

Consuming Lives, Consuming Landscapes: Interpreting Advertisements for Cafédirect coffees

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Abstract

This paper explores the marketing strategies of Cafédirect, a company that pays a guaranteed price for coffee to Latin American and African producers and sells it to UK consumers. Based on a visual and textual analysis of newspaper advertising, my concern is with the representations used to hail potential consumers. These might be understood as a challenge to commodity fetishism, the concern being to reveal the (unequal) social relations underlying conventional coffee production and to present the consumer with the opportunity to transform such relations through the purchase of fairly traded coffee. In case the moral imperative proves insufficient, even greater emphasis is placed on the quality and superiority of the product, such that its consumption becomes a matter of self-worth and social distinction.

Notwithstanding the viability of effecting social justice through consumption, the adverts can also be read as symbolically re-inscribing relations of power between majority world and minority world. For example, while they routinely render aspects of producers' lives 'knowable' to potential consumers, their faces displayed, stories told about their poverty and about the difference access to fair trade markets has made, producers have little control over these meanings and no opportunity of a reverse gaze. Moreover, I argue that the commodity does in fact remain fetishized, in order that the pleasures of the consumer can be privileged. Thus consumers are invited to savour the coffee-growing landscape along with their coffee, presented as natural, authentic, uninhabited, a salve to the superficiality and artificiality of late capitalism. I argue that these problematic representations of lives and landscapes are by no means accidental or arbitrary but intrinsic to the consumption of difference on which the advertising relies. However, effective redistribution may be reliant on such misrecognition.

1. Introduction

... the pleasures of consumerism would be routinely diminished by an awareness of the productive origins of consumer goods.
(Billig, 1999, p. 313)

The result of my leadership style that makes me happiest, is the rise and rise of cafedirect, no longer a charitable fair-trading concern, but a new way of doing business and the fastest growing coffee company in the UK.
(Robin Smith, Founding partner, Host Universal [advertising agency], 2001).

It is now commonplace to argue that contemporary constructions of the self in late capitalist societies are achieved more through the consumption of commodities than their production. Less common is the argument exemplified by Michael Billig above, that

such constructions require a habitual forgetfulness, repression even, of the social relations underpinned by the production and exchange of those commodities (1999). But what happens when commodities are designed to precisely draw attention to those social relations, to the links (and inequalities) between producers and consumers. Are the pleasures of consumerism inevitably diminished? How might such products be marketed? What tensions and contradictions are set up and how are they to be negotiated? Such are the concerns of this paper, which examines the advertising strategies of Cafédirect, a UK based organisation that markets fair trade coffee and other hot beverages from Latin America, Africa and Asia. How are the links between minority world coffee drinkers and majority world coffee farmers configured?

The paper is based on my description and analysis of part of the print media advertising campaign launched by Cafédirect in October 1999, which ran until 2002. It is supplemented by an interview with the Managing Director of the company, Penny Newman, which took place in December 2001. I write from my subject position as a potential consumer of Cafédirect products, although obviously I am no 'average' reader of the advertisements, whoever she might be, given my research interests. I also write as an actual consumer of the goods; I invest in the concept and practice of fair trade but am nonetheless intrigued and troubled by some of the strategies used to market it. Perhaps the wider research project from which this paper derives is an example of the 'textual turn' in development studies, exemplified by the collection edited by Jonathon Crush (1995), *Power of Development*. My interest is in the representations of development and global relations that are constructed through the narratives of fair trade, in whether fair trade has the potential to transform free-market capitalism or merely to (re)present it, in whose voices are heard and whose are not.

The first part of this paper provides some background both to Cafédirect and to fair trade in the UK. Attention then turns to a description of the advertising campaign, followed by an analysis that seeks to unpack the strategies used to hail consumers and identify the wider representations and discourses in which the advertising is implicated. My main arguments are as follows. The advertising does reveal something of the social relations that lie behind the production, exchange and consumption of the product, with the promise that these can be transformed through fair trade. However, this revelation is only partially achieved. Moreover it operates in a very particular way that renders the producers' lives items of consumption for the potential consumer. At the same time a great deal of effort goes into privileging and legitimating the pleasures of the consumer, over and above the 'ethical' message. In part this is pursued by continuing to fetishize the commodity, imbuing it with qualities of 'otherness' that promise the consumer a re-colonization of both lives and landscapes as a moment of 'escape' from the post-industrial condition. Thus the advertising seeks to ensure that the fair trade message does not diminish the pleasures of consumption, indeed it enhances and legitimates these pleasures. This achievement, if Michael Billig is correct, may be crucial to Cafédirect's increasing market share and ambitions to go from niche to mainstream.

2. The Context

Conceived in the early 1980s, Cafédirect was founded in 1991 by four alternative trade organisations, Oxfam Trading, Traidcraft, Equal Exchange and Twin Trading, each owning a 25% share. The underlying impetus was the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989, the ensuing slump in coffee prices and the consequent poverty experienced by coffee producers. Cafédirect's mission was to buy coffee from such growers on a fairly traded basis and market it to UK consumers, offering growers direct access to the international market for the first time, at a fair price. Its status is unusual in that it is owned by four non-governmental organisations (NGOs) but is itself a business rather than an NGO. More precisely it is a medium-sized profit re-investment company, in that retained profit goes back into the company to fund its growth, especially new product development. Turnover by sales for the 12 months up to 30 September 2002 was £10.4 million, during which period premiums of nearly £2 million were paid to coffee producers (ie payments over and above the world price for coffee) (Cafédirect, 2002, p. 15). In the meantime, the 'mainstream' coffee market has undergone another dramatic slump, prices paid to producers collapsing by 50% in three years and prompting Oxfam's call in Autumn 2002 for a Coffee Rescue Plan (Oxfam, 2002). Needless to say, the price of coffee to consumers has not slumped.

Historically fair trade in the UK, earlier known as alternative trade, was confined to handicrafts from the majority world, marketed through specialist shops and mail order. By the 1990s sales of such handicrafts were in decline amidst recession and competition, but prospects for recently introduced food products seemed brighter. Two initiatives were to be particularly significant in the growth of fair trade foods and Cafédirect was at the forefront of both. First, there was an initiative to move fair trade food products into mass distribution through supermarkets. Second, there was the introduction of consumer labels identifying fair trade goods. These two developments are undoubtedly interconnected; if fair trade products are to compete successfully on the supermarket shelves then it's important that their distinctiveness is readily identifiable by consumers.

Initially available only in the usual small outlets (Traidcraft, Oxfam shops, ethical stores), in 1992 Cafédirect's ground coffee was put on trial in the Co-op and Safeway in Scotland. In 1993 the Co-Op and Safeway gave it national distribution and by 1994, having successfully launched an instant version, Cafédirect was being carried by branches of all the major British supermarket chains. Central to this success was the availability of free human capital; via its founders, especially Traidcraft and Oxfam, individuals could be mobilized to put pressure on their local supermarket branches to stock the products, and relied upon to buy them thereafter. Diversification of products and outlets has continued apace since the mid-1990s, taking the beverages from niche to mainstream. Traidirect was launched in 1998, the initial 'regular' tea being followed by three specialist, organic versions in 2001; four new organic coffees were launched in 1999; the first fair trade coffee hit the high street in 2000 when Cafédirect went into partnership with Costa Coffee Shops; and in 2002 vending machine outlets came into the frame through a partnership between Cafédirect and Coffee Fresh. In February 2002 5065 was launched to replace the 'standard' instant coffee and early in 2003 Cocodirect

was launched, described as the UK's first 100% fairtrade drinking chocolate (Cafédirect, n.d. a).

According to Renard 'Although the fair coffee initiative attempts to escape the competition-driven market, because of the context of free market and globalization, it eventually finds itself obliged to negotiate its niche in the market (1999, p. 498). Such is the case with Cafédirect, whose product differentiation and targetting of alternative consumption sites has seen its successful establishment in a sector that is notoriously difficult to penetrate. Cafédirect's UK market share for roast and ground coffee was 3.7% in 1998 and reached 8.3% by 2002, although they still have only 1% of the static freeze dried instant coffee market. Indeed the overall market remains dominated by Nescafe, with almost 60%, such that Cafédirect achieves its status as the sixth largest UK coffee brand with an overall market share in 2001/2 of just under 2% (Cafédirect, n.d. b).

The Fairtrade Foundation was formed in the UK in July 1992 by several of the most prominent distributors of fair trade goods: CAFOD (Catholic Fund for Overseas Development), Christian Aid, New Consumer, Oxfam Trading, Traidcraft Exchange and the World Development Movement.¹ The aim of the Foundation is 'to improve the lot of poor workers and producers in the third world by encouraging and stimulating industry and consumers to promote "fairly traded" products... [with a] strategy based on establishing authoritative, independent criteria by which to recognise and endorse fairly traded products' (Fairtrade Foundation, 1993). Companies whose products meet the criteria are awarded a licence to display a Fairtrade Mark on them, 'encouraging consumers to choose a Fairtrade product in preference to others' (ibid). As such, the Fairtrade Foundation has followed in the footsteps of the first European 'fair' trade label, the Max Havelaar mark initiated in 1988.

In March 1994 the Fairtrade Mark was introduced in the UK, displayed first on Green and Black's Maya Gold chocolate and shortly afterwards on Cafédirect coffee. While Green and Black's have notably not extended the Mark to their other lines, all of Cafédirect's lines, fourteen as of April 2003, carry the Fairtrade Mark. The number of overall items carrying the Mark has increased steadily since its launch. In November 1998 the Fairtrade Mark appeared on 39 products in the UK (all teas, coffees, cocoas or chocolates), produced by 10 companies (The Fairtrade Foundation, 1998). By April 2003 this had increased to over 150 products in the UK (including fresh fruit, fruit juice, biscuits, snacks, and honey) from over 20 companies (Fairtrade Foundation, n.d).

Over time the Fairtrade Foundation has defined the criteria governing fair trade in increasing detail. In the case of trading with small, independent producers (which is usually the case in coffee production), the initial criteria referred to the meeting of a minimum price, the provision of credit and the commitment to a long term trading relationship and audit criteria. The Foundation's literature always made clear that criteria and standards were to be developed and this has certainly occurred; the Fairtrade Standards for Coffee now run to fifteen pages (FLO International, 2002). Standards

¹ Since then the National Federation of Women's Institutes has also become a member.

concerning democracy, participation and transparency, the price paid (which must cover the cost of production and include a fair trade premium to improve living and working conditions), access to export markets, environmental protection and labour conditions are now included. The UK's Fairtrade Foundation is a founding member of Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO), which operates a system of common international standards, and in Autumn 2002 a new international Fairtrade mark was launched, enhancing recognition across borders and increasing the flexibility of suppliers to switch markets. As well as providing a route to ethical consumption, the carrot if you like, the Foundation has also wielded the stick, pursuing inequalities in trade through its research (see Fairtrade Foundation 1997).

Given that Cafédirect began trading some three years before the advent of the Fairtrade Mark, it is perhaps not surprising that it developed its own fair trade criteria. Indeed these remain higher than the minimum standards required for the Mark, guaranteeing a price that is always higher than the world market price and including a Producer Support and Development Programme. There is clearly some frustration that this additional commitment is not readily visible to potential consumers, such that Cafédirect continues to lobby the Fair Trade Foundation for 'a graded system with Bronze, Silver and Gold standards' (Cafédirect, n.d. c).

Cafédirect's mission statement is 'To be the leading brand which strengthens the influence, income and security of producer partners in the south and links them directly to the consumer' (Cafédirect, n.d. d). According to the Managing Director Penny Newman, 'We have said and we've publicly said it, we want to be the number one Fair Trade hot beverage company' (Newman, 2001, p. 10). Advertising and marketing are clearly central planks of their strategy, indeed Cafédirect is singled out in the fairtrade sector for the money spent. As Penny confirms, 'Our marketing's about a million [pounds sterling] and then we spend about a quarter of a million on sales budgets ... for promotions within the multiples and within our food service' (Newman, 2001, p. 16). Of course this is a tiny amount in comparison with other players in the coffee market, but significant in the realms of the fair trade sector.

3. Introducing the Campaign

On Saturday 16 October 1999 the *Guardian* first carried a new and highly distinctive advertising campaign for Cafédirect. At least one advert appeared in all sections of the paper apart from Jobs and Money, thus in the main broad-sheet, in Weekend, in Sport, in the Guide, in Saturday Review, and in Travel. A banner at the bottom of the main broad-sheet section was used to flag up the location of the various adverts. In this way the campaign seemed to stretch the boundaries between advertising and print journalism: the banner at the bottom of the page informing the reader where the adverts were in the paper is akin to the top banner used by the *Guardian* to signal the location of edition highlights.

The campaign involved a new tag-line 'Fresh', accompanied by the text 'World fresh coffees, bought direct from the growers at the world's fairest prices by a world fresh company. www.cafedirect.co.uk'. There was also a new slogan 'Think It', and a

redesigned Cafédirect logo. Formerly all in one colour, ochre was used for ‘café’ while ‘direct’ appeared in white, allowing an extra message to be included. In smaller ochre text above ‘café’ came the word ‘Excellent’ and in equally small white text below ‘direct’ the words ‘from the growers’. So the whole message became ‘Excellent cafédirect from the growers’.

Five advertisements were run in that issue of the *Guardian*, three for Cafédirect products and two for Teadirect products, and I’ll concentrate only on the coffee adverts here. All of them follow a similar format: an image, the ‘Fresh’ tag-line, the ‘Think it’ slogan and the relevant Cafédirect label. In addition to the front-page banner mentioned previously, the campaign was also tied together by an ‘advertisement promotion’, taking a double page spread in the body of the Weekend magazine. This was as much textual as visual, providing a lot of detail. All five adverts were run again in the *Guardian* over the following month, though not usually together, and they were joined by two new adverts. The first advertisement promotion did not run again but a new version of five different promotions ran over five weeks in late February/March 2000. It followed a similar journalistic formula with a lot of text and culminated in a competition to win a trip to visit a coffee plantation, entry to the competition requiring questions to be answered on the basis of the text of the five promotions.

The campaign was produced by Host Universal Ltd, which was founded in the late 1990s by two ex-employees of the global advertising giant Leo Burnett. Host is a ‘virtual’ agency with no clients and no employees, being a network of marketing, advertising, design and research professionals who do one-off commissions. These have included campaigns for Body Shop, The Iron Bed Company, Ruddles County Beer and the Pro-European Conservative Party, as well as Cafédirect. In a play on the initials in Ltd., Host presents the delivery of its campaigns in three consecutive strands labelled learn, think, and deliver (Host Universal Ltd, n.d.). The Cafédirect project is described on the Host web-site as one of brand repositioning and communications, most notably to ‘re-introduce a tea and coffee company – with the most fantastic proposition – to a consumer who simply refuses to see it’ (Host Universal Ltd., n.d.).

The choice of the *Guardian* as advertising medium is interesting, suggesting that Cafédirect’s target consumers are left of centre, a supposition subsequently confirmed: ‘we worked with the Guardian because it’s targeted audience is very similar, ‘cos the target reader is similar to us’ (Newman, 2001, p. 16). Parts of the campaign also featured in *Marie Claire*, perhaps chosen for it’s status as a ‘thinking woman’s’ magazine and because it has a regular slot on ‘third world’ issues, and ultimately in a cinema advertisement, but these are not examined here.

4. Advert 1: Do Yourself a Favour: Discover World Fresh Coffees

Turning to the detail of the campaign, I’ll begin with the double page advertisement promotion.

SHOW OHP ADVERT PROMOTION TEXT

As we see, the left-hand page is predominantly text, with some images. The whole of the right-hand page is taken up with a head and shoulders photo of a male coffee grower, and I'll come to that shortly. The style of the left-hand page is journalistic with a headline 'Do yourself a favour: discover world fresh coffees'. Thereafter the page is split into two main sections. The first section comprises two columns of text, with a summary in larger print at the left-hand side. The second section has five columns of text, each with a banner headline and image. The quantity and layout of the text resonates with that of a newspaper or magazine. Such a reading of the ad's style is supported by the fact that 'Advertisement Promotion' is displayed at the top right hand side, presumably lest readers mistake it for a piece of news journalism.

The Consumer Comes First

I find the banner headline very telling. It suggests that my first responsibility as a reader of this ad is to myself, I have to look after my own interests. The onus is on me to act, to 'do' something, and what I have to do is 'discover world fresh coffees'. This headline also works to obscure the marketing of the product. The word 'discover', redolent of exploration, adventure and the great colonial myth of unknown lands and unclaimed riches, evokes the rich pickings that I will find if I start looking. The suggestion is that these riches are waiting for me and that I am to become the agent of their realisation. This works to shift my subject position as reader from one of being passively 'marketed at' to one of being invoked to act, to take my consumption, and myself, seriously and in the process find my reward in 'world fresh coffees'. As Judith Williamson remarked in her classic study *Decoding Advertisements*, 'In advertising it is essential to compensate for the inactivity forced on us; hence advertising's Romanticism, its emphasis on adventure and excitement' (1978, p. 140).

The summary of the two paragraphs below the main banner provides the gist of the meaning: Cafédirect has the quality discerning coffee drinkers want, and this quality comes from the way it does business. Here is a gesture in the direction of ethical production, but as a subordinate message to that of the requirement to look after myself as a consumer. And that subordination of the ethical message is writ large across the whole campaign.

Nature at Work

The idea that the quality of the coffee derives from good business practices is expanded on in the two paragraphs below, which introduce the new 'gourmet blends'. The first paragraph begins by establishing the quality and freshness of the product and asking why the coffee tastes so good, providing its own answer: 'Because of the special way it [Cafédirect] works directly in partnership with coffee producers, linking them with consumers and by making sure that the growers get a good price for the crop'. I then

hear about the grower Leonardo in the Peruvian Andes, whose crop is contributing to the first organic Cafédirect coffee. I also learn much about the environment this coffee is produced in – ‘With the surrounding peaks rising to over 18,000 feet, a number of micro-climates in the valleys provide just the right balance between sunshine and rainfall to create the conditions for growing very fine coffees’. Attention then turns to the grower Mathew Matoli in Tanzania, again with much about the environment: ‘the rich volcanic soils of Mount Kilimanjaro - Africa’s highest mountain. Watered by abundant seasonal rains and the rivers flowing down from the mountain summit, the fine high-grown arabica coffee has a distinct flavour and rich aroma’.

The promise at the start of this paragraph has been that the high quality comes from the way Cafédirect does business, and there is a sentence about growers getting a good price. However most attention is actually paid to the geographical features of the locations that the two new blends are grown in, described in optimal terms. It is the altitude, rich soils, sunshine, rainfall and river water that get the credit for the coffee’s high quality; the suggestion is almost that the weather does most of the work of coffee production. The rest is presumably done by a male grower – the text and the photograph opposite establish coffee producers as male and give me no opportunity to imagine the large numbers of women (and children?) that work in the sector, notably as planters and pickers. Instead what I’m presented with is the lone male grower ‘working’ nature.

The emphasis on geographical location extends to the naming of the new coffees – Machu Picchu Mountain Special and Kilimanjaro Mountain Special. A packet of each type of coffee is pictured, and I read the images on the glossy packaging as being of the two locations. These images show geographical features, devoid of people or agriculture - the process of coffee production is absent, as is the labour involved. Such characteristics also feature in the three adverts analysed later in the paper.

More attention is paid in the second paragraph to the business practices of Cafédirect and what these mean for quality production. It is explained that coffee is produced by small-holders who typically work together in co-operatives, to pool the risks from market volatility and unfair practices by middlemen (sic) and to increase leverage in negotiations. Working with Cafédirect, coffee co-operatives get a premium that enables them to invest in their community, in improving the quality of the coffee, and in expanding production. This section ends, ‘So do yourself a favour and drink some’.

Do Yourself a Favour: Taste and Distinction

Thus far I would argue that the case being made for a fair trade purchase rests on the quality of the product that will be consumed and, drawing from Bourdieu (1979), the distinction that it will offer the consumer. There is no talk of the consumer (me) paying a fair price in the name of social justice or solidarity; instead the idea of a fair price is sold as being of direct benefit to the consumer: it makes for a premium quality coffee that I can reward myself with. By drinking this coffee I’ll be doing myself a favour, looking after my own best interests, which includes confirming my superior taste and judgement.

This is the coffee that ‘tastes so good’ to those who have good taste, that marks out the consumer as superior in her choice of a superior product. The pre-occupation with far-flung geographical landscapes can be read as an appeal to the cultural capital of the imagined consumer, whose enjoyment of travel and tourism will ensure their appreciation. Thus the fair trade aspects of the product are marketed second, and the price premium that fair trade brings in comparison with other brands is presented as having its own reward. You give more but you also get more, a better product, a confirmation of social status, a better self. What came to mind here was the slogan from the infamous L’Oreal campaign, ‘Because I’m worth it’.

Putting the Ethical Case (Second)

The lower part of the advert is made up of five columns of text, each headed by a picture or logo. Two columns concentrate on labelling schemes that circulate more widely (Fairtrade; Soil Association Organic Standard), two are about concepts new to this campaign (Value Partners; Virtuous Circle) and the fifth concerns Teadirect.

First is the Fairtrade logo, accompanied by text explaining the generic principles of Fairtrade: premium prices, credit terms, a long-term trading commitment, environmental standards, health and safety regulations, and minimum wages. The text adds that Cafédirect goes beyond what the Fairtrade Mark requires, although it does not specify how. So here we have the criteria and structure of the Fairtrade Mark labelling in full focus, the aspects that relate to production of licensed products with smallholders listed

Second comes the heading Value Partners, with an image of a (white) male working at a computer. The text states that Cafédirect buys direct from coops, at an agreed minimum price, and if world prices exceed this Cafédirect pays an extra 10% social premium to the co-op. We are informed that Cafédirect also invests in a business development programme, enabling several co-ops to track world coffee prices by satellite, email and fax so that they can judge the best time to sell. This column provides some detail about the partnership framework between Cafédirect and the coffee cooperatives. I learn the size of the premium and that it’s not automatic but depends on world coffee prices. An example of the technological inputs Cafédirect promotes is also given: growers can use information technology to ‘play’ the world coffee market and increase their control over income. It’s noticeable how far removed this scene is from the naturalistic images used to market the coffees (see below).

Third we have the Virtuous Circle, accompanied by an image of a circle made up of 6 roasted coffee beans. The text defines the concept of a virtuous circle - the quality of the trading relationship is linked with the quality of the coffee – and reiterates the idea that fair trade makes for better coffee. The last sentence of the column provides another key phrase: ‘So everybody benefits. And that means an even better cup of coffee for you’. Mutual benefit is clearly the outcome of the virtuous circle. However, it’s as though mutual benefit is deemed not quite enough; as a (potential) consumer I have to be left imagining only my own benefit, that even better cup of coffee. Better than what? Presumably better than non-fair trade coffee from Cafédirect’s competitors. Better also

than the ‘solidarity’ coffee (such as from Nicaragua) that circulated in the 1980s, renowned for its terrible taste but bought by many on the left on ethical grounds, out of ‘duty’.

Fourth is the heading Organic Growth together with the Soil Association Organic Standard logo. The text refers to the growth in the consumption of organic products [in the North] and how this benefits those coffee farmers who have never used artificial pesticides or fertilisers anyway because they were too expensive. ‘Natural farming methods’ are said to go back to Inca times around Machu Picchu. It’s then explained that premiums allow farmers’ organisations to investment in organic methods. The most interesting aspect here is the way that organic coffee is presented both as natural and ancient *and* as something new that is being developed and requires investment. This is indicative of a recurring tension between representations of the product as authentic, ancient, natural, deriving from the hands of knowledgeable male farmers if not spontaneously from the weather and the landscape itself, and representations of the product as controlled, managed, worked on, and new.

Finally the heading Time for Tea, with an image of a box of Teadirect tea bags, signals the launch into a new type of hot beverage. The text introduces ‘a blend of freshly selected high-quality teas, brightly coloured with a full-bodied taste’. It’s explained that the tea is bought directly from tea-producing groups in the mountains of Uganda and Tanzania, who face similar problems to coffee growers even though ‘the structure of the tea-producing market’ differs. The text ends with the ‘news’ that a tea factory working with teadirect in Uganda is now majority owned by the growers. The emphasis in the description of Teadirect is on its distinctively high quality, and the implication from the text, given what’s already set up by the preceding text, is that this derives from the direct partnership with the ‘tea-producing groups’. The different structure of tea production is alluded to but not specified – instead of small-scale, own account producers, tea production is characterised by wage labour working on large estates or plantations. This type of production involves a different set of criteria for Fairtrade certification than those listed earlier, including worker representation, decent wages, adequate housing (where provided), minimum health and safety standards, environmental standards etc., although these are not mentioned. The advent of a new structure for tea production – a large-scale cooperative owning a factory or plantation - is mentioned, and presented as one of the positive changes that Teadirect is bringing about.

This half of the advertisement promotion concludes with the Cafédirect logo at the bottom of the page together with the text: ‘Now available in seven varieties in leading supermarkets and independents’ and then below that: ‘For further details visit our website www.cafédirect.co.uk.’ Beyond are pictures of two more new ground coffees, rich roast and organic full roast, in their glossy packaging, and two instants, the new organic decaffeinated and the original medium, which has had its label simplified in line with the new glossy packaging style.

The Consumer's Gaze

SHOW OHP OF LEONARDO

A photograph of Leonardo Navarro Bustinza, described as a coffee grower from Cocola, Peru, takes up the whole of the left-hand page of this double-spread advert. I take him to be in his late 40s or early 50s, he has a tanned and weathered face, greying hair and moustache, with a day or two of grey stubble. Leonardo's looking straight at the reader (and the camera), and his mouth is set seriously, although a slight upturn at either side and very prominent laughter lines promise a less serious side. His face is shown much closer up than is usual, filling the entire page such that every line and pore of his skin seems visible, and he doesn't *appear* to have been 'made up' for the camera in any way. The style of the photograph is one of realist documentary, the illusion that what you see is what you get. Given the context, I read Leonardo as a hard-working coffee farmer, spending long days in the sun, and one who is determined and steadfast. I sense that he must know a lot about growing coffee and about life in the mountains of Peru and read his face as 'authentic', without artifice.

Leonardo's presence brings us, as potential consumers, face to face with a coffee producer. His maleness is taken for granted, the text describing him simply as a coffee grower, and this works further to suggest that all coffee growers are male. He looks straight at me from the photograph, and I look at him; it is a one-to-one encounter. Except of course that he cannot see me. For an instant the advert connects us through the coffee that he grows and sells 'there' and that I may buy and consume 'here'. He becomes part of the meaning of the coffee that is being marketed to me.

Beyond Commodity Fetishism?

In my gaze, and together with the information from the page opposite about the conditions in which (male) coffee growers live and work, the advertisement works to expose an aspect of the social relations behind the product. As such it could be understood as a deliberate unpicking of what Marx called in the first volume of *Capital* the fetishism of commodities (1961). Fetishism refers to the ascription of living power to inanimate objects, and commodity fetishism involves the endowment of commodities with properties assumed to be intrinsic to them, at the same time as the social relations involved in the human production of the commodities are concealed. Marx held commodity fetishism to be at the heart of capitalism:

Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange... The relations connecting the labour of one individual to that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations... But as... material relations between persons and social relations between things', (1961, p. 73).

Thus our relationship to the circulation of goods becomes a relationship with money rather than with the people who have produced the goods, and the value of commodities is seen as natural rather than social.

Marx developed the concept of commodity fetishism in a particular, early, phase of capitalist development, raising a question pursued by Billig as to whether the concept can successfully travel to late, post-modern forms (1999, p. 316). I would agree with his insistence that it can, indeed that it becomes 'even more apposite' (Billig, 1999, p. 317), in an era when identity is increasingly performed through consumption via the status meanings of commodities.

Returning to Cafédirect's advertisement promotion then, I am arguing that here is a clear attempt to undermine commodity fetishism, to make part of the potential consumer's relationship with the product, coffee, also a relationship with the producer(s) of that coffee. But how can this be part of a successful marketing strategy? According to Billig:

... if the commodities are to be consumed as items of pleasure and as confirmations of the identity of the consumer, then the consumers must routinely not think about the labour relations involved in the production of what they are consuming. This means forgetting about the social relations which lie behind commodities. ...My goods, in order to be mine and to be enjoyed as such, must be separated from the bodies which have created them... My sense of possession would be diminished – as well as my good consuming self – if I took seriously those dark, busy fingers, working in conditions far removed from the life-world of my playful self (1999, pp. 318-9).

And yet the hard-working face, if not the fingers, of the man producing the coffee are in full view in this advertisement, the co-operatives of coffee producers and the hard lives they lead are deliberately drawn attention to. So what is going on? What I seek to argue below is that there is in fact only a partial revelation of social relations here, and the way in which they figure renders them items of consumption in their own right. Moreover that the potential for this revelation to undermine the pleasures of consumption is simultaneously disrupted by a process of continuing to endow the commodity with properties assumed to be intrinsic to it, that is to (re)fetishize it. Finally that a lot of work is done by the adverts to legitimate the pleasure of the consumer, with part of this pleasure deriving from the idea that (fair trade) consumption can transform unequal relations.

Consuming (Partial) Lives

The relationship between consumer and producer set up by the advert is, of course, visual, virtual, and entirely one-way. I may 'know' Leonardo's face through the advert but I don't know him. And crucially he knows nothing of me. As a reader of the ad and potential consumer of the coffee I remain entirely anonymous. This one-way consumption of lives is in fact ubiquitous to marketing in the fair trade industry. I've been interested for some time in the use of what I call vignettes; short descriptions of the

lives of producers and their families which pay particular attention to the hardships of the 'free' market and the benefits that fair trade brings.

There is no space in the photograph of Leonardo to portray the environment he lives in, his family, those who may work with him and for him growing the coffee, the co-operative he may belong to, and his dealings with Cafédirect. But these details are commonly featured. For example, on Cafédirect's web-site it is currently possible to 'meet' several (male) producers: Mario Hernandez and his family in Nicaragua, who says 'Now I have money to buy clothes for my children and to build my house. Day to day things are improving because of the better price'; Mathew Matoli in Tanzania who says 'Our rains and soils produce coffee whose quality is as high as the mountain itself. This Fairtrade business is the finest deal for the finest coffee' and whose picture is accompanied by one of Ugandan children gathered outside their school; Raul del Aguila from Peru, shown with other Peruvian Cafédirect producers and an additional photo of the local shop, who says 'Fairtrade gives us several advantages. It means we can invest in our education, our health, organic farming methods and growing the highest quality coffee' (Cafédirect, n.d. e).

Notwithstanding a certain scepticism as to the extent that such producers are 'on message' about fair trade, it must be said that I find these vignettes less problematic than some of those used by other fair trade organisations. For example, Traidcraft, whose tendency is for lengthy stories about producers that provide a lot of detail about their personal circumstances and the arduousness and inequalities that characterise their lives before getting involved in fairtrade, followed by the much rosier scenarios that they now enjoy. See, for example, the story of fifteen-year old Rijayatu Razak whose parents are members of the Kuapa Kokoo cocoa farmers' cooperative in Ghana (Traidcraft, n.d).

There is no doubt that the production of such vignettes is a conscious strategy to market fair trade. As the Managing Director of Cafédirect puts it, 'Fair Trade is a very difficult concept to get over... you've got to paint the picture. And the best way to paint a picture is to tell the story of the impact it's made' (Newman, 2001, p. 24). Hers is a view shared by others in the sector; according to Stuart Palmer, Marketing Director of Traidcraft, '... marketing is about simplifying whatever the situation is to absolute bare essentials, and then amplifying, so that people can understand and see clearly... And I know that most people need something fairly emotive that they can connect with very quickly, that's shorthand for all that we're doing' (Palmer, 2001, pp. 22-23).

These happy transformation stories, offering the consumer the romance of a full and transparent relationship with the producer, are in fact necessarily partial, a caricature even.. Indeed in these post-modern times it could hardly be otherwise; no representation could ever be fully referential. As such, and because whatever the potential consumer may know about producers, producers know nothing at all about specific consumers, this is a far cry from the 'mutual relations' envisaged by Marx (1961, p. 72), from a full revelation of the social relations concealed by the economic forms of capitalism. Moreover, I would argue that the form this very partial revelation takes is itself one of consumption, primarily the consumption of difference. As the life of the 'other' is consumed through the advertisement the potential consumer may well be able to remark

on her good fortune. I am thus rather less optimistic than Raynolds about the extent to which the social distance between consumers and producers can be ‘shortened’ (2002).

Privileging the Pleasures of Consumption

The second way in which this campaign recovers from the risk that revealing coffee producers to consumers will serve only to alienate them is by privileging the pleasure of the consumer. The advertisement promotion presents the potential consumer with a scenario whereby everybody benefits, the so-called virtuous circle. However, more emphasis is placed on the benefit to consumers, who are going to realise their self-worth through treating themselves to a superior coffee. The key phrase that I’ve drawn attention to is ‘Do yourself a favour’, but a simple content analysis of the text on the left-hand page provides further evidence of this trend.

Throughout the text what the coffee producers gain from fair trade is mentioned sixteen times. There are seven references to the higher prices accruing to producers in partnership with Cafédirect, and nine other benefits mentioned: credit terms; long-term trading commitment; environmental standards; health and safety regulations; opportunities to invest in production (mentioned four times) and in the community. The fallback position for coffee grower who are not part of Fairtrade is also made clear – low prices, insecure incomes, high risk, dependence on corrupt middlemen, and a lack of prospects.

What about what the consumer will get from Fairtrade? There are no less than thirty one references or phrases describing the Cafédirect product in positive terms: quality (used five times), organic (four), new (three) good (two), special (two), gourmet (two), fresh (two), freshly selected, fine, very fine, rich, excellent, great, pick of the crop, even better, full-bodied, speciality, distinct. The dominant rationale presented to the consumer for engaging in fair trade consumption is that of the ‘better’ product. Phrases that would legitimate fair trade on the basis of an ethics are much fewer (just three, namely better deal, decent wages, everybody benefits) and there is no mention at all of terms like justice, inequality or redistribution.

The fallback position for consumers who do not buy fair trade coffee is actually much less significant than that for producers who cannot sell via fair trade mechanisms. While the whole livelihood of the producer is deemed to be at risk without the benefits of fair trade, all the consumer would apparently be without is one high quality brand of beverage. However, the fallback position for the consumer is exaggerated by the dominant meaning of the advert – not only will they have to risk drinking coffee of a lower quality, the implication is that they will also be failing to look after themselves, to value themselves, and failing to be an ethical agent. Perhaps this lack of equivalence in terms of the ‘real’ fallback positions between consumers and producers explains why the advert goes out of its way to privilege the benefits of Cafédirect to consumers, making its consumption part of an identity project to be good to oneself. The privileging of consumer satisfaction over and above social justice is certainly not accidental. As the Managing Director makes clear: ‘We’ve really made ourselves look as good, taste as

good and be as good at marketing as the biggest brands such as Nescafe or Kenco... and we feel that's the right way to go... [pause] and by the way it's fair trade. Whereas... what's historically been done in the fair trade movement, and I still see it being done, [is that] fair trade is the main proposition and... mainstream tools have not been looked at in depth' (Newman, 2001, p. 6).

Perpetuating Commodity Fetishism

The third way in which I argue that pleasurable consumption is recuperated is by simultaneously perpetuating aspects of commodity fetishism. As I described above, the qualities of the landscape in which the coffee is produced receive a lot of attention, such that 'the natural' becomes an intrinsic quality of the product itself. In order to develop this idea, I'd like to turn to some of the other adverts in the campaign.

SHOW OHP OF MACHU PICCHU

5. Advert 2: 'The Hidden Face of Machu Picchu' (description of the advert in the 'contents' banner)

I'll begin by describing the advert and what it suggests to me, then I'll consider how I read the links between the advert and the product, that is how the advert 'sells' the product, and finally I'll consider the wider discourses in which the advert is located.

This advert can be read in both portrait and landscape modes, with text in both orientations. I originally privileged a landscape orientation although I later switched to portrait. What I see in the landscape mode is an ancient terraced settlement, partly in ruins, in a soaring mountain landscape, the air looking very pure and fresh. The city looks abandoned, although there are two people just visible if you look closely, perhaps tourists. I didn't immediately associate it with Machu Picchu, the ancient Inca settlement in Peru, but made this link after a few moments. It looks like dawn, the terraces of the settlement and the peaks immediately behind catching the early rays of the sun. The colours in the advert are earthy browns and yellows, dark greens for vegetation, with some rich blue in the sky and white on the horizon. I read the settlement as in harmony with its surroundings, integrated into the rock of the hillside, and the scene looks pre-industrial. The text provided in the landscape orientation is the Fresh tag-line, prominent in the top right hand corner, above the peaks.

The image also works in portrait mode, whereby the peaks immediately behind the settlement can be read as a massive human face in profile, eyes closed and looking quietly satisfied, peaceful perhaps. A cirrus cloud drifting over the 'nose', together with the satisfied expression, suggests to me a good aroma, to be savoured. The portrait text includes the Cafédirect logo as it appears on the label from Machu Picchu organic coffee, together with the slogan 'Think it.'

Concentrating first on the text, I read the *Fresh* strap-line as denoting both the freshness of the coffee and the freshness of the idea of ethical consumption. The term invokes a sense of the speed with which the beverages transfer from 'there' to 'here'. Indeed when something is fresh there's almost the sense that it has hardly travelled at all, that it's just been picked. The presentation of the text reminds me of a postmark on an envelope, reinforcing the notion of travel. The circle around the word 'Fresh' resonates with the date and place of posting stamp while the accompanying text in wavy lines is akin to the 'advert' that the UK postage system sometimes uses, such as 'Post early for Christmas' or 'Remember to use the post code'.

I read the 'Think it.' slogan on several different levels. First, it seems to be asking me to think through my consumption, to be a 'wise' consumer and make the connections with producers. Cafédirect is pitching itself as the 'thinking person's' product, appealing to cultural capital. Second it works as an imperative to think through the adverts, which typically leave open the links between image and product. Third, it hails a consumer already in the know about fair trade, evoking the ethical production practises that are not pictured literally. Fourth, the phrase 'Think it' resonates for me with the Nike campaign slogan 'Just do It'², although there are obvious differences. The latter privileges action above thought or discussion and is very minimalist. 'Think it' has similar minimalism – short and snappy, there are no 'bleeding hearts' here - but would seem to invite thought, although the ultimate call is not to think but to act, to buy the product. Instead of realising myself through running I am to realise myself through thoughtful coffee consumption. Indeed, a subsequent leaflet promotion, referred to below, highlights that the invocation to thought is not an end in itself but a prelude to action: the 'Think it.' byline is followed on the next page by 'Drink it.'.

An obvious feature of this advert is the absence of coffee from the picture. It's not being drunk and it's not growing on the terraces as far as I can see. Since the text makes clear that this is an advert for coffee, how do I think it through? Basically the cloud becomes the steam from an early morning cup of coffee, its aroma being savoured by the sleeping giant. On offer is the promise of awakening to a day full of possibility. Also on offer is the idea of an ancient civilization, of wisdom and knowledge working in harmony with the earth, of freshness, freedom, purity, lack of pollution, qualities that become associated with the coffee. The advert invites us to consume and savour the location as well as the product. Indeed the name of the location is appropriated as the name of the coffee, and the subsequent series of advertisement promotions mentioned earlier culminated in the chance to win a trip to Machu Picchu (or Kilimanjaro).

Consuming Landscapes

According to Harris, nature photography is in many ways pornographic, inhibiting our ability to enjoy the natural world that is immediately around us and stimulating us to invade far away locations whose eco-systems will inevitably be disturbed in the process

² Which is subject to fascinating deconstruction by Cole and Hribar, 1995.

(2000, pp. 246-7). The appeal to nature in advertising is redolent of a particular phase of capitalism: ‘the natural is the product of a society in desperate need of relaxation’ (Harris, 2000, p. 250). The risk is not from the vagaries of nature that haunted our ancestors but from the machines and the high-pressured corporate world that characterise 21st century living in the minority world. As Harris explains, ‘Long ago, mankind (sic) took shelter from nature in his own manmade world. Now he takes shelter from the manmade world in nature, or at least in a simulacrum of nature’ (2000, pp. 250-1).

Through these associations with nature, Cafédirect coffee is imbued with qualities that it cannot possess; the potential to salve the superficiality, artificiality and stresses of the modern world. So it remains fetishised. Moreover, the meaning of the location to the people who live there is entirely absent, as they are absent; the location we consume is shown as uninhabited (except perhaps for two tourists in the settlement, showing up as tiny specks). What circulates through this advert is a particular meaning of the product, its landscape and those who produce it, generated in response to marketing requirements thousands of miles away. According to Baumann, this is a feature of globalization: ‘... localities are losing their meaning-generating and meaning-negotiating capacity and are increasingly dependent on sense-giving and interpreting actions which they do not control...’ (Baumann, 1998, pp. 1-2). The next advert I’d like to look at reiterates this process, and although it does represent the landscape as inhabited it does so in equally troubling ways.

SHOW OHP OF ARM

6. Advert 3: ‘Get to grips with Organic’ (description of the advert in the ‘contents’ banner)³

The advert is portrait, the image showing a right forearm and hand pushing down on dark brown earth, the fingers spread out to grip and slightly penetrate the earth. The hand and arm are dark brown, they look weathered and the short fingernails and cuticles are encrusted with earth; this is a working hand. The hairiness of the forearm suggests to me that the hand is male, although this is by no means a reliable criterion. In the background are mountains and cloudy looking skies, heavy with mist. The dominant colours are on the brown spectrum: the rich brown of the soil, the darker brown, almost black of the rocks in the immediate background, and the burnt orange/brown of the arm and hand. The far background and sky is predominantly white/grey in colour. The soil looks very moist and rich and in the foreground it can be seen in great detail, its structure visible, cross-cut by root systems which look to me like grass roots. This would suggest that the soil has been turned over or ploughed, as though ready for planting. The arm and hand dominate the image, both by being in the foreground and through additional lighting

³ While the Machu Picchu image has gone on to be a mainstay of Cafédirect advertising, inspiring a cinema advert using digital enhancing such that the sleeping giant wakes up, I understand that this advert and the following one were dropped from the campaign, in response to negative responses from focus group participants.

bouncing off the hand. The Fresh tagline appears bottom left and the Cafédirect label for organic decaffeinated coffee is bottom right, with the ‘Think it.’ slogan directly below.

Consuming Lives (Again)

Once again, coffee does not appear anywhere in the image, it’s not being produced (except through the link with the working hand) or consumed, yet the text makes it clear that this is an advert for coffee. The reader is required to do quite a lot of work to make a link between text and image, to think it through, and this is the work I did. The length (which appears exaggerated) and the straightness of the arm, with the spreading fingers pressing into the soil and surrounded by what looks like root systems, mean that for me the arm becomes the trunk or stem of a tree or plant, the hand and fingers the root system. Given the context set up by previous adverts, I read the location as the Peruvian Andes and the plant, symbolically at least, as a coffee bush. In this way the arm and hand are simultaneously the (male) producers of the coffee and the coffee itself. The producer is shown to be at one with the soil, to be *of* the soil even, at one with the coffee, *of* the coffee even. The image suggests to me the authenticity of the producers, the way they and the coffee ‘belong’ to the environment, and the ‘earthy’ wisdom of the producers with regard to coffee’s cultivation. In some sense the coffee does not belong, of course, since it is not indigenous to Latin America, and the labourer himself is more likely to be mestizo – a mix of settler Spanish, indigenous South American and African slave – than only indigenous.

If a link is thus made between the image and coffee, what meanings does the advert impart about the product? The suggestion to me is that it will be rich and dark in flavour, authentic and natural, a product of the soil and of human hands only – no other inputs are shown. It is surely no accident that this advert is for organic coffee. In buying and drinking that coffee the promise is that we also consume the authenticity and unspoilt characteristics of the landscape, the richness of its soil. Do we not also consume, metaphorically at least, the very body of the labourer? Or is that going too far? Perhaps not, in the light of the following and obviously associated advert.

SHOW BEAN OHP

7. Advert 4: From bean to cup in an instant (my title; this advert is not previewed in the ‘contents’ banner)

This advert is in portrait mode. Most of the image is taken up with a landscape of recently ploughed earth, the dying grass that has been turned over quite visible, and in the centre is a large round, golden brown shape. Above the horizon there is a band of dark blue sky. The temperature is obviously cold, the upturned sods having a touch of frost across them. It looks like dawn; there are purple tints just above the horizon and the golden light on the central shape is suggestive of the first warming rays of the sun. The dominant colours are the rich dark browns of the earth, lifted by the white frosting, the

golden brown of the central shape, and then the blue of the sky. The 'Fresh' tagline is in the top left hand corner, against the sky, and the Cafédirect label for freeze dried medium roast coffee is in the bottom left hand corner, with the 'Think it.' slogan below.

My main focus of attention when viewing the advert for the first time was on the central shape in the middle of the image. After a moment or two of looking, I identified it as a naked human, crouching down with her/his back to the camera/me, head dropped forward and arms tucked in such that the back and shoulders make a very rounded shape.

Although I read the image as human, this reading immediately becomes problematic because the nakedness of the body and its posture mean that it does not 'fit' into the landscape. The posture of the body suggests to me that fear or anguish; some very strong emotion that has occasioned curling up into a ball, head down. Yet such a reading does not make sense in terms of an advert for coffee. After some time I began to notice that the representation of the body seems very particular. The spine is in shadow but the shadow seems over defined, as does the shadow in the crease at the top of the buttocks. In addition the upper arm that is visible looks over-thin in comparison with the rather thick and substantial back. This generated a sense that the body had been made to look like something else, manipulated both 'really' through the posture and 'virtually', perhaps through digital enhancement of the photograph. However, I couldn't work out what the something else was. Finally a friend pointed out that the body represented a giant roasted coffee bean.

This then is the link between the image and the product, and once I saw it I realised that the appearance of a light frost in an image to advertise a freeze dried Cafédirect product was not accidental. The coffee bean is like a giant seed, set down to grow in the newly ploughed field. There is much artistic licence of course, the 'seed' actually being a roasted coffee bean, and the vast ploughed landscape being far removed from the small-scale production that prevails for coffee, with plants usually grown in the shade of other crops such as bananas or maize.

How does this advert 'work' in terms of selling me Cafédirect coffee? The rich brown evokes the richness of the roasted coffee bean that will become the instant granules in the jar. The 'naturalness' of the product is suggested through the juxtaposition of the coffee bean/seed with the soil and the simplicity of the image – I don't see anybody working the land, planting, weeding, harvesting or processing the coffee. Of course instant coffee is far from natural but the product of complex industrial processing. And it is far from recognizable to coffee producers: 'a lot of them don't understand freeze dried, you know, to them that's like "that's my coffee?"... We took them [selected coffee producers visiting Cafédirect] to Germany where we do our freeze dried manufacturing to see how we take their beans, and roast it [sic] and melt it and freeze dry it and jar it and everything and they were fascinated' (Newman, 2001, p. 26).

The dawn in the image suggests the promise of the coffee bean realisable in an instant, and also reminds me of the early morning, a time of day when many coffee drinkers consume their first, and most important, cup of coffee of the day. But is the promise of the advert that I could consume more than the coffee? Is the landscape itself on offer, in

all its apparent emptiness? And are the peoples of the Andes reduced in this image to coffee - the only human in the image is miming a coffee bean. In consuming the coffee would I also, quite literally, be consuming them? Or am I getting carried away!

6. Conclusion

Cafédirect is arguably the most successful fair trade company in the UK, at least in terms of the number of coffee farmers who receive a fair and sustainable price for their product through its operation. Yet the number of coffee co-operatives registered to sell their products on a fairly traded basis far exceeds those who are bought from, and the proportion that is bought may be as little as 20% of total output. The imperative to increase the market for fair traded coffee is thus obvious, and is arguably about more than the usual pursuit of growth within capitalism. We know from market research that only between 1% and 3% of consumers in the UK are core, committed buyers of fair trade products, motivated primarily by the ethics of consumption. So the challenge that Cafédirect has set itself in going from niche to mainstream is clear, as is the rationale that this will involve some new strategies. As the Managing Director expressed it: ‘You can’t just sit there and say I’ve got a real passion for fair trade and I’ve got a wonderful fair trade product. Those days are gone, and the movement has to realise that as well. You have to sell a business as well as the passion and understanding of fair trade. And you have to sell it in their terms and in their language...’ (Newman, 2001, p. 7).

This paper has explored what selling in ‘their terms and their language’ consists of, analysing aspects of the advertising campaign used by Cafédirect to re-launch their products and introduce new additions to the range. It seems to involve treading a very careful line. Some aspects of the productive origins of the coffee are made visible to the potential consumer, alongside the opportunity to transform the inequalities involved through purchase, but in such a way that the pleasures of consumerism are left very much intact. Of course, for some consumers the opportunity to transform the inequalities involved in the production and exchange of coffee may be pleasure enough. However, the assumption of the adverts is that this will not be sufficient and so more emphasis is placed on the gratification available to the consumers, who can realise their self-worth and display their distinction through treating themselves to a superior coffee.

I have argued that the way the campaign exposes the social relations behind the product is very partial, not least because whatever the consumer may know of the producer, this is a one-way street. There is no opportunity of a reverse gaze. Moreover, that the commodity continues to be fetishized, imbued with qualities assumed to be intrinsic, in the coding and decoding of its representations. I read its associations with nature as promising an escape from the trials of a post-industrial world, but the location embedded in this escape, the Peruvian Andes, is of course imaginary. The image that circulates through the product is empty of the meanings that the inhabitants of the Peruvian Andes might give it, a fate all too common for the ‘local’s in a globalized world (see Baumann, 1998, p. 18). To borrow from Spivak, the subaltern may talk but cannot speak, because

s/he will not be heard (Landry, Maclean and Spivak, 1995, p. 292). Instead s/he is subsumed by the product, reduced to it quite literally, becoming part of the 'natural' world that can be consumed with the coffee.

Privileging the pleasures of the consumer over and above any ethical message would seem to be an essential strategy of successful advertising in late capitalism. The ways in which Cafédirect's campaign achieves this are particular in some ways and like much other advertising in others. Of course the product itself is special, and there is no doubt in my mind that mass consumption of Cafédirect coffee makes for a better world than mass consumption of Nescafe. Nonetheless the question remains, how much do the representations of majority world: minority world relations that this advertising speaks to and reproduces matter?

Another way that this question might be framed is in terms of the distinction Nancy Fraser makes between recognition and misrecognition, redistribution and maldistribution. While recognition involves a 'difference friendly society', misrecognition involves 'insitutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute actors as inferior, excluded, wholly other or simply invisible, hence as less than full partners in social interaction' (Fraser, 2001, p. 21, 24). While redistribution involves the quest to 'redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor, from the North to the South, and from the owners to the workers', maldistribution to an unjust allocation of resources and goods (Fraser, 2001, p. 21). In this context, the issue is whether redistribution of wealth to coffee producers through fair trade (as modest as it is) can be accompanied by recognition of such coffee farmers as equals. Is there a trade off whereby boosting the sales of Cafédirect to promote redistribution to coffee producers depends on their misrecognition? And if so, does it matter and who decides if it matters?

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