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Technology, Computer



10 Nov. 2012 Analyzing Sarah Stein's "The '1984' Macintosh Ad: Cinematic Icons and Constitutive Rhetoric in the Launch of a New Machine". In 2002 the rhetorical analysis of the "1984" Macintosh ad was published by Sarah Stein. Sarah Stein's "The '1984' Macintosh Ad: Cinematic Icons and Constitutive Rhetoric in the Launch of a New Machine" Explores the dimensions of the "1984" Macintosh ad, which features a big brother theme taken from the dystopic George Orwell novel, allusions to the Wizard of Oz, and a futuristic scene reminiscent to Blade Runner. Stein explores the integral role ads play in the cultural discourse of new technologies in her rhetorical analysis of the "1984" Macintosh ad. Stein's study also provides an important look at the ways mass media has helped shape a culture's acceptance of new technologies. In her analysis Stein uses three frameworks to help readers re-see what it is the ad is portraying. The frameworks of Maurice Charland, Robert Goldman, and Walter Benjamin are critical to Stein's analysis. Charland's constitutive rhetoric provides a framework to explain how audiences are rhetorically engineered. It is proposed by Charland that identification is the key term of the rhetorical process. Stein agrees with Charland, she also believes that in order to connect with an audience you have to understand the identification of your audience. Stein states that "The theoretical move toward understanding audiences as embodying and... the... attempt to persuade them allows for a rhetorical view of ideological discourse." Basically, Stein is saying that being able to connect with what your audience will be persuaded by is rhetorical. Next we look at the framework of Goldman. Goldman framework focuses on the importance of advertisement is social relation. Stein knows that media influences are often

discussed in our society. According to Stein “ Repetitive media images such as ads have the power to establish frames of reference and mark the boundaries of public discussion as an integrative common language. ”(Page 285) In other words Stein means that the media we see a lot is remembered by us and may spark discussions we have with our peer, which relates to Goldman’s theory of ads playing a role in our social relationships. Last we have Walter Benjamin’s frame, which focuses on the re-enchantment of the social world through commodities. The advancement in new technology is somewhat magical. Stein believes that the “ 1984” Macintosh ad plays on being enchanting by appearing colorful, artful and promoting this new never-seen-before personal computer. The ad is also made to relate to the people of 1984. The Big Brother theme of the “ 1984” Macintosh ad was taken from George Orwell’s Dystopia. It is a dystopian novel set in Oceania, where society is tyrannized by The Party and its totalitarian ideology. Their tyranny is headed by Big Brother, the quasi-divine Party leader who may not even exist. Macintosh’s “ 1984” ad makes IBM out to be the “ Big Brother”. IBM was the leading computer manufacturer at the time. Stein explains that the Macintosh “ 1984” ad uses the big brother theme to convey IBM’s hold on the computer market place. Stein states how “ apple is equated with the real leader of the information revolution as it frees the computer users from subjugation to IBM and its operating system. ” (Page 293) In making this comment, Stein argues that Apple wants to portray itself as the hero freeing consumers from IBM. The “ 1984” Macintosh ad also features themes from Alice in Wonderland. Allusions to the Wizard of Oz show up when the running woman appears in color with red shorts and blonde hair that contrast the

hazy blue, black and white of the background. Stein explains how this parallels Dorothy's entrance in the Wizard of Oz. (Page 294) Stein also declares the head on the computer screen as reminiscent to the disembodied head of the wizard and that the hammer that demolishes the screen is an echo of Toto's revelation of the " Wizard" behind the curtain. (Page 294) these are all things that are relatable to the 1984 person. Much different is today's views on technology. The post-modern era is extremely advanced in technology, so advanced that we overlook the achievements are technology has made. Advertisement has been a successful tool in making these new technologies attractive to the consumer. Stein tells how the media environment of 1984 shifted advertising strategy. (Page 291) Audiences are now seen as a part of the rhetoric.