



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

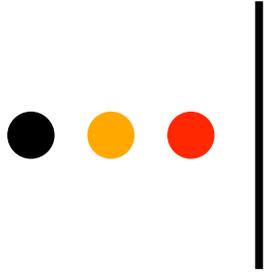
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ABS Conference

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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



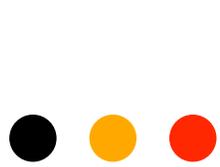
Structuralism

- 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*

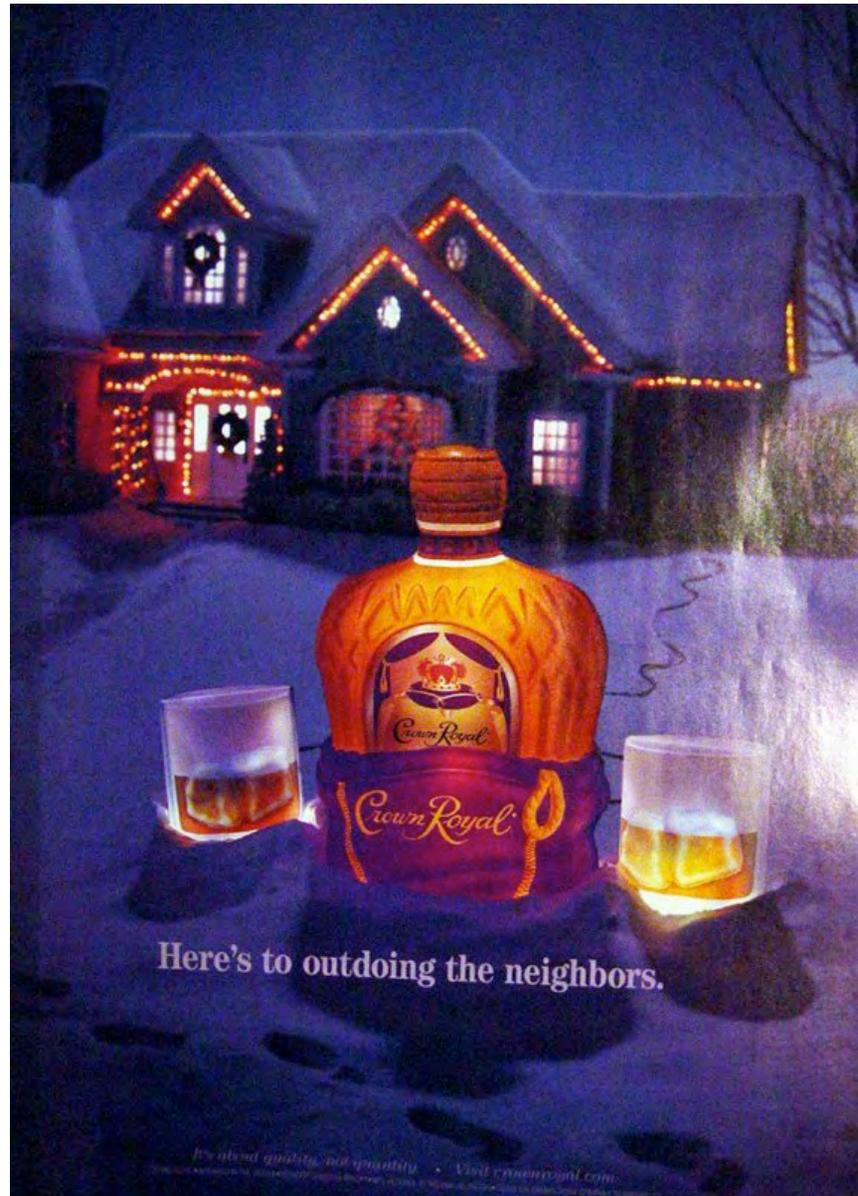


Reality

- 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).



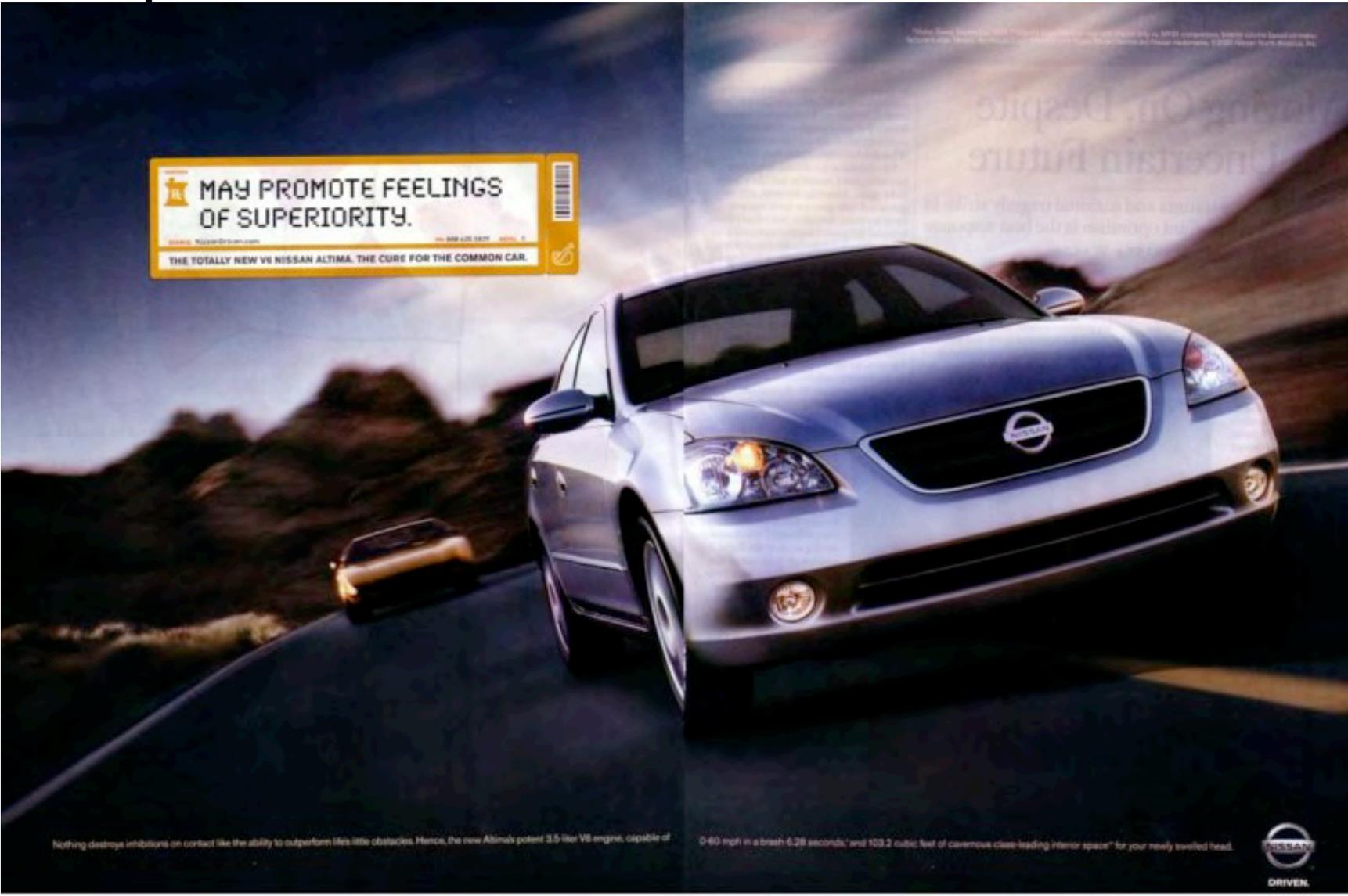

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e.g., Femininity

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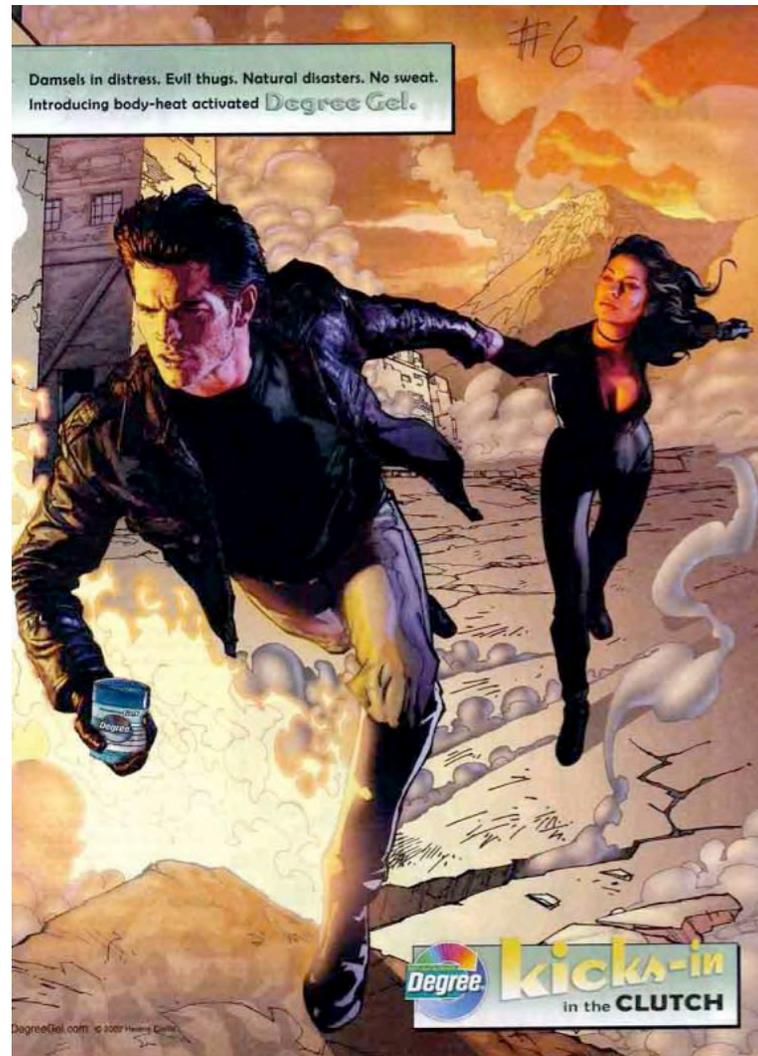
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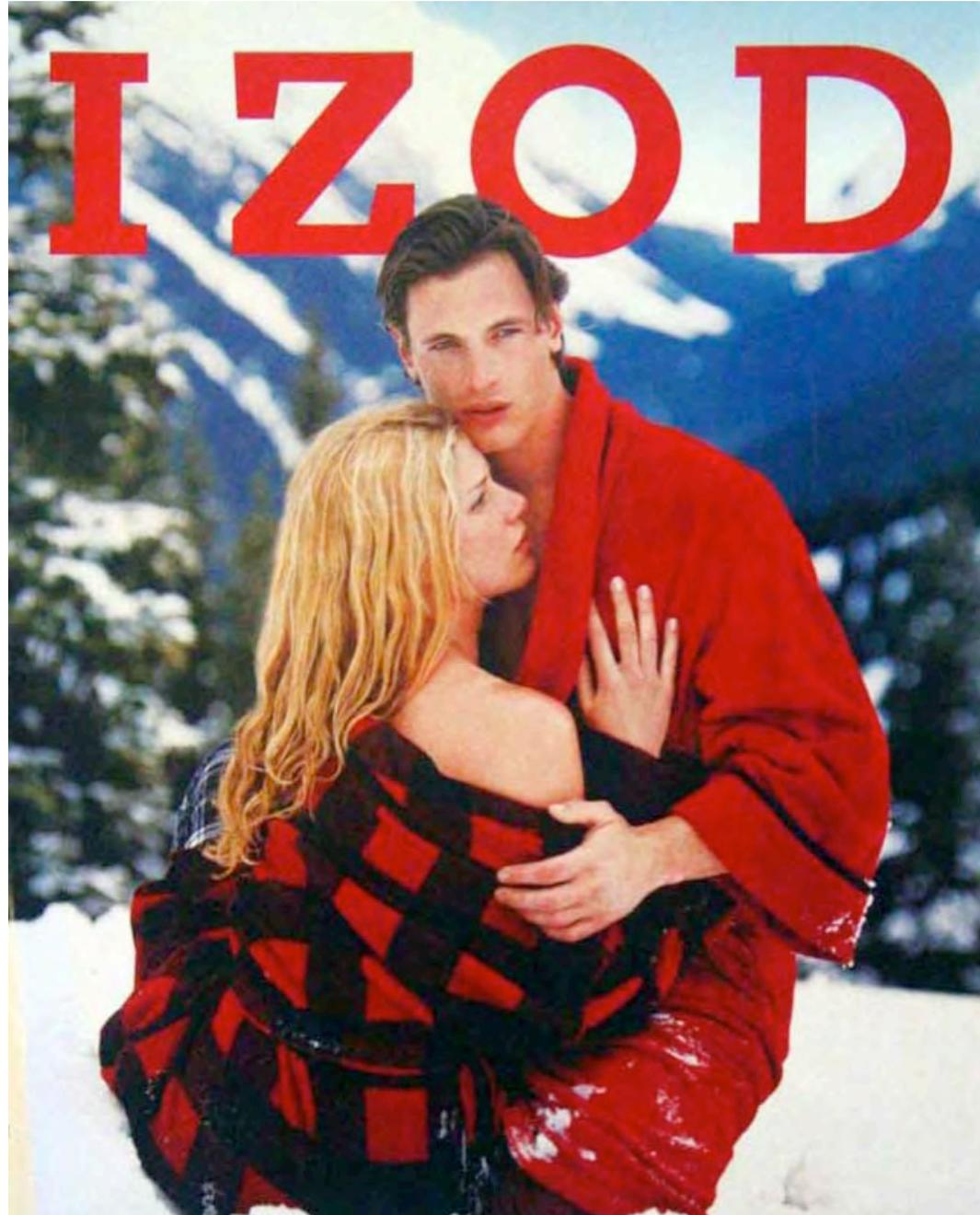
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THE
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e.g., Masculinity







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

An advertisement for TheManShow.com. It features three women posing in a studio setting. One woman stands in the center wearing a yellow bikini, while two others are crouching in front of her, wearing black bikinis and high-heeled boots. The background is a light, patterned wall. At the bottom, there is a circular logo for 'The Man Show' on the left, the website address 'www.TheManShow.com' in the center, and a computer mouse icon on the right. Below the website address is the tagline: 'Because the Internet wasn't filthy enough already.'



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

Women 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 *FHM'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 woman with dark hair, smiling, wearing a black bra. The background is a soft-focus floral pattern. The text is overlaid on the image.

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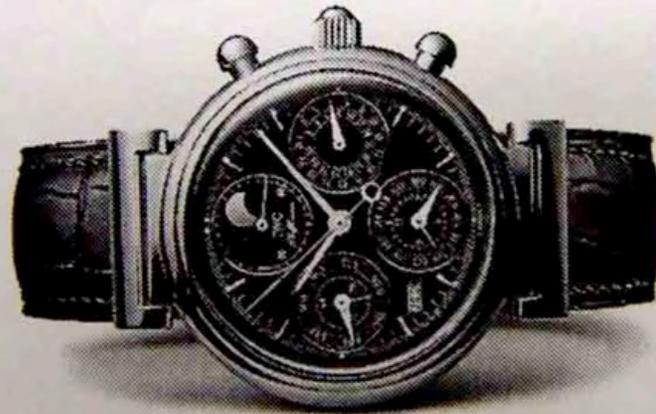
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