“The Big Apple”:
The Narrative Potential of Utopianism in Apple Inc. Advertisements

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Abstract

This thesis examines the presence of a utopian discourse in a selection of Apple Inc. televised advertisements released from 1983 until 2017. Specifically, it analyzes in which ways these messages of utopianism can be placed in a tech-utopian discourse. Furthermore, it explores how the representation of new media in society has changed over the course of decades, and what marketing strategies ground the commercials in question. The case studies and source material included in this research are subdivided according to three strategies Apple Inc. put to practice in this aforementioned period: a strategy underlining the differences between Apple Inc. and its rivals, a strategy stressing the creative, musical potential of the brand, and the most recent strategy focusing on the future possibilities of the brand. Grounded in theories of media studies by Marshall McLuhan, Raymond Williams, and J.W.T. Mitchell, theories of utopianism by Lyman Tower Sargent and Fred Turner, and theories of pop culture and American Studies by Michael Bull and Jean Baudrillard, amongst others, the analysis showed that Apple Inc.’s marketing paradigm is shifting from the reform potential of humans to that of the media machine.

Key words:
Apple Inc., utopianism, technological imaginary, popular culture, remediation, advertisements, marketing, McLuhan, determinism, social constructivism, Steve Jobs, Williams.
For my brother, who hates Apple.
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Introduction

Since its founding in 1976, Apple Inc. has grown from a niche-brand computer manufacturer into one of the largest global players in the tech-industry. The Californian company, which has held the top spot in the renowned ‘Most Innovative Companies’ survey by the Boston Consulting Group since 2005, is thereby one of the most well-known American companies in the world. In 2016, the Boston Consulting Group even declared Apple Inc. to be America’s favorite brand1 – thereby topping Coca-Cola, Samsung and Netflix (Wenk-Bodenmiller). This makes Apple Inc. currently one of the most valuable companies in the world (Isaacson 1).

Unsurprisingly, every step the company takes is closely documented and analyzed by a large group of tech-journalists and a highly-devoted fan base: 9to5Mac.com, CultofMac.com and Macworld.com are only few of the many websites fully dedicated to the Apple brand. Even within the Netherlands itself a small group of (online) tech magazines such as MacFan, OneMoreThing.nl and iCulture.nl report solely on the very brand. This latter preoccupation with the comings and goings of Apple Inc. has dramatically increased over the decades.

This is not surprising: the story behind the founding of the company alone is – to say the least – remarkable. The earliest history of Apple Inc. leads back to the late 1960s, with the lives of the Californian students Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak in particular. In the hours after college, the two students manufactured microcomputers by hand in the garage of Jobs’s parents in Los Altos. With Wozniak being the self-educated talented engineer, Jobs was primarily focused on selling their self-made devices. Their products were relatively successful, leading to the founding of Apple Computers in 1976. One year after the company

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1 These findings are consistent with the findings of a survey by Goldman Sachs in May 2012. According to this research, 88 percent of iOS users who own Apple tablets or smart devices would stick with the same brand for their next device (Elmer-Dewitt in Johnson et al. 418). On top of that, 21 percent of them would purchase Apple devices no matter the price of the products (Elmer-Dewitt in Johnson et al. 418).
was founded, the two younglings presented their Apple II to the world, followed by the Apple III in 1980. Only few years later, the two successfully distanced their startup from the American International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) and quickly managed to build Apple Inc. into a $32 billion corporation (Finkle & Mallin 31).

Many of Apple Inc.’s products are generally regarded as revolutionary (Johnson et al.), as the brand managed to remediate\(^2\) a large amount of tech products, such as the computer, the mp3 player, and the tablet. In other words, Apple Inc.’s iPod, iPhone, and iPad “all took the world by storm and changed the way people interacted with technology” (Smith). Walter Isaacson, who wrote the famous best-selling biography *Steve Jobs*, even argues that Apple Inc., especially under the influence of Jobs as CEO, helped transforming seven different industries: personal computing, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, retail stores, and digital publishing (1). Besides, the coming of the Apple Macintosh – which was the first affordable computer to offer a graphical user interface, replacing a text-based operating system with an intuitive layout of folders and icons – generated a new era in the tech-industry. It is for this reason that researchers Ikujiro Nonala and Martin Kenney note that the Macintosh should be conceived of as “the bicycle of personal computers” (Nonala & Kenney 79).

\(^2\) Following the definition as given by Martin Lister et al., ‘remediation’ is the idea that “new media, in their novel period, always ‘remediate’; that is, incorporate or adapt previously existing media” (Lister et al. 428). Early cinema was based on existing theatrical conventions, and the World Wide Web, for instance, remediated the magazine (Lister et al. 428). The definition given by Lister et al. thereby follows Marshall McLuhan, who coined the term in 1964. Remediation as a phenomenon was further developed by Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, who discussed the term in their famous work *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999).
1.1. Research on Apple Inc.

As Apple Inc.’s fan base and brand cult grew stronger and stronger over the course of decades, so did the academic interest in the brand (Belk & Tumbat). Some researchers fully devoted their work to the idea that Apple Inc. equals a religion (Miller; Robinson). Researcher Pui-Yan Lam, for instance, researched Macintosh devotion as an implicit religion – a devotion that is based on the sacralization of the bond between people and computers. His main argument is that Mac devotees used the Macintosh as a “reflective medium” to discover meanings in the midst of changing computer technologies (Lam 243).

His findings correspond with those of Brett Robinson in his book *Appletopia: Media Technology and the Religious Imagination of Steve Jobs*, in which the writer explores how Apple Inc. became an icon of technology, and how the religious imagination of Steve Jobs was embodied in Apple Inc.’s campaigning. Robinson, however, also argues that Jobs and Apple Inc. “provide an allegory for reading religion in the information age” (105) and that the Californian brand, like other culturally key-technologies (such as the cathedral and the railroad telegraph), is presented as a “vehicle of transcendence” (105).

Because of Apple Inc.’s global popularity and strong fan base, many researchers have devoted literature to the secret behind the successfulness of the brand. Adam Lashinsky, for instance, argues that Apple Inc.’s extreme devotion to secrecy is one of the main secrets behind its enormous successes. He thereby jokingly refers to a t-shirt for sale in the public company store at the Infinite Loop Building\(^3\), which reads: ‘I Visited the Apple Campus, But That’s All I Am Allowed to Say’ (32). Atul Gupta and Joe Prinzinger, on the other hand, believe one of the reasons why the company is so successful is because Apple Inc.’s conservative business model and unconventional management strategies have changed little since the company’s emergence (Gupta & Prinzinger).

\(^3\) The Infinite Loop Building has been Apple Inc.’s main campus, corporate headquarters, lab space and office center since 1993.
Many researchers especially stress the role of Jobs in the development of Apple Inc.’s management strategies (Nickerson & Rarick in Isaacson 2011). Walter Isaacson, Jobs’s biographer and close acquaintance, argues that Jobs’s success primarily lied in the fact that his personality was integral to his way of doing business: “He acted as if the normal rules didn’t apply to him, and the passion, intensity, and extreme emotionalism he brought to everyday life were things he also poured into the products he made” (Isaacson 2012: 94). Others attest Jobs’s successful way of leadership mostly to his effective rhetorical skills and ability to persuade (Gallo, 2015; Harvey, 2001: 254).

1.1.2. Apple Inc.’s advertising

Apple Inc.’s contemporary marketing techniques are generally regarded as very successful. Unsurprisingly, the company invests large sums of money into its advertising, as could be found in Apple Inc.’s annual report of 2015: “The Company believes ongoing investment in research and development (“R&D”), marketing and advertising is critical to the development and sale of innovative products and technologies” (Apple Inc. 2015). As could also be found in the latter report, Apple Inc. increased its advertising spend by 50% to $1.8 billion in 2015 (Spanier). The 2015 ad expenses thereby topped both the $1.2 billion in the year 2014 and the $1.1 billion investment in the 12 months before that (Spanier). Unfortunately, Apple Inc. has unexpectedly stopped disclosing how much it spends on advertising for no given reason (O’Reilly). Data about the annual spending on advertisements in the years 2016 and 2017 are therefore unavailable.

Content-wise, Apple Inc.’s advertisements have proven to be successful in the past. According to researcher Rob Enderle this success is the result of Apple Inc. “simply seeming

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4 Apple’s ad spend has thereby tripled since 2010. In this year, Apple invested $691 million in advertising, which was raised to $933 million in 2011 and $1 billion in 2012 (Spanier).
to understand what will get people excited about its products, and then executing on that vision” (Enderle). Other scholars argue that the power of Apple Inc.’s advertisements lies in the fact that, instead of talking about product features or updated technologies, the company shows they care about their consumers’ lifestyles: “They advertise their products to offer the better life to customers and make the trend of aesthetics and lifestyle appeal important. All of Apple Inc.’s products were launched with these attributes and outstanding functionality” (Johnson et al. 13). What makes Apple Inc. different from other companies that similarly produce electronic devices, is that it launches new products and advertisements in a tempo that is more similar to “fast moving consumer goods companies with new products every six months or at least once a year” (Johnson et al. 16). It is exactly this approach what makes the company’s advertising successful: “[releasing new products (bi-)annually] makes people excited about Apple Inc.’s products and keeps the Californian company a leader in the technology industry (Johnson et al. 13).

It is my intention to add another different answer to the question why Apple Inc.’s advertisements have proven to be so successful and revolutionary in the past. In order to grasp the successfulness of Apple Inc.’s marketing strategies, I intend to research the impact of the utopian discourse in the company’s television commercials.

In-depth research on the content of Apple Inc. commercials, however, is not new: some researchers have looked into a selection of advertisements, although mostly as part of a general analysis of the company. Johnson et al., for instance, devoted the article ‘The Innovative Success that is Apple Inc.’ to the overall influence of the company and the creativeness that has made it thus successful. Part of their article is concerned with marketing and branding strategies, among which the televised and printed advertisements. However, an in-depth, qualitative analysis of the advertisements in question is missing.
Ronald Shields, on the other hand, attempted to theorize the 1997 award-winning “Think Different” campaign as an example of Foucault’s “mirrored heterotopian site” (202). In his article, the scholar does a close reading of the aforementioned campaign, arguing that, by evoking and exploiting cultural myths associated with the “Garden of Eden” (202) and reinscribing Apple Inc.’s reputation as a brand suited for young professionals, the campaign “illustrates media advertising’s proclivity to manipulate fin de siècle preoccupations with memory, fame, and cultural status” (202).

Shields thereby carried out a much closer analysis than many other researchers have done so far. Other researchers often merely look at very small selections of advertisements and the audiovisual discourses that are brought forward with them. These researchers, including Shields, primarily focus on the most well-known Apple Inc. commercials. Besides this, with the exception of Thijs van den Berg – who looked specifically into the opposition between a utopian and dystopian discourse in the famous “1984” commercial – no research has yet looked into the workings of utopianism in a larger selection of Apple Inc. advertisements. However, due to word limitations and to limit the scope of this thesis, my research will merely focus on a selection of Apple Inc.’s televised advertisements released after 1983, up until the present. In order to equally represent the timespan between 1983 up until now, the selected advertisements all represent three major marketing approaches Apple Inc. adapted during this period: a marketing approach underlining the differences between Mac and PC computers, an approach stressing the creativity and musicality that comes with the Apple Inc. brand, and the latest strategy, which focuses on the future possibilities of Apple

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5 Sites serving as “liminal spaces of possibility and revision connected with and in resistance to existing institutions of power and authority within the culture” (Foucault 22- 25; qtd in Shields 208).


7 1983 is hereby taken as starting point, as this year was the release year of Apple Inc.’s first noteworthy television ad: “1984”.
1.2. Methodology

To examine the ways in which Apple Inc. incorporates utopianism in its commercials, specific case studies will be discussed to provide an in-depth analysis. Using the distinguishing features of utopianism, which will be presented in chapter one, the presence of this discourse in a selection of advertisements will be examined. Questioning how utopianism works in Apple Inc. commercials, as well as examining how this discourse has developed over the course of decades will result in a better understanding of the advertising strategies of the very company. An analysis will be done separately for every selected advertisement, ultimately leading to an overarching conclusion on the way utopianism is used in Apple Inc.’s advertisements and how this discourse has developed over the course of decades in the company’s advertising strategies.

After discussing the necessary theories on the workings of utopianism in the first chapter, the subsequent chapters will be fully devoted to the discourse analysis. All case studies discussed in chapter two, three and four will consist of two main aspects in which the representation of utopianism will be examined. First, a description of the advertisement itself, including its context of release will be given. Then, the audiovisual content and narrative of the advertisement will be connected to a larger framework of academic thinking on utopianism.

After having discussed the necessary theories regarding utopianism, advertising and new media, the subsequent chapters will establish the presence of messages of utopianism in a selection of Apple Inc. advertisements. The second chapter will thereby focus on two advertising campaigns that specifically address the utopian characteristics of Apple Inc. as opposed to the (dystopian) power of IBM and Microsoft. The commercial “1984” (1983) and
the “Get a Mac” campaign (2006 – 2009) will therefore be subject to the analysis in this chapter. The third chapter will focus on the utopian discourse in the Apple commercials devoted to musical Apple products: the famous iPod silhouette campaign (2003 -2008) and the recent AirPods commercial “Stroll” (2017) will therefore be the subject matter of this section. Again, the aim of this chapter is to explain how the sentiment in these commercials is grounded by a utopian core. The fourth and final chapter of the analysis will be devoted to the utopian sentiment in two of the company’s most recent commercials “Take Mine” (2017) and “Bulbs” (2016). Central to this chapter will be the notion of progress and convenience and how these aspects are related to utopian thinking. Each of these chapters devoted to the analysis of the campaigns will be grounded by the work of great academic thinkers within media studies and/or American Studies: Marshall McLuhan, Raymond Williams, Richard Grusin and Jay Bolter are only few of the names of those whose work will aid in the examination of the relationship between the utopian sentiment of these commercials and the development of new media products.

Lastly, the final chapter will be devoted to the conclusion and a summary of the research. As previously mentioned, the individual analyses will be combined, leading to a final statement on the use of utopianism in the marketing strategies of the company. Besides, this chapter will discuss the shift in paradigms of advertising. The concluding chapter will thereby also provide suggestions for further research.

By examining how messages regarding utopianism can be identified in Apple Inc.’s commercials throughout the decades will provide a deeper insight into the workings of Apple Inc.’s advertising strategies. This is relevant; not only because Apple Inc. is regarded as one of the largest, most influential companies in the world (of which many commercials have thus far been ignored within academia), also because the company is getting increasingly more secretive regarding its marketing strategies – of which the lack of disclosing how much the
company spends on advertising and marketing is only one example. Besides, examining how utopianism can be identified in the selected commercials, as well as researching the ways in which this theme is exploited in an audiovisual way, will provide a more profound insight into the influence of utopian thinking in Apple Inc.’s advertising strategies from the company’s beginning years up until now.
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

“The question to ask of pictures from the standpoint of a poetics is not just what they mean or do but what they want – what claim they make upon us, and how we are to respond”

(Mitchell 24).

In order to discuss the use of utopianism in Apple Inc.’s advertisements throughout the course of decades, this chapter will present the necessary theories required to answer my research question: How does Apple use a utopian discourse in its television advertisements, and how has the use of this discourse in Apple advertisements developed over the course of decades? With this research question in mind, it is important to reflect on the concept of utopianism and utopian thinking within academia. In this chapter, a distinction will be drawn between different forms of utopianism. The term is generally known as a literary concept – utopianism as opposed to dystopianism is a widely used starting point for many novelists – but is also present in political thinking, and used as a more philosophical concept too. The general aim of this chapter is therefore to point out that utopianism is a multisided phenomenon that not only applies to political issues but also ties in closely with the development of new media – as that is exactly what the selected Apple Inc. advertisements are all about. Besides, the chapter will illustrate how utopian thinking is central to advertising in general. Also, theories of utopianism in relation to new media need to be linked in order to properly analyze the workings of utopianism in Apple Inc.’s television advertisements. Luckily, a considerable amount of literature has yet been devoted to utopian thinking in combination with the coming and development of new media, with the computer revolution at the end of the twentieth
century in particular. Lastly, this chapter will seek to offer a clear understanding of how inherently paradoxical such utopian thinking is.

1.1. Utopianism: Definition and Origins

Utopianism has played an important role in critical thinking and literature for decades. The term ‘utopia’ itself was first coined by Thomas More (1478 – 1535), who was an English lawyer, politician, author and Renaissance humanist. He based the term on the Greek words ‘topos’ (place) and the prefix ‘u’ on the Greek ‘ou’ meaning no or not, thereby meaning ‘no place’, or ‘nowhere’ (Tower Sargent 32). The neologism was then first used in More’s fiction book Utopia (Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia), published in Latin (Tower Sargent 32). It is important here to reflect on the distinction between the term ‘utopia’ and ‘utopianism’. Whereas the former term is now commonly used to define a literary genre, the latter should be regarded as a social theory.

Even though there has been extensive research looking at utopianism, no agreement has yet been reached on an exact definition. The political scientist Lyman Tower Sargent, who devoted his work Utopianism to the very concept, defines it as:

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8 This does not mean that the idea of utopia did not exist before the term was founded by More. The idea of a utopian society could already be traced in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans – Plutarch (46-120 CE), Virgil (70 – 19 BCE) and Plato (428/27–348/47 BCE), among others, devoted literature to this theme (Tower Sargent 54). Plato is thereby often seen as the founder of western utopianism, as his work Republic is devoted to the workings of an ideal society. In this work, Plato argues that in an ideal society every person ought to be fitted into an occupation that is most befitting for him or her, and that this will lead to ultimate happiness. His ideas were dismissed by Aristotle (384–322 BCE). Plato himself, however, was sceptic of his own utopian reasonings too, as Republic goes on to argue that there cannot be a perfect society, only approximations as such (Bloom).

9 In the English translation by Ralph Robinson in 1551 the title is translated to A Fruteful and Peasaunt Worke of the Beste State of a Publique Weale, and of the Newe Yle Called Utopia (Scafi 170).

10 This genre could then be defined as “a fantasy, (…) a description of a desirable or an undesirable society, an extrapolation, a warning, an alternative to the present, or a model to be achieved” (Tower Sargent 37). Although what exactly constitutes ‘desirable’ or ‘undesirable’ society remains highly debatable.
A non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space. In standard usage, utopia is used both as defined here and as an equivalent for eutopia or a non-existent society described in considerable detail, and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived (39-40).

He thereby opposes himself to a previously given definition by literary theorist Darko Suvin, who argued that utopianism is:

The verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms and individual relationships are organised according to a more perfect principle than in the author’s community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis (Suvin)\(^\text{11}\).

Both interpretations overlap to a certain extent, although the reading of Tower Sargent is more specific and mostly applicable to literature. My argumentation will therefore stick to a more general and concise definition given by Luigi Manca, Alessandra Manca and Gail Pieper: “Utopias are devoted to the idea how one would live and what kind of a world one would ideally live in. They are about changing reality” (Manca, Manca & Pieper 2). Following the argument of Manca, Manca and Pieper, utopianism should be regarded and used as a mentality – a philosophical attitude instead of a mere literary concept (Kolakowski).

The issue that is at stake here with the term, is that there could be fundamental disagreement over what exactly constitutes a utopian society, concept or philosophy. Both the

\(^{11}\) A more concise definition of the term utopianism, however, is given by scholar Ruth Levitas. He defines this type of social dreaming simply as “the desire for a better way of being” (221).
utopian literary genre as well as the social philosophy are used in every conceivable way. Meaning that utopian ideas could be used for, among others, racist, anarchist, communist, egalitarian or capitalist purposes (Tower Sargent 70). In other words, whereas utopias are intended to envision an ideal world for many, for others this supposed utopia equals a world of aggravation, danger and fear. Thus, there is a strong paradox embedded in the concept of utopianism, and it is exactly this paradox that is often central to the narrative of utopian and dystopian literature.

The paradoxical nature of utopianism is also an element that many scholars seem to touch upon. Tower Sargent, for instance, stresses this inherently paradoxical core by arguing that:

In its broadest outline, the argument is that utopianism is essential for the improvement of the human condition, and in this sense opponents of utopianism are both wrong and potentially dangerous. But I also argue that if used wrongly, and it has been, utopianism is itself dangerous, and in this sense supporters of utopianism are both wrong and potentially dangerous (Tower Sargent 46).

Scholars Joel Nelson and David Cooperman, besides, note that the paradox of utopian thinking is well-demonstrated in the postindustrialization age. They argue that the increased

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12 The widely acknowledged novel The Circle, written by Dave Eggers and published in 2013, for instance, points at the dangers of living in a seemingly ideal world. The novel follows the life of Mae Holland, who works at the company The Circle. The global tech-company, which closely resembles the main offices of Google, Facebook and Apple, is completely controlled by digital (social) media devices that allow the characters to record events. Without getting into an in-depth analysis of Egger’s work, it is important to point out that the novel revolves around the idea that the seemingly utopian society that mankind has constituted – and is still busy constituting – through the development of increasingly advanced digital media as we know them (iPhones, Smartwatches, Facebook and Twitter) endangers our sense of privacy. Whereas many characters in the narrative lose their ability to critically reflect on the development of intrusive media devices, the reader – recognizing the questionable media devices from the present world – is getting more and more critically engaged as the plot develops. Through this, Eggers makes the reader realize that the ideal world as we know it is flawed, and – to say the least – dangerous.
control humans seem to have over their lives – with the use of many recent innovations and revolutions in information technologies – is often regarded as distinctly utopian. However, as they point out, many of the (arguably dystopian) social problems in contemporary society are a direct consequence of such “utopian” technology, given their often destabilizing effects on organizations and the world (market) (583). For instance the selling of big data and the infringement of online privacy by big media conglomerates such as Google and Facebook, which are topics that people are getting increasingly more worried about. Besides, following the argumentation of Nelson & Cooperman, most innovations are not used with any collective or utopian goal in mind, but for business; to increase profits and to advance their competitive position in the marketplace (Nelson & Cooperman 589). In other words, there is a strong ideological charge to the concept of new media, yet at the same time do many people express their fears and uncertainties for what new media will bring13.

### 1.2. Utopianism and New Media

Following the argumentation of Nelson & Cooperman, it is thus equally important to reflect on the role of new (media) technologies and artefacts in relation to utopian and dystopian thinking. Cultural studies scholar Kevin Robins, however, especially stresses the utopian potential of new technologies. He argues that the utopian social imaginary in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century led human kind to explore the possibilities new digital technologies had to offer. Cyberspaces and other virtual places thereby formed a new way of exploring and community building, since, according to his argumentation, virtual reality allowed humanity for the first time ‘to play God’: “We can make water solid, and solids fluid; we can imbue inanimate object (chairs, lambs, engines) with an intelligent life of their own.

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13 Lister et al. ascribe this dual approach of new media to utopianism to the strong, transformative potentials of technology, which led new media to have always been received in both utopian as well as dystopian terms throughout the centuries (Lister et al. 65).
We can invent animals, singing textures, clever colours or fairies” (Sherman & Judkins qtd. in Robins 126-7 1995).

Another great mind in the thinking about utopianism in relation to new media is the famous media theorist Marshall McLuhan. In his work *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan claims that mankind has left a typographic age, and instead now enters an electronic one. As a result of this, McLuhan argues, bureaucracy and rationalization, as was facilitated by the typographic age, were broken down with the help of new technologies, through which humanity entered a new, more democratic age (McLuhan). Many utopian communities in 1960s and 1970s America were created in line with this latter philosophy, thereby embracing the notion that “small-scale technologies could transform the individual consciousness and, with it, the nature of community” (Turner 74). Likewise did he American writer Steward Brand write the *Time* article “We Owe it All to the Hippies” in which he argues that the global computer revolution grew exactly out of the free-spirited communities (Brand), although this claim has been subject to criticism as well.

Utopian thinking in relation to new digital technologies, however, did not start in the 1960s, but leads back to the end of the Second World War. In a 1945 *Atlantic Monthly* article “As We May Think”, the American engineer Vannevar Bush philosophized about the augmentation of human intellectual capacities through the digital organization of knowledge and the abundance of available data. He described a hypothetical hypertextual desktop machine which he called ‘the Memex’. This machine would organize data not according to a standard alphabetical protocol, but instead via associations – just like the human brain works.

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14 Note that this book was published in 1962. The ‘electronic age’, as it was called by McLuhan, therefore did not apply to the coming of personal computers and mobile phones, but instead to television, radio and cinematic artefacts.

15 In his article, he claims that hippies and 1960s students, such as Jobs and Wozniak, were the ones who used technologies in order to break down the establishment. Before their success with Apple, the two Steves developed and sold “blue boxes” – illegal outlaw devices for making free telephone calls. They were the ones who transformed computers from university and corporate machines into self-empowering devices (Brand).
Associative linkages, argues Bush, replicate more accurately the way in which the mind works. Besides, he argues: “The continuing appeal of hypertext\textsuperscript{16} as both information storage and creative methodology has been that it appears to offer a better model of consciousness than linear storage systems” (Bush qtd. In Lister et al. 28). Bush thereby coined one of the first utopian thoughts on improved hypertextual thinking and data storage, thereby opening up the world for hypertextual projects, such as Project Xanadu – which, despite all efforts, flopped\textsuperscript{17}.

The introduction of the internet and the World Wide Web announced a new way of looking through utopian glasses at the world. The Internet was not only about to “flatten organizations” (Negroponte 182), but also to “globalize society, decentralize control, and help harmonize people” (Negroponte 182). Besides, as was argued by Nicholas Negroponte, the Internet would announce a new generation in which people could playfully interact with other independent peers over large distances, thereby being more self-sufficient than ever before. Fred Turner even goes as far as to argue that the arrival of the internet questioned the existing state structures. According to him, the coming of the internet led to a talk of revolution filling the air: “Ubiquitous networked computing had arrived, and in its shiny array of interlinked devices, pundits, scholars, and investors alike saw the image of an ideal society: decentralized, egalitarian, harmonious, and free” (Turner 1). In line with this, some scholars argued that the role of the government would be so dramatically redefined by the internet, that the leading forces should just pull back completely, leaving the new tech-democracy rule.

\textsuperscript{16} “A kind of writing facilitated by computer technology by which documents and parts of documents are linked together to allow the reader to follow his or her own ‘path’ through a body of information or a narrative. Developed by Ted Nelson in the 1960s (…), the hypertext model forms the basis of the organisation of the World Wide Web” (Lister et al. 424).

\textsuperscript{17} Tech-magazine \textit{Wired} already reported on the failed project in 1995. They concluded that Xanadu was “the most radical computer dream of the hacker era. (…) [It] was supposed to be the universal, democratic hypertext library that would help human life evolve into an entirely new form. Instead, it sucked [founder] Ted Nelson and his intrepid band of true believers into what became the longest-running vaporware project in the history of computing – a 30-year saga of rabid prototyping and heart-sla
desh despair (“The Curse of Xanadu”)}
As was claimed before by Fred Turner, this digital culture then grew directly out of the utopian counterculture of the 1960, with Steve Jobs as its most famous flag-bearer. This generation had been raised in a world of massive armies and “the threat of a nuclear holocaust” (Turner 5). They saw the coming of cyber technologies as comforting, and perhaps even as the first step towards global harmony (Turner 5), thereby distancing themselves form the generation prior to that\(^\text{18}\). Turner, who devoted the book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* solely to the rise of so-called digital utopianism as a result of the coming of computer technologies and the internet, concludes that a variety of sociologists have confirmed the suggestion that the tearing down of corporate bureaucracy indeed occurred. He argues, besides, that the coming of these new utopian technologies led to an increasingly networked society:

In many industries, vertical chains of command with clear reporting structures have indeed given way to more leveled forms. Bureaucracies certainly still exist, but increasingly, and particularly within knowledge-inventive and high-technology industries, networks rather than hierarchies are becoming key forms of organizing production (242).

Besides, according to Turner, the coming of the internet, with the virtual community ‘The WELL’\(^\text{19}\) in particular, also promised an improved and more equal role for women in (digital) society. In a cyberworld where gender divides were no longer playing a role, women often

\(^{18}\) This argumentation goes hand in hand with the critique offered by Jacques Ellul, John Galbraith and Charles Mills, who argued that the end of the Second World War announced a period of increased centralization and rationalization, supported by technologies: the era of “technostructure” (Galbraith 209), or “the technological society” (Ellul).

\(^{19}\) Short for ‘Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link’, claiming themselves to be “the birthplace of the online community movement”, is an online community in which members can discuss a whole range of topics. The forums on their website, for instance, concern arts, computers, mind and health, money, recreation, society and politics.
took on strong leadership roles, establishing online conferences, starting topics, and participating in a wide range of discussions (Turner 152). Whereas in the late 1960s women had often been confined to supporting roles (cooking, cleaning, and the raising of children), on the WELL, they could and did slide across such gender divides. In the late 1980s, some 40 percent of WELL users were women (Turner 152). As such, the WELL promised a more democratic, utopian world, thereby revolutionizing academia, the economy and gender relations.

As was already mentioned by Nelson and Cooperman, digital media technologies are not only seen as utopian devices functioning as mere improvements to the world as we know it. New media are also the ones that frequently conjure up feelings of despair and dystopian fear. Computers in particular were often seen as technologies of dehumanization in the twentieth century (Turner 2). For many of those who were critical of American society in the 1960s, the technological bureaucracy that was offered by new technologies announced a “drab era of controlled adulthood” (Turner 38), and some were even afraid that newer technologies would lead to the extinction of the human race (Turner 38). In line with this train of thought is the hard-found idea that games promote violence in society – especially when games became graphically more sophisticated and generally more engaging with the player (Bolter and Grusin 99; Herz 184).

The introduction of new technologies is thus closely bound to strong expectations for improvement, but also to fears for the unexpected. These utopian and dystopian visions in relationship to new media technologies are covered by the concept of ‘technological imaginary’. This term is most generally defined as the ‘collective’ or ‘popular’ imagination about technologies (Flichy), thereby drawing attention to the way that (frequently gendered) “dissatisfactions with social reality and desires for a better society are projected onto technologies as capable of delivering a potential realm of completeness” (Lister et al. 429).
The most prominent expectations and fears of mankind are thus projected on the development of new technologies, thereby being particularly strong for those devices remediating into digital forms: “When broadcast television becomes interactive digital television, it will motivate and liberate viewers as never before, and so will electronic mail be presented as more convenient and reliable than physical mail” (Bolter & Grusin 59). As was mentioned before, Robins’s understanding of the contemporary technological imaginary of new media stresses primarily its utopian character. In his work, his main argument is that the dominant way in which we are asked to understand new media is exclusively driven by utopian and rationalist thinking of social reality (Lister et al. 70):

The new image and information culture is now associated with a renewed confidence in technological solutions to the problems of human culture and existence. The new technologies have revitalized the utopian aspirations in the modern techno-rationalist project (Lister et al. 70).

Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelley therefore argue that Robins sees the modern ‘social imaginary’ as “having always been expansionist and utopian” (Lister et al. 70; Robins (1996) 16), leading users to seek out new frontiers: “As real places and frontiers become exhausted, the cyberspaces and places of virtual life promised by new media become the new utopias which we reach for across a new technological frontier” (Lister et al. 70; Robins (1996) 16). This also means that humanity reflects high expectations on new media products; they must become better, smarter, and increasingly more assisting in daily life. Due to the influence of this utopian technological imaginary thinking, tech companies are constantly busy remediating their products in order to appeal to the wishes and expectations of the consumer.
1.3. Utopianism in Advertisements

The practical consequences of the utopian technological imaginary, often in combination with the phenomenon of remediation, makes especially sense when giving a closer look at marketing slogans and the designing strategies for new media devices. These are often rooted in a utopian, technological imaginary discourse, as they frequently promise a sublime, unprecedented device that is better than any product that had ever been released before.

Advertisement designers and their corporate clients know what the consumer wants, and then use a utopian discourse and drama to sell their products – be it media devices or not. This way of using utopianism has proven to be effective: it is for this reason that a great amount of advertisements currently have a utopian sentiment at its core. Manca, Manca and Pieper have therefore looked into the workings of utopianism in commercials. In their book *Utopian Images and Narratives in Advertising: Dreams for Sale*, the scholars argue that advertisements purposely show fictional displays of people the reader or viewer would like to be like – or be with. Their argument is then founded on the idea that advertisements, due to the intrinsic presence of a utopian superstructure, are purely an emotional and aesthetic experience that discourages any sense of critical reflection (Manca, Manca & Pieper 3). According to Manca, Manca and Pieper, presenting the world in a utopian fashion, or presenting products as for having utopian characteristics reduces the critical engagement of the audience, and is thus often considerably effective.

These authors also argue that utopian images and narratives are often associated with stereotypical portrayals of both genders, and often reflect socially constructed expectations for both femininity and masculinity (3). Research by Kristy Boekee and Ted Brown, besides, has looked into the portrayal of girls in toy commercials. They argue that in 2015, girls were still often portrayed in a stereotypical manner, wearing pink dresses and being much less adventurous than boys (Boekee & Brown 97-107). Similarily did researcher Paola Panarese
show that in Italian toy commercials girls often wear pastel-coloured clothing while playing inside, whereas the boys in these commercials often instruct their female counterparts. Key is – following both the results of these researchers, as well as the more general statement by Manca, Manca & Pieper – that televised advertisements tend to reflect a world that is both familiar to the watcher, but also often portray a slightly more rose-tinted, and stereotypical (and thus less complex) view on the world than the actual state of beings.

The fact that so many marketing companies embrace such reality-distorting imagery is the result of what Martin Heidegger calls “the age of the world picture” (Heidegger, 1977). Generally speaking, Heidegger’s argument is founded on the idea that the world has become a picture and is thus dominated by representations. What is most important in his argumentation is the idea that pictures – such as the utopian imagery that grounds many television commercials – are worldmaking, and not necessarily world mirroring. Heidegger therefore argues that images play a crucial role in the interaction between corporation and consumer:

If ours is the age of the world picture (Heidegger, 1977), it is also certainly the age of the global corporation. Corporations fuel the image-age by promulgating brand images in every possible medium. Faced with the scale and concomitant depersonalization of contemporary capitalist conditions, corporations turned to the manufacture of images due to their inherent ideological power, namely, the ability to represent an abstraction in concrete garb. At its heart, a corporation is nothing more than an abstraction, a legal fiction of associated employees, factories, stores, marketing campaigns, and products. Developing a corporate image allows this abstraction to appear as reality, as a living being with a particular ethos and character (Jenkins 466).
William J. T. Mitchell, on the other hand, is unquestionably the most important authority to take into consideration when looking at the reality-distorting potential of utopian advertisements, as the latter scholar has devoted a considerable amount of literature to the relationship between images, power, and desire. He argues that:

Above all they [pictures] would want a kind of mastery over the beholder... The paintings’ desire, in short, is to change places with the beholder, to transfix or paralyze the beholder, turning him or her into an image for the gaze of the picture... The power they want is often manifested as lack, not as possession (36).

To the question posed in the title of his most famous work *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*, Mitchell therefore offers a concise answer: you. And it is exactly this all-encompassing power ad-developers make use of.
Chapter 2: Mac vs. PC: “1984” and the “Get a Mac” campaign

“Person of the year 1982 is… the computer” (Friedrich).

Every year, Apple organizes the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference (which from now on will be abbreviated to WWDC), taking place in California. The annual WWDC is set up in order for Apple Inc. to display its newest products, software updates, and technologies for developers, journalists and Apple Inc. enthusiasts. With over 5000 participants attending, the WWDC is one of the most popular tech-events of the year. The importance of the event should not be underestimated: many of the keynotes held at this conference are widely discussed in the days that follow, either on online fora, or in print media.

At the WWDC in June 2017, Apple Inc. started the conference with a short introducing video that was received to be – to say the least – remarkable. The video opens with a short scene in which a new Apple Inc. employee installs himself in the data center, unboxing his office tools and arranging his desk. When looking below his desk for a vacant power socket, the man finds out that there is no socket available. He pulls out one of the plugs in order to make room for his plug, and as a result the data machines behind him are drained of power and stop working. What follows is an ‘Appocalypse’ – pun intended –: all apps on every Apple Inc. device in the world stop working and delete themselves from the device they are installed on. A dystopian world is then pictured: the viewer sees how people are shouting at their phones and tablets, FaceTime\(^{20}\) conversations are interrupted, and games are unexpectedly closing. As the video continues, the imagery gets more chaotic and the tone gets darker: in the final part of the short video, world leaders are declaring a global state of emergency, and people can be heard screaming and seen running through streets on fire while

\(^{20}\) FaceTime is a service provided by Apple that can be used to make video and audio calls to other Apple users. The app is freely available for iPhone, iPad and Mac.
paperwork is raining from the sky. The images that are shown here conjure up those of apocalypse movies, such as *I am Legend* (2007) or *World War Z* (2013) – films that are similarly set in contemporary, large American cities with broad streets and skyscrapers. The WWDC video then ends with the text: ‘Keep making apps. The world is depending on you. Welcome to WWDC.’ The intention of the video is clear: it is an encouragement for developers to continue developing apps for Apple Inc., as the world will be lost without them. However, at the same time there is another intrinsic message present: without Apple Inc. and its apps, the world will tear down in misery and a dystopian future will be near.

The reason why this video will not be analyzed any further, despite its usefulness for the general argumentation of my thesis, is that it is was not intended as a product-selling video, but instead merely targeted at WWDC17 visitors (who are mostly developers) and devoted Apple Inc. followers. Thus, unfortunately, the video does not fit the research question. Still, I did not feel like the ‘Appocalypse’ video should remain unmentioned. The tone of the video and the general argument is in line with previous marketing videos released by the company: the “1984” commercial, and the “Get a Mac” campaign. As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter will serve to look at the stark contrast between both the utopian and dystopian discourses, respectively, in “1984”, and the series of “Get a Mac” advertisements that followed in the period from 2006 until 2009. The aim in this chapter, therefore, is to establish the presence of antithetical utopian thinking in the televised branding of the Californian tech-giant in two of their most well-known product-selling campaigns.

2.1.: ‘Why 1984 Won’t be Like 1984’: the Superbowl Commercial

In order to understand “1984”, it is important to reflect on the years prior to the release of the advertisement. In the beginning of the 1980s, Apple Computers had grown significantly, and was already rivalling heavily with IBM. Jobs’s and Wozniak’s company was among the three
largest microcomputer manufacturers in the world (Hogan): in 1982, 279,000 Apple IIs were sold, compared to 240,000 IBM PCs and its clones (Isaacson 200). But in 1983 tides changed: 420,000 Apple IIs were sold, versus 1.3 million IBMs (Isaacson 200). Even though the Apple II was relatively popular at schools, small business and companies, it failed to win the hearts of people at home. With the release of the Apple II series as one of the first highly successful computers, followed by the failure of the Apple III (which was prone to overheating due to some severe cooling problems, causing many customers to become sceptic of the relatively new brand), and the underperforming Apple Lisa (of which only 100,000 units were sold), Apple was desperate for some success (Isaacson 200). To make things even worse, Business Week had declared the battle for market supremacy to be already over: “In a stunning blitz, IBM has taken more than 26% of the market in two years, and is expected to account for half the world market by 1985. An additional 25% of the market will be turning out IBM-compatible machines” (“And the Winner is…” 1).

The Macintosh computer, which was announced in October 1983, was thus supposed to be the company’s lifesaver. In order to present the Macintosh to the world in a powerful fashion, Jobs wanted to release a commercial for the computer that would be just as revolutionary and astonishing as the product itself (Isaacson 202). Isaacson, who, among others, researched Jobs’s influence on the creation of this commercial, argues that Jobs wanted “something that will stop people in their tracks (…), a thunderclap” (Isaacson 202). Lee Clow, Steve Hayden, and art director Brent Thomas were then assigned by Apple to put together a concept and a storyline for the Macintosh launch. Their idea for the commercial, as was created by these handful of writers of the TBWA\Chiat\Day advertising agency, was to capture the sentiment of the computer revolution and to translate this into a sci-fi movie (Isaacson 202). The scriptwriters thereby took the dystopian novel 1984 by George Orwell as a main source of inspiration. Thus, the opposition between a utopian versus a dystopian world
that is so central to the plot and narration of the advertisement was founded relatively early on in the creative process.

When Jobs and chief executive officer John Sculley agreed with the concept and the script, Apple hired Ridley Scott, the director of the famous *Blade Runner* movie, to direct the commercial (Isaacson 204). With a budget of $750,000 to film the one-minute advertisement, Scott was assigned to evoke a dystopian aura, just as he did in *Blade Runner* (Isaacson 204). Although the commercial itself was critically received by the chief managers of Apple Computers when Jobs proudly showed the outcome of Scott’s work for the first time (“Most of them thought it was the worst commercial they had ever seen before” (Isaacson 204)), the larger public was positively impressed. During the Super Bowl break on January 22 1984, the commercial was aired to 96 million watchers. What followed was a landslide: three national networks and fifty local TV-stations were reporting on the advertisement that same evening, and both *TV Guide* and *Advertising Age* chose the “1984” commercial to be the best advertisement of all time (Isaacson 205).

2.1.1. Content

The commercial was different from other televised ads that had been released until the beginning of the 1980s. The commercial, namely, begins by showing a group of skinheads, marching through the corridors of a grim-looking sci-fi world (see picture 1). These baldheaded drones are all wearing loosely-fitted, grey overalls, through which their individuality is completely eradicated. Meanwhile, a man’s voiceover is heard, a voice who speaks to these seemingly brainwashed marchers through both small television screens on the walls, and a large screen to which a group of these same baldheaded men are staring (see picture 2). This man’s voice drills the following words:
Today we celebrate the first glorious anniversary of the Information Purification Directives. We have created for the first time in all history a garden of pure ideology, where each worker may bloom, secure from the pests of any contradictory true thoughts. Our Unification of Thoughts is more powerful a weapon than any fleet or army on earth. We are one people, with one will, one resolve, one cause.

Our enemies shall talk themselves to death and we will bury them with their own confusion. We shall prevail! (“1984”).

The uniforms, the shaved heads, the drilling voice, and the dark, shadowy environment thereby give the impression as if the images were shot in a prison. However, this uncanny atmosphere is interrupted from time to time by brief moments in which an athletic-looking woman can be seen sprinting with a large sledgehammer in her hands (see picture 3). The contrast between her and the surrounding environment, including the baldheaded men, could hardly be any stronger. First of all, the running lady is looking much more powerful than the other characters: she is running instead of marching, and moving quickly towards the viewer instead of passing the camera. By this swift movement, her agency and strength as a rebellious character is the more underlined. She is invulnerable, in a sense, being the only one wearing a weapon, thereby being also the only character who is able to defend herself against the words of the overpowering forces. Besides, her shining, heavily-muscled arms and legs are accentuated by the light of the screen she is running towards, which again emphasizes her strength.

Color also makes up an important part of the visual discourse. Whereas the general environment is set in greyscale, dark colors, the female character is the only one who appears in full color. The color of her skin is exposed, for example, contrary to the grey-faced marchers. Also, the viewer can see that she has blonde hair, and that her running shorts are a
deep tone of red. The contrast between the cold tones of the environment versus the warm color scheme of the woman thus again strengthens the opposition between both sides of the good versus evil spectrum.

Last but not least, her sexuality is in stark contrast with the monotonous looking others. The full-breasted lady is merely wearing a deep-cut tank top\(^{21}\) and a short pair of trousers, so a large part of her body is exposed to the viewer. She is also the only woman in the male-only environment in which the commercial is set\(^{22}\).

Near the end of the commercial, the woman finally arrives in front of the large screen (which shows the talking ‘Big Brother’ figure) with the sledgehammer still elegantly clenched in her wrists, followed by a group of stormtroopers who are trying to outrun and eliminate her. However, before they can, the woman swings the hammer to the screen, followed by a large explosion. In the final seconds of the commercial the camera slides along the rows of skinheads who were watching the Big Brother figure talking on the screen. They are now looking with an open mouth to the blank screen, surprised by the sudden demolition of their leader (see picture 4). The screen then fades to show the final text message, which is also narrated: “On January 24th, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you’ll see why 1984 won’t be like 1984” (“1984”).

2.1.2. Analysis

The utopian message of this eighties commercial is relatively clear-cut: Apple wants to present itself as the number one company that offers a fruitful, utopian alternative to IBM and its all-controlling, dystopian computers. This suggestion ties in with the words Jobs had

\(^{21}\) Although barely notable, a drawing of a Macintosh computer is printed on her top.

\(^{22}\) Even though one could argue that the lady herself is sexualized because her body and her gender are fully exposed, it is also important to note how her strength and agency balance this. However, due to word limitations, this gender discussion will be left out for now.
It is now 1984. It appears that IBM wants it all. Apple is perceived to be the only hope to offer IBM a run for its money. Dealers, after initially welcoming IBM with open arms, now fear an IBM-dominated and controlled future and are turning back to Apple as the only force who can ensure their future freedom. IBM wants it all, and is aiming its guns at its last obstacle to industry control, Apple. Will Big Blue dominate the entire computer industry? The entire information age? Was George Orwell right? (Isaacson 210).

Bringing this message across without offering any information on technical differences and qualities is remarkable, since the Macintosh differed strongly from its predecessors – either produced by Apple or IBM. The newest Apple computer, for instance, shipped with a mouse (which was not standard at the time) and had revolutionary operating software, by which the Macintosh both introduced pointing devices and a graphical user interface to ordinary consumers, thereby offering them an alternative to commandline-only microcomputers for the first time (van den Berg 98). The “1984” commercial, contrary to many computer commercials that had previously been released up until then, thus “presented a less utility driven and more abstract sales argument” (van den Berg 100).

The utopian sentiment of the commercial is, of course, mainly expressed with help of the visual narrative that has been discussed and analyzed in the previous paragraphs. The colorful running lady with the sledgehammer functions as a metaphor for the utopian coming of Apple Computers and her products23, and Big Brother and his drones, of course, function

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23 Arthur Berger argues the blonde lady impersonates an “Eve figure who leads humans to knowledge of good
as the embodiment of IBM, its dystopian products, and its users. The agency of the protagonist, the contrasting color-scheme and the emphasis on sexuality and gender differences are all set up in order to widen the gap between the good and evil forces in the narrative, thereby enforcing this utopian versus a dystopian dialogue between the rivalling tech-manufacturers.

As Fred Turner argues, in “1984” the Macintosh was explicitly marketed as a device that could be used to tear down bureaucracies, achieve intellectual freedom, enhance individual consciousness, and to build a new, collaborative society (247). The audiovisual discourse of “1984” is thereby in line with the general philosophy of tech-utopian communities discussed in chapter 1. Besides, Turner points at the connection between Steward Brand’s 1972 argument that computers might become a new LSD (accordingly used to open minds and reform society) and the release of the Macintosh:

During the Super Bowl of 1983, Apple Computer introduced its Macintosh with a like-minded suggestion. (…) The ad implied [that] the executives of Apple had unleashed a new technology on Americans that would, if they only embraced it, make them free (Turner 139).

With Turner’s perspective in mind, one could argue that his argument about the enhancement of individuality in “1984” thereby ties in with the technological imaginary assumption that technological development would increase individual agency and power.

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24 Hereby again referring to the following quote by Turner: “small-scale technologies could transform the individual consciousness and, with it, the nature of community” (Turner 74).

25 More on the individual freedom promised by Apple Inc. could be found in the book Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life by Arthur Berger.
individual power, with the use of the Macintosh computer, one is able to react against the
overpowered, all-controlling grip of IBM – a sentiment that is of course strengthened through
the intertextual appropriation of Orwell’s *1984* and the visual discourse of the lady with the
sledgehammer demolishing Big Brother.

In order to get a deeper insight in the way the polarization between a utopian vs. dystopian
world is expressed in the very commercial – and thus to get a deeper insight in the way
utopianism grounds the very commercial –, it is important to analyze “1984” from the social
constructivist perspective of Raymond Williams. From Williams’s point of view, the utopian
sentiment in the advertisement is specifically dependent on the idea that the computer *in casu*
functions primarily in the context of global power relations: in this case, between different
superpowers on the computer market.

Williams – who was a committed follower of Western Marxism – is specifically prone
on underlining the presence of power structures in the development and positioning of new
media in society. The humanist scholar argues that whatever is going on in society in terms of
technological change, there are often “rational and manipulative interests at work driving the
technology in particular directions, and it is to these that we should primarily direct our
attention” (Lister et al. 79):

> Over a wide range from general television through commercial advertising to
centralized information and data-processing systems, the technology that is now or is
becoming available can be used to affect, to alter, and in some cases to control our
whole social process. And it is ironic that the uses offer such extreme social choices.
We could have inexpensive, locally based yet internationally extended television
systems, making possible communication and information-sharing on a scale that not
long ago would have seemed utopian (Williams 156).
In line with this, as argued by Williams, is the development of new technologies dependent on society’s demands: people shape new technologies according to their social or technological imaginaries. Generally speaking, Williams is thus more prone on emphasizing the agency of human beings. After all, following his argument, new media are not able to cause radical changes, though people do.

These visions by Williams – the existence of new media as being ever present in the context of global power relations, the close link between the (ideological) demands of society and the development of new media, and the finite power of media technologies – are, one after another, embodied in the audiovisual discourse of the commercial in question. As mentioned, “1984” clearly points at the notion that technologies are not only socially formed, but also emphasizes that the creation of the Macintosh has been subject to ideological factors. After all, the lady with the sledgehammer is suggested to embody the rebelling against the overpowered tech-industry, thereby pointing primarily at the societal context in which the Macintosh exists. Most importantly, the woman overpowers the technological forces, thereby pointing exactly at that what Williams assumes: new media do not cause radical changes, people do. Also, “1984” embodies what happens when technological inventions are driven by strong political forces and power relations. The Orwellian society in question is suggested to be founded by philosophies and politics having full control over social processes: the Big Brother figure, but also the marching drones literally embody what could possibly happen once a totalitarian fascist ideology underlies the invention of new technologies and media.

By adapting to Williams, the narration in “1984” at the same time rebels against the philosophy of Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan, who has already been shortly introduced in the theoretical framework, takes on a technological determinist view on technology that opposes
strongly to that of Williams. According to McLuhan, media and technologies overpower humanity and have a ‘determining’ factor in daily life. It could be argued, however, that “1984” demonstrates how this determining potential of new media can, in fact, be overpowered. As is demonstrated by the sledgehammer-carrying lady, media will never fully dominate us, but instead always be overpowered by the agency of humanity. In the end, the ability to revolutionize is in the hands of humanity, not of computers.

The tech-utopian sentiment in “1984” is thus fed predominantly by the perspective of Williams, taking on a social-constructivist view on how the Macintosh should be regarded within a tech-utopian context. And by means of presenting the computer brand as one that seems to be primarily driven by utopian viewpoints, “1984”, of course tries to lure the consumer into buying the life-changing Macintosh.

2.2.: ‘Hello, I’m a Mac, and I’m a PC’: The “Get a Mac” campaign

The rebellious character and the offset against other companies that is so present in the “1984” commercial is of equal importance in the “Get a Mac” campaign, which ran from 2006 to 2009. The series of 66 commercials were again created by the TBWA\Chiat\Day Media Arts Lab, and directed by Phil Morrison. They were broadcasted both on television and the internet in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Japan. The “Get a Mac” campaign was highly successful: it made Apple Inc.’s market share increase from 3% to about 10% (Segall “Cycle of Advertising”).

At the moment these commercials were released, Apple Inc. was thus relatively successful: in the years prior to 2006, different types of the immensely popular iPod were released for the first time, along with the first version of the Macbook. Still, however, the company was rivalling heavily with other technology multinationals, of which Microsoft was the most important competitor. During these days, Apple Inc. was planning on releasing a
new series of Intel-powered Macs. Yet the PC was still the bestselling computer platform in the industry, much to the frustration of Jobs and his colleagues. Apple Inc.’s new product line thus needed a strong advertising campaign to back it. Jobs wanted the TBWA\Chiat\Day advertising agency to come up with a series of advertisements in which Mac’s superiority relative to the PC was central. No deadline was given (Quenqua).

Interviews with developers of the series of advertisements show that it was not easy for the agency to come up with concepts. 10 to 15 ideas were presented by the team every week for seven months, but each of the proposed concepts was denied by Jobs and his team\(^26\).

Shortly after this, associate creative director Barton Corley came up with the idea to have two people speak to each other: one symbolizing the Mac, the other a PC (Wuerthele). With this idea, Corley founded the “Get a Mac” campaign, which was eventually declared by *Adweek* to be the best advertising campaign of the new century (Nudd).

The initial scripts suggested the Mac and PC characters to be combative, rivalling enemies, whereas in the final scripts the two characters were just friends (Wuerthele). Campaign executive producer Mike Refuerzo reflected upon the creative process prior to shooting the advertisement: “We were wondering: do you really want to pound your competitor to the ground and look like the bully? Thankfully at that point we were the underdog, so we could be a little more hard-hitting” (Wuerthele). The contemporary market relations between Apple Inc. and Microsoft were thus certainly playing a role in the developing process. Nevertheless, in order to make the commercial more playful and thus more appealing to the consumer, Apple Inc. decided to make the tone of the new campaign more informal and humoristic (Wuerthele).

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\(^26\) Due to the lack of proper ideas, Jobs even threatened to fire the agency: “‘Where's my campaign?’ Jobs reportedly asked. ‘If you can't do it, we’ve got to find someone that can’” (Wuerthele).
2.2.1. Content

Due to word limitations, it is impossible to analyze all of the 66 released advertisements. However, the setting, actors and general sentiment is the same in any of the clips. Almost every video starts with the two actors standing beside each other against a white background, with John Hodgman (who impersonates the PC) standing on the left, and actor Justin Long (Mac) on the right (see picture 5). Even though the actors do not necessarily differ that much in age (Hodgman being in his mid-thirties, and Long in his late twenties at the moment these advertisements were filmed), the PC figure looks much older, duller and more formal than the Mac character. Not only is he wearing a suit – alternately a grey or brown one –, he is also wearing a pair of frameless glasses, and his hair is ever stiffly combed to the sides of his head. His posture is more awkward than that of Mac, with his shoulders held high and his arms resting bunglingly alongside his body. Mac, on the other hand, looks more casual, wearing a hoodie, a t-shirt, loosely-fitted jeans and sneakers. The latter is also standing more relaxed, always leaning slightly backwards with his hands stuck deep inside his pockets\(^{27}\).

The videos always follow a standard script: Mac introduces himself first with the words: “Hello, I am a Mac”, followed by the words of PC: “And I am a PC”. However, the script and the short storyline differ per commercial. After the standard introduction follows a remark on a computer-related issue, either posed by Mac or PC, respectively. The short story then wraps up after approximately 30 seconds, after which a picture of the newest iMac computer with an Apple logo is shown.

\(^{27}\) The visual imagery of this commercial thereby ties in with a previous advertisement campaign by Apple from 1998. The newest iMac ‘revolutionized’ the idea of PC’s being boring, dull-looking office tools. The advertisement therefore shows a fancy colored iMac, including the message: “Chic. Not Geek.” (see picture 6).
2.2.2. Analysis

Even though the content of these clips differs – all 66 commercials have a unique storyline – most commercials revolve around the same handful of themes in which the Mac always comes out as the best alternative. Many of the commercials stress that PCs are generally well-suited for office work: the PC character repeatedly argues that he is good with numbers, and in one of the commercials (“Better”) Mac praises PC for his ability to create spreadsheets, pie charts and PowerPoint presentations. Mac adds to this that he himself is better at doing “fun stuff” – the editing of photos, videos and music. The different qualities of both operating systems are specifically stressed in one of the commercials in which the out-of-touch businessman argues: “You were made to stimulate ten-year old kid’s brains with your iLife\textsuperscript{28} jazz, I was made to balance checkbooks” (“Computer Chart”).

However, in order to counterbalance the idea that Apple computers are merely for fun, Apple Inc. released the commercial “Self Pity”. In this commercial Mac is wearing a business suit for once, arguing that he does “work stuff too” (“Self Pity”), and that Mac has been successfully running the Microsoft Office applications for years as well. The commercials thereby frequently point at the inconvenience of PC computers: their supposedly cryptic error messages, and their proneness to catch viruses and spyware, among others. This opposes to the Mac character casually explaining he never suffers from any of these problems.

The major differences between both operating systems are thus central to the 66 commercials. This opposition is exploited for two purposes: deconstructing the utopian promises of convenience of the opposing party, and underlining the qualities of the iMac and its MacOS operating system. As pointed out in section 2.2.1., the simplistic audiovisual content of the commercials strengthens the polarization between both computer engines: the quirky PC, dressed for business, and the casual, approachable, ‘hip’ Mac impersonation

\textsuperscript{28} iLife, initially released in 1999, is a collection of computer programs for MacOS and iOS. It is composed of iTunes, iMovie, iPhoto, iDVD, iWeb and GarageBand and used for media creation, editing and publishing.
embody exactly that what Apple Inc. wants the consumer to believe; that a Mac computer is better looking and more reliable than its opponent.

Apple Inc.’s utopian promises in this series of commercials is strongly grounded by the process of remediation (as in; the continuous process of media refashioning, replacing and commenting on each other (Bolter & Grusin 18)). Everything the PC fails in – soft- and hardware wise – the Mac excels in. As is demonstrated in the commercial “Computer Chart”29, incomprehensible error-messages do not exist in Mac operating systems. This is a reaction – and thus an improvement upon – the puzzling error-messages in PC operating systems. This argument of remediation, and specifically the strength of this process in terms of utopianism, applies to the way these commercials underline Apple Inc.’s convenience as compared to the PC. Apple has an in-built webcam, as opposed to the PC – whose personification (in the commercial “Tech Support”) is awkwardly wearing a webcam installed on his head with the use of masking tape (see picture 7). Apple Inc. thus constantly presents itself as a remediated version of the PC. And, as these commercials try to bring across, Apple Inc. offers the utopian, flawless computer of the future that is ever an improvement on the PC devices consumers already knew of. The remediation argument in the “Mac vs. PC” commercials thereby ties in with one of the key arguments of Bolter and Grusin about this very process: in many instances of remediation, the new medium must try to convince the viewer to accept a new standard, for the older medium is inevitably superior when judged by its own traditions” (97).

This argument by Bolter and Grusin is not the only one that ties in directly with the content of these commercials. As mentioned, the self-acclaimed belief in the utopian reform

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29 This commercial starts with PC announcing that he will be away for a while, as he gets “funky” error messages and needs to be fixed by IT. PC then lists a number of cryptic error messages that he is getting: the “WMP.DLL” message (Thereby asking: “Do you know what that means, Mac?”), “Error 692”, “Syntax error” and “Fatal error”. Mac explains with a smile that Macs don’t get any of these cryptic error messages.
potential of new media through remediation is the ever-driving factor behind the “Mac vs PC” campaign. According to Bolter and Grusin, the assumption of reform through remediation is so strong that many new media products are expected to justify themselves by improving on a predecessor (Bolter & Grusin 59): hence the need for Apple Inc. to keep on claiming the interface/hardware/software/usability of the Mac is in any way an improvement upon the characteristics and technical aspects of the PC.

This latter process is also in line with another important claim by Bolter and Grusin: in the process of remediation, each new medium is justified because it fulfills the unkept promises of an older medium. An example of this latter claim literally resounds in the commercial “Broken Promises”. Again, the commercial commences in the typical “Get a Mac” way, with Mac and PC standing beside each other, followed by PC beginning to talk: “Hey Mac, did you hear the good news? Windows 7 is out. And it is not going to have any of the problems my last operating system had. Trust me.” (“Broken Promises”). Mac critically responds by saying: “I feel like I have heard this before, PC.” (“Broken Promises”). What then follows is a sequence of flashbacks to different moments at which PC announces previous versions of Microsoft updates, again claiming that the update in question is not going to have any of the problems the preceding operating system had. In order to emphasize the release year of the update in question, PC is shown dressed up in attire that is typical for the year of release (see pictures 8 & 9). The sequence of supposedly broken promises is exactly what makes the tone of the commercial so ironic. Besides, at the time of release of this advertisement, many Microsoft users were disappointed by the weakness of the Windows Vista system: this operating system not only slowed down computers, it was also increasingly less stable and compatible than the preceding Windows XP operating system. What is most

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30 A software update for the Windows operating system, released in October 2009.
important is that, as with all “Get a Mac” videos, there is only one winner in “Broken Promises”: Mac.

Again: both by means of deconstructing the utopian promises of its rival, and by justifying Mac’s utopian remediation of PC features, Mac is presented as the desired follow-up for the future. In order to tone down the straightforward attack on its rival, Apple Inc. made sure to work on the likeability of both characters in the series of commercials. As mentioned, the characters always stay friendly towards each other, sometimes even giving each other compliments on their strengths. In the commercial “Christmas”, the two characters even voice their desire to put aside their differences and stop comparing themselves. This is also the only commercial in which the two characters embrace each other and their differences.

However, what is most important is that, contrary to “1984”, PC is not represented as a dystopian force of evil. Instead, the PC character comes across as quirky, but is not necessarily unlikeable. Still, a running thread throughout both campaigns is that Apple Inc. remains ever superior to its rivals, both in terms of intelligence, looks, and what it has to offer. Mac thus always comes out as the best alternative, soft- and hardware wise.\footnote{On a sidenote: the relationship between both characters and the ‘soft’ teardown of Microsoft in the “Get a Mac” campaign has also been subject to criticism. The English satirist and writer Charlie Brooker, for instance, argues that when he saw the commercials, the goal of the ads worked the other way around for him: “You think: PCs are a bit rubbish yet ultimately lovable, whereas Macs are just smugs” (Brooker).}
Chapter 3: Music & Immersion: Utopianism in “Stroll” and the iPod Silhouettes Campaign

“Simply handing over your iPod to a friend, your blind date, or the total stranger sitting next to you on the plane opens you up like a book. (...) All somebody needs to do is scroll through your library on that click wheel, and, musically speaking, you’re naked. It’s not just what you like—it’s who you are” (Steven Levy qtd. in Isaacson 695).

As was already concluded in the “Get a Mac” campaign analysis, Apple preeminently tries to market itself as the number one computer brand suited for creative purposes. Music in particular started playing a more important role in Apple Inc.’s marketing discourse at the beginning of the twenty-first century. By the year 2000, many people were downloading music from file-sharing services, or (illegally) ripping CDs. In this same year, 320 million blank CDs – suited for the copying and ripping of digital music – were sold in the United States, whereas there were living 281 million people in the country (Isaacson 649). This meant that a great share of the population was into the burning (and thereby possibly the illegal selling) of CDs. This was a great warning for Jobs and his colleagues; they needed to focus more on the impact of the digital music industry on Apple Inc.’s consumers.

In order to gain more control over this industry, Jobs announced media player iTunes. The introduction to this program was thereby part of a new ‘digital hub’ strategy. Apple Inc.’s idea was to transform their consumer’s iMacs and Macbooks into central hubs at home to store digital music collections in (Isaacson 650). With the ever-rising popularity of easily downloadable music, Apple Inc. announced the iTunes Store in April 2003, two years after the release of the widely-used iTunes program. The iTunes Store allowed its users to buy
digital music, which made CDs in theory no longer necessary. However, the most important step towards total control over the consumer’s digital music collection was the release of Apple Inc.’s portable music player: the iPod, which was announced in October 2001 (Isaacson 591).

Nowadays, music is still an important aspect of Apple Inc.’s marketing strategy. The company, for instance, introduced Apple Music in the summer of 2015 in a reaction to the immensely popular Swedish music streaming service Spotify32. Besides, Apple Inc. has collaborated with various artists in the last decade, among which Coldplay, U2, the Gorillaz, and Muse. These artists either starred in commercials for the iPod or iTunes, or were asked to play at the Apple Music Festival. In the period between 2007 and 2016, namely, the company organized a weekly-during event (formerly known as the iTunes festival), for users of iTunes, Apple Music and DICE. All in all, Apple Inc. is a company that loves working with a creative, musical reputation.

However, with the recent removal of the audio jack in the iPhone 7, this reputation has become subject to criticism: the newest iPhone is no longer suitable for wired headphones, unless the user uses a dongle. Most importantly, by means of removing the headphone jack, Apple Inc. forces her costumers to spend more money on wireless headphones. Apple Inc. therefore introduced the wireless AirPods earbuds with the iPhone 7. Yet many critics claim these Bluetooth earbuds are unfashionable, easy to lose, and extremely overpriced33.

Large marketing campaigns were held for both the iPod and the AirPods. And, as with the commercials discussed in the previous chapter, utopian thinking makes up a key-element of the audiovisual discourse of these commercials. The aim in this chapter, therefore, is to analyze and discuss the presence of utopianism in the selected television commercials for

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32 Yet the streaming service was received with mixed reviews, as many argued Apple Music lacked the intuitive layout Apple Inc.’s operating systems are generally known for (Kline).

33 A pair of AirPods costs $159 in March 2018 (“Buy Airpods”).
these two pre-eminently musical Apple products. Because the conclusion with regards to utopianism applies roughly to both advertising campaigns that will be discussed in this chapter, the analysis regarding utopianism in both commercials will be combined in the third and final section of this chapter: section 3.3.

3.1.: Dancing Shadows: the iPod Silhouettes Campaign

The iPod is generally regarded as one of the most important – if not the most important – product that has ever been released by Apple. Many argue that the introduction to this device was the key factor in Apple Inc.’s transformation from being a mere computer maker into the world’s most valuable company (Isaacson 591). The popular device is also one the best-selling devices in the history of the Apple Inc.: on April 9 2007 the 100 millionth iPod has been sold, making it the fastest selling music player in history (“100 Million iPods Sold”). The iPod was an enormous success: Apple Inc. journalist Leander Kahney declared the music player to be one of the first devices that moved from being a hip-accessory to a lifestyle classic almost immediately (Kahney 64). When speaking about the popularity of the very device, Kahney therefore even calls this phenomenon ‘the cult of iPod’. Others claim that the iPod preeminently serves as a synecdoche for widespread changes in media and consumption habits and should therefore be seen as one of the major lifestyle products of the beginning of the twenty-first century (Jenkins 475).

Behind these high sales rates and hip-reputation of course lies a very extensive marketing campaign. As with the “1984” commercial and the “Get a Mac” campaign, the TBWA\Chiat\Day advertising agency was hired for the iPod commercials, although this time Apple Inc. also employed James Vincent, a former British DJ and musician and later CEO of Chiat\Day, who helped the iPod campaign strategists focusing on millennial-generation consumers instead of baby boomers (Isaacson 661). The idea for the famous dancing
silhouettes came up in 2003 and was invented by Susan Alinsangan, art director at Chiat\Day. The silhouette campaign then ran from 2003 until 2008 and appeared in print, on TV, and the internet. By means of this, the simplistic advertisements and the powerful imagery of the free-spirited dancers helped imprint “the Apple style” around the world (Doyle). As with the previously discussed campaigns, the television spots for the iPod were critically acclaimed by various advertising agencies, receiving, among others, one of the New York American Marketing Association’s EFFIE awards for most effective campaigns of 2004 (Jenkins 475).

3.1.1. Content

As with the “Get a Mac” campaign, it makes little sense focusing on one mere iPod television commercial, since the released commercials for this campaign are to a great extent identical to each other. Every iPod commercial consists of a selection of highly recognizable elements: dancing silhouettes, a neon background, uplifting music, a white iPod silhouette, and a short, written closing message (see picture 10). Little distinct features of the main silhouette characters are shown in the commercial: from time to time, the viewer can distinct a pair of sneakers (see picture 11), or a set of earrings, but most of the time the dancing silhouettes appear entirely in black. Researcher Eric Jenkins has looked deeply into the visual power and iconographic features of the silhouettes campaign. He argues the following:

The blackened shadows display distinctive fashion and hair styles while executing astounding feats of individualism in dance, symbolizing the new and the urban. Often one element of the wardrobe glows in a faint black-light white, enhancing the individualism of the dancers. The self is condensed to body through the darkness of the silhouette and the association with the sensual pleasures of dance; yet, the amazing
In other words, by reducing the amount of details of the dancing silhouettes to the absolute minimum, but instead letting the viewer focus purely on the movement of the silhouette characters, the individuality and the ecstatic freedom he or she experiences is the more put to the foreground.

This sentiment is strengthened by the neon-colored backgrounds: the flashing green, pink, yellow, and purple templates contrast strongly with the stark, black dancers. The use of color works in two ways here: on the one hand, it draws the viewers’ eye to the silhouettes, since the colored backgrounds do not offer any visual distraction (in the sense that it feels as if the silhouettes are dancing in empty, radiant spaces). On the other hand, the colorfulness of the commercials adds to the “hip” reputation Apple Inc. is willing to aim for, as that is exactly what targets the desired millennial consumer.

The dancing silhouettes and the bright, blazing backgrounds would make little sense if there was no music present in the commercial. Thus, every commercial in the iPod silhouettes series is accompanied by a very upbeat, contemporary song. Some of these songs were released by well-known artists, such as the American rapper Eminem, whereas other songs are more niche, but nonetheless catchy. Again, both by featuring well-known contemporary artists as well as more niche artists, Apple Inc. is appealing to the younger, millennial consumer. Choosing a song that consumers know of draws the viewers’ attention, but hearing a catchy song by an unknown artist stimulates the viewers’ curiosity as well. Besides, one could argue that choosing a song by a niche artist the more underlines the aforementioned progressive, avant-garde, or leaning-edge image Apple Inc. is aiming for. Last but not least, the background music also underlines that what the whole commercial is all about: selling the music playing iPod.
The campaign developers chose to highlight this main object of the advertisement in white, thereby being in stark contrast with the black silhouettes that are holding the device. This draws the consumer’s eyes directly to the outlining of the iPod. What is most important in this respect, is that the iPod is presented as the source of all ecstasy: it is, after all, the one device carrying the songs the silhouettes are dancing to in a harmonious fashion. Jenkins also commented on the broader importance of the white iPod silhouette in these commercials:

It illustrates how Apple deploys iconic form in its television advertisements for just an ideological purpose, constituting the iPod as an iconic hypostasis and the corporation as its devoted votary (…). They [Apple] are dedicated to the spiritual experience of immersion in music, transforming them from detached megacorporation committed to materialism and profit to the hip votary of the digital age (Jenkins 474).

The commercials are thus celebrated as audiovisual circuses in which the iconic iPod is central. Little to no written text is therefore used: in line with “1984”, Chiat\Day came up with the idea to celebrate the iPod not for its technological features, but purely for its refashioning of the music industry. Thus, again, the commercials simply do not focus on the technical aspects of the device as compared to other media players, neither by mentioning it with a narrating voice, nor by text. The only tagline that accompanies the printed iPod advertisements is: “1.000 songs in your pocket”\(^{34}\) – the slogan with which Jobs introduced the first iPod to the world in one of his famous keynote speeches.

\(^{34}\) In the commercials for later versions of the iPod, this slogan changed to “10.000 songs in your pocket”. And in the recent keynote for the Apple Watch, CEO Tim Cook again adapted this slogan to “40 million songs on your wrist”.
3.2.: Dancing in the Streets: The “Stroll” Commercial

The free-spirited tone of the silhouette commercials also resonates in one of Apple Inc.’s more recent campaigns. In the beginning of 2017, almost 14 years after the release of the first silhouette advertisement, Apple Inc. came up with a series of commercials for their newest iPhone 7, which, as mentioned before, features the wireless AirPods earbuds. In this “Practically Magic” campaign, Apple Inc. focuses entirely on the advertising of different aspects of the new iPhone. Whereas some commercials in this campaign focus, respectively, on the fact that the newest iPhone has a waterproof case and a low-light camera, the commercial “Stroll”, which was again created in collaboration with the TBWA\Chiat\Day, focuses particularly on the convenience of wireless AirPods. On January 14 2017, this spot debuted on television during the Seahawks-Falcons NFL playoff game on Fox channel. With “Stroll”, the AirPods were now introduced to the larger public for the first time after Apple CEO Tim Cook’s introducing keynote in September 2016. The powerfulness of this commercial should not be underestimated: the AirPods have almost continuously been sold out ever since.

3.2.1. Content

There are, however, many differences between the iPod campaign and “Stroll”. Contrary to the iPod commercials, the AirPods advertisement is completely shot in black and white. By means of this, the small white AirPods are not lost in any colorful visual background noise but remain relatively visible throughout the video. Contrary to the lack of visual complexity in the iPod silhouette commercials, “Stroll” is set in the busy streets of Mexico City, a city that is strongly segregated in terms of income and social class35. “Stroll” perfectly

35 Research results of the Human Development Index Report of 2005 show that there are significantly strong welfare differences between different areas in this city: Mexico City is home to both high-income
demonstrates these two sides of the same coin: during the walk of the protagonist – the famous dancer and model Lil’ Buck – through the streets of Mexico City, the main character passes fancy dining places and luxurious theatres in which masses of presumably wealthy couples are pictured. However, streets crowded with impoverished street sellers and badly preserved buildings serve in the background of this commercial as well (see pictures 12 & 13). One of the shots is even taken from the inside of an empty store (see picture 14). Unclothed store dolls and unplastered walls are then shown, hinting at the vacancy and poverty of the depopulated areas of Mexico City. Lil’ Buck, however, never seems to take notice of this, being too caught up in his own experience, continuing to dance with his eyes closed – literally blind to what is going on around him.

Even though there are many visual differences between “Stroll” and the silhouettes campaign, the commercials also bear some close resemblances to each other. As in the iPod commercials, “Stroll” features a main character immersed in a musical experience who walks and dances through the streets of Mexico City while listening to the song “Down” by Marian Hill. The so-called “magic touch” of the AirPods is put forward at the moment the protagonist frees himself from gravity and starts dancing on the sides of walls, cars (picture 15), and upside down on the entrance of a movie theater. The synergy between his dancing movements and the song – a tune which gains more and more intensity as the commercial progresses – is strongly refined through the visual effects. The more intense the song becomes, the more abundant Lil’ Buck’s movements become, and the more this character is eventually freed from gravity. Halfway through the video, Lil’ Buck fully dances through the air, completely ignoring the laws of nature. This sense of magic realism and the ultimate physical freedom neighborhoods, as well as many lower-income areas and slums. The Index Report shows that of the sixteen boroughs in Mexico City there were three boroughs with a very high Human Development Index, and a number of boroughs with either a high or medium HDI value. In contrast, the boroughs of Xochimilco, Tláhuac, Iztapalapa and Milpa Alta showed significantly lower HDI values. The latter borough thereby lies far below all other districts (“Panorama de la Entidad” (“Panorama of the entity”).
experienced by the protagonist are then used in order to underline the flexibility of wireless earbuds. Not only do the AirPods stay in place the whole time – even when the protagonist is dancing upside down against walls and car doors –, the movement of his arms and head is neither blocked by swinging earbud wires.\footnote{Again, it could be argued that Apple Inc. is appealing to Bolter & Grusin’s argument that in the process of remediation the new medium must try to convince the viewer to accept a new standard and overrule the older medium (97). But this discussion will be left out for now.}

As in the silhouette campaign videos, the audiovisual discourse of “Stroll” strongly appeals to the hip, millennial consumer. First of all, the company chose a renowned YouTube artist to star as main character in the very advertisement. Also, in order to increase the contemporary urban atmosphere of the advertisement, Lil’ Buck is dressed in contemporary, sporty clothing – jogging trousers, a loosely-fitted sports jacket and white sneakers. His easy-going, casual style is even more underlined by the cap he is wearing backwards on his head. From an auditory perspective, one could argue that Apple Inc. strove to achieve a free-spirited tone that is similar to the silhouette campaign, since the advertisement designers chose a song that strongly appeals to the contemporary taste of many consumers. The electronic trip hop\footnote{A musical genre that is known for its infusion of hip hop and other forms of electronic music.} song “Down” by Marian Hill, namely, is strongly recognizable for its use of electronic beats and infusion of acoustic and classical instruments. As with many contemporary songs categorized within this genre, Hill’s singing voice is remixed and quickly repeated at times, through which the synergy with the background beat is even the more increased. As mentioned before, in order to reach out to the younger consumer, Apple Inc. again focuses on the experience in which individual immersion and individualism play a major role, rather than simply using a narrating voice in order to bring the message across that the AirPods offer no constraints.

The commercial shows the AirPods in an artistic way, letting the device flourish through
the experience of the user instead of presenting the AirPods as a static, gimmicky gadget. Similar to the iPod commercials discussed in the previous section do the AirPods earbuds take on a central position in the advertisement. The protagonist’s face is often filmed from the side, which the more highlights the presence of the product in question (see picture 16). In this manner, “Stroll” in a sense piggybacks on the visual strength of the silhouettes campaign.

This sense of being immersed by the experience of using AirPods is the more underlined in the final part of the advertisement. In this part, the spell of music is broken when Lil’ Buck takes out one of his AirPods. The music then stops playing, Lil’ Buck stops dancing, and what is left is the mere sound of traffic and people talking around him. Again, no technical details are given. The words: “AirPods on iPhone 7. Practically magic.” appear and the commercial draws to an end.

3.3. Analyzing “Stroll” and the iPod Silhouettes Campaign

What do total immersion and the hip audiovisual discourse that is so strongly put to the forefront in both these commercials mean when speaking about utopianism? First of all, it is important to note that immersion, hip imagery, and utopian thinking ground the so-called iPod lifestyle, according to sound studies professor Michael Bull. He devoted a considerable amount of research to the emergence of the iPod in urban culture. His article “No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening” well-demonstrates his findings on the relationship between the iPod and the consumer. And even though the term ‘iPod lifestyle’ suggests Bull’s conclusions merely apply to the silhouette campaign, the upcoming analysis will demonstrate that these conclusions apply just as much to the AirPods commercial.

Bull’s entire argumentation about immersion, the iPod culture, and the utopian lifestyle that comes with it, is grounded by the idea that the “ability of ‘sound’ to deliver what consumers want is increasingly connected to the ability of consumers to create their own
personalized “soundworlds” (Bull 2005 347). In other words, sound – and music in particular – enables iPod (and AirPods) consumers to create “intimate, manageable and aestheticized” spaces in which they are increasingly able, and desire, to live in (347). By using the iPod or AirPods when walking through streets, or when generally moving through public spaces, one could choose his or her own personal background song. Bull therefore argues that spaces, with urban, public spaces in particular, are now increasingly more subject to the agency of the iPod user. As a result of that, if the “aural environment” (347) of a certain space does not fit the preference of the user, he or she is now able to recreate this very space. Bull calls this the post-Fordist habitation of urban space:

The packaged aural environment of the supermarket, departmental store or health club no longer necessarily fit the desires of the user. iPod users often refer to the sense of power and wonderment achieved precisely through the individualizing of this ‘representational space’ (Bull 2005 347).

As was demonstrated in “Stroll” in particular, AirPods users could likewise personalize their own journey through the use of music. The audiovisual narrative of “Stroll” in particular is thereby in line with one of Bull’s main arguments about the reconfiguration of spaces of experience:

The device reorganizes the user’s relation to space and place. Sound colonizes the listener but is also used to actively recreate and reconfigure the spaces of experience. Through the power of sound the world becomes intimate, known, and possessed. (…) iPod [in this case: Airpods] use provides users with their own ‘unique’ regulated soundscape that mediates the experience of whatever space is passed through and
regulates the flow of time as they wish (Bull 2005 350-51).

The sense of immersion and agency thus makes the user perceive the world in a completely different, (often) personalized tone. And by doing so, users banish the “contingency of daily life” through immersing themselves “within their very own private utopia in which they do not speak, but listen, silenced and silencing through the spaces of the city” (Bull 2015 68). “Stroll” in particular well-demonstrates this: Lil’ Buck does not seem to take notice of the poverty around him when dancing through the depleted areas of Mexico City, nor is he aware of his spatial coordination when dancing upside down the entrance of the theatre. The AirPods therefore allow the user to crawl back into a private space in a busy environment and completely forget the world around him or her. And this goes for the silhouette campaign too, given the fact that the dancing figures are supposedly fully engaged with the music they are listening to.

The creation of immersed spaces is grounded by the belief in limitless individual self-expression. After all, key to both visual narratives is the idea that the devices in question promote a sense of idealistic, individual freedom. The iPod owner, for example, is able to choose a selection of music to carry with him or her. And the freedom of the iPod is enhanced by the fact that it allows the user to move wherever he or she wants, as is illustrated with the words “1(0).000 songs in your pocket”.

The personal, almost emotional relationship between the iPod user and the music that is carried by the device is thus central to the visual narrative, given the taintless synergy between the background song and the dancing movements of the black silhouettes. This leads to an increased engagement with the device. According to Slate journalist Seth Stevenson, the iPod commercials construct this sense of expression mainly through “symbolic realism; (…) somewhere between abstract and concrete” (480):
Through inverse perspective, divine light, heavenly color, and enraptured gestures, the ads portray the experience of immersion in music. Apple insists that it sells this transcendent experience, rather than a mere commodity, positioning the company as the dedicated votary of the spiritual experience rather than another mindless corporation bent on monetary gain and material pleasures (Stevenson 480).

In this manner, the iPod user is portrayed as a utopian free-spirited thinker who is dedicated to improving his or her personal experience with music. Or, in the words of Troy Cooper: “This advertising campaign continues to view the Apple consumer as one who thinks outside of the box, and quite literally dances to the beat of a different drum” (Cooper 92). In a similar manner does “Stroll” put the experience of Lil’ Buck to the foreground: it is, after all, his song of preference that the viewer can hear in the background. And, again, the synergy between the music and the dancing underline the individual experience of the user 38.

Returning to Jenkins’s argument about the potential of silhouette forms, minimizing the amount of details in the silhouette campaign makes the viewer focus purely on this individual experience of immersion. Similarly does the visual discourse in “Stroll” aim for this concentration on immersion by focusing the visual narrative solely on the dancing movements of the protagonist. The visual form of both advertisements is thus key in bringing across this utopian foundation.

38 Even though Jobs died in 2011, the entrepreneur’s belief in the potential of new media devices enhancing individual self-expression should not be underestimated here, as it has had a huge influence on the way consumers interact nowadays with their media devices:

Jobs understood determinism well. He probably in some way believed it. However, more importantly, Jobs understood that human aesthetic – expressed in and through music, movies, and art, among a host of other manifestations of media as some of the highest expressions of human achievement – bring meaning to the human experience (Randles 130).
3.4. Double Consciousness: W. J. T. Mitchell and the iRaq Campaign

In order to understand the ability of these images to construct a utopian dialogue with the viewer, it is important to be aware of the power of imagery. As mentioned, the visual culture and media scholar William J. T. Mitchell is one of the main authorities when it comes to scholarship in relation to the potentials of visual media. In his collection of essays *What do Pictures Want?*, Mitchell argues that one of the main functions of pictures is to waken desire, to provoke, and to create a sense of craving. This does not imply that images are all-encompassing and paramount. Mitchell also argues that viewers have a “double consciousness about images” (8); the viewer could be attracted to them and simultaneously be distanced and critical. However, as mentioned in chapter 2, the utopian superstructure that is present in many advertisements highly discourages the viewer to take such a critical stance at what is shown (Manca, Manca & Pieper 3).

Mitchell’s argumentation about the power of imagery is based on Jacques Lacan’s presumption that images force people to do something – the so-called ‘scopic drive’. According to both Lacan and Mitchell, images are thereby constantly actively establishing and changing values and presumptions, while at the same time creating a sense of desire. By doing so, pictures are powerful enough to imprint a certain grounding message into the (sub)consciousness of the viewer; in the case of “Stroll” and the iPod commercials, the consequences – grounded by utopian beliefs – of purchasing an iPod or AirPods earbuds.

Specific evidence grounding the applicability of Mitchell’s (and Lacan’s) theories to the silhouette commercials could be found in the 2004 appropriation of the silhouette style by the graphic design group Forkscrew Graphics. Their “iRaq” campaign consists of four mock advertisements – free for download and distribution – criticizing the US government leading the war against Iraq (see picture 17). Even though the silhouette style of the original Apple campaign is straightforwardly copied, the tone of the iRaq advertisements is in stark contrast
with the free-spirited dancers in the iPod advertisements. Instead of dancing silhouettes, the iRaq campaign features harrowing war-imagery, among which photographs of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. Also, the representative form of the white headphone wires in the original campaign are used by Forkscrew Graphics to represent images of terror. The earbud cables are used in the appropriation of the famous Abu Ghraib electrocution picture, in which one prisoner has electrocution cables attached to both his hands and genitals (see picture 18).

The ironic sentiment of the iRaq campaign is even more strengthened by one of the taglines that is placed at the bottom of every iRaq poster: “10.000 Iraqis killed. 773 US soldiers dead.” and “10.000 volts in your pocket. Guilty or innocent.” – commentary reacting to Apple Inc.’s marketing phrase “10.000 songs in your pocket.” are only two of the many examples that were placed at the bottom of these mock-advertisements. The satirical tone of these posters thereby deconstructs the cheerfully unconcerned tone of the iPod advertisements39. Indeed, it could be argued that this anti-war campaign works because its dark, satirical tone contrasts strongly with the utopian sentiment of the original iPod campaign.

In its mocking of the original advertisements, the iRaq campaign does two important things in terms of utopianism. On the one hand, by means of constructing a consciously ironic, dystopian mock-advertisement that is meant to rail right against the message of the original campaign, the “iRaq” ads strengthen the utopian message of the original advertisements. The iRaq campaign, in fact, adds to the soundness of Bull’s vision on

39 A different take on this double-sided effect is given by communication scientist Troy Cooper. He argues that this double-take effect not only draws the viewer’s attention to the atrocities of the Iraq war, but simultaneously makes the reader aware of Apple’s (superficial) utopian message:

The juxtaposition of the two similar-looking, yet meaningfully different forms, produces the double-take effect, forcing the viewer to look more closely at the message. In this case, Forkscrew’s argument serves dual purposes. On the one hand, it is an argument of political protest against the Iraq War. The message is clearly anti-war and is meant to make a statement about the indecency of war and the costly effects of war. But the images also appropriate the popular advertisement to argue that the general public is largely oblivious to hyperconsumerism (100).
the utopian power of the silhouette campaign by pointing at the absence of the utopian elements that are so important for the iPod campaign. Thus, the iRaq posters thereby gain in ironic sentiment, but simultaneously strengthen the message of the original campaign. On the other hand, the iRaq campaign literally embodies part of Mitchell’s aforementioned theory of “double consciousness” (8); in this case, the part in which viewers are critical of utopian imagery. Just by being so strongly oppositional to the silhouette advertisements, the iRaq campaign proves of the applicability of Mitchell’s theory to the iPod campaign imagery, and thus of the sense of utopianism that is at the very heart of this campaign.
Chapter 4: Progress and Convenience: Utopian advertising in the Post-Steve Jobs Era

“Computers are the bicycle for our minds” (Steve Jobs qtd. in Popova).

Past performances, however, are no guarantee for success in the future. After Steve Jobs died in October 2011 of complications of pancreatic cancer, the company has changed. Although some journalists argue that CEO Tim Cook and Chief Design Officer Jonathan Ive still do a terrific job in pursuing Jobs’s philosophy of minimalism and staying focused on a small number of products, the company is also subject to criticism. Many dedicated Apple Inc. followers argue they feel as if many of Apple Inc.’s current products are neglected (Wagner). The latest versions of their former successful media playing software iTunes, for instance, are criticized for their messy layout and lack of intuitive design. With regards to Apple Inc.’s recent marketing campaigns, many Apple Inc. followers are critical as well. Business Insider journalist and Apple Inc. follower Dave Smith, among others, points at the lack of marketing breakthroughs after the death of Jobs:

When Jobs was alive, Apple created some of the most iconic ads in the history of advertising, like the “1984” commercial, the “Think Different” campaign, and the iPod silhouette ads. But lately, Apple’s ads have been, quite frankly, not as good. You can point to any number of factors – perhaps a lack of originality, or humor, or style – but

40 In an article published by online magazine The Verge, journalist Jacob Kastrenakes, for instance, argues:

Apple released an update to iTunes today that's supposed to give it “a simpler design”, supposedly making it easier to navigate between sections to find what you're looking for. (…) But the update doesn’t address the core issue with iTunes’ navigation, and perhaps even makes it worse: it’s still weirdly difficult to find the section you’re looking for — as in, your music library, your video library, or the App Store (Kastrenakes).
the bottom line remains: Apple’s advertisements from the past five years have not generated the same buzz they used to (Smith).

These are not the only issues at stake right now for Apple Inc. More trouble is ahead: a large number of lawsuits have recently been filed against the company. Even though the corporation has always been participant in various legal proceedings (mostly concerning copyright issues), over the past few years these lawsuits have increased both in size and importance, thereby putting the company in an increasingly bad light.

Yet, despite the supposed decline in revolutionary products, an increasing number of lawsuits, the growing rivalry of Android phones and other cheaper alternatives, and a large number of journalists claiming that Apple Inc. is reaching the limits to its growth, the company posted a record revenue of 78.4 billion dollars in the final quarter of 2016 (van Bokkum & van de Wiel). In this same year, Apple Inc.’s iPhone, Mac, and Apple Watch sales also reached new quarterly records, and its Services business, which includes iTunes and Apple Music, continued to rise as well (Reisinger). In January 2016, even 1 billion Apple Inc. devices were in use, meaning these devices regularly checked in with the App Store and iCloud (Statt).

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41 A similar claim about Apple Inc.’s recent way of advertising is made by former creative director Ken Segall. Although the latter mostly ascribes the lack of marketing breakthroughs to the absence of Jobs:

Here’s the thing. Apple advertising has been considered the “gold standard” in the industry for decades. It’s been the point of comparison for so many companies that wanted to achieve marketing success. This didn’t happen because of a few great ads over the course of time. It happened because, under Steve Jobs, the ads were consistently creative. And that’s because Steve was a passionate marketer, actively involved in every major campaign. Depending on your point of view, Apple has either lost its marketing consistency or has been losing it since Steve passed away (Segall 2016).

42 A recent example of such a lawsuit was in February 2016, when the District Court for the Central District of California ordered Apple Inc. to unlock an iPhone 5C that was used by a terrorist shooter who killed 14 people in San Bernardino, California. The company refused to collaborate with the FBI, arguing that this would threaten data security and privacy, which led to a lot of criticism. Currently, the company is facing a lawsuit for having disabled FaceTime purposefully in order to force users to update to a newer iOS 7 system, thereby making it no longer possible for iPhone 4 and 4s users to use the feature. The company, however, claims the problem was the mere result of a bug and has tried to tackle the lawsuit – with no success.
Following the claims of many tech journalists and CEO Cook himself, the company is devoting much research to the future possibilities of the brand. Recently, the Californian company even won a patent for an augmented reality (AR) system “that can identify objects in a live video stream and present information corresponding to said objects through a computer-generated information layer overlaid on top of the real-world image” (Campbell). Cook also noted that the company is currently running a project (‘project Titan’), that is fully devoted to the innovation of software for self-driving cars.

Despite these futuristic projects, the corporation still primarily focuses on the continuous remediation of their best-selling products: the iPhone, the Macbook and the iPad. It is therefore not surprising that in the beginning of 2017 both an updated version of the iPhone was released – the iPhone 7 –, as well as the newest Macbook Pro with Touch Bar43. The release of both these products was again accompanied by extensive utopian marketing campaigns, of which the commercials “Take Mine” for the iPhone 7, and “Bulbs” for the Macbook are the two greatest examples. As with all the commercials that have been analyzed so far in this thesis, “Bulbs” and “Take Mine” are grounded by a strong utopian framework. Although, again, in a significantly different manner than the previously discussed videos.

### 4.1.: Old and New Worlds: “Take Mine”

TBWA\Chiat\Day’s “Take Mine” was released in January 2017, thereby being part of the aforementioned “Practically Magic” campaign. In order to present the iPhone 7 as being completely different from its predecessor, “Take Mine” is one of the many advertisements that focuses on the remediated features of the company’s newest flagship device. In the description of the campaign video, Apple Inc. claims that taking a professional-looking

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43 The Touch Bar is an OLED strip built into the top of the keyboard in place of the function keys.
portrait is now as easy as snapping a photo. The commercial is thus fully devoted to the updated camera that comes with the iPhone 7 Plus.

### 4.1.1. Content

“Take Mine” is a one-minute clip shot in a remotely different location than almost any other Apple Inc. advertisement. The commercial, namely, starts by showing a young woman in her early twenties, stepping out of a cab in a traditional, picturesque Greek village. The girl is picked up by her grandmother, who welcomes her in Greek: “My girl, welcome! How are you?”. What then follows is a meeting between the two in a small café, during which the girl demonstrates her new pink-colored iPhone 7 Plus to her grandmother. The girl shows how to make a dual-lens ‘Portrait mode’ picture with the camera on her phone by snapping a picture of her grandma (see picture 19). The elder, impressed by the results, shrieks when looking at the screen and shouts (again in Greek): “What a great photo!”. Hearing the exclamation of the grandmother, the other visitors of the café look up and immediately all want a portrait picture taken of themselves as well. Soon afterwards, the protagonist is dragged by her arm through the village, as nearly every native wants a portrait picture taken with the new Portrait technology. From orthodox priests to schoolkids, old fishermen to shepherds, the girl uses her iPhone 7 Plus with the Portrait mode to capture them all on screen (see picture 20). This narrative is interrupted every few seconds in order to show the photos the girl has taken, showing the depth effect and impressive way in which the newest iPhone takes these sharp and focused portraits. The commercial then ends in a familiar manner: the words “Portrait Mode on iPhone 7 Plus. Practically Magic.” appear, the Apple logo is shown, and the commercial draws to an end.

A running thread throughout “Take Mine” is the confrontation between the traditional, rural sentiment of the Greek village and the newest technology offered by Apple. The contrast
between the old and the new, first of all, is underlined in many visual ways. The native Greeks that are shown in the advertisement are mostly elderly people carrying out traditional professions: the commercial shows a shepherd with a herd of sheep, a priest, and old fishermen on the dock of the bay, among others. These characters contrast strongly with the young female protagonist, who is clearly strongly influenced by globalization, given her adaptation of contemporary fashion trends – the girl wears sporting sneakers and baggy clothes – and her being in possession of the newest iPhone.

The style in which the commercial was filmed is equally important in that respect. The soft, warm light of the camerawork adds to the cozy, rustic and authentic Greek atmosphere that the ad-developers aimed to bring across. This soft lighting and warm filter add to the Mediterranean atmosphere the consumer may know of Italian food commercials, or otherwise Mediterranean settings in films and series.

Besides, different auditory elements in this commercial are used by the advertising agency in order to strengthen the oscillation between the modern and the traditional. The key-language in the commercial is Greek, for example. This is an interesting choice, given the fact that Apple Inc. is a profoundly Californian brand. Yet, it could be argued that sticking to the native language of the setting adds the more to the authenticity and also to the believability of the storyline. Background music takes on an important auditory role too. The background song ‘Pame sti Honolulu’ – freely translated as ‘Let’s Go to Honolulu’ – by the fairly unknown 1930s group Bezos’ Hawaiian Orchestra is a hybrid composition between Hawaiian- style ukulele strumming and yodeling. Choosing this gritty recording of a 1930s niche song as background music enhances the nostalgic, old-fashioned sentiment of the Greek village, and thereby simultaneously widens the gap between the old and the new.

Although most of the supposed background noises are covered by this very song and the dialogues spoken in Greek, some background sounds are still audible and do play an
equally important role in terms of old versus new. The faint sounds of ringing buoy bells and bleating goats, for instance, again point at the rustic character of the setting. On the other hand, the viewer also repeatedly hears the picture-making sound of the iPhone when the girl is taking the photos. Again, it is exactly this familiar iPhone sound which points at everything the Greek village is not: modern.

4.1.2. Analysis: Connecting People

The utopian sentiment in this ad is grounded in a dual fashion. First of all, central to the video is the utopian belief that the iPhone 7 is capable to physically connect people. The connection between different generations – the younger and the older generations, respectively – is namely, central to the narrative, given the interaction between the young protagonist and the large group of substantially older people who want to be portrayed by the girl and her iPhone. Apple Inc. is thereby railing against a technological imaginary paradigm about new media technologies that is often adapted in articles and general thinking about new media channels.

Many journalists and scholars, namely, claim that new media devices would prevent people from meeting up in real life (Primack et al.; Ahn & Shin). And so did a number of academic- (such as the one mentioned by Nelson & Cooperman) and non-academic articles recently point at the supposed isolation that comes with the global movement towards life in cyberspace. The opinion article ‘The Future of Loneliness’ by Olivia Laing shows how much preoccupied cultural critics are with the lack of intimacy due to the increased importance of online networks:

In 1942, the American painter Edward Hopper produced the signature image of urban loneliness. *Nighthawks* shows four people in a diner at night, cut off from the street outside by a curving glass window: a disquieting scene of disconnection and
estrangement. In his art, Hopper was centrally concerned with how humans were handling the environment of the electric city: the way it crowded people together while enclosing them in increasingly small and exposing cells. His paintings establish an architecture of loneliness, reproducing the confining units of office blocks and studio apartments, in which unwitting exhibitionists reveal their private lives in cinematic stills, framed by panes of glass. More than 70 years have passed since *Nighthawks* was painted, but its anxieties about connection have lost none of their relevance, though unease about the physical city has been superseded by fears over our new virtual public space, the internet. In the intervening years, we have entered into a world of screens that extends far beyond Hopper’s unsettled vision (Laing).

With its repeated emphasis on real-life connections between people, “Take Mine” tries to deconstruct this popular discourse of massive disconnection between people, and different generations. Thus, by ascribing a central role to the real-time connection between people as a result of the device, Apple Inc. is adapting a very utopian scope on the working of her devices on society: it brings people together instead of driving people further apart. “Take Mine” thereby appeals directly to the aforementioned definition of the term ‘utopia’ by Manca, Manca & Pieper: “Utopias are devoted to the idea how one would live and what kind of a world one would ideally live in. They are about changing reality” (2). Criticizing a technological imaginary discourse – one that puts the negative aspects of new media devices to the foreground – is thus central to Apple Inc.’s understanding of what constitutes a utopian, tech-based society. Instead, the company stresses a technological imaginary discourse that argues otherwise.
4.1.3. Analysis: the New American Frontier

The utopian sentiment of this advertisement, however, is likewise grounded by another strong utopian belief. Contrary to the other commercials discussed so far, “Take Mine”, attests a crucial role to the workings of a modern, utopian, American-made device within a European context. The commercial is thereby part of a larger cluster of ideas promoting a supposed connection between American culture and utopian thinking. Many academic thinkers within American Studies have devoted literature to the workings of America as a utopian country.

From the City upon a Hill philosophy by the English Puritan lawyer John Winthrop, which could be read as a prime example of early American utopianism (Tower Sargent 143), to the development of the United States into an immigrant country, and the emergence of unlimited self-expression through American pop-culture (Fluck): all are examples showing how a utopian philosophy works out in practice in American culture.

As with “Take Mine”, the contrast between America as a utopian country versus the ‘old world’ in Europe is thereby central to many of these claims. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, for instance, argues that contemporary America embodies “the traumatic consequence of European dreams” (97). He argues that America is often seen as the utopian

44 “John Winthrop (1588–1649), the first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, said that the Puritans had travelled to America to build a ‘citty upon a hill’. While Winthrop was actually warning his people that ‘the eyes of all people are upon us’ and meant his statement as a warning against failure, it is now read as ‘a statement of early American utopianism’” (Tower Sargent 143). The Mexican poet and diplomat Octavio Paz therefore argues that America, with John Winthrop as key figure, was created in the hope of escaping from history, of building a utopia sheltered from history (Paz qtd. in Baudrillard 2010 87).

45 Ever since its founding, America was seen by many immigrants as a utopian country that offered fruitful job-opportunities (Higham 13). Thus, as the continent became a main-base for a cluster of immigrants in a web of transnational connections, the utopian image of the United States the more strengthened. In the nineteenth century, the North-American continent was the place where the formation of so-called utopia’s – idealized communities and settlements – were grounded. Because of the lack of a centralized government, contrary to European countries, local ethnic groups. (Higham 13).

46 More information on this theme could be found in the work Dreams of Paradise, Visions of Apocalypse: Utopia and Dystopia in American Culture by the Dutch Americanist scholar Jaap Verheul.
country because it forms the “weightless paradise of liberation from the past” (98), whereas Europe is the mere “dubbed or subtitled” version (98):

The social and philosophical nineteenth century did not cross the Atlantic and here the driving forces are utopia and morality, the concrete idea of happiness and mores, all of which political ideology, with Marx at its head, liquidated in Europe in favour of an ‘objective’ conception of historical transformation (98).

The French philosopher claims that, contrary to Europe, the US is utopia achieved when it comes to wealth, rights, freedom, the social contract\textsuperscript{47}, and economics\textsuperscript{48}. Baudrillard thereby maintains that America is the only truly modern nation:

But is it really what an achieved utopia looks like? Is this a successful revolution? Yes indeed! What do you expect a ‘successful’ revolution to look like? It is paradise. Santa Barbara is a paradise; Disneyland is a paradise; the US is a paradise. Paradise is just paradise. Mournful, monotonous, and superficial though it may be, it is paradise. (Baudrillard 107).

\textsuperscript{47} Thereby referring to Rousseau’s philosophy about a ‘social contract’ between citizens and government, which, simply said, leads citizens to follow rules imposed by the ruling forces.

\textsuperscript{48} Tower Sargent also argues that American culture – with its economic system in particular – has traditionally always been entwined with a utopian discourse:

The USA is all for free trade while protecting its own industries and subsidizing its farmers, at the same time strenuously opposing the European Union subsidizing its farmers. The free market is great as long as it only benefits the home side. The utopia is in the belief that free markets and free trade only ever produce positive results. (…) In the utopia, everyone benefits; globalization will benefit everyone economically and will help spread democracy by opening up or liberalizing markets and integrating markets worldwide (Towers Sargent 261).
An even more relevant quote when it comes to the relationship between America and utopianism, especially in the light of “Take Mine”, is the following statement by Bolter and Grusin:

American culture seems to believe in technology in a way that European culture, for example, may not. Throughout the twentieth century, or really since the French revolution, salvation in Europe has been defined in political terms: finding the appropriate (radical left or radical right) political formula. (…) In America, however, collective (and perhaps even personal) salvation has been thought to come through technology rather than through political or even religious action (61).

As claimed by Bolter and Grusin, America, with the Californian region Silicon Valley in particular, has thus gradually become the epicenter of tech-utopianism. This region, which grew largely due to the aforementioned group of anti-authoritarian tech-utopianists, is now fully devoted to the development of new technologies improving life as we know it. Europe, on the other hand, supposedly takes on a more traditional role, as was similarly claimed by Baudrillard. “Take Mine” strongly represents this discourse: the commercial not only shows how the phone literally embodies the convenience tech-utopians are claiming to strive for, but also how the device flourishes in a non-American context.

Vital in the discussion about the global influence of utopian American tech-culture and technological development, especially in the context of this commercial, is the concept of Americanization. This process is central to “Take Mine”: the aforementioned juxtaposition between the old- and new worlds strongly emphasizes the power of American culture. The iPhone and her newest, double-lens camera, namely, flourish in the Mediterranean context.

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49 Americanization, following the argumentation of William stead, thereby means the “fashioning of the world after an American image and culture” (Stead). Nowadays, the process should arguably be seen as an effect of modernization, as film, television, the internet, but above all popular music, have been the driving forces in the Americanization of modern culture (Fluck 243).
that comes across as behind the times. The commercial is set in a place where many people are seemingly unfamiliar with the possibilities of the American-made iPhone, and it is exactly this lack of familiarity that makes the native Greeks so impressed with the stunning portraits the phone is making. More importantly, the commercial demonstrates how widespread the influence of Americanization is: the iPhone literally travels everywhere, even to small villages at the Greek coast. In its refashioning of the old world, “Take Mine” thereby demonstrates the argument about Americanization by Americanist scholar Rob Kroes. He argues that, even though many European countries heavily resisted the influence of American countries, “America slipped in through the rear entrance” (Kroes 315).

Going back to the ultimate selling point of the advertisement; the underlying message behind the amazement of the natives is, of course, that a device like the iPhone is able to portray the world in a completely different and better manner than other (i)phones have done so far. By portraying the iPhone as a modern-day miracle, Apple points at the belief that a utopian world (in which anyone could be a master portrayer) is in each one's hands. Artefacts of American culture apparently lie at the very heart of this belief. The underlying message of “Take Mine” thereby adds to a discourse claiming that the United States is the epicenter of the utopian tech-industry and should therefore be regarded as such.

4.2.: Looking Towards the Future: “Bulbs”

The final advertisement that will be discussed is the Macbook Pro commercial “Bulbs”. This advertisement, which was released in November 2016, has not been awarded or critically acclaimed like many of the previously discussed commercials. However, Ken Segall, creator of Apple Inc.’s famous “Think Different” campaign and former Chiat\Day employee, argues
that “Bulbs” should be regarded as the new-century version of “Think Different”50. In his blogpost ‘Apple ad blitz: four hits and a cringe’, the creative director argues that “Bulbs” is one of the greatest commercials Apple Inc. has ever made: “This spot is so artfully constructed, and so intensely energetic from the start, it literally embodies the ad’s concept. That being: ideas have tremendous power” (Segall 2016).

4.2.1. Content

As mentioned, the commercial is all about celebrating the newest, remediated version of the Macbook Pro. The concept of the advertisement is thereby considerably simple: the video shows a seemingly endless row of glowing lightbulbs exploding one after another (see picture 21), thereby metaphorically symbolizing a series of breakthrough human inventions. The footage of the lightbulbs is interspersed with short instances in which a considerable amount of such breakthrough inventions are shown: the invention of fire, the wheel, train-transportation, the computer, and space traveling, among others. Even though “Bulbs” takes half a minute longer than “Take Mine”, plot-wise there is a lot less happening. The advertisement races through a brief history of inventions, thereby highlighting some man-made techniques more than others. Because of the fast pace of the clip, facilitated through the rapid succession of imagery and the dynamic, galloping overture in the background, the viewer is prevented from losing attention. The ad-developers, besides, seized to prevent the commercial from getting monotonous by referring to toilet paper, the paperclip, and the Tamagotchi as examples of groundbreaking inventions. By adding these mundane objects to the sequence of big inventions, a humoristic tone is added to the relatively serious message central to the clip. For the same reason does the commercial make clear-cut references to

50 “Think Different” was Apple’s advertising slogan between 1997 and 2002. One of the most famous Think Different campaign videos is probably “Crazy Ones”, which features footage of 20th century personalities who changed the world.
stories resonating in urban culture: the falling Apple incident of Isaac Newton, for example, is reenacted as an example of a ‘Eureka’ (or ‘light bulb’) moment (see picture 22).

After a minute, this quick sequence of inventions ends, the background orchestra playing Gioacchino Rossini’s well-known “William Tell Overture” falls silent, and the screen fades to black. “Ideas push the world forward. Introducing a tool for all the ideas to come” are the words that follow, and in the final seconds of the advertisement the newest Macbook Pro is demonstrated with a slide of the finger over the OLED Touch Bar (see picture 23).

It remains questionable whether “Bulbs” directly aims to equate the invention of the Touch Bar Macbook to the sequence of these series of groundbreaking inventions. The final words that are shown – “Introducing a tool for all the ideas to come” –, namely, do not support this suggestion. After all, the tagline stresses the Macbook is basically there to function as an apparatus to help the user developing ideas such as those referred to in the preceding part of the clip. On the other hand, it could be argued that the Macbook is deliberately placed in a sequence of revolutionary life-changing products, thereby emphasizing the innovativeness of the newest computer. This latter interpretation is also the one that is most taken on by the general audience, including a great deal of critics. The suggested representation of the Touch Bar Macbook as being the groundbreaking invention of the year 2017 is therefore, unsurprisingly, also the part of the clip that is most often criticized: “The Touch Bar is certainly an interesting development in user interface but whether it is the pinnacle of ideas on par with the lightbulb, as the ad implies, is another question entirely” (Mayo). Even former Apple employee Segall sees the portrayal of the Touch Bar as a groundbreaking invention as one of the major downsides of the clip: “This artful buildup of sound and images all leads to … the Touch Bar on the new MacBook Pro. Not to diminish that cool bit of technology, but the concept of this commercial is so enormous that the ending lets some air out of the balloon” (Segall 2016). The commercial thus (subconsciously)
suggests the Touch Bar Macbook to be in line with a great deal of groundbreaking inventions, thereby simultaneously functioning as a supporting tool for all inventions to come.

4.2.2.: Analysis

The final shots of the commercial, including the aforementioned tagline, are deemed most important in terms of utopianist thinking. In “Bulbs” utopianism is grounded again by the idea that a whole new world opens for the user as soon he or she uses a Macbook. With the newest Macbook, according to the commercial, the user now has the ability to shape his or her revolutionary ideas. As with many of its predecessors, “Bulbs” thereby appeals to a discourse of the technological imaginary: the Macbook is literally delivering the potential realm of completeness Lister et al. mention in their description of the latter term. Apple Inc. thus seems confident in presenting the remediated Macbook as the solution to those who need help in realizing their ideas and inventions.

This latter feature brings the analysis of “Bulbs” in terms of utopianism again to the discussion between McLuhan and Williams. On the one hand, the commercial appeals to William’s philosophy of human agency, as the advertisement shows how inventive humans can be, and what man-made technologies have brought humanity so far. The clip thereby seems to be based on the social constructivist presumption that humanity constructs media and its environment, and not vice-versa. In line with this idea of ‘social shaping of technology’ (posed by Donald Mackenzie and Judy Wacjman in 1999), Williams does not understand new media only as artefacts, but always as products that exist relatively to the human experience.

On the other hand, and this is what “Bulbs” is eventually all about, is the representation of the Macbook as a supporting tool. The vision of the commercial thereby ties in strongly with the McLuhanite idea of media functioning as extensions of the mind.
According to the technological determinist view of Marshall McLuhan, media technologies – such as the Macbook – act directly to change a society and a culture: “Any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex” (McLuhan 2013 4). The wheel thus functions as an extension of the feet, the television as an extension of the eyes and ears, and the computer functions as an extension of the brain. According to McLuhan, the content of the medium is thereby not important: it is all about their supporting role and the physicality of technology. McLuhan thereby sees new media constructions and their remediated versions as the main determinant of major changes in society, culture and the individual. He argues, for instance, that print – in its extension of the human eye – created individualism, privacy, specialization, detachment, mass production and nationalism, among others. A concise and fruitful reflection on these latter statements by McLuhan was offered by Lister et al.:

McLuhan stresses the physicality of technology, its power to structure or restructure how human beings pursue their activities, and the manner in which extensive technological systems form an environment in which human beings live and act. Conventional wisdom says that technology is nothing until it is given cultural meaning, and that it is what we do with technologies rather than what they do to us that is important and has a bearing on social and cultural change. However, McLuhan’s project is to force us to reconsider this conventional wisdom by recognizing that technology also has an agency and effects that cannot be reduced to its social uses (85).

Thus, from a McLuhanite perspective, the utopianist sentiment in “Bulbs” is grounded with the technological imaginary presumption that the Macbook helps its owner in reconstructing
reality, as it forms an extension of the human brain. By means of this, the commercial directly suggests that the Macbook extends the human capability to invent ideas. The laptop is thus presented as an artefact able to bring about cultural change: the commercial literally embodies how humanity is becoming increasingly reliant on digital technologies in order to realize “all the ideas to come”. In its continuous representation of human inventions, with the Macbook as the most recent example, “Bulbs” thus also represents the McLuhanite reciprocal process in which “society shapes our tools, and thereafter they shape society” (Culkin qtd. in Stearn 1968, p. 60). After all, the computer in casu is literally presented as such, given the tagline in the final seconds of the clip (“Ideas have always pushed the world forward. Introducing a tool for all the ideas to come.”).

Looking at the marketing approach of “Bulbs”, it could be concluded that McLuhan’s vision on the utopian reform potential of new media is increasing in relevance in the advertising of technologies. It is for this reason that Bolter and Grusin commented on the contemporary importance of McLuhan’s vision with the following words:

“Today, communications giants happily borrow the phrase ['media as extensions of man'] in their advertising. The idea that new electronic technologies of communication will determine our social organization is clearly not threatening to corporations that produce and market those technologies” (76)

“Bulbs” embodies exactly this. The commercial shows that, according to Apple Inc., the world is becoming increasingly more reliant on technologies and that their supporting and extending role is only the more increasing. Future Apple Inc. commercials will show whether this McLuhanite trend will be further pursued. Although with the promises for self-driving
cars and sophisticated augmented reality systems the answer to this question is probably already given.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Televised advertisements offer a fruitful opportunity for media- and American Studies scholars to look into the dialogue constructed between a billion-dollar company and the targeted consumer. Utopianism – at least in the case of Apple Inc. – plays a predominant role in many of these reciprocal conversations. When communicating ideas of utopianism through televised advertising, a connection is established between a visual culture, philosophy, politics and theories of media studies. Also, in their commentary on society, the selected advertisements offer a concise reflection on the manner in which technology has interacted within its societal context over the course of decades and what social role is currently ascribed to new technologies and media.

5.1. Summary

Various types of utopianism were examined in the discussion on the selection of Apple Inc. advertisements. Ideas about technological determinism (McLuhan), social-constructivism (Williams), and other theories within media studies (Bolter & Grusin; Mitchell; Bull; Jenkins) were used to interpret the visual discourses presented in these videos. The theories discussed in chapter one established how historically grounded utopianism is, and how utopianism and media culture have historically always been intertwined. Furthermore, the discussion in chapter one established how theories of utopianism are often central to the marketing strategies of advertising companies, thereby frequently presenting socially constructed expectations that hardly correspond with reality.

The examination of the six commercials and marketing campaigns in chapter two, three and four reveal various manners in which a utopian discourse is constructed in the selected Apple Inc. advertisements. “1984” and the advertisements in the “Get a Mac”
campaign thereby strongly rely on a contrast between Apple Inc. versus IBM and Microsoft, respectively. The dialogue between utopianism as opposed to a dystopian discourse is central to “1984” and primarily grounded by the social-constructivist view of Raymond Williams. In the “Get a Mac” campaign, a similar approach is taken on, although the tone in this series of advertisements is much lighter and primarily grounded by the process of remediation.

The iPod silhouette campaign and “Stroll” discussed in chapter three are grounded by a much different take on utopianism. Central to both commercials are the notions of full immersion in music, complete mastery over the aural environment, and unlimited self-expression. Taken together, both commercials present the iPod and AirPods as devices allowing the user to let their agency flourish through the creation of immersed spaces. Pop-culture is at the very heart of the audiovisual narrative of these commercials. Also, the applicability of this utopian grounding as part of Mitchell’s “double consciousness” was demonstrated by the iRaq mock campaign discussed in the final part of the chapter.

The final two commercials discussed in chapter four offer a fruitful reflection on the manner in which Apple Inc. uses a utopian discourse in its most recent campaigns. On the one hand, the analysis of “Take Mine” shows how its audiovisual discourse rails in right against the idea of new media drifting people apart by underlining the phone’s potential to harmonize generations. On the other hand, “Take Mine” also shows how the iPhone - as an artefact of American culture - functions as a source of utopianism. Finally, the analysis of “Bulbs” in chapter four demonstrates how Apple Inc.’s latest marketing emphasis has shifted towards McLuhan's technological determinism.

5.2. Conclusion

Taken as a whole, I believe the conclusions about Apple Inc.’s marketing strategies and the appliance of a utopian narrative in many of the commercials are to a great extent in line with
the intellectual legacy of the tech-utopianists mentioned in the introductory chapter. In line
with this 1960s group of individuals embracing the notion of technologies enhancing our
daily lives, the Californian company has continuously stressed the potential of her products to
revolutionize and enhance the identity of her customers. The company has therefore
represented her products over the last decades almost exclusively by devoting her marketing
content largely to the utopian and rationalist context in which these products exist.

The role of Jobs – who himself was of course part of the digital utopian counterculture of
the 1960s – was thereby repeatedly put to the foreground. By highlighting the prominence of
his philosophy in Apple Inc.’s marketing strategies, this research sheds another light on the
contemporary influence of the former CEO. Apparently, his views on the potentials of future
technologies did not merely lead to the founding of Apple Inc., but are still strongly at the
heart of the company, even after his death in 2011. Indirectly, this research demonstrated that
the cultural and intellectual legacy of the tech-utopianists is still pursued in the contemporary
tech-industry

As demonstrated, Jobs’s belief in personal empowerment through new media and
personal computing was coined to the world with the “1984” commercial. I therefore think it
is fair to conclude that the “1984” commercial marked the beginning of Apple Inc. marketing
itself as a brand that is remotely different and more out-of-the-box than other technological
manufacturers. Or, in the words of Johnson et al.; “[In “1984”, Apple Inc.] advertised their
products to offer the better life to customers and make the trend of aesthetics and lifestyle
appeal important. All of Apple’s products were launched with these attributes and outstanding
functionality” (13). This philosophy was then further pursued up until the latest “Bulbs”
advertisement, although these commercials of course adapt a different take on the extent to
which this personal empowerment reaches.
It could be argued that “Bulbs” thus indirectly comments on “1984”, given that both commercials are the ones that oscillate the strongest between the perspectives of Williams and McLuhan, respectively. William’s vision on the agency of human beings overpowering the control of new media is the key philosophy grounding the 1983 award-winning advertisement. “Bulbs”, on the other hand, shows the limited potential of Williams’s humanist framework, given that the analysis of the clip shows how the agency of the media-machine is put to the foreground: the ability to assist, but also to reconstruct reality. By means of this, the clip indirectly shows how society is becoming increasingly reliant on the power of media products. As argued, this sentiment ties in directly with McLuhan’s technological determinist view that media have the ability to radically change and remodel society: with “Bulbs”, Apple Inc. aims to portray the Macbook and the very Californian brand itself as the number one company supporting the creation of one's visions and ideas. I therefore believe the latter comparison between the audiovisual content in “Bulbs” and “1984” represents an important paradigm shift that has taken place over the course of decades.

Following the audiovisual content and plot in Apple Inc.’s most recent commercials, I would argue that society is slowly moving from the intellectual heritage of Williams to that of McLuhan. Of course, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the conclusions about these advertisements might not be applicable to a more general conclusion on the position of new media in society. I strongly believe, however, that our lives are indeed becoming increasingly more dependent on digital media devices. The last couple of year, smartphones have become physical extensions of ourselves, enhancing our hands, eyes and minds. Which, as mentioned in the introductory chapter and in the analysis of “Take Mine”, has led to a significant amount of criticism on the arguably intrusive social role of new media devices.
“1984” was also important for many other ads that followed. The manner in which “Take Mine”, for instance, represents her utopian discourse may remind the viewer of the approach taken on in “1984”: both videos use contrasting impersonations in order to represent the Macintosh and iPhone 7 Plus, respectively. Also, with use of this audiovisual content, both advertisements make promises for the future by defining the limits to the present. Of course, there are strong audiovisual differences between both videos: whereas the lady in “1984” aggressively intends to change worlds, the girl in “Take Mine” innocently demonstrates her device. Yet, even though the approach of both characters strongly differs, both ladies eventually ignite a similar revolution by changing the environment completely with the introduction of an Apple Inc. device. The interpictorial influence of “1984” should therefore not be underestimated.

In each of the discussed ads, among which “1984” and “Take Mine”, Apple Inc. focuses a lot on the emotional appeal of her products. Whereas many companies use their commercials initially to state what their product does, Apple Inc.’s focus lies on the question why the consumer needs her products and how they will improve his or her lifestyle. The company thereby chose not to overwhelm the consumer with technical details. This strategy allows the Californian company to focus the more on the utopian superstructure that is often at the base of her commercials: the audiovisual discourse in many of the advertisements is often driven by a predominantly simplistic narrative, focusing primarily on the emotional connection between the product and the consumer. The hip, contemporary audiovisual elements in the discussed commercials are then used by Apple Inc. in order to strengthen this sense of individual taste and emotional appeal; interpictorial references to pop culture – e.g. the use of pop-music and allusions well-known films – make up an important part of this relation between consumer and product.

This the more shows how conscious Apple Inc. is about its audiovisual
representation. Instead of coming across as a detached megacorporation merely sticking to a more abstract sales-argument, this research clearly demonstrated how much aware the company is about what interests the consumer. This alludes to the aforementioned conclusion by Heidegger and Jenkins, respectively: “At its heart, a corporation is nothing more than an abstraction (…) Developing a corporate image allows this abstraction to appear as reality, as a living being with a particular ethos and character” (Jenkins 466; Heidegger n. pag.). Apple Inc. seems to be really aware of this proposition.

Indirectly, the discourse analysis in this thesis has captured the story of the Californian company, and closely followed how Apple Inc. has developed throughout the course of decades. The audiovisual content in the selected advertisements shows how the company has moved from an outsider position to a mainstream billion-dollar company and one of the most powerful tech-giants in the world, both financially and culturally. I think the metaphor used in “1984” beautifully captures a paradox underlying this story. With the increasing discussion about user-privacy, the massive collection of big data, and (child labor) manufacturing controversies, one could wonder to what extent Apple Inc. itself has now changed from the running lady with the sledgehammer into the greedy, dehumanizing Big Brother character it so much rebelled against in the “1984” advertisement.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Due to the relatively limited scope of this thesis, I did not have the opportunity to give a well-rounded view on the workings of utopianism in a larger selection of Apple Inc. commercials, including printed advertisements. Having briefly looked into a selection of Apple Inc. advertisements published in magazines and newspapers from the 80s and 90s, I believe it is equally interesting to see how the visual discourse in these advertisements has changed over the course of decades.
Neither did I investigate the public reception of the selected advertisements. This may have led to some interesting new insights into the manner in which the utopian discourses are interpreted by the audience. Ideally, one would combine such a research with interviews with ad-developers. I knew, however, that getting to talk with Apple Inc. and/or TBWA\Chiat\Day employees, or getting a glance behind the scenes at Apple Inc. in general, is virtually impossible. I have read many works of media scholars who have tried to do so, but each of them eventually concluded in one or another way that the secrecy of Apple Inc. was simply too limiting for proper in-depth research.

Another subject that is interesting to further research that the limitations on this thesis simply did not allow for is comparing Apple Inc.’s emphasis on social constructivism and technological determinism with the marketing strategies of other tech-companies. Apple Inc. has of course always acted within the context of other rivalling companies, as some of the previously discussed commercials have already brought forward. It may be interesting to compare their efforts to that of Microsoft and Google, for instance. Comparative research may lead to an answer to the question whether Apple Inc. is unique in its approach and shift from Williams’s to McLuhan’s intellectual legacy.

In line with the previous suggestions, future research could look more into the profiling of Apple Inc. as an American brand. Little to no research has yet looked profoundly into the brand’s ability to Americanize the world and the extent to which it identifies as an American brand. This is, to say the least, remarkable, given that the Californian company is currently one of the largest cultural influencers in the world. A discourse analysis would be helpful in this respect: advertisements offer a fruitful opportunity for researchers to reflect on the current process of Americanization and the way the United States is presented to the world. Besides, such research would give an interesting view on the way in which the Apple Inc. brand markets itself according to American ideology of individual freedom and unlimited potential.
Apart from this, I cannot stress enough the (interpictorial) importance of the “1984” commercial. Up to this date, the commercial is copied or otherwise (in)directly referred to by many companies. Even though many of these ads often differ strongly from the original, the dystopian superstructure that lies at the base of the original video is always there. A comparative discourse analysis focusing on the interpictorial potential of “1984” compared to those that used this ad as an inspiration could therefore shed new light on the influence of a dystopian plot-structure in contemporary marketing content.

Last but not least, it is important to note that it is hard doing research in a time when media technologies are developing so extremely rapidly: at the time I finished this thesis, a dozen of new Apple Inc. products and advertisements were already waiting to be analyzed. It is extremely challenging – if not impossible – to keep up to this pace. Nonetheless, the examination of the presence of utopianism in the selected advertisements provided interesting conclusions on the paradigm shift that has taken place of the decades.
Appendix

Picture 1: The baldheaded individuals are marching through the corridors of a sci-fi world. The television screens on the left broadcast the big brother face drilling about the “garden of pure ideology”. Screenshot: 00:08 (“1984”).

Picture 2: The large television screen shows actor David Graham as the Big Brother figure speeching in front of the baldheaded drones. Screenshot: 00:38 (“1984”).
**Picture 3:** The woman central to the “1984” commercial. A group of stormtroopers chasing the woman is vaguely visible in the background. Screenshot: 00:23 (“1984”).

**Picture 4:** The drones stare in agony at the screen that is exploding. Screenshot: 00:51 (“1984”).
Picture 5: John Hodgman as PC (left) and Justin Long as Mac in one of the 66 “Get a Mac” campaign videos. Screenshot: 00:03 (“Better”).

Picture 6: 1998 ‘Chic not Geek’ campaign picture for the newest iMac computer (“Chic not Geek”).
**Picture 7:** Actor John Hodgman awkwardly wearing a webcam installed on his head with the use of masking tape. The person next to him personifies tech support. Screenshot: 00:08 (“Tech Support”).

**Picture 8:** A younger version of PC, personifying PC in a preceding decade. Screenshot: 00:19 (“Broken Promises”).
Picture 9: A younger version of PC, personifying PC in a preceding decade. Screenshot: 00:21 (“Broken Promises”).

Picture 10: Stills from various different iPod advertisements.
Picture 11: A pair of sneakers can be distinguished in one of the iPod silhouette commercials. Screenshot 04:00 (“Every Apple iPod Ad ever (2001-2012)”).

Picture 12: Still from “Stroll” showing the impoverished streets where the advertisement is set. Screenshot: 00:25 (“Stroll”).

Picture 13: “Stroll” features many street sellers, adding to the urban atmosphere of the advertisement. Screenshot 00:01 (“Stroll”).
Picture 14: One of the shots is taken from inside an abandoned store. Dancer Lil’ Buck can be seen dancing upside down on the window. Screenshot: 00:39 (“Stroll”).

Picture 15: Dancer Lil’ Buck, freed from gravity, dancing on the doors of a car parked in the street. Screenshot: 00:30 (“Stroll”).
**Picture 16:** The AirPods take on a central visual role in the commercial. Screenshot 00:27 (“Stroll”).

**Picture 17:** The mock “iRaq” campaign posters by Forkscrew Graphics (“Forkscrew Graphics”).
Picture 18: Photographs for one of the iRaq campaign posters. An Iraqi who was threatened to be executed if he fell of the box. Wires are attached to both his head and hands ("The Hooded Man", Frederick 2003).

Picture 19: The protagonist taking a picture of her Greek grandmother. Screenshot 00:09 ("Take Mine").
**Picture 20:** The protagonist taking a picture of a fisherman. Screenshot: 00:36 (“Take Mine”).

**Picture 21:** Still from “Bulbs” showing the row of lightbulbs exploding one after another. Screenshot: 00:37 (“Bulbs”).
Picture 22: Enactment of Isaac Newton’s famous falling apple incident. Screenshot: 00:25 (“Bulbs”).

Picture 23: Demonstration of the OLED touch bar on the newest Macbook. Screenshot: 01:31 (“Bulbs”).
Bibliography


