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Constructing the Prophet: Steve Jobs and the Messianic Myth of Apple

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Rhetoric

Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By

Scott Forsyth Mickey

Lewiston, Maine

March 22, 2013

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## Abstract

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011 the cofounder and President of Apple Inc., Steve Jobs, passed away. His death invoked a tremendous exhibit of grief from the public, complete with candlelight vigils, shrines, and a surge of digital activity praising his accomplishments. Tributes and obituaries to the deceased American icon often used religious language and motifs. This cooptation of sacred symbols by the media reflects a growing tendency to sacralize technology in the modern era. As traditional religions morph, many individuals search for a different means of spiritual engagement and for some, Apple's devices are perceived as a way of connecting with the divine. In conjunction with this phenomenon, the mainstream media outlets have delineated Steve Jobs as the central figure of a religious movement by chronicling his life. Utilizing the theories developed by Wilson Moses and James Darsey on messianism and the rhetorical creation of a prophet, this thesis critically views the construction of The Messianic Myth of Apple. This narrative frames Apple as the heart of a messianic movement grounded in the ideals of change and transcendence through technology. Meanwhile Jobs assumes the role of prophet, the savior who provides devices of individual, social, and mystical satisfaction.

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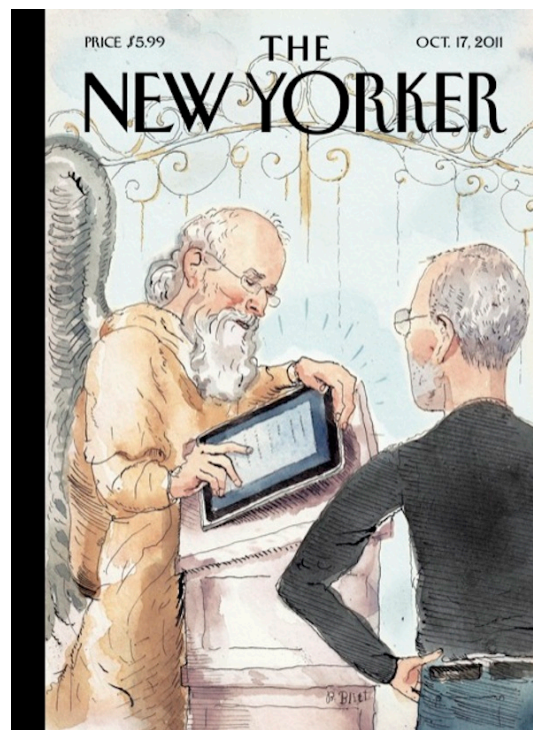
## Introduction

On October 5, 2011, Steve Jobs, cofounder, chairman, and CEO of Apple Inc. passed away. His death was immediately followed but a worldwide outpouring of grief as people mourned his passing with “pilgrimages to the company’s stores” (Rosenwald), personal notes of thanks, video tributes, and a shrine outside of Apple’s corporate headquarters in Cupertino, California, complete with candlelight vigils. So notable was this event that *Time Magazine* stopped its presses for the first time in 20 years to produce a new issue with Jobs on the cover (Horn). Across television networks and the Internet, people praised Jobs as a “visionary” and a “cultural leader” whose work “transformed one industry after another, from computers and smartphones to music and movies” (Sarno and Goffard). New York Mayor Bloomberg hailed Jobs’ vision and his impact, stating, “Steve Jobs saw the future and brought it to life long before most people could even see the horizon” and his “passionate belief in the power of technology to transform the way we live ... brought knowledge and power that is reshaping the face of civilization” (Effron). Similarly, Mark Zuckerberg said, “thanks for showing that what you build can change the world” (Effron). Explicit appreciation of Jobs’ vision, products, and role in shaping society were prevalent themes in many texts that surfaced after his death, a fact that bespeaks his cultural importance.

For some however, Jobs was more than a figure to be respected, he was a spiritual guide of the technological age. The vast amount of praise he received, and the emotional responses to his death, reflect a relationship with consumers that was religious in nature. Many of the tributes and comments after his death were infused with religious terminology and imagery. Alluding to Jobs’ spiritual leadership, Howard Stringer, CEO of Sony Corp., commented, “the digital age has lost its leading light” (Effron). Light has always been a symbol of divinity and it carries with it a

1 spiritual connotation. The fact Jobs is recognized as the “leading” light of this age, speaks to his position as out in front—leading. *USA Today* more directly calls attention to Jobs’ role as a spiritual guide describing him as “an almost mystical figure in technology circles as well as popular culture” (Swartz and Welch). According to *The Los Angeles Times*, Jobs brought “a messianic intensity to his message that technology was a tool to improve human life and unleash creativity” (Swartz and Welch). In describing him as “mystical” and “messianic,” these articles frame Jobs religiously, suggesting a connection with the divine.

The religious imagery that appeared after Jobs’ death also reflects a spiritual association. *The New Yorker* dedicated an issue to Jobs, putting an image of him standing in front of Heaven’s gates as Saint Peter scrolls through an iPad. The cover implies that the iPad is a divine technology, used by the apostles themselves. It also positions this technology and Jobs as fundamentally good, worthy of existing within the heavenly realm.



(The New Yorker)

This same allusion to St. Peter is used by a tribute video from Next Media Animation, a

company dedicated to reporting contemporary news stories through CGI-rendered videos (NMATV). The video features scenes of fans waving glowing iPads and iPhones skyward. The camera cuts to a view of the Earth from outer space and then zooms out as lights begin to populate the Americas. The viewer next sees Jobs walking up to the gates of Heaven. The camera focuses on the screen of the iPad in Saint Peter's hands as he scrolls through several headshots, until he reaches a picture of Jobs. St. Peter then puts his arm around Jobs' shoulders and leads him through the gates. Similar to the cover of *The New Yorker*, this allusion to St. Peter positions both Jobs and Apple technology as heavenly. Not only is Jobs allowed into heaven, a fact that suggests his goodness, but St. Peter also uses Apple technology to catalog those deemed worth of entrance. This implies that the device stores divine knowledge. The religious symbolism used in presenting Jobs and Apple technology associates them with the divine.

The examples discussed thus far all appeared immediately after Jobs' death and reflect a perception of Jobs and Apple as spiritual. This perception is manifest in the way some people express their devotion to the company. Alexander Kahney, author of *The Cult of Mac*, chronicles the ritualistic practices of Apple users. Kahney notes that some fans get Apple tattoos and haircuts to demonstrate their beliefs. He states that it is not about advertising, "it's about homage" (Kahney 58). People want to express their love for the brand and do so through self-alteration, literally taking the company into their body. Other devotees pay homage by undertaking pilgrimages to the Macworld conference, which is often compared to a "religious revival" (Kahney 5). People travel thousands of miles to this communal gathering and before Jobs became too ill to attend, many camped out all night to hear him speak. Other forms of Apple devotion appear in Mac collection, customization, and songs not written on, but about



Macs. These acts of devotion are reminiscent of religious practices, and speak to the way in which Steve Jobs and Apple hold personal significance and meaning for many Mac fans.

The incorporation of biblical allusions in tributes to Jobs, reflects a spiritual tone that has been the focus of significant popular attention. In discussing the results of a research study completed before Jobs' death, CNN reported, "for Apple fans, the brand triggers a reaction in the brain that's not unlike that of religious devotees" (Milian). After his death, the *Washington Post* acknowledged similar religious qualities of Apple, writing, "In a secular age, Apple has become a religion, and Steve Jobs was its high priest" (Rosenwald). Rosenwald recognizes that for some, Apple fulfills many of the same functions as traditional religion, an idea supported by the cult-like behavior of Apple fans that many have compared to religious fanaticism. Steve Jobs, assumes a prophetic position in this religion by being the company's founder, its public face, and in the end, a martyr. These associations between Apple and religion reflect a growing tendency to find religious significance in traditionally secular areas.

The fanatic devotion of Apple fans has inspired many scholars to examine the religious dimensions of the company and its leader. Some of these authors note religious themes in Apples corporate mythology (Campbell and La Pastina; Shields; Stein). Campbell and La Pastina focus on the labeling of the iPhone as the 'Jesus phone'—paying particular attention to the appropriation of religious language and imagery by bloggers. They conclude that religion serves as a "broad cultural pallet" (1204) that can be used within the media to endow items and ideas with added meaning. Discussing the biblical allusions in Apple's "Think Different" campaign, Shields argues that the ad contained "mythical associations with the Garden of Eden" (Shields 211). Stein's analysis of the "1984" ad reveals another biblical allusion in Apple's mythology. She states that the Macintosh presented a "David versus Goliath" narrative, promising "a future

freed from tyranny and the constraints on an unbridled creative renaissance” (Stein 182). The work of these authors reflects an historic association between biblical myths and Apple.

Other scholars attending to the spiritual qualities of Apple discovered religious themes in individual and group devotion to the company (Belk and Tumbat; Kahney; Lam; Muniz and Schau). Belk and Tumbat and Kahney recognize the similarities between the Apple community and a cult. They maintain that the community is mythically based and functions to provide users with a sense of belonging. Muniz and Schau and Lam also attend to the religious dimensions of the Apple community, but focus their analyses on group veneration of Apple products. They maintain that for some, Apple devices present a means of religious engagement. This body of scholarly work further indicates that the relationship between Apple and religion is not superficial, but that many people do find spiritual meaning in Apple and its products.

The religious framing of Jobs and Apple indicates a blurring of the sacred and secular that has taken place over the past several decades. In the 1960’s, the governing wisdom was that society tends to secularize as modernization occurs however, this has not been the case (Taylor XIII). Many scholars see the apparent decline of religion not as its death, but as a morphing or a widespread sacralization of the secular (Detweiler and Taylor; Featherstone; Lyon; Miller; Taylor). In his book *After God*, Mark Taylor writes, religion is “no longer confined to [the] church, synagogue, and mosque,” but has “taken to the streets” (1). However, “while formal religions may decline, symbolic classifications and ritual practices...live on at the heart of the secular social processes” (Featherstone 121). With the coming of the modern era, the traditionally sacred has secularized, and the secular has become sacred. Modernism does not equate to the death of religion but instead, “the sacred continues to survive and reappear in various ways throughout consumer culture, often by ‘sacralizing’ the most secular aspects of the

late capitalist world itself” (Urban 272). These objects of sacralization include, “consumer commodities, business structures, and new media technologies” (Urban 272). Many people who previously found spirituality in religious institutions, now find meaning in other areas.

Several authors attribute the blurring of the sacred and secular to the rise of advanced technology (Campbell and La Pastina; Sotlow; Urban). Jeremy Sotlow, in *Deus in Machina*, writes, “the precarious lines dividing humans from non-humans, the living from the inanimate, or nature from the supernatural... have become increasingly blurred through the development of advanced technological systems” (46). These systems extend human capacities beyond their previous limitations, challenging previously held notions of the possible and impossible. In a world where genetic engineering allows the creation of artificial life and particle accelerators enable the cosmic reproduction of Earth’s first seconds, the line between divinity and humanity becomes fluid. Furthermore, when we can see the surface of mars, or a baby in utero, we experience the mysteries of life formerly thought divinely inaccessible. Advances in technology allow individuals to do and experience things thought impossible and things not fully understood.

For some scholars, the sacralization of the secular is evident in communication technologies (Alexander; Campbell 2013; Campbell and La Pastina; Lam; Muniz and Schau). These advanced networks are seen as divine entities (Cobb; Stahl) or as a means of connecting with divinity (Campbell 2013; Campbell and La Pastina; Davis). Campbell and La Pastina argue, “with the rise of computers and the internet, the tendency to equate technological engagement with religious pursuits has been further strengthened” (1193). Cyberspace offers unlimited information anywhere, anytime, and to anyone. It allows people to surf through the metaphoric “cloud” and transcend reality into another digital world, free of class, race, and social constraints.

Cyberspace has many similarities to a divine entity and its increasing presence in everyday life causes people to engage it, and the devices that connect to it, spiritually.

Recognizing a fundamental human need for religious myth, Pui-Yan Lam, in her 2001 work, saw religious devotion to the Macintosh computer as rooted in the “battle between good and evil in computer technology” (260). She concluded her paper by questioning whether or not this devotion would continue if Apple gained market dominance. Aided by historical distance, I posit that the brand devotion Lam recognized continues as demonstrated by the Messianic Myth of Apple. I maintain that while this myth does incorporate a good and evil dichotomy, it is grounded at its most basic level in the aspirations of change and transcendence through technology.

In developing the Messianic Myth of Apple, I rely on theories of messianism, the prophetic ethos, myth, technology, and discussions that combine these to varying degrees. Messianism provides insight into the sociological elements of the prophetic story. The prophetic ethos is used to understand the rhetorical construction of the prophet and the cultural significance of this narrative. The messianic story, in presenting a divinely inspired social leader, functions mythically.

Myth is the fundamental means through which humans make sense of the world. These stories “are the glue of society that binds us to one another and to our traditions” (Kelley-Romano 385). In their fullest form, myths are religions. Religious myths function pedagogically, sociologically, and mystically. I argue that the Messianic Myth of Apple demonstrates the formal characteristics of a religious myth but ultimately fails to function as such.

In my analysis, I rely on a variety of articles and videos<sup>1</sup> that were produced by major

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<sup>1</sup> BBC’s documentary *Steve Jobs: Billion Dollar Hippy*, a *60 Minutes* special dedicated to Steve Jobs, a tribute video produced by IGN, and the *New York Times* obituary of Jobs.

media outlets shortly after Jobs' passing and argue that these artifacts frame Apple's messianism as a religious myth grounded in the belief of social transcendence and change through technology. Jobs is positioned as the embodiment of these messianic ideals through the rhetorical construction of the prophetic ethos. His prophetic role is reinforced through the spiritual depiction of his products that renders him a bridge between divinity and laity. I maintain that the artifacts present this messianic narrative as a religious myth that functions pedagogically, sociologically, and mystically. This story serves as a religious metaphor through which we can understand the values and beliefs of the Apple community. In my conclusion, I offer some implications of this study for mythmaking in the modern world, the search for spiritual engagement in a secularizing society, and the need for further scholarly attention in this area.

The choice to ground this analysis in major media obituaries and tributes began with my initial interest in Apple. I would not consider myself an Apple devotee, but I undoubtedly have appreciation for and a reliance on its products. In reading about Jobs' death, I was struck by the incredibly emotional messages of thanks and noticed a prevalence of religious allusions. In searching for ways to make sense of this phenomenon, I discovered the work of James Darsey, a scholar of prophetic rhetoric, whose work I recognized as immensely relevant and forms a central part of my analysis.

Darsey's comprehensive work provides insight into the rhetorical creation of the prophetic story. He writes, "the problem of the prophetic office is biographical, and there is a real sense...in which it can only be judged in its completion, in the end of the prophet" (33-4). The prophetic story "as presented by the prophet and his disciples becomes its own rhetoric, and it must be judged ...according to its aspirations and to the sympathies it creates" (Darsey 34). Messianic movements and figures can only fully be appreciated retroactively, for the prophet must die

before he or she can be canonized and his or her influence understood. Therefore, relying on artifacts produced posthumously allowed for a complete reconstruction of the specific elements and values proffered by the Messianic Myth of Apple.

The purpose of this study is to add to the larger discussions of the sacralization of technology and the secularization of religion. Examining the rhetoric surrounding technology is imperative because “only by understanding the omnipresent shaping of technological consciousness by discourse can we hope to gain control over technology in its material form” (Alexander 170). Discourse shapes how we perceive and interact with the world. Consequently, understanding technological discourse informs us about our perception and use of technology. Furthermore, technology changes not only what information we have access to, and therefore what we can know, but also how we come to know and how we position ourselves in the world. Analyzing the combination of religious and technological discourse is important in understanding how individuals and groups find and express meaning.

Religious myth provides humans with “ways of life” and “ways of acting,” helping them to make sense of reality (Flood 2). These myths are characterized by the feelings of awe and wonder that they instill in believers. They are myths that deal with questions of transcendence, the unknowable, and God. Their prevalence reflects a fundamental human need for spiritual engagement. However, traditional religious myths are in decline. In their place, people are finding meaning in the modern consumer world by sacralizing the secular aspects of society. The Messianic Myth of Apple is one example of an attempt to find spiritual meaning in late capitalist society. The relationship between Apple and the now deceased Steve Jobs provides insight into the role of technology in American lives and into the implications of finding spiritual meaning in consumer electronics.

## History

In 1976, Steven Jobs founded Apple Computers and began a revolution that would fundamentally alter the way humans interact with technology. While Jobs worked at Apple, he oversaw every detail and made the company into “an expression of [his] personal ethos” (Grossman “How Apple Does It”). He infused the company with his counterculture beliefs and promoted technology as a means of liberation, helping to shift the computer from a symbol of power and control to a symbol of “freedom and expression” (Markoff in Isaacson 57). In this way, Apple and Jobs came to be seen as rebels, a portrayal that would stick with them for the next thirty years. Jobs’ relationship with Apple changed the way humans engaged with technology, shaping “what entertainment we watch, how we listen to music, and what sort of objects we use to work and play” (Elkind). His impact made him into an American iCon (Jenkins 482), subsequently developing a relationship with the public that many described in religious terms and criticized as cult-like (Belk and Tumbat; Kahney; Lam; Muniz and Schau).

The genesis of the modern computer has come to be a key element of human communication but, to a large extent, the spread of this technology was defined by a relationship between two children of the counterculture era and a computer hobbyist club. In 1970, a mutual acquaintance introduced Steven Jobs to Steven Wozniak, a fellow computer enthusiast. The two became friends and began attending meetings of the Homebrew Computer Club, a loose association of counterculture hackers who gathered to share their ideas and discuss emerging technologies (Dormehl). The club was underpinned by a “cultural freedom-fighting ideology” that resonated with Jobs who saw the proliferation of technology as a means of liberation and empowerment (Dormehl). Jobs internalized the idea of “technology for the people” (The Editors of Fortune) and “became bent on starting a company of his own to build computers for

individuals, and he convinced Wozniak to start it with him” (MIT). Together, the two founded Apple Computers on April 1, 1976 and they poured into it their rebellious attitudes and desire to make computers accessible to the average consumer.

Wozniak engineered Apple’s first computer, the Apple I, and Jobs sold it to a local computer store, which ordered fifty of the devices. They began constructing this first order of Apple I’s, with the help of friends and family, in Jobs’ garage in Palo Alto, California (Linzemeyer 8). The Apple I was a step forward in computer human relations because it simplified the user interface, making the machine more easily accessible to those who were unfamiliar with the device. The machine allowed users to type “a character on a keyboard and [see] it show up on their own computer’s screen...” (Isaacson 61). Before this, people interacted with their computers through a “cryptic front panel with a bunch of lights and switches” (Wozniak in Isaacson 66). This advance was the first step in moving computers out of the hobbyists’ garages, and into the hands of the average public who did not have the expertise to use the complicated front panel inputs.

Jobs and Wozniak founded Apple computers together but while they both signed the partnership agreement, Apple was almost entirely Jobs’ child. As Wozniak states, “it never crossed my mind to sell computers;” that was all Jobs (Isaacson 62). Jobs never had the ability to make breakthroughs in technology however, he is given most of the credit for Apples products as he was the company’s creator, its public persona, and meticulously oversaw every detail of the company (Evans). Wozniak was integral as an engineer but Jobs, during the time he spent at Apple, was the marketer, director, and promoter of its counterculture ideology of technology for the masses.

The next stage of their quest to bring technology to the people was to make a product that



could nestle itself perfectly in the household of average Americans and would help people see computers as items for everyday use, not just for backroom technicians and scientists. Jobs “understood before anyone else the key to transforming the computer from a geek’s expensive toy into a household appliance” (Booth and Jackson) and so, for the Apple II, Jobs contracted a simple beige case that did not look out of the ordinary in a normal home. His understanding of design and technological vision contributed to the great success of the Apple II, which was released in 1977 and “would be marketed, in various models, for the next sixteen years” (Isaacson 84). The Apple II was “one of the first personal computers that wasn’t a hobbyist’s kit” (The Editors of Fortune) and its presence in the households of many average consumers led many people to consider it “the machine that defined personal computing” (Rubin). The Apple II, and its friendly easy to use interface, helped average Americans to see computers as household items and contributed to the increasing consumption them in the late 1970’s and early 80’s.

With the success of its second computer, Apple quickly grew in size and notoriety, moving out of Jobs’ family garage into multiple office buildings in Cupertino, California. On December 12, 1980, Apple went public. In the first day, the stock price jumped from \$22 to \$29, making it the most oversubscribed initial public offering since Ford Motors in 1956 (Isaacson 102). By the end of the month, the company was valued at \$1.97 billion, having made “three hundred people millionaires along the way” (Isaacson 103). After this great success, Jobs was featured on multiple magazine covers during the early 1980’s (Isaacson 106) and he became a prominent figure in the computer industry, exuding a rebellious persona in the public light. His publicity, success, and hippie image led him to become a somewhat of a celebrity in the tech world.

The creation of Apple and its incredible rise to the Fortune 500 is a popular myth among Apple followers. Comparing him to a well-known American myth, he has also been called “the Johnny Appleseed of personal computing” (The Editors of Fortune). The myths surrounding Jobs and Apple are numerous and are told throughout the Apple community (Kahney 254), which some authors have noted as cult like (Belk and Tumbat: Kahney: Levy). Among these myths are a creation myth (Belk and Tumbat 207), a savior myth surrounding Steve Jobs (Belk and Tumbat 207), and a belief in satanic opponents (Belk and Tumbat 207-8). This corporate mythology “sustains this cult of loyal followers” (Belk and Tumbat 208) and strengthens the cohesion within the Apple community.

One of the most prominent myths among Apple cultists is the satanic opponent myth. This myth revolves upon the troubled relationships between Apple and IBM in the 1980s, and Apple and Microsoft in the 1990’s and 2000’s; in both cases, Apple and Jobs are portrayed as the righteous good battling against the forces of evil. In 1981, established computer industry giant IBM released its first personal computer, coming into direct competition with the counterculture startup in Cupertino. Not straying far from their rebellious nature, Apple responded to IBM’s release by taking out an ad in the *Wall Street Journal* with the headline “Welcome, IBM. Seriously” (Adelstein). This ad positioned the upcoming battle of consumer technology “as a two-way contest between the spunky and rebellious Apple and the established Goliath IBM” (Isaacson 135). In attempting to keep his counterculture roots, Jobs, throughout his career, embraced the characterization of “himself as an enlightened rebel pitted against evil empires, a Jedi warrior or Buddhist samurai fighting the forces of darkness” (Isaacson 120). Jobs stated in an interview, “if [...] IBM wins, my personal feeling is that we are going to enter a computer Dark Ages for about twenty years” (Jobs in Young 235). Proclamations of this sort and Apple’s

marketing publicly cemented his role as IBM's opponent, perpetuating his and Apple's shared image as a freedom fighter that Jobs had nursed since his meetings at the Homebrew Computer Club (Dormehl). To many people, Jobs was seen as a promoter of technology as liberation while companies like IBM and Microsoft promoted technology as subjugation. This dichotomy strengthened the bonds between members of the Apple community by giving them a leader in their struggle against an evil opponent.

The contentious relationship between the rebellious Apple and Orwellian IBM was publically cemented when Apple released a 60-second television commercial, "1984," that was named the "Commercial of The Decade" by *Advertising Age* (Stein). In 1995, the magazine revised this label, retitling the ad as the "greatest commercial" of the last fifty years (Stein). The '1984' ad had a filming budget of \$750,000 and debuted during the third quarter of the 1984 Super bowl. Directed by Ridley Scott, it portrayed a rebellious young woman fleeing the Orwellian thought police and hurling a sledgehammer into a screen showing a floating head image of Big Brother.



(Kattan)

The ad framed Apple as a company fighting against omnipotent and malignant companies such as IBM and instilled a good/evil dichotomy in the minds of many Apple fans (Isaacson 135). Apple received an unprecedented publicity blast following the ad, which was featured on every major network. The commercial and publicity blast cemented Apple as a legitimate company, worthy of being viewed as a direct competitor of IBM (Morrison). After the commercial, Apple's product and its team of creators were featured in major articles in both *Rolling Stone* and *Newsweek* (Levy "The Birth of the Mac"). They were "the pirates" (Levy "The Birth of the Mac"). of Silicon Valley who were creating a machine that was entirely different and directly

against any created by IBM. '1984' reinforced Apple's rebellious ethos and framed it and the Macintosh as liberating the masses from evil corporations like IBM.

The computer featured in the 1984 ad was just as influential as the ad itself, featuring an easy-to-use interface that contributed to making computers yet more accessible to the general public. Named the Macintosh, the computer was first shipped on January 16, 1984. It was the first widely affordable machine to feature a 'desktop operating system' that could be navigated using a "mouse." Before this, computing was conducted with typed commands that required time and a certain degree of expertise or at least familiarity (The Editors of Fortune). Apple had already introduced the graphical interface in "The Lisa" but its "price, a user-unfriendly \$10,000, undercut its appeal" (The Editors of Fortune). Consequently, widespread use of the graphical interface and mouse of the Macintosh played "a key role in making society comfortable with the central technology of the age" and "set in motion a subtle intellectual process that [changed] the way people think about information and, ultimately, thought itself" (Elmer-DeWitt). The technological innovations of the Lisa and the popularization of them by Macintosh began the personal computer's "evolutionary course to its current status as an indispensable object in millions of every day lives" (Stein) and many Mac users look "back to 1984 as the dawning of a New Age of human empowerment" (Elkin and Voight). Being able to move windows around on a computer as one would papers on a desk gave people a frame of reference for using the device, helping them to become familiar with the new technology. The 'desktop' metaphor of the Macintosh strengthened people's relationships with their devices as it made computers easy to use and widely accessible.

In 1985, Jobs' relationship with Apple became strained as he and Apple's CEO John Sculley became embroiled in a power struggle, which culminated in a failed *coup d'état* by Jobs.

Angered by his actions the board officially ousted Jobs from his administrative duties on May 28, giving him the empty title of ‘Global Visionary’ (Isaacson 207). Roughly three months later, Jobs resigned from Apple, taking several key players with him. At the time, “many insiders [were] shocked by his removal; they fear[ed] Apple [had] lost the spirit and vision that made it into a business phenomenon” (The Editors of Fortune). Jobs was seen as the face of Apple’s nonconformist identity and his resignation set the company adrift.

While Jobs was in exile, he developed his relationship with art and technology by purchasing Pixar, a 3-D animation studio, which, at the time, focused on high-end graphics computers and software (Isaacson 241). Forbes called Pixar a place “where it’s impossible to tell the difference between a computer hacker and an artist” (The Editors of Fortune). This combination of art and technology was always what appealed to Jobs, as he later said, “it’s technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing” (Jobs in Lehrer). Computers were created to solve equations and make bombs but Jobs, and a handful of others like him, saw “the wonderful hidden potential: for song, laughter, poetry, community, family” (Johnson). Combining art and technology was Jobs’ focus at Pixar and later became a central pillar of Apple’s philosophy. The incorporation of humanities into technology influenced how people perceived computers, removing them from the concrete realm of numbers and work, and positioning them as facilitators of poetry, art, and music.

Jobs achieved great success and publicity at Pixar where he concentrated his efforts on the animation division, which produced a short film called *Tin Toy* that won the 1988 Academy Award for animated short films, the first computer-generated film to do so (Pixar). Afterwards, Jobs went to Disney, Pixar’s biggest customer, and proposed that the two companies make a movie together. Pixar and Disney teamed up and in 1995, they released *Toy Story*, which “was

the No. 1 box-office film of 1995” (Lohr). Two weeks after releasing *Toy Story*, Pixar went public, the biggest IPO of the year: “trading had to be delayed because there were too many buy orders” (Isaacson 291). The success of Pixar’s IPO brought Jobs back into the limelight for the first time since his exile from Apple. As Tim Balarin, an American technology columnist and consultant, said, “the fact that [Jobs has] defied history, allowing lightning to strike twice—first with Apple and now at Pixar—really solidifies our view of him as a visionary” (Balarin in Linzmayer). Jobs at Apple and Pixar demonstrated an ability to predict technological trends and these predictions contributed to widespread praise of his vision.

While Jobs rose at Pixar, Apple fell. The years of 1989-1991 presented a host of successful products from Apple, including the Mac Portable and PowerBook 100 but eventually, it began producing a number of poorly designed and marketed products that led to its near death experience in 1996. *Time* magazine called it “arguably the worst-managed compan[y] in the industry” (Alsop). Apple was mere months from going out of business. The board had tried to sell the company; nobody wanted it. Market share in 1996 had dwindled from 12% to a meager 4% and there was an exodus of software developers abandoning the platform (Elkin and Voight). Meanwhile, Jobs was trying to sell his computer company, NeXT, which he started at the same time as Pixar (Brooks). It was in an attempt to revitalize Apple that president Gil Amelio purchased the NeXT operating system, bringing Jobs back in “to lend a hand as a part-time adviser” (Lohr). However, Apple was Jobs’ “first child, and you know how hard it is to let the first child go” (Booth and Jackson). From the moment he returned it was unclear exactly what his role at Apple would be, but it was immediately obvious that it would not be a minor one.

Jobs returned to Apple in the midst of a social crisis. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a chaotic time of rapidly changing technology and degradation of traditional modes of

communication and structural institutions. The public feared “the era of global communications and the new media technologies,” which threatened “to dissolve all traditional institutional hierarchies” (Urban 272). The disappearance of these traditional structures was seen as “making way for a global McVillage, a Gaian brain, and a whole heap of chaos” (Davis 1). People became increasingly lost in this “limitless question mark” (Davis 1) and sought structure and stability in this rapidly shifting landscape.

Some people had faith in Jobs’ ability to guide them through this crisis so, six months after returning to Apple, the board ousted Amelio, with Jobs replacing him as an advisor and board member. Shortly after Amelio’s departure, “Jobs forced the resignation of most of Apple’s board members” (Edwards). He could make demands of Apple’s board because he was considered the company’s best chance for survival and brought “a spirit of enthusiasm to users and employees alike” (Booth et al). As soon as Wall street got wind that Jobs was running the company’s product review meetings, stock began to rise and in July, went “from about \$13 to \$20” (Isaacson 321); his iconic presence reassured investors. With his new administrative powers, Jobs installed a group of people who “were eager to keep him happy,” a move that gave him almost total control of the company (Isaacson 321). As Elkin and Voight wrote in *Brandweek*, “Steve Jobs hasn’t just reassumed the helm at Apple Computer, he has become Apple Computer...” Jobs was seen as “firmly at Apple’s helm” and once again “the rebel flag [flew] over” the company (Booth and Jackson). People viewed him as a manifestation of Apple’s rebellious creed, which it lost while he was in exile, but regained with his homecoming. Jobs would remain a synonym of the company until his death in 2011.

Many people recognized Jobs for his vision and for his work at Apple, but his heroic return to save his first-born child solidified his position as an industry leader and cultural icon.



To Apple followers, Jobs' return was "nothing short of emotional closure" (Elkin and Voight) and as Isaacson writes, "the return of Elvis would not have provoked a bigger sensation" (307). This was not only the return of Apple's creator, but "something akin to that of Luke Skywalker returning to fight what [...] cultists regarded as the evil empire" (Booth et al). Some people saw Jobs as the father of Apple and were curious to see how he would reign in his troubled first-born child (Booth et al), while others saw him as the "computer era's prodigal son" returning home from exile (Lohr). When Jobs heroically stepped onto stage at the 1997 Macworld expo, the "rapturous reaction" from the crowd was deafening (Dormehl). His return was a critical stage of his quest to make technology accessible to everyone and led people to see him as a hero and savior of the company. Crowds gathered to see the hero returned and hear him speak about his plans for revitalizing Apple.

From his return until 2008, Jobs gave a keynote speech at Macworld expo each year, a semi-religious "gathering of the faithful" (Heilemann) where Mac enthusiasts met with likeminded individuals to test products and disseminate new software for the platform. In 1997 Jobs spoke at the Expo for the first time since his return and in a move that appalled many followers, announced that Apple was partnering with Microsoft for a period of 5 years. Jobs' decision to partner with Microsoft was taken poorly by many Apple devotees who had, until this point, seen it "as the evil empire" (Booth and Jackson). At his announcement, many of the faithful booed and some even went so far as to cry (Stone). Many of the Mac faithful saw Microsoft as producing inferior products, which it forced on the public and had driven Apple to death's door ("The Apple of Microsoft's Eye").

However, while this partnership brought the two companies closer together, there was still palpable tension, which can be seen on the forums of sites like Macworld.com and

Cultofmac.com. One user on Macworld responded to an anti-Apple article writing, “Microsoft has proven again and again that they cannot build sexy, fun, elegant and instantly lovable products or software, even when they've had years to copy Apple” (iwdesign). The relationship between Apple devotees and Microsoft has always been strained and even today, many Mac users continue to see Microsoft as an inferior company. However, as Apple has reached dominance, the threat of Microsoft’s Orwellian domination is no longer a pressing concern. Consequently, many Mac users look down on Microsoft products but do not regard them with the same enmity as they did in the 1990’s. The decision to partner with Microsoft was controversial at the time, but while many Apple followers questioned this decision, they still felt excitement at the prospect of having Jobs return to the company.

Jobs ability to energize a crowd or boardroom has been noted by anyone who has seen or heard him speak and the “messianic zeal” (Booth and Jackson) with which he spoke kindled a cult-like following. After one of his launch events, Andrew Pollack of the *New York Times* called him “the Andrew Lloyd Webber of product introductions, a master of stage flair and special effects.” People nicknamed Jobs’ charisma his “reality distortion field” (Pollack). A term from Star trek, the label represents his magnetic personality and ability to persuade people of things they held to be untrue (Madrigal). Debi Coleman of the original Macintosh team said, “he laser-beamed in on you and didn’t blink. It didn’t matter if he was serving purple Kool-Aid. You drank it” (Isaacson 119). It is because of his ability to influence people that several authors compared him to a cult leader (Belk and Tumbat; Dormehl; Kahney) and there was a running joke at NeXT “likening him to the charismatic cult leader Jim Jones” (Dormehl). Fans flocked to see him speak, waiting “up all night to gain entry into his famous ‘Stevenote’ speeches at Macworld, almost levitating with anticipation of what [he] might say” (Levy “Steve Jobs”). His

alluring public persona established a unique relationship with his followers and many Apple fanatics took his words as scripture.

Partnering with Microsoft brought increased financial stability to Apple and Jobs' presence was important, but to reestablish the company's counterculture ethos, Jobs relied on marketing. He requested pitches from several advertising agencies, eventually settling on the agency he worked with to produce the "1984" commercial, TBWA/Chiat/Day. Together, Apple and TBWA/Chiat/Day produced an advertising campaign entitled "Think Different." The campaign capitalized on the rebellious ethos of Apple, praising the "the misfits," "the rebels," and "the ones who push the human race forward" (Siltanen). It was a huge success. Launched in 1997, Apple's stock tripled in the first year after its debut without any significant product releases (Siltanen). Jobs "took a major role in editing, revising and fine-tuning ideas for 'Think Different'" (Elkin and Voight) and as Rob Siltanen, creative director and managing partner of TBWA/Chiat/Day at the time of the campaign's release, wrote, Jobs "used his significant influence to secure talent and rally people like no one I've ever seen before." The campaign received significant praise from advertising professionals, winning many awards and receiving credit for restoring Apple's image and prosperity (Hornby; Siltanen). Jobs revitalized Apple's rebellious persona through the 'Think Different' campaign and simultaneously, public recognition of his involvement in the campaign perpetuated his own nonconformist caricature.

Jobs was praised for his advertising and marketing, not just in the "Think Different" campaign or in "1984" but throughout the entirety of his career and was hugely important in establishing Apple's image. As Isaacson writes, "every major product launch that Jobs was involved in—at NeXT, at Pixar, and years later when he returned to Apple—would end up on the cover of either *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *Business Week*" (166). He had an instinct and an innate

ability to attract public attention and rile up the press. Jobs always managed to intensify “journalists’ desire to know what’s afoot” by rigidly controlling the secrecy of Apple’s new products and by mastering “the art of the selective leak” (Farhi); prior to an announcement or product release, Jobs covertly fed information to members of the press who were favorably disposed towards Apple. In this way, Jobs was able to tightly control the hype surrounding Apple, its products, and to a certain extent, himself.

In 2001, Apple released the iPod and iTunes, which hastened the widespread digitization of music and allowed people to listen music wherever and whenever they wanted. The iPod was a digital music player that was portable, could fit one thousand songs without needing to use any type of removable disk, and was relatively affordable. The iPod could be used with iTunes, a digital music marketplace, to purchase and listen to songs for \$0.99 (Dormehl). iTunes and iPod appeared at a time when digital piracy was rampant with sites like Kazaa and Napster that were used to illegally obtain music (Isaacson 403). Unlike these examples however, Apple offered a legal and simple method of purchasing, downloading, and uploading songs onto an MP3 player that could be brought anywhere. By allowing users to bring their music wherever they went, Jobs and Apple “invented the notion of music everywhere” (Werde). Users could now “retreat into a bubble of individual meaning, often within public spaces,” thereby blocking out the noisiness and complexity of the digital age (Dormehl). No longer would music be limited to households and concerts, but it could be enjoyed in every situation, effectively giving increasingly noisy lives a single soundtrack that could be personalized to one’s music preferences.

The great success of the iPod and iTunes positioned Apple as a major player in the music industry, reinforcing its image as a hip company with roots in the music-loving era of the 1960’s. In the first six years, one hundred million iPods were sold and the device was praised across the

board, being named the best Mp3 player in existence (Dreier; *Rolling Stone*). Similarly, iTunes had great success. When it went live, people predicted Apple would sell a million songs in six months on the music marketplace; instead, the company sold a million songs in six days (Isaacson 403). Currently, the iPod remains the most popular Mp3 player in the world, representing a solid 70% of the digital music device market (Goldman 2012). The iPod and iTunes store made CD players obsolete, music accessible and portable, and owning an iPod “made one a member of an increasingly popular subset, suggesting that the user was hip, youthful and in-the-know” (Dormehl); it was “the world’s coolest [...] MP3 player” (Dreier). With the release of the iPod and iTunes, Apple was no longer a rebellious computer manufacturer, it was the heart of pop culture. Artists “wanted to appear in iPod ads [because] the exposure would guarantee success” (Isaacson 417). In 2006, Apple no longer paid musicians to appear in commercials. Both Bob Dylan and Bono promoted their albums via iPod commercials and as a result, Dylan’s album was number one on the Billboard Chart its first week, “the first time he had reached the top spot since *Desire* in 1976” (Isaacson 418) and U2’s album debuted number one on the Billboard Chart and sold 840,000 copies in the first week (Billboard.com). iPod commercials allowed artists to reach younger audiences and gain instant notoriety by piggybacking on Apple’s hip cool image and ubiquitous presence. Simultaneously, Apple’s close association with and public recognition from famous artists perpetuated its cool image.

The iPod Silhouette campaign, launched in 2003, further reinforced Apple’s rebellious image (Gunn and Hall: Jenkins). The ads, featuring dancing black human silhouettes on colorful backgrounds, came to be an iconic piece of the Apple image. The advertisements helped turn the iPod into an icon, allowing the device to transcend into “something more than itself” (Gunn and Hall 140). It became a symbol of the “spiritual experience of immersion in music” and

“inspire[d] a cult following by celebrating a divine experience and encouraging audience participation in the rituals and mores of that experience” (Jenkins 468). Along with its musical symbolism, the iPod also came to represent independence, giving users “the illusion of operating independently” (Gunn and Hall 140). The iPod enabled users to exist within their own individual sphere, removed from the outside world. In this sense, the iPod came “to signify the self-transparent autonomy of its user” (Gunn and Hall 140). People could exist within their own world, with total control over their auditory environment in the palm of their hand. This helped transform the iPod into a symbol of independence as, at least in the auditory sense, it made each user the master of their existence. In the modern consumer age, the iPod obtained significant symbolic meaning, becoming a cultural icon and a symbol of immersion in music and of independence.

Partly as a result of its domination of the music market, in August of 2012, Apple became the most valuable company in history in terms of market capitalization (Benzinga, “Editorial”). The same year it became the most valuable company, Apple “was named number one in management consulting firm Booz & Company’s annual survey of the 10 most innovative companies” (Bonnington). It was also called a “wave-maker” that “does still shake up a lot of the status quo even today” (Smallman). Despite being a corporate giant, Apple was still perceived as a counterculture company. This public image stems from a combination of Jobs’ presence as CEO, Apple’s associations with music and popular culture, its innovative technologies, and from deliberate cultivation of its rebellious ethos in advertising like ‘1984’ and ‘Think Different.’ Apple worked hard to ensure that it never came to resemble other large corporations. In 2008, Pixar released *Wall-E*, a movie about a destroyed world in which an evil mega-corporation has ruined the planet and technology has ruined humanity. Apple, “just to drive home the point that

[it] was nothing like said corporation” or technology, dispatched it’s “head of industrial design, Jonathan Ive, [...] to design the film’s female robot character, Eve, who acts as Wall-E’s love interest” (Dormehl). In the end, the technology contained within Eve, who mimics the design of Apple products, redeems humanity and rebuilds “Earth’s shattered ecosystem” (Dormehl). Apple, in sending Ive to Pixar, ensured that its image would be linked not with an evil mega-corporation but instead more closely with Eve, the world-redeeming piece of technology that exhibited a free spirited artistic persona (Dormehl). Apple, despite being one of the world’s largest corporation, has maintained its rebellious image for many reasons, but its deliberate cultivation of its image has played a major role in the public perception of it as a counterculture company.

Apple’s marketing contributed to the rapid proliferation of its digital devices, which fundamentally altered human relationships with technology and with other people. The iPhone, released in 2007, “altered the smartphone landscape and ushered in the modern era of intelligent, connected devices” (Kim). *Time* magazine called it “the best thing invented this year” (Grossman "Invention of The Year: The iPhone.") and in what can now be seen as perhaps a premonition, acknowledged the permanence of the iPhone and wrote that it was “built to evolve” (Grossman "Invention of The Year: The iPhone."). The frenzy around it was unprecedented: “for two weeks a gizmo took its place among Iraq and Paris Hilton as a dominant news event” (Levy “Steve Jobs”). The hype surrounding the phone was immense and reflected the scale of its social impact. The iPhone introduced the concept of “always on” (Dormehl) as it came without an off button, ensuring users were always connected to each other and to the internet. For many people, “iPhones have become an extension of their daily lives and routines. [...] Activities that used to be impossible to perform on a mobile phone just 4 years ago, are now taken for granted” (Low).

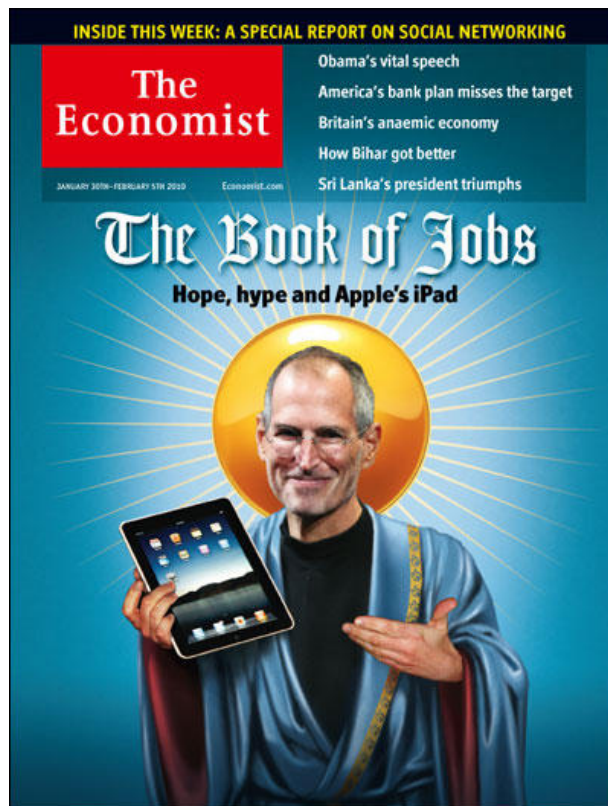
iPhones started the revolution of smartphones, which, in October of 2012, had seamlessly inserted themselves into the lives of over 1 Billion people worldwide (Dover). Smartphones ensure that users are constantly connected to the Internet and enable them to consume videos, photos, and text at a speed and in places that were not previously possible.

In a similar manner, the iPad and its accompanying application store, released in 2010, allowed users to consume music, movies, games, and everything digital in a new simplified way. In one year, 55 million people were using these devices to work, play, and communicate (Cook and Elmer-Dewitt) and Apple soon began indoctrinating a generation of children as many education establishments adopted the device. Apple encourages this indoctrination on its website where it reads, “no longer limited to a single picture to illustrate the text, now students can flick through a gorgeous photo gallery or dive into an image with interactive captions. They can use a finger to rotate a 3-D object to show a human brain from every angle, or have the answer spring to life in an interactive chapter review” (Apple). Apple believes that the iPad is nothing short of a pedagogical miracle and while this is an exaggeration, there is some evidence that iPad’s facilitate education (Geist; Manuguerra and Petocz; Tate et al). The iPad changed the way humans learn and how they consume information and in some cases, has been shown to make them more efficient at learning. In becoming involved at an early age and in education, the iPad has become an integral part of many lives and is present from cradle to grave.

For same, the ubiquitous presence of Apple products is religious in nature. Shortly after its release, the iPhone was given the title of the “‘Jesus Phone’ by media outlets based on the devotion of its followers and apparent God-like status” (Mackenzie). The title “Jesus Phone” appeared in articles by *The Economist* (“Where would Jesus queue”) and *MSNBC* (“Can iPhone live up to big expectations”), among others. Like Jesus, the iPhone heralded what was to come; it



was the most advanced phone of its time and its design set the standard for all future mobile devices. The religious rhetoric surrounding the iPad, released in 2010, was similar. *The Economist* put Jobs “robed, haloed, and holding what was dubbed ‘the Jesus Tablet’ (Isaacson 493).



(Kahney “Steve Jobs Makes Cover of Economist”)

Also referencing the biblical tablet, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote “the last time there was this much excitement about a tablet, it had some commandments written on it” (Peers). These examples speak to the transcendental qualities of Apple products and the discursive construction of these devices as divine.

The iPad and iPhone, along with everything Apple, were widely viewed as products of Steve Jobs’ mind, and the two are, despite Jobs’ death, still synonymous. His connection with Apple was “unlike any other brand and CEO relationship in corporate America, maybe the

world” (Bush). He was “Apple’s irreplaceable leader, personally responsible for everything from the creation of the iPod to the selection of the chef in the company cafeteria” (Elkind). Apple stock consistently dropped anytime the seriousness of his health issues were called into question; however, this is not hugely surprising given the fact that poor health of most well-liked CEOs results in stock drops (Ellyatt). Jobs was Apple Inc., for it was common knowledge “that nothing [got] done at Apple without his OK” (Bush). This is why the announcement that he had cancer in 2004 came as such a shock to Mac followers as well as average consumers.

Jobs told Apple employees of his illness in 2004 before undergoing surgery and from that point until his death in 2011, he waged a public struggle with the disease, remaining company’s outspoken leader even as he grew gaunt and frail. Jobs took three medical leaves of absence before stepping down as CEO in August of 2011. The seriousness of his condition was downplayed by Apple but eventually came to be public knowledge when *Fortune* released a cover story in 2008 entitled “The Trouble With Steve.” The author, Peter Elkind, told Jobs’ tale but questioned what needs to be done when a CEO, who is as closely linked to a company’s future as Jobs, keeps a life threatening illness secret. The article admonished Jobs for his secrecy but also praised his accomplishments and influence. It brought Jobs’ health problems to the public stage and when he appeared on stage two months later, he was “so thin that it overshadowed the product announcement” (Isaacson 478). Partially as a result of Jobs’ appearance and the widespread recognition of his illness, “Apple’s stock price drifted from \$188 at the beginning of June 2008 down to \$156 at the end of July” (Isaacson 478-9). Jobs took his first medical leave of absence six months later in January of 2009. This announcement raised further concerns for Apple’s future and heralded the beginning of a two-year decline of Jobs’ health.

By the time Jobs was 56, he had “revolutionized no fewer than six different industries: personal computers, mobile phones, music publishing, animated films, digital publishing and tablet computing” (*The Independent*). In making these products and sowing the seeds of the computer revolution, Jobs became “a global cultural guru” (Elkind) and the “high priest of the computer age” (The Editors of Fortune). His impact on modern technology had a major influence on humanity’s relationship with their digital devices and his cultural impact, public persona, and vision made him into a modern prophet and leader of ‘the cult of mac.’

When Jobs died on October 5, 2011, the rhetoric surrounding his death was almost entirely reverential in tone. *MSNBC*, *ABC*, *Time*, and *NBC* praised him as a visionary, a genius, a spiritual leader, and someone who made the world a better place. *ABC* called him “our Edison, our Disney, our Da Vinci” (Hart 2011). Harold Evans in *Newsweek* said that while Jobs did not have the ability to make breakthroughs in technology, given his lack of technical expertise, he did create “an imaginative apogee of form and function” and “had the vision of a seer” (Hart 2011). Tom Brokaw stated, “in a secular way, he was a terrific spiritual leader of our time. He was the kind of Dalai Lama of personal computers” (Hart 2011) and *Forbes* wrote, “so exalted is Steve Jobs that often he is compared, metaphorically at least, to Jesus Christ” (Editors of Fortune).

Immediately following Jobs’ death, there was a massive worldwide outpouring of grief, including a shrine in front of Apple’s headquarters in Cupertino complete with candlelight vigils, flowers, and pictures of the dead icon. People stood outside Apple stores and wept in some cases, and millions of emails were sent to Apple expressing sympathies for the deceased CEO. The amount of attention and public response to Jobs’ death was immense, rivaling the deaths of Princess Diana, John F. Kennedy, and Michael Jackson. The death of Jobs was, at the time, the

5<sup>th</sup> most tweeted about event in history; with 6,046 tweets per second. Discussion of his death beat news of Osama Bin Laden's death (5,106) and over the first 24 hours after his death, 15% of all tweets related to his passing (Dugan; Sullivan). The intense emotional responses of Apple fans reflects a relationship between consumer and CEO that goes beyond traditional capitalism and more closely resembles the relationship between a prophet and his religious followers.

In founding Apple, Jobs began a quest to move technology from the garages of the hobbyists and into the homes of the average consumers. Over the years, he became synonymous with Apple, embodying its counterculture ethos and championing the intersection of art and technology. His role as Apple's public face and the common knowledge that Jobs' had near dictatorial control over the company led many people to see the two as one entity that embodied the same counterculture roots. Together they championed technology as liberation, using public struggles with IBM and Microsoft to strengthen this characterization by creating a dichotomy between their differing ideologies. In the end, Jobs' relationship with Apple was unique in the tech world and led many people to give him credit for Apple's many products.

Jobs and Apple made computers, MP3 players, smartphones, and tablet computers accessible to the masses, fundamentally transforming the relationship between humans and machines in the process. The Macintosh, iPod, iPhone, and iPad each contributed to the accessibility of that type of electronic. Many other devices evolved from these creations, but Apple helped start the ball rolling by consistently anticipating the needs of consumers.

Apple's great success renders it more than just a company with a counterculture ethos; it has become "one of the world's most powerful lifestyle brands" (Learmonth). Apple's products are embedded with the values of the company and owning one is more than a proclamation of an individual's philosophy of computing, it represents a philosophy of life (Lam 259). Jobs' role in

the creation of this lifestyle brand led to many people seeing him as a prophet of the modern age. Consequently, he and Apple developed a cult-like following that is complete with its own rituals, mythology, and religious rhetoric.

Speaking to the influence and scope of this religion of technology, Pope Benedict recently warned, “technology cannot replace God” (Pullella). Other Christians have specifically targeted Jobs, arguing that he cannot function as a savior. As Michael Horton states in his article, “Is Steve Jobs Dying For us All”, “more than any other purveyor of technological products, Steve Jobs has seemingly translated his soul into machines meant to be immortal even when they are only as eternal as consumerist whim.” Horton acknowledges the widespread framing of Jobs as a Christ-like figure but maintains that Apple’s CEO does not have the power to save humanity from its sins.

Along with popular attention, Apple and Jobs have also been the subject of significant scholarly work. The majority of academic literature dedicated to Apple falls into two categories: analysis of the Apple community and the unique brand devotion the company inspires and rhetorical criticisms of Apple’s numerous advertising campaigns. Within each of these categories, several themes remain consistent. The Apple brand community has been noted as religiously oriented, providing members with a sense of community (Belk and Tumbat; Lam; Muniz and Schau) and evoking devotion to various products (Campbell and La Pastina; Lam; Muniz and Schau). Within analyses of Apple’s advertising, scholars attend to discussions of the Apple brand and its corporate ideology (Jenkins; Shields; Stein), as well as the implications of its advertising for capitalist consumption (Jenkins; Stein). The massive attention Jobs and Apple have gotten from both the religious community and scholars supports the claim that for some, they are more than just a company and a CEO.

## Theory

### Introduction

One of the primary ways that humans make sense of the world is through the use of myths. These narratives provide a meaningful order to the human condition. As Malinowski notes, myths are “not merely a story told but a reality lived” (100). As many authors recognize, some of the most significant and pervasive myths are religions (Cassirer; Gadamer; Kelley-Romano; Oliver). These all-encompassing narratives function on three levels, psychological, sociological, and cosmic. Psychologically, these myths teach humans how to perceive and interact with their reality. Sociologically, they provide a community with beliefs that helps form a common identity. On a mystical level, religious myths promise transcendence and explain the inexplicable. In the Messianic Myth of Apple, all of these things are present, which explains its importance to believers.

Understanding the combination of the three mythic functions and how they perform in the story of a is the goal of this section. I will first discuss the narrative construction of messianism, or a group’s perception of itself as chosen. Then, I will expand on the rhetorical creation of a messianic figure via James Darsey’s theory of the prophetic ethos. Thirdly, I will discuss the functions of myth. And finally, I will consider the fusion of these narratives and their functions in relation to religion and technology to better understand the source of power.

### Messianism

Wilson Jeremiah Moses defines messianism as “the perception of a person or a group, by itself or by others, as having a manifest destiny or a god given role to assert the providential goals of history and to bring about the kingdom of God on earth” (Moses 4). The people of this

movement believe that they are “chosen or anointed” and “will lead the rest of the world in the direction of righteousness” (Moses 5). They are engaged in a messianic mission of ushering in salvation or a new perfect era and the prophet champions these ideals. The messianic mission is “usually seen as politically revolutionary but culturally reactionary” (Moses 4) and is “usually even more important than the expectation of a personal messiah” (Moses 4). In this manner, messianism is a group identity where believers perceive themselves to be chosen and charged with a sacred duty.

Americans have a long tradition of messianism, believing in a national mission to civilize, save, or better the world. Moses writes that the American messianic tradition has “often seen its mission as the salvation of the world” (3) that was made manifest in the sacred duty to bring freedom to all persons (10). Moses argues that this historical precedent developed out of the Jeffersonian tradition and the American enlightenment, which cemented the idea of the inalienable rights of humans. As a result, this movement sought “to serve as an example of the spiritual perfection that human nature could aspire to in an atmosphere of political freedom” (Moses 8). Americans are predisposed to messianism, as it has been a cultural myth since the days of the founding fathers.

Early American messianism, like similar movements, developed “because of the historical experience of being oppressed as a group” and continues, “because the heritage of oppression persists” (Moses 8). So, while messianism develops out of a tradition of oppression, it is often not cast aside when groups reach dominance; “rich and powerful peoples are equally capable of viewing themselves as chosen” (Moses 8). This is sometimes because “they have not yet cast aside the myths and traditions that sustained them during their early history, when they were weaker and less imposing” (Moses 8). This idea is important because it acknowledges the role of

historical oppression in messianism, indicating that a group's history must be taken into account to fully understand the movement in its current form.

The title messiah or prophet has a long history with biblical roots and for some these words “may conjure up images of fearless, angry, countercultural voices of divine judgment” (Pauley 515). Popular prophetic figures are often thought to be people such as Moses or Jesus however, prophets are not necessarily relegated to traditional religious doctrines. A prophet is defined not by religious affiliations, but is created by the messianic movement. Messianism forms around an ideal and belief in a sacred duty, but these movements often have a tendency “to personify the messianic ideal, and to have a personal messiah play the central role in its realization” (Werblowski in Moses 2). Messianism often involves an “expectation or identification of a personal savior- a messiah, a prophet, or a Mahdi” (Moses 1). People believed the messiah would “usher in a messianic age” and “the chosen people would revolt against their political oppressors and revitalize the conservative values advocated by the prophets” (Moses 4). Messianic figures are the manifestation of the beliefs and goals of the messianic movement and appear at a time of crisis with a message that resonates within the group.

Messianic figures appear in a time of crisis, or “a time of intellectual and emotional tension” (Scott *Relevance* 95). Darsey notes that this tension constitutes a perceived “threat to the self definition of people” (23). People turn towards a prophet in crisis because they have lost a sense of identity or structure and seek a guide. Habermas elaborates on the concept of crisis defining it as a time when “members of a society experience structural alterations as critical for continued existence and feel their social identity threatened” (3). He continues:

Disturbances of system integration endanger continued existence only to the extent that social integration is at stake, that is, when the consensual foundations



of normative structures are so much impaired that the society become anomic.

Crisis states assume the form of a disintegration of social institutions. (3)

In this time of crisis and chaos, “the prophet posits sacred judgment” and offers salvation to the faithful (Darsey 24). Times of oppression and crisis cause people to look for leadership and it is in these moments that the prophets appear to guide the faithful.

Central to the messiah is the idea that he or she is rhetorically created. Messiahs do not exist in and of themselves, but appear from a group perception of an individual as the embodiment of its ideals. The messiah is a story that gains cultural significance by resonating with a particular group. The rhetorical construction of the prophetic ethos affirms the perception of a individual’s story as messianic.

### Prophetic Ethos

While the term prophet is biblically rooted, several authors have attended to the rhetorical creation of modern day ‘secular’ prophets (Darsey; Japp; Pauley). Darsey cites Eugene V. Debs, a radical labor advocate, as a prophetic example while Japp discusses the feminist rhetoric of Angelina Grimke as an appropriation of the prophetic ethos. While the prophetic ethos is a secular creation, it takes on religious meaning due to the significance it holds for those who believe in the ideals the figure champions. Messianism and messianic figures, while they are not necessarily associated with a religion, often herald the formation of a religious following. Desroche writes, “messianism engenders a religion [...] and even, in a sense, a religion is often the sociological spin-off of a messiah” (116). However, given the wide variety of ways in which religion is manifest in the modern era, the sociological spin-off of messianism can take a multitude of non-traditional forms. Jasinski acknowledges that God is not necessarily present in

messianic beliefs writing, in the prophetic ethos there is an “emphasis on duty or on obedience to a calling from some higher source (be it God, history, class solidarity, sisterhood, etc.)” (461). In this sense, God, Allah, or Yahweh are rendered as unnecessary to prophetic movements and instead, these are interchangeable with any source that is perceived to be sacred.

Black messianic movements, whether grounded in religious beliefs or not, have a commonality in the belief of racial redemption and the American messianic ideal of serving as an example for the rest of the world. In his discussion of the black messianic tradition, Moses notes that while “black Americans have not had a common religion,” they have “been able to maintain a distinct messianic tradition despite differences in class, culture, and regional background” (9). Moses here lends support to the idea of a secular prophet by acknowledging a lack of religion in black messianic movements. The unifying agent in these movements, according to Moses, is a belief in “the redemptive mission of the black race” (1) that sees itself as a “conscience for the rest of the human race” (5). The commonality between these different movements supports the notion that religion, while it is sometimes present, is not of the utmost importance and instead, ideals of salvation, redemption, and exemplification are the soul of messianism.

The messiah is created by the group perception of an individual as consubstantial with its millenarian hopes. This is then realized in the prophetic ethos, which has several identifiable rhetorical components. Prophets are often reborn into their role and in many cases undergo a profound conversion. The validity of their office is reinforced through an acceptance of suffering, their position as an outsider, and through the use of prophetic discourse.

The first element of the prophetic ethos is a rebirth into the prophetic role that coincides with a “profound conversion that awakens the person’s capacity to see the truth” (Jasinski 460). Darsey provides support when he explains, “Jonah’s expulsion from the belly of the whale, for

example, has traditionally been viewed as a metaphorical expression of a second birth to a life of prophecy” (Darsey 29). Similarly, there is a “mythological reconstruction” surrounding Eugene Debs’ Woodstock conversion story (Darsey 94). Debs attended Woodstock and came out a changed man and this “conversion myth was widely perpetuated” among his followers (Darsey 94). Prophets are not born into their role, but often must go through an awakening to gain their divine powers.

Prophets experience a conversion, but this journey into the life of a prophet is “not a role one seeks; it is a role with which one is burdened” (Darsey 28). They do not choose their title but instead, it “is depicted as a burden or a calling that one is compelled to accept” (Jasinski 460). A prophet accepts the role reluctantly and presents him or herself “not as hero, but as God’s servant” (Darsey 28). This acceptance is often coupled with an acknowledgment that suffering and persecution are part of the calling (Jasinski 461). Prophets understand that “they must speak the divine message that they have been elected to deliver regardless of the cost” (Pauley 516). This cost is often realized through martyrdom.

Martyrdom “is a means of making public and visible the private, personal submission to the call” to action (Darsey 32). This outward manifestation of the prophet’s dedication to the cause reinforces “the truth or validity of the prophets vision” and “demonstrates the nobility of his or her cause and calling” (Jasinski 461). Darsey notes that the willing acceptance of the prophetic burden indicates a masochistic tendency, explaining that the individual recognizes “the pleasure in suffering and denial, the exercise of the will through self-sacrifice, [and] freedom through subordination” but “what he refuses to recognize is the assertion of strength in suffering” (30). It is the “will to do right” that drives the prophet, not a concern for power or public appearance (Darsey 30). The prophet publicly suffers for the cause but as Darsey discusses, remains virtuous

by refraining from acknowledging the strength that this public demonstration elicits. The prophet reluctantly accepts his or her role and in doing this, also accepts the public suffering that reinforces the truth of the individual's prophecies and calling.

The prophetic persona is reinforced by public suffering but also gains strength from public recognition of the individual's charisma, which several authors have noted as integral to the ethos (Darsey; Moses; Weber). Weber defines charisma as:

A certain quality of individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities, these are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary and on the basis of them the individual is treated as a leader. (229)

Prophets are set apart from society by recognition of their personality as unique for charisma, as Darsey writes, "is only validated when recognized; it is a social phenomenon" (33). The public recognition of this special characteristic sets the prophet up as a leader and can serve as the foundation of a messianic movement. Moses argues that the following of Bishop Charles Emanuel Grace was based on "no more than charismatic charlatanry" (11). Charisma, therefore, is a powerful factor in setting an individual apart from average humans and is essential to the prophetic ethos.

Prophets are outsiders who often aim to challenge traditional power structures. The prophet criticizes mainstream society and in doing this, "polarizes his audience: he is believed by some and opposed by many" (Waldman 2). Prophets are most often leaders of the minority and the oppressed. It is "because of their marginalized status, prophets can speak as messengers of God's anger and impending judgment on mainstream society" (Pauley 516). Scott elaborates on

Pauley's remark, the "primary targets" of their "denunciations and exhortations were the men of power in society, the king and his ministers, the priesthood, the professional prophets, the men of wealth and prestige" (*Way of Wisdom* 117). Prophets directed their accusations at these elites because it was their "corruption that led to the moral disintegration of the body politic, for it denied the principles of justice and humanity that were basic to the covenant ethic" (Scott *Way of Wisdom* 117). Prophets denounce the men of power in society for their corruption infringes upon the rights and ideals that people hold to be sacred.

Language is an important part of the prophetic ethos as certain types of discourse set an individual apart from average people. Prophetic speech champions an ideal or cause that may not be religiously affiliated, but is believed to be sacred by the prophet's followers. The founding fathers, for instance, did not specifically preach the gospel or the word of God, but are nonetheless considered prophetic figures in American messianism. Darsey attributes this recognition to the fact that "they argued on behalf of what they perceived to be a sacred cause and predicated their arguments, not on expediency, but on principle" (39). By grounding their arguments in natural law, they assured "the sovereignty of a principle" and the formulation of "a principled, unified, and internally consistent interpretation of the cosmos and the meaning of human life" (Lucas in Darsey 39). The founding fathers' prophetic ethos stemmed from their championing of a 'sacred cause' that relied on argument from natural rights and provided consistent answers to common metaphysical preoccupations.

Along with this sacred belief, prophetic discourse attempts to reveal truth through prophecy. The founding fathers prophesized about natural law and in doing this, they attempted to reveal truth. Truth is "the whole purposes of sacred discourse" (Darsey 39) and therefore it is the burden of the prophet "to make the extraordinary, invisible, and personal understandable,

visible, and public” (Darsey 32). Jasinski lends support to this idea, acknowledging that “prophetic visions reveal truths; they remove blindness and replace it with clarity” (460). The prophet predicts “what is about to happen” (Pauley 518) and is so sure of this future that he or she could speak “of it as something which Yahweh has done” (Scott *Relevance* 151). The messiah’s followers hold these orations as sacred truths by and further the perception that he or she has access to divine knowledge.

Messianism is a movement of people who need transformation or transcendence. They desire guidance in a time of crisis and personify their hopes for the future in a messianic figure. This prophet can be constructed by outside sources, such as the mass media. They do this by building the prophetic ethos, which is the personification and rhetorical manifestation of a group’s perception. Consequently, an examination of media constructed prophets can enlighten us as to a cultures fears and hopes, and to the role of media in the formation of religious thought.

### Myth

Myths can be all encompassing and as a result, have tremendous power in influencing human thought and action. Academic discussions regarding the form and function of myth are numerous. Hart defines myths as “master stories describing exceptional people doing exceptional things and serving as moral guides to proper action” (234). Jasinski calls them “narratives that report the struggles and heroic exploits form a community’s past” (383). Similarly, Joseph Campbell, in his many works studying myth, maintains the view that myths are heroic stories that possess unique informative powers. Myths can be understood as “big” stories (Doty 38) that people perceive to be true, not in the sense of historical accuracy, but as accurate representations of reality.

The functions that these stories fulfill have been the topic of much academic debate, but several authors agree that myths serve pedagogical, sociological, cosmological, and mystical functions (Campbell; Doty; Kelley-Romano; Rowland). Kelley-Romano maintains that cosmological and mystical functions can be combined into one category based on their similarity. She stresses, however, that the “mystical function provides a sense of awe and gratitude, whereas the cosmological keeps up with the science of the day and provides an image of the universe in keeping with the time” (387). For the purposes of this discussion, I will use the term mystical instead of cosmological, as it stresses the religious component of myth.

The symbolic power of myths lies in their pedagogical capacities; myths teach humans about themselves, their world, and help answer fundamental questions. Myths have “organizing value for experience” (Schorer 355). They provide humans with a model by which to understand their condition and inform them on the proper way to understand any given situation. As Malinowski explains, myth “contains practical rules for the guidance of man” (Malinowski 101). Hart similarly acknowledges the capacity of myths to teach in writing that myths inform humanity about “the proper way to live” (242). Myths inform humans on the proper ways to act and react to the world.

Myths function sociologically by providing a collective means for understanding and justifying beliefs, rituals, and social orders. Myths promote group identity by providing “members of a community with a story that serves as the basis for their sense of who they are as a collectivity” (Jasinski 383). Malinowski writes, myth “expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual” (101). In doing this, myths create a common base for a community and bind it together. Doty elaborates on the process by which these communal myths come into being, maintaining that these myths are

“socializations of private dreams or visionary stories” and that in many societies, “the inspiration of the individual dreamer or prophet first is tested in the public arena for its corporate significance before attaining its wider acceptance” (38). A communal myth often begins privately, but undergoes a process of socialization and if it is widely accepted, provides members of a group or culture with a communal identity.

These myths are often reinforced through ritual. Discussing the importance of ritual in myth, Campbell maintains, “myths are the mental supports of rites; rites, the physical enactments of myths” (45). Doty agrees with this perspective, writing, the acting out of ritualistic acts “may convey or reinforce systems of meaning held in common by members” (399). Rituals provide an outlet for a physical demonstration of one’s adherence to the ideals contained within a myth. These rituals often function to build communal cohesion by providing not only a common belief, but also a common means of expressing that belief.

In functioning sociologically, myths also teach people the proper way to respond in certain situations and deal with crises. Jasinski writes that myths help “explain the world and suggest ways of coping with it” (383). These stories teach humans the proper way to respond to a given situation, and how to react to environmental and social changes. Mythic stories have great power in helping solve “personal and social dilemmas” (Doty 136-7), by providing an example of how to react and interpret difficult situations.

The mystical function of myth is ultimately the level on which religions function (Kelley-Romano 389), for it serves to explain elements beyond that of the visible rational world. It also deals with questions of transcendence, the sacred, and in many cases, deities. Rowland writes, the “function of myth is to transcend ordinary life and provide meaningful grounding for that which cannot be supported rationally” (103). Doty maintains a similar position, arguing that



myths help clarify the “mysterious and unfathomable” (75). Stories provide a framework for understanding that which is beyond the secular. Things that are sacred are “features of the lived world [that] are marked out as being especially significant” (Doty 75). This can be applied to ideals, objects, and beings. Doty calls sacred entities “suprahuman” and describes them as beings “that indicate something transcending but not negating ordinary personhood” (74). Myths often fulfill mystical functions by explaining that which is extraordinary or mysterious and help to negotiate the relationship between the sacred and profane. In doing this, mystical functions “infuse the individual and his/her defined community with awe” (Kelley-Romano 389).

### Technology

Technology is more than a material object, it is a process, a perception, and a means of experiencing the world. Technology is entrenched in myth and has power to shape human thought and experience. Technology is not a myth in the fullest sense, but is comprised of many mythic themes. For Herzfeld, technology has “three elements to it—tools, processes, and a social context” (8). This definition provides a framework for a discussion of technology because of its simple yet inclusive elements and wide scholarly support (Alexander; Cox and Foerst; Gotz, Padgett; Stahl)

The most obvious element of technology is that it is a tool. Padgett supports this idea in defining technology as “the use of tools by human beings to manipulate their environment toward some purpose or end” (578). Similarly, Stahl describes technology as “machines and the knowledge and skills of how to make and operate them” (15). Stahl’s definition is more constricted than Padgett’s as it confines technology to ‘machines’ but both Stahl and Padgett recognize an object and the human use of that object as key components of technology.

The idea of usage naturally indicates the second part of Herzfeld's definition, process. Herzfeld writes, "technology is not just the machines, chemicals, or instruments we use but also the techniques, processes, and methods by which we use them" (8). The use of an item to accomplish an end is the method through which an ordinary item becomes a tool. Essentially, an object only becomes a tool when it is used to affect some sort of change; otherwise the object remains simply an object. The idea of technology does not just include the item itself, but also incorporates the process of using that object. Stahl expands on the notion of processes by looking at it on a larger scale. He describes them as "the organizational structures and economics of using [tools]" (15). This perspective borders on being too broad for this discussion, but is saved by its profound recognition of society's impact on the use of tools. In this manner, Stahl blends the ideas of process and social context set out by Herzfeld, positing that any human process, especially in this interconnected digital age, will include a social component.

An important aspect of technology is what Herzfeld calls "social context" but what other authors view as mythic themes (Cox and Foerst; Noble; Stahl). Stahl defines the cultural aspects of technology as "the goals, norms, beliefs, and values surrounding the machines and their use" (15). Padgett writes, "the essence of technology lies in a way of approaching and disclosing being" (580). Technology is embedded in a complex belief system and enmeshed in "ideologies and myths, ranging from fads and fashions up to the deepest symbols around which people structure their identities and order their societies" (Stahl 16). Technological mythic themes are pervasive, implying that technology does fulfill many individual and social functions.

Technology "has not only been immersed in sacred myth and ritual, in many cultures certain technologies became central metaphors through which the theology, philosophy, literature and science of that society understood reality" (Stahl 2). Bolter titles these certain

technologies “defining technologies” because, to some degree, they “redefine our relationship to nature” (10). They bring “ideas into a new focus by explaining or exemplifying them in new ways to larger audiences” (Bolter 11). “Defining technologies” become the medium through which humans understand and interact with their world. Consequently, they shape perceptions of thought and action.

Advanced communication devices, more so than any other technology, have redefined “our relationship to nature” (Bolter 10). Bolter argues that these “defining technologies” bring “ideas into a new focus by explaining or exemplifying them in new ways to larger audiences” (Bolter 11). Stahl writes that these advances “are on the cutting edge of social and economic changes” and are “changing the way we communicate, and therefore the way we think” (2). Technologies that deal with human communication naturally have enormous power in influencing thought. Davis supports this the notion writing, “the moment we invent a significant new device for communication... we partially reconstruct the self and its world, creating new opportunities (and new traps) for thought, perception, and social experience” (4). This creates a “new interface between the self, the other, and the world beyond” and in turn, “media technologies become part of the self, the other, and the world beyond” (Davis 4). Consequently, advancing technologies enable new modes of self-definition and ways of experiencing the world.

Technology, especially communication technology, has enormous power to shape perceptions of reality. This power stems, in part, from the ways in which technology and myth interact. Cox and Foerst, maintain that technology is a way of expressing myth (57). Other authors, such as Noble and Stahl, also see technology as a mythic medium. These myths are not a new phenomenon but instead, technology has been linked with religious myth for thousands of years (Davis; Noble; Stollow).

Noble, in his book *The Religion of Technology*, grounds the combination of myth and technology in ancient times. He posits, “the religious roots of modern technological enchantment extend a thousand years further back in the formation of Western consciousness, to the time when the useful arts first became implicated in the Christian project for redemption” (Noble 6). Clarifying, this primary implication occurred when technological “means of survival were ... turned toward the other-worldly end of salvation” and became invested with spiritual significance (Noble 6). Noble calls this “the myth of technology” and argues that this story centers on “the recovery of mankind’s lost divinity” (6). He notes that humans are caught up in “the millenarian promise of restoring mankind to its God-like Perfection” (201) and that “the expectation of ultimate salvation through technology, whatever the immediate human and social costs, has become the unspoken orthodoxy” (207). Transcending humanity through technology is the focus of Noble’s book but several other authors lend support to his argument (Alexander; Cox and Foerst; Graham; Urban).

Stolow provides anecdotal support to Noble’s “myth of technology” in his discussion of the clock, which was originally developed to coordinate religious practices. He writes, “the clock is a religious technology, a machine that mimics the harmony of the cosmos and orders the hours of monastic observance” (Stolow 33). He argues that while the clock is no longer perceived as a sacred technology, this so called ‘secular’ object does fulfill “the classic religious function of providing a meaningful orientation to the universe” (Stolow 26). Stolow maintains that technology has the power to answer mystical questions, but maintains that it is a secular mechanism.

Stahl expands on the technological expression of myth, presenting several key myths of technology that he argues “are central, usually unquestioned, sets of beliefs that give meaning to

the world” (30). The first myth he describes is “the dream of mastery and control” through technology (Stahl 30). Technology is the means by which “knowledge becomes power” (Stahl 30) and it is with this power that humanity can “control nature and save [itself] from all the suffering caused by disease, want, and natural disaster” (Stahl 31). In this sense, this story takes on a uniquely transcendental quality.

Through technology, humans gain power and with this power, they believe that historical human constraints will be overthrown. Alexander presents several historical examples of the transcendental perception of technologies writing, inventions such as “the steam engine, railroad, telegraph and telephone [...] were hailed by elites and masses as vehicles for secular transcendence” (Alexander 164). People believed that their immense “speed and power... would undermine the earthly constraints of time, space, and scarcity” (Alexander 164) and those few who understood this technology were viewed as worldly priests. Similarly, in their discussion of technological discourse, Cox and Foerst recognize the hope that as humans advance, “weaknesses and flaws of the human body- such as disease, mortality and limited muscle power; and of the human mind- such as memory failures and slow processing of thoughts—can be overcome and we will end up somewhere close to the exalted condition the primal serpent held out to Adam and Eve ‘...as gods’” (55). There is a “struggle between the ideal of a pure, immutable, incorruptible digital world and the hard reality of the mortal, corruptible human body in this material world” and “this is much of the drive behind our generations increasing desire to ascend into hyperspace, to leave the suffering, mortal body behind and enter a purely virtual realm” (Urban 287). In these examples, technology is seen as a means to transcend human limitations and reach a state of being akin to the divine.

A second myth of technology is that it is gendered (Stahl 31). Women and men have a natural affinity towards certain machines but “those machines culturally assigned as power symbols (e.g., high tech) are seen as a masculine preserve” (Stahl 31). Supporting this idea, Gotz notes, “men have been—and still are—in control of most technologies” (2) and Davis agrees, “technology and engineering have historically been considered masculine provinces” (327). But Davis also presents the idea that the current technological revolution could very possibly rehash this typical patriarchal agenda through equal access to knowledge for both genders that leads to equal power (327). For now, however, technology remains a gendered domain and therefore the power it bestows on those who use it is relegated largely to males (Davis 327). This idea implies that there is a hierarchy embedded in technology and supports the conclusion that technology is an important facet of societal power structures.

Lending support to the implicit hierarchy of technology is the third myth, which is that there exists a “cult of expertise” (Stahl 31). Simply put, whoever has mastered technology can wield its power to serve their own ends. Particularly in this age, “as our lives become increasingly ensnared in a mesh of complexity, the practical power of the expert grows” (Stahl 31). Consequently, experts take on added significance, assuming “the roles of priests, prophets, and monks” (Stahl 32). When the computer first emerged, it was framed as a symbol of power, a transcendental brain that would usher in a new era and consequently, “priests emerge[d] as intermediaries between divinity and laity” (Alexander 166). Davis acknowledges that this mythic theme of expertise is still prevalent, but stresses that due to the proliferation of communication technologies, it now exists in tandem with another myth of universal information (Davis 3). In this sense, humans are simultaneously empowered with access to knowledge and technology, but also trapped within a system of capitalist control. Combining the perspectives of these authors, it

follows that those who control technology in a capitalist sense, e.g. corporations, have power, but that the rise of universal technological knowledge and access has also empowered individuals to a certain extent.

The final myth is the equation of technology to progress (Stahl 33). Some authors similarly recognize that technology is perceived as a means of ushering in the new era through either salvation or destruction (Davis; Gotz; Herzfeld; Stein). Regarding technological progress, Davis writes, “despite a century of Hiroshimas, Bhopals, and Chernobyls, this myth of an engineered utopia still propels the ideology of technological progress” (3) and Gotz maintains, “achievements of technology have created an impression of well-being and progress” (17). Both authors note that technology has the capacity to bring about just the opposite of a utopian future, but support the notion that technological progress is largely spurred on by “promises of freedom, prosperity, and release from disease and want” that undergird notions of technology (Davis 3). For those who hold this theme to be true, technology becomes a symbol of a utopian future.

Technology and myth have been related for thousands of years. They interact with each other on a fundamental level to answer individual, social, and cosmological questions. Technology is a means of expressing myth and also, also Noble maintains, is a myth. The close association between technology and myth suggests that technology is perceived mythically. Some of the scholarly literature suggests that technology and myth have grown closer as advanced communications systems change the way we interact with and perceive reality. Perhaps nowhere is the relationship between technology and myth closer than in the all-pervasive and infinitely knowledgeable Internet.

## Cyberspace

Cyberspace is a general term referring to the international networks of advanced communication systems, i.e. the Internet however, its origins are in William Gibson's 1984 science fiction book, *Neuromancer*. Within the novel, he calls cyberspace a "consensual hallucination" (Renegar and Dionisopoulos 334). The origins of this word frame this medium as a group experience in which participants willingly engage. Furthermore, "consensual hallucination" implies a spiritual connotation, as it is reminiscent of group religious visions and epiphanies. In modern times, the word cyberspace is used interchangeably with the Internet, and will be used as such throughout this paper, but its root is important to understand as it supports the reading of the Internet as a religious experience.

Cyberspace has been the topic of significant academic discussion investigating its religious dimensions. Several authors have noted similarities to a divine being (Cheong et al; Cox and Foerst; Davis), while other have investigated it as a means of connecting with the divine (Campbell 2010; Cobb), and still more have written about its ritualistic and communal functions (Campbell 2010; Cobb; Goethals; Urban; Cheong et al). Cyberspace "has corresponding features to the image of God as being accessible at any place, at any time, and for anyone" (Cheong et al 111). It is everywhere at every time and enables users to grasp "everything—past, present, and future... within a single field" (Cox and Foerst 55). Like traditional conceptions of God, cyberspace is often perceived as an all-encompassing all-powerful entity that offers the potential for spiritual engagement.

The Internet presents a new range of possibilities for connecting by facilitating spiritual encounters. Campbell (2010), in her analysis of Internet use by traditionally religious individuals presents the idea of "spiritualizing the Internet," which signifies that the web is "seen as a



technology or space that is suitable for religious engagement” (2). She describes four common discourse strategies in the construction of the Internet “as a spiritual space or medium” (Campbell 9). They are, Internet as: “as spiritual medium facilitating religious experience, a sacramental space suitable for religious use, a tool promoting religion or religious practice and a technology for affirming religious life” (Campbell 2010, 10). The most relevant of these strategies is the Internet as a spiritual medium. This type of discourse maintains that “technology itself is an extension of the spiritual world and engagement with it will facilitate spiritual encounters” (Campbell 2010, 10). Cyberspace, in enabling the discovery of individual spiritual meaning, offers a means to discover the divine.

In some ways, using the Internet can be seen as a form of spiritual encounter. Divinity, as defined by Cobb, “is that which enables all of creation to become more than it once was, to evolve and expand, to experience greater richness, depth, and diversity” (12). It is unbridled creativity that cyberspace allows that connects humanity with divinity. God, she maintains, does not “create from nothing but works to bring increasing levels of order and complexity to the chaos of the world” (12). Therefore, in its simplest form, “creativity unfolding in the universe forms the primary expression of divine activity” (Cobb 12). The processes of creation and expression of cyberspace enable humans to experience more and in doing this, connects them with the divine through creative activity. Cobb and Campbell acknowledge that spiritual meaning in cyberspace is not necessarily affiliated with an established religion but instead, agree that any powerful belief system can appropriate the Internet for spiritual means.

Cyberspace enables two primary functions of myth, the formation of a community and the reinforcement of that community through ritual. Cyberspace can help “to create new forms of faith communities that exist on a global level and yet are based on deep, personal interactions”

(Cobb 96). These communities are unique because the Internet allows users “who would normally be separated by geography, time or other limitations” to connect (Campbell 2010, 13). Urban also mentions the way in which the Internet liberates users stating, it allows people “to engage in personal exploration and social interaction relatively free of normal hierarchies and social prejudices” (273). The Internet helps people to connect with others of similar faith and to share their convictions. In doing so, “the internet serves to affirm or build communal identity and cohesion” (Campbell 2010, 18). Communication technologies enable users to connect in new ways, with new people, and build communities with other likeminded individuals.

Technologies such as video cameras and radios enabled people to partake in ritual-like occasions, endowing viewers and listeners with a sense of community (Goethals 258). Since the inception of these technologies, the Internet has gained the same capacity by digitizing video, audio, and photos and enabling users from disparate locations to experience the same media at the same time. Goethals cites sports events as particularly apt for ritualization when he writes, “like ancient rites, the telecast games galvanize the attention of disparate individuals, evoking feelings of belonging and egalitarianism” (258). However, he argues that rituals experienced online, even if they are the same sports events, are not as real as televisual rituals for the Internet is an individual endeavor. He does acknowledge that there are “powerful and widely accepted ‘secular’ myths and rituals flourishing in cyberspace” (268) that help bind people together. Goethals perceives rituals enacted in the physical world to be more meaningful in community formation for although relationships can form online, computer use is a fundamentally solitary endeavor. Websites are constantly online, “but people choose diverse, separate moments of entry” (Goethals 258). People can interact, ritualize, and form communities, but these connections are qualitatively different than those enacted in the real world.

Along with secular rituals, religious rites are also enacted in cyberspace and serve as a means of expressing religion or getting in touch with one's spirituality. Campbell calls the Internet a sacramental space and posits that even if it is not naturally a sacred space, "can become so through designing technology in distinct ways or through performing rituals that transform it into a place where the spiritual can be encountered" (11). In this manner, traditional religions can be experienced through a new medium, such as an online church, synagogue, or mosque. Urban adds, "some have created their own alternative religious communities and virtual ritual spaces, in which individuals vastly separated in physical space can enter virtual temples and other sacred spaces to participate in on-line ceremonial gatherings" (274). One sacred space, as noted by Cheong et al, is the blogosphere. Religious blogging has become an online ritual that helps people express and affirm their faith. In their work, Cheong et al call blogging a "religious practice" and "a contemplative religious experience" (126). By enabling these rituals to take place, the Internet allows people to connect with each other through a shared means of expression. Either secular or religious, rituals in cyberspace fulfill a communal function by providing members of the same mental disposition with an outlet for expressing their beliefs. Technology functions as a means of expressing myth and especially in cyberspace, this helps build communal identity through communication and ritual acts.

Some have noted that narratives promoting the communal aspects of cyberspace are very closely linked to the counterculture of the 1960's. Matei proposes "that the main cultural and rhetorical resource fueling the virtual community vision is the counterculture" of the 1960's (346). The countercultural "hacker imagination... sees a new magic or a 'digital polytheism' emerging from this technological breakthrough" of communication technologies that promises empowerment and freedom for bureaucratic control (Sotlow 214). The ideologies of both the

counterculture hippies of the 1960's and modern technologists focus on individual empowerment. Modern technological proponents view cyberspace as a place where individuals “can communicate across national, social, or racial barriers; they have more access to information and thus will be motivated to participate in social and political affairs” (Matei 348). They also recognize that with the rise of the decentralized Internet, it is “more likely to be free from censorship or monopolies” (Matei 349). Individual empowerment and freedom from capitalist control were hugely important to the generation of activists in the 1960's and are currently important to modern proponents of technology. The Internet is a communal space, birthed from the 1960's, that holds within it promises of liberation, unbridled creativity, empowerment, and individual expression.

Communication devices and cyberspace, more than any other technology, hold the potential for spiritual engagement. Scholars like Campbell (2010), Cobb, and Cheong et al, demonstrate that cyberspace is host to a wide range of myth and ritual. Their work supports the idea that as modernization occurs, traditional religious myths disappear or are expressed in different ways. The “sacralization” of the Internet and practice of “religious blogging” are just two examples of the ways in which cyberspace has produced new ways of expressing and encountering traditional religious myth. Campbell and La Pastina support this notion, maintaining that with the rise of computers and the Internet, it has become normal “to use myths that link human-created technologies to some higher, transcendent purpose or outcome” (1193). There is perhaps no better example of the intersection of religious myth and technology than Apple, which has garnered a following of the faithful who find their religion in the “Jesus phone” and the messiah, Steve Jobs, more than traditional sectors.

## Method Section

In my analysis, I draw on four artifacts that were produced shortly after Jobs' death. Each of these sources has a high number of viewers or readers, and is a well-known media outlet. Their use as the basis of my analysis is justified by their wide distribution and their notoriety in popular culture.

The first is a documentary entitled *Billion Dollar Hippy* that was produced by the British Broadcasting Channel and aired in the United Kingdom on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Evan Davis narrates the documentary and while there is no data regarding the number of viewers it received on television, the YouTube version was posted on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and has over 436,000 views as of March, 2013. *Billion Dollar Hippy* examines Apple's rise to global supremacy by focusing on the counterculture roots of the company. It attributes the success of Apple, Steve Jobs, and the way in which he combined deft branding, advanced technology, and a hippy background to create the company that "inspires fervour [sic] and defines cool consumerism" (BBC Two).

The second item of my analysis is a *60 Minutes* special dedicated to Steve Jobs that aired on CBS on October 23, 2011. Hosted by Steve Kroft and featuring an extended interview with Jobs' biographer, Walter Isaacson. The show garnered twelve million viewers during its Sunday night airing (Ariens). This artifact pays less attention to Apple and its products than the BBC documentary. Instead, it focuses primarily on the personal life of Jobs, his personality, and his relationship with his coworkers, his family, and Isaacson.

Adding to these videos is a tribute from IGN, an American entertainment website dedicated to videogames, films, and television. The video was posted on YouTube on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and has received over 94,000 views as a March, 2013. This tribute relies on archived

footage of Jobs, focusing primarily on his numerous product demonstrations and his 2005 commencement speech at Stanford University.

The final artifact I use is The *New York Times* front-page obituary of Jobs that appeared in print on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011, but was posted online the day before. The article gives a general overview of Jobs' life and career, focusing on his journey from a California suburb to the leader of one of the most influential companies in the world.

My discussion draws on these popular sources and analyzes them as informed by theories of messianism, the prophetic ethos, myth, technology, and the fusion of these elements. I begin my analysis by using Wilson Moses' messianic theory to demonstrate the rhetorical construction of Apple's messianism. I argue that it is grounded in beliefs of change and transcendence through technology and that its genesis is set as the release of the Macintosh computer in 1984. These ideals are reinforced by the presentation of the advertising campaign, "Think Different," which appropriated historic prophets to ground Apple in a tradition of revolutionary change. I maintain that technology forms the basis of this messianic movement for it is positioned as the means of effecting social change. I use James Darsey's theory of the prophetic ethos to demonstrate how the artifacts frame Jobs as the embodiment of Apple's messianic ideals. Graduating to a discussion of the spiritual framing of Apple's devices, I argue that Jobs' role as intermediary between these divine objects and the people gave rise to his messianic status. I highlight the pedagogical, sociological, and mystical functions of this myth throughout my analysis but develop these functions and their implications more fully at the end of my discussion. Finally, I conclude that the Messianic Myth of Apple serves as an example of how to find spiritual meaning in a secularizing society and functions mythically for those who believe it to be true.

In my conclusion I focus on the implications of the construction of this metaphoric religion, paying particular attention the exigencies that produced the Messianic Myth of Apple and to its implications for society. I argue that the spiritualization of consumer electronics presents several problems for modern society and discuss the implications of Jobs' death for this myth. Finally, I suggest some avenues for additional research and emphasize a need for further study in this area.

## Analysis

The artifacts construct a messianic movement around Apple that is grounded in the beliefs of change and transcendence through technology. The launch of the Macintosh in 1984 is framed as the genesis of this movement, which is reinforced through the inclusion of the “Think Different” campaign. In being the means to change, technology assumes the fundamental base of the movement. In this way, Apple’s messianism is shown to revolve not on the prophet, but on the technology that he champions. The construction of Jobs’ prophetic ethos is a reflection of his messianic status, which stems from his relationship with Apple’s devices and consumers. The spiritualization of Apple technology suggests the religious importance of these devices. This Messianic Myth of Apple functions on three levels within the artifacts, pedagogical, sociological, and mystical. As a result, the presentation of this myth serves as a religious metaphor that provides an example for how to negotiate spirituality in the modern age.

### Messianism

Messianism is “the perception of a person or group... as having a manifest destiny or God given role to assert the providential goals of history” (Moses 4). Apple’s messianism is based on a group belief in the power of technology to bring about social change and transcendence that has its genesis in 1984. BBC calls the launch of the Macintosh the “first time that you started to get the real sense of the Apple club” (BBC 4:45), or “a group of people who define themselves by the brand” (BBC 4:45). From this point on, Apple followers “weren’t IBM clans, and they were these creative thinkers” (BBC 4:55). BBC defines 1984 as the time when Apple first developed a following, or a “club.” Association with this club set an individual



against IBM and apart from the rest of society. They were outsiders, brought together by a belief in the values Apple championed.

BBC grounds this movement in the ideals that social change and transcendence could be realized through technology. The Macintosh, which framed Apple as a freedom-fighting force, carried with it the “audacious message of revolution” (BBC 2:50). Further promoting this message, *60 Minutes* calls the Macintosh a “truly revolutionary product” (12:12). The computer promised that through its use, individuals could fight back against societal control and came to symbolize a passage to a utopian future. BBC states, the Macintosh was “the distillation of Steve Jobs’ vision of what technology should be. Easy to use, intimate, intended to change the lives of ordinary people” (BBC 29:10). As the narrator says this, the camera focuses in on the revolving Macintosh computer set in front of a plain white background. The camera caresses the device through a variety of close up and full body shots that pan up and down the computer. In the background, a piano plays over subtle drumbeats to create a feeling of wonder and inspiration. The music creates a feeling of revelation, as if a light bulb appeared over someone. BBC juxtaposes the intention “to change lives” with sense of inspiration, suggesting that the ideas of social empowerment through technology began with this machine. It is praised, both by the narrators tone of voice and through its visual presentation, suggesting its importance. Consequently, the idea of change through technology is lauded. The BBC video presents the Macintosh as the inception of Apple’s messianism by discussing its launch as the genesis of the “Apple club,” using inspirational music, and praising the ideas message of revolution.

The IGN video similarly frames the Macintosh as the inception of Apple’s messianism and reinforces it as a means of achieving transcendence by framing it spiritually. The video chronicles every major product that the company released until Jobs’ death and deliberately

chooses to begin this story not with the Apple I or II, but with the introduction of the Macintosh. This choice reflects the idea that the Macintosh was the first significant device produced by the company and the start of the Apple's messianism. It was the first device that held meaning beyond the material as is seen in IGN's presentation of the device as spiritually significant. As Jobs appears on the screen, church organs play softly in the background. The organs create an ambience of spirituality and veneration and as Jobs takes the computer out of a bag, an audience applauds over the music. He places it on a table and walks off screen. With the organs continuing to sound quietly, the camera slowly begins to zoom in on the device as its screen lights up and the rest of the shot darkens. The presentation of light, which is infused with spirituality by the church music, frames the computer as the source of holy energy. The Macintosh is shown as an object of veneration, a device filled with spiritual light that receives praise in the form of enthusiastic clapping. The exclusion of Jobs in this spiritualization of the Macintosh positions the device as more significant than Jobs' proclamations. It is the Macintosh that gains spiritual significance not Jobs, as he walks off stage and is not the central focus of the shot. In praising the ideals of the Macintosh and framing it spiritually, both BBC and IGN set 1984 as the time when the company transcended the secular, becoming the center of a movement that saw technology as a means to "usher in a messianic age" (Moses 4).

BBC and *60 Minutes* reinforce the ideals of change through technology by presenting the "Think Different" campaign that specifically compares Apple's following to known movements and messiahs. Both BBC and *60 Minutes* rely on clips from this ad and use it to draw similarities between Apple's messianism and the recognized movements and figures that the campaign featured. In 1997, the "Think Different" campaign took Apple "back to the values that had built it up in the first place" (BBC 35:34). The ad relied on a variety of hugely influential historical

figures to promote the idea that in buying an Apple computer, users could effect change in the same way as people like Ghandi, Bob Dylan, and Martin Luther King, Jr. These figures are known prophets. They were hugely influential and inspired movements that fundamentally altered society. Each of them focused on ideals of peace and were dedicated to the cause of individual empowerment and transcendence. The campaign functions on a sociological level by helping form communal identity, but also by “transmitting cultural values” (Kelley-Romano 389). The media coopts these cultural icons to position Apple and Jobs as consubstantial with their ideals. BBC called the ad “an emotional recasting of Apple’s rebel roots” (BBC 37:00). *60 Minutes* alludes to the ideals of Apple embedded in this advertisement saying, it was written “not as an ad copy, but as a manifesto” (*60 Minutes* 14:59) and that the ad “did change the world” (15:25). These videos do not admonish the company for their appropriation of these historic individuals, but instead agree that the ad reflected the core beliefs and roots of Apple. In supporting Apple’s appropriation of these personas, the videos legitimize its ideals of revolutionary change with famous historical examples. The use of these secular figures in framing Apple’s messianic ideals speaks to the blurring of the secular and religious lines. Transcendence is available not only through traditional religious myths, but also through secular myths, such as Indian and American civil rights movements and Apple’s messianism.

The comparison between Apple’s Messianism and these historical examples of “Think Different” also grounds the movement in tradition. Since it’s founding, the American mission has been “to serve as an example of the spiritual perfection that human nature could aspire to in an atmosphere of political freedom” (Moses 8). *60 Minutes* and BBC present Apple as similar to the movements began by MLK, Gandhi, and Dylan, connecting Apple’s messianism with traditional manifestations of political action. Apple’s messianism is one interpretation of the

American tradition, offering technology as a means for social transcendence. *60 Minutes*, mentions that Jobs came back to Apple and did two things, he focused the company on “four computers” and “launched a new advertising campaign” (*60 Minutes* Part 1 14:30). In the BBC documentary, “Think Different” runs on the screen and as the ad finishes, the narrator states, “after renewing Apple’s sense of its own identity, Jobs needed a product” (BBC 37:35). *60 Minutes* and BBC position Apple as similar to previous civil rights movements, but the change that Apple offers is grounded not in political action, but in consumption of technologies. Jobs is not a social leader like MLK or Ghandi, but he is perceived similarly by being the promoter of revolutionary technologies. Unlike the previous movements, Apple does not want the overthrow of societal structures; it relies on these structures to exist. In framing Apple technology as a means to change, the videos simultaneously position the company as revolutionary while reinforcing the capitalist structure that it claims to resist. As a result, Apple’s followers are able to both identify themselves as part of a activist subculture, while remaining a functioning and actively participating member of society.

Associating Apple with these historical rebels casts the company and its followers as activists and outsiders. Apple’s messianic movement, like many historical examples, is shown to have developed “because of the historical experience of being oppressed as a group” (Moses 8). In comparing Apple to the movements of Ghandi and MLK, BBC and *60 Minutes* frame the company and its followers as similar to these historically marginalized groups. BBC further argues this by interviewing Stephen Frye who states, “I and other Apple users were being told with malicious grins from our windows using friends that if we wanted to keep our machines we’d have to go hobbyist shops because there would be no Apple computers” (BBC 33:58). In the background, a piano and violin combine to create an incredibly somber ambience. This

statement positions Apple as an underdog, an outsider, and the target of the “malicious” gaze of mainstream windows users. On top of this, the somber mood, combined with the recognition of oppression, demonstrates Apple’s righteousness. Apple is the company that should succeed and it is tragic that the “malicious” and evil windows users had brought it so close to death.

The oppression Apple felt subsequently caused an exodus, BBC states, “customers were leaving in droves” (BBC 33:51). However, Jobs returns to save Apple with “Think Different,” providing a “manifesto” around which people can gather. The ad reasserted the values set in 1984 and once again provided a means for communal definition. BBC states that the campaign renewed “Apple’s sense of its own identity” (37:30). The ideas of freedom and social empowerment that “Think Different” championed are cast as central to this identity. In grounding its message of change in historical figures, the ad promotes and appropriates the values that they represent. The community defines itself by these mythic narratives and as a result, the values they represent are incorporated into Apple’s messianism. The videos legitimization of this communal identity allows believers to define themselves as revolutionary while in reality, they are part of the mainstream consumer culture.

Apple’s messianism functions sociologically, providing a narrative of success, grounded in historical example. The videos portray Apple as consubstantial with the beliefs of figures like MLK, Ghandi, Picasso and Bob Dylan. They frame Apple as a righteous company that desires social empowerment and champions values of peace and creativity. The videos then praise the company, its products, and consumers, highlighting the immense success of Apple. Viewers see the success of those who “defined themselves by the brand” and are enticed to join. The narratives of the Macintosh and “Think Different” offer a means of self and group definition.

The videos construct an origin story and explains to viewers that they too can be empowered, creative, and a rebel, if they buy Apple products.

The Messianic Myth of Apple also functions sociologically and mystically in the narrative to explain Apple's role in the 1990's social crisis. The rapid advancement and proliferation of consumer electronics at the end of the century challenged traditional structures of communication, creating a crisis state. Overwhelmed consumers sought their place in relationship to of communication and technology, seeking stability in a chaotic world. As people began to rapidly consume personal electronics, Jobs was called back to Apple, and began offering products that were friendly and easy to use. As BBC states, "around the turn of the century, technology was changing rapidly. Consumers were rushing to buy new digital devices like cameras and music players and Jobs saw how Apple could weave itself deeper into people's lives" (BBC 42:00). With these words, the video plays fast paced rock music and presents a rapid series of images, which all feature consumers using or purchasing electronics. The series of images present jumbles of wires and many different products in many different locations and this, combined with the electric guitar, frames the increased consumption of the 1990's as frantic. A speech by Jobs plays on top of these images and in a booming prophetic voice he states, "we are living in a new digital lifestyle with an explosion of digital devices and we believe the Mac can become the hub of our new emerging digital lifestyle" (BBC 42:20). In the midst of this chaos, Jobs' messianic voice offers structure to consumer electronics. On top of this, he offers a product that can be the center of modern life.

*60 Minutes* reflects Jobs' claim to be the center of life, and coupled with the 1984 genesis, the movement evoked an association between Apple and the Garden of Eden. *60 Minutes* asserts that Jobs had "created a walled garden. If you wanted to use any of his products,

it was easier to buy into the whole Apple ecosystem” (*60 Minutes* Part 2 2:16). Jobs offered a protected preserve, a modern Garden of Eden. *60 Minutes* strengthens this association by featuring a shot of its narrator and Isaacson walking through a garden as the words sound overtop. Then the video presents a few shots of people using their devices and as the narrator says the word “Apple,” the shot switches to an Apple logo centered in the middle of a glass cube and surrounded by a crowd of people. The video references a “walled garden,” alluding to the protected Garden of Eden, and then offers viewers the bitten Apple of knowledge. On top of this, the Apple is centered in a giant glass case with crowd around it. This glass structure is shown with a low angle shot, focused on the Apple logo high above the mulling crowd. This framing instills the notion that these people are regarding the structure with reverence. They are not simply customers and instead, they are worshippers at the altar of Apple. As a result, the discussion of the Apple ecosystem is given religious significance. Apple did not just offer customers a technological system, it offered them a belief system that promised stability in a time of chaos brought on by globalization and rapid advances in technology.

The Messianic Myth of Apple functions both sociologically and mystically in the narrative presentation of Apple’s digital hub strategy. On a sociological level, Apple offers structure in a time of chaos. It presents an example of technological chaos and then describes the way in which Apple can offer structure. The videos offer a stable way of viewing and using technology, promoting the idea that Apple can help relieve psychological tension in a rapidly changing world. Mystically, the biblical associations with the Garden of Eden instill notions of awe, reverence, and beginnings. Apple is positioned as offering a divine paradise and the scenes of worshippers gathered around the Apple icon furthers these perceptions. These narratives present an example of how many people found safety and comfort in the brand, promoting

identification among followers. The depictions of worship and biblical allusions interspersed in this discussion of the Apple ecosystem suggest that it is a suitable source of not only technological stability, but also religious. The videos legitimize Apple's offer to be the "center of life," sociologically and mystically, by recognizing and praising the company's success after the introduction the digital hub strategy.

At the heart of the Messianic Myth of Apple is the ideal of change and transcendence through technology that was first realized in 1984 and reinforced through the "Think Different" campaign. In associating Apple with the mythic figures of the campaign, Apple's messianism is grounded in historical example. Ideas of empowerment, creativity, and peace are demonstrated as fundamental tenets of the movement's mythology. The construction of this messianic movement and legitimization of its cause and values promotes its basic tenet that technology is a means for change and transcendence. This myth entices viewers by historic examples and praise of Apple's success. However, it neglects the idea that consumer electronics are unable to liberate users. The existence of Apple's products depends on the social hierarchy that the myth itself alleges to rebel against.

### Prophetic Ethos

One issue with prophets is that they are recognized as such, almost exclusively, after they have died. Darsey writes, "it stands to reason that sainthood is always *posthumous*" (33). Through the media, prophets can be created without actively playing into this role. As such, an analysis of the *posthumous* media representations of Steve Jobs will shed light on the construction of the individual elements of the prophetic ethos. This prophetic ethos speaks to the tendency of messianic movements to personify the messianic ideal, and to "have a personal



messiah play the central role in its realization” (Werblowski in Moses 2). In constructing the prophetic ethos and his relationship with Apple’s products, the artifacts position Jobs as the leader of Apple’s messianism and the promoter of their ideals of freedom and empowerment through technology.

Prophets are unique individuals who are set apart from ordinary people. It follows that charisma, “a quality of individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men” (Weber 229), is important in the construction of the prophetic ethos. Steve Jobs, in *60 Minutes* and the BBC documentary, is depicted as being extraordinarily charismatic. They call this aspect of his personality his “reality distortion field” and define it as his “ability to convince himself and others of almost anything using his indomitable will and charisma to bend any fact” (*60 Minutes* Part 1 10: 20). Andy Herzfeld in the BBC video states, “he was somehow able to convince everyone that the impossible was possible” (19:00). Like other prophets, Jobs was “treated as a leader” because his charisma set him apart from ordinary men. In this way, the story of Jobs takes on a mystical tone by being what Doty calls “suprahuman.” Suprahuman entities indicate “something transcending but not negating ordinary personhood” (Doty 74). Jobs is framed in line with this definition by calling attention to the idea that he “could bend” reality, which sets him above ordinary individuals. Jobs is set “apart from ordinary men” and framed prophetically by the absolute recognition of his charisma.

In being extraordinary, Jobs is portrayed as apart from the main body of society. The videos dedicate a large portion of time to discussions of him as an outsider from the 1960’s. The *New York Times* states, “surrendered for adoption by his biological parents,” his “worldview was shaped by the ‘60s counterculture in the San Francisco Bay area, where he grew up” (3). The *New York Times* not only acknowledges his counterculture origins, but states that they defined

him for the rest of his life. Decades after he dropped out of Reed College to live a countercultural lifestyle, “he flew around the world in his own corporate jet, but he maintained emotional ties to the period in which he grew up. He felt like an outsider in the corporate world” (Markoff 3). It is “the marginal position of the prophet’s place” that creates “an opportunity...to speak” (Pauley 516). As such, his outsider status in the corporate world is what enabled him to prophesize, to become a prophet. The videos ground Jobs’ outsider status in the 1960’s counterculture. The BBC documentary uses an audio clip from Jobs who recites, “the time we grew up in was a magical time. It was also a very spiritual time in my life. Definitely taking LSD was one of the most important things in my life” (BBC 8:18). As he says these words, a low angle shot shows a desert cactus with rapidly shifting white clouds on a background of blue sky. At the same time, the guitar riffs that characterize the music of artists like Jimmi Hendrix dampen, and soothing bird chirps and crickets can be heard. In this instance, Jobs is portrayed prophetically by the acknowledgement of his status as an outsider, and by his use of mind-altering drugs that is reminiscent of a shamanic journey. Furthermore, using words like “spiritual” and “magical” present him as an enlightened figure. This scene fully anoints him as prophetic by using this language in tandem with the white clouds and soothing nature sounds. The use of rapidly changing white clouds could be discounted as an attempt at hallucinogenic replication, but the sudden drop in guitar and start of bird and cricket sounds is undoubtedly a deliberate rhetorical strategy meant to reinforce Jobs’ words. Consequently, the clouds, soothing sounds, and Jobs’ use of religious language combine to construct his roots in the 1960’s as a time of individual enlightenment and spirituality coupled with a use of reality altering drugs. His status as a hippy supports his prophetic ethos both on the base level of being an outsider, and by framing the 1960’s as a spiritual time.

Although Jobs was an outsider, this did not hinder him, but is instead depicted a cause of his success. Pauley maintains, that it is the prophets' marginalized statuses that enable them to "speak as messengers of God's anger" (516). BBC and 60 Minutes frame Jobs' outsider status as what enabled him to assume his role as a divine messenger. The narrator of the BBC documentary asks, "How did a drug taking college dropout create one of the most successful corporations in the world?" The scene transitions to Stewart Brand, writer of the *Whole Earth Catalog* that served as inspiration for Jobs in the 60's, who says, "his hippy background made him a better billionaire" (BBC 1:20). The camera quickly switches back to the narrator who says, "this is the inside story of how Steve Jobs took Apple from a suburban garage to global supremacy" (BBC 1:40). The insertion of Stewart Brand's comment directly after the narrator questions Jobs' success implies that Brand is answering the question. The narrator of *60 Minutes* also attributes Jobs' role as an outsider to his immense success, maintaining that Jobs' "disregard for establishment helped him achieve some of his biggest successes, allowing him to see products and applications that nobody else imagined" (*60 Minutes* Part 1 12:00). It is because of his status as an outsider that he is able to envision the future. These videos not only construct Jobs' outsider status as that which enabled him to gain the art of prophecy. The recognition of his success affirms the validity of his claim to the prophetic role and the authenticity of his art.

The videos depict Jobs prophetically, reluctantly accepting his calling. The prophetic role "is depicted as a burden or a calling that one is compelled to accept" (Jasinski 460). BBC instills the idea of reluctant acceptance in presenting an interview with Jobs in 1991. He states, "gradually we were pulled into business... we didn't start out to build a large company, we started out to build a few dozen computers for us and our friends" (BBC 13:00). This statement supports the idea that he did not seek to be CEO but instead was compelled to accept his calling. The videos

reinforce the idea that Jobs did not seek his role by never showing him assume credit for Apple's inventions. *60 Minutes*, BBC, and IGN never show Jobs using the word I in referencing products. He accepts his role as the intermediary between Apple and its users but is not arrogant. At product demonstrations, he uses "we" and "Apple" as subjects instead of I and me, framing himself as a humble servant. However, while Jobs does not take credit, the videos always give it to him, calling them his products, and positioning him as the unquestioned leader of Apple. The fact that the videos do give him credit shows that they acknowledge him as a prophet and position him as the intermediary between Apple products and the people.

The claim to see truth and the attempt to reveal this truth through prophecies are primary elements of the prophetic persona. After his death, Jobs was widely praised as being a visionary and as someone who could perceive technological trends. BBC says, "he just saw things" (58:00). *60 Minutes*, in discussing computers, maintains that Jobs understood "their importance and their future" (*60 Minutes* Part 1 7:50). Revealing truth and removing blindness is a key duty of the prophet. Jobs is shown to have accomplished this on two levels of prophecy, his rhetoric, and in his products.

BBC supports Jobs' ability to tell prophecies by presenting the example of his visit to the Xerox PARC research center, where he first encountered the mouse. Upon seeing this device, "he started pacing around the room, very nervously almost and then more excitedly and then he couldn't hold it back, he just had to talk" (BBC 20:50). Like traditional biblical prophets, Jobs is filled with a divine vision and has to make his "accessible to others through a linguistic translation" (Jasinski 460). *The New York Times* adds to this portrayal, quoting Jobs, "I remember within 10 minutes of seeing the graphical user interface stuff, just knowing that every computer would work this way someday. It was so obvious once you saw it" (7). Jobs witnesses

a divine truth and is compelled to share his vision with the world. He returns to Apple and gives “a very clear design brief” (BBC 21:30) to his flock of engineers. Jobs sees what electronics would become and explains to those around him what he perceived, commanding them to stop everything and build it (BBC 21:20). The acknowledgement of his ability to see the future of technology speaks to his capacity to perceive divine truth and the stories of his imparting these visions on others portrays them as prophecies.

Throughout the artifacts, Jobs imparts the truth of his visions not only through his rhetoric, but through the products that he created. Darsey notes that “it is the prophets burden to make the extraordinary, invisible, and personal understandable, visible, and public” (Darsey 32). Jobs made the computer, a previously extraordinary, invisible, and personal device, into a widely used and connected consumer electronic. He made it understandable by making it “easier to use than any that had come before” (BBC 2:37), he made it visible by producing devices that “consumers hadn’t even thought of” (*60 Minutes* Part 2 1:00), and he made it public by making it “for all of us” (BBC 2:10). In delivering these products to consumers, Jobs removed blindness and replaced it with clarity. Through the products he produced, he enlightened consumers as to the true nature of technology. A prophetic relationship that is reinforced through visuals in the video that show consumers and worshippers of the products.

BBC and The *New York Times* portray the devices Jobs created as true or right manifestations of technology. Through these devices, Jobs removed false perceptions of technology, and taught the public others that were more relevant to the modern era. BBC presents the iMac saying that it “meant that the computer wasn’t just a dreary piece of office equipment”, it was “friendly” (39:00). From that point on, “you could have an emotional bond with your computer” (40:00). This led to a rapid increase in previously computer illiterate

customers. BBC states that “a third of sales where to people who had never bought one before” (BBC 39:50). The iMac was a “huge success and propelled Apple back into profit” (BBC 39:30). It showed that computers were not just for the office, but could be things of pleasure. This conception of technology is praised by the video and the great success of the computer demonstrates a public recognition of its correctness. His financial success is also positioned here almost as evidence of fate or divine providence, which further validates his conception of technology.

The iMac is presented as a truer technology than previous machines not only through discussions of the device, but also the way in which the video fetishizes it through visual techniques. In discussing the iMac, designer Jony Ive states that they want to make products “that make sense and that people really develop some sort of affinity with” (BBC 41:00). As Ive speaks, the camera slowly pans over the translucent green case, focusing in on the sleek outer packaging that’s shiny veneer reflects light. The video presents several of these shots, each with a slow deliberate focus on the revolving iMac that highlights the beautiful design praised earlier in the video. These shots transition between close up and full body shots of the device that create a visual tension, producing a desire to reach out and touch the machine featured on the screen. The consistent praise and glorification of the iMac’s design and values supports the notion that it was a truth, an enlightened manifestation of technology.

The *New York Times* article similarly notes the way in which Jobs eradicated false perceptions of technology and enlightened users as to the truth of certain devices. Quoting Regis McKenna, the obituary reads, “Mr. Jobs’ genius lay in his ability to simplify complex, highly engineered products, ‘to strip away the excess layers of business, design and innovation until only the simple, elegant reality remained’” (Markoff). Jobs eradicated false perceptions of

technology and showed people the ways in which it could be used properly. Further supporting this idea, the article adds that when Jobs was asked what market research went into the iPad, he responded, “None. It’s not the consumers’ job to know what they want” (Markoff). It was Apple and Jobs’ sacred duty to provide consumers with the right technologies. The devices that Jobs created are framed as prophecies because they are the physical manifestation of his visions that he reveals to followers who don’t know, but are seeking. This process of revelation enlightens the public for they had never even thought of these technologies. Apple products reveal the truth of what technology should be, removing an unrecognized blindness and replacing false conceptions with clarity.

The prophetic story, at its core, is pedagogical, presenting an example for how people should live and what they should believe. In revealing false conceptions of technology to consumers this narrative functions pedagogically. The artifacts present outdated ways of using and perceiving technology and then show Jobs stripping away these false conceptions, praising his enlightened vision. This narrative construction emphasizes that there is a right way and a wrong way to view technology, and that Apple is on the side of good. Consequently, the viewer is compelled to see technology as friendly, creative, and a means for social change. The praise the artifacts shower on Apple and Jobs, and the acknowledgement of their success, reinforces this righteous conception of technology.

Telling prophecies is a key element of prophetic discourse, but along with this, messianic figures also denounce “the men of wealth and prestige” in society (Scott in Pauley 517). Both *60 Minutes* and BBC provide examples of ways in which he criticized mainstream society. BBC presents the “1984” commercial, in which Jobs cast Apple as “the plucky underdog taking on a domineering rival” (BBC 3:37). The BBC documentary follows this statement with footage from

a press conference held to release the '1984' ad in which Jobs states, "IBM wants it all and is aiming its guns at its last obstacle to industry control, Apple... will big blue dominate the entire information age" (BBC 3:50). In contrast to IBM's Orwellian and impersonal style of computing, Jobs offered a different philosophy, one in which technology was a means of empowerment. Furthermore, Jobs frames this struggle as violent, it is a war with "guns," suggesting a battle to the death.

The "1984" spot is presented as a criticism of mainstream society and also as a promotion of the principle of "humanity" that is "basic to the covenant ethic" (Scott 117). The BBC video shows how Jobs promoted this principle by juxtaposing the "1984" ad with a presentation of "his latest tablet" (5:05) that was released three decades later in 2010. On stage and in front of an audience, Jobs states, "its in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough. That its technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the result that makes our hearts sing" (BBC 5:23). The narrator notes that from 1984 on, this philosophy of computing was the "consistent vision" (BBC 5:46) guiding Apple. By using marriage, a traditionally religious institution, Jobs implies a bond that is both eternal and spiritual. The connection of liberal arts and technology is subsequently framed as a sacred institution. On top of this, it is in the computers "DNA," a choice of words that personifies the device. This strengthens the appropriation of the institution of marriage, as the device is framed as human and therefore an appropriate counterpart for humanity. The result of this fusion makes "our hearts sing," a choice of poetic language that reinforces the sense of spirituality. Furthermore, the choice of the narrator in describing the presentation of this guiding vision as a presentation of "his latest tablet," instead of the iPad, positions Jobs as a prophet handing down divine proclamations. Jobs is shown as a consistent promoter of the ideals of justice and humanity by



acknowledging his championing of the sacred bond between technology and the humanities from 1984 until 2010. On top of this, the inclusion poetic language that suggests spirituality promotes the idea that Jobs championed the sacred covenant between technology and humanity.

Jobs denounces not only IBM in these artifacts, but also criticizes the super rich. He was a billionaire, but as Isaacson points out in the *60 Minutes* interview, he “did not want to live that nutso lavish lifestyle” that so many other wealthy individuals fell into (*60 Minutes* Part 2 3:00). Using a recording of Jobs’ voice, the point is made that he saw how money changed people, it turned them from “nice simple people ... into these bizzaro people” (*60 Minutes* Part 2 3:50). In saying this, Jobs denounces wealthy members of society. This seems ironic because he himself was super rich however as *60 Minutes* states, “he was worth seven Billion dollars, but not materialistic” (*60 Minutes* Part 2 3:30). The fact that Jobs is shown to target large corporations and wealthy individuals reinforces his sincerity. He was incredibly wealthy and led a major corporation, two qualities that are typically perceived negatively, especially in this day and age when CEO’s and the rich are under public criticism for their greed. However, the videos negate this characterization by presenting Jobs’ denunciations of money and major corporations. As a result, Jobs is not motivated by money or corporate power, but by the sacred ideals that he and Apple profess. He is humble, not seeking riches or power, his only motivation is his mission. This reflects back on the technologies that he created. His devices are subsequently framed not as for money or marketplace domination, but as truthfully committed to the ideals of empowerment and transcendence that they embody.

The prophet symbolizes a group’s “hopes” and a “restoration of their ancient ideals” (Moses 4). The prophet embodies the sacred beliefs of a movement and symbolizes their aspirations of a perfect future. As such, the prophet’s proclamations and denunciations serve distinctly

pedagogical functions. In embodying the sacred values of a group, the prophet teaches these values to new members and reinforces them throughout the community. Jobs promotes the idea of not letting money lead to corruption. The BBC video supports this ideal through an interview with John Sculley, who reflects on his role in the ousting of Jobs. He states, “in hindsight that was a terrible decision.” Coming from “corporate America, people were asked to step down all the time... I didn’t appreciate what it meant to be a founder of a business, the visionary of the business. I was focused on how do we sell Apple II computers, he was focused on how to change the world” (31:00). Sculley’s regret in this instance stems from his inability to understand what Jobs meant to Apple. Because he was from corporate America, he did not understand the vision of Apple and instead was only focused on the finances. He is a disciple and through his interactions with the prophet, he is enlightened as to the error of his ways. This narrative reinforces the ideals Jobs promoted in his denunciations. Humans do not want to feel regret, they strive to make good decisions. In presenting this story, BBC implies that being able to appreciate not just money, but also ideals leads to better decisions. In using John Sculley’s story to inform viewers about the pitfalls of corporate America, this myth serves a distinctly pedagogical function. At the same time, it also reinforces Jobs’ prophetic role by presenting anecdotal support to validate his claims against money and greed.

His humility is demonstrated not only in refraining from assuming credit, but through visual strategies. The BBC video features early Apple employee Andy Herzfeld who states, “Not only was he fighting this debilitating disease, he was leading this huge corporation doing earthshaking work that affects the lives of hundreds of millions of people” (BBC 53:45). While Herzfeld speaks, a video clip of Jobs leaving a building and getting into a car appears on screen. Throughout this clip, Jobs looks down at the ground and appears thin and sick. In these clips, he

is shown to present himself “not as hero, but as [a] servant” (Darsey 28). He does not seek the fame and notoriety, but is a servant to Apple, the people for whom he tirelessly works, and technology. His role as servant is accentuated by his gaunt appearance. People praise him and he humbly accepts their praise, but it is also clear that his selfless work is taking immense personal toll. By giving credit to Jobs for his work and simultaneously framing him as humble and self-sacrificing, the videos portray his motives as untainted by personal gain, rendering his message and technologies as pure and sacred.

Similarly in *60 Minutes*, the narrator discusses Jobs’ cancer, stating, “He survived eight years with cancer and in the final meeting with Isaacson in mid august, still held out hope that there might be one new drug that could save him” (62M 12:20). While the narrator speaks in the background, the camera very slowly zooms in an image of Jobs. The shot features Jobs from the waist up wearing a black turtleneck, turned away from the camera, and looking down. Behind him a black Apple logo stretches from his lower back to the top of the shot. Jobs is framed by this logo and a halo effect is created by the white light that seeps around the Apple’s edges. This image casts Jobs as humble and divine. The divine depiction sacralizes the humility he demonstrates, reinforcing its importance and righteousness. When Jobs is shown on screen, unless he is being interviewed, he almost never looks into the camera. He does not seek fame, he does not desire publicity, he is only focused on his mission and does not spare the time to acknowledge his public role. This further supports the righteousness of his cause as his motivations are demonstrated not for gain, but for the people.

Jobs’ ethos is again associated with messianic tropes in the discussion of his illness, which speaks not only to his humility, but also to his role as a martyr. Many prophets, especially those in the Old Testament, die as martyrs for their causes. This willingness to suffer and self-

sacrifice “demonstrates the nobility of his or her cause or calling” (Jasinski 461). Despite the personal suffering, Jobs had a desire to continue in his mission to bring technology to the people. Public acknowledgement of suffering but recognition of his dedication to the cause and reinforces the “truth or validity” of his vision (Darsey 30). The *New York Times* obituary writes that he “waged a long and public struggle with the disease, remaining the face of the company even as he underwent treatment, introducing new products for a global market in his trademark blue jeans even as he grew gaunt and frail” (Markoff). Similarly, *60 Minutes* discusses the seriousness of his cancer, and then states, “but Jobs returned to work to unveil the iPad, and continued working right up until the end” (*60 Minutes* Part 2 10:20). Elaborating, Isaacson states, it was a “painful brutal struggle” and he “would talk often to me about the pain” (*60 Minutes* Part 2 11:00). Jobs, despite going through this arduous trial, continued to pursue his goal. Like prophets before him, he strove for ideals until the very end, despite the resistance and hardships. He served his calling despite the obvious fact that he was dying and as it became public knowledge that his cancer was life threatening and very serious, his achievements and his status as a visionary were solidified. The *New York Times* writes, “as the gravity of his illness became known, and particularly after he announced he was stepping down, he was increasingly hailed for his genius.” In demonstrating his adherence to the values he proclaimed and his willingness to sacrifice himself, the *New York Times* affirms his status as prophet. In a similar manner, *60 Minutes* states, the cancer and this struggle “focused him” on his “products” and “the couple of things he wanted to do” before he died (*60 Minutes* Part 2 10:45). The video says that Jobs had a “devotion to the product, to the work” (BBC 23:25). Jobs was willing to become a martyr, for the objects of his devotion. Martyrdom represents ultimate dedication to a cause. As a result, the cause to which a martyr dedicates his or her life is rendered sacred. In presenting Jobs as a

martyr, the videos affirm the validity of his claim to the prophetic office. He died for his beliefs and therefore they are unquestionable and sacred. It is with the closing of his narrative that it gains spiritual significance, as prophets can only be appreciated in death. His story becomes sacred and mystical, providing “a sense of gratitude, finitude, and humility” (Kelley-Romano 389). The aspirations and sympathies contained within it serve as examples to strive towards for those who believe his story.

The videos further construct Jobs’ ethos by recognizing him as chosen individual. Upon confronting his parents about his adoption, “Jobs said, from then on I realized that I was not just abandoned, I was chosen” (*60 Minutes* Part 1 3:40). He was chosen to be special, which is reinforced in the *60 Minutes* video, as Isaacson says, “I believe that is the key to understanding Steve Jobs” (*60 Minutes* Part 1 3:40). Isaacson’s acknowledgement that being chosen is “key” to Jobs draws attention to that terminology. It is not said in passing, but is highlighted as important. A messianic people are a “chosen” people and Jobs similarly was chosen to be their leader. The term chosen carries with it a host of religious connotations but in this instance, it functions not only to frame him as a divine individual, but also speaks to his reluctant acceptance. He did not seek the role of prophet, but was picked by a higher power to come during a time of crisis. He was chosen by the peoples need for guidance in the chaos of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Prophets often undergo a profound conversion, a spiritual awakening that represents the acceptance of ones God given mission. For Jonah, his expulsion from the whale was a symbolic rebirth and for Jobs, his expulsion from Apple represented the same. Both the BBC documentary and *60 Minutes* structure their narratives around Jobs’ abandonment and triumphant return to Apple. BBC states, “One of the astonishing things about the Apple phenomenon is that it goes in two halves” (BBC 33:20). *60 Minutes* reflects this division. Prior to leaving Apple, his petulance

and arrogance are emphasized and as *60 Minutes* states, there are many instances “of his callous behavior during this time period” (*60 Minutes* Part 1 9:40). Then he undergoes a conversion. Apple abandons him, an act that ruins him, but as the video states, he “would be saved by a tiny company that he acquired from George Lucas for 5 million dollars, Pixar studios” (*60 Minutes* Part 1 14:00). Repenting after leaving Apple, Jobs has huge success at Pixar, making him “a multibillionaire” (*60 Minutes* Part 1 14:00). Highlighting his financial success in this instance serves as evidence of the correctness of his conversion. The truth of his rebirth into the prophetic role is enforced by the success he had not only while away from Apple but more importantly, when he returned.

Where the videos show Jobs’ failures as a manager before leaving, they emphasize his great success following his return. While, the first half of the *60 Minutes* special is devoted to explaining Jobs’ flaws, his mistakes, and the ways in which he offended family, coworkers, and a host of other individuals. Conversely, the second half praises him for “the biggest comeback in business history [that] did change the world” (*60 Minutes* Part 1 15:37) and focuses on the ways in which he succeeded at Apple and with his family. The reversal point is his expulsion from Apple and success at Pixar, which serves as a metaphoric rebirth into his role as a prophet. Similarly, BBC states that when he returned, “he taught the company what he learned when he was at NeXT and Pixar” (BBC 36:40). His trip through the wilderness taught him humility and wisdom. The trials he had suffered changed his focus from himself to others. He had transcended his foolish youth into a fully-fledged and anointed prophet. He brought this knowledge back to Apple and used create the products that the video consistently praises.

Jobs’ time away from Apple anointed him a prophet, awakening his “capacity to see the truth” (Jasinski 460), not only in the business world, but also in himself. Jobs’ conversion

enabled him to understand the importance of helping people over selfish motives. This switch from self to others is consistent with religious ideals and as such, the framing of this conversion speaks to his holiness and prophetic ethos. *60 Minutes* highlights Jobs' change from selfish to selfless in discussing the ways that he treated his family throughout his life. Before he ascended to his messianic role, Jobs had a daughter with his long-time girlfriend. At the time, "Jobs, who himself had been born out of wedlock and abandoned, denied paternity and refused to pay support until the courts intervened" (*60 Minutes* Part 1 10:00). Later in the video, after discussing Jobs' expulsion from Apple and his return, the narrator goes back to his daughter. He states, that Jobs had neglected his daughter "for more than a decade, until she moved in with the family as a teenager. Isaacson said their reconciliation was important to Jobs because his own birth parents had abandoned him" (*60 Minutes* Part 2 4:50). In the first of these instances, *60 Minutes* draws attention to Jobs' decision to refuse paternity framing it as odd that despite being abandoned, he did not acknowledge his child. Later on in the video, Jobs specifically claims paternity because he was abandoned. The positioning of these utterly contradictory stories creates a narrative hole, a need to explain the obvious and radical shift in motive. His being "saved" during his time away from Apple fills this space and explains the change of heart that is made so obvious by the juxtaposition of two incredibly similar yet contradictory statements. Before his time away from Apple, Jobs thought not of his daughter and her abandonment, but only of himself. Afterwards, Jobs found it important to engage his daughter because he understood her situation.

The narrative construction of Jobs' shift from selfish to selfless fulfills a distinctly pedagogical function. Myth teaches humans the right way to act and the story of Jobs promotes culturally acknowledged values of selflessness. Jobs was selfish and he was punished by being

expelled from Apple. After undergoing a spiritual transformation, he returns to Apple and has immense success. Jobs is rewarded for becoming a better person and for his reconciliation with his daughter. In this way, the values of family, responsibility, and selflessness are championed. Furthermore, the video instills the notion that if these values are realized, an individual will be rewarded with immense economic success.

The construction of the prophetic ethos positions Jobs as the leading force of the Messianic Myth of Apple. His status as this divine embodiment is grounded in his role as intermediary between Apple devices and the people. The *New York Times* writes that Jobs “helped usher in the era of personal computers” and calls the Macintosh a “breakthrough in making personal computers easier to use.” It also uses a quote from a Twitter user who writes “R.I.P. Steve Jobs. You touched an ugly world of technology and made it beautiful.” The beginning of the BBC video presents notes of remembrance laid atop flowers that thank Jobs. Later on, the video shows a series of images of people buying iPhones, packed stores, and fans jumping up and down excitedly, before focusing in on one customer who screams into the camera, “Steve, I love you!” (54:50). Jobs functions mystically in this instance by eliciting a sense of gratitude from Apple customers. He is thanked for his transformation of technology from cold business machines to something “beautiful,” a word that carries with it a certain emotional or spiritual connotation. When coupled with the showing of flowers, Jobs’ death is also suggested to be something natural. Jobs is established as the prime creator and distributor of Apple products. People thank him directly, and the videos often refer to Apple devices as “his” products. At the same time, the videos spiritualize this technology and cast him as the intermediary between divinity and laity.



Throughout the videos, Apple devices are equated with transcendence. They offer social transcendence through empowerment, but they also enable users to connect to the Internet, a medium in which “everything—past, present, and future can be grasped within a single field” (Cox and Foerst 55). BBC recognizes the idea of ascending to a different plane of existence through Internet access. After showing the man proclaiming his love for Jobs, the narrator of the BBC video states, “the iPhone was a gateway to a world of downloadable software for anything from shopping to finding love or lust nearby” (55:05). This communication device offers a divine experience, a means of transcending this reality and into the next “world.” They enable users to find emotional and physical fulfillment, “love” or “lust,” anywhere. The iPhone is presented as all-encompassing, fulfilling both emotional and physical needs in any location. It offers access to the divine realm of cyberspace. *60 Minutes* presents an alternative idea of transcendence. It notes that Jobs did not “like putting on off switches on Apple devices” because he wanted “to believe in an afterlife. That when you die, it doesn’t just all disappear, the wisdom you’ve accumulated. Somehow it lives on” (*60 Minutes* Part 2 12: 25). In this way, the video renders Apple devices as physical metaphors of transcendence and eternal life. Contained within its products is a message of continuity. Lam notes that “the computer is a reflective medium through which individuals create meaning” (Lam 244). It follows, digital devices that embody transcendence reflect this idea back onto the user. These different conceptions of transcendence reflect a variety of perceptions regarding the capabilities of Apple devices. However, they all speak to the presentation of Apple devices as mystical.

The spiritual framing of these technologies supports the idea of them as mystical. IGN and BBC highlight the spiritual dimensions of Apple products through the *mis en scene* of certain shots. IGN begins with Steve Jobs’ introduction of the Macintosh computer and use of

light, as discussed earlier, positions the computer as divinely inspired. However, the video also frames the iPod as an item to be revered. At the iPod launch, Jobs is up on stage and hold out the device to the crowd as church organs softly sound in the background, creating a spiritual ambience. The camera zooms in on the iPod in Jobs' hand and then zooms out. In zooming out, the camera encompasses Jobs, the stage, and the screen behind him. Up on the screen is a giant white iPod. The projection is twice as big as Jobs, is in the center of the shot, and immediately draws the viewer's attention. Jobs is slightly off to the right and framed as subordinate to the device. Similarly, in the shot prior, the camera focused not on Jobs, but on the object in his hand. The iPod is the focus of these shots and the spiritual ambience speaks not to Jobs, but to the main actor, the technology. In this way, IGN indicates that the iPod is more important than Jobs and is spiritually significant. The iPod is portrayed similarly in the BBC documentary when discussing the choice of the color white. The speaker states that the color white "carried on a certain spirit and purity" (BBC 43:50). Interspersed in this discussion are simple pictures of white clouds, flowers, blossoms, oceans, and sea spray. These images add a spiritual dimension to the discussion, connecting to the purity and natural elements imbued in the iPod. Apple devices are rendered mystical by the acknowledgement of transcendental motifs, both social and religious, and by the spirituality enacted through auditory and visual strategies. Subsequently, Jobs is positioned as the intermediary between these spiritually infused devices and the people.

Apple's messianism is grounded in beliefs of change and transcendence through technology. Technology is the central component of realizing the kingdom of Heaven on Earth. The prophet, Steve Jobs, is not the basis of this movement, but it is the technology that he promotes. Jobs assumes the prophetic role by being the intermediary between these devices and the people. While he is a deliverer, he is not a creator. BBC and *60 Minutes* both acknowledge

that Jobs “didn’t know how to write code or program a computer” (*60 Minutes* 8:00). He does not make these products, but he connects them to people. He is a prophet of technology, a herald, who teaches consumers how to engage technology spiritually.

The Messianic Myth of Apple is demonstrated as functioning on three levels in the artifacts, pedagogical, sociological, and mystical. Pedagogically, the story of Jobs and Apple teaches humans how to view technology, and what values should be held sacred. The prophet is revered as more than a man and ultimately, the values and characteristics his story emphasizes are reinforced. These values are demonstrated through Jobs’ personal story, but are also occasionally supported through the use of other examples. Sociologically, the Messianic Myth of Apple offers an example of where to find community and how to gain stability in a time of crisis. Mystically, the myth teaches people how to find spiritual engagement in a secular world. The Messianic Myth of Apple, as constructed by these artifacts, serves as a powerful religious metaphor. This narrative provides an example of how many people find spiritual meaning in Apple. These mainstream media depictions that sacralized Apple indicate that it is culturally acceptable to find spiritual meaning in alternative areas. In my conclusion, I will focus on the implications of religious belief made manifest in a consumer electronics company.

## Conclusion

The Messianic Myth of Apple is born out of need to find new spiritual meaning in a time when traditional religious myths seem to be disappearing. However, secularization is not the end of myth, but instead a morphing, a changing of the guard. Bruner maintains that “in a period of mythic confusion” there is “the occasion for a new growth of myth, myth more suitable for our times” (Bruner 285). Given the modern obsession with technology and with consumption, it is not surprising, that a more suitable myth has developed in the form of a consumer electronics company. The Messianic Myth of Apple is a rehashing of traditional religious myth in an attempt to create spiritual meaning in the modern age.

This story revolves upon the prophet, Steve Jobs, who is the central human figure of the Apple religion. Darsey maintains that the prophetic story “as presented by the prophet and his disciples becomes its own rhetoric, and it must be judged...according to its aspirations and to the sympathies it creates” (Darsey 34). It is the story of the prophet that holds power, not the prophet himself. Once the story of the prophet is told, “that life will be known, and changed, only by our retelling it” (Zulick 142). It is through this narrative that the prophet casts his or her “voice in social memory” and in turn, shapes “the narratives of those who respond” (Zulick 142). The story of Steve Jobs and Apple creates aspirations and sympathies that reflect a growing and problematic association between technology and spiritual meaning.

The basic tenet of Apple’s messianism is social change and transcendence through the use of Apple products. Depicted spiritually and righteously, these devices are given significance beyond the material. They promise not only change and transcendence, but admonish any attempt to seek empowerment in other computer companies. Corporations like IBM and Microsoft are depicted as incorrect and spiritually lost. The Messianic Myth of Apple presents an

example of how many have found spiritual meaning in Apple products. This narrative promotes the idea that individual, social, and religious fulfillment can be obtained through the consumption of Apple products. Simultaneously, the myth informs believers that the consumption of any other technology will only lead them astray.

The sympathies the Messianic Myth of Apple creates are for the company and for Jobs. Jobs and Apple are framed righteously in their conceptions of technology, business, and humanity. Believers of this narrative are filled with a sense of reverence for the company and its deceased CEO. They want Apple and Jobs to succeed and thrive and companies like IBM and Microsoft to fail. This sympathy for the company is only ultimately realized in the death of the prophet. His public martyrdom renders the ideals he and Apple champion as sacred truths. The acknowledgement of his public suffering serves as an ultimate legitimization of Apple's holiness. In this myth, questioning the motives of a cancer-ridden prophet striving to bring his faithful customers one last product is akin to questioning the motives of MLK after he was shot.

The aspirations and sympathies developed in the Messianic Myth of Apple position the company as the divine authority in consumer electronics. As a result, it assumes more power than an average company in the minds of believers. Its motives are holy, it is unquestionable, and it fulfills the pedagogical, sociological, and mystical needs of consumers. In gaining religious authority, Apple appropriates more power than any technology company should.

In finding spiritual meaning in consumer electronics and corporate structures, believers become blinded by their faith. They fail to recognize that ultimately, whether or not a corporation proclaims moral values, capitalism dictates a company's direction. Consumers, who find faith in technology, and see it as a means of freeing themselves from social constraints, are only further subjugated by capitalist society. The promise of transcendence through products is a

false promise, veiled in a mystical guise, it tempts users to buy into it and therein, traps them. Once a commodity becomes a primary means of self-definition and spiritual satisfaction, only through further consumption can these needs continue to be met. Through recognition of this farce, it is possible to counteract corporate domination and truly realize the transcendence that some of these institutions promise.

Apple's assumption of mythic power is problematic however, it is questionable whether or not this myth will sustain itself as Jobs' legacy fades. It is entirely possible that Apple's new CEO, Tim Cook, will be unable to lead the company in the same manner as his predecessor. Apple could eventually become simply another computer company with a base of consumers, not devotees. If Apple is to sustain its religious following, the company needs to successfully innovate and convince both its users, and the media, that its products are a means to transcendence. Attempts to do this can be seen in the establishment of the "Apple University" (Dilger). This school teaches Apple executives "to emulate and perpetuate the successful strategies of Steve Jobs" (Dilger). In upholding Jobs' management and marketing philosophies, the same ideals on which the Messianic Myth of Apple is based will presumably continue. Apple products play a key role in the lives of many people and will continue in this manner because once a user has bought into the Apple ecosystem, it is hard to leave. However, despite deliberate cultivation, the charisma, counterculture ethos, and innate marketing sense that Jobs brought to the company may not be replaceable. Without Jobs, Apple may be unable to sustain its following in the same manner and people may begin to recognize Apple not as a means of salvation, but as a technology company that helps people to work, play, and interact. Only time will tell whether or not the Messianic Myth of Apple will sustain itself but for the moment, consumers continue to find spiritual significance in the devices Apple creates.

The analysis of this modern myth only reveals some of the elements of prophetic discourse. Future studies could ask a variety of other questions relating to the relationship between Steve Jobs and Apple. What are the implications of the biblical symbolism used in Apple's ads and in memorializing Jobs? How does Jobs' narrative resemble the story of Moses? How is the hero's quest enacted in this prophetic discourse? Certainly there are significant similarities between the messianic narrative and Campbell's monomyth, a likeness that speaks to the informative capacities of the prophetic story. The Messianic Myth of Apple provides insight into the ways in which traditional sources of religious engagement are shifting. It also highlights the means by which a myth is created in mainstream media and the power of these creations to influence and codify belief. Ultimately, this myth allows us to look at the increasingly complex discursive interactions between religion, technology, and consumer culture.

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