



# Naming Names: The Power to Control the Meaning of Media Symbols

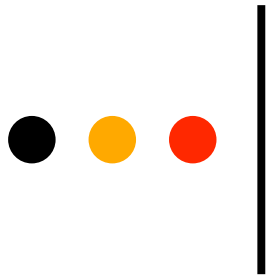
Dr. Deborah Clark Vance

*Associate Prof. of Communication*

ABS Conference

Washington, D. C.

August 15, 2009



- o What is culture?

- o Where is it?



# Universe of shared meaning

- I beseech Thee, O my God, by Him ... through Whom the kingdom of names hath been convulsed  
-- Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers & Meditations*, 300
- the power of intellect is not sensible; none of the inner qualities of man is a sensible thing; on the contrary, they are intellectual realities.  
--Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 83



# Theories *re*: How we create meaning

- Semiotics
- Structuralism
- Symbolic interactionism
- Social construction of reality



# Re: Semiotics & Structuralism

- Know thou that every created thing is a sign of the revelation of God.

--Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 184

- The dwellers of the kingdom of names have busied themselves with the gay livery of the world.

--Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 196

- I am an Oriental and on this account I am shut out from your thoughts and you likewise from mine.

--Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, 144



# Semiotics = Signs & codes

- System of relations (“kingdom of names”)
  - Arbitrary signs gain meaning via convention
  - Suggest particular ways of seeing world
- Language signifies reality
  - Meanings seem natural & self-evident
  - We learn to read them



# Structuralism

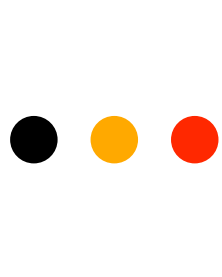
- Recognizing larger systems (structures) helps to get meaning
  - Each element in system derives meaning from relationship to others
- No independent meanings



# Myths

- Carry cultural values, beliefs, attitudes
- Serve ideological interests
  - Connotation = added cultural, emotional meaning
- Embedded in media





## Re: Symbolic interactionism

- at the time of the appearance of each Manifestation of God extraordinary progress has occurred in the world of minds, thoughts and spirits  
-- Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 163
- The world of thought has been regenerated...Present exigencies demand new methods of solution  
--Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, 224
- All the people have formed a god in the world of thought, and that form of their own imagination they worship  
--Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, 381



# Symbolic interactionism

- We act based on meanings we ascribe to things
- Meanings derive from social interactions



# Re: Social construction of reality

- The reality of man is his thought, not his material body  
--Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 17
- When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love. --Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 29- 30
- consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.  
-- *Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, 168
- every Faith has given rise to a culture which flowered in different forms  
-- *The Importance of the Arts in Promoting the Faith*

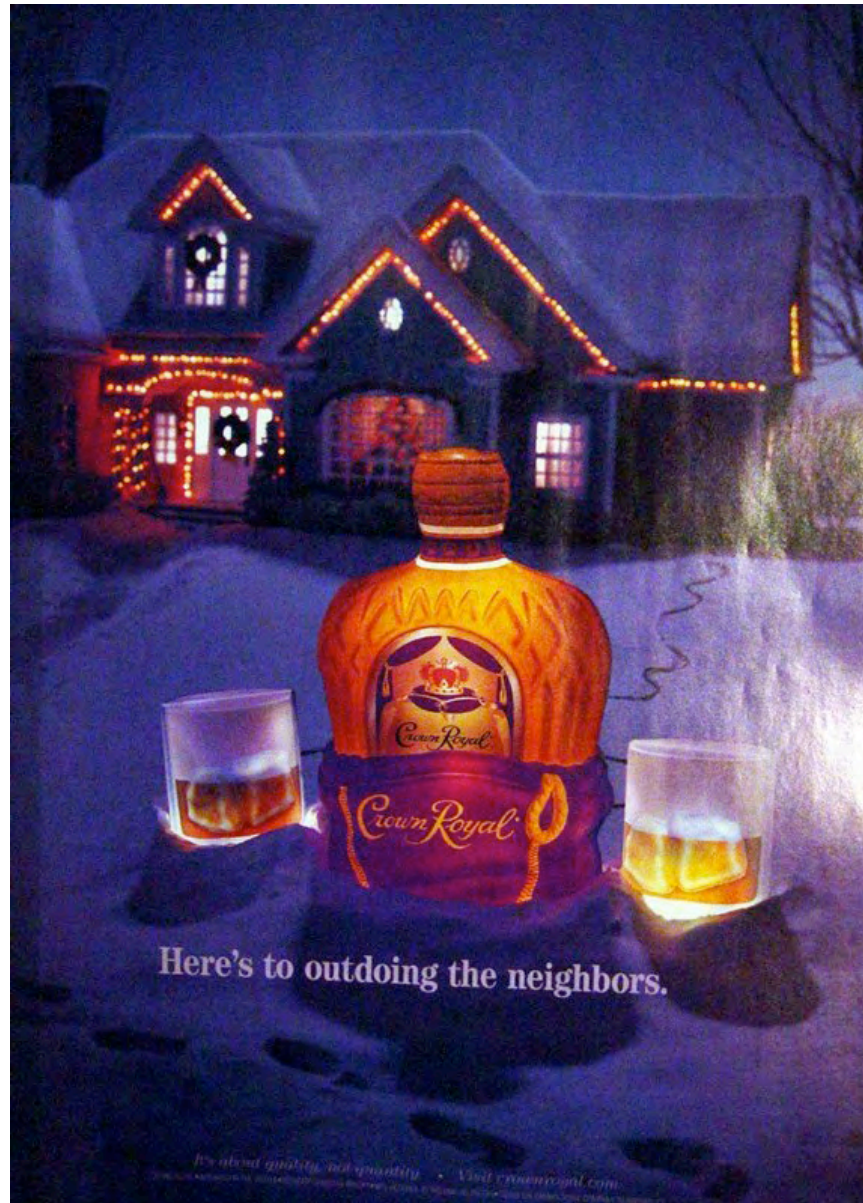


# Reality

- Originates in our thoughts
- Symbolic illusions of naturalness & common sense create “reality”
  - symbols, stories, myths, characters embody social values

e.g., Cultural Values

- Media are within, not separate from, our universes of shared meaning (culture).







Why my TV is way better than yours.



DIRECTV® DVR with TiVo®





THERE IS NO GREATER POWER THAN  
THERE IS NO GREATER POWER THAN  
THERE IS NO GREATER POWER THAN  
**TRUST**  
THERE IS NO GREATER POWER THAN  
THERE IS NO GREATER POWER THAN

THE LARGEST INVENTORY OF  
CERTIFIED DIAMONDS  
ON THE INTERNET

VISIT [DIAMOND.COM](http://DIAMOND.COM) AND ENTER TO WIN A MAGNIFICENT 3 CARAT DIAMOND.



THROUGH THE EASE OF THE INTERNET YOU CAN BROWSE AND BUY FROM THE LARGEST SELECTION OF FINE JEWELRY, LUXURY TIMEPIECES AND CERTIFIED DIAMONDS. DIAMOND.COM GUARANTEES YOUR DIAMOND WILL APPRAISE AT 150% OF YOUR PURCHASE PRICE. BUY WITH POWER. DANCE WITH THE LEADER.



MEMBERS OF DIAMOND.COM WERE ENTRUSTED TO CUT BEYOND 201 CARAT MILLENNIA STAR DIAMONDS THE WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE DIAMONDS SHOWN ACTUAL SIZE.

**DIAMOND.COM**  
AN ODMCO COMPANY • 1.888.DIAMOND

supported by  
**GIA**  
GRADUATE GEMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA



WHEN THE  
PURITANS REACHED  
AMERICA  
THE SECOND THING  
THEY BUILT  
WAS A CHURCH

THE FIRST  
WAS A BAR

EVERY COUNTRY HAS ITS OWN DRINK. OURS IS BOURBON. IN FACT, IT'S AMERICA'S OFFICIAL  
NATIVE SPIRIT. JIM BEAM IS THE NUMBER 1 BOURBON IN THE WORLD. MAYBE THAT'S BECAUSE  
SINCE 1795 WE'VE BEEN ABOUT THE STUFF INSIDE. [THESTUFFINSIDE.COM](http://THESTUFFINSIDE.COM)

HERE'S TO THE STUFF INSIDE



Maxim Dec 08



These days, kids don't want to grow up to be athletes, comedians or movie stars. They want to be highly leveraged brands.

**SEATTLE**  
100 million  
100 million  
100 million

**Some 20 on Madison Avenue.** The real power in America no longer belongs to the most talented celebrities. But the most marketable ones. They would power their professions never dreamed about in our March 22 issue? **Forbes** will examine this new phenomenon and rank the 100 wealthiest and most influential celebrities. We'll go beyond the glib and glamour of the gossip columns and explore the mind in building multi-media brands based solely on a celebrity's name. A name that now has the power to influence big business around the world.

**The result.** It's the kind of **Forbes** issue that won't only reach our regular readers. But will be read by the celebrities as they pass it in the bank, visit your local **Forbes** representative or visit our website. And feel free to visit a little piece of your own.

Previewing the **Forbes** "Super Celebrity 100" issue. Closing date February 15, 1999.

**Forbes**  
ESTABLISHED 1916



SHOW THE WORLD  
HOW PHENOMENAL YOU CAN BE.

Start today with a shave even better than  
MACH3 – Gillette Fusion Power.  
Turn on Fusion Power – soothing micro-pulses  
help you reduce friction and increase razor glide,<sup>\*</sup>  
so you barely feel the blades.  
The world's most comfortable shave.

**Gillette**  
The Best a Man Can Get

gillette.com  
\*vs. Fusion Manual



e.g., Femininity





See your mother on holidays. Not every time you look in the mirror.



Maybe it's a line on your forehead. A crease or two around your eyes. Or a line above your lips. Whatever the wrinkle that bothers you, Osmotics introduces the first transdermal skin care patch with age-fighting Vitamin C to reduce its appearance.

Unlike the Vitamin C in antioxidant creams, which breaks down upon exposure to air, the active Vitamin C in the Derm saturates your wrinkles at a constant rate overnight. Within days, you'll see softer, smoother skin. And the person you want to see in the mirror.



**OSMOTICS.**  
ANTIOXIDANT SKIN CARE PATCHES

Neiman Marcus

Nordstrom

Saks Fifth Avenue



Confessions  
OF A  
Shoe  
Addict:



NICOLE

THE  
PAIR  
FOR  
WEEK



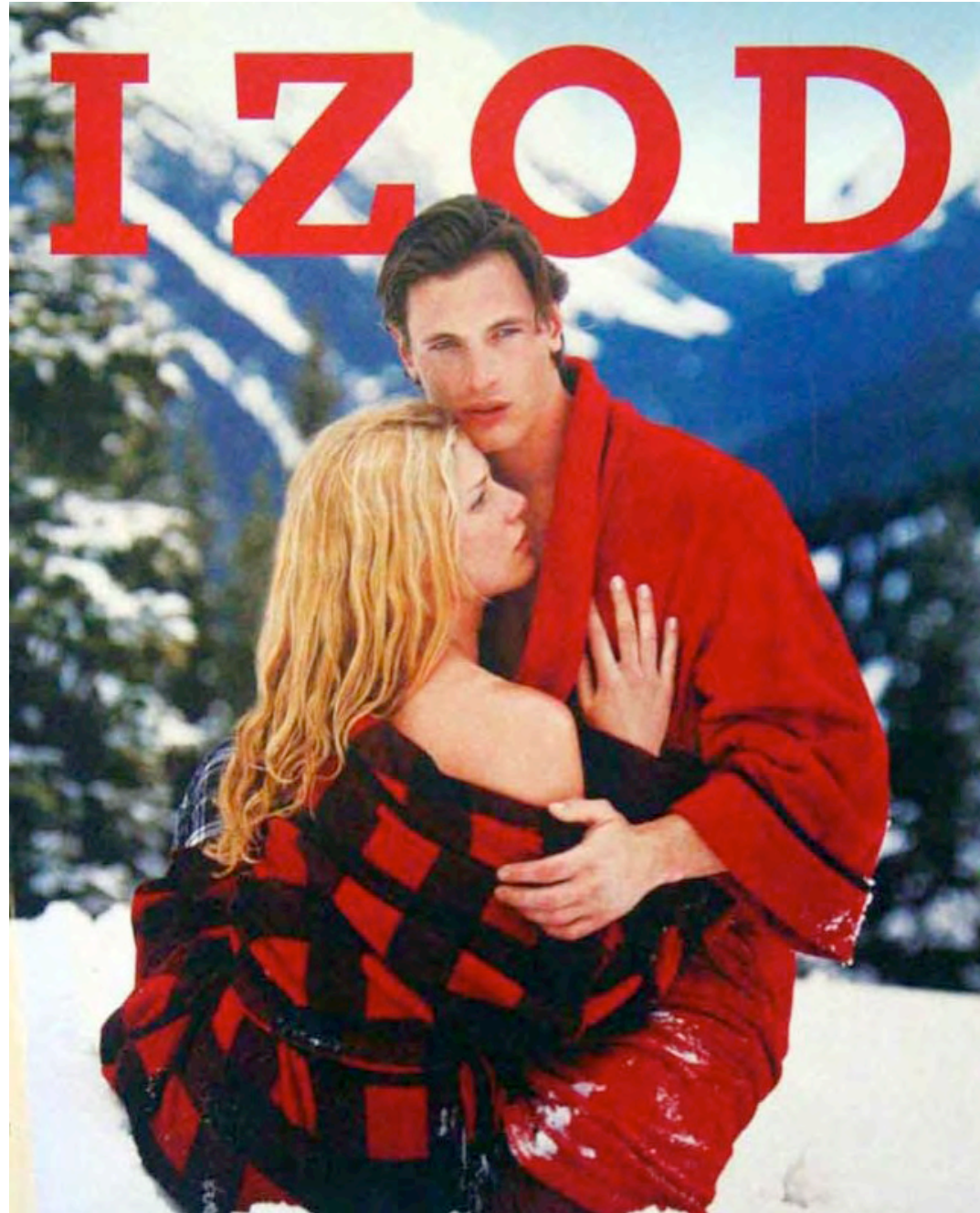


e.g., Masculinity











This page: Michael Stars  
T-shirt, \$25. H&M bikini,  
\$15. On guys: Spinnato  
swim trunks. Opposite:  
Mallorca Jeans, Carhartt  
T-shirt, \$29. Calzedonia  
\$295. Gola sneakers.



e.g., Relationships





BODY LANGUAGE

# SEDUCE ANY WOMAN!

Crack the nonverbal code and the next time a hot blonde rubs her lips and bounces her foot, you'll know it's not due to a lack of Chap Stick and a mild case of Tourette's

**W**omen are complicated and clever, which is why lame come-ons are usually greeted with a drink in the face. But as 93 percent of human communication is nonverbal, hordes of women may already be flashing you the "Come on, big boy!" signals with their bodies—and you are totally in the dark. Follow *PHM's* guide to reading the signs and you can make her yours!

BY SUSAN QUILLIAM  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIP MEYER

## THE HAIR TWIRLER

Can't keep her fingers out of her locks



**It means**  
She's preening because she wants to look her best. If she's glancing at you, you're the lucky schmuck she's primping for.

**To get her**  
Pay her a genuine yet appropriate compliment. "My, your cans sure rock."

Inviting in that top," isn't as effective as commenting on her eyes or lips.

**Forget about**  
Smacking her ass and asking when the diet starts. If her self-esteem wavers, so will her interest in you.

**Once you have her**  
Eliminate her insecurity about getting naked. As she strips, touch and kiss her to show you're a fan.

**But it could mean**  
She has dandruff and is picking at her flaky scalp.

## THE STATUE

Hardly makes any gestures or movements, and speaks in a quiet voice

**It means**  
She's shy and perhaps nervous, and unsure whether you like her. But if she holds eye contact and smiles, there's a chance you're in scoring position.

**To get her**  
Take her somewhere quiet—in other words, far from the mosh pit that formed once the DJ started blasting Limp Bizkit—and shield her from other people by placing yourself between her and the crowd. Get her to open up by asking questions that require more than simple yes or no answers.

**Bargain about**  
Trying to coax her out of her shell by licking her face or telling dirty jokes.

such as the koola bear that eats bush and leaves. This will just make her feel even more nervous—and prompt her to do her best Carl Lewis impression on her way out the front door.

**Once you have her**  
Opt for a more conservative approach, which is likely to be more effective than full-on Kama Sutra or trying to replicate Sven and Ginger's most recent positions of the month.

**But it could mean**  
She's simply not interested, especially if she doesn't look at you. If that's the case, pitch her into the scrap heap and move on.



PHOTOGRAPHY: KIP MEYER; STYLING: JESSICA COOPER; HAIR: BLAKE DASH BY L'ORÉAL; MAKEUP: JESSICA COOPER

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, smiling and looking down. She is wearing a black underwire bra. The background is a soft-focus floral pattern. The overall color palette is muted, with a pinkish-purple tint.

**IT EMBRACES YOU. IT MAKES YOU FEEL SEXY.  
IT DOESN'T HOG THE REMOTE.**

This is the bra you've been waiting for. An amazing new fabric means no more padding, protruding underwire, or digging. Just soft, stretchy support and a naturally sexy shape. Perfect Touch from Lily of France, you have to touch it to believe it.

**LILY OF FRANCE**  
**PERFECT TOUCH**


\*Excludes other GM products. ©1997 GM Corp. Buckle up, America!



The kids aren't going to listen  
to you anyway.



Save your breath. The all-new Chevy<sup>®</sup> Venture<sup>™</sup> is the only minivan<sup>\*</sup>  
available with a Dual Mode Sound System that lets you listen to the radio in the front seat  
and lets them listen to a CD of whatever they call music in the back. And vice versa.  
Which means they won't roll their eyes when you sing, and you won't have to listen to something  
that sounds like bees attacking a hippo. And that should help keep every trip in harmony.

Chevy Venture  Let's Go!

For a free brochure and video, call toll free 1-888-950-VENTURE or visit us at [www.chevrolet.com](http://www.chevrolet.com)



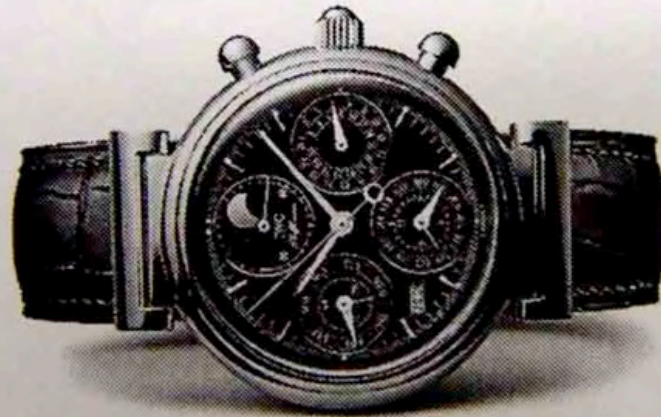
# Almost as complicated as a woman. Except it's on time.

The Da Vinci, one of the most complicated mechanical chronographs ever manufactured and, like a woman, is designed to appeal to men. With perpetual calendar and moon phase display. In stainless steel. Ref. 3750, \$12,500.  
Also available in 18 carat yellow or rose gold.

## IWC

Since 1868.

And for as long as there are men.



**ALPHA OMEGA**

*Luxury's Most Precious*

Harvard Square 40 JFK St. Cambridge, MA 02138-4127  
The Plaza at Four Seasons Center 400 Boulevard, Kansas, MA 01923-824-9000  
Call toll free 800-447-4362

IWC International Watch Co., Ltd., Schaffhausen, Switzerland  
For complete IWC catalog please call (800) 447-4362 • www.iwc.ch