summoned, suggests an increasing interconnectedness between markets and geographies, as well as the permeability of national boundaries. However, one of the contradictions of our supposed “global village” is a persistent and rigid separation between the spheres of consumption and production. Integral to the pleasures of consumption is that we not see the laboring or ailing bodies that make consumption possible (re-enter Le Nègre). So that we heed Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s admonition that we “keep the economic visible under erasure” (1999: 315), I will continue to explore the ways in which (RED), in spite of, and possibly through, its missionary fervor, mirrors and deploys erasure.”

One of the many erasures and separations that figure integrally in globalizing conversations, I have been pointing to the fact that development discourses bring us into an experiential — rather than visual — imaginary — an imaginary that makes it become a psychic spectacle, that psychic is one that highlights the ways in which “Africa” functions as an ontological category. “Africa” is a sign of HIV/AIDS. There is the rendering of a smiling Maasai warrior as the iconic, exploitative global markets, the seduction of “cheap” labor has, on many occasions, placed Gap Inc. on the defensive, most recently in response to charges of its use of child labor in India. It would be noble if such whistle-blowing represented a deep commitment on the part of governments and corporations to caring about the context of production. However, an ever-shrinking middle class presents the American consumer with a dilemma: that of keeping jobs within the US but still being able to buy goods cheaply. Yet, the working premise of (RED) is exactly that people do care. For whom, then, should the consumer care? Should she care for the ailing bodies who are “helped” by her consumption, or should she care for the laboring bodies who have contributed, often to their detriment, to what she consumes? These tensions and contradictory flows of global capital and ethical intent remain unresolved.

By the campaign’s own assessment, (RED) had, in a little over a year of its operation, contributed US$50 million to the Global Fund. There is, of course, something strikingly persuasive in Bono’s assessment of the HIV/AIDS pandemic: “This is an emergency — normal rules don’t apply. There are no easy good or bad guys. Do you think an African mother cares if the drugs keeping her child alive are thanks to an iPod or a church plate? Or a Democrat or a Republican? I don’t think that mother gives a damn about where that 20-cent pill comes from, so why should we. It can lead to some uncomfortable bedfellows, but sometimes less sleep means you are more awake.”

(“It’s Bono, on line one,” Vanity Fair (July 2007))

My concern is not about these moral inconsistencies, but rather the lack of systemic interconnections made between consumption in the North and poor health indicators in the South in the deployment of these very networks for profit. In this way, again, drawing on a neoliberal individualist logic, poor health indicators in the South are reduced to bad decisions made by individuals in the Global South.
Economically mi(red): getting Africa out of the (RED)TM

I have argued here that there are economic, textual, and rhetorical practices in philanthropic models, such as the (RED) campaign, that are inimical to the long-term well-being of peoples on the African continent. Primary among these is the disarticulation of operational and analytical spheres. This disarticulation masks the asymmetrical relations that exist between and among economic regions and the ways in which individual lives are affected by these inequities. This is a disarticulation that also hides the ways in which consumption in the North facilitates the underdevelopment of the Global South. Rather than address these inequities frontally, these campaigns' dependence upon consumption and profit-generation reflects a model which, I have argued here that there are economic, textual, and rhetorical practices

In this section, I will bring operational and analytical sites of economic circulation into dialogue with the bodies affected by these movements of capital, initially by connecting health indicators to economic policy and, finally, by centering the cinematic work of Malian filmmaker Abderrahmane Sissako for the ways in which his film Bamako challenges and re-narrates the interactions that exist between global economic injustice and African peoples' lived realities.

The indicators on the economic, political, and health status of the peoples of Africa are undeniably worrying. According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), 22.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS are in sub-Saharan Africa; this accounts for 68 percent of adults and 90 percent of children living with HIV/AIDS worldwide (2007: 7–8). Despite falling poverty rates between 1999 and 2004, persistent population growth in sub-Saharan Africa has resulted in 300 million people living below the poverty line and, in the midst of debt-forgiveness programs, external debt responsibilities remain high (IMF 2007: 5).

In 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) noted in their annual report that:

The lack of fiscal expenditure on health-related services is a critical factor when confronting the HIV/AIDS crisis. There is presently a deficit of approximately 2.4 million health care providers in 57 countries; 36 of the countries affected by this deficit are in Sub-Saharan Africa (WHO 2006:12). This fiscal instability cannot, and ought not, be isolated from the economic instability arising, in part, from structural adjustment programs (SAPs) imposed on the region. Reduced public expenditure and privatization of state services are now well-known and standard features of SAPs. While not a causal factor per se, reduced expenditure on the health sector does account in important ways for the WHO's sobering observation that the national healthcare management systems in these states are "weak, unresponsive, inequitable — even unsafe" (WHO 2006: xv).

Health management systems are critical to the prevention of HIV/AIDS mother-to-child transmission, the provision of information that challenges myths and dangerous folk practices, of testing and counseling, and of pediatric services for the growing number of children who are living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. Philanthropic models such as (RED) are so deeply imbicated in neoliberal assumptions that consumption and poor health are rendered as discrete properties, rather than as phenomena that hold an obverse and occasionally parasitic relationship with each other. It is here that I turn to Abderrahmane Sissako's Bamako (2006) for the ways in which the film resists the compartmentalization of the impact of the global political economy on individual lives, and its defiance of the laryngectomy that results when the North tells "Africa's" story.

Bamako is set in a residential compound surrounded by a rural village atmosphere in the capital of Mali. An outdoor court of law has been convened, with judges and prosecuting and defense attorneys, to consider an indictment of international financial institutions (IFIs), and globalization more generally, for socio-economic injustices based on villagers' testimonies. Bamako tells no single story, but rather interweaves a panoply of lives, with
people telling parts of their stories as formal testimonies or through cutaways to their daily lives and conversations outside the courtroom, in, and beyond the village setting. The closest that *Bamako* comes to a coherent storyline is through a secondary narrative of a young couple: Mele, who sings in an upscale, urban bar at night, and her unemployed husband, Chaka, are caught in a marriage on the verge of demise; their communication with each other is perfunctory, and the only signs we have that there must have once been love between them are the still photograph of the young couple on the wall, and their love and affection for their young daughter. While this story unfolds, we are also the audience for the seemingly bizarre trial of IFIs and globalization that occurs daily in the compound in which Mele and Chaka live.

In *Bamako*, testimony and witnessing work along a continuum of words, silence, and unintelligibility to convey the grief and mourning resulting from living under the exigencies of globalization. As the trial continues, a reporter covering it re-engages one of his interviewees, Chaka, by prompting, "You were saying that the worst part of structural adjustment policies is the destruction of the social fabric—that entire part got erased—say it again." To which Chaka responds, "No one will listen . . . don't waste your time." Yet, Sissako places the film’s moral burden on the importance of testimony and witnessing. Through the trial testimonies, Sissako humanizes the social and economic variables of macroeconomics; these variables are made flesh as whistle-blowers formerly employed by exploitative corporations; migrant workers with harrowing tales of near-death experiences on their forced journeys across African deserts to seek work in Algeria; laid-off teachers in the wake of education cuts; infirm but stoic elderly, who have seen so much loss; these variables are made flesh as the trial progresses.

The camera shuttles into Mele and Chaka’s room and out into the courtyard, following the trial in the compound and following Mele and Chaka when they leave the compound. Sissako skillfully ensures that these parallel, and occasionally intertwined, narratives. They never seamlessly mesh into each other, but maintain the tension of a bringed messiness. The confined location and the occasional character movement from the personal narrative to the political remind us that these stories matter to each other; however, the most intimate connection is at the epistemological level. That these private and public knowledge-worlds confront each other is a deliberate attempt to put personal connections and costs into relation with the worlds of production and consumption. The personal is made prominent and the political, accountable. As such, these narrative structures and spatial contrivances disallow the deception of separation.

The narrative culmination of the film comes through the voice of an elder, a *griot*, who, at the beginning of the film, disrupts the conventional legal narrative and walks to the podium to speak before he is called. As he is sent back, he responds, "Words are something, they can seize your heart if you keep them inside." This elder again defies convention by poignantly breaking into a song that is never translated, at which point all non-Bambara-speaking viewers, and the French-speaking magistrates, are left unable to decipher what is being conveyed. If words are inadequate to tell these woes, in this moment, Sissako appeals to the human spirit, not so that we, the viewers, can understand, but so that we can feel. The song’s profound emotive effect rests in its very unintelligibility; that we do not know, understand, and are not enabled to understand (through subtitles) requires us deploy a different register. Here, Sissako seems to suggest a connectedness through the power of the human spirit, and the possibility, through alternative engagements, for a new socioeconomic arrangement that can be reached when other, typically rationalist, discourses are suspended. To treat any emotional register as though it were transcendent may not always be effective; however, in this scene, we are faced with the very important reminder that there are parts of these narratives that will always be impossible for us, the Western viewer, to fully comprehend.

Sissako skillfully press the unseen hand of the market against the slow and quotidian aspects of economic tyranny and, in so doing, makes the market hyper-visible. Sissako weaves these worlds into each other so that, as lawyers debate the impact of SAPs on the legal system, we see the immediacy of the ailing body when the compound dwellers keep vigil for a sick and dying neighbor. Heated exchanges between legal teams on China’s economic prowess are punctuated by a toddler’s squeaking synthetic shoes as she learns to walk. A cameraman, there to film the historic trial, announces that she now does most of his business filming funerals, suggesting a lucrative, homonynic play on “death” and “debt.” Throughout the entire movie, the local economy is represented by Malian women who dye fabric; their steady and adaptable centrality is reflected by an equally steady, yet flexible, flow of dyed water that winds its way on the ground in almost every scene of the film.
There is the unmistakable irony of a cross-eyed policeman, who has been assigned the task of solving the theft of a gun, an instrument which simultaneously implies an indictment of increased violence and compromised policing in the era of adjustment. Similarly, as the proceedings unfold, we find twin brothers among the community members: they wear the same style shirt in different colors; they are always visible during the proceedings; and they never speak audibly. In my reading of the film, *Bamako* is edited as if to suggest that they are simultaneously inside and outside of the proceedings, so that they remain in the camera’s eye, even when partially hidden. It is difficult not to interpret these twins as both observers and observed, as the metaphorical: mystical omnipresence of the twin Bretton Woods institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), always in the backdrop.

Sissako employs the absurd in his critique of how IFIs impact on the economic and moral worlds of the continent. He offers a particularly strong indictment of the promise of technology and prescriptive infrastructural development, for which World Bank funds are released through a set of ironies. For example, the film opens with a mass of scaffolding constructed upward into nothingness with no connected building or other construction. Meanwhile, Mele’s husband has begun to learn Hebrew and is presently wrestling with sentences to explain that he has lost his wallet. His intended goal for such a task? To work as a security guard for an Israeli embassy that parodies infrastructure, development, and daily rituals, the film points to promises emptied of utility and meaning.

A rupture occurs in *Death in Timbuktu*, featuring US film star Danny Glover, Palestinian director Elia Suleiman, and Sissako himself as one of the cowboys, Dramane Bassaro. In this embedded movie, a band of marauding cowboys has arrived in a Malian village and is recklessly shooting villagers as they tend to their daily affairs. Villagers in the main film, *Bamako*, are depicted as viewing the embedded movie. The young children viewing *Death in Timbuktu* laugh along with the cowboys, who find humor in their murderous spree. This laughter itself points to an early de-sensitization to the violent effects of structural adjustment and illuminates the film’s claim that “even in our imaginations we are raped.”

I am not suggesting that Sissako offers a “truer” narrative about the effects of structural adjustment, but his filmic account is undoubtedly one that resists disembodiment and one that contextualizes inequity. The use of testimony and witnessing resists the erasure of the laboring/ailing body without sacrificing the poetic. *Bamako* resists the conventional heroic narrative through the use of de-centered narratives: this is a film that neither needs nor desires a “star” (or savior) from the North to make the point that demands equity in trade and economic practices, which makes it possible for nations to heal themselves. *Bamako* is a testimony and an epistemological challenge that echoes the words of one viewer to the filmmaker: “At least they’ll know that we know.” And it is here that a hero of sorts emerges — civil society. The heroes of *Bamako* are the teachers/professors, whistle-blowers, writers, and migrant workers, who, despite the Sisyphean dimensions of their task, continue to tell their stories so that at least the world will know that they know.

These narratives challenge the disembodied, silencing erasures of projects such as (RED). I have argued that the neoliberal logic that now drives globalization and development projects for a purposeful distorting of markets from their effects. Throughout this chapter, I have wrestled with one dominant question: why is it that centralizing the consumer and centralizing laboring/ailing bodies are presented as mutually exclusive, non-compatible sites of critique? My examination of celebrity-driven philanthropy for profit models shows that not only states are displaced within conversations on the global political economy, but so, too, are citizens. In this model, it is the brand identity that takes precedence and the medium of transnational dialogue between consumers in the North and perceived need in the South. These are not inconsequential activities; to date, the (RED) website notes that more than three million people have been impacted by “HIV/AIDS programs supported by ... (RED) purchases.”

However, through a reading of Sissako’s work, I have called for a lived literacy of oppression which, for many marginalized bodies, is critical to survival. The pleasures of contemporary consumerism come with embodied costs, as was the case with Candide’s “Lettre du Suriname.” Unless we connect the worlds of productions and consumption, it becomes too easy to individualize and commercialize responses to global inequity. Such policy solutions focus on the importance of individual “behavioral adjustments,” whether on the part of the consumer to buy more “responsibly,” or on the part of laboring bodies to work harder. This individualist logic masks the ways in which underdevelopment is historically and structurally determined; and, it further masks the ways in which individual consumers in the North are implicated in the construction of the very inequity that their consumption is supposedly designed to change.

Notes

1 The very contemporary nature of this topic required that research be done using sources and media unlikely for a paper on development and globalization (e.g. popular magazines, television, blogs, and internet sites). I would like to thank EO for her careful read and comments and my undergraduate student, Erin Dawson, for her trolling curiosity and for helping me navigate the many cultural messages and spaces that target and bombard her generation.
2 The encounter is rendered in Candide in the following manner: «En approchant de la ville, ils rencontrèrent un nègre étendu par terre, n'ayant plus que la moitié de la jambe. Leur arrivée surprit le nègre, qui se redressa et dit : 'Oui, monsieur, à votre service.' Candide, en voyant un nègre, 'C'est l'usage. On nous donne un caleçon de toile pour tout vêtement deux fois dans l'année. Quand nous travaillons aux sucreries, et que la meule nous attrape la jambe, on nous coupe la main; quand nous voulons nous étirer, on nous coupe la jambe: je me suis trouvé dans les deux cas. C'est à ce prix que vous mangez du sucre en Europe.» (Voltaire 1759, 2000: 96).

3 Despite the persistence of modernization thinking, there have been a number of prominent and varied development economic models which have challenged the preeminence and linearity of modernization thinking. These include a basic needs approach, redistribution with growth, and dependency approaches. Heppner (1999: 6) is important to note that both dependency and world-systems models called into question the historical structures of inequity in which "underdevelopment" was seen not as a stage in production, but as a production in itself, which was foundational to profit maximization in the North.

4 Bono, lead singer for the group U2, was born Paul David Hewson.

5 While my work focuses on the relationship between celebrity identities and development, Cooper addresses the nexus of celebrity and the shifting spheres of diplomatic operation.


10 Gap Inc., as part of its (RED) campaign, has worked with comedian Chris Rock. Bono also partnered with Gap Inc. and designer Rogan Gregory in 2005 to create a line of "socially responsible" fashion, EDUN.

11 Brand equity refers to the set of "assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add value or extract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm or to that firm's customers" (Sawilov 2002: 3). Available: <http://www.sdbaccom.com/files/wp66_WXYYXZLUA2R7FH86EU010191211699.pdf> (accessed 27 December 2007).

12 I refer to the use of fashion as a "glocalized" expression of political economy to point to the ways in which the production process requires global labor.

However, for the purposes of this chapter, I want to emphasize the ways in which a collective recognition of the (RED) brand among the cosmopolitan elite also brings a recognition (albeit sporuous) of the global home. In a more direct way, Bono also partnered with supermodel Gisele Bundchen in 2005 to create a line of "socially responsible" fashion, EDUN.

13 Brand equity refers to the set of "assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add value or extract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm or to that firm's customers" (Sawilov 2002: 3). Available: <http://www.sdbaccom.com/files/wp66_WXYYXZLUA2R7FH86EU010191211699.pdf> (accessed 27 December 2007).


15 On: www.joined.com, there is the occasional exchange between the iconic (PRODUCT) RED motif and (YOU)FED. Similarly, on www.who.org, we find "POWERED BY YOU." Both instances generate a very powerful appeal to an individual sense of global responsibility while engaging in the process of commodifying both consumer and recipient.


17 This presence is nowhere more readily apparent than on the 20 covers released in July 2007 by Vanity Fair. For this issue, guest-edited by Bono, photographer Annie Leibovitz paired 21 individuals, all identified for their connection with or concern for "Africa." The list is remarkable for the sheer political heft of the individuals who participated in this project. Among the individuals who sat for these covers were then-President George Bush, then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, pop star Madonna (noted for her adoption of an African child), peace activist Bishop Desmond Tutu, Oprah, then-US Senator Barack Obama, former prize boxer Muhammad Ali, and philanthropists William Warren Buffett and Bill and Melinda Gates, the 21 individuals selected, two presently reside on the continent (Bishop Tutu and Queen Rania Al-Abdulla of Egypt). In my introductory analysis of Candide's encounter with the nameless Le nègre du Suriname, I pointed to the fact that "This is the moment when we encounter the laboring body. It is a moment in the text that serves to advance Candide's knowledge and critical awareness of himself. Similarly, the blurs that accompany the individual photographs tell us something more about the individual as they gaze on "Africa" and, in so doing, learn something more about themselves.

18 CSR places emphasis on the pursuit of ethical business practices, as well as a holistic corporate model which makes connections between economic development, communities, and the quality of life of the workforce (Watts and Lord Holme 1999: 6).


22 The WHO estimates that only one in five people in sub-Saharan Africa have access to adequate information to make decisions about sexual practices