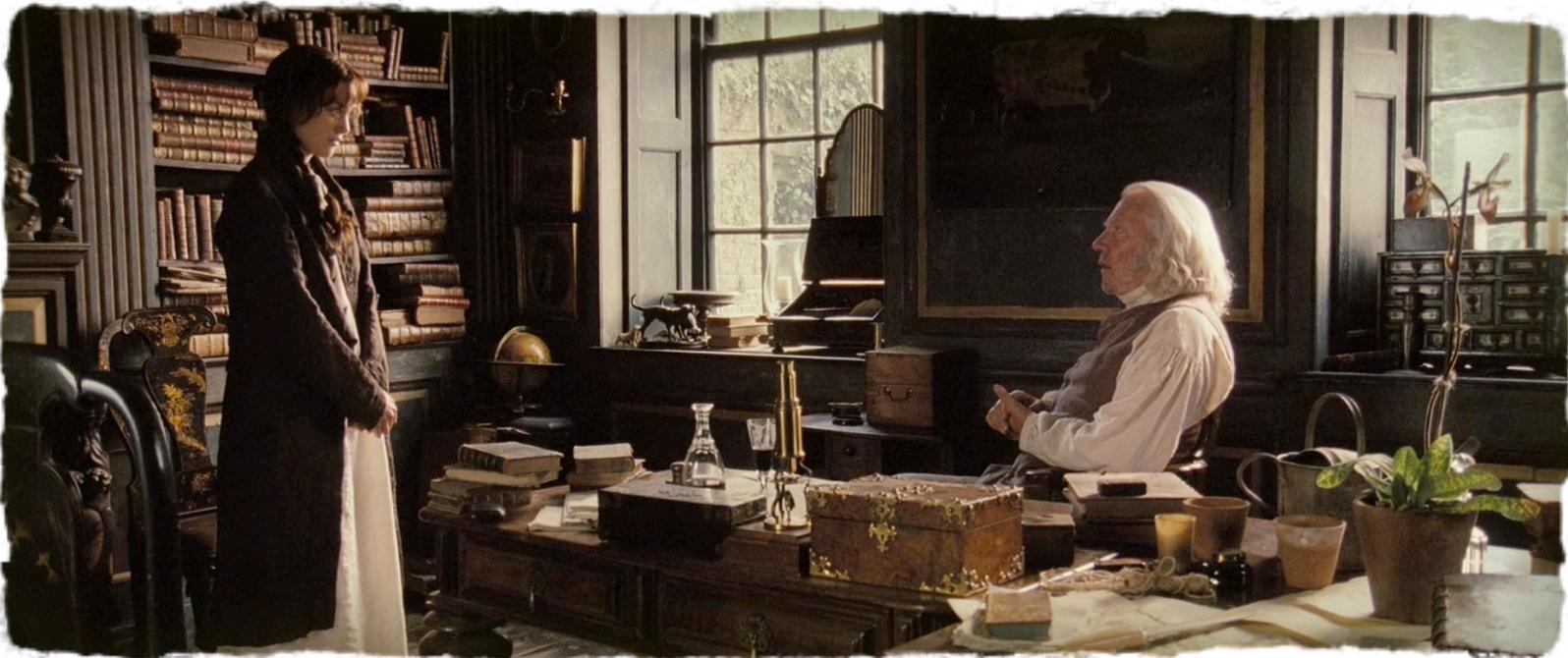


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Semiotics for Creators of Popular Culture
Semiotic Analysis # 6
Date: 3.13.14 | Revised 5.14.14
Image: Pride & Prejudice - Stills



Time Code: 1:17:38



Time Code: 1:56:33

Signifier: Elizebeth (Lizzy) is the signified. In both images she's standing or sitting in a reverent state to her father. In the first image she's kneeling looking up at him, and in the second she's standing by docilely as if she's done something naughty.

Signified: Mr. Bennet, her father, is the signified. In both images he's sitting but still holds a sense of authority. Both of these images are captured in his study, his inner sanctum. Lizzy is intruding upon his territory in order to seek his wisdom and permission regarding her personal affairs.

Overall Sign/Metaphor: Mr. Bennet is a library of wisdom for his daughter in every circumstance imaginable.

Image: Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth (Lizzy), studying desk, a bookshelf full of books, a clock, a globe, and windows.

Symbol/Index/Icon Books and libraries are often associated with a sense of knowledge. The bigger the library, the more knowledge is stored.

Windows are letting light into the room, similar to the wisdom Lizzy receives from her father that illuminates her world.

The significance of sitting is also a hidden symbol in these images. As the head of the family, Mr. Bennet holds the place of authority in his home and the small manor that they own. The family look to him for their well being. He's similar to a king reigning over a small throne. In the first image, Lizzy looks as if she's a kneeling servant seeking mercy as a peasant citizen would. She could have easily taken a seat beside him, but one never sits in the presence of a king as it could show lack of respect or reverence.

Denotation: A woman standing in a room as an older gentleman sits at his desk with books, papers, and study materials all around him.

Connotation: A woman is seeking her father's approval and permission.

Synchronic Analysis/Diachronic Analysis: Lizzy's potential suitor is of a higher cultural status than she, so it could help her status to marry him. Yet, Mr. Bennet is more concerned with her happiness and wants to make sure she truly is in love and this isn't just a material marriage.

Syntagmatic Analysis: In the scene before this Lizzy has just been proposed to by Mr. Darcy. Mr. Darcy has just spoken with her father, and now it's her turn. There's a sense of "What will he say" or "Will he approve?"

Paradigmatic Analysis: What if Elizabeth would have been sitting in a chair at her father's desk with him. The scene would have looked more like a negotiation. It's in her position that says she's asking for permission and humbling herself to seek his wisdom. She's giving him power. Mr. Bennet is a person Lizzy respects and trusts deeply as she doesn't listen to her mother's advice who isn't concerned with matters of the heart.

It's Lizzy's humble stance that gives Mr. Bennet the power over her affairs. Earlier in the film, Lizzy refused to be married to her awkward, distant cousin. In previous scenes, she didn't care what anyone said and her body language showed it. Contrarily now, Lizzy cares deeply about her father's answer to her marriage and wants his approval. It's her lack of dominance that gives him power in contrary to her defiance before that subverted it.

Codes: "May I" or asking for permission is a soft spoken code in this image. Lizzy's posture resembles that of a sweet-sixteen girl asking her father to stay out late at prom. She knows that if she doesn't put on her coy, girlish charm she'll have no chance of being with her true love.

Ideology: In this time period, it was respectable if the father of the family blessed (gave his consent) to the the marriage of his daughter. Lizzy needs her farther's approval in order for her marriage to not be frowned upon and seen as a scandal.

Structuralism/Auteur Theory: As a period piece, Joe Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the few I can take in with pleasure. Kierra Knightly's portrayal of Elizabeth Bennet isn't full of melodramatic farce but sincere being. Donald Sutherland also plays his role with stately but relaxed manner fitting of, well, a king.

This scene manages to hold onto what little drama is left in the film as the resolution has taken place. All through the film Lizzy faced drama in her relationships personally and with her family: Lizzy's younger sister gets married before she does, Ms. Bennet tries to force Lizzy to marry her awkward cousins whom Lizzy's best friend ends up marrying, Lizzy's older sister finds love, loses love, and finds it again, and all the while Lizzy has been in a battle of pride against Mr. Darcy. After all this has happened, she now needs a nod of approval from her father to approve this relationship.

Obfuscation: Lizzy has a habit of hiding from her problems in the film, and I believe she gets that from her father. Throughout the film, Lizzy and her mother have to encourage Mr. Bennet to get involved with the family's affairs. He's often found in his study working on his hobbies. Lizzy know he won't come to her and address the problems she has so she has to come to him.

Jingoism/Interpellation: Lizzy's situation is somewhat relatable for those who still value the idea of receiving your father's approval for your partner. Anyone who's ever brought a first date home can understand this need of approval from your family.