
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Expectations of Pamela's Presentation of Herself and Her Situation in Her Narrative

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ABSTRACT

Samuel Richardson is widely considered the first author to promote the epistolary novel in the 18th century with his popular novel *Pamela*. Richardson claimed that epistolary novels would help close the distance between readers and characters, helping them understand the physical and mental basis from which protagonists drew inspiration when writing letters. However, it is immediately apparent that *Pamela* is based on only one character: the eponymous Pamela. In contrast to the primary argument that epistolary novels possess a distinct edge over other formats due to the variety of perspectives represented through letters, *Pamela*, in presenting only one point of view, prevents readers from accessing other characters with the same intimacy. Essentially, readers are assessing all the other characters solely through Pamela's perspective, a quality that is oppositional to what the reader expects from the epistolary format. Richardson is regarded for his ability to imbue Pamela's letters with an authentic female voice that channels the feminine concerns and sensibilities of his time. Nevertheless, readers develop biased interpretations of the other characters due to Pamela's emotional, naïve disposition. While Pamela's letters are part of the novel's realism, they simultaneously serve to weaken the verisimilitude of this novel. For example, in one of Pamela's letters, she writes, "My young Master" (11). This salutation could be interpreted in many different ways, influencing the readers' understanding of her intentions. In this essay, I will explore both Richardson's technique and role in expanding and popularizing the epistolary novel as well as the textual evidence in *Pamela* that undermines her credibility as a narrator and casts her virtue into question.

KEYWORDS: Epistolary Novel, Narrative Manipulation, Unreliable Narrator, Pamela, Samuel Richardson, Female Voice, Verisimilitude, Virtue

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1. Introduction: The Epistolary Novel, Narrative Manipulation, and Pamela's Virtue

Richardson is one of the authors who promoted the epistolary novel in the eighteenth century with his popular novel, *Pamela*. Richardson believes that epistolary novels will help readers to be close to the character's thoughts and feelings and they can identify the places and the positions that emerge for the protagonists to write their letters. However, we can see that *Pamela* is based on only one character, Pamela the protagonist, and readers might not have any access to the other characters in this novel. Readers are making their judgments for the other characters' issues based on Pamela's point of view. Richardson is regarded for his ability to create these letters in his novel in the voice of his female heroine that express the feminine concerns and sensibilities of his time. However, readers are only receiving a sense of the other characters from the narrator, Pamela, who is also touched by her emotions and feelings and considers herself an innocent child. Therefore, it could be argued that if these letters are part of the realism of this novel, which may help readers identify Pamela with her parents, someone might say that these letters also weaken the authenticity of this novel. In this paper, I will discuss some primary key parts, some specific quotations, and childish excuses that reveal how Pamela manipulates her narrative and causes readers to be uncertain of her virtue. In addition, I will discuss Pamela's role as a servant according to the historical facts about servants' roles in the eighteenth century and how she is supposed to be treated as a servant. The main focus here is to show how Pamela was an exceptional

servant to her master and why she does not follow the same rules as the other servants. Pamela's treatment as an exceptional servant is a questionable point against the didacticness of Richardson's epistolary novel and how that portrays her as a hypocrite and manipulates her narrative. Therefore, I will discuss how Pamela's behavior with her master reveals some variances when it is compared with other servants. Based on the historical evidence of the normal relationship between female servants and When I think that if Richardson's goal of this epistolary novel is to make the letters reflect the reality of that society, then I have to keep in my mind that the writer of any letter is only telling what he or she wants the reader to know, not certainly the whole truth. For instance, Pamela is looking for advice from her parents that can help her manage the critical situation that she finds herself in. At the same time, she does not want to worry them and she asks them again and again to trust her and not to be concerned.

Then, I find myself asking how many details she may leave out in order to maintain her own desire to reach her needs. In addition, Pamela is a young girl who is afraid of her own safety; therefore, she seems to come up with several minor or unacceptable excuses in order to stay longer. For example, in one of her letters to her parents, she mentioned that she must finish the waistcoat that she was working on for the man who is threatening her and making some new clothes for herself. If I grant her excuse here for a valid reason, I must ask a question whether or not she is being totally honest with her parents. An important aspect in this novel is that Richardson is trying to maintain that Pamela is an honest girl who is struggling to keep her virtue. I believe that careful readers also do not want to imply that Pamela lacks her virtue. No doubt that her virtue is an essential part of the theme of the novel, and I am not trying to say that she lacks it. However, I believe that Pamela is lacking one of virtue's pillars by being manipulative with everyone especially her poor parents.

Richardson's use of the feminine voice in this novel is a special feature for his time, but misses the control of the narrative voice here when Pamela, through her narrative, tries to control and deceive her parents to get what she wants, apparently to win her master. I will discuss what she needs from her master and, as a young girl, she may not even know what she is looking for; however, she seeks more than anything else the comfort that may not be provided by anyone else except her master. Therefore, she needs to stay. Before discussing how she represents herself and her situation in her narrative to reach her needs from her master, readers should be aware of what it means to be a servant in the eighteenth century.

2. Historical Evidence for Normal Female Servants-Master Relationship

Richardson uses the new genre of the epistolary novel, *Pamela*, by focusing on the life of Pamela, as one of the young female domestic servants in his time. By looking at the study of domestic service in this period, the life of the female household servant is based on her duties as one of the other employees who are controlled by their responsibilities. However, the personal and social parts of these women's lives portray their identities as human beings as well. As such, a servant like Pamela would understandably desire to control over telling her story, when she has no control over the events in it.

Female domestic servants are people in the eighteenth century whose roles in that society were a means of labor and keeping social status. Carolyn Steedman defines servants in that society as "persons employed by men of trades and profession...to perform the work and business of their families" (1). Those menial servants are considered additional hands and feet for their masters and mistresses who are contracting manual labor for modest wages (Steedman 1). In *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England*, J. Jean Hecht discusses the impersonal side of business regarding this issue, in which he points out those domestic servants used to be "a symbol of wealth" for the masters and mistresses who they work for (2). Many of the servants were young women who were required to maintain "polite education" that sought a secure protection and a chance to "rise in the economic and social scale" (Hecht 19). Poor girls were also hired beside these females of decent social standing and those who were poor were cared for by charity schools. These female servants were usually connected to the wealthy families by other friend servants, tradesmen, the statute fair, register office, or by newspaper advertisements that refer to the available young women who are qualified and ready to work. On the other hand, R.C. Richardson points out that when these servants were hired into service, they were mainly the possessions of their masters "servants" time...was not their own but their master's" (Richardson 111). Masters not only require servant's time. Hecht mentioned that a servant "was expected to abandon all thoughts of maintaining a private life" (72). In addition, Robert Folkenlilk mentioned that domestic servitude "broke down the sense of the individuality through, role dispossession, and "the practice of renaming servants" (255-256). Female domestic servants are known by their different identities that refer to their hierarchical tasks of their occupational title. The highest domestic female servant is the lady's maid or waiting maid who is usually the closest to the mistress of the house. She is responsible for dressing the lady, arranging her head, clothes, and being with her all the time in the house and outside the house. Then, there is the housekeeper who is responsible for the household and managing the other female servants. Beneath the housekeeper there is the cook, and these are the three highest positions for the domestic female servants (Hecht 61).

Readers are aware of Pamela's job as a servant. Richardson gives her the highest position, being a waiting maid, among the other servants. As we know from the novel, Pamela as a waiting maid for the Lady B for almost three years. However, when Lady B died, Pamela still in the service at the same position for Lady B's son. For him, she was more than just a servant.

However, I may argue that Pamela's Master gives Pamela her own privacy, as a servant, on several occasions. For example, one day he praises how she is dedicated to her parents by writing them several letters. Pamela indirectly proved that she had an advantage over the other servants in one of her letters when she said to her parents "for he was always dutiful to his parents; and why should he be angry, that I was so to mine!" (Richardson 12). Readers may indicate the meaning of this quotation as whether Pamela is defending her right that she should practice her own privacy, considering herself as her master's property, or she is telling her parents that her master is allowing her to do what he is doing with his parents because she is dutiful to her parents. However, a perceptive reading of some of the master's words to Pamela may indicate that he probably guides her to reach the highest level among the other servant in a condition that Pamela should be "a good Girl, and faithful and diligent, [then] he would be a friend to [her]" (Richardson 12). Therefore, it could be argued that he asked Pamela to abide by these three manners and then she would be treated better than just a servant. When he promised her that he would consider her as a friend not just a servant, my attention was curious about his intention of what kind of friendship he was looking for? In the same letter, when Pamela mentioned that she should be dutiful to her parents as he was dutiful to his, we can see that the master's conditions for being a friend to Pamela were eliminated into that Pamela should be only "faithful, and diligent". Throughout the novel, it is obviously seen how Pamela is embracing her master's characteristics gradually and how frequently she leaves the servant's behaviors. However, we can note how Pamela portrays herself to be an exceptional servant because her situation leads her to manipulate her narrative.

3. Heading Based on Historical Evidence, How Pamela Deviates from Normal Role?

Acknowledging the historical facts that describe the role and social order of the domestic female servants in the eighteenth century can help readers identify how Richardson's portrayal of his protagonist, as a servant, was completely different when compared to other servants in that society. Therefore, when readers are aware of how the domestic female servants were treated in the eighteenth century, they will be able to identify how Pamela was an exceptional servant compared to other servants in that society. Throughout the novel, her master's closer relation with her, as well as his words reveals that he guides Pamela to reaching the highest level among his other servants by giving her specific conditions to follow. Thus, I can say here that this kind of special treatment puts Pamela in a situation that leads her desires to manipulate her narrative.

Another interesting point that makes Pamela an exceptional servant can be seen when analyzing her attitude towards her master, when she mentioned in her first sentence in one of her early letters in the novel, that she writes that she "has a great trouble, and some comfort, to acquaint her parents with." (Richardson 11). Unarguably, as readers always agree, Pamela's trouble was a result of her loss of her master; however, my argument is based on what she means by saying "comfort". It may come to readers minds that comfort means that she feels more comfortable with her master, to some extent, though she is not aware of it. A historical fact shows that the simple nature of the epistolary novel indicates that there is no omniscience. Writers have the bias of a first-person narrator as well as the added restriction of what they are about to tell the reader, and I believe that Pamela took the advantage of this point. It is unclear what is really going on in the mind of this young girl. We can see that Pamela is not aware of her own mind and she is not just confusing her readers. Because there was no omniscience, Pamela offers several perspectives. We can see how she was defending herself, hiding some incidents, disputing with herself, confusing her parents' attention and misleading her parents. These perspectives can be seen in many words within her letters. Pamela, as a naïve young girl, keeps the readers of how she is interested in her master for example, when she said "my young master" (Richardson 11). Perceptive reading to the way in which she chooses the words "my" may indicate that by calling him "my master" rather than "our master", since they are all servants, may reveal something different. The way she said "my master" portrays him as if he for her only and nobody else among the servants. Her use of the word "my master" indicates that she looks at him as if he is her husband. However, there are some other occasions in different letters where we can see Pamela use the same expression by calling him "our master" and that may indicate something else. For example, she mentioned at the beginning of letter 26 that "for he was our master, and so put on sharp anger at first" (Richardson 65). Such quotations can prove to readers that Pamela was hiding something.

Moreover, Pamela asserts that there is starting to become compatibility between herself and her master when she said, "For he was always dutiful to his parent; and why should he be angry, that I was so to mine!" (Richardson 12). She also tries something different, like focusing on her Master's words that would elevate her in his eyes. The master appears in the letters that he promises his mother to take care of all the servants; however, his mother insists that he should take care of Pamela and he says, "I will take care of you all, my Lasses; and for you, Pamela" (Richardson 11). By calling her, Pamela, by her name, can show how he is really interested in her. By not including her with the other Lasses and naming her by her first name and not the other servants, it makes her an advantage over the other servants. As known in the history of the normal female servants at that time, servants considered their master, but in the previous quote, the roles are changed, and the Master seems to be the one who spends his time for his servants and Pamela is one of them. The contradiction of the role of the normal servants with their

masters in the eighteenth century might put the Master in a position that indicates he is interested in his servant. What is mentioned in the previous quote may place Pamela in a situation in which she was trying to elevate her lower status among the other servants in order to reach her intended goal, by marrying her master.

Furthermore, I believe that the contradiction that young Pamela is portraying throughout her letters can be noted easily. For example, the contradiction is significantly seen when she said, "To be sure I did nothing but curchee and cry, and was all in confusion, at his Goodness. Indeed he is the best of Gentlemen, I think" (Richardson 13). Her contradiction here can show how manipulative she is to her narrative. The meaning of "indeed" at "Dictionary.com" is defined as "in fact, in reality; in truth (used for emphasis, to conform and amplify a previous statement, to indicate a concession or admission, or, interrogatively, to obtain conformation). Therefore, she is admitting that he is kind to her in one sentence; then, at the end of the same passage, she changed her mind by saying "I thing" in order to avoid that her parents might think negatively about how she feels. Thus, he reduces her conformation level into the possibility level by saying "I think." In this situation, readers have the right to be skeptical about her situation with her master because she alluding them to perceive that there is something is going to happen between her and her master. It can be proved when she said to her parents, "I must give you both Grief and Pleasure" (Richardson 12). She might be able to predict through her unconscious feelings and her master's abnormal actions and conduct towards her that she is planning to give some "grief" to her parents because of her master's freedom with her; then, she is going to give them "pleasure" when she accomplish her intended goal by marrying him.

4. Richardson's Goal in This Novel

Richardson aims at a didactic religious lesson in *Pamela* by his protagonist's superiority in virtue, love through cleanliness, and forgiveness of others. He presents Pamela, in this novel, as rigorously devoted to God. This usually makes her seem manipulative, greedy, and hypocritical. Readers can see that Richardson's goal is to give a lesson through Pamela who is proud of keeping her virtue when, at the end, God rewards with love and happiness. However, Richardson is missing "honesty" which is one of the important pillars of virtue. Readers may argue that if the truth is all that matters in order to keep her virtue, why would Pamela manipulate her narrative and be deceitful with her parents? Therefore, I can say that Pamela has an early intention to elevate her status from being a servant to being closer to her master's social class. A possible evidence that Pamela is manipulating her narrative to elevate her status as a servant is seen when her parents respond to her poorly concealed actions. Her father is trying to suggest indirectly that he feels that she is hiding something. He mentioned in the second letter in the novel that:

"If you love *us* then, if you value *God's* Blessing, and *your own* future Happiness, we both charge you to stand upon your Guard; and, if you find the least Attempt made upon your Virtue, be sure you leave every thing behind you, and come away to us; for we had rather see you all covered with Rags, and even follow you to the Church-yard, then have it said, a Child of ours preferred worldly Conveniences to her Virtue." (Richardson 14)

Pamela receives several letters from her father that focus on the moral advice lessons that Richardson targets in this novel. Her father takes a didactic role in this novel by encouraging Pamela to examine people's actions, as they may not be great as they look like. In the above quote, it can be seen that her father is telling her how important her virtue is by linking it with three other components to her virtue; her love to her parents, her God's Blessing, and her future happiness. Careful reading may reveal how skeptical her father is about her virtue throughout her previous letter by saying, "the least attempt" (Richardson 14).

Pamela's redemption that touches her father's doubtful hinting about her virtue is strong evidence that make her significantly manipulative to her narrative. At this critical moment, Pamela starts to redeem herself naively. Pamela's misunderstanding causes her to misinterpret her parent's encouragement when she says to them, "that they seem to mistrust the honesty of their child" (Richardson 15). In fact, her parent did not mistrust her honesty, but they seemed to encourage her to be stronger. However, such a response shows that she is distracting her parents to a different topic. As a matter of fact, some people usually reveal to others what they have done by their inexperienced actions. Therefore, Pamela was frustrated and she thought that her parents discovered that she is lying; then, she started to defend herself. Also, she seemed to try and change the topic to draw their attention to something different. She defends this situation by mentioning that she is not only describing her relationship with her master, but she is also describing other people around her in order to eliminate her parents' mistrust. Changing the topic is significantly seen in the same letter when she says, "My master continues to be very affable to me. As yet, I see no Cause to fear any thing. Mrs. Jervis the house-keeper too is very civil to me, and I have the love of every body" (Richardson 15). Pamela is not satisfied with what she mentioned to her father; therefore, she told her mother "yet there is a secret pleasure one has to hear one's self praised...[the master's sister] told [her she] was a very pretty wench." (Richardson 15-16). Pamela here is asserting to her parents that not only her master is praising her, but other people around her do, as her master's sister.

5. Richardson's Recognition of Pamela's Flaws as Unintended Result

Richardson uses Pamela's letters in order to serve as both a vehicle for the delivery of the narrative, as well as an element within the plot, Pamela as virtue rewarded. However, when Richardson was not able to accept how people in his society criticize this novel and how it lacks its authenticity, he was unconscious of her intention, he decided to come up with another work, *Clarissa*,

in which the protagonist is fully conscious of her actions. Pamela, as the narrator of the plot, manipulates her narrative based on her need for authority as an unintended result that Richardson was aiming. Although *Pamela* is a happy ending novel, Pamela being a manipulative narrator of the plot caused her to miss one of the important aspects of keeping her virtue, as Richardson's aim, by being honest. Therefore, Clarissa was the best response to his society critics. Alison Case mentioned in her *Plotting Women* that, "Clarissa complicates the narrative issues raised in *Pamela* through its multiplication of narrators: the novel is composed principally of two two-way correspondences between same-sex pairs of close friends-Clarissa and Anna Howe, Lovelace and Bedford." (37). Case raised several issues that Richardson was avoiding when he wrote Clarissa after and not to repeat the same unintended result when Pamela manipulated her narrative.

6. Conclusion

Richardson's epistolary novel allows readers to view the novel as more a real life experience instead of just merely as fiction, which can be viewed as both positive and negative. On the positive side, the letter writing aspect provides opportunities for twists and turns in the plot as well as providing entertainment value for the reader. Richardson was able to create drama within the letters that readers should have appreciated. A reader might find him/herself sometimes is drawn to what Pamela is writing about, and he/she feels like going through experiences. The letters within Richardson's novel allow readers to gain a better insight into Pamela's mind. Therefore, readers are able to feel what she feels, experience what she experiences and ultimately have a chance to discuss what type of woman Pamela truly is.

Based on the provided examples and evidence, I can provide the negative side that Richardson makes in this novel. I can say that Pamela is manipulating her parents and her narrative because she is looking for something that satisfies her inner needs that she presumably does not want her parents to recognize. Based on the historical evidence for the normal relationship between female servants and their master, Pamela's Master treats her better than just a servant. Although she took the highest position as a servant, the special treatment she was given by her Master put her in a questionable position. She deviated from her normal role as a servant by having some feelings for her Master who led her to reach her highest position among the other servants. He has a kind of special treatment for her that puts Pamela in a situation that leads to her desire to manipulate her narrative. Although Richardson aims at a didactic religious lesson in this novel through his protagonist's superiority in virtue, he is missing "honesty" which is one of the important pillars of virtue. Several key parts within the novel reveal that Pamela manipulates her narrative, and she was deceitful with her parents. When Pamela, as the narrator of the plot, manipulates her narrative based on her need for authority as an unintended result that Richardson was aiming for, he decides to write Clarissa as the best response to his society critics. I may argue that Richardson was not aware of Pamela's flaws which caused him to write the unintended result at the end of the novel.

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