

## ***Nineteen Eighty-Four* and "1984": Apple's Use of Dystopian Poetics in iCommodification**

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On January 22, 1984, in the break of the third quarter of the NFL's seventeenth Super Bowl, Apple Computer Incorporated aired for the first time the now famous "1984" commercial for its new, Macintosh computer.<sup>1</sup> Needing a commercial winner and increasingly feeling the pressure of IBM, Apple banked its future on the success of Macintosh and the commercial that introduced it to the public. This article argues that Apple's choice to refer to Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) in order to sell computers was informed by more than a lucky coincidence of dates. Rather, the "1984" commercial was to a large extent prompted by the poetics of dystopian discourse. By engaging with Orwell's classic fiction Apple's advertisement was able to activate paradigms of spatial coherency and subversion that are associated with utopian and dystopian constructions, and so effectively managed the commercial space into which Macintosh could emerge.

### **Macintosh and Product Placement: The First iCommodity**

In 1984, several computer manufacturers were converging from different backgrounds to compete in the relatively new market of what was variously referred to as the home-, personal- or microcomputer. For example, Apple had jumpstarted its business from an electronics and hobbyist background, and sought to expand on its first commercial success, the Apple II. By contrast, IBM had expanded its traditional big-iron, mainframe computer business by introducing the IBM PC for end-users. Meanwhile, Commodore and Sinclair had developed from established calculator manufacturers to produce inexpensive home computers. In this complex and crowded emerging market, IBM had so far been the most successful competitor. Although comparatively late to realise the potential of the microcomputer, by the mid-1980s IBM had ensured that its PC was the dominant computing paradigm for consumers. It was into this turbulent and IBM-dominated marketplace that Apple introduced Macintosh.

Apple's decision to quote what is perhaps the most canonical example of dystopian discourse appears to have been inspired by the company's sales strategy for its new Macintosh computer. Macintosh, like so many of Apple's subsequent products, relied to a large extent on the idea that it offered a unique sales alternative to the computing mainstream (i.e. the IBM PC). And certainly this claim was to a degree justified in the case of the Macintosh. As with its upscale sister the Lisa, Apple's Macintosh shipped with a mouse and the System 1.0 operating software, thus introducing pointing devices and graphical user interfaces to ordinary consumers and giving them an alternative to commandline-only microcomputers. However, alongside these innovations, Apple continued to use 'off-the-shelf' parts for the Macintosh so that its 'unique' design shared a large technical base with competing devices. For example, Macintosh was built up around Motorola's 68000 processor architecture, which gave the machine a powerful family connection with, for example, the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as Brian Bagnall argues, it was Commodore, not Apple, that mostly lead the technology race in the early days of the microcomputer (ix-x). And yet, Apple has been far more successful than Commodore

– and IBM, Atari, and Sinclair – at projecting a sense of radical innovation and capitalising on this message. Certainly, the marketing strategy for the Macintosh relied on stressing the machine's exclusivity and "unique" design to such a degree that these became principal sales arguments in themselves. In this way, Macintosh, and Apple's products in general, are, from the consumer's point of view, not necessarily characterised by technical distinctiveness or superiority. Instead, Apple's computing devices are associated with the *idea* of technical distinctiveness and superiority because these help to express the sales message of exclusivity and individuality. As indicated by Apple's recent line of iDevices, it is not so much the tangible characteristics of the technological commodity itself that Apple uses as a sales argument. Instead, the company suggests that its products offer customers the tools to give voice to their individuality. Expressing yourself, the i-prefix proposes, is a simply a matter of deciding which iPod you are.<sup>3</sup>

Apple first explored this sales strategy with the Macintosh: buying a Mac was not only buying a computer, it was also purchasing a piece of technology that functioned as a token of individuality. In short, Macintosh and Apple's later products are not so much computing commodities as they are the attempted commodification of the concept of 'uniqueness.' This commodification of uniqueness, which deserves in this context to be named 'iCommodification,' entails the creation of a commercial space where the social relationship between individual and perceived collective is established through the consumption of electronic goods and services.

From a Marxist perspective, then, iCommodification reveals itself as a form of commodity fetishism. As Marx explains in *Capital*, commodities can attract functions beyond simply the representation of use, labour and exchange value. In this way, commodities express something other than the sum of their raw materials or the labour required to make them. Rather, commodities contain value beyond the mere physical and represent social relations, as Marx explains:

There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. There, the existence of the things *quâ* commodities, and the value relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. (Marx 43)

Macintosh, then, as a physical object, is transformed by its role as a commodity. It changes form from a collection of technological parts into a "fantastic form" where physical properties express social behaviour. In the case of Apple's products, this commodity fetishism encodes a negative social relationship, or anti-social behaviour. That is, iCommodification entails the transformation of electronics devices into objects that bespeak an individual's desire to reject the mainstream and instead express their non-conformity.

Apple's effort to commodify uniqueness was first made tangible by Macintosh, and specifically by the ad that introduced it to potential consumers. "1984" represents a watershed event in Apple's history as it forms a considerable break with the company's previous advertising strategies. It replaced an emphasis on the pragmatic, concrete virtues of computing products and presented a new approach to selling computers. Previously, Apple had competed in the marketplace primarily on features and price (on use-value). Before Macintosh, Apple's advertisements

generally showed products in the context of a use environment, and listed technical details in support of the computer's usefulness. For example, the Apple II was introduced to the consumer by a full-page spread that focused on the practical application of the computing device. (See Fig. 1 and 2) The left page featured a realistic kitchen scene: wife in the background preparing food; husband in the foreground working with an Apple II that displays a graph. While the specific usefulness of the Apple II within this domestic context is not immediately apparent, Apple's literal product placement here does indicate their desire to present their product favourably in terms of utility. Specifically, the ad's use of diagrams and confirmation of gender stereotyping underline the idea that the Apple II fits conventional, gender-biased paradigms of usefulness, labour division and efficiency with a degree of mathematical precision. Moreover, the right page of the advertisement lists the machine's technical details, as well as a number of suggestions about how it may be employed in the household. In its entirety, then, the advertisement which introduced the Apple II stressed utility above all else: it showed a tool with specific capabilities that could be used to perform tasks that were imagined to be compatible with a pre-existing social context. Apple II and its commercial discourse, in short, were technologies of conformity, or at least attempting to be so.

By contrast, "1984" presented a less utility driven and more abstract sales argument. The advertisement opens by showing gritty images of multitudes marching through corridors while a narrative voice-over can be heard exalting the merits of the "information purification age" ("1984"). The *mise-en-scène* is dominated by shades of grey. Almost no colour is present in the picture. The marchers are men who share the same outfit of loosely fitting overalls and have shaved heads, giving the impression of a prison colony. The view then cuts to a scene revealing the destination of the marching men as an auditorium. At the front of the auditorium is a massive screen from which the source of the voice-over can be seen. An enormous, blurry and bespectacled talking head continues to pontificate about information, ideology and resolve over the captivated, attendant crowd. The uniformity of these scenes is interrupted by brief shots of a single figure running instead of marching. An athletic woman, dressed in red shorts and white top runs powerfully and elegantly holding a hammer, while being chased by what are intended to look like riot police. Her movement, colour and sexual appeal all disrupt the uniform monotony of the surrounding environment. The view of the running figure and that of the auditorium begin to coincide as the athlete can be seen coming up to the screen. She stops, swings around, and then throws the hammer. It flies through the auditorium and hits the screen. As the screen explodes, its light illuminates the front row of onlookers to reveal their shock at its destruction. The screen then fades to show the final text message, which is also narrated: "On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you'll see why 1984 won't be like '1984'" ("1984").



**Fig. 1.**  
"1977 Apple II Introduction Ad."

# The home computer that's ready to work, play and grow with you.

Clear the kitchen table. Bring in the color TV. Plug in your new Apple II\* and connect any standard cassette recorder/player. Now you're ready for an evening of discovery in the new world of personal computers.

Only Apple II makes it that easy. It's a complete, ready to use computer—not a kit. At \$1298, it includes features you won't find on other personal computers costing twice as much.



Features such as video graphics in 15 colors. And a built-in memory capacity of 8K bytes ROM and 4K bytes RAM—with room for lots more. But you don't even need to know a RAM from a ROM to use and enjoy Apple II. It's the first personal computer with a fast version of BASIC—the English-like programming language—permanently built in. That means you can begin running your Apple II the first evening, entering your own instructions and watching them work, even if you've had no previous computer experience.

The familiar typewriter-style keyboard makes communication easy. And your programs and data can be stored on (and retrieved from) audio cassettes, using the built-in cassette interface, so you can swap with other Apple II users. This and other peripherals—optional equipment on most personal computers, at hundreds of dollars extra cost—are *built into* Apple II. And it's designed to keep up with changing technology, to expand easily whenever you need it to.

As an educational tool, Apple II is a sound investment. You can program it to tutor your children in most any subject, such as spelling,



history or math. But the biggest benefit—no matter *how* you use Apple II—is that you and your family increase your familiarity with the computer itself. The more you experiment with it, the more you discover about its potential.

Start by playing PONG. Then invent your own games using the input keyboard, game paddles and built-in speaker. As you experiment you'll acquire new programming skills which will open up new ways to use your Apple II. You'll learn to "paint" dazzling color displays using the unique color graphics commands in Apple BASIC, and write programs to create beautiful kaleidoscopic designs.

As you master Apple BASIC, you'll be able to organize, index and store data on household finances, income tax, recipes, and record collections. You can learn to chart your biorhythms, balance your checking account, even control your home environment. Apple II will go as far as your imagination can take it.

Best of all, Apple II is designed to grow with you. As your skill and experience with computing increase, you may want to add new Apple peripherals. For example, a refined, more sophisticated BASIC language is being developed for advanced scientific and



mathematical applications. And in addition to the built-in audio, video and game interfaces, there's room for eight plug-in options such as a prototyping board for experimenting with interfaces to other equipment; a serial board for connecting teletype, printer and other terminals; a parallel interface for communicating with a printer or another computer; an EPROM board for storing programs permanently; and a modem board communications interface. A floppy disk interface with software and complete operating systems will be available at the end of 1977. And there are many more options to come, because Apple II was designed from the beginning to accommodate increased power and capability as your requirements change.

If you'd like to see for yourself how easy it is to use and enjoy Apple II, visit your local dealer for a demonstration and a copy of our

Apple II™ is a completely self-contained computer system with BASIC in ROM, color graphics, ASCII keyboard, lightweight, efficient switching power supply and molded case. It is supplied with BASIC in ROM, up to 48K bytes of RAM, and with cassette tape, video and game I/O interfaces built-in. Also included are two game paddles and a demonstration cassette.

## SPECIFICATIONS

- **Microprocessor:** 6502 (1 MHz).
- **Video Display:** Memory mapped, 5 modes—all Software-selectable:
  - Text—40 characters/line, 24 lines upper case.
  - Color graphics—40h x 48v, 15 colors
  - High-resolution graphics—280h x 192v; black, white, violet, green (16K RAM minimum required)
  - Both graphics modes can be selected to include 4 lines of text at the bottom of the display area.
  - Completely transparent memory access. All color generation done digitally.
- **Memory:** up to 48K bytes on-board RAM (4K supplied)
  - Uses either 4K or new 16K dynamic memory chips
  - Up to 12K ROM (8K supplied)
- **Software**
  - Fast extended Integer BASIC in ROM with color graphics commands
  - Extensive monitor in ROM
- **I/O**
  - 1500 bps cassette interface
  - 8-slot motherboard
  - Apple game I/O connector
  - ASCII keyboard port
  - Speaker
  - Composite video output

Apple II is also available in board-only form for the do-it-yourself hobbyist. Has all of the features of the Apple II system, but does not include case, keyboard, power supply or game paddles. \$598.

PONG is a trademark of Atari Inc.

\*Apple II plugs into any standard TV using an inexpensive modulator (not supplied).

detailed brochure. Or write Apple Computer Inc., 20863 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino, California 95014.

 **apple computer inc.™**

Fig. 2.  
"1977 Apple II Introduction Ad."

Apple's "1984" commercial, then, works not by focusing on the Macintoshes' technical merits and their ability to connect with convention, but instead draws parallels between Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the personal computer marketplace to suggest the *resistance* to convention. The ad's success in this respect depends upon a number of thematic connections between the novel's major concerns and the early 1980s computing landscape. This thematic overlap consists of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s dominant power structures and computer market leaders on the one hand, and Apple and dystopian resistance on the other. By offering itself as an intertext to Orwell's novel, "1984" suggests that social conformity involves the forceful compliance to imposed ideals and the restriction of free and creative thought. In this way, the ad paints Apple's competitors – in particular market-leader IBM – as entities that inherently confine the individual consumer and inspire submission to generalised computing solutions. Alongside this analogy of market dominance and freedom restriction, "1984" places Macintosh in the position of the freedom fighter. Recalling *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s protagonist, the ad associates Winston Smith's heroic struggle for individual freedom and creativity with resistance to the existing state of affairs in the computer marketplace. In this way, Apple attempts to make its desire to commodify uniqueness concrete: by presenting its competitors in the shadow of the Ministry of Truth and "newspeak", the company allows itself to assume the role of resistance fighter. As a result, an Apple computer becomes evocative of confronting conformity and questioning the status quo. In turn, this image suggests that buying an Apple involves an act of rebellion which, through its opposition to orthodoxy, is able to express individuality and uniqueness. As such, "1984" forms an early attempt on Apple's part to commodify uniqueness rather than shift technological artefacts. Indeed, there is nothing in the ad to suggest that buying a Macintosh entails the acquisition of a technological commodity. (See Figs. 3 and 4) Instead, "1984" proposes that choosing to buy a Macintosh offers you a chance to stand out as unique and individual.

Not only was "1984" Apple's first more abstract sales message, one that focused on the ability of computers to codify social relationships rather than on technical details, it also resolved a number of inconsistencies in the company's previous sales strategies. In two ways "1984" introduced a consistent message where there formerly had been none. To begin with, "1984" introduced a solid logic behind Apple's pricing schemes. From its inception, Apple had struggled with the exchange-value of its products, as well as the importance of advertising on price. As a result, pricing schemes were often contradictory and Apple's narrative on price showed little consensus. Henry Whitfield, Apple's manager at the advertising agency Chiat/Day, complained of the difficult bind that this ambivalent attitude towards pricing put him in:

"There are these guys at Apple," Whitfield said, "who are saying 'Let's make a lot of hay out of price.' Then the left hand says, 'Don't advertise price.' And the right hand says, 'Promote the hell out of price.' We look like idiots if the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. I don't think price is an advantage for Apple. The price of the Apple Two isn't all that low compared to other machines. People don't know what price means." (qtd. in Moritz, *The Little Kingdom* 57-8)

Macintosh and "1984" resolved this tension by clearly positioning Apple's products as luxury items. Macintosh was launched with an introductory price of \$2,495 which – while still considerably cheaper than the Apple Lisa which cost \$9,995 at introduction – placed it well above, for example, the Commodore Amiga 1000 that used many of the same components and retailed at just \$1,295. Macintosh, in other words, was not competing on price but on its social value as a commodity item. Accordingly, Apple made no mention of price in its commercial at all. As with the Macintosh's technical details, then, Apple preferred to highlight the social aspects of its products over use-value or exchange-value. In this way, "1984" helped to structure Apple's sales strategy around iCommodification and removed some of the inconsistencies of the company's earlier advertisements in relation to price.

Secondly, Apple's commercial effectively signposts the computer as a mainstream commodity for the first time. Whereas earlier advertisements attempted to appeal to specific and often disparate customer focus groups, "1984" made no overt claim as to the particular audience it was trying to reach. Before Macintosh, Apple – and IBM, Commodore, Philips as well as every other manufacturer of microcomputers – still sold their wares working from the basic premise that computers had as of yet no place in mainstream culture. Strongly rooted in amateur electronics traditions, companies such as Apple struggled to find their way from parents' garages into mainstream markets.<sup>4</sup> Their initial customer set of bespectacled young men with interests in ham radio and telephone exchange signals<sup>5</sup> continued to fuel Apple's need to appear worthy of 'serious' attention. So, while products progressed from the Apple I in the form of (quite literally) a wooden box with bits to rather mature looking consumer objects such as the Apple II, advertisement messages continued to work hard at convincing the non-tinkerer potential customer of the polished experience that Apple now had on offer. In their effort to appeal to customers outside of their traditional niche, computer companies tended to work hard at finding possible uses for their products and identify their associated marketing segments. As can be gauged by, for instance, the ad that introduced the Apple II, commercials offered a confusing cast of 'typical' housewives, dutiful family men and smiling secretaries to help potential customers identify with the product. This cast of focus group characters signifies the extent to which Apple perceived the need to make a case for its products outside of its traditional market of hobbyists. More importantly, it presented Apple's potential customer base with a disparate message on who these computers were for.

Apple's new commercial for the Macintosh changed this ambivalent message by forgoing the question of focus group altogether. Rather than put the Macintosh forward as a machine for students or housewives, it attempts to appeal to the individual in general, thus inserting itself into the mainstream. It is interesting to note that no focus group tests were conducted at any time during the commercial's production. Apple's advertisement company Chiat\Day scripted "1984" and after production the ad was approved by Steve Jobs and Apple's new CEO John Sculley; no testing of target audience was done at any time.<sup>6</sup> Apple's decision not to perform quantitative testing prior to producing or airing the commercial appears to indicate its desire to appeal to the majority of potential customers rather than a narrow demographic subset.



**Figs. 3 and 4.**

“1984.”

[Unlike earlier advertisements, Apple no longer presented its customers with technical details or even showed its wares. In fact, there is nothing about “1984” that hints at the nature of the advertised product bar the final voice-over.]

The mainstream appeal of “1984” is further underlined by its Hollywood-sized production budget and its director, as well as by the context in which it appeared. Apple allocated a \$900,000 budget for the commercial’s production, making “1984” the most expensive commercial ever made,<sup>7</sup> And Chiat\Day hired film director Ridley Scott to direct it. Scott’s work on *Alien* (1979) and *Bladerunner* (1982) put Apple’s

dystopian vision of the computer marketplace in the art style and visual language that audiences associated with the large-scale tech-noir Hollywood productions of the late 1970s and early 1980s. As a result, "1984" seems less like an advertisement with a target audience than it does a miniature film for popular, mainstream cinema: its production value, visual style and soundscape bespeak a heritage of Hollywood film production rather than that of an advertisement for a niche electronics device. To further root Macintosh in popular mainstream culture, Apple bought 60 seconds of advertisement time during the Super Bowl. As one of the most watched sporting events of the year in the USA, the Super Bowl ensured that "1984" would have a large and relatively generic audience. As such, "1984" constituted a dramatic move away from Apple's previous advertisements and their anxious attempts to identify target audiences. Here, Apple unambiguously positioned Macintosh in the mainstream using a high-value, high-quality production, a premier Hollywood director and primetime advertising space. In this way, the company resolved some of the issues of its previous advertisement strategies and began to broadcast an unambiguous message in terms of price and target audience.

Of course, Apple's brand of iCommodification and personal expression strongly conflicts with this idea of Macintosh as a product for popular, mainstream culture. Indeed, as with most luxury consumer goods, Macintosh's function as a commodity fetish is based on a paradox. Macintosh's codification of social relationships – its representation of the relationship between individual and collective – is entirely at odds with Apple's sales strategy. It requires consumers of Apple's products to transform their allegiance to specifically branded commodities into a tool used for personal identity formation and social demarcation. Yet, Apple did not wish to sell computers to a small number of unique consumers. While Apple's marketing campaign stressed individuality and uniqueness, its production lines were geared towards market penetration and mass production. Apple never intended Macintosh to be a niche product but instead aimed the device squarely at its main competitor, the IBM-PC clone. Accordingly, and paradoxically, Apple's success at marketing the Macintosh as the computer for individuals would ultimately result in its product turning into the status quo that it proposed to subvert. Macintosh's success at commodifying uniqueness, then, would ultimately hurt its credibility in this respect. In becoming a popular object, Macintosh would no longer be a convincing token for individuality.

Apple solved this issue by invoking the paradigms which characterise dystopian fiction. These paradigms allowed for a careful renegotiation of Apple's projected self-image of the individual freedom fighter towards a more lenient image where resistance to the existing state of affairs can occur in several different places at the same time and is organised by several people. These pockets of resistance, then, begin to establish a balance between Macintosh's iCommodification and Apple's desire to sell as many machines as possible. Apple's use of dystopian poetics, in other words, creates the commercial space into which Macintosh can emerge. As such, Apple's choice of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is neither solely engendered by its thematic overlap with Apple's plight in the computer marketplace, nor by a lucky coincidence of dates. Certainly, the relationship between "1984" and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* exists primarily in their portrayal of power structures and subversion. However, at the same time, "1984" activates certain dystopian spatial paradigms which ultimately allow Apple to position the Macintosh as a commodity fetish while simultaneously selling significant amounts of product.

### Dystopian Poetics

The effectiveness of "1984" can only be understood by first becoming aware of the discursive patterns that the commercial activates. The ad's textual engagement with Orwell's dystopian novel places "1984" within a specific narrative tradition that sets in motion certain expectations. It is these expectations that ultimately help determine how the viewer will 'decode' Apple's message concerning Macintosh.

While perhaps the most obvious anticipatory response in relation to dystopian narrative is the idea that dystopia is characterised by a 'bad' imaginary society, there are actually more powerful genre indicators at play. The standard body of canonical dystopian texts – "The Machine Stops" (1909), *We* (1921), *Brave New World* (1932), *Animal Farm* (1945), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), *The Matrix* (1999) – suggests, at the surface, that dystopia and its dialectical opposite, utopia, are both narrative forms concerned with imagined societies, where one respectively deals with 'bad' and the other with 'good' communes, cities and nations. While this may seem plausible initially, adjectives like 'good' and 'bad' are ultimately inadequate descriptors of these genres. That is not to say that "1984" does not represent Apple's competition in a negative light. Clearly, IBM is meant to be understood as an authoritarian and oppressive Big Brother and Apple as the 'good' alternative. The ad's lighting, sound and costumes all seem to work towards aligning "1984" with this typical conception of dystopian narrative. However, there are other, more powerful factors that serve to inform our notion of dystopia as well. And it is through these factors that "1984" successfully manages to position Macintosh as the commodification of uniqueness.

The idea that dystopia centres on 'bad' societies whereas utopia focuses on images of a 'good' or 'perfect' society, is problematized when looking at cross-genre analogies of seemingly prototypical cases. This point can be illustrated briefly by focusing on one of the seemingly most prominent dystopian indicators of Apple's advertisement, namely its treatment of sexuality. In "1984", dystopian reality is characterised by apparently sexless (if not gender-less) masses, whereas resistance to this society is represented as overtly sexual in nature. As such, "1984" appears to activate one of the staple characteristics of dystopian literature. Certainly, dystopia is strongly associated with rigid class systems in combination with state enforced, selective breeding programs that give way to the repression of sexuality. In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for instance, such interlinking of class with birth control emerges through Oceania's government and its policies. Per Big Brother's dictum, Oceania's society is organised in a triangular fashion with four classes filling the space between base and top: proles, outer party, inner party, and Big Brother himself. What is more, this socioeconomic model is enforced through the restriction of sexual relations and of sexuality itself. The novel professes that all relations, including intercourse, between proles and party members are a taboo. What is more, as evidenced by the existence of the "Junior Anti-Sex League," procreation for party members in general is strictly limited so as to ensure the continuation of the nation's social fabric: too many party members would disrupt the carefully constructed triangular social model.

Other classic examples of dystopian literature, such as Zamyatin's *We* and Huxley's *Brave New World*, imagine similar connections between socioeconomic class and authoritarian breeding schemes. Zamyatin's novel, for instance, uses "pink slips" to symbolise state enforced social status through control of sexual relations. And *Brave New World* is a well-known example of a society that outsources natural reproduction entirely to the state in order to ensure the proper numbers of Alphas, Betas and Gammas. Indeed, it is this same form of government-imposed restriction of

sexual relationships that emerges in Apple's "1984". The ad's anonymous masses embody the asexual and androgynous qualities that bespeak dystopian repression of sexuality. The baggy, grey clothing of the drones disguises sexuality, while the scant clothing and obvious sexuality of the female runner contrasts with the state's success in suppressing sex drive. Arguably, then, sexual repression and the enforcement of class difference seem strong indicators of dystopian societies. Surely, such incursion into the most private of experiences by government in order to limit the social mobility of individuals can only be understood as dystopian and 'bad.'

But to what extent can this be said to be an exclusively dystopian trademark? Certainly, while social control through authoritarian management of sexuality may seem like a typically dystopian device, the same theme is prevalent in what we understand to be utopian fiction. Consider, for example, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1915 novel *Herland*. Gilman's narrative imagines a 'perfect' female society hidden away deep in the rainforests of South-America. Three male characters inadvertently come across this female enclave and serve to expose both the virtues of matriarchal society and the demerits of patriarchal England. Interestingly, *Herland* depends entirely upon similar notions of social and sexual control as do dystopian novels like *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Gilman's purely female society relies on asexual reproduction for its survival. Within the narrative, this parthenogenesis allows for full state control of reproduction. As procreation no longer depends on fertilisation, mothers-to-be simply 'will' their pregnancies into being. In turn, *Herland* suggests, this allows the state to exact a high level of control over who is allowed to give birth and who is denied such a privilege, thus linking social status and economy with government-enforced breeding programs. More importantly, the novel also echoes the sinister discourse of *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in this respect, as the matriarchs invoke the tone and logic of social Darwinism on several occasions: "We have, of course, made it our first business to train out, to breed out, when possible, the lowest types" (Perkins Gilman 83).

Even the utopian genre's eponymous text, Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), is subject to the same social and biological manipulation at state level that seems to underlie the dystopian image that Apple puts forward in "1984". As Hythloday's visit to the island nation of Utopia illustrates, Utopian society depends to a great extent upon the state's influence in such private matters as choice of partner and family size.<sup>8</sup> What at first appears to be an emblematic characteristic of 'bad', dystopian societies is upon closer inspection revealed to be an essential part of 'perfect' utopian constructs as well.

This thematic overlap between utopian and dystopian literature, then, ultimately raises the question to what extent it is possible to claim that dystopias such as Apple's "1984" portray 'bad' societies while utopias depict 'perfection'? If, for example, authoritarian sexual selection and social Darwinism are the linchpins to both dystopian and utopian socioeconomic models, who is to say which is 'good' or 'bad'? Whose opinion is at stake here exactly, and how do we weigh the moral consequences of the text's propositions?<sup>9</sup>

These questions already arise from utopia's etymology. Its Greek lineage reveals its combination of 'ou' (not) and 'eu' (good) with 'topos' to denote the good place that does not exist. Conversely, its derivate, dystopia, merges 'topos' with 'dys' (bad or harsh) to signify the place that is bad. In other words, the etymologies of both utopia and dystopia reveal that these are not just 'good' or 'bad' constructions. Both constructs rely on the idea that they are 'outopos' or non-places as well. In this way, utopia and dystopia question from the beginning the extent to which it is possible to

ascertain the exact link between 'real' and 'fictional' spaces: as the author and construct do not inherit the same continuum, there is no reason to assume that the former intended the latter to be 'perfect' or 'bad', or for this connection to be accessible.<sup>10</sup>

More importantly, the reliance on the 'topos' morpheme by these utopian and dystopian constructs points towards the central significance of the notion of space. That is, besides notions of 'good' and 'bad', ideas that revolve around an authorial intent that remains inaccessible, utopia and dystopia are engendered by their spatial properties. As such, it seems logical to assume that the reading of a text as utopian or dystopian is to a certain extent determined by the narrative's invocation of specific spatial paradigms. Whether a text is utopian or dystopian, in other words, is not greatly determined by what the texts are about. Rather, it is their treatment of space that activates the patterns of expectation that we associate with these specific literary forms.

In the case of utopian literature, these expectations consist of a diegetic construct that is both spatially isolated and features a homogenous geography. Typical and prototypical utopias, such as the Garden of Eden, Plato's Republic, More's Utopia, Wells' modern Utopia, Huxley's Pala and LeGuin's Anarres, are all comprised of communes, cities, islands, and planets that position themselves outside of ordinary space. By emphasising distance, cartography, inaccessibility and detachment, these narratives begin to activate the emblematic representation of utopian space. More's *Utopia*, for instance, invests a significant amount of textual real-estate in conveying the isolation of its island setting. Rather than just have the island exist, More posits that Utopia was at first a peninsula, but that king Utopos, "[t]he moment he landed and got control over the country [. . .] immediately had a channel cut through the fifteen-mile isthmus connecting Utopia with the mainland, so that the sea could flow all round it" (More 50). In doing so, the text emphasises Utopia's island status and makes it an imperative condition: Utopia is utopian precisely because it was disconnected from the 'real' world by its founders and its creator.

Moreover, the text explains at some length where Utopia is located in order to emphasise the island's separateness. For Susan Bruce, such cartographic information actually signals More's desire to increase the credibility of his text as "an unknown nation in the middle of the Indian Ocean or off the coast of the Americas is self-evidently more credible than it would be to situate such a community in a village in the Alps" (More, Bacon and Neville ix-x). However Utopia's position off the coast of South America has little to do with raising its credibility. *Utopia* is steeped deeply in the lore of colonial exploration and, if anything, uses the travels of Amerigo Vespucci in order to grant itself the greatest artistic license possible. Freely mixing early modern travel narratives with classical Greek mythology, the text renders South America as the place where "nothing is more easy to be found than be barking *Scyllas*, ravening *Celaenos*, and *Laestrygons*, devourers of people, and suchlike great and incredible monsters" (More, Bacon and Neville 14).<sup>11</sup> As a place where there are monsters, then, the Americas are precisely not a setting that allows Utopia to acquire 'credibility' but rather allow the island to obtain the isolation from the known world that its existence requires. So, while the discovery of the Indies may have been the economic, technological and political inspiration for many early modern utopias, their location in the new world is not an argument for the fictions' credibility. Instead, their exotic locations underline the idea that utopias are isolated, impenetrable topoi.<sup>12</sup>

Besides their isolation, these utopian spaces are also defined by their internal consistency. Utopias present complete accord with their political systems. In turn, this social invariance can be seen reflected in the topography of utopian space. Standardised and homogeneous, the utopian topography is the featureless representation of ideological strictness. In More's *Utopia*, for example, it is made clear that, while the city of Amaurote serves as an example to Hythloday's lecture, Utopian cities are characterised principally by their similarities:

There are fifty-four splendid big towns on the island, all with the same language, laws, customs and institutions. They're all built on the same plan, and, as so far as the sites will allow, they all look exactly alike. The minimum distance between towns is twenty-four miles, and the maximum, no more than a day's walk. (More 50)

Utopia, in other words, through its strict regulation of social interaction, projects uniformity on its internal space. As modes of communication, social decorum and laws have all been standardised in Utopia, the precisely location of its cities has become irrelevant, rendering the island's topography as a homogenised space of uncritical, ideological conformity.

Dystopias copy the spatial properties of utopias, as well as subvert them at the same time. That is, dystopian narrative is characterised by the stipulation of a utopian-like space that is subsequently subverted and disrupted. As such, the spatial attribute with which dystopia is principally associated is the disruption of spatial totality. In contrast to utopia, dystopia is concerned with rendering a space of totality that is unstable and forcefully threatened with collapse, as Jacobs indicates:

Whether dystopia is an Orwellian place of fear and deprivation or a Huxleyan one of vapid contentment and plenitude, the individual who would choose or act "otherwise"[. . .] will be reprogrammed, exiled, or killed, so that the social fabric may maintain its impenetrability. (Jacobs 92)

Dystopia, then, is concerned with the threat of destruction to totalitarian spaces. That is, protagonists Winston Smith and Bernard Marx help to define *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Brave New World* respectively as dystopian novels by providing the penetrative force with which to threaten the texts' otherwise totalitarian spatial dimensions. Airstrip One and The World State are required to protect their ideological space against rebellion, and it is this act of protection of the uniformity of ideological space that is so characteristic for dystopian texts.

This may suggest that the way in which dystopia treats space is hardly different from utopian spatial poetics. After all, is Utopia not also characterised by an effort to protect certain ideologies through spatial isolation? Are its walls not seeking to defend against influences that could disrupt the uniform topography within? While, on the surface, dystopia's and utopia's spatial poetics may bear similarities, they are in fact inspired by entirely different sets of concerns. In the case of utopia, an imaginative space is created in which a social experiment can be performed unhindered. Utopia is required to safeguard its own isolation in order that its experiment may remain uncontaminated by outside influences and so protect the 'validity' of its 'results'. Even minor incursions such as Hythloday's visit to the island of Utopia are never imagined in terms of insurgency or disruption of the utopian space. Rather, in More's *Utopia* the outside visitor only serves to further underline the

island's geographical distinctiveness and coherency. As Hythloday relates his travels to More and Peter Giles, his status as a foreigner in Utopia does nothing to interfere with the utopian space but only enhances its uniformity further. Here, the travel narrative format helps to affirm Utopia's character as a distant, different, and homogenous space.

By contrast, dystopia is characterised by spatial properties that, while they initially project coherency and uniformity, are either disrupted or about to be disrupted. For example, Winston Smith and Bernard Marx interrupt the totalitarianism of Airstrip One and The World State by constructing sites of opposition. These spaces – the savage reservation in *Brave New World*, and the countryside, Smith's personal apartment and the room above the antiques shop in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – form the pockets of resistance that inform the texts' dystopian spatial poetics. It is in these spaces that the tension between the uniformity of totalitarianism on the one hand and the disruption of this uniformity on the other begins to emerge. As a result, dystopia is typified by a homogenous space that is similar to that of utopian constructs, but that, crucially, seems unable to contain the social experiment within. In the case of Orwell's novel, for example, Oceania initially constitutes a space that is as uniform as is, say, More's Utopia. Of course, the socioeconomic landscape of Orwell's nation is characterised by standardisation through birth control, the creation and maintenance of artificial social classes, as well as state controlled work, 'leisure' time and recreational activities. In this way, then, Oceania is no different from More's island Utopia. However, what marks *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a dystopian text is the failure of Airstrip One to maintain the uniformity of its "Ingsoc" ideology. In spatial terms, Airstrip One is denied the status of a utopian construct because it harbours within its borders certain sites of opposition that contaminate its social 'reality' and disrupt the uniformity of its topography.

These spaces of resistance in dystopian narratives are significant because they help to codify the relationship between the individual and society at large. It is in such places of opposition, for instance, that Winston Smith can be seen acting out his rebellion. In the alcove besides his television, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s protagonist can give voice to his individuality just outside of the panoptic gaze of the collective by writing in his diary. This space, then, helps to stage Smith's relationship with the collective by changing the social aspects of the act of writing. On the one hand, writing outside of this space is Smith's act of conformity. His job as a clerk at the Ministry of Truth who rewrites historical documents signals the character's submission to the ideological norm. On the other hand, inside such spaces of resistance, record keeping turns into an act of exclusion, and marks the extent to which Smith is able to separate himself from the collective. Smith's apartment, in other words, transposes the act of writing from an inclusive to an exclusive social operation, thus allowing dystopian resistance to dominant ideology to occur.

What is more, such subversive spaces in dystopian narratives generally give voice to the idea that the disruption of dominant ideology requires not a single individual but a *collection* of individuals. For example, in the case of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the room above Mr. Charrington's antique shop allows for Winston's romantic interest, Julia, to emerge as well. Conveniently furnished with a double bed, this seditious space already hints at a common theme in dystopian fiction, namely that the revolution is carried out by more than one dissenter. Both by providing the diegetic space for an additional subversive character and through its suggestion of revolutionary procreation – the bed plays host to Winston and Julia's main act of rebellion: intercourse – Mr. Charrington's room demonstrates how dystopian

narratives use social spaces for the disruption of totalitarianism. Indeed, it is this use of subversive spaces as a meeting place for society's rebellious elements that typifies canonical dystopian literature: prefiguring *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *We's* D-503 and I-330 have their illicit sexual encounters in an old abandoned house on the edge of the One State; Kuno and Vashti discuss escape from their subterranean world in the latter's quarters in E.M. Forster's "The Machine Stops"; Faber's house in *Fahrenheit 451* allows Guy Montag to make good his escape from the book-burning dystopian city to the book people who live in the surrounding forests. In this way, sites of resistance in dystopian literature are not just representative of the individual's struggle against conformity. Rather, such spaces help to suggest that resisting the status quo is a collaborative effort as well as a social practice.

All in all, then, dystopian poetics are characterised by the construction of new social spaces alongside the deconstruction of the main authoritarian space. The dystopian poetic involves the interjection of contentious spaces where disruptive elements can meet, plan and procreate.

### **Dystopian Poetics in "1984"**

Apple's "1984" commercial is heavily informed by dystopian narratives' reliance on spaces that simultaneously subvert and establish new social relationships. The spatial poetics laid down by texts such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* dictate that the dystopian landscape is characterised by an initial social isolation and uniformity that is subsequently disrupted by sites of opposition. It is in this establishment of new social spaces, especially, that "1984" finds most of its persuasive force as well as a solution to the paradox that informs iCommodification.

Apple's "1984" resolves the inconsistencies behind its commodification of uniqueness by borrowing the spatial organisation of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It starts by constructing a site of ideological conformity. The multitudes marching in unison, uniform clothing styles, riot police, as well as the pontificating head convey a strong sense of totalitarianism and forced submission to dominant belief. Moreover, this totalitarianism is signified spatially as well. As with prototypical dystopian texts, "1984" begins by constructing an isolated site of ideological uniformity and topography, and subsequently subverts and disrupts this space. In terms of isolation, the ad spends considerable screen time in rendering the limits of its diegesis in order to demonstrate its seclusion from normal space. The first shot, in fact, shows nothing but wall, indicating that the diegetic space should be seen as walled-off from normal space. This sense of isolation grows in later shots where the *mise-en-scène* is also dominated by barriers. Indeed, the commercial consistently and carefully frames the tight-spaced enclosures of the "garden of pure ideology" in order to give the impression of a site of incarceration. For instance, the low camera position, especially in the shots of the corridors, accentuates the narrowness of these inner spaces to further accentuate the impression of imprisonment. The main auditorium, as well, is not so much spacious as it feels confining with its high walls and pillars restricting the viewer's gaze. Here especially, the legacy of director Ridley Scott's filmic interpretation of dystopian spaces may be easily identified. Specifically, the low camera position and obstruction of line of sight are devices that are characteristic of Scott's visual representation in *Alien* and *Bladerunner*. In this way, Scott's experience in translating dystopia to the screen imbeds "1984" in typical dystopian filmic spaces of isolation. Dominated by thick, concrete walls, the frame of "1984" invokes the tradition of dystopian fiction to imagine isolated diegetic spaces in order to contain its dominant ideology.

"1984" also conforms to the dystopian tradition in its uniformity. Initially, the isolated diegetic space is shown to be homogenous and featureless. It consists of a bland palette of walls, drones and omnipresent technological bits to create a space that is of a more or less uniform topography. The *mise-en-scène* of "1984" further underlines this dystopian uniformity through use of colour. It consistently uses low-contrast, drab shades of grey and blue that work to make everything in the frame appear similar. The use of sound also sets up the diegetic space of "1984" as a typical dystopian construct. The sound of marching as well as the ubiquitous background bleeps of technology – again a direct descendant of Scott's work on *Alien* and *Bladerunner* – make a constant white noise that echoes the uniformity seen on the screen.

This isolated and uniform space that "1984" initially sets up is subverted by the character that Apple's customers are to identify with: the female runner. She subverts the dystopian space both in terms of uniformity and isolation. In the case of the former, the first four shots of the runner show how she disrupts the homogeneity of the corridors, hallways and auditorium. Her gender, bright clothing, blonde hair, athletic ability and sexual appeal all act to subvert the uniformity of both the screen space and of the diegetic space. The briefness of these shots, their apparent random distribution, and the lack of fade-in or overlay transitions ensure that the sequences showing the female runner have a maximum disruptive effect in the camera's space. As if to transmit a subliminal message, the *mise-en-scène* – suddenly, briefly – contains content that is oppositional to its otherwise uniformly a-sexual, rigid-limbed, grey and blue primary subject. Moreover, the runner disrupts the uniformity of the diegetic space as well. Leaving in her wake sprinting riot police, she manages to interrupt the orderly progression towards the auditorium and introduces chaos to a disciplined system.

The final three shots of the runner deal with disrupting the isolation of the ad's dystopian space. Here we can see the runner come to a halt, rotate and swing her hammer. These actions lead to the primary subversive act in "1984": the breaking of the screen in the auditorium and the destruction of the isolation of the diegesis. That is, not only does the runner's hammer stop the transmission of the pontificating head, it also fractures dystopia's barrier in order to subvert the ideological space. The ad signifies the screen's function as dystopia's barrier primarily through the use of colour. The breaking of the screen is accompanied by a bright explosion of light that not only bathes the awe-struck drones but drowns out the previously bleak and dark dystopian space as well. Air forcefully flows into the auditorium and moves down the ranks of attendants in order to expose them to what lies beyond the talking head and barriers of the system. What lies on the other side of the screen is then revealed by the voiceover and, perhaps more importantly, the final shot of the commercial. After dystopia's barriers have been removed the screen fades to black and then displays the only substantial use of colour: a bright Apple logo, rainbow-coloured, sits at the center of the frame.<sup>13</sup> This colour intrusion, then, marks the final destruction of the dystopian space as its most pervasive filmic representation can be seen subverted. The breaking of the auditorium's screen, in short, breaks the quarantine of dystopia and allows the outside world to usurp its ideological space.

The sales proposition of "1984" derives primarily from the ad's subversion of dystopian space. Obviously, the Super Bowl audience was meant to identify with the runner and see themselves as individualistic rebels in an IBM-dominated world. Indeed, at the surface, this is the sales message of Apple's advertisement. However, "1984"'s use of spatial paradigms allows it to carefully negotiate the tension between

positioning Macintosh as a product for 'rebels' while at the same time popularising microcomputers in the mainstream market. Apple is able to solve this paradox which informs its iCommodification by relying on the ability of dystopian resistance to suggest the emergence of new social spaces. As may be seen in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, dystopian rebels seldom fight alone but find spaces where rebellion can be staged collectively. Concurrently, in "1984" the shock of the drones as the bright light and air hits their faces suggests their – and the consumer's – possible conversion and emergence out of dystopia beyond the wall of the screen, together. So, while the runner in "1984" acts purely as an individual, dystopian poetics suggest that this action does not preclude a form of collective rebellion. In fact, the commercial suggests that the viewer can join this emblem of fitness, strength and sexuality in the space she just opened up, and not be any less of a rebel for it. In this way, Apple's "1984" is able to sell Macintosh as a high-priced luxury piece of electronics intended for those who want to stand out of the pack, while at the same time building a large, mainstream base of like-minded and devoted Apple users.

It is interesting to note that, as with the resistance in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the suggestion of new social spaces in "1984" functions predominantly as a hegemonic device. Just as the antiques shop turns out to be part of Big Brother's set of controls, so is the space of resistance offered by "1984" complicit to Apple's intent to dominate the computer marketplace. In this sense, Apple's customers are like Winston and Julia in that they are presented with the verisimilitude of resistance in order to 'trick' them into accepting dominant ideology. Nevertheless, there is a strong sense that the runner in "1984" opens up a new space of collective rebellion against IBM's status quo, even if it is at a basic level understood to be motivated primarily by Apple's commercial interests and its desire to dominate.

Apple's advertisement, in other words, successfully turns dystopia into the topos from which Macintosh can be understood by consumers. As a 'marketplace,' dystopia pertains to precisely the right mix of social relationships that reflects Apple's product placement with the Mac. On the one hand, dystopia stands for resistance and uniqueness, marking Macintosh as an emblematic form of iCommodification. On the other hand, dystopia is characterised by spatial poetics that suggest the emergence of new social collectives, and is steeped in mainstream, popular culture. This combination of individual appeal and mainstream conformity allows Apple to sell Macintosh as a commodity which expresses individuality while still building a substantial customer base in mainstream culture. Dystopia, in short, is the site where Apple is able to market Macintosh as well as make available microcomputers in popular culture.

Apple's decision to try and make dystopia the site of the popularisation of the microcomputer is all the more remarkable because of the aura of fear that still surrounded the technology in 1984. Strongly associated with amateur enthusiast culture, computers appeared as arcane machinery to a mainstream audience. Computers' interfaces and functions resembled no pre-existing paradigms and as such it was difficult for audiences to grasp why they needed these machines, what they were buying, and how computers could be made to support one's activities. As mysterious and highly technical devices, computers therefore inspired fear of use in potential new users. Moreover, popular culture had done an effective job of reinforcing Luddite fears and had managed to demonise the technology. Most notably, Arthur C. Clarke's and Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) made concrete consumers' distrust of computers with the specter of HAL. Aloof and malicious, HAL embodied the fear that computer technology could not be controlled

and that the 'magic' of Integrated Circuits might give rise to unintended and entirely unwanted results. Certainly, the combination of HAL's uncanny, unemotional voice and its murderous plots weighed so heavily on the popular imagination that, as Friedman points out, "the shadow of HAL hovered over early PC advertising" (106). But HAL was not the only fictional creation that was making computers monstrous. *Alien's* Mother, for example, also reified consumers' fears of computing devices. The main computer of the spaceship *Nostromo*, Mother, in spite of its name, showed anything but maternal compassion for the suffering of its crew. Coldly informing the human contingent that their chances of survival did not compute, Mother shaped the popular imagination with the image of computers as apathetic to and incompatible with the human condition.

As such, computer manufacturers faced similar issues as producers of electrical equipment and services did in the late nineteenth century. As Graeme Gooday and David Nye argue, electricity faced an uphill battle in the late Victorian era as consumers struggled to understand both what they were supposed to buy and what dangers it involved.<sup>14</sup> As opposed to coal-gas, whose quantities could be measured and whose dangers were known, electricity's matter was difficult to fathom and, therefore, perceived as dangerous by the general public. Of course, as Gooday points out, this was an image of electricity that suppliers of coal-gas were only too happy to sustain ("The Expert Consumer Relationship" 247-53). For manufacturers of electricity, the solution to improving electricity's public image lay in finding sites where its virtues could be discussed with authority and enter the public mind. As the home was mostly dominated by gas, these sites were frequently construed as public spaces. The 1893 World Fair in Chicago, for example, served to extol electricity's wonders and dispel the public's fears. It provided manufacturers of electrical equipment with a space where they could establish a discourse of authority and back up their claims with extravagant displays of power.

As with electricity, computer manufacturers also had trouble making a case for themselves as their services were ethereal and highly suggestive of mystery and danger. As can be gauged by Apple's "1984" commercial, the solution here also lay in finding the right space from which to begin to debunk the public's fear. This space, as it turned out, was dystopia.

Apple's success at using dystopia for this purpose stands in stark contrast to its earlier attempts. In trying to dispel fears about computers, Apple had resorted to kitchens, teenage-son's bedrooms and office spaces, presumably under the assumption that these were typically considered to be safe havens and might therefore assuage the consumer's doubts.<sup>15</sup> However, as these sites were already pervaded with discourses of other forms of technology, the invasion of the microcomputer into these scenes seemed to, if anything, confirm the idea that it had no place there to begin with and might introduce new dangers or undesirable elements. Apple's use of 'conventional' spaces, in short, seemed to be problematic for the same reason that early manufacturers of electrical equipment had such trouble finding their way into the home: the authoritative presence of other discourses resisted the newcomer and fuelled questions about usefulness and potential dangers.

Again, Apple's successful appropriation of dystopia and its conversion into the locus of the popularisation and acceptance of microcomputers by mainstream culture comes down to dystopia's ability to encode the correct social relationships. Apple's earlier attempts to insert the microcomputer into mainstream culture were foiled by the stagnant discourses of the home with their powerfully established social relationships. So, while the kitchen may have appeared as an obvious site for

mainstream intervention, its pre-existing social significance resisted the inclusion of this new element. It immediately raised numerous important questions. Why would I want a computer in my kitchen, especially if this also involves moving my television there to use as a monitor?<sup>16</sup> Does moving the television entail shifting the centre of family life from the living room to the kitchen? Who is to use the computer? If dad uses the computer, does this make the kitchen a primarily male-oriented space and what does that do to the distribution of gender throughout the house? Apple's attempt to insert the computer in this domestic space, in short, was rife with contentious discourse on the social construction of space. Dystopia, however, was a space that came with an entirely different set of pre-existing social relationships that were far more suited for Apple's purposes. Especially from the perspective of the high-priced, luxury commodity Macintosh, dystopia could speak authoritatively about the social relationships that Macintosh was attempting to encode. Both subversive and popular, dystopia proved the ideal site from which Macintosh could sell in large quantities while retaining its appeal as a rebel's machine, wherever it might be placed in the house or office.

### **The Legacy of "1984"**

The success of "1984" and its invocation of dystopian discursive strategies has continued to inspire most of Apple's marketing strategies. Especially in the realm of desktop computing, Apple has persisted in making use of dystopian and utopian imagery for its brand of iCommodities and portrayed itself as the underdog and creative alternative.<sup>17</sup> Following "1984", Apple continued in a similar vein, for example, with its "Think Different" campaign (1997). Approximately coinciding with the introduction of the new iMac – the replacement of the Macintosh brand – the "Think Different" campaign consisted of a montage of film fragments featuring such individuals as Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lennon, and a voice over that detailed their rebellious nature:

Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.

As indicated by its ungrammatical title, the "Think Different" advertisement was meant to inspire the viewer to identify with the defiant minority. Naturally, Apple 'sided' with this minority and presented its wares as a possibility to buy into creativity and uniqueness. As with "1984", the advertisement balances precariously between this surface message of rebellion and its real intent of selling as many computers as possible. And while less overt than in "1984", it is again the invocation of dystopian and utopian poetics that allows for this sleight of hand to occur.

Although "Think Different" does not overtly reference dystopian literature, it manages to activate the same paradigms of inclusion and exclusion that helped to sell Macintosh as an iCommodity. As with "1984", it is the simultaneous suggestion of individual rebellion and the creation of new communities that turn this commercial into such an effective sales argument. Its sequence of portraits of famous, world-

changing individuals intimates a desire to stand out, and to "have no respect for the status quo" ("Think Different"). At the same time, this sequence of portraits, by its very nature, conveys a sense of inclusion as well. That is, as a series, it implies that while being a misfit, rebel or troublemaker will make your life more meaningful in the long run, it does not exclude the possibility of fitting into a community. Rather, it prefigures social recognition and even fame. The advertisement's consistent use of black-and-white images, and its substitution of diegetic sound with a single, extradiegetic soundtrack, generate a uniform cinematic space that holds together all of the rebels. Outlined by the same visual and auditory cues, John Lennon, Maria Callas and Jim Henson are in this way turned into a community of individuals who can be adored and idolised. This discursive strategy, then, generates a sense of inclusion in the viewer and establishes a similar sense of rapport as did "1984": buying an iMac entails standing out as an individual as well as belonging to a larger social context of rebels and world-changers. The commercial's denouement is especially effective in conveying this message. It shows the face of an unknown child as the last in its series of portraits. The image suggests that the viewer too, like the anonymous child, will be able to belong to this ever-expanding series of successful world changers and rebels. In this way, "Think Different" proposes to the viewer that Apple's products are the key to expressing individuality as well as offering membership to an exclusive community. It is this message, borrowed from the poetics of dystopian narrative that continues to inform Apple's marketing strategies. It allows Apple to sell its electronics as commodities that serve to express individuality while at the same time maximising revenue and profit.

Of late, this delicate balancing act between exclusivity and inclusivity has become more difficult for Apple to maintain. Although the company's marketing strategy has remained effective until now, its recent financial success begins to question the extent to which dystopian poetics will be able to continue to bridge the gap between Apple's marketing message and its marketing goals. Certainly, while Apple's desire to make as many consumers as possible part of its "minority" has always constituted a paradox, it has up to this point remained somewhat safeguarded by its minority market share. As Apple remained the underdog in comparison with Microsoft and IBM PC clones, its particular brand of commodity fetishism, while dependent on the subtle use of dystopian poetics, always had a ring of justification to it: even if Apple sold and made millions, Microsoft, HP and Dell sold more. So, while Apple was required to enlist narrative strategies in order to push its products, macroeconomics were at least not flatly contradicting its sales pitch.

By 2010, however, Apple had become the most valuable technology company on Wall Street, its \$222.12 billion value exceeding Microsoft's value of \$219.18 billion for the first time.<sup>18</sup> While largely based on speculation about its future value rather than its 'real' value, Apple's place in the stock market's limelight does reflect the company's recent financial successes and its subsequent ascension to the forefront of the technology industry. Rather than mere hype, Apple's high stock price is justified to a large extent by its strong earnings (\$24.67 billion revenue and \$5.99 billion profit, second fiscal quarter 2011) and very healthy profit margins (41.4 percent gross profit margin, second fiscal quarter 2011).<sup>19</sup> And while Apple may see its strong financial performance as vindication of products and its dare-to-be-different message, it does present the company with a new challenge. In manoeuvring itself into a position of authority, Apple has effectively destroyed any possibility of appealing to consumers' unconscious knowledge of dystopian poetics and their desire

to express their ‘individuality’ through brand loyalty. Buying an Apple, in short, is becoming mainstream.

It is interesting to see that Apple’s immediate reaction to this increase in financial success has resulted in conflicting messages. That is, while the company remains heavily invested in iCommodification through dystopian poetics, it simultaneously has begun to broadcast a utopian discourse that coincides with its new, dominant market position. In terms of spatial representation, certainly, Apple increasingly codifies its dominance through spaces that are isolated and uniform. For example, on the heels of its successful iMac line of products, Apple stopped selling its product through retailers, opting instead to open up Apple Stores. (See Fig. 5) These stores, and especially their internal decoration, represent an effort to present consumers with a universal outlet with a homogenous look and feel that matches Apple’s electronics. All such stores feature a mix of woods, white plastics and glass, and store employees wear the same black outfit. The uniformity thus created by Apple’s retail outlets creates a consumer space that mimics the characteristics of the islands, cities and republics from canonical utopian literature. Moreover, even Apple’s virtual storefronts now resemble such utopian spatial poetics. For example, the App Store for Apple’s line of iOS devices (i.e. iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch) is standardised through Apple guidelines and censorship in order to supply the consumer with a consistent shopping experience. So, while the store is accessible for any software developer, it remains exclusive to Apple products and looking standardised at all times. As with Apple’s brick-and-mortar stores, then, the App Store suggests that the company is moving towards presenting its products in utopian commercial spaces. These utopian poetics, however, contradict the dystopian spatial poetics that still inform most of Apple’s advertisements (as in for example the “Mac vs. PC” series).



**Fig. 5.**  
“Apple Store Fifth Avenue.”

The question then remains how Apple will deal with this discursive conflict. On the one hand, we can expect Apple to continue to build on its dominant market position and increasingly employ utopian discourse. It seems logical to assume that Apple will attempt to expand its virtual stores to all of its devices and make the App Store available to its desktop lines of computers as well. In the process, it will continue to increase the uniformity and exclusivity of the Apple shopping experience, thus projecting utopian spatial properties, or at least for a long as the competition will not cry ‘monopoly’. On the other hand, Apple will at some point have to deal with its marketing campaigns and their reliance on dystopian discourse. If the company continues to grow its dystopian message will progressively come into conflict with Apple’s solidifying position in the technology market as well as its iCommodity brand. A possible solution to these discursive contradictions would be for Apple to embrace utopian discourse in its marketing. The play seems obvious: the apple, after all, is a symbol for proto-utopia. In fact, Apple used this reference in its advertisement once before. In 1980, the company issued an advertisement for the Apple II in the form of a contest. (See Fig. 6) The ad featured Adam in front of the Tree of Knowledge, hiding his nudity behind Apple’s computer and prompted the consumer to come up with an even more creative use for the machine. But Apple’s use of utopian poetics need not be so crude. If it could invoke utopian spatial discourse in marketing and advertising its computing commodities, Apple would be well underway in mobilising their customers’ narrative expectations in order to continue its growth in the electronics industry.



**We're looking for the most original use of an Apple since Adam.**

What in the name of Adam do people do with Apple Computers? You tell us. In a thousand words or less. If your story is original and intriguing enough, you could win a one-week all-expense paid trip for two to Hawaii. Which is the closest we could come to paradise.

**Win fabulous prizes for creative writing.**

To enter, drop by your nearest Apple dealer and pick up an entry blank. Fill it out. Then write an article, in 1000 words or less, describing the unusual or interesting use you've found for your Apple. A jury of independent judges will cast the deciding vote for the grand prize: a week for two, airfare included, in Hawaii. The judges will also choose 16 additional winners, two each from eight categories:

graphics/music, entertainment, home, business, education, scientific, professional, and industrial. And each winner will choose from a long list of longed-after Apple peripherals—from Apple Disk II's to Graphics Tablets to printers. Or you can take a \$250 credit towards the purchase of any Apple product. The contest ends March 31, 1980. All winners will be notified by May 15. Entry forms are available at your participating Apple dealer. Call 800-538-9696, (800-662-9238 in California), for the one nearest you. Mail the entry blank, your article and any photos to: Apple Computer, "What in the name of Adam" contest, 10260 Bandley Drive, Cupertino, CA 95014. And may the juiciest application win.

Reader Service Number 8

apple computer

**Fig. 6.**

"Apple Computer's Take on Adam and Eve."

[An early example of utopian references in Apple's marketing strategy.]

## Notes

1. At present, Apple is registered simply as Apple, Inc. The company dropped "Computer" from its name in 2007 to reflect their increasing portfolio of non-computer, consumer electronics and services (i.e. iPod, iTunes, iPhone and iPad).

2. More recently, Apple made 'the switch' from the PowerPC architecture to X86 for all of its mini, desktop and portable computers. As such, since late 2005, there is no longer anything in terms of functional hardware that distinguishes an Apple from an IBM-PC clone.

3. See for example "Which iPod Are You?"

4. This is not to say that there was no status quo in the computer marketplace itself. Indeed, in 1984 the computer market was dominated by enthusiasts and business users who were primarily using IBM-PC clones and MS-DOS. However, this computing 'mainstream' majority could not be said to be part of mainstream popular culture.

5. Before they made their first computer, founders of Apple Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak were busy making and selling the infamous 'Blue Box'. Following on from the discovery that a free whistle inside Captain Crunch cereal boxes produced exactly the same tone that public payphones made when coins were inserted, this box of electronics could be used to fool telephone exchanges into accepting phone calls without payment. The Blue Box was a cult object among students and electrical engineers in 1970s California and was used especially to make long-distance phone calls. While Jobs and Wozniak did not invent the Blue Box, it was their first business adventure together. See: Moritz, *The Little Kingdom* 70-85.

6. See Friedman 109-10.

7. See Friedman 109.

8. Consider for example the episode where Hythloday relates the social circumstances of the island at the beginning of book two. According to his narrative, Utopians are forced to live and work in a highly organised, patriarchal social structure where the state ultimately determines where one lives, works, and who is family. See More, *Utopia* 59-66.

9. The standard response in utopian and dystopian studies to this conundrum is to posit ever more narrative genres in an attempt to capture more precisely the exact relationship between the author's intention and the text. Typically Lyman Tower Sargent's extensive categorisation of utopian discourse is used for interpretation. See Sargent, "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited."

10. In the face of post-structuralist criticism this may seem a superfluous statement. However, utopian and dystopian discourses continue to inspire even contemporary scholarship to look for authorial intent. Presumably, this search is inspired by the strong allegorical and political content of such texts.

11. I quote here from the Oxford collection of Early Modern utopias rather than the Penguin Classics edition I referred to earlier as it is one of the few translations that retains the collection of monsters of the original Latin. While I, overall, prefer Paul Turner's translation, his version of More's *Utopia* exchanges the specific mythical creatures of the original for "horrible creatures who pray on human beings, snatch away their food, or devour whole populations" (19). This abridged translation seems unfortunate in light of *Utopia*'s setting: More's engagement with Greek mythology is important in establishing the relationship between *Utopia* and the 'real world'.

12. From this perspective, it seems no accident that utopian discourse frequently takes the form of a travel narrative. Travel, as Foucault argues in relation to heterotopias, is one of the main actions responsible for the formation of places outside of the ordinary socioeconomic space. From Foucault’s analysis of cultural ‘counter-sites’ it follows that travel, whether by sea-ship or spaceship, is often a prerequisite of utopian constructs. See “Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias.”

13. Before the Apple logo the colour red can also be seen in the runner’s shorts.

14. See Gooday, and Nye.

15. Other manufacturers used a combination of settings and characters to try and exorcise HAL. IBM, for example, had an extensive run of commercials featuring Charlie Chaplin in office spaces. See Friedman, 105-07.

16. Because computers displayed relatively low resolutions they often used televisions as their primary monitor. The Apple II ad indeed suggests that users move their televisions into the kitchen. See Fig. 2.

17. The only real disruption in this strategy coincides with Steve Jobs absence from Apple. In 1985, Jobs left Apple as a result of a falling out with then-CEO John Sculley. Subsequently, Apple’s marketing strategy returned largely to a focus on use and exchange value until Steve Jobs was reinstated as CEO in 1997.

18. See “Apple Passes Microsoft as No.1 in Tech.”

19. See “Apple Reports Second Quarter Results.”

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