

The Force of Callas' Kiss: The 1997 Apple Advertising Campaign, "Think Different"

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Theorizing the "Think Different" advertising campaign as an example of Foucault's mirrored heterotopian site, this essay argues that the campaign is structured to create an amphigorical perspective, a ubiquitous form of postmodern parody. By evoking and exploiting cultural myths associated with the Garden of Eden and reinscribing Apple's reputation as the computer of choice for creative young professionals, "Think Different" illustrates current media advertising's proclivity to manipulate fin de siècle preoccupations with memory, fame, and cultural status. Following a reading of how the advertising campaign disciplined historical images to empower corporate myth, the essay analyzes how subsequent recirculations of the ads' imagery function as cultural critique. **Keywords:** Apple Computers, Michel Foucault, Maria Callas, advertising, activist performance

The Apple campaign is pitched perfectly to match the *fin de siècle* mood. Whenever the end of an era approaches and people feel the future pressing in upon them, culture tends to take a necrophilic turn. In our case, fascination with the past is a little more hysterical, thanks to the coming millennium, and a lot more hallucinatory, thanks to proliferating media that will rob any grave to feed their hunger for content.

Debra Goldman, "Day of the Dead" 60

Far from creating ideas or meanings, advertisements actually *remove* all meaning from objects and events in terms of material *context* and *content*, thus leaving gaps which can be filled by the product.

Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements* 166

All too rare is the pleasure of reading, hearing or watching something that doesn't seem to have an agenda.

Janet Maslin, "Creative Cannibalism" E1

APPLE Computers ignited the personal computer revolution during the 1970s with the Apple II and reinvented the personal computer in the 1980s with the Macintosh. After the enormous success following the now legendary "1984" television ad during that year's Super Bowl game, the fame and fortune of the Apple corporation surprised many. During the "1984" ad campaign a clear sense of corporate identity emerged along with an innovative product designed to secure new markets. A combination of winning technological advances and mythic posturing dominated the images created to introduce Apple's logo. Apple's mythic posturing linked images of Adam's banishment from the Garden of Eden and David's triumph over Goliath with Apple's struggle against IBM. The "1984" ad campaign also introduced the theme of individual freedom promised Apple consumers (Berger 119). Toward the end of the decade, however, Apple's fortunes

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began to rot as the company lost ground to competing machines powered by Microsoft and Intel processors. Apple's losses in 1996 and 1997 totaled \$1.85 billion, and market share fell to just 3% in 1997 from a high of nearly 10% in 1991 (Burrows 144; Williams C8). Clearly, things had to change for Apple to survive.

In 1997, Steve Jobs, an Apple cofounder who had been fired twelve years earlier, returned to slim down, revise, and turn around the ailing company. Working in conjunction with Lee Clow of the advertising agency TBWA Chiat/Day, Apple launched a major advertising campaign. The campaign began on September 28, 1997, with a 60-second television commercial that aired twice during the network premier of *Toy Story* on ABC's *Wonderful World of Disney*.¹ The massive "Think Different" campaign featured television spots, web-based events, striking print ads, and large outdoor ads on buses and buildings.² Collapsing "high" and "low" cultural appeals in a questionable utopian vision, the documentary style black-and-white television ad and photo print ads recycled images of twentieth-century innovators.

This analysis of the mythic strategies featured in the "Think Different" campaign links the theoretical concerns of media and performance studies scholars who investigate image and myth by focusing more specifically on the intersection of marketing appeals as cultural indices and performance as cultural text. Recent scholarship provides historical and theoretical links between mediated and live performance. John Tulloch reminds us that it is in the area of spectatorship that contemporary scholars of ritual and performance have "drawn most on media and cultural studies," working within a conceptual framework of "agency, locality, strategy and skilled daily practice" (8). These concerns are rewriting the history of live performance. In *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990*, Richard Butsch traces the historical and cultural forces that shape audiences' responses to performances and develops an approach to theatre history that focuses on the evolution of audiences within the nexus of performance, performer, audience, media and market (1-19). Butsch's work provides historical background for Philip Auslander's theoretical work on the status of live performance in contemporary life, particularly his critical reflections on "liveness" and the tangled relationship between live and "mediatized" performance forms. Auslander draws attention to performance scholars' ongoing practice of "plac[ing] live performance and mediatized or technologized forms in direct opposition to one another" and urges performance studies scholars to learn from their media studies counterparts (41). Rejecting assumed distinctions between live and mediatized performance, Auslander writes:

The qualities performance theorists frequently cite to demonstrate that live performance forms are ontologically different from mediatized forms turn out, upon close examination, to provide little basis for convincing distinctions. Mediatized forms like film and video can be shown to have the same ontological characteristics as live performance, and live performance can be used in ways indistinguishable from the uses generally associated with mediatized forms. (159)

Indeed, Auslander maintains that "scholars working in mass media studies, particularly those interested in television or popular music, have dealt more directly and fruitfully with the question of liveness than most scholars in theatre or performance studies" (3).

While Butsch and Auslander overtly investigate the relationship between live and mediatized performance forms, other scholars pursue this relationship more indirectly, focusing instead on appropriation and other modes of cultural circulation that reveal the porousness of the boundaries that ostensibly separate text from text, genre from genre, medium from medium, even culture from culture. Patrice Pavis, for example, reads Eugenio Barba's practice of intercultural performance as a site of cultural critique as well as textual analysis, construing performance as a series of "transforming and rewriting" acts of appropriation (37). And Nancy Robichaud and Ronald E. Shields critique Peter Sellars' recent operatic productions as the theatrical manifestation and circulation of attitudes and imagery dominant in popular culture, specifically television images concerning race, class, gender, and celebrity.

Taken together, these scholars foreground spectatorship and interrogate performance as negotiated translation, the articulation and circulation of appropriated meanings in various forms and cultural contexts. All pursue the intersection of spectatorship and cultural context without positing ontological differences between live and mediatized performance forms. All assume that live and mediatized performances circulate, mirror, and intersect in the same cultural economy. It is this theoretical orientation that informs my analysis of Apple's "Think Different" campaign. How do the mediatized performances staged in and around "Think Different" spin celebrity images into cultural circulation through mythic posturing? What cultural forces and spectator preoccupations contribute to this circulation? Theorizing "Think Different" as an example of Michel Foucault's mirrored heterotopian site for the negotiation of cultural shifts, I argue that the ad campaign is structured to create an amphigorical perspective, a ubiquitous form of postmodern parody. Following a theoretical reading of how the ad uses an amphigorical perspective to discipline historical images and empower corporate myth, I turn my attention to how subsequent responses to the ad sustained its amphigorical perspective but shifted its status from marketing technique to cultural critique. "Think Different" was a highly successful campaign that refined and expanded Apple's corporate identity. It also sold a lot of product. By evoking and exploiting cultural myths associated with the Garden of Eden and reinscribing Apple's reputation as the computer of choice for creative young professionals, "Think Different" illustrates current media advertising's proclivity to manipulate *fin de siècle* preoccupations with memory, fame, and cultural status.

Creating "Think Different"

Jeremy Miller, spokesperson for the advertising firm that created "Think Different," characterizes the campaign as a quest for market appeal and product identity. According to Miller, the ads presented a "change the world" kind of challenge "that Apple has always been part of." The ads worked, he reasons, by presenting an award-winning tribute to several creative innovators in order to evoke the "love of exploration and innovation that people have associated with Apple from the beginning." The campaign's appeal also emanated from its implicit promise to empower, via the use of Apple technology, "those of us in the creative fields today to move forward and do the same" sorts of work as the featured innovators. Stressing the current significance of the "Think Different" campaign, Miller main-

tains that the ad serves as “a reminder that the Apple Computer Company is still very relevant to those who not only think differently but those who choose to change the whole body of what they think about.”

Obviously, “Think Different” is not grammatically correct. When challenged to change the phrase to the correct form (“think differently”), a spokesperson for Apple explained that the word “think” is used as a noun (telling people what to think about) and “different” is misinterpreted if viewed as a directive (Ono C2). Barbara Lippert, a media critic, simply labeled the phrase “brand-speak” (28). Grammatically correct or not, the campaign was effective. An *Ad Track* poll of consumers, conducted during the closing weeks of 1998, noted the overall effectiveness of the campaign. Based on a nationwide poll of 303 adults who had seen the ads, more than a quarter liked them, but only 17% said they were effective; however, 38% of the target group of 25–29 year olds rated the ads effective (Enrico 12B). Ultimately, the “Think Different” television advertisement won Emmy and Obie awards, among others (Elliot “TBWA Chiat/Day Wins”).

In *The Making of “Think Different”*, a video produced for the Macworld Expo in January 1998, the creators of the campaign describe how the process of creating the ad demonstrates Apple technology’s utility and potential. Indeed, the advertising firm’s art directors used Macintosh systems for every aspect of the design process. With less than seventeen days from approval to air time, the creative team used Mac-powered editing machines to view and edit archival footage as it arrived from all over the world, and Apple’s QuickTime technology played an important role in this process. Images from graphics stations were imported into the ever-changing rough-cuts, an advantage that allowed the agency’s editorial department to complete the editing without leaving the office. In the words of Jennifer Golub, executive producer of the advertisement:

With our schedule, it would have been impossible to have executed this campaign prior to having a nonlinear editing system. Producing the Think Different campaign was a very live situation, where new material was arriving each day. I was constantly changing the material and also changing the cut based on the copy and the text. What had to be infused was an emotional resonance to the spot. My researcher actually found Maria Callas’ home movies. They came in from Greece in a can covered with dust. When we found that one moment when she blew a kiss and then put in the footage of Gandhi, there’s incredible power and feeling in that moment. I couldn’t have articulated what I needed there, but when I could see it, in front of me, I knew it was exactly what I was looking for. (qtd. in “Here’s to the Crazy Ones” 3)

Golub’s response while editing the Callas footage underscores the capacity of images to trigger emotions prior to cognitive processing. The meaning of the Callas image is associative and holistic, so that the image not only presents itself as literal but also speaks to the emotions, bypassing logic and working through the power of allegory.

Lee Clow of Chiat/Day boasts that the media technology used to create the ad actually expanded the possibility for innovation. By focusing on the manipulation of visual images through computer editing, the creators of the ad argue that the actual process of meaning-making shifts from the mind to the computer screen where the image can be viewed, responded to, and edited. Ultimately, this shift from an embodied to a mediated experience becomes, for Clow, an “evolutionary” event

connecting man and machine: "When Apple comes into play is when people are reaching a little bit higher for their human potential. That means that computers will become even more accessible, whether that's by price or by the design of the products. It's always an evolution and a pushing. It's all about how much further you can take what you've always done" (qtd. in "Here's to the Crazy Ones" 4).

Clow's linking of consumer needs, technology, and human potential corresponds to the multifaceted nature of visual perception. "The logic of perception," argues media critic Ann Marie Seward Barry, "moves in ever-widening metaphors, stretching the boundaries of linear logic through analogy, expanding understanding through symbols, and arriving at places where neither experience nor imagination has ever before traveled" (83). Similarly, Nicholas Mirzoeff writes, "Visual culture used to be seen as a distraction from the serious business of text and history. It is now the locus of cultural and historical change" (31).

Given Jobs' connections with computer animation as CEO of Pixar, given Apple's recent innovations in computer graphic and editing equipment, and given that Apple's "Think Different" campaign opened during the network debut of *Toy Story*, one might expect the "Think Different" ad to pitch the company's expanding multimedia and graphics applications. What Apple presented, however, appealed to something quite different. Not an advertisement about product, the commercial instead was something far more fundamental—Apple's restatement to the world and to themselves of corporate identity and mission.³ The ad, a video montage of black-and-white moving images, connects the creative and bold accomplishments of individuals from all walks of life. Most of the featured innovators achieved fame before 1970. Most are dead.⁴ As Richard Dreyfuss narrates a text celebrating originality, greatness, ambition, and absolute self-belief, visual images of famous individuals dissolve one into another:

IMAGES

Albert Einstein
 Bob Dylan
 Martin Luther King, Jr.
 Richard Branson

 John Lennon and Yoko Ono
 Buckminster Fuller
 Thomas Alva Edison
 Muhammad Ali
 Ted Turner
 Maria Callas
 Mahatma Gandhi
 Amelia Earhart
 Alfred Hitchcock
 Martha Graham
 Jim Henson
 Frank Lloyd Wright
 Pablo Picasso
 Unidentified young girl
 Apple Logo

TEXT

Here's to the crazy ones.
 The misfits. The rebels.
 The trouble makers.
 The round pegs in the square holes.
 The ones who see things differently.
 They're not fond of rules.
 And they have no respect for status quo.
 You can quote them,
 disagree with them, glorify
 or vilify them.
 About the only thing you can't do is ignore them.
 Because they change things.
 They push the human race forward.
 And while some may see them
 as the crazy ones,
 we see genius.
 Because the people who are crazy enough
 to think they can change the world,
 are the ones who do.
 "Think Different"⁵

Who Should “Think Different”?

The makers of the ad clearly targeted particular audiences. According to one anonymous Apple executive, the ad was not targeted to the general public: “The smart ones will be able to figure it out. The ones who aren’t smart enough [. . .] will probably not be able to think different anyway” (qtd. in Grossman 18). Describing why the ad won an Emmy award, Marla Matzer argued that it continued Apple’s focus on “creative professionals” as a niche market but moved away from appeals directed toward “business and mass consumer markets.”⁶

The “Think Different” campaign targeted computer users who identified with the corporation’s status as an outsider. In fact, one reporter attributed Apple’s amazing rebound after the launching of “Think Different” to the corporation’s forward-thinking youth culture and its corporate identity based on “rebellion (a skull-and-crossbones flag flew over the building in which the Mac was developed), jeans in the workplace, full benefits for unmarried, gay or lesbian partners, great company t-shirts, and sushi in the cafeteria” (“Rebound”). Apple’s outsider image emerged in its earlier “1984” advertising campaign, a campaign that stood in sharp contrast to the flood of patriotic and family-value ads popular during the Reagan presidency. While Kodak’s highly successful “Because Time Goes By” series, produced in 1984 and 1985, presented images of an “American Eden” (Himmelstein 224), Apple’s “1984” series, which introduced the apple-with-a-bite-out-of-it corporate logo, mined the same mythic terrain toward quite different ends. According to Arthur Asa Berger, the blonde woman with the sledgehammer in the “1984” ad functions as an “Eve figure who leads humans to knowledge of good and evil, though she is functioning in a dystopian institution, just the opposite of the Garden of Eden” (119). Apple’s 1997 “Think Different” campaign built on the outsider appeal established by the earlier campaign, providing spectators a complex restatement of Eden’s mythological appeal that I explore in detail later. No celebration of the status quo, “Think Different” challenged spectators to “change the world” and celebrated those persons who “artistically or imaginatively did creative things” (Clow qtd. in “Here’s to the Crazy Ones” 4).

The diverse images used in the “Think Different” campaign appealed to Apple’s established markets while simultaneously tapping into new and expanding ones in gay and ethnic communities (Bhat, Leigh, and Wardlow 162). Apple’s courting of the gay market began prior to the “Think Different” campaign. Apple sponsored the 1994 Gay Games, and its corporate policies supported nontraditional couples (Freitas, Kaiser, and Hammidi 90). The inclusion of the Callas footage in the “Think Different” gallery of innovators continued this courtship. To be sure, Callas’ inclusion was intended as an appeal to the followers of elite art forms, but it can also be read as an appeal to the gay community. According to Wayne Koestenbaum, for many in the gay community, Callas serves as an uncontested cultural icon (134–153). Indeed, Koestenbaum maintains that the star persona embodied in Callas provides insight into “the typical biography of a gay person in the 20th century,” those individuals who have “to fight against invisibility and silence” (qtd. in Grossberg 10C). Dave Mulryan, a partner at Mulryan/Nash Communications, notes that in addition to assuming an activist stance toward gay issues, Apple may also have been responding to market realities. The gay demographic is an affluent one that

marketers increasingly choose not to ignore,⁷ and, interestingly, the spoken text that accompanies Callas' image in the television spot proclaims that "about the only thing you can't do is ignore them."

In addition to targeting the gay community, "Think Different" also targeted minorities, particularly African Americans. The early 1990s witnessed a dramatic rise in the overall purchasing power of ethnic minorities in the United States, with potential revenues increasing 47% between 1990 and 1996 to \$447 billion. According to marketing critic John Templeton, the African-American market for computers expanded with the continual drop in prices for technology. Most computer ads directed to this market "stress consumer utility versus highlighting functions and features" (42). Apple took a different approach. Jessica Shulman, who selected the African-American images used in the campaign, states: "We wanted to show that creativity and creative people are very diverse—it's not just a middle-aged white male in a tower somewhere [who uses a Mac]" (qtd. in Templeton 43). The images she selected—Muhammad Ali and Martin Luther King, Jr., for the television ad and eventually Rosa Parks for photo ads on buses—feature African-Americans icons associated with a variety of public institutions, including sports, religion, and politics. While Shulman wanted the ad to "pay tribute to those who changed the world," she also hoped her selection of images would "empower the rest of us to do the same thing." To assess this, she visited one of the city buses where Rosa Park's image was displayed.⁸ The African-American driver told Shulman that, although she had been driving a bus for twenty years, she did not anticipate the response to the ad. Shulman reports that the woman told her that "the whole time people were talking about civil rights on the bus instead of the normal conversation" (qtd. in Templeton 44). Whether the ad prompted computer sales among African-Americans is unknown; however, in this instance at least, it clearly struck a deeply resonant chord.

"Think Different" as Mirrored Heterotopian Site

Michel Foucault argues that sites of institutional power are contested through contrasting sites, "which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found in the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted" (24). Identified by Foucault as "heterotopias," these sites serve as liminal spaces of possibility and revision connected with and in resistance to existing institutions of power and authority within the culture (22–25). Foucault also argues that the mirror, existing in a real space and time, can be used to discover the "absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there" (24). A transforming space of possibilities, a mirrored heterotopian site can be constructed "between utopias and these other quite other sites, these heterotopias." To do so would create "a sort of mixed joint experience, which would be the mirror" (24). Foucault's mirrored heterotopian sites are conceptual spaces opened between imagined utopias and real heterotopian sites (e.g., museums, nineteenth-century boarding schools, the honeymoon trip) where time is altered and new social and personal relationships are negotiated. Foucault writes:

Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look into the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (24)

For Foucault, then, the process of viewing the mirrored heteropian site is neither passive nor ineffectual.

The visual rhetoric and mythic appeals of "Think Different" can be theorized as a mirrored heterotopian site in which the images serve as a mirror, reflecting and shaping the aspirations of the target audience. A close reading of the images mirrored in "Think Different" underscores the gaps between history and utopian projections, memory and reality, revealing the power of the mediated image to persuade. Most of the images in the ad contain little internal movement connecting one image to another; however, two edits exploit what little internal movement is featured. The shadow boxing of Muhammad Ali visually mirrors and connects with Ted Turner's triumphant salute, and Maria Callas' kiss to her adoring public, through quick editing, is caught on the cheek of Mahatma Gandhi. The images of Ali and Turner connect the televised worlds of sport, news, and media, flattening the elements of race, class, and economic power referenced in the lives of Ali and Turner. The triumph of a defiant African-American-Muslim athlete is copied and co-opted by a white team owner and media magnate, and the shared gesture eases the slippage beyond critical awareness of economic status and race. In another moment of hallucinatory enactment, the edited images of Callas and Gandhi blur the boundaries between artistic triumph and national politics, personal satisfaction and social well-being. Responding to Callas' kiss, Gandhi connects political struggle with prima donna politics.⁹ Similarly, other images in the ad flatten the boundaries between high and low cultural reference, linking Jim Henson and Martha Graham, Bob Dylan and Pablo Picasso. Although the many linkages contained in the ad may, upon critical reflection, appear strained, even ridiculous, the sequence of visual quotations and spoken text together create a compelling allegory that ultimately opens a mirrored heterotopian site useful to the promotion of Apple's stated corporate values. In the words of media critic Peter Diekmeyer, the "ads become the product" (D2).

The final image of the ad features a young girl slowly opening her eyes. The final line of spoken text states: "Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do." The images of Frank Lloyd Wright and Pablo Picasso featured in the first part of the sentence give way to the image of a young non-Caucasian girl chosen to illustrate "the ones who do." Apparently, Wright's and Picasso's objectification of women was not seen as contradictory to the ideal of emancipation. Presenting the future through the embodiment of the exotic other, the final image paradoxically projects a utopian future through gendered and racial imagery. In this instance, global politics speaks through disciplined history as corporate myth. Blurring the boundaries of gender, race, class and cultural appeals—and empowered by Apple Computers—the image of the unknown, non-Caucasian girl is the image of the future opened within this mirrored heterotopian site.

"Think Different" as Intellectual Montage and Amphigorical Perspective

Film pioneer and theorist Sergei Eisenstein developed a theory for making images function rhetorically by deploying colliding images to create deliberate perceptual dissonance. According to Eisenstein, a dialectical collision of images forces the viewer to resolve the conflict and to derive a meaning not implicit in any of the individual frames, a gestalt in the mind of the viewer: "The projection of the dialectic system of things into the brain, into creating abstractly, into the process of thinking, yields: dialectic methods of thinking; dialectical materialism—Philosophy." (45). In Eisenstein's view, "intellectual montage" results in the creation of a forceful rhetorical and ideological argument, thus engaging viewers' perception and directing their thought. Film theorist Paul Messaris identifies this as "propositional editing" (107).

The march of images in the Apple ad plays out the rhetorical and aesthetic strategy of propositional editing. In media advertising, Messaris contends, propositional editing links the subject image to the object image by presenting conceptual similarity or difference rather than visual repetition, and this challenges the audience to accept the implied analogy and make meaningful connections between the images. The implied analogy in "Think Different," however, is a problematic one. What does it mean to connect Maria Callas and Mahatma Gandhi in an ad to sell computers? What is the force of Callas' kiss?

The mythic associations of the "Think Different" campaign echo the already described allusions to Eden introduced in their "1984" ad campaign. "Think Different," too, presents an Eve figure and celebrates those who leave the Garden, who creatively pursue a dream, who take a chance. An explication of the ad's use of Maria Callas and Gandhi illustrates this claim. Callas fans would immediately read the concert footage of Callas as coming from her late concert performances in the 1950s, a time when the recently beautifully slim Callas reigned on the operatic scene. Callas fans might also reflect on the image of a kissing Callas and associate that gesture with the only opera she ever sang that featured a dramatically significant kiss, Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*. While writing the libretto, Wagner struggled to build the mythic connections between the biblical Eve and his Kundry. Responding to Ludwig, his patron, about the significance of Kundry's kiss, Wagner wrote:

Adam and Eve become "knowing." They become "conscious of sin." Because of this consciousness the human race had to do penance in shame and misery until it was redeemed by Christ, who took upon Himself the sin of man. My dear, can I speak about such profound matters other than in metaphor, through comparison? But only the clear-sighted person can inform himself of the inner meaning. Adam-Eve: Christ. What it we added to them: "Amfortas-Kundry: Parsifal"? (qtd. in Groos, 31)

Kundry embodies the nineteenth-century trope of woman as temptress and virgin, a combination of the themes of temptation and redemption that Wagner, in his earlier *Tannhäuser*, split between the female characters Elizabeth and Venus (Plaut 183; see also Poizat 194). Callas sang Kundry early in her career before her rise at La Scala in 1951. At that time she was a large, dramatic woman with a powerful voice (Galatopoulos 89–90). Kundry, a suffering woman in need of redemption, has been cursed to live forever because she dared to laugh at the suffering Christ on the

cross. When she meets the innocent Parsifal—the “perfect fool”—she turns temptress and tries to seduce him with a kiss. At the turning point in his quest to serve the Holy Grail, Parsifal—unlike Adam in the Garden—rejects her kiss and flees. Years later, as an ordained Knight of the Holy Grail and transformed as a Christ-figure in the opera, Parsifal baptizes Kundry and announces her redemption.

The image of Callas as Kundry/Eve and Ghandi as Parsifal/Adam in the “Think Different” ad campaign extends the mythical associations with the Garden of Eden promoted in the earlier “1984” ad campaign. “Think Different” catches the kiss of Callas/Kundry/Eve just at the moment of Parsifal’s/Ghandi’s/Adam’s temptation. Catherine Clément, in *Syncope: The Philosophy of Rapture*, describes Ghandi’s embodiment of sycopic strategies in the political arena, specifically Ghandi’s life of nonviolence and chastity. Clément, in an image that resonates with the legend of Parsifal, calls the reformer Ghandi “a knight” who openly professed suffering from his asceticism, the pains of “a renouncer’s chastity.” For Ghandi, as well as for Parsifal as a follower of the Holy Grail, “fasting was his main syncope,” the source of his personal and political power (Clément 243–245). Interestingly, Callas also endured much to achieve a body image equal to her musical talent, an act of personal discipline that dramatically altered her career, her personal life, and ultimately became a part of the Callas legend (Tommasini B4). Midway through the “Think Different” television ad, Callas/Kundry/Eve tempts Ghandi/Parsifal/Adam, a subtle reminder of the moment of choice for all that leave the Garden, for all who take a bite of the Apple.

In addition to reinscribing corporate and cultural myths, the “Think Different” campaign also exploits necrophilic preoccupations associated with end-of-century aesthetics (Goldman 60). In our millennium moment, the proliferation of visual imagery that saturate our media reflects our culture’s preoccupation with reflexive rhetorical and aesthetic strategies. Critical response to the first broadcast of the ad focused on these strategies. For example, James Martin, a media critic, noted that the ad was “amusing rather than offensive (it’s too ridiculous to be offensive).” Characterizing Apple customers as “lemming-like consumers,” he read the intended response to the ad as follows: “Gee, if I buy an Apple computer, I’ll be just as smart as Albert Einstein and discover a new theory of relativity and get to grow my hair long . . .” (22). Asked if it was overreaching to involve Einstein, Gandhi and Picasso in pitching their product, representatives from Apple declared that homage, not exploitation, was the goal: “We would never associate these people with any product; it’s Apple celebrating them versus Apple using them. To say that Albert Einstein would have used a computer would cross the line. Why would he need one? But it’s different to say he looked at the work differently” (qtd. in Elliott, “The Media Business” 1D).

Through the use of documentary-style images, the video ad creates an amphigorical perspective—a kind of burlesque, nonsense writing or parody—and it is this amphigorical perspective that both troubles and appeals. As Paul Edwards argues, “It is impossible to draw the line between earnest, unhappy parody and more amphigorical attitudes: happily smart-ass mimicry, selfish appropriation, or sheer irresponsible unresponsiveness” (296). Given the artful black-and-white images and the lofty delivery of the spoken text, the amphigorical attitude emerges only upon critical reflection. Indeed, the formal visual structures of the ad carefully and

tellingly harmonize with the rhythms and nuances of the spoken narration. One particular moment in the ad clearly reveals the attention to verbal syntax and underscores the playful tone of the amphigorical perspective within this mirrored heterotopian site: the image of Jim Henson manipulating Kermit the frog appears while Dreyfuss deftly notes “we see genius.” By placing the emphasis on individual perspective rather than product, the ad effectively connects with the shifting cultural attitudes towards technology in our time. In the words of media critic Kathy Tyler: “Despite some of the criticism that the campaign is not ‘different’ enough, Apple’s idea of branding the consumer who uses the computer instead of the computer itself is timely today. It may have been ahead of its time more than a decade ago, but the changing definition of computing makes Apple’s message on target. Computing today has much more to do with people and communication than 13 years ago, when it represented a tool to run a business” (6).

We All Want to “Think Different”

What does “Think Different” tell us about spectatorship in a world dominated by mediatised visual images? “Think Different” works to capitalize on visual appeals in terms of memory, fame, and cultural status. Counterposing corporate culture and the specific cultural moment reveals the complex layering of contradictory dualities that constitute the visual grammar of this ad. James Martin, a media critic, refers to the contradictory forces in contemporary advertising as “content dissonance,” noting that it “occurs when an advertisement that follows (or precedes) an article is so at odds with the content of the article that it renders the advertisement either offensive or absurd, like insipid ads placed in the middle of serious stories or a silly television commercial that follows news of a tragedy. It is easy to spot; and once you’ve got the hang of it, you’ll see it everywhere” (23). “Think Different” exploits the power of content dissonance as a means of cultural circulation and identification. Read only as documentary footage, as vestiges of real people in real places, the particulars of historical fact negate the rhetorical argument of “Think Different”—namely, that all of these individuals contributed in equal ways to the betterment of all by thinking differently. The visual juxtaposition and voice-over narration used throughout the ad, however, move the ad beyond mere reportage or quotation. The boldness of reference and audacity of association within the ad, through the techniques of intellectual montage, open a mirrored heterotopian site of renewal and possibility.

Audiences can read the visual icons of “Think Different” in a multiplicity of ways, sometimes consuming the text within the dominant ideology, sometimes recoding the text entirely, sometimes mixing elements of dominant or emerging ideologies. As S. Paige Baty reminds us: “Iconic remembering is fundamental to mass-mediated circulation. Icons are culturally resonant units that convey a familiar set of ‘original’ meanings and images. Because they represent content as form [. . .] they also provide a surface on which struggles over meanings can be waged” (59). These struggles are shaped, in part, by the audience’s willingness and ability to identify and make associations between and beyond the specific images.

The design and reception of “Think Different” reveal how cultural forces and media content are mutually self-referential and reinforcing. Indeed, Apple’s use of images of twentieth-century innovators—ranging from Bob Dylan to Maria Callas,

Einstein to Ghandi—speaks to corporate image processes designed to exploit the collapse of high and low culture and the globalization of cultural referent. Paul Messaris acknowledges that “some degree of specific experience with propositional editing may be required for a viewer to be able to recognize its characteristic patterns of juxtaposition and iteration as frameworks for the conceptual integration of images” (111). Given the popularity and critical acclaim surrounding “Think Different,” it can be assumed that most viewers got the point.

Advertising, Williamson argues, possesses the power to serve both specific ideological forces and individual desire: “Ideology is the meaning made necessary by the conditions of society while helping to perpetuate those conditions. We feel a need to belong, to have a social ‘place’; it can be hard to find. Instead we may be given an imaginary one. All of us have a genuine need for a social being, a common culture. The mass media provide this to some extent and can (potentially) fulfil a positive function in our lives” (13). Ultimately the marketing strategy in “Think Different” was, paradoxically, at once self-serving and visionary. Operating in a materialist and ahistorical culture, Apple extolled the virtue of rebelliousness to creative young professionals and marketed itself as the rebellious computer company. By doing so, it attempted to sell product through consumer identification with corporate myth. “Mythical thought,” Levi-Strauss contends, “builds ideological castles out of the debris of what was once social discourse” (qtd. in Williamson, 97). The surprising and contrasting celebrity-images appropriated in the ad create an amphigorical perspective framed as tribute, structured as polemic, and sold as advertisement, and this works for those consumers who want and expect an edge, a spin (both visual and conceptual), history and common sense be damned.

Visual rhetoric assumes particular force as a means of evoking cultural myths in marketing, particularly in an age preoccupied with the reframing and recirculation of individual lives as iconic images. The corresponding impulse to read these images as mythic narrative powers “Think Different.” A string of documentary images become hallucinatory history/memory, blending the “high” with the “low” and leveling out class, bleaching out race, and erasing time. “Think Different” evokes the cultural myth of renewal and rebirth, a universal faith in the power of technology, progress, and the human potential. The ad functions as a postmodern media Eucharist, feeding the living images of the dead and evoking a desire for the bread and the body, the wine and the blood, a truth and a vision, a salvation myth and a constructed future. The final image of the young girl opening her eyes presents the imagined ideal world citizen (as a person waking from sleep? a person moving from darkness into light? Eve after taking a bite out of the Apple?). The future is here for all who think Apple.

Thinking About “Think Different”

In true postmodern fashion, the slogan, visual rhetoric and amphigorical tone of “Think Different” have been quoted and recirculated in a variety of venues as a form of product, media, and cultural critique. Steven Levy, for example, turns the ad campaign’s slogan against Apple in his review of the company’s 2000 product line, suggesting that it might be time to “stop Thinking Different” (“Should I Stay or Should I Go?” 45; “Apple’s iBook” 54–56). Visual artist Alex Tehrani, in his 1998

series of photographs of people in Times Square, captured the massive "Think Different" image of opera diva Callas on the side of a building staring down over the shoulder of an unidentified black man next to a designated "hard hat area." With the photographs in the Times Square Project, Tehrani "provided an inversion of spectator and spectacle, audience and performer in a neighborhood in which the mongrel theater of the street competes with the legitimate theatre indoors" (Frailey 88). And, in another cycle of circulation testifying to the relevance of the *amphigorical perspective in contemporary marketing*, this particular image from the Times Square Project was featured on the cover of the July/August 1998 issue of *Print*, a graphic design magazine.¹⁰

More aggressive appropriations soon followed. In late 1998 and early 1999, Hocus Focus, a guerrilla art group, reacted to Apple's use of counter culture figures in the campaign. According to its website, Hocus Focus is comprised of artists dedicated to "conducting rituals to reanimate the archetypes whose images have been rendered lifeless on billboards, city buildings, and magazine covers in the service of Apple Computer Corporation's international 'Think Different' marketing campaign."¹¹ In an effort to turn back the "mass cynicism" perpetuated by ads such as "Think Different," the members of Hocus Focus carefully orchestrated a series of midnight alterations, adding text to Apple's billboard images in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. To an Apple billboard featuring the image of Ghandi, Hocus Focus activists added the phrase "corporate colonization of the unconscious" as well as a question mark after "Think Different." To a "Think Different" image of Callas, they added "prefer a pitch more sublime." According to Judith Coburn, a performance critic for *The Village Voice*, although Hocus Focus respects Apple's savvy in selecting culturally resonant figures, they resist and condemn the facile commodification of the dead:

Using these heroes as "savage appliance hucksters" strips them of their cultural potency. They aren't simply co-opted, but become dead for us. "We are in a constant exchange with archetypal figures like these with whom we engage to orient ourselves psychologically. The morphing of these figures into retail salespeople creates direct psychic disorientation within us," argues one of the group's mission statements, in their heady brew of Jung, Marcuse, and Debord. (47)

Hocus Focus' acts of artistic protest (or vandalism) speak directly to the viewer and indirectly to the Apple Corporation. By drawing attention to how advertising works, Hocus Focus aims to empower consumers to resist the rhetorical and mythic appeal of the ad. Their midnight revisions of Apple's "Think Different" billboards construct "meanings that challenge people to think (if not differently)" (Coburn 47).

Additional reactions to "Think Different" continued to circulate, evidence of the pervasiveness and, for some, potential perverseness of the ad's *amphigorical perspective*. Consider, for example, the front and back covers of the April 20, 1998, issue of *New York*. The back cover featured the image of Maria Callas in a "Think Different" print ad, and the front cover featured an image of gutter-TV host Jerry Springer assuming a similar pose. Commenting on the visual parody, Steven Heller dismissed the cover image as evidence of a striking lack of originality in contem-

porary periodical publishing (10). However, the fact that the juxtaposed images were used at all assumes that the general reader would make the connection and get the joke. Another example of the recirculation of "Think Different" appears in a personal website established in 1998. The website underscores the dark side of "Think Different" with a group of images entitled "Ads that Apple Didn't Release." This gallery of images features the likes of mass murders, including Adolf Hitler, as those who also "Think Different" (Bernard). A final example of the recirculation of "Think Different" appeared in a more traditional venue, the *New York Times*. In a series of full-page ads, the organizers of the Turning Point Project warned readers of the danger of megatechnology. Their third installment, "The Internet and the Illusion of Empowerment" challenged readers with the following: "Think Different. (Think differently, actually). Start asking questions about how this revolution is going. For inspiration you might check the work of, well, Gandhi, who actually spent his life working against the kind of centralizing technology that global computer systems represent" (A13).

"Think Different" entered American cultural life through a carefully orchestrated synergistic campaign. Given the number of texts that revise, recycle, and recirculate "Think Different," perhaps in this instance the synergy built message resistance and fatigue, as well as product recognition. Taken together, the many responses provoked by "Think Different" underscore the extent to which the advertising campaign spoke to the cultural forces that animate the contemporary moment. "Think Different" problematically and creatively mixed high and low cultural appeals, reached out to specific demographics, reinscribed corporate and cultural myths, and ultimately constructed the "ideal audience/consumer" for the computer product. Walter Benjamin predicted that with the rise of visual images in our culture (specifically, the use of photography in advertising), the caption would become the "most important component of the shot" (25).¹² In "Think Different," Richard Dreyfuss' narration and the carefully edited images plead the amphigorical logic of this mirrored heterotopian site. An act of cultural narration and utopian projection, the television, billboard and print ads of the "Think Different" campaign synergistically construct a vision of an Apple-dominated world filled with consumers who, paradoxically, all "think different."

Responses to that mediated construction, the image from the mirror, varied. In a critique of the synergistic marketing strategies used to promote popular films such as *The Blair Witch Project*, Janet Maslin warns of the corroding effects of aggressive marketing. She argues that the "accumulated impact of this much stealth marketing, and of the cultural cross-pollination that synergy entails, is to foster an atmosphere of deep mistrust" (Maslin E1). Perhaps Apple's "Think Different" created such feelings. No doubt, although many in the audience accepted the surface idealism of "Think Different," others rejected the deeper amphigorical logic of the ad and the saturation of the campaign. Nevertheless, as media theorist Mark Poster reminds us in his discussion of Foucault and cultural power: "Anything can be associated with anything else for a viewing subject who is structured by the rhetoric of the commercial" (120). And for Apple consumers during the closing months of the last century, most seemed ready to buy it: Callas' kiss awaits those who leave the Garden.

Notes

¹Stuart Elliot, a *New York Times* reporter, quickly drew connections between Disney and the marketing appeal of Apple's "Think Different" ("New Apple Ad").

²A variety of Apple press releases related to the campaign, including "Apple Launches Brand Advertising Campaign, September 29, 1997," are archived on the Apple website at (<http://www.apple.com/pr/library>). Photos of a "Think Different" billboard and store display campaign can be found at (<http://product.info.apple.com/pr/photos/ads/adphotos.html>) and (<http://www.expectingrain.com/ads/thinkdifferent.html>). In Boston, the South Train Station served as a site for saturation display of the ads. According to a *Boston Globe* reporter, during early 1998 "Think Different" posters used most of the available advertising space, usually shared by forty different companies (Reidy). CNN broadcast reports describing the origins, goals and success of "Think Different" ("Apple CEO Announcement"; "Award Winning Ads").

³For a summary of the impact of management tactics, advertising, and product innovation on Apple's changing financial fortunes, see Bartholomew. For an example of critical response to the "Think Different" campaign a year after it began, see Alonso.

⁴Debra Goldman explains this necrophilic turn: "In the '90s, we extol thinking different, but we reward people who think the same. If you don't believe me, try playing a game I suspect devotees of this campaign are already playing: Choose three candidates fit for a place on the 'Think Different' honor roll. They have to meet three criteria: They must have a high-enough celebrity quotient to be recognized by Apple's target market. They have to be real innovators. And to make it challenging, they can't be businesspeople. Where will you find them, among the quick or the dead? My three picks would be George Balanchine, Coco Chanel and Charlie Parker: May they rest in peace" (61). To promote interest in the campaign and to teach history and computer literacy, Apple urged the public to participate in a "Think Different Quiz" established on the corporation website.

⁵Readers are encouraged to download the advertisement from the Apple Website. To view the video, access (<http://www.thinkdifferent.nu/td/video.html>).

⁶Matzer conducted a survey of *Los Angeles Times* readers to determine which of that year's Emmy-nominated ads the readers considered most creative and emotionally effective. Results revealed that e-mail response to the survey favored the Apple commercial. Noting that several of the e-mail votes for the Apple ad originated from persons on the e-mail system of TBWA Chiat/Day, the advertising firm that created the spot, Matzer dryly concluded: "Guess they don't 'think different'" (6).

⁷For a discussion of contemporary marketing appeals to the gay community, see "Gay Advertising Examined."

⁸A photo of a bus bearing the image of Rosa Parks can be found at (<http://product.info.apple.com/pr/photos/ads/adphotos.html>).

⁹I am indebted to Susan J. Leonardi and Rebecca A. Pope for the phrase and concept "prima donna politics." In *The Diva's Mouth: Body, Voice, Prima Donna Politics*, they explore the place of the female voice in cultural life, providing a detailed feminist explication of the image of the prima donna in contemporary life and literature. They argue that "opera seems these days to cross boundaries between elite and popular entertainment in a way that calls these categories into question, so too do divas" (22). As I argue in this essay, the iconic images in "Think Different" function as cultural prima donnas, collapsing the categories of high and low culture.

¹⁰The *Print* cover image appears in conjunction with Frailey's essay on Tehrani's Times Square Project. Only one photo in Tehrani's series featured the Callas image as backdrop/context.

¹¹Hocus Focus' website (<http://www.HocusFocus.org>) contains information about the group and their performances, as well a gallery of images designed to subvert the Apple campaign. For information concerning the defacement of the Apple billboard near highway 101 in San Carlos, California, in April 1998, access (<http://www.zdnet.com/zdnn/content/zdnn/0428/311073.html>). According to Lisa M. Bowman (on the website), the words "Think Dissillusioned" replaced "Think Different." As a sign of not being willing to think too differently (and not willing to offend the Chinese government), the incident occurred shortly after Apple announced that the corporation would not use the image of the Tibetan leader in Hong Kong.

¹²Mark Roskill and David Carrier provide a convincing example of the power of Walter Benjamin's "caption" to guide viewer response in their explication of a recent Chanel #5 ad featuring Catherine Deneuve (37-39).

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