

## The “1984” Macintosh Ad: Cinematic Icons and Constitutive Rhetoric in the Launch of a New Machine

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*The “1984” Macintosh ad was broadcast only once in 1984 to launch a personal computer that could easily be used by non-expert consumers, but the ad has remained in the public eye via numerous television and advertising award ceremonies. Applying a theory of constitutive rhetoric with analysis of the ideological codes and cinematic narratives that construct the ad, this essay explores the integral role ads play in the cultural discourse of new technologies. Ultimately, the ad’s rhetoric of freedom and revolution is used to constitute consumers, not rebels, leaving intact capitalism’s ideological investment in the technological realization of social progress. **Key words:** constitutive rhetoric, computers, advertising, media criticism, technology, Charland, Benjamin, Goldman, Macintosh*

Half time at the 1984 Super Bowl featured a sixty-second commercial, one that has taken on legendary status as “the biggest single splash in the history of advertising.”<sup>1</sup> Its purpose was to announce the release of the Macintosh, Apple Corporation’s new personal computer. Titled “1984,” the ad evokes the dystopic George Orwell novel of the same name, with its Big Brother figure ceaselessly intoning the slogans of Newspeak. “1984” was directed by Ridley Scott, the highly regarded director of *Alien* (1979) and *Blade Runner* (1982). The ad is elegant, filmic, and, despite its abbreviated form, a powerful cinematic narrative containing allusions to legendary films and cultural myths and icons. *Advertising Age* declared “1984” the Commercial of the Decade for the 1980s<sup>2</sup> and then in 1995 named it the “greatest commercial” of the last fifty years.<sup>3</sup> It was the first U.S. commercial to win a Grand Prix award at Cannes.<sup>4</sup> In 1999 *TV Guide* named it the best commercial ever made; “1984” cost \$400,000 to produce and \$500,000 for the advertising slot in which it ran.<sup>5</sup> As an advertisement broadcasting nationally, it ran only once.<sup>6</sup>

In retrospect, it was a defining moment, not only of the heralded computer revolution but also of what has become our media landscape: “It turned the Super Bowl from a football game into advertising’s Super Event of the year. And it ushered in the era of advertising as news: The three major TV networks replayed parts or all of the spot as a story on nightly news programs.” The ad broadcast was followed with a highly orchestrated promotional scheme: television and print ads displaying the Macintosh computer and touting the simplicity of its use (“1984” never showed the product), press releases, T-shirts—an integrated marketing strategy that the president of the American Association of Advertising Agencies called the “beginning of a new era.”<sup>7</sup> With the launch of the Macintosh, the personal computer began its evolutionary course to its current status as an indispensable object in millions of everyday lives. Although Atari and IBM had been manufacturing personal computers, it took Apple’s Macintosh to change the nature—and the perception—of individual computing. At the same time, the Macintosh ad opened the floodgates of computer hype. Images of computer-based technologies poured forth, images that were themselves increasingly generated by the very technologies they were promoting.

This study provides a critical look at the ways that mass media help to shape a culture's incorporation of new technologies, and in doing so, contributes to our ongoing understanding of the hegemonic processes engaged in technological dissemination. Its focus is the cultural constructions circulated by television commercials, specifically the Macintosh "1984" ad, early in the introduction of computers into everyday lives. If, as Hartley claims, "the popular media of the modern period are the public domain, the place where and the means by which the public is created and has its being,"<sup>8</sup> then mass media texts, such as new technology ads, form part of that public domain and thereby influence public perception of the desirability and efficacy of technological mediation of everyday social and economic interactions. Advertising thus can be seen as a significant locus of cultural production to be understood, as Schudson argues, not simply as a system of corporate persuasion but as a "distinctive and central symbolic structure" in society.<sup>9</sup>

In the cultural transformation wrought by the widespread dissemination of the personal computer over the last two decades, the "1984" ad represents a key rhetorical moment. Its tropes of freedom and revolution made possible by a computational device still dominate popular discourses, both commercial and philosophical. In Aristotelian terms, it was a kairotic moment, the right cultural product appearing at the right time, a critical juncture in the emergence of an information economy and computer-mediated social world. IBM had overtaken the Apple II in the early 1980s corporate market with a personal computer that foregrounded computational complexity. The Macintosh ad was to launch accessible computing for the non-expert public.

Although the "1984" ad has been the subject of ongoing popular media attention, it has not been subjected to extensive critical examination.<sup>10</sup> Its standing as a rhetorical text of enduring power and status warrants a closer look at its internal dynamics as well as its cultural impact, and criticism provides the means by which this may be accomplished. In examining this text for its complex interweaving of ideologies and cinematic icons that elevated the cold rationality of a machine into the realm of fantasy and the mythic, this essay contributes to an understanding of the integral role ads play in contributing to and drawing on ideological and cultural discourse.

The analysis is based on a synthesis of three theoretical frameworks: Maurice Charland's<sup>11</sup> treatise on the rhetorical constitution of a particular public that is ideologically based and grounded; Robert Goldman<sup>12</sup> and others' work on the significance of advertisements in social and political relations; and Walter Benjamin's concepts of the role of cinematic representation and of mass-mediated re-enchantment.<sup>13</sup> By combining the literature on meaning making in advertising discourses with Charland's view of constitutive rhetoric, this analysis contributes to a theoretical understanding of the strong constitutive, ideological function of advertising texts.

The first section of the essay begins with a description of the Macintosh ad and then surveys the theoretical frameworks that are the basis for the analysis of the ad. Charland's theory of constitutive rhetoric is connected with analyses of ads as key cultural symbol systems to reveal the workings of ideological discourses in an emergent period of our computer-mediated society. The first section concludes with a brief history of the Macintosh marketing strategy and the rhetorical context in which the "1984" Macintosh ad first appeared.

### Description of the Text

"1984" begins with an extreme long shot of a line of men, dressed uniformly in gray prisoner-style clothing, marching in a circular tunnel, much like that in an underground train system. The audio, which extends for most of the piece, consists of a rumbling background with the sound of marching feet and a sustained electronic tone. Mixed over this, at first almost inaudibly and then in full force, is the voice heard throughout; its first intelligible words are: "Today we celebrate the first glorious anniversary of the information purification directives."

The image cuts to a mere flash (a quarter of a second) of a woman running, carrying a long-handled hammer. The woman is in color. She is dressed as a track and field athlete, with short blond hair, a white sleeveless T-shirt with a schematic drawn on the front, and vibrant red shorts. Her entrance is heralded by two electronic notes, a high D, followed by another, one octave below, whose decay seems to ring out continuously underneath the following shots, until the high D is sounded again. This audio motif acts as a clarion call that announces each one of the shots of the woman running.

The next shot is a close-up of the workers' faces as they march by. Only white males are visible, all with shaven heads and blank, fixed stares, a few wearing gas masks.<sup>14</sup> The pallor and sickliness of the workers are accentuated. The air is thick with smog, a bluish-gray haze overlaying everything, reminiscent of Scott's vision of the bleak, rainy misery of the future Los Angeles in *Blade Runner*. The image cuts to a brief shot of men in face-obscuring helmets, running with rifles in their hands. The long shot of the marchers in the tunnel reappears, the camera positioned to cut their heads out of the frame. Their bodies move along mechanically, arms hanging inertly. Television monitors are attached to the walls every few feet along the way. The camera cuts to a close-up of their feet, marching in lockstep.

The runner appears, again briefly. The voice has intoned over the last three shots: "We have created, for the first time in all history, a garden of ideology where each worker may bloom, secure from the pests of contradictory truths," the word "truths" hitting over the image of the runner. The image cuts to reveal for the first time the source of the relentless voice. In an extreme long shot, a huge hall is seen filled with workers already seated as others march in. The hall is monumental; the line of marchers/workers appears endless. The back wall of the hall is an enormous screen, filled by the talking head of an elderly man in glasses. The screen resembles that of a computer monitor, and computer code can be glimpsed along its borders. The man's face is framed so that the top of his head and the bottom of his chin are cut off. He appears hollow-cheeked and steely-eyed, the cinematic stereotype of the cold-blooded tyrant. As he speaks, his words appear in white font on the screen below his mouth, each word preceded by a round dot of light, the proverbial bouncing ball.

We see the runner for the first time in full-body, flanked by enormous marble columns. Noticeable now are the red shoes on her feet, and the power of her stride. Behind her the cadre of guards appears. The camera cuts to a panning shot of the workers, staring passively at the screen as if mesmerized. The words "Our unification of thought is more powerful a weapon . . ." are heard from the screen. Once again the camera pans over workers sitting inertly, one or two now visible as quite young. The voice builds in intensity: ". . . than any fleet or army on earth. We are one people . . ." Cut to the runner in slow motion in an extreme long shot that reveals the vast and imposing hall. ". . . with one will." Cut to a medium shot of the faceless guards: "One

resolve." Then the camera reveals the full computer screen, the tyrant's face filling most of the frame: "One cause. Our enemies shall talk themselves to death . . ." The image cuts over the last words to the runner stopping and beginning to spin with the great hammer. For the first time we can just make out the drawing on her shirt—the Macintosh logo of the bitten apple and monitor-keyboard. The guards are approaching in the background. The image cuts to a medium shot of the guards running fast.

The runner spins again. The voice continues, with the image cutting in mid-sentence to a full-frame closeup of the face on the screen, venomously proclaiming as the bouncing ball follows the words: "And we will bury them with their own confusion."

The runner makes her final windup and lets go of the hammer with a loud cry, as the guards are almost upon her. We see the hammer in slow motion flying through the air, then a wide shot of the screen with the hammer approaching. The onscreen presence finishes in diabolical triumph, "We Shall Prevail," just as the hammer shatters the screen in a blinding flash and the sound of a detonation. A synthetic chorus of wordless cries is heard, behind which is a sound like rushing wind. The camera pans over the workers, flooded with white light, their mouths opened in awe, hands gripping the benches beneath them, uniforms blown back against them. A title, its text in black font, rolls up the white screen, as we hear the familiar television advertising voice of authority of the cultured, white male:

On January 24th,  
Apple Computer will introduce  
Macintosh.  
And you will see why 1984  
won't be like "1984."

The screen fades to black, then reveals the last image we see: the multi-color graphic of an apple, with a bite taken out of it.

The ad's production values are those of high-budget feature quality. The great visual lushness of the images presents a futuristic scene at once frightening and enticing, reminiscent of the feel of the lighting of Scott's *Blade Runner*. The cinematic technology, with its telephoto lenses and mattes, is supplemented by the then cutting-edge computer-generated special effect of the slow motion flying hammer and the blinding white light that fills the hall at the end of the spot.

The formal structures of the commercial add to its power. The accelerating pace of the cuts juxtaposing the lone woman, the faceless band of guards in pursuit, and the giant, bodiless face on the screen, produce a kinesthetic experience of danger and urgency triumphantly resolved with the contact of the hammer with the computer screen and its satisfying explosion.

The aural code is complex. The meaningless sloganeering of the tyrant puppet on the screen continues unceasingly, destructive of thinking, of reflection. The marching feet, the great hall ambiance, the electronic rumble, all work to create an aura of dread, of industrialized enterprises and great human oppression. The multilayered sound seems designed to mesmerize. The body is prevented from contacting itself when sound intrudes that way, creating a kind of disorientation so cataclysmic that it is impossible to reconnect the mind and the body. The body becomes an automaton, running on pilot, programmed by the aural bombardment.<sup>15</sup> Then the clarion call, announcing the running woman: an alarm, an audio hailing, something that has escaped from the iron-fisted control of the aural environment.

## Theoretical Frameworks

In the emergence of a new technology, particularly one as foreign as a computer was to most people outside scientific or corporate domains, speculative discourses often shape expectations more than substantive assertions. Popular media representations such as ads then play a central role in the hegemonic production and reproduction of perspectives on new technologies in our culture. In investigating such representations both the ideological codes that construct them and the audiences they address are important.

Charland's conception of constitutive rhetoric was developed to illuminate the workings of political discourse, yet it provides a framework to understand how audiences are rhetorically constructed by advertising texts. Charland builds on Kenneth Burke's proposal in *A Rhetoric of Motives* to use "identification" rather than "persuasion" as the key term of the rhetorical process in which "audiences are constituted as subjects through a process of identification with a textual position. This identification occurs through a series of ideological effects arising from the narrative structure of constitutive rhetoric" (228). Audiences are not considered to exist outside rhetoric as the subjects of its address, but rather to "live inside" the rhetoric that constructs them:

A theory of constitutive rhetoric leads us to call into question the concept, usually implicit to rhetoric's humanist tradition, of an audience composed of unified and transcendent subjects. If we are left with a subject, that subject is partial and decentered. History, and indeed discourse itself, form the ground for subjectivity. (228)

The theoretical move toward understanding audiences as embodying and, thus, participating in the discourses that attempt to persuade them allows for a rhetorical view of ideological discourse:

Because ideology forms the ground for any rhetorical situation, a theory of ideological rhetoric must be mindful not only of arguments and ideographs, but of the very nature of the subjects that rhetoric both addresses and leads to come to be. Indeed, because the constitutive nature of rhetoric establishes the boundary of a subject's motives and experience, a truly ideological rhetoric must rework or transform subjects. (229)

In 1984, generating consumer awareness of the computer outside of scientific or corporate realms and as something beyond a game console meant not only introducing a radically different personal computer to the marketplace, but also entailed transforming the social identity of the consumer into that of a personal computer user, at the time an identification held by few outside of a narrow work context. This transformation requires a rhetorical re-positioning, as Charland suggests:

What is significant in constitutive rhetoric is that it positions the reader towards political, social and economic action in the material world and it is in this positioning that its ideological character becomes significant. For the purpose of analysis, this positioning of subjects as historical actors can be understood as a two-step process: First, audience members must be successfully interpellated; not all constitutive rhetorics succeed. Second, the tautological logic of constitutive rhetoric must necessitate action in the material world; constitutive rhetoric must require that its embodied subjects act freely in the social world to affirm their subject position. (221)

Charland developed his theory of constitutive rhetoric through his analysis of the sovereignty claims made by Quebec in its bid for independence from Canada. The

discourse he examined focused primarily on a "White Paper" that sought to convince a specific population to vote for secession, a population that had to recognize themselves as the rhetorically framed "Québécois." In a similar fashion, the Macintosh ad sought to engage viewers in assuming the mantle of an information freedom fighter who could withstand the brainwashing techniques of a despot, an identity that would then mobilize them into the computer-mediated world.

Charland's theory posits three ideological effects: (1) the process of constituting a collective subject through narratives that foster an identification superseding divisive individual or class interests; (2) the positing of a transhistorical subject; and (3) the illusion of freedom and agency of the narrative's protagonist. The third ideological effect is of particular utility in revealing the constitutive rhetoric of the Macintosh ad. It provides a means of understanding how the ad's narrative connects to social action, in this instance reconstituting audiences as personal computer users:

Constitutive rhetorics are ideological not merely because they provide individuals with narratives to inhabit as subjects and motives to experience, but because they insert "narrativized" subjects-as-agents into the world. . . . In particular, . . . the constitution in action of a motivated subject, that orients those addressed towards particular future acts. (223)

Advertising discourse constitutes viewers as deficient in some quality, attribute, or value such as happiness or liberty, a deficiency constructed as happily remedied through the consumption of material objects. In the terms of Charland's third ideological effect, ad narratives construct us as subjects motivated by lack, sent into the world as acquisitive agents. The ideological and rhetorical work involved in this transformation of viewers into subjects can take place at two different levels, the cognitive and the emotional, including aesthetic practices that extend the reach of ideological rhetoric beyond political public address. As demonstrated later in the analysis, the "1984" Macintosh ad is inclusive of both levels theorized by Charland: a narrative that provides strong possibilities for identification as well as a visually compelling aesthetic employing innovative computer-generated special effects.

The concept of constitutive rhetoric enriches our understanding of the ideological aspects of advertisements, particularly those that promote new technologies. Although Charland provides an overarching look at how audiences are constructed in ideological discourses, critics of advertising texts provide a sense of how the ideological codes that produce the narrative work. As cultural critics such as Goldman point out, advertising images are ideologically powerful because they draw on socio-cultural meanings from viewers' lives as well as from the mass media themselves, meanings reframed as inherent to the products. Goldman views ads as "maps to the cultural reproduction of commodity hegemony":

In a society that is fundamentally structured by commodity relations--by the relations of private property and wage labor--ads offer a unique window for observing how commodity interests conceptualize social relations. . . . This search for the underlying social grammar of meaning in ads is an essential step toward grasping the deeper ideological significance of ads in our cultural and political lives.<sup>16</sup>

To further the search for meaning, Goldman incorporates Judith Williamson's analytic framework to parse the system of value exchanges in ads, illuminating their influence on viewers. In ads the meaning of one thing is made equivalent to another, the visual signifier is substituted for the product's signified: "signifieds are quickly trans-

formed into signifiers: what reflects us will soon create us too, the symbols of our feelings will become the bounds of our feelings.”<sup>17</sup> The meaning produced by viewers, through their work of exchanging values of signifiers, exists in a transformational space in which we as subjects are constituted as well. Viewers are part of the meaning-making process; at the same time, the meanings made help to shape viewer subjectivities.

Expectations and assumptions about new technologies are particularly susceptible to symbolic negotiations and narrative symbolizations.<sup>18</sup> Repetitive media images such as ads have the power to establish frames of reference and mark the boundaries of public discussion as an integrative common language. Such frames of reference inform Roland Marchand’s cultural critique of print ads in mass circulation publications of the 1920s and 1930s. Marchand identifies the verbal and visual patterns used to frame the valorization of “modernity” by consumer capitalism during the time of the first great wave of immigration in the twentieth century:

If the metaphors, syntactical patterns, and verbal and visual “vocabularies” of our common language establish our parameters of thought and cut the furrows along which our ideas tend to flow, then advertising has played a significant role in establishing our frames of reference and perception.<sup>19</sup>

Brief though it is, the “1984” Macintosh ad is a richly layered narrative that contributes to frames of reference that mark the transition into the Information Age: a world saturated in vibrant color and fantasy, a world made free by the freeing of information, a world of tomorrow brought into the present by a radically new technology. Yet the “1984” ad is also highly reminiscent of Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner*, evoking its “cyberpunk film noir”<sup>20</sup> sensibility and the fears in society that make such cultural products so compelling: alienation of the human spirit, abandonment of the body, increasing estrangement from the natural world, displacement in the work force—all are fears that continue to feed the tension between humans and machines. In the face of such hopes and anxieties, the promoters and advertisers of computer-based technologies employ rhetorical strategies and visual tropes that foreground the power and wonder of technological innovation.

Promotional rhetoric has long been a corollary to the introduction of new technology. Mass-mediated discourses have fostered the shifts in public consciousness necessitated by the introduction of every mass communication technology since the telegraph.<sup>21</sup> New technology ads have fostered the adoption of the personal computer by non-technical users in ways both parallel to and divergent from earlier communication technologies. The electric light, the telegraph, telephone, radio, and television are all communication technologies that materialized in forms foreign to early adopters; their introduction required the production of cultural conventions targeted at non-expert consumers. Yet none of these prior media forms have required the level of technical expertise computers demand of mainstream users. Neither tuning into a television program nor the often intimidating job of programming a VCR are comparable to the level of skills required in the use of a personal computer, an unstable medium prone to frequent breakdowns with rapidly changing software applications that must be learned and updated. How computers are made to speak to overcome their very foreignness requires the type of non-expert, everyday discourses in which ads excel.

Walter Benjamin expressed a similar perception of the function of mass culture in *Passagen-Werk*,<sup>22</sup> his study of the nineteenth-century Parisian arcades, or the first mega-shopping mall. He saw in mass culture a move toward the “re-enchantment” of

the social world through commodities and images that brought about a "reactivation of mythic powers."<sup>23</sup> His notion of re-enchantment played off Max Weber's social theory that pointed to the valorization of abstract and formal reasoning in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the source of the disenchantment and rationalization of economic and political structures as well as cultural forms.<sup>24</sup> Benjamin perceived a level below this systematic rationalization, an unconscious dreamworld fueled by the projection of ancient mythic symbols onto present commodity images, the re-enchantment from which the collective needed to be awakened. Goldman's conceptual framework of meaning making in ads rests on the socio-cultural knowledge viewers bring to their interpretation, and Benjamin suggests one source of the shared values that constitute that knowledge. As is later elaborated, Benjamin's notion of re-enchantment through commodity images correlates with one of the cinematic icons invoked in the Macintosh ad.

Cinematic representations were the early twentieth century's cultural realization of the visual. Benjamin saw the language of film as a bridge during a period of transition, helping people to navigate within the changing conditions of their world.<sup>25</sup> In a time of physical dispersal of human populations, the new medium of film afforded people the means to connect with each other, to see one another clearly through the distance-obliterating closeups afforded by the camera lens. Further, Benjamin remarked on the state of distraction in which audiences perceived architecture and film at the turn of the century, a state very like the one mass media advertisers rely on for optimum persuasion today.

Mirroring what Benjamin perceived to be the role of cinematic technology in a fundamental shift in viewing the world, ads for new technologies project computer-generated special effects and images of digital technologies that provide a guide to changing modes of cultural behavior and perception. The "1984" Macintosh ad, a commercial that is itself one of the most cinematic in form and content of any produced, promotes a product that promises re-enchantment, bringing color and art to the gray, rationalized world of computation.

The "1984" Macintosh ad in particular lends itself to an analysis utilizing the frameworks discussed above because of its appearance in the emergent personal computer evolution and its use of a cinematic and cultural vocabulary. Charland's view of audiences, not as transhistorical subjects addressed by a persuasive appeal, but rather first *constituted* as "narrativized subjects-as-agents" propelled into the world supports an exploration of the Macintosh ad in its ideological and rhetorical constitution of its subjects-as-acquisitive-agents. Synthesizing such an investigation with Goldman's work on the interpretation of ads helps reveal the ideological codes embedded in the formal as well as the narrative elements of the "1984" ad. Drawing on Benjamin's work on the important orienting function of cinematic representations at a time of profound social change and his notion of the re-enchantment of commodities in the form of dream images that keep a society enthralled provides a more nuanced understanding of the role of the numerous cultural icons evoked by the ad. The synthesis of these theoretical frameworks will aid in understanding how the "1984" ad continues to resonate for contemporary critics and viewers.

The sections that follow look at the making of the Macintosh in terms of its promotional team's designs and the historical context in which the ad first appeared. The history of the Macintosh reveals the ways that the advertising industry addresses the notion of the constitution of an audience. In particular, the formulation of the Macintosh



promotional strategies reveals a remarkably intentional rendering of constitutive rhetoric's third ideological effect: the constitution of narrativized subjects-as-agents in the material world.

### The Rhetorical History of the Macintosh

The marketing of the Macintosh computer was a process intertwined with the marketing of its creator and his vision. Apple Computer Corporation was founded in 1976 by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. Part of the California hobbyist scene, Jobs and Wozniak had been working together since 1971 building "blue boxes," electronic devices that allowed for illegal access to the long-distance phone system.<sup>26</sup> Wozniak was the engineering wizard of the two, and in 1975, when the first hobbyist computer kit launched the personal computer revolution, Wozniak joined the Homebrew Computer Club in Berkeley, bringing Jobs with him to meetings. Its premise was to "seize control of technology, to transform the computer from an Orwellian instrument of oppression to a liberating force . . . not [through] massive mainframes but from computers so small they could sit on a table."<sup>27</sup> The early hobbyists were computer game players, a background that led to a desire for ease in human-computer interactions. The Homebrew Computer members, with Jobs particularly attuned to their vision, regarded the creation of an easy-to-use personal computer as a counterattack on the establishment, a liberatory movement:

The personal computer of Homebrew's dreams would combine the coolest design features with the purest individuality, built by enterprises that undermined the predatory world of Big Business, and priced to liberate the common man. It would be not just a personal computer but a revolutionary act.<sup>28</sup>

The sixties' counter-cultural goals for revolution through technology have been characterized by Roszak as "a wishful alliance of the reversionary and technophilic visions."<sup>29</sup> They brought together the desire for a return to economic simplicity and self-reliance and mixed it with a view of high tech as a politically egalitarian force. Apple's origins grew out of such a sensibility and reflected the early manufacture of personal computers as a sort of cottage industry.

The prototype for the Apple II was built in a garage and began selling in 1977; its enormous success was among computer programmers, designers, and game players, securing a part of the market ignored by the leading computer manufacturer. IBM, the leader in business computers, stayed out of the personal computer arena until 1981. In that year, IBM hired the advertising agency Chiat-Day (ironically, the same agency that later would create the "1984" Macintosh ad that would demonize IBM) and mounted a highly successful campaign featuring a Charlie Chaplin lookalike to give IBM a "human face."<sup>30</sup> By 1983 IBM's personal computer surpassed the Apple in sales to become the industry standard, largely because of the availability of business-related software programs that ran on IBM compatible clones such as Compaq.<sup>31</sup>

Jobs's vision for Apple was to create a "user-friendly" computer with an intuitive interface for the domestic market and to reclaim the dominant position in personal computing. By 1979, Apple began developing the Apple III, the Macintosh (with Jobs in charge), and the Lisa, Apple's bid to penetrate the corporate consumer world controlled by IBM and its clones.<sup>32</sup> Lisa's complicated functionality and expensive price tag made it a failure at its launch in 1983, and Apple desperately needed a new breakout

product to replace its now aging Apple II technology. The Macintosh, with its mouse and graphical user interface, observed by Jobs in 1979 in a more primitive form at Xerox PARC, was that breakthrough product as far as Jobs and his engineering team were concerned. They would utilize the Lisa graphical interface and produce a personal computer that was affordable and easy to operate for the general public. Jobs named his working group “pirates” and fired them with the revolutionary rhetoric and zeal that had energized him since the sixties. Macintosh was going to change the world. What it needed was a marketing strategy.

Stanford University is the recipient of archived documents from the Apple Computer Corporation and has made them available through a website called “Making the Macintosh.”<sup>33</sup> In citing the significance of the materials, Stanford’s posted narrative speaks of the Macintosh story as a “kind of Ur-text for Silicon Valley,”<sup>34</sup> thereby contributing to the ongoing propagation of the mythic elements of the personal computer industry. This “Ur-text” marked the beginning of popular culture’s now familiar casting of programmers, engineers, and technically savvy entrepreneurs as heroic, brilliant rebels against the “system.” The Macintosh ad continued in that vein, setting the stage for popular culture’s and the advertising world’s increasingly fantastic depiction of the world of computers.

Apple’s goal for the Macintosh was to establish it as the industry standard for personal computers along with their own Apple II and the IBM-PC. “The Evolution of a Computer,” a video produced in 1983 for Apple, featured Apple CEO John Sculley: “We wanted a product that was really going to change people’s lives. Where the personal computer could be as important in people’s lives as the telephone has been over the last century.”<sup>35</sup> The tone of the documented marketing strategy echoes the computer games that had first popularized the personal computer in the form of the Atari. Referring to the competition, the report states that “IBM will be using its successful corporate positioning approach known as FUD to thwart Apple success in the worldwide business marketplace. FUD stands for Fear, Uncertainty, and Doubt.”<sup>36</sup>

The marketing plan targeted “knowledge workers,” defined as “professionally trained individuals who are paid to process information and ideas. . . . In general, their psychographic profile correlates very closely with SRI’s Values and Lifestyles Study (VALS) group known as ‘achievers.’ Excluded from our definition of the knowledge worker are CEO’s and secretaries/clerks . . . Macintosh is an advanced *personal productivity tool* for knowledge workers”<sup>37</sup> (emphasis added).

What is clear in this statement is the intended penetration of a Tayloristic workplace mentality into the personal space of the home. The marketing plan, then, is rooted in the movement toward a greater colonization of leisure time and the enlistment of the white-collar workforce in extending its own labor. Ironically, that control and productivity of personal space and time is fundamental to the futuristic world of Orwell’s *1984*, a bleak reality the Macintosh was designed to subvert.

The public relations firm of Regis McKenna was hired to market Apple products. McKenna’s philosophy of high-tech marketing indicates his strategy, “Markets are Made, Not Won”:

[T]raditional marketing was fine for mature markets (like, say, soft drinks), but for new technologies, a more comprehensive approach is necessary . . . This *requires defining who users are. . . . It also requires constructing the rules by which a product would be evaluated—inventing the concepts, terms of evaluation, and discourse that would define a product.*

Markets for high-tech products don’t exist, in other words: they have to be created. Thus.

high-tech marketing involves not just convincing buyers that a product is right for them; *it involves convincing them to think of themselves as members of a group who would—almost by definition—be interested in that product.* As sociologists of technology would put it, the technology and its market are co-productions.

*Successful marketing would thus define the product, define the way to think about a product, define who its market is, and help customers figure out if they are potential buyers.* This sounds subjective, but subjectivity is intrinsic to public perceptions of high-technology products (emphases added).<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, personal computers were not yet able to “speak” for themselves, having gained no hold in the social identity or cultural imagination at the time. In a striking echo of constitutive rhetoric’s theoretical claims, this ad campaign recognizes the need to define who users are, that is, constitute audiences who as narrativized subjects-as-agents fulfill their subject identities through being propelled into the world to buy computers. The marketing strategists recognize that audiences do not exist outside rhetoric, but, as Charland states, “the very moment of recognition of an address constitutes an entry into a subject position to which inheres a set of motives that render a rhetorical discourse intelligible” (228). What is observable, then, is that elements of a theory meant to *critique* ideological rhetoric are apparently being used to *script* the same rhetoric. It is not only critics of advertising that utilize these principles, but also those within the advertising industry.<sup>39</sup>

Regis McKenna’s theory of marketing also applies the logic of the commodity form identified by Goldman as central to interpreting the impact of advertisements:

A logic is a framework within which social practices are defined and enacted. The logic designates the cognitive and procedural rules which mediate exchanges between people. These rules are evident in the formally rationalized contractual and juridical codes of capitalist society but, more significantly, they comprise tacit and underlying principles which define what is ‘real’ about individuals and the social relations they form.<sup>40</sup>

Regis McKenna perceived the powerful combination of imagination and identification in selling computers and framed Apple’s ads in the image of hip rebels, contemptuous of the conventional corporate world, and whose mission to make the world freer and better through personal computing positioned Apple as, in Michael Malone’s words, a “style, an attitude, a *movement*.”<sup>41</sup> McKenna recognized the necessity of supplementing advertising with “Macmessages” fed to “influencers,” such as journalists and industry analysts whose “appearance of objectivity and disinterestedness” was an essential ingredient in orchestrating the coverage of a new technology product.<sup>42</sup>

Much of this radiated around and from the public relations personification of Steve Jobs, portrayed as not “just a high-tech intellectual . . . but that elusive combination of visionary and evangelist.”<sup>43</sup> One story that is continually repeated is that of Jobs’ visit to Xerox PARC in 1979, where he saw for the first time the graphic user interface and mouse that would later be the design framework for the Lisa and the Macintosh. Jobs’ genius and charisma frequently were extolled, and Guy Kawasaki, Apple’s chief software evangelist, characterized the “meaning” of the creation of the Macintosh as, “A small team of bright, fearless, and ambitious punks led by a charismatic high priest trying to do the right thing can defeat mediocrity and the status quo.”<sup>44</sup>

In the voluminous press generated about Macintosh from press, evangelists, critics, and biographers, talk of dreams, magic, mission and passion abound. Macintosh is a philosophy—the *Macintosh Way*—and an expression of fervent belief on the part of Jobs, the Mac developers, and the myriad software developers who provided the programs for the Macintosh to use:

In a world of empty and cynical claims for “revolutionary” toilet bowl cleaners and diet aids, Apple and its agency believed in a higher power. “1984” was “truth in advertising,” says Joanna Hoffman, one of 18 original members of the Macintosh engineering and marketing team and now VP-marketing at General Magic, a software company.

Macintosh, Mr. Hayden [the Chiat/Day copywriter of “1984”] says, was “leading a revolution . . . taking the power away from big business and big government and putting it in the hands of people.

“You’ve got to understand that was the rallying cry in the hallways of Apple. Computing had been held by a close-knit elite, and we were going to bust up the cabal and give the power to the people.”

“This spot resonated because it was dealing with fundamental issues at the change of an age,” Mr. Hayden says. “1984”—or any great commercial, any great thing—*operates on a super-rational level, and so it carries with it a lot of freight that has nothing whatsoever to do with what’s being said, and nothing whatsoever to do with the product in question*” (emphasis added).<sup>15</sup>

The statements above are clear examples of what Goldman and other theorists refer to as “commodity-as-sign,” maintaining that modern advertising teaches viewers to consume the sign, not the product.<sup>46</sup> The reference to the “super-rational level” in the discourse above echoes as well Benjamin’s concept of “dream images,” messages of re-enchantment that lurk below and in resistance to the hyper-rationalized empirical worldview. Most important, the promotional strategists’ statements delineate the central ideological code of the narrative: revolution and freedom.

The impact of the “1984” ad is clearly evident in several media initiatives. News coverage of “1984” began the practice of reporting on advertising as news and, of most significance, turned the Super Bowl into an advertising event for new campaigns, a veritable hymn to capitalism.<sup>47</sup> News now regularly reports nearly as much on the commercials the day after the Super Bowl as on the game, and the computer industry and Internet-related companies have been major advertisers at that event. The price of the commercial airtime is currently about \$2 million for a thirty-second spot, about four times the cost of the same time slot when the Macintosh ad was aired.<sup>48</sup>

Although the “1984” Macintosh ad ran only once in a commercial slot, forty-six percent of U.S. households were tuned in,<sup>49</sup> and it has been broadcast repeatedly on news and award programs. Ironically, however, “1984” almost was not broadcast. The Board of Directors saw it just days before the air date and loathed it. The ad contained nightmarish depictions of dehumanization through technology, and worse, it never displayed the product. Jobs and the marketing team were ordered to sell the time and pull the spot.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the ad received the lowest-ever score for a business machine commercial in focus-group testing that was commissioned by the Macintosh marketing team to change the Apple Board’s minds.<sup>51</sup> One of the two minutes that had been purchased was sold; when the other minute couldn’t be sold, the decision was made, just days before the Super Bowl, to run the ad.

The Apple Board’s response is interesting as their inability to grasp the ad’s rhetorical and aesthetic power placed them outside of what Charland referred to as the narrative’s “identificatory” function necessary to the successful constitution of subjects (223). As Rose stated, “what they failed to realize—what they couldn’t realize, being businessmen and capitalists rather than dreamers—was that Macintosh wasn’t a computer, it was a crusade.”<sup>52</sup> In time, the tone-deafness on the part of those businessmen to the Macintosh ad would prove prophetic: while the ad itself resonated powerfully and created an immediate spike in Macintosh sales, the corporate world never adopted it to the degree Apple’s “revolution” had prescribed. The ad’s rhetoric constituted its subjects as rebels

against the "system." In the widespread dissemination of the personal computer in the years following the Macintosh's release, Apple's marginal status in the industry never has afforded its subjects another role.<sup>53</sup>

As this rhetorical history makes clear, the theoretical themes developed by Charland, Goldman, and others are present in the advertising discourse. The principles spelled out by the theorists also functioned in producing the Macintosh ad: constituting the audience and subject positions for new technologies in the framework of commodity logic were paramount marketing strategies in the emergence of the personal computer.

### The Rhetorical Context of the "1984" Ad

The Macintosh ad "1984" appeared in a year in which several themes coalesced that continue to inform our present computer-based information society. In 1984, President Ronald Reagan was elected in a landslide victory to a second term. Reagan not only embraced the ultimate high technology in the form of the Strategic Defense System (dubbed "Star Wars") but also continued to push his anti-big government agenda (at least rhetorically), a chord that would resonate in the Macintosh narrative itself.

On the cultural front, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* was published in 1984, coining the term "cyberspace" for the realm of networked electronic communications, thus making a seminal contribution to the burgeoning cyberculture of the 1980s and 1990s. Further, *The Terminator* was released in 1984, bringing stardom to Arnold Schwarzenegger and supplying the world with a prototype for the cyborg as consummate evil, an anti-human life form created by the coming to consciousness of the globe's networked computers. Finally, Sherry Turkle's study of young computer programmers at MIT, *The Second Self*, was published in 1984, and introduced the notion that humans invest spirituality in their dealings with computers and even accord independent intelligence to the computers themselves.

One further movement in the media environment of 1984 is worthy of note: a shift in advertising strategy that marked the Association of American Advertising Agencies' attempt to re-engage jaded viewers. Goldman reports on their ad campaign in that year, "Advertising. Another Word for Freedom of Choice," that headlined the questions, "Is advertising a reflection of society? Or is society a reflection of advertising?"<sup>54</sup> The use of the phrase "freedom of choice" resonated with the short-lived marketing strategy targeting independent women as consumers.<sup>55</sup> The Advertising Association's ad also set the stage for the opaque and ambiguous (and often entertaining) advertising narratives that pervaded the commodity culture by the 1990s. The 1984 campaign's advertising narratives denied the symbolic equivalence exchange between the viewer and the commodity ideal<sup>56</sup> by incorporating criticism of advertising into the ads, utilizing overt elements within commercial narratives to "recognize" viewer sophistication, and reflexively foregrounding the conventions that inform the routine reading of ads. The Association's market research found this new breed of ads to be highly effective in grabbing and keeping audience attention, requiring the viewer to decipher obscure symbolic narratives and even what product is being sold.

The years preceding the introduction of the Macintosh were those in which attitudes toward personal computers exhibited more technophobia than celebration. Reed's investigations of instructional and popular media in the 1970s and 1980s found cultural management of technophobia to be a primary concern in the mainstreaming of the personal computer.<sup>57</sup> Women especially were cast as fearful of the effects of the personal

computer as it encroached on the domestic sphere, and mainstream magazines made a considerable effort to cajole the U.S. housewife into accepting this new technology as a constructive pastime for her husband and children. Feminist critics such as Doane<sup>58</sup> and Wajcman have noted the fundamental opposition between discourses of the technological and of the feminine, with the technological “always promising to control, supervise, regulate” the latter.<sup>59</sup> The “1984” Macintosh ad, however, cast a female as its victorious protagonist. With these tensions, contradictions, and anticipations in the larger rhetorical context in mind, I turn to the analysis of the ad itself.

### Analysis

One of the most striking aspects of the Macintosh ad on first viewing is that it casts the introduction of the ultimate rational device—a computational machine—into a mythic narrative of Manichean struggle. This version of a David triumphing over a Goliath projects the promise of a future freed from tyranny and the constraints on an unbridled creative renaissance. Yet its intertextual resonance with *Blade Runner*'s tale of robotic replicants created and controlled by a ruthless master—a powerful dystopic narrative of unchecked technological progress—is also present. The tensions and ambivalence so often present in dreams of technological salvation and enchantment are strongly evident here: the dehumanized and brainwashed legions of workers, their bodies as broken as their minds are shackled, alienated from their surroundings and each other, mesmerized by the lure and the cadence of high technology.

The ad makes manifest two other cultural preoccupations that have resurfaced throughout popular culture in relation to new technology. The roboticized, automaton-like workers materialize the fears expressed from Thomas Carlyle on that not only will machines become more human, but that humans also will become more like machines. In a less overt way, these figures evoke the haunting specter of joblessness, of the displacement of humans by machines, an anxiety complicating the reception of technological advances since the Industrial Revolution.

The other cultural anxiety hinted at in the text is that of the obsolescence of the physical body. If the computer is an invention and extension of the human mind, the bodiless head floating on the screen is a symbolic reenactment of the human body becoming obsolete, a fear that is materialized in even more threatening terms in *The Terminator*, which was released the same year.<sup>60</sup>

Much of the ongoing fascination with the “1984” Macintosh ad—and a significant facet in its hold on viewers' and critics' imaginations—can be attributed to its reconfiguring of popular cultural icons. The most obvious articulation is with the novel that gives the ad its name, *1984*. George Orwell's novel, written in 1948, is a critique of power, directed specifically at Stalin and his gulag and evoked by the mass of prisoners/workers assembled on the screen in the “1984” ad. The incantations of the voice emanating from the screen recall the Newspeak of the novel, a form of ideological brainwashing that ruthlessly curtailed the words permitted expression in the totalitarian society of *1984*. That society was policed night and day by “Big Brother,” a panoptic presence on countless television screens.

The ad's use of this theme suggests some intriguing political inflections. The IBM culture was famous for its rigid rankings and insistence on a uniform, blue-suited corporate look and attitude. Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs, Apple's founders, had already been brought into the public eye by media stories highlighting their hippie,

garage-grunge style and anti-corporate, anti-hierarchical stance. The baby-faced, long-haired Jobs, with his slingshot aimed at the IBM giant, was the personalized basis for the David and Goliath myth evoked by the ad.

The identification of Big Brother and Stalin with IBM/Big Blue is clearly intentional, although IBM, it might be argued, is quintessentially representative of capitalism. The reversal of that identification, the equation of IBM with the communist dictatorship of Stalin, allows a reiteration of the conflation of capitalistic competition (suppressed by IBM in this narrative) with democracy and freedom, represented by the Macintosh. That this is at odds with the professed sixties “power to the people,” anti-capitalist sensibilities of Jobs and the other developers of the Macintosh is an issue addressed later in this essay.

As discussed above, Charland developed his theory of constitutive rhetoric to understand the workings of political discourse in Quebec’s movement toward independence. One aspect of the rhetoric used to constitute the Quebec people was to frame the existing government as not real, as illegitimate in its claim to represent the Québécois. In a parallel fashion, in the Macintosh ad, the equation of IBM with Orwell’s Big Brother and its authoritarian control over language and thought negates it as a source of information (which longs to be free), rendering it inauthentic as a leader of the computer revolution. The cognitive processes—ways to think, to communicate—are imprisoned; the robotic bodies become metaphors for the shackled and brainwashed mind. Apple is equated with the real leader of the information revolution as it frees the computer users from subjugation to IBM and its operating system, DOS.<sup>61</sup>

Orwell’s dystopic tale is the most directly quoted framework for the ad’s narrative structure, but there are other important cultural symbols invoked along with it. The opening shot of the marching workers is taken from Fritz Lang’s 1927 *Metropolis*, a film that depicted the destructiveness of capitalism and the misery of the working class in a plea for compassion and equity. The futuristic world of *Metropolis* is dependent on the advanced technology that has created a soaring, awe-inspiring colossus of glass, steel, and flying bridges above ground, yet it is a world that buries the darker side of its technological progress underground. In the endless tunnels undergirding the great city are nightmarish scenes of mechanized industrialism where the relentless push toward greater profit and productivity for the corporate “Master” drives the human laborers to the edge of destruction.

*Metropolis* begins with a series of shots of the bent and exploited workers in a circular tunnel, directly quoted in the Macintosh ad, leading to their underground city and the machines they die maintaining. The hall in the Macintosh ad in which the head on the screen addresses the mass of men mirrors architecturally the oppressive Master’s building in *Metropolis*. Orwell’s narrative projected stasis and immutability in the totalitarian state of 1984; Lang’s story, however, allowed for resistance and the redistribution of control, a theme central to the Macintosh ad’s industrial agenda as well as to its narrative.

Drawing such a classic film into play associates the introduction of the Macintosh with a political sensibility, transforming consumerism into a revolutionary act against authoritarian tyranny and dehumanizing technological progress. Computer choice—and acquisition—wrest control from the tyrannical Master and deliver it into the hands of the individual user. Commodity hegemony, in Goldman’s term, is reproduced as democratic principles of free thought and expression are defended and secured through the *real* technological salvation. The media representation of an individual tyrant is a staple

of hegemonic ideology, the projection of an isolated and specific instance of abuse that deflects attention from the systemic forces of capitalism and technological development.

In interpreting the ideological codes in "1984," the collective masses here are inimical to freedom. In *Metropolis*, a narrative motivated by more socialistic sensibilities, the massed workers led by a courageous female rebel are the force necessary to the overthrow of the tyranny. In "1984," the U.S. ideological faith in the individual supersedes the potential of the massed workers and is triumphant *despite* the collective. Thus, we have a rhetorically constituted subject who is a political activist by virtue of a choice of a consumer object and who is free to do so because of the *independence* from the masses afforded by capitalism's free market.

Casting a woman in the "1984" ad as the liberator of information technology and thus the savior of the free world was counter to identifications that had surfaced before in popular culture's depictions of technology and femininity. Huyssen<sup>62</sup> found the attitudes toward technology in *Metropolis* to present two diametrically opposed views: the expressionist fear of technology as oppressive and destructive, and the *Neue Sachlichkeit's*<sup>63</sup> fascination with and belief in technological solutions. Huyssen notes that the balance between male and female sexual identity in eighteenth-century androids gave way to a marked preference in the literature of the nineteenth and twentieth century for a machine-woman. He proposes that in *Metropolis*, male projections result in a homology between woman and technology. This homology encapsulates the myth of the dualistic nature of women, the binary of virgin-mother versus prostitute-vamp projected onto technology, which in turn is perceived as either neutral and obedient or out-of-control and threatening.

In *Metropolis*, the threat of a raging femininity succeeds in displacing the threat of technology. When the robot made in the likeness of the chaste female leader of the workers is burned at the stake, Huyssen observes, "Sexuality is back under control just as technology has been purged of its destructive, evil, i.e., 'sexual,' element through the burning of the witch machine."<sup>64</sup> The expressionist fear of technology and the displacement of male fears of female sexuality projected onto the machine-woman thus are exorcised, leaving intact capitalism's ideological stake in the technological realization of social progress.

In an analogous situation, messages about technophobia tied to women in the popular media discourses examined by Reed also implicate women as obstacles to the social progress realizable through technological innovation. The difference in the instance of emergent computer technologies was that women's *anxieties* rather than their uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) *sexual appetites* threatened the unimpeded march of civilization.

The Running Woman of the Macintosh ad reverses these depictions, displaying a courage, strength, and determination usually reserved for her male counterparts, and fostering an identification necessary to the constitution of subjects. It is a role that resonates with another classic U.S. narrative, one whose inflection is evident in the "1984" ad as well. This is the role of Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*, and it contributes in significant ways to the enduring popularity of the ad.

Allusions to the *Wizard of Oz* appear in several of the ad's visual codes. The Running Woman is in color, her blonde hair and red shorts in sharp contrast to the hazy, bluish black and white of the other scenes, paralleling Dorothy's entry into Oz and color, from the black and white of the Kansas scenes. The computer screen talking head is reminiscent of the disembodied head of the Wizard consulted by Dorothy and her



friends. The hammer shattering the screen in the Macintosh ad echoes Toto's revelation of Frank Morgan behind the curtain, exposing the virtuality of the Wizard and unmasking the artifice. When the Running Woman is finally shown in full shot she can be seen to be wearing red shoes, and the fully saturated colors of the Apple logo lighting up the screen after it is shattered tells us that we are not in Kansas anymore.

Based on this associative link to the Emerald City, Benjamin's concepts of dream images and re-enchantment are illuminating. William Leach calls the author of the *Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum, one of the "earliest architects of the dream life of the consumer age." Baum was the first significant advocate of the aesthetic display of consumer goods and believed fervently in "the virtues of consumption and leisure and in lifting taboos on the expression of desire."<sup>65</sup> The late nineteenth century saw the move from an agrarian to an industrial society, transforming the nation from the "Land of Comfort" to the "Land of Desire." The visual vocabulary of desire was expressed in new forms of representation, reconstructing both the look and the meaning of commodities and commodity environments.

The aesthetic energies mobilized on behalf of consumption were fed by technological developments in the production of colored glass and electrical light. Baum's fascination with these fueled his success in creating a new language of commodity interpretation, influencing merchants and department stores to create visual environments for goods that evoked magical associations. Baum's animation of products, according to Leach, helped to accustom Americans to living in artificial environments, even to finding them superior to the natural, a preference significant in light of our contemporary virtual communities and mediated communication networks.

In Leach's words, "Display was fantasy, childhood, theater, technological play, and selling all rolled into one for Baum, as it would be for later display artists infatuated with the same urban commercial forms." The show window was of primary importance to Baum, leading him to exhort department stores and fellow merchants to create ever-larger windows in which theatrical effects and a new enchantment could be offered for the consumer's imagination. When Baum began writing his fictions in 1900, after 25 years as a merchant, his literary works followed the aestheticization of machinery begun in the mid-nineteenth century and culminating around 1915 with the pleasure palaces and their new "aesthetic of artificiality." In a statement that bears a strong resemblance to descriptions of computer morphing and multimedia for which Macintosh provided the lead, Leach likened Baum's stories to "the literary apotheosis of commodity flow. In the Land of Oz, things are always animated, always metamorphosing; landscapes shift again and again in color and hue, boundaries are magically crossed, and pathways go in many directions at once. Gender lacks fixity."<sup>66</sup>

Anne Friedberg comments on the analogy between Baum's conception of the display window and the cinema screen, because both feature an inaccessible yet visible tableau. Friedberg characterizes the "mobilized virtual gaze" of both window shopping and cinema spectatorship and refers to the late nineteenth-century shop window as "the proscenium for visual intoxication, the site of seduction for consumer desire." Window shopping and cinematic spectatorship rely on a gaze that is acquisitive yet distanced, "an integral feature of both cinematic and televisual apparatuses: a *mobilized 'virtual' gaze*. The *virtual gaze* is not a direct perception but a *received* perception mediated through representation."<sup>67</sup>

Baum transformed consumer items into commodities by transforming the department store window into a theatrical stage, captivating the attention of passersby, ultimately

luring them through the doorways to revel in (and purchase) intoxicating objects. The allusions in the Macintosh ad to the *Wizard of Oz* point to an equivalent seduction by dream images, the lure of a different window. Almost a century later, the computer screen offers the same enchantment, luring consumers in as surely as Baum's shop windows, as the Internet is gradually transformed into a virtual shopping mall. The acquisitive drive for goods and information is an additional element in the frenetic consumption particular to our culture—beyond goods, in an information economy, accumulating and consuming information is rapidly becoming both a recreational pastime and a prerequisite for staying employed.

Benjamin's concept of dream images in the service of capital and the commodification of everyday dimensions of life is strongly echoed in Baum's enthusiastic embrace of the seduction of image and display. In 1984, the emergence of a new form of computer that was to revolutionize the consumer market called on new ways of representing re-enchantment. Macintosh brought color and light to the world of computing, reawakening aesthetic pleasure and appreciation. The magic glimpsed through the early department store windows is evoked in this new promise of an enchanted computer screen, a promise realized later in the multimedia capabilities of the mid-nineties. These new commodities signal a shift in their use value, from the Big Blue world of business and commerce to leisure and designer lifestyle.

Baum proved a significant force at a time of transition in which discursive conventions were being formed for new ways of relating to commodities, in a period when leisure and consumption became the focus of individual fulfillment. Friedberg sees a progression in the cultural shifts "resulting from the organization of the look in the service of consumption and the gradual incorporation of the commodified experience into everyday life":

From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, as if in a historical relay of looks, the shop window succeeded the mirror as a site of identity construction, and then—gradually—the shop window was displaced and incorporated by the cinema screen. Cinematic spectation [was] a further instrumentalization of this consumer gaze. . . .<sup>68</sup>

We can posit a further progression from the cinema to televisual apparatuses and then on to the computer screen, where a new level of identity construction and instrumentalization of the consumer gaze is observable. Extending the progression even further is the projection of an exteriorized identity in the form of adopted personae, virtual avatars in digital environments.<sup>69</sup>

By incorporating elements interpretable through the *Wizard of Oz*, the Macintosh ad works on a number of levels. It defuses the negative association with computers in the "1984" dystopia represented. By introducing themes of fantasy and wonder, the association is forged between a repressive corporate sensibility and 1984, rather than between computer technology and the invasion of human freedom and spirit graphically depicted, an associative link that could easily contaminate the perception of the Macintosh computer as well as the IBM PC. Quoting the *Wizard of Oz* facilitates a move into the realm of fantasy fiction and magic and invokes the playful, inventive possibilities of the new computers.

The tension nevertheless exists in the 1984 Macintosh ad between these elements of magical play and cinematic delight and the technophobia that has repeatedly been found in cultural responses to technological development. In the ad, bodies and machines are in antagonistic relation to each other. The bodies of the mass of

prisoner-workers have been stripped of cognition and volition, rendered automatons by bureaucratic machinery as well as technological development. The narrative in this sense is modernist, expressing the fears and distrust of industrialization. The bodies are inscribed with the marks of a disciplinary society, in which, in Foucault's terms, a body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body.<sup>70</sup>

Power is present as a destructive force and rendered visible in the technology, the inimical all-seeing presence of Big Blue/Big Brother. The split between body and mind is paramount: the disembodied talking head on the huge computer screen controls the collective body, the roboticized masses at the will of the master. But power, as Foucault points out, is always local and unstable,<sup>71</sup> and in the "1984" ad, it is depicted as vulnerable to Apple's surrogate, the Running Woman.

The woman in the "1984" Macintosh ad is a significant figure in contrast to depictions in later technology commercials. She represents a powerful body able to execute a plan with great risk, formulated with a mind capable of maintaining its autonomy, an image that provided a heroic narrative figure for the identification at the base of Charland's theory. She equally represents a political figure, one aware of the repressive powers of advanced capitalism and willing to use revolutionary tactics in response. The rigorous training of her body, then, is in protest and defiance of the docile, subjected bodies of the roboticized masses of DOS users. Recall that Apple retained at that time an image of the maverick, of an anti-corporate, individualistic U.S. entrepreneurship, and the runner reflects that cultural myth. Hers is the uncontainable, disruptive body, the body aligned with and an appropriate vehicle for a courageous and independent mind.

Casting a woman as the heroic rebel who shatters Big Blue/Big Brother marks several discursive strategies at once. In 1984, the feminist movement, although already facing some of the backlash against women in the public sphere that continues to this day, would still have allowed for a wide familiarity with a woman as signifier of the iconoclastic rule-breaker. In fact, in the summer of 1984 the first and only woman was selected as a running mate for a major presidential candidate.<sup>72</sup> Yet although the Running Woman of the "1984" Macintosh ad presents a formidable figure, it is not one that will be repeated in later ads. The clarion call and the subversion of the established order that the runner represents are about to nose-dive into the backlash of the '80s. The patriarchal oligopoly that Big Blue represents is mobilizing in this period to subvert the feminist movement and the interventions made against sexual, racial, and economic inequality. The Running Woman may narratively survive her assault on Big Brother in 1984, but she will not survive the mass media's symbolic annihilation of her kind in the technology ads of the 1990s.

In the "1984" ad, the Running Woman hurls a sledgehammer, a salute to David's slingshot as well as an ironic co-optation of the communist symbol as an anti-totalitarian weapon. The hammer, made of stone or metal, also resonates with Roszak's assertion of a reversionary-technophilic synthesis attempted by the sixties' counterculture. He remarks on the vision that energized the early techno-utopians, of a "technophilic route forward that would lead to a reversionary future":

For many in the counter culture, the result of high industrial technology would be something like a tribal democracy where the citizenry might still be dressed in buckskin and go berry-picking in the woods: the artificial environment made more artificial would somehow become more . . . natural . . . The motto of the philosophy might almost have been "Forward to the Neolithic!"<sup>73</sup>

An even more distant past, reaching into one the West's myths of origin, is evoked, however, with the principal signification visible: the bitten apple's reference to Eve and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Invoking the Edenic myth, with its associations of pain and death as well as of pleasure and knowledge, the woman's act precipitates, points us to Leo Marx's reading of the "machine in the garden."<sup>74</sup> Marx tracks the metaphor of contradiction pervasive in U.S. literature and thought: the idealization of the pastoral in the face of the grim realities of nineteenth-century industrialization and the increasing domination by the machine in the visible world. That this metaphor of contradiction is again present in the "1984" ad affirms the tenacity of the pastoral ideal in our cultural imagination. The Macintosh computer in the ad is the sign of "the fruit of an Edenic tree, with its links to notions of a clean technology, free from polluting and robbing the planet's resources, while making the Tree of Knowledge within everyone's grasp."<sup>75</sup>

As so often occurs in the most complex popular discourses, however, other cultural chords are sounded. The tensions that exist in the larger culture in response to women asserting their own power must evoke an ambivalence to the portrayal of a rebellious and, therefore, dangerous woman. Many feminist theologians have noted the metaphoric equating of "woman" with "nature" or the earth, and the corresponding edict in Genesis to subdue "her."<sup>76</sup> As Jane Caputi points out, the Apple logo replaces the material symbol of knowledge with an inorganic icon representing artificial intelligence, knowledge, and understanding stripped of their elemental material dimensions. The Running Woman thus represents the artificial paradise or, as Caputi observes, the artificial *as* paradise.<sup>77</sup>

The numerous links to cultural themes and the complexity of embedded sociocultural codes coalesce to make the "1984" Macintosh a constitutive rhetoric of a select group of narrativized subjects. At the same time, the "1984" ad has such staying power and force because its ideological and cultural codes resonate with viewers' social knowledge. Charland theorizes that all of these facets constitute us in ways that make us less aware *because* of the complexity itself; the more multifaceted and the more subtle those elements are, the more possibilities for identification. These different strands come together to constitute subjects in a more ideologically gripping, yet opaque, way.

## Conclusion

This analysis of the Macintosh "1984" ad comes full circle from a political sensibility evoked through the ad's homage to Orwell's *1984* and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* into social action ultimately realized as consumer choice of commodified dream objects. The ideological codes represented in the ad of the lone hero defeating the monstrous agent of repression are much cherished myths of Western culture. Freedom through revolution is the central theme of the ad, the power to revolt against tyranny and to act freely as an individual. The narrative constitutes its audience as revolutionaries, cast into the marketplace to realize their subjectivity as warriors in the crusade for the freedom of information. As Charland frames it, these subject positions are driven to act in the illusion of agency to fulfill their narrativized roles of breaking free from authoritarian suppression of choice. The objects of this fulfilling act are computational devices reconfigured as dream machines, Baum's department store windows recast as portals to digitized global markets. The co-optation of individual rebellion via mass culture manifested by the Macintosh ad resonated strongly with then President Reagan's

rhetorical glorification of the individual opposed to big government while his actions empowered and valorized big business and the military. The "1984" ad promised rebellion but actually delivered further obedience, further submission to the hegemony of the market.

The Running Woman is successful at shattering the image of Big Brother in the "1984" ad, but that is as far as her revolutionary power extends, not unlike the Macintosh itself that never took over the corporate market, the only market that would really count. Furthermore, the panoptic presence depicted in the "1984" ad has become a much greater reality as computer-mediated communication networks such as the Internet have elevated monitoring and surveillance technologies to disturbing new heights.

Evocations of radical social, economic, and political change become subverted by commodity hegemony. As pointed out by Roszak, the misguided notion that information is sufficient for radical social change continues to drive the rhetoric of the telecommunications industry. The synthesis of the technophile with reverent sensibilities, that early perception of the homebrewed personal computer as a means of democratization and political activism combined with a return to a pastoral lifestyle, was resolved, in Roszak's words, with the "technophile values of the counter culture [winning] out."<sup>78</sup> Notions of technologically facilitated freedom and revolution fueling the creation of the Macintosh have been appropriated to such ends as Microsoft's freedom of "travel" via the web ("Where Do You Want To Go Today?"), or the instrumentalization of African Americans and civil rights songs to promote the "freedom" afforded by Toshiba's cellular phones.

Ultimately, the message of the Macintosh ad is an old one echoing cultural faith in the machine and in technology-engendered progress. Technology per se does not yield the Big Brother figure and its control over brainwashed and roboticized masses. It is the *wrong* technology that creates such a state. The right technology—in this case the Macintosh—will provide salvation. The solution to the problems of technology is always a better technology.

This analysis has suggested that in understanding the rhetorical constitution of the audience through ideological codes used to construct the narrative we can begin to fathom how commodity techno-discourses work in our lives. The computer revolution in advanced Western societies insinuates electronic mediation into communications to an unprecedented degree and increasingly dictates how our social and economic relationships will be played out. In the absence of public education and deliberation over the merits and pitfalls of far-reaching technological development, advertising discourses play a crucial role, contributing to expectations of computer technologies and a sense of identity in relation to them.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Michael S. Malone, *Infinite Loop: How the World's Most Insanely Great Computer Company Went Insane* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 274.

<sup>2</sup>Bradley Johnson, "Ten Years After '1984': The Commercial, and the Product, That Changed Advertising," *Advertising Age Online*, 10 January 1994: (<http://www.adage.com>).

<sup>3</sup>"The Best of TV's 50 Years of Pitching," *The Houston Chronicle* (15 March 1995): 3.

<sup>4</sup>Malone, 276.

<sup>5</sup>Dottie Enrico, "The Fifty Greatest Commercials of All Time," *TV Guide* 147 (3 July 1999):4-34. There are conflicting reports on the cost of the production and of the airtime: Malone, 271, states the ad cost \$500,000 to

produce, and Frank Rose, *West of Eden: The End of Innocence at Apple Computer* (Viking, 1989) 155, states the cost to be \$900,000 for the sixty-second time slot.

<sup>6</sup>Steven Levy, *Insanely Great: The Life and Times of Macintosh, the Computer that Changed Everything* (Viking, 1994) 171, reports that the ad ran once in December 1984 in a local Midwest market to qualify for that year's advertising awards, but it has been aired numerous times in the context of advertising award shows and television features on the Super Bowl.

<sup>7</sup>Johnson, 1.

<sup>8</sup>John Hartley, *The Politics of Pictures: The Creation of the Public in the Age of Popular Media* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Schudson, *Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion* (NY: Basic Books, 1986), 210.

<sup>10</sup>For a semiotic textual analysis that includes a study of student interpretations of the Macintosh ad, see Arthur Asa Berger, *Ads, Fads, and Consumer Culture* (Lanham: Maryland, 2000). For a political reading of the "1984" narrative and for an online video of the ad, see Ted Friedman, "Apple's 1984: The Introduction of the Macintosh in the Cultural History of Personal Computers," online version of a paper presented at the Society for the History of Technology Convention, Pasadena, California, October 1997 [cited July 28, 2001], available from World Wide Web: (<http://www.duke.edu/~tlove/mac.htm>).

<sup>11</sup>Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebecois*," *Critical Questions: Invention, Creativity, and the Criticism of Discourse and Media*, ed. William L. Nothstine, Carole Blair, and Gary A. Copeland (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 211-232. Hereafter cited in parentheses in the text.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Goldman, *Reading Ads Socially* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>13</sup>Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 217-251; and Susan Buck-Morss, "Dream World of Mass Culture: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Modernity and the Dialectics of Seeing," *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, ed. David Michael Levin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 309-338.

<sup>14</sup>Levy reports that London skinheads were recruited to perform these roles in *Insanely Great*, 171.

<sup>15</sup>The idea of a mind "programmed" by political propaganda converges with the computer use of "programmed," which, as Turkle notes, is one of many technical terms that have made their way into mainstream language as attributes humans apply to themselves. Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 362.

<sup>16</sup>Goldman, 2.

<sup>17</sup>Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements* (London: Boyars, 1978), 47.

<sup>18</sup>I borrow this phrase from Pam Rosenthal; in her study of post-Fordism and technology, Rosenthal considers cyberpunk fiction writers crucial in providing the "narrative symbolizations" that address such public concern. See "Jacked-In: Fordism, Cyberpunk, Marxism," *Socialist Review* 21 (1991): 79-103.

<sup>19</sup>Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), xx.

<sup>20</sup>Levy, 171.

<sup>21</sup>See Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4-5; and Lynn Spiegel, *Make Room for TV* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>22</sup>Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften (Passagen-Werk)/Walter Benjamin: unter Mitwirkung von Theodor W. Adorno und Gershom Scholem hrsg. von Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972).

<sup>23</sup>As quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, "Dream World of Mass Culture: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Modernity and the Dialectics of Seeing," *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, ed. David Michael Levin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 309-338. Cited material at 317.

<sup>24</sup>Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1985 ed. (London: Counterpoint, 1904).

<sup>25</sup>Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 217-252.

<sup>26</sup>Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray, *Computer: A History of the Information Machine* (Basic Books, 1996), 244.

<sup>27</sup>Rose, 31.

<sup>28</sup>Malone, 54.

<sup>29</sup>Theodore Roszak, "Machines of Loving Grace," in "From Satori to Silicon Valley," [online], Alvin Fine Memorial Lecture at San Francisco State University, April 1985 [cited 7 February 2001], available from World Wide Web: (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/primary/docs/satori/machines.html>).

<sup>30</sup>See Jane Caputi, "Seeing Elephants: The Myths of Phallotechnology," *Feminist Studies* 14 (1988): 487-524, for her critique of the emptying out and reversal of Chaplin's anti-technology characterizations in his films *Modern Times* and *The Great Dictator*.

<sup>31</sup>Campbell-Kelly and Aspray, 257.

<sup>32</sup>Malone, 236.

<sup>33</sup>Stanford University, "Making the Macintosh" [cited 4 March 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac>).

<sup>34</sup>Stanford University, "Making the Macintosh" [cited 6 March 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/subjects.html>).

<sup>35</sup>Stanford University, "Making the Macintosh" [cited 6 March 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/primary/docs/relationmkt.html>).

<sup>36</sup>Stanford University, "Making the Macintosh" [cited 8 March 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/subjects.html>).

<sup>37</sup>Stanford "Making the Macintosh: Macintosh Production Introduction Plan" [cited 6 March 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/primary/docs/pip83.html>).

<sup>38</sup>Stanford University, "Making the Macintosh" [cited 9 March 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/mckenna.html>).

<sup>39</sup>I am not claiming that Regis McKenna read Charland or Goldman, but that the same principles inform the advertising discourse as arise in the theoretical writing. The former uses these principles to perpetuate; the latter uses them to critique.

<sup>40</sup>McKenna, 19.

<sup>41</sup>Malone, 231.

<sup>42</sup>Stanford University, "Making the Macintosh" [cited 9 March 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/mckenna.html>).

<sup>43</sup>Malone, 368.

<sup>44</sup>Guy Kawasaki, *The Macintosh Way* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Company, 1990), 25.

<sup>45</sup>Johnson, 2.

<sup>46</sup>Goldman, 19.

<sup>47</sup>Thanks to Jo Tavener for this phrase.

<sup>48</sup>Richard Linnett and Wayne Friedman, "No Gain: Super Bowl Ad Pricing Is Flat," [online] *Advertising Age* January 2001 [cited 1 August 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://www.adage.com>).

<sup>49</sup>Johnson, 2.

<sup>50</sup>Malone, 273.

<sup>51</sup>Fred Goldberg, "Recalling '1984' Spot." *Advertising Age* (31 January 1994): 21.

<sup>52</sup>Rose, 133.

<sup>53</sup>A recent newspaper story reported that the Macintosh controls only five percent of the computer market but, as portrayed in the "1984" ad, has retained its "rebel image." John Yaukey, "Mac Mystique: What Is It About These Stylish Computers that Has Created an Almost Cult-Like Following?" *Asheville Citizen-Times* (24 July 2001): C1ff.

<sup>54</sup>Goldman, 3.

<sup>55</sup>For an excellent discussion of advertising's transformation of feminist ideals into lifestyle signifiers see Robert Goldman, Deborah Heath, and Sharon Smith, "Commodity Feminism," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8 (September 1991): 333-351.

<sup>56</sup>Williamson, 38ff.

<sup>57</sup>Lori Reed, "Domesticating the Personal Computer: Technology and Cultural Management of a Widespread Technophobia, 1964-," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17:2 (June 2000): 159-185.

<sup>58</sup>Mary Ann Doane, "Technophilia: Technology, Representation, and the Feminine," *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourse of Science*, ed. Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Sally Shuttleworth (New York: Routledge, 1990), 163-176; Judy Wajzman, "Technology as Masculine Culture," *Feminism Confronts Technology* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 131-167.

<sup>59</sup>Doane, 163.

<sup>60</sup>The threat of unemployment and the marginalization of the human body come together in Hollywood actors' response to *Final Fantasy*, a film released by SONY that uses a cast made up entirely of computer-generated human-like actors. Rick Lyman, "Movie Stars Fear Inroads by Upstart Digital Actors," [online] *The New York Times* 8 July 2001 [cited 10 July 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://partners.nytimes.com/2001/07/08/technology/08FANT.html>).

<sup>61</sup>In the mid-nineties, IBM launched an ad campaign under the rubric, "Solutions for a Small Planet." Lisa Nakamura, "Where Do You Want To Go Today?" *Race in Cyberspace*, ed. Beth E. Kolkko, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert B. Rodman (New York: Routledge, 2000), 15-26, notes the racial and ethnic boundaries central to the conceptual frame of the ads—that of having characters from non-technological societies talk "computer-speak." IBM's hegemonic power through its information networks causes everyone to speak the *same* language (21).

<sup>62</sup>Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine," *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 65-81.

<sup>63</sup>This is the term given to describe the mix of art and technology that surfaced during the Weimar Republic.

<sup>64</sup>Huyssen, 81.

<sup>65</sup>William Leach, "Strategists of Display and the Production of Desire," *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 107.

<sup>66</sup>Leach, 110.

<sup>67</sup>Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 65, 2.

<sup>68</sup>Friedberg, 3, 66.

<sup>69</sup>See Sherry Turkle's *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).

<sup>70</sup>Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>71</sup>Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 93.

<sup>72</sup>Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale chose Geraldine Ferraro; they were defeated overwhelmingly by incumbent Republicans Reagan and Bush.

<sup>73</sup>Roszak, "Machines Of Loving Grace."

<sup>74</sup>Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 392.

<sup>75</sup>Marx, 7.

<sup>76</sup>See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads, 1993); and Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1993).

<sup>77</sup>Caputi, 514.

<sup>78</sup>Roszak, "The Light That Failed," in "From Satori to Silicon Valley," [online] Alvin Fine Memorial Lecture at San Francisco State University, April 1985. [cited 7 February 2001], available from World Wide Web at (<http://library.stanford.edu/mac/primary/docs/satori/light.html>).



