

# PAMELA: A REFLECTION OF A NEW 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WOMAN <sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract: The 18<sup>th</sup> century period is often considered as a period where women had to live in men's world. There were norms, values, and rules, which binded, tied and controlled women's movements in every part of life. Women 'were forced' to be only as men's servants and slaves who were obliged to be submissive and servile. Through his novel, Pamela, Samuel Richardson introduces his main character, Pamela, as a controversially different character. She changes the meaning of servitude, in which women do not have to be men's properties for being servile. Unlike most women in her century, she introduces herself as a being who is able to use her intelligence in defending her rights in front of men in a patriarchal society while at the same time she still gives her respect to them. This article, which uses traditional, sociological, moral, and feminism approaches, is intended to analyze the new portrayal of the 18<sup>th</sup> century female character by focusing on Samuel Richardson's Pamela, as she showed new meanings of being a woman, a wife, and a mother to her husband, friends and society.*

*Key words: servitude, feminism, patriarchal society.*

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## INTRODUCTION

As a pioneer of the epistolary writing technique, the novel *Pamela*, whose first edition was published in 1914, portrayed a female's experience that was written by a man who attempted to understand the way the female character thought and felt. It was rarely happening, especially for the people who lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, it makes *Pamela* special because it shows that in that period, women were lacking education opportunities so that it should took a man to write about a female's experience. In addition to *Pamela's* specialty, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was impossible for a man to admit a woman's intelligence, but Samuel Richardson did it in *Pamela* when he created Mr. B's character.

Like Mr. B, referring to Plumb's book entitled *England in the Eighteenth Century*, all the people who lived in that era were controlled tightly by the unwritten tradition and custom of the immediate society. They also based every actions, thoughts and feelings on the norms, values and rules applied among them. These influenced the ways the 18<sup>th</sup> century society viewed women (1957:17). There are also some ideas, which portray traditional women's status as women, wives, and mothers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

First, as women, they were positioned under men's authorities. This is because they were born with the obligations to serve men. In fact, Perry Chase et. al. wrote that the social theorists regard women as inferior (1985:412). Women also cannot escape of being the creation of men's pleasure that can be used, cared for, and guided, but not to be taken seriously because women were subordinate to men. The idea is shown clearly in the novel when Mr. B's pride, as a master, is offended after Pamela, his servant, refuses his kiss:

“... You won't, hussey ! said he: “Do you know whom you speak to?” “... Go, take a walk in the garden, and don't go in till your crying is over; and I charge you to say nothing of what is past, and all shall be well and I'll forgive you.” “... Be secret, I charge you, Pamela, and don't go in yet, as I told you” (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 12).

The above excerpt of Mr. B's, which views women, as submissive and servile slaves and servants, made Mr. B confident into automatically thinking that Pamela will never refuse his kiss.

Mr. B's way of thinking above is strengthened by Madan Sarup's statement about an arranged culture, which sees women as people with no freedom which was mentioned in the theory of women's inferiority as a culture of the West. Sarup states: "The culture of the West is monosexual; the status of women is that of 'lesser men', inferior or defective men". (1993:117). This culture limited women's movements because indirectly it shaped the characteristics of women where they must be submissive, servitude, and inferior toward men in order to be accepted in their society.

Being considered as incomplete people, women are less important than men because they are only born to breed and serve men. Sigmund Freud (cited in Sarup 1993) has perfectly described women as dolls that were inferior, childish, and helpless. The only way to gain happiness for women was being men's passive objects. Therefore, it became women's nature to be ruled by men. Not only do men who have this traditional perspective of women, but also women themselves lived and placed themselves in these stereotypes. It was considered a great sin if they thought differently. It will not be strange, consequently, if Mrs. Jewkes, a supporting character in *Pamela*, views herself as a men's slave.

"...I have a great notion of doing my duty to my master... I must and will call you Madam; for I am instructed to shew you all respects... he is my master; and if he bids me do anything I can do, I think I ought to do it: and let him, who has power to command me... I must lie with you for the present..."  
"But it is in your instructions that you must lie with me?" "Yes, indeed," said she (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 92-94).

Secondly, as stated by Stephen Davis (2003) women as wives have boundaries when they were committed to marriage life. Their freedom, dreams, and desires were focused only for their husbands. The marriage law during the 18<sup>th</sup> century stated that all of the properties belong to their husbands so that they have to be submissive to men. Cited also in Mary Eagleton that traditionally, as taken from Elaine Scholwalter's opinions of *A Literature of their Own*, women were prescribed as "the people who became the angels in the house, contentedly submissive to men" (1986:13). In addition to this, it is illustrated here clearly that women do not have powers to be decisions makers.

Finally, as mothers, women were only functioned as children's nurses and tools of 'milking'. They do not have rights in shaping and having responsibilities toward their children's education because they were considered uneducated. Quoted as one of Wolfreys' ideas in EAgleton (1999:50) "women did not exist for thinking, giving opinions, rejecting something, and having dreams" Henceforth, at that time they need not have the necessity to obtain education.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century's women's roles as mothers in the patriarchal society are noticed by Helene Cixous, a novelist, who becomes a feminist critic and commentator. Her attention drags herself in the debate in the *-Eumenides*, where she puts her concentration to the words of Apollo, one of the characters, "The woman you call the mother of the child is not the parent, just a nurse to the seed ...the man is the source of life" (cited in Sarup 1993:110). It is mentioned here abstractly, that women as mothers do not have rights to become parts of their children's education's future. Mothers are purely the nurses who deliver them into the world and give them milk as they need it. Men are the perfect educators for children.

Written in epistolary form, that is "the narrative which is conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters" (Abrams, 1988:119), Pamela's communication shows briefly that all of the women traditional roles in the 18<sup>th</sup> century are applied and obeyed submissively by the representations of three women characters, i.e. Mrs. Jervis, Mrs. Jewkes and Polly; yet the novel also describes clearly that Pamela's ways in running her life are quite different with them all.

## **THE PORTRAYAL OF ENGLISH FEMALE SERVITUDE IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

In contrast to Pamela, Samuel Richardson attempts to show that all 18<sup>th</sup> century society's norms, values, and norms banded women's movements. Through some female characters, he tries to indicate that these characters are forced to behave and restrict themselves in order to fulfill all the expectations occurred in that period.

Mrs. Jervis is the first character that shows her dilemma in being a free individual who is abandoned by her society, or being accepted in her

society as a 'prisoned' individual. She is Pamela's best friend. She often helps Pamela when she is in trouble, especially with Mr. B.

'Sir', said Mrs. Jervis, "...I will go away as soon as I can. As for Pamela, she is at her liberty..." (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 52).

However, no matter how much she loves Pamela, Mrs. Jervis still tightly holds the 18<sup>th</sup> century society's traditional thoughts. She knows that a woman must control her own dreams, desires and willingness in order to satisfy men. In connection to Mr. B's case, Mrs. Jervis prefers to blame Pamela.

Says Mrs. Jervis, "Pamela, don't be so pert to his honour: you should know your distance..." "Oh dear Mrs. Jervis," said I, "Don't you blame me, too" (Richardson Vol. I, 1969: 23).

here, she shows that she agrees with Pamela that she should defend herself against Mr. B's cruel attention, but Mrs. Jervis is too afraid of being rejected by the society if she behaves differently from the society's views by defending Pamela.

Another servant who lives in Lincolnshire house is Mrs. Jewkes. As a loyal servant, she becomes another perfect example of how women lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For all her life, she is willing to commit her time, mind, and soul to meet and obey Mr. B's commands. It is shown when she tries hard to force Pamela to accept Mr. B as her husband, although she really hates Pamela.

\_\_\_\_\_ "Why, look ye, Madam," said she: "I have a great notion of doing my duty to my master,.... if I can do that and serve you, I will; but you must think, if your desire and his will clash, I shall do as he bids me, let it be what it will" (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 93).

“Look ye,” said she, “he is my master; and if he bids me do anything I can do, I think I ought to do it: and let him, who has power to command me,” (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 93).

Deep down her heart, she does not agree if Pamela becomes Mr. B’s wife, however, she sacrifices and buries all her rights in having opinions to humble herself toward Mr. B’s needs. Yet, In order to protect her master’s necessities, she becomes mean to Pamela. The worst thing that she has done to Pamela is by hitting her.

\_\_\_\_\_” Why,” said I, “Suppose he should bid you cut my throat, would you do it?” “There’s no danger of that,” said she... And is it not natural for a gentleman to love a pretty woman? And suppose he can obtain his desires, is that so bad as cutting her throat?” (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 93).

Later in the novel, however, Pamela willingly accepts mr. B’s proposal of marriage because she has fallen in love with him. Mrs. Jewkes is able to completely change her bad behavior upon Pamela after knowing that Pamela, who was once a servant has turned into the mistress of the household. Mrs. Jewkes shows her high respect and honour to Pamela automatically because she knows that mr. b ‘expects’ her to do so:

Her talk and actions are entirely different from what they used to be, quite circumspect and decent (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 339).

As a woman and a servant, Mrs. Jewkes learns that she must put aside all her pride and feeling to comply with her master (a man) wants.

To describe restrictions experienced by women, as daughters, the novel shows this in Polly Darnford’s character. She is Pamela’s neighbour in Lincolnshire. Her father, Sir Simon Darnford, has full control over her, which unfortunately, chains her freedom. Everything is always absolutely dedicated for her father’s needs. However, in opposition to Pamela, Polly has been use to this kind of condition.

It was common for fathers to have a full dominion on their households to control their wives and daughters. For Chase “patriarchal structure applied in the 18<sup>th</sup> century created a right of preserving and increasing the patrimony

of the fathers over their families" (1985:413). It is shown in Polly's daily life. As a daughter Polly, must obey her father's desires and orders of reading and singing for him. If her father is not satisfied enough with her service, he commits a physical abuse over her, such as throwing books to her head, to show his anger towards Polly's lackness. In her miserable and depressed life, she believes that all men, like her father, have rights to treat her and all other women badly. She is grown in a society where the bad treatments she receives everyday are considered appropriate for her and for other women.

Another obedience performed by Polly is her willingness of being married to Sir W.G, although she has not even met him. She prefers loosing her opportunity to choose her own life partner than of pursuing her own wishes. She believes that she does not have the rights to seize her liberty.

My papa has had a proposal made to him from a gentleman you have seen, and thought polite... everything was adjusted... which I knew not, till I had seen him here four times... But, hitherto, he seems to like me better than I do him... why should this be? (Richardson Vol. II, 1969: 350-351).

Those three female characters discussed above are the portrayal of English female servitude in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They live their lives in the ways of servile means. As servants and slaves of men, they are forbidden to reach their dreams and desires. It is interesting to reflect that they consciously and willingly negate their own ambitions in order to fulfill the 18<sup>th</sup> century's expectations.

## **PAMELA AS THE NEW PORTRAYAL OF THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH FEMALE**

Like other women who lived in that period, Pamela also cannot escape from all the obligations in obeying all the norms, values, and rules that imprison her freedom in chasing her dreams and desires. She is still obligated to follow men's commands. However, in *Pamela*, she becomes a new flavour of woman who is different from other women, like represented by the three women characters explained previously.

As a woman and servant, Pamela tries to keep her servitude towards Mr. B, her master. But, deep down her heart, she knows that she has a right to defend herself. The evidence is occurred when Pamela shows her confident rebellion and urge in refusing Mr. B's kiss. Although she realizes that she is not supposed to do it, she ignores the fact of not being accepted by her society than betraying something that she really believes in. She believes that she does not deserve Mr. B's bad treatment.

I struggled... at last I burst from hi ... I would have given my life for a farthing... I lost all fear and all respect, and said, "Yes, I do, Sir, too well! Well may I forget that I am your servant, when you forget what belongs to a master". "... You have taught me to forget myself, and what belongs to me... by demeaning yourself, to be so free to a poor servant" (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 12).

As stated previously, Pamela's self defense offends Mr. B's pride. He creates problems to frighten her. Pamela always attempts to keep her servitude. However, Mr. B's rudeness ruins her patience. She feels that she has to defend herself.

"Your honour knows you went too far for a master to a servant, or even to his equal; and I cannot bear it" (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 23).

Pamela has the courage to give her onions, something which is never done by ordinary women in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Her spirit to be different makes society, in this case represented by Mrs. Jewkes, thinks that Pamela must be watched over. Even though in the end she finds out that there is a disagreement, related to her bravery, and she heard an opinion, that she is wrong, she keeps her own ways in running her life.

What sort of creatures must the women \_\_\_\_ kind to be, do you think, to give way to such wickedness? ... what a world we live in! for it is grown more a wonder that the men are resisted, than that the women comply. This, I suppose, makes me such a Sauce-Box, and Bold-Face, and a Creature; and all because I won't be a Sauce-Box and Bold-Face indeed" (Richardson Vol. I 1969: 57).

It is reflected through Pamela's statements that she knows exactly about her limitations but she chooses her liberty in pursuing her dreams and desires. Women are considered inferior and weak, but Pamela refuses to be imprisoned and prisons herself into a capacity of being men's objects. She rejects in limiting her ability in an idea of lesser people. She creates her own ways of being servile without abandoning men's positions.

Later in the novel, however, as a wife, Pamela still holds what she believes. Although she is willing to place herself as a good and faithful wife for Mr. B, she still disagrees that a wife must sacrifice her life only to focus on her husband's better life. Pamela admits that a wife should be her husband's proponent; however, she is able to make a limitation that she does not want to be treated as a slave of the marriage. She continually demands having an equal position to run their household, although she knows that the society will never give approval of what she fights for.

Could you ever have thought, my dear, that husbands have a dispensing power over their wives, ...I have had a smart debate with Mr. B... he says, the ladies are of his opinion. I am afraid they are and so will not ask them... (Richardson Vol. II 1969: 202-203).

Being servitude for Pamela in her position as a wife is considered different. She forms her own servitude with her loyalty and patience toward Mr. B without making herself as his property. There was once a time when Pamela hides her disagreements for herself, in front of Polly Darnford, to make Mr. B look perfect. She even asks Mr. B to find another wife if she dies in giving birth. Yet, it must be noted that in here, Pamela shows her faithfulness without being a tool of Mr. B's happiness. All of her actions are purely her own decisions and choices because nobody was forcing her to do them.

When Mr. B's all tenderness and indulgence, and requires me nothing, that I can have material objection to, ought I not to oblige him? Can I have a will that is not his? Or would it be excusable if I had? All little matters I cheerfully give up... (Richardson Vol. II 1969: 214).

And that you may in your next choice be happy with a lady ... who may love and honour you,... (Richardson Vol. II 1969:266).

Pamela's self respect is able to change Mr. B into a better person. For Lady Davers, Mr. B's sister, she thinks that her brother is a very complicated man to live with. She believed that it is an impossible thing for someone to turn him into someone better, but she finds out that Pamela is capable in doing it. Pamela has a 'control' over her husband, something that other wives in the 18<sup>th</sup> century will never have. So in this respect, lady davers salutes pamela for achieving such a condition:

And his uncontrollable temper... that it is impossible for a good wife to make even a bad man a worthy husband (Richardson Vol. II, 1969: 237).

About education, Pamela thinks that an educated wife is a perfect supporting partner for her husband. A man will have a great marriage if he allows his wife to get education. This has become one of the reasons why she maintains to be more outspoken in comparison to other women of her time.

Pamela knows that men and women consider her as a strange person, however, she does not want to waste her capabilities and talents to be used only as an ordinary wife. To show her efforts, she learns more of writing and speaking foreign languages to become an equal partner of Mr. B.

When she receives a gift of being a mother, Pamela shows her refusal in not only doing only the basic duties of mothers, such as giving birth and being a tool for 'milking' but also She wants to be an educator for her child because she thinks that basic education come from mothers. In this case, Mr. B, as a representation of men, thinks that Pamela's will is awkward.

I think a mother ought, if she can, to be the nurse to her own children... Mr. B says, he will not permit it... for our debate began...(Richardson Vol. II 1969: 228).

Education of my own sex;... that the mothers might teach the child this part of science, and that part of instruction;... (Richardson Vol. II 1969: 413).

Pamela places her loyalty and servitude to her first child, a son. She sacrifices herself to be a part of both intellectual and emotional developments of him. A big consequence must be taken later when she realizes Mr. B has an affair. Pamela consciously accepts that she only owns two choices, and she chooses her son.

If he takes from me my Billy, who must, after all, be his heir, and gives him to the cruel Countess, he will at once burst asunder the string of my heart! ...If you tear from me my husband, he is in his own disposal, and I cannot help it: ...But this I am sure of, that my child and my life must go together!  
(Richardson Vol. II 1969: 288).

### **PAMELA AS A FREE TO EXPRESS WOMAN**

Compared to other women in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Pamela is special. When she reaches three stages of her life, as a woman, a wife, and also a mother, she is able to keep her servitude (to her master, husband and son) without ignoring her own dreams and desires. If she disagrees and has opinions or ideas on certain circumstances, she immediately will freely express them by abandoning her fear and hesitations. In this context, Pamela's new attitude is a concept of a 'free to express' woman. She has the character of a woman who has courage and willingness to freely express all her feelings, opinions, and disagreements in front of people. She bravely shows her logical reasons to defend herself without underestimating men.

If her actions are based on the theories about radical feminism, Pamela cannot be included as one of those. This is because, Pamela 'traps' herself in a marriage life, a place where radical feminists will never consider because for them a marriage life is a perfect prison of binding their every mental and physical being for men and children's profit. Another fact shows that Pamela also never judges men as her enemies, or even judges herself as a man hater, who tends to underestimate men to be equal with them. So, It is quite different if it is based on Jo Freeman's idea of being a radical feminist. Yet, Having a job and earning money are regarded as a strong indication of being a true independent feminist which corresponds with men's positions in a society. If it is seen from Pamela's life, it proves that she is not a feminist because she does not have a job to support her life. She depends her life on Mr. B.

In addition, in order to be the same and equal as men, radical feminists try to do activities that are commonly done by men, for example drinking, smoking, and enjoying sexual adventures. They want to show that as women, they are able to do all the manly things. On the contrary, Pamela is so feminine. She keeps doing all the womanly things, and she does not intend to leave her woman nature, as a wife and a mother behind. Radical feminists also consider women's positions, as wives and mothers, beneficial to men. It leads to the points where women, who choose to be wives and mothers, are good helping mates for men. Referring to this idea, radical feminists refuse to live their lives in these positions because it will make men pleased. Pamela, in this case, does the opposite. She gladly runs her life in her positions as a wife of Mr. B and a mother of her three children, William, Davers, and Little Pamela.

As a gentle woman who lives in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Pamela is not a 'man hater'. She is a type of woman who happily runs her life without forgetting her dreams and desires. Pamela's abilities in showing her faithfulness and honour to men, yet at the same time holding her urges, by defending herself with all her brilliant and reasonable reasons without letting herself to be men's slave. With this argumentation, therefore, it makes Pamela included as an example of a 'free to express' woman, not a radical feminist.

## CONCLUSION

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, women's rights were ignored and neglected. Men restricted women and women restricted themselves to fulfill the norms, values, and rules recognized among them. However, through a male's point of view, like Samuel Richardson, Pamela's characters become a tremendous break through. He conceives a new flavor of woman who is different with other ordinary women in that period. Pamela is able to place herself in three positions, as a woman, a wife, and a mother, in the ways she really wants. She refuses to be placed and places herself as somebody's slave and servant.

Viewing from radical feminists' ideas, Pamela cannot be concluded as a follower of this feminism movement. Pamela does not apply the theories of radical feminism; she only chases her equality in expressing opinions and disagreements using good reasons and explanations. She does not men to underestimate men or society by doing it. Pamela still enjoys in doing her obligations as Mr. B's servant, Mr. B's wife, and her children's mother.

Pamela's efforts in preserving her own way to defend her rights, pride and dignity in giving service to men, have broken men's dominance over her. Her brilliant reasonable reasons, patience, and faithfulness toward people around her make nobody can look down upon her. By keeping her dreams and desires, Pamela can change the entire meaning of being servile and become a new portrayal of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English female who is able to freely express her own wants and needs.

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