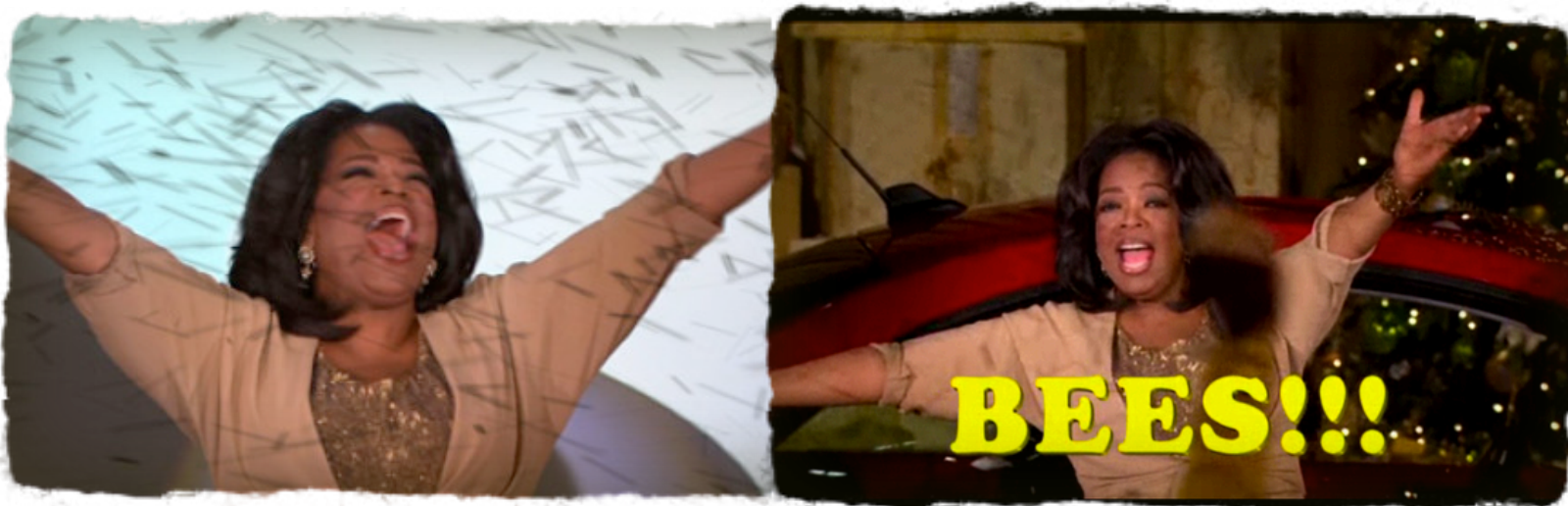


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Semiotics for Creators of Popular Culture
Semiotic Analysis # 2
Date: 2.18.14 | Revised 5.14.14
Image/Media: Oprah - Bees Gif

<http://img37.imageshack.us/img37/7044/oprahbees.gif>



Signifier: The signifier in this gif (graphics interchange format) is what looks to be a swarm of bees. One could argue that the insects are locusts, but whether it's bees or locusts the impression of unwanted bugs still comes across clear.

Signified: The signified in this media is none other than Oprah and her lavish generosity! Where to begin with Oprah? In my experience of watching Oprah sporadically through the years, she was adored by a large female fanbase due to the popular and sometimes sensitive topics on the show. Studio audiences would often receive free gifts just from being an audience member that day, and sometimes the gifts were amazing! She was adored and respected and was more than a household name.

Overall Sign: No matter what Oprah gives, we love it! Be it brand new cooking sets or your very own swarm of dangerous insects. We love it! She's like the everyday Santa Clause. Just the mere image of Oprah and the sound of her unique announcer voice, makes anyone want bees! Oprah's significance can be transferred to something unappreciated and unwanted until it becomes celebrated. The humor is there but the principle is still strong.

Image: A wide unveiled screen of some sort, Oprah, an ecstatic studio audience, and bees!

Icon/Symbol: Oprah herself is an icon: for women, for African Americans, and as an entrepreneurial entertainer. The bees normally when used as a symbol are sometimes associated with honey as a product, but also for allergies and sometimes death due to their stingers.

Index: Bees are considered industrial and hard workers. One could read past the humor and say just like the bees are hard workers who create just as Oprah is a hard worker who creates opportunity. We could say that, or we could just keep laughing at the the gif here.

Denotation: Oprah is unveiling a gift to the the studio audience in the form of bees. They, in return are crying and screaming happily as Oprah does a victory dance on stage.

Connotation: Oprah is about to unveil one of her greatest gifts of all time! It's a swarm of insects and the audience loves it....Completely useless...But they love it! And Oprah knows they're loving it! She could literally give them garbage and they would receive it likes kids on Christmas morning! There are several intercut shots where she's visibly happy about the gifts she's just unveiled as the audience is screaming and crying with joy.

Diachronic Analysis/Synchronic Analysis: In the digital age of social media, things are constantly being remixed and given new meaning. Sometimes the remixed meaning is for political propaganda, creative statement, or simply for the fun of things. Someone probably saw

this clip online and got the bright idea to juxtapose the idea of an unpleasant gift (the bees) being given by a very pleasant person (Oprah). They edited the gif so that the audience was still overjoyed at the swarm while Oprah is dancing and laughing, almost sort of maniacally.

Syntagmatic Analysis: This GIF pokes fun at the “giving power” Oprah has. Chances are in the real life recording of this episode, whatever Oprah gave them was much nicer, more valuable, and less dangerous. Yet, say it was a flat screen TV, the sense of humor would be lost because that would be “normal” for Oprah to do. Oprah has always given nice things, so the fact that in this GIF she’s giving something not nice, it’s funny as they are just as ecstatic to receive a good thing from her as well as the bad with the same level of emotion.

Paradigmatic Analysis: Laughing and crying were oppositions I found here as separate visible reactions to the mutual feeling of joy. Some members of the audience cry tears of joy while others scream and jump around. It’s interesting to note to how Oprah can evoke two separate visible reactions that both stem from the same joyful emotion.

Intertextuality: Because they lack sound, GIFs often use text to recreate dialogue, be it the original lines or impromptu ones to make it funnier as in this particular GIF. The text *BEES!!* is flashing on and off screen, as if similar to a gameshow text when someone has won a prize.

Metaphor: From what I could perceive, I didn’t get a sense of a metaphor in this form of media, or at least not a strong sense. The overall felling is more humorously ridiculous than metaphorically humorous.

Codes: The code that seems to be at play is the rules of giving and receiving. The gift giver is often very giddy to present a gift, especially if it’s for a loved one. The receiver on the other hand has to be obliging to the giver even if he or she doesn’t like the gift and plans to return it.

Interpellation: This gif is also poking the finger at past and current Oprah fans who share that same ecstatic fandom for Oprah and asks if she gave you a swarm of bees, would you really be this excited. Sarcasm is a clear element.

Structuralism/Auteur Theory: GIFs are an interesting genre to dissect, mainly because it's a relatively new online social tool. Most gifs only last a few seconds, and the seconds that are shown should be the funniest of all. By adding the bees, the creator maximizes the humor level of this gif. This is one of the best gifs I've seen on the internet.

Jingoism: While I myself am not a huge Oprah fan, my Grandmother was and I'm sure that millions of other women out there are fans as well. I think that if the fans saw this gif, the reactions could vary: some may be privy to gifs and understand it as small animation just to make you smile, while others may see it as a blaspheme to Oprah's name! It depends on how avid the Oprah fan is and their level of gifs as a social media remixing tool. But overall, I think there's no harm in it because it's not making fun of Oprah, since her laughing and dancing are what makes it funny. This gif is actually making fun of the fans.