

ARTICLE

Steve Jobs: The Human Logo?

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ABSTRACT

This paper will focus on the idea of the 'human logo' by exploring the example of Steve Jobs (the CEO of Apple Computers Inc.). Specifically this paper will investigate the notion that in the period of late-modernity 'people' increasingly have been able to brand themselves. This involves a type of commodification of the self for public consumption. Equally people have come to represent branded forms of knowledge, in the same way that a more traditional logo works as a sign to represent a wider system of beliefs. Findings from a discourse analysis of Jobs' 2005 commencement address to a group of Stanford University graduates were compared with secondary sources about Jobs, and reoccurring discourses produced by consumer interviews. Conclusions look at how Jobs, through reflexively constructing for public consumption a 'lifestyle project' (Giddens, 1991), mediates between producer and consumer.

KEYWORDS

Brands, Discourse, Apple, Consumer Society, Identity.

Introduction

In the beginning (of the Information Age) was the void. And the void was digital. But lo there came upon the land, the shadow of Steve Jobs (and Stephen Wozniak)...and Steven (Stephen) said, 'Let there be Apple', and there was Apple. And Steven (Stephen) beheld Apple. And it was good
(Belk & Tumbat, 2005, p.205)

This paper offers an investigation of human branding through a case study of Steve Jobs (the CEO of Apple Computers Inc.). At the end of the Twentieth Century, and into the Twenty-First, 'people' increasingly have been able to brand themselves, by mediating the self into short hand for public consumption. Equally certain people have come to represent branded forms of knowledge, in the same way that a more traditional logo works as a sign to represent a wider system of beliefs. This is achieved through the use of 'metonym' the grammatical device where a partial knowledge is used to signify a whole lot more. An example of this human metonym effect is Margaret Thatcher; the woman and even just her name, has historically come to signify a period in UK politics, an ethos of privatisation, monetarism and so on. People are also used to represent events or a range of emotions, such as reference to the death of Princess Diana, to symbolize a nation grieving, mass hysteria or even conspiracy. In the case of self-help guru Deepak Chopra, the man is linked to a range of audio-book and DVD merchandise, and if one overheard a person saying they are

‘into Deepak Chopra’, one might infer that person knows something about the life of Chopra and that they consume the products as well. It is even possible to make a supposition about that person’s view of the world, or even their lifestyle, based on their claim of being ‘into Deepak Chopra’.

This practice of personal branding and of marketing biographical events is not restricted to celebrities or public figures though. Tom Peters’ (1999) work (described in Lury, 2004) on the project of becoming ‘brand you’ in the late 1990s, encouraged people to develop and market information about themselves, using exercises such as devising a bumper sticker to express a personal essence (see Lury, 2004, p.36), that could be used, for instance, to add a creative dimension to a resume. This is based on the idea that people want to be able to give out pointers, or bite sized signifiers about themselves so that other people, be it employees, colleagues, audiences, or consumers etc, can make inferences about the type of person they may be, and the sorts of ideas they represent. It is a type of encoding of the self, for others to decode and consume which in contemporary Western society people do everyday through the clothes they wear, and the music they listen to, amongst other things.

The marketing industry has come to recognise that, especially through company executives becoming public or media figures such as Richard Branson for Virgin (see Lury 2004, p.97), or David Cameron the UK politician, and his particular branch of Compassionate Conservatism, people have the potential to be marketed as a physical embodiment of a code for the rest of an organisation. Consumers through their engagement with the particular person may make readings about the company or institution as a whole, and this works neatly as an example of the key marketing concept of ‘adding value’. Adding value means when consumers make a purchase they get more than the product alone, because they are buying into a whole system of beliefs. They should feel as if they are gaining something more than the straightforward function of the product because the product is meaningful and that meaning has an intangible value.

Equating him to a ‘human logo’ or as an example of the human metonym effect begins to explain exactly how Steve Jobs ‘the man’ works as a brand. The idea of Jobs as a logo relies on understanding him both as a sign and as an object capable of ‘meaning’. As Lury says of logos,

They are agreed general typifications; the relation of the logo to its object, the brand, is established in relation to an interpretant; and the interpretant represents the logo as argument... as a symbol or mode of Thirdness, the logo as a legi-sign mediates both Secondness and Firstness

(Lury, 2004, p.78)

Lury is referring to Peirces’ (1839-1914), ‘trichotomy of the sign’, the first of this trichotomy being the sign’s simple existence creating a direct meaning, as with iconic signs. The second is its relationship to its object and or interpretant producing meaning, i.e. indexical signs, the third is to do with the sign’s ability to mean ‘symbolically’. (*ibid.*: pp76-78). Jobs can be viewed as a human logo because he personifies Apple iconically through his real and obvious relationship to the company and its products – founder, CEO, spokesperson - and also indexically because of his shifting relationship with the company in these roles, and through various events in

his life which have become public knowledge. Finally what both these iconic and indexical meanings stand for symbolically is in fact mediated through a (re)presentation of him, and then again through the consumers' perception of this (re)presentation. What he signifies as an individual, or discrete brand blurs into part of the overall ambience of Apple. As Arvidsson (2006) argues in his discussion of brand management, 'the distinction between material product and promotional message tends to be less clear' (Arvidsson, 2006, p.77), so that the consumer is sometimes unable to distinguish completely whether the personality that is being promoted belongs to the person or the company and/or their product.

As previously mentioned, the decision to investigate Steve Jobs' speech arose from including the analysis in a wider PhD study. The Apple brand was chosen as a case study for the PhD, because the company began around 1973, during roughly the same period that the media and the academic community (particularly sociology, media and communications, and economics) also became interested in the idea of an 'Information Society'. This has provided an interesting parallel trajectory between shifts in Information Society literature, and the Apple brand's evolution. Apple have been responsible for innovating new products, such as the ubiquitous desk top user interface, drop down menus, and the development of the hand held mouse, devices which shape many people's daily experience of information communication technology in contemporary society. It was also chosen; because of the way Apple draws on consumer feedback in their research and development, with a record of regularly employing enthusiasts and people from user-groups, and finally because Apple was amongst the first 'techie' companies to recruit marketing personnel to develop a brand strategy, as early as the mid-seventies.

Taken from a commencement address, given in June 2005 to an audience of Stanford University students in the U.S. (where Jobs usefully delivers a three-act autobiography), what follows is an analysis of Jobs' own words, against recurrent themes and descriptions of key events from secondary evidence, i.e. biographies. The investigation identifies several emerging discourses in Jobs' address, which are based on the themes of fate, a divine leader, love, and counterculture. Jobs builds and reiterates these themes in an unsystematic weave through out the speech; therefore the subsequent discussion will follow his three-act outline, rather than discuss them thematically. Finally the paper will argue that the Apple Company has made use of what is known about Job's life, work, and personality, to provide information for the consumer about the company, as well as the man, and that Apple consumers reiterate and renegotiate discourses of fate, the divine leader, love, and counterculture.

Part One: *'The first story is about connecting the dots'*

Fate:

Delivered in the style of a three-act monologue or soliloquy, Jobs addresses his Stanford audience, 'Today I want to tell you three stories about my life' (Jobs, 2005). The first section of the speech covers Jobs' adoption and early life. In it he discusses and reflects on personal details regarding the wishes of his biological mother, that his adopted parents be college graduates. However, as he explains, after an initial match with a lawyer and his wife fell through, Clara and Paul Jobs a working class couple with no college education were subsequently granted adoption on the condition that when he grew up, Jobs went to college (see Young and Simon, 2005, p.8).

Steve Jobs, reflects on this period of his life during his Stanford speech:

I dropped out of Reed College after six months...I couldn't see the value in it... so I decided to drop out and trust it would all work out OK... The minute I dropped out I could stop taking the required classes that didn't interest me, and begin dropping in on the ones that looked interesting. I decided to learn calligraphy

(Jobs, 2005)

Jobs theorises about his dropping out of college and goes on in his speech to describe his personal theory of 'joining the dots in life', to look forward. He tells his audience that they must trust their instincts in life and trust 'the dots' to connect them to their future, matching up his experiences at Reed to destiny and karma. Here he is attempting to present himself as a spiritual person, who believes in the power of fate. He describes his relationship with Apple as a type of 'calling', rather than a planned or structured career-path. The details he provides from his background show how he acquired a knowledge, which forms part of the foundations of his career. He explains this in mystical terms; as the sum of events that formed part of a predetermined, though unknown destiny.

Jobs also describes how he values this period in his life for providing a high degree of creativity and personal freedom. The idea of trusting in the unknown to gain a new knowledge is framed as interesting, beautiful, and intangible. Talking about learning calligraphy he says, 'It was beautiful, historically artistically in a way science couldn't capture, and I found it fascinating' (*ibid.*). Here, he implies that, although this artistic knowledge might be unquantifiable knowledge, the incentive for believing in it lies in the gaining of a fresh intuitive outlook. Fate will somehow magically help form the future. He links his experiences here, in part to the birth of the Macintosh. He feels he can in part attribute the reason the user interface was developed to incorporate aesthetics as well as functionality to this. He says,

Ten years later when we were designing the first Macintosh, it all came back to me. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. And since Windows just copied Mac, it's likely no other personal computer would have had them

(Jobs, 2005)

This free and creative period is then reworked into his later life and constructed as the path to his achievements with the Mac. This 'reworking' sets up the Macintosh as a reward for trusting his instincts and pursuing the things that he found personally interesting and rewarding. He also sneaks in a swipe at Microsoft setting up a Windows/Mac duality. By aligning the Macintosh with a whimsical description of good looks and imagination he transfers those qualities onto the machine. He also offers the Mac as the original, authentic beauty, rather than Windows as the copy.

Jobs continues,

It wasn't all romantic. I didn't have a dorm room, so I slept on the floor in friends rooms. I returned coke bottles for 5cent deposits to buy food and I

would walk the 7 miles across town every Sunday night to get one good meal at the Hare Krishna Temple

(Jobs, 2005)

Jobs continues to employ a quite idealistic rhetoric in this part of the speech about living hand to mouth, even though he states the experience was not easy. He describes not having a proper home or employment, and casually drops in his association with Eastern spirituality -the meals at the Hare Krishna centre. Also, in this part of the speech he continues to place immense value on intuition, and being guided by his inner self. Despite having just painted a picture of hard times he says, 'I loved it. And much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on' (ibid.). Here he reinforces the idea established earlier, of being rewarded for trusting in destiny. He has gone outside of doing what traditional society tells him - college, a stable home, constant employment – but, very importantly, his going against the grain has paid dividends for him. Therefore one can infer again, that Jobs places great worth on free will.

Counterculture:

Ideas presented in the first part of Job's speech, and what the ideas symbolize, can be compared with information circulated about him in other media texts, to see how they might reinforce signified aspects of his persona through reoccurring themes. After high school, Jobs spent some time in the Berkley area experimenting with spiritual philosophy, but finally enrolled in Reed College in Oregon, Portland, the expensive, liberal, arts college he mentions in his Stanford speech. In an interview prior to the speech Job elaborates on his reasons for choosing Reed, he says of the time, 'I was interested in Eastern mysticism, which had hit the shores about then. At Reed there was a constant flow of people stopping by from Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert to Gary Synder' (Jobs quoted in Young and Simon, 2005, p.22). As the quote illustrates, prior to Apple, Jobs was developing an interest in, and was keen to cultivate, an association with cult figures of the time who were famously connected with environmental activism, psychedelics and American Beat poetry. Thus began his alliance with characters and literature which were to feature in later Apple marketing campaigns such as the 1990's 'Think Different' poem, 'Here's to the Crazy Ones' taken from Jack Kerouac's famous 1957 novel 'On the Road'.

Prior to this though in the early chapters of their biography, Young and Simon through interviews with Jobs, and anecdotal accounts from friends and neighbours, chart a teenage Jobs' love affair with electronics as a high school student, and his subsequent initiation into the Californian Counter Culture movement during the end of the 1960s. In Young and Simon's book, Jobs describes his time at Homestead High School: 'I got stoned for the first time. I discovered Shakespeare, Dylan Thomas, and all that classic stuff. I read Moby Dick and went back as a junior taking creative writing classes' (ibid, p.17). This reinforces Jobs' interest in creative pursuits, artistic works, and drug related counter-culture. In fact, classmates from the period interviewed in the Young and Simon biography remember Jobs as what was known as a 'Wire head',

The slang name that Silicon Valley high school kids gave to electronics club members had a hip connotation. The name combined the drug orientation of the time

with the electronics and avoided the bumbling connotations of ‘Nerds’. In Silicon Valley it was ‘cool’ to be into electronics (Young and Simon, 2005, p18).

It was also during this period that Jobs struck up a friendship with another ‘wire head’, Steve Wozniak, through his Saturday job at ‘Haltek’, an electronics parts warehouse. Wozniak was working on a project building his own kit computer with another friend, Fernandez, and, through hanging out at the store, struck up a friendship and began to share details of the project with Jobs. They also got involved together in a gang of ‘technology savvy hippies [called ‘the phreaks’ who amongst other high-tech heists...] had discovered how to fool AT&T’s long distance switching equipment [and generate free over seas phone calls]’ (ibid p19). The ideas of counterculture and ‘cool’ feature heavily in the construction of the Steve Jobs brand. ‘For white countercultural radicals, cool was a more confrontational posture, a statement that even though they were not excluded from capitalist affluence, they chose to reject it in favour of something more egalitarian and authentic’ (Pountain & Robins, 2000, p.74). This is linked to the idea of cool being about feelings of being subordinated by mainstream culture, creating important feelings of ‘otherness’. This is especially notable as Apple and Mac users, when describing themselves in relation to PC users, and in relation to other technology brands, often echo these feelings of ‘otherness’. Jobs articulates his dropping out as ‘not romantic’ (Jobs, 2005).

By painting a picture of living a life hand to mouth, Jobs is also marketing a personal freedom, seemingly disconnected from his ‘other’ profit making businessman persona. This point in the narrative, and his description places the onus on a sense of freedom, rather than a need to conform to a conventional course, or one, which had been expected of him by his up bringing. This creatively places Apple in context, creating a background of important ‘alternative’ credentials.

Part Two: ‘My second story is about love and loss’.

The beginning of an affair:

In the second part of his Stanford speech Jobs moves on to begin telling his audience about the origins of Apple, and his feelings towards his work. He is keen to create an emotional relationship with his work at Apple, and remind the audience of the company’s humble beginnings as the product of a hobby based in a garage. He establishes a narrative of hard work and determination, resulting in professional and financial triumph. He says,

I was lucky - I found what I loved early in life. Woz and I started Apple in my parent’s garage when I was 20. We worked hard and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage to a \$2billion company with over 4000 employees

(Jobs, 2005)

Importantly here, he introduces the theme of love. The idea that Steve Jobs ‘loves’ his work at Apple is restated later in this section of the speech. He establishes his work as much more than a job, but as an ‘*affaire de coeur*’, and a relationship that he goes on to build in even more romantic terms in a while.

The divine leader:

Aged nineteen, Jobs had a brief stint at Atari as an electronics engineer, and a trip to India 'to see his Guru' (Young and Simon, 2005, p.23) in 1974. It was on his return in 1975 that he and his friend Wozniak began seriously working on their Altair project with the forming of 'The homebrew computer club'. Altair formed the basis for Apple I, II&III, and the Lisa; the predecessors to the first Macintosh released in 1984. The story of the invention of The Macintosh is covered in some detail in Andy Herzfeld's (2005) book which, through first hand accounts from the product development team, describes their personal involvement, relationships and memories of working on the Macintosh project.

Significantly, in Jobs' description of this period in the speech, he likens the development of the Macintosh again to a labour of love, and refers to the invention as a 'creation', rather than a project, or a product. His choice of words signifies the Macintosh, as being brought into existence in quite an organic or natural way, rather than through a technical, innovation process. This relates closely to the 'human like' exchange value produced by the branding of the Macintosh and other Apple products, such as the '1984 big reveal', of the Mac event. It is also indicative of Jobs introducing himself as 'creator', strengthening the ties between the man and the machine – a reoccurring theme in the '1984 Macintosh launch'.

The idea of Jobs as a creator or a spiritual leader has been explored by Belk and Tumbat (2005), who observe the cult-like qualities of the Mac user community in the U.S. They place this early period of Jobs' career against what they call 'The Creation Myth' (see Belk & Tumbat, 2005, p.208). They argue that the story of Jobs and Wozniak working together in Jobs' parents' garage on the Altair project is very important in the myth making process, and even suggest that the selling of Jobs' VW van to raise funds was a classic 'sacrificial' act. During the study Belk and Tumbat asked the participants what they knew about the history of Apple, and many of the participants were able to come up with detailed information about this period in Jobs' life. In their analysis Belk and Tumbat conclude the cult following of Apple consumers in the earlier years can be correlated to the public image of Jobs as that of a spiritual leader, with Wozniak as his helper in the manner of 'John the Baptist'. The image of Jobs as a spiritual leader, may not be simple conjecture in the minds of Apple consumers 'wanting to believe', but a carefully constructed role on the part of Jobs, who has drawn on further themes of religiosity: 'According to Young (1988), Steve Jobs appeared at the first annual party in 1977 dressed as Jesus Christ' (Belk & Tumbat, 2005, p.211). One can only speculate that if the anecdote is true, perhaps Jobs was being ironic, or possibly cultivating his image.

Referring again to the Macintosh as his creation, Jobs explains, 'we had just released our finest creation – the Macintosh – a year earlier and I had just turned 30. And then I got fired'. In 1983 Jobs, then vice president of Apple and head of the Macintosh division, recruited the CEO of PepsiCo, John Sculley over to the Apple Company. However, in 1985, just a short time after the success of the Macintosh, professional disagreements and a clash of personalities led to Jobs being ousted (CNet newstaff, 1996). Jobs had overestimated sales of the Macintosh, which had resulted in an over production for the year of 1985, and the model was also experiencing problems with its fledgling software. In his memoirs, Sculley recounts the event, 'his eyes focused on me in a constant burning stare. I nearly felt like he was publicly daring me to go

through with it, to announce before his company - his people – that he had been dethroned...’ (Sculley, 1989, pp.387-388). It is interesting that even Sculley, describes the removal of Jobs as a ‘dethroning’, implying that Jobs had an imperial quality, with Apple employees positioned as his subjects. Despite being a description of his removal, it strengthens the idea that Jobs was the all powerful leader at Apple.

Jobs was essentially in exile from Apple between 1985 and 1997. The media and other commentators at one time constructed the exile of Jobs as an acrimonious divorce. However, it is now presented as a necessary episode in the destiny, and personal growth of both Jobs and the company. Therefore his absence of over a decade from Apple remains significant, because consumers and the contemporary Apple brand have subsequently appropriated it into the narrative and personal journey of the man and the brand.

Love:

What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating...I was a very public failure, and I even thought about running away from the Valley. But something slowly dawned on me – I still loved what I did. The turn of events at Apple had not changed that one bit. I had been rejected but I was still in love, so I decided to start over

(Jobs, 2005)

This particular excerpt from the speech, begins by Jobs presenting a period of grief. The thing he had centred all his energy and attention on, was gone and as he describes the effect as devastating. He paints a strong picture with terms such as failure, rejected and running away, the way one might describe a difficult break up, or the language of a love-affair gone wrong. However he expresses an unwavering affection for his work and on the strength of that passion he turns to the idea of renewal or rebirth.

It is interesting that later on in this section of the speech, when he is discussing what he did next professionally, Jobs also notes his personal relationship with his wife: ‘During the next five years, I started a company named NeXT, another company named Pixar, and fell in love with an amazing woman who would become my wife’. This is the first time in the speech that he mentions his current private life. Significantly, the rest of the narrative has focused on his career, and personal insights about that. However, during the admission, he gives equal weight in the sentence to the startup of NeXT and Pixar. Despite falling in love and describing his relationship with wife in remarkable terms, it is interesting that he has already portrayed Apple in the same way one would a significant other, using the same type of language and giving his relationship with his wife equal billing.

Speaking about his return, the decision to ‘comeback’ adds even more force to the notion of Jobs as a great leader, because it is framed as the triumph of both a corporate and perhaps more importantly, a personal conflict. In his description of his feelings about the time he tries to create the notion of confronting a difficult sense of pride, of having to face a type of comeuppance, and once again the end point is his coming to terms with the circumstances of fate and reaching a new found humility. There appear to be three significant aspects of his come back that affect the public perception of this time. Firstly, that Jobs suffered a humbling shock to his ego, as he is at pains to point out in the speech. Secondly, the end point was his apparent

‘rescuing’ of Apple in 1998, which, thirdly, as stated in his speech, he did out of ‘pure love’: ‘I’m convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did. You’ve got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers (ibid.). Again he stresses his affection for his work, and gives it equal significance to his private life, implying the philosophy for both should be the same, and in equal measures:

As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don’t settle.

(Jobs, 2005)

Jobs the Redeemer:

Belk & Tumbat, in their analysis, label the period where Jobs returned to Apple ‘the resurrection’, the penultimate stage in Joseph Campbell’s (1991) myth formula, therefore comparing Apple’s history to a classic adventure hero myth. The resurrection theme is emphasized by the very title of Deutschman’s (2000) book *The Second Coming of Steve Jobs*, and connotes more than the ability to make a comeback, but explicitly a Christ-like quality. The Deutschman book details the resurrection period 1985-2000, beginning in 1985 when Jobs bought the graphics group from Lucas Films to begin Pixar and founded a new venture, NeXT Computers, which incorporated networking technology that had been omitted in the Macintosh design. NeXT was a commercial disaster collapsing in 1993, but the networking technology was instrumental in the progression of domestic access of the World Wide Web and, rather ironically, the basis for the Apple operating platform with Unix (see Deutschman, 2000, pp.9-84). Describing the shutting of NeXT’s factory in 1993, Deutschman begins the preface to his book: ‘It was all going to hell. His followers were abandoning him. His friends no longer believed in him...A fallen hero, the victim of his own hubris’ (Deutschman, 2000, pp1-2). Again Jobs is described in explicitly glorified terms, as someone who had been dearly loved by his devotees, and as some one who was awesome and hero-like, introducing the Aristotelian term ‘hubris’, aligning Jobs to the protagonist of an ancient Greek myth.

In 1993 Jobs began to concentrate his efforts on his Pixar Company, and appeared back in the limelight in 1995 when the company released the first ever feature-length computer animated film, *Toy Story*. The film was a massive box-office hit and spawned a large range of merchandise (see Deutschman, 2000, pp.189-228). One could say, as Deutschman does with a biblical reference, this was Jobs’ ‘second coming’. Steve Jobs describes the experiences in his speech:

I didn’t see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life...Pixar went on to create the world’s first computer animated feature film, *Toy Story*, and is now the most successful animation studio in the world

(Jobs, 2005)

Picking up with earlier themes, he draws on a spiritual, and fatalistic description of being fired from Apple, with a literary reference (albeit vague) to *The Lightness of*

Being by the Czech author Milan Kundera (1984), which explores the theme of people not being bound to the decisions they make in life; excepting the lightness of being means excepting fate. Once more, trusting in his fate allows Jobs to be free and creative. Yet again his account shows that this turned out to be a personally, and financially rewarding experience. As he goes on to say, ‘In a remarkable turn of events, Apple bought NeXT, I returned to Apple, and the technology we developed at NeXT is at the heart of Apple's current renaissance’. He describes his homecoming to Apple and the work he achieved during his time away as being at the core of Apple’s new beginning. This implies Apple would not be as it is today, without Jobs’ experiences in exile, a position that reinforces him as the company’s savior.

Part Three: ‘My third story is about death’.

Where Jobs connects all the dots:

During the third section of the speech, Steve Jobs focuses on his experience of being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and thoughts on his own sense of mortality. Using his understanding of facing a life threatening disease as a narrative device to synopsise his personal philosophy, he tells his audience,

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart

(Jobs, 2005)

Revealing his insight, he constructs a transient understanding of his being. He also raises the idea of humility again, reminding his audience he has been humbled by his experiences. This is important to the notion of being spiritual and the myth of a spiritual leader. More so than his sense of (self) importance is ‘what is truly important’, an emotional wisdom. Since the audience also knows what remained is a continued involvement with Apple, a supposition can be made that through listening to his feelings what he found was that Apple is truly important. It serves as another reminder Jobs loves his work.

Jobs reiterates, what appears by now to be a personal mantra about being caught by certain systems of belief, dogma or the expected ways of being:

This was the closest I've been to facing death, and I hope its the closest I get for a few more decades [...] No one wants to die [...] Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking

(ibid.)

He urges his audience to go against this concluding, ‘Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice’. Using very spiritual language, and referring to the idea of an inner voice, he once again, through his choice of words, constructs a mystic self who values personal freedom.

When I was young, there was an amazing publication called The Whole Earth Catalog, It was created by a fellow named Stewart Brand not far from here [...] and he brought it to life with his poetic touch. It was one of the bibles of my generation [...] this was in the late 60's, before personal computers [...] it was idealistic, and overflowing with neat tools and great notions. On the back cover of their final issue was a photograph of an early morning country road, the kind you might find yourself hitching on if you were so adventurous. Beneath it were the words 'stay hungry, stay foolish' It was their farewell message... and I have always wished that for myself. And now as you graduate to begin a new, I wish that for you (ibid.).

By borrowing the signified meaning of the whole earth movement i.e. care for the environment and care for others, and their farewell tag line Jobs places himself, and the genesis of his computer against the culture and ethos of Whole Earth, and the idea that it is better to work towards an idea for the greater good of society, even if it involves being ambitious. What is implicit in this part of the speech, but never the less there, is an ongoing history of association with the Whole Earth movement. 'Technophilia and radical politics met in the pages of publications such as The Whole Earth Catalog and Co-Evolution Quarterly. These magazines promoted the appropriate technology movement, which advocates the use and development of new, democratizing, environmentally friendly tools. The publishers of Whole Earth would go on to found Wired magazine' (Friedman, 2005, p.97). In the Friedman book he talks about Wired editor Stuart Brand, and the subculture of the Counter Culture moment 'who were fomenting a populist computer revolution' (ibid p98). Their ideas were about creating machines that everyone would be able to use on an individual basis, which would decentralize and make more democratic, 'computer power' this was combined with the hobbyist vision of computing as 'a way to participate in making the future' (ibid, p.100). This is the context of Jobs' association with the Phreaks and the Homebrew Computer Club, so in the closing section of his speech he brings the theme back around in a full circle by referring to Whole Earth, which as he says '*was one of the bibles of my generation... it was idealistic*'.

As mentioned, the successful technology magazine Wired though now produced by Condé Nast, has its roots in Whole Earth, and a particular branch of left wing politics based in the West Coast of America. Friedman describes the magazine as a business publication, but with a 'cyberpunk edge', (ibid, p.171). He says the team behind the magazine were ex-bohemians who reworked their '1960's utopian rhetoric' into their business philosophy, and accepted capitalism as a catalyst of positive social change. In his analysis of Wired magazine Friedman looks at reportage in the early 90's during the dot.com boom and focuses on coverage of the 'Hacker Ethic'. Interestingly he claims of the time, 'typical of wired cyberpunk-recuperated-for-capitalism sensibility were stories that portrayed industry figures as counter-cultural rebels with a cause' (ibid, p.174). A similar rhetoric has been performed by Jobs in his speech; there is an equation being worked out, between his countercultural roots, spiritual beliefs, and being a successful, and famous businessman. Why did not Stanford just book an unknown, religious teacher? Because, despite the spiritual style, and expression of liberty the idea is to hopefully inspire the students to include an entrepreneurial, and commercial ideology into their vision of success and to step outside the mainstream, whilst paradoxically be part of it.

Consumer interviews:

This next section examines brief excerpts from three consumer interviews where people discuss their perceptions of Steve Jobs. The interviews were conducted on-line using *iChat*, Apple's instant messaging software. The participants quoted in this paper were recruited from The Sussex Mac User Group 'SMUG' in the UK. as part of the wider PhD case study about the Apple brand, and therefore, were not focused specifically on Steve Jobs. Nevertheless many of the interview participants were extremely knowledgeable about the autobiographical details of Jobs' life, and were forthcoming in their opinions of him during their interview, often remarking on Jobs when asked more generally about the Apple brand. What follows is a sample from three participants to be known as *A*, *B*, & *C* who were amongst the best informed and forthcoming about Jobs during the data collection process.

The divine leader:

He's basically the mind behind it all - a man of great gravitas and genius, and all the problems that can come with such a personality
(Participant A)

Well he's God! just kidding but well no a lot of Apple fans love him and rightly so. He has uniqueness and a quirky nature and his keynote addresses are fantastic, he is still seen as the figurehead and a legend
(Participant B)

Driven, visionary, obsessive, perfectionist, unforgiving, amiable and shrewd.
(Participant C)

As the quotes illustrate, the participants all hold Jobs in high regard, describing him as a *genius*, a *figurehead*, a *legend*, *visionary*, *unique*, and so on. However, they reflect on this, recognized that he is not perfect, but excuse his faults by constructing them as a side effect of brilliance. Despite acknowledging there have been problems in his life and career, and that some of his personality traits are negative to varying degrees (*quirky*, *obsessive*, *unforgiving* etc), the over all gist of these statements frame him as a mastermind leader, who though complex, is deeply admired by his followers.

Jobs and Apple; Interwoven fate.

The main thing is when he was around Apple did well.
(Participant C)

Apple's fortunes took a turn for the worse in the 90s and Jobs got sacked. He started up his own company called NeXTStep, and this experience taught him many of the lessons that have been instrumental in Apple's resurgence since the first I Mac was released.
(Participant A)

He was relieved from Apple In the late 80s and worked elsewhere before returning to save Apple in the 90s and helping to bring in the line of computers which has made Apple the name and reputation it has today
(Participant B)

The interviewees clearly correlate the changing fortunes of Apple, with the rise and fall of Jobs. Although some of the historical information cited by interviewees was slightly incorrect, it is interesting, just how much detail about Jobs' career, and the political struggles within the company some of them knew.

The link between Apple's *resurgence, doing well* etc is also framed as the company literally being rescued by Jobs, and remade or reborn under his leadership. Again this is not without admitting personal fault on his part, addressing his hubris, but recognizing that he experienced *learning a lesson*. The humility, and new knowledge acquired by Jobs from this period are connected with Apple's recovery, even described as *instrumental* to the process by Participant A.

Counterculture & personal style:

Also, the original definitive 'How to program the Mac' book from Apple called Inside Macintosh quoted Dryden's poetry. In a programming manual! I've never seen that anywhere else. I'm not being just a fawning Apple fan to say that in many ways, particularly for a technical company, they do have a very different ethos and that's borne out by what the customer doesn't see too....Well he's always in that black turtle neck sweater and jeans. He comes over as very laid back and friendly and on 'our side' He talks of personal empowerment rather than 'this will go forward with your business enterprise market penetration' and jargon like that.

(Participant C)

Participant C in particular, makes a point of discussing Jobs' alternativeness, picking up on textual clues in Jobs' dress sense and references to counter-culture in Apple product branding. The interviewee notes with surprise and delight, the use of the 17th Century English poet John Dryden, in an early Apple programme manual. Dryden's is noted for his work within the heroic tragedy oeuvre and which is an usual choice of discourse to contextualize a 20th Century technological consumer item, but perhaps not so strange when considering Jobs' persona in retrospect. Participant C understands these signifiers as evidence of Apple's *different ethos*, or their special way of doing things. He also remarks on Jobs' casual jeans, which could be read to connote an informal work place and the blurring of work and leisure, and the black turtleneck, the signified of which is conceivably, the intelligencia and beat scene. He correlates this with Jobs being *laid-back and friendly*, and representative of an alternative approach to industry. Also noting Job's language style as personal, rather than traditionally businesslike, reiterating that Jobs goes against the mainstream in his methods.

The excerpts here, show that Apple consumers rearticulate some of the discourses discussed in the earlier part of this paper, namely Jobs as a divine leader, and as a man with a personal philosophy rooted in countercultural values. The ways in which he is described are emotional and emotive, which perhaps more implicitly reiterates a notion of love. At the heart of the Apple/ Jobs / consumer relationship, there is a deep rooted affection in a type of brand - 'ménage a trois'.

Conclusions:

Through out his speech, Steve Jobs pieces together an autobiography for his audience that is designed to inspire them. During the speech he uses certain key events, and

specific language to construct the reoccurring themes, of fate, himself as a divine leader, and a personal love affair with technology. He situates himself outside of mainstream values, and consequently these ideas, as belonging to a counterculture.

The notion of Jobs, his work, and his company, adopting aspects and attitudes of countercultures, and borrowing meanings from socio-groups on the margins of society is a theme, which has been prominent in Apple's marketing messages since its creation. This has manifested in the product branding with lots of examples, for instance the radical idea in the 70's of 'personal computers' taking their place in domestic environments such as kitchen tables, or the launch of the Macintosh in 1984 attempting to humanize the machine. More examples of campaigns include subverting tradition forms of and renegotiations of 'Power' in the 80's, 'Think Different' in the 90's, and the more recent iPod Silhouette campaigns portraying different youth and music subcultures of today. What has been communicated about the early life of Jobs is very important in reinforcing these key marketing messages, because of how his personal philosophy and associations with alternative groups has been incorporated into Apple's corporate brand identity. Jobs' life, lifestyle and philosophy communicate something about the company as a whole. By association, the consumer understands that Apple is not just a money hungry corporate, but has taken an alternative path to become what it is today. The mediated message is at the company roots as in the heart of Jobs, is a spiritual, and egalitarian ethos.

To build a here and now, Jobs reflects back on earlier periods in his life. To allow his audience to gain a sense of who he is, he constructs his identity using a reflexive technique. In other words what he calls '*connecting the dots*' is almost a classic example of what Giddens would describe as 'lifestyle project', and is indeed, a very carefully put together, public presentation of one.

Via Jobs' life, and viewpoint Apple are able to exploit a specific philosophy to negotiate a tension between the company's countercultural roots and evolution into a trans-national corporation. Reflexivity is vital to managing this tricky contradiction: that is, by referring back on themselves through Jobs' biography Apple's identity is in part created through Jobs' narrative and his ability to be creative with it and rework it back into the present.

Jobs mediates attitudes and beliefs on fate, spirituality, love and counterculture which, one could argue contradict the values of a corporation such as Apple within a Capitalist system, but since he is able to resolve the conflict between competing philosophies on a level of personal experience, it transforms into a resolution for the brand identity as well. This creates and maintains what Giddens refers to as 'ontological security'. A resolution between contra worldviews is reached and the consumer can appreciate a sense of coherence and consistency, and maintain a positive view of Apple.

Giddens' theories are also discussed in relation to marketing techniques in Binkley (2003) 'modern people confront with anxiety and uncertainty the predicament of having 'no choice but to choose' in a market place of consumer options increasingly devoid of substantial moral guidelines' (Binkley, 2003, p.234). Relating consumption to the 'practice of lifestyle' Binkley postulates, that in the Giddens defined 'period of late modernity', individuals as 'consumers' place faith in the things they consume in

order to define their lifestyle and therefore themselves as authentic – but that this is complicated by what Giddens calls ‘the remoteness of the apparatus of mass marketing systems’. But for the Apple consumer in identifying with Steve Jobs the man, and not an overt marketing system, therefore the ‘remoteness’ is perhaps not so remote. So ‘the apparatus’ (i.e. the marketing machine – press, PR etc.) is still at work, but it is obscured through Jobs’ humanness. For audience or consumer, it is a much more authentic experience to connect with a physical being or personality. An actual man is more real and relatable on the face of it, than a traditional form of branding like a product brochure or product placement. Thus, it is a more outwardly authentic experience, and the philosophy that Jobs is advocating appears more sincere and open, than if it were embedded in for instance, a TV advert.

In a sense Jobs’ public self is ‘a new media object’ (Lury, 2004, p.6), because he is as Lury describes, working as an interface between consumers and producers. Arvidsson extends this theory to argue that brands can work as a form of capital in the sense that capital is an object, which embodies value. Jobs, is therefore a source of capital, creates value for Apple, and he is a source of immaterial capital because he is able to mobilize social or symbolic relations (see Arvidsson, 2006, p.125).

‘Branded objects are but partial manifestations of the ‘essence’ or ‘personality’ of the brand. This is something that moves on the abstract levels of ‘emotion’, ‘experience’ or ‘metaphysics’, too abstract sometimes to put into words’ (Feldwick 1999 in Arvidsson, 2006, p.126). In terms of the Apple brand, Jobs is an object, albeit a human manifestation, and lends the brand ‘realness’, because he is a person. This physicality masks the metaphysical nature of the brand, making it easier for consumers to connect to. Consumers are able to access Jobs’ narrative, real events, and real thoughts etc and form an affiliation with him, but also to the Apple brand. The essence or personality as Arvidsson puts it, is mediated by Jobs into an immaterial object, and becomes part of the overall ambience of Apple, so consumers can then make personal meanings through their understanding of Jobs. Subsequently Apple is able to harness this relationship and exploit its’ value in the more traditional financial sense, because after all, people buy products, because they believe and identify with shared meanings.

Finally based on the findings from the case study, it seems as a human logo ‘Steve Jobs’ works. Steve Jobs stands in for a particular way of seeing the world, which is not only established through his personal narrative and personality, but as a reflexive body of knowledge, that has come to signify the Apple company ethos. Furthermore, consumers do appear to recognise and rearticulate those discourses, which are so carefully constructed through his mediated persona.

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