Pamela: A Social and Cultural Study

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Abstract

Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* has been the subject of a great deal of criticism from the time of its publication in 1740. Most critics focus on the moral aspects of the novel; some critics agree with Richardson in seeing Pamela as an example of virtue to be followed. Like Richardson, they see the heroine as presenting a standard of behavior for women. *Pamela*, they think, has provided a lesson for all women to protect their chastity against the machinations of irresponsible men like Mr. B. Other critics attack Pamela as a sly little minx who tries her best
to tempt Mr. B. and secure him for a husband. They accuse her of hypocrisy and intrigue, pointing out situations where Pamela intentionally postpones her departure for home in order to be near Mr. B. Some other critics study the aesthetic aspects of the novel and discuss the novel from a realistic and psychological stance.

This paper deals with the social and cultural aspects of the novel, pointing out that Richardson has been involved in a social theme which is of great importance to the man of eighteenth-century England. In Pamela Richardson shows the numerous forces which work throughout his time, mainly the class-structure of eighteenth-century England; the conflict between classes; the rise of the middle-class; and the improvement of women’s position in society, in such a way as to indicate possibilities of social reconciliation between the two traditional classes, the aristocracy and the middle-class. Richardson’s views have been influenced to some extent by different literary and other sources such as drama, fiction, and mythology which have some positive bearing on his treatment of his social themes.

Samuel Richardson’s Pamela has been the subject of a great deal of criticism from the time of its publication in 1740. Most critics focus on the moral aspects of the novel; some critics who are called anti-Pamelist attack Pamela as a sly little minx who tries her best to tempt Mr. B. and secure him for a husband. They also accuse her of hypocrisy and intrigue, arguing that Pamela has at least two opportunities to go home: the first occurs when she postpones her departure to finish Mr. B.’s linen; the second occurs when she voluntarily returns after Mr. B., in the Lincolnshire section of the novel, has asked her to come back. Pamela clearly has an obvious attraction to Mr. B., and the reason that she returns at the summons of Mr. B. is that she realizes her love for him. Pamela, in Lincolnshire, becomes mature enough to know what she wants. Besides, as Mr. Kinkead-Weckes argues, if Pamela were to leave for home at the outset of the novel, we would have a different novel, or, more probably, no novel at all. The most staunch anti-Pamelist contemporary of Richardson is Fielding, who wrote Shamela and Joseph Andrews to parody Pamela. And even now, we have a host of anti-Pamists, among them Joseph Wood Krutch, who attacks Pamela as follows:
The character of Pamela is one so devoid of any delicacy of feeling as to be inevitably indecent. She seems to have no sense of either her own or any possible human dignity. Despite the language of pious cant which she speaks with such fluency there is no evidence that she has the faintest conception of that disinterestedness which alone can give piety a meaning.  

The other group of critics, the Pamelists, praise Pamela as an example of virtue to be followed. Like Richardson, they see the heroine as presenting a standard of behavior for women. They regard Mr. B. as a rake who tries incessantly to debauch a virtuous girl. They give examples of Pamela's resistance to his temptations and violence until her victory, which they consider lies not only in defending her virtue but also in reforming Mr. B. himself. Pamela, they think, has provided a lesson for all women to protect their chastity against the temptations of irresponsible men like Mr. B. I think this is relevant and was important to women in Richardson's time because a large number of them worked as servants and were exposed to the danger of sexual violation. Kinkead-Weekes has much to say on behalf of Pamela.  

It is important to study the moral issue of Pamela because it shows us how people in the eighteenth century regarded morality and sex. However, both the Pamelists and the anti-Pamelists hardly deal with the social and cultural aspects of the novel. They ignore the fact that Richardson wants Pamela to be not only a standard of morality but also an example of what kind of relation should exist among the social classes. This fact is obvious in the last section of Pamela I and through the whole of Pamela II. Richardson tries to establish a code of relation between social classes, master and servant, rich and poor, and husband and wife. The first title of the novel is "Letters Written to and for Particular Friends on the most important occasions, directing not only the requisite style and form to be observed in writing Familiar Letters; but also how to think and act justly and prudently in the common concern of human life." Then Richardson's aim is not only to provide his readers with appropriate forms of language useful for any social situation, but also to prescribe codes of social behavior and relationships that would transcend class differences and bring people together on the basis of their common humanity.  

Apart from the dispute among critics concerning whether Pamela is virtuous or not (which is not my concern in this paper), Pamela is of social significance to the student who is interested in the social picture of eighteenth-century England and in Richardson's cultural backgrounds, which affect the form and theme of his novel. So I shall try to present a picture of the social system and its ramifications.
in eighteenth-century England as it is conceived from *Pamela*, focusing on Richardson's treatment of the conflict between the two main classes, the aristocracy and the middle-class, represented by the conflict between Mr. B. and Pamela in such a way as to suggest possibilities of reconciliation between the two traditional classes, and on the position of women in this social milieu. As a sequel to Richardson's presentation of the conflict between the two classes, I shall deal with the literary and other influences that had a positive bearing on Richardson's treatment of the subject, thereby enhancing his social themes.

The two main social classes portrayed in *Pamela* are the aristocracy and the middle-class. The novel presents the struggle between two individuals, Pamela and Mr. B., who at the same time represent the struggle between the two classes. Mr. B. represents the values of a minor and marginal aristocracy, and Pamela represents those of the middle-class. The novel ends with the triumph of middle-class values and the reformation of the aristocracy. It seems that when both classes are reconciled and understand each other they can live harmoniously, not threatening the prerogatives of either class.

No doubt, Richardson is a devotee of the middle-class; he presents his heroine as an example of virtue. At the same time, he admires the nobility of the aristocracy; he tries to indicate that ideal nobility and aristocracy are synonyms -- they involve a sense of obligation to help the poor. This bright picture of the aristocracy is shown after Mr. B.'s marriage to Pamela, that is, after his re-education when he becomes a good husband to Pamela and a benefactor to the poor. For example, Pamela lavishes on him all kinds of praise and forgets all the past hardships he had inflicted on her as well as her accusatory statements against him. Now Mr. B. becomes an angel and a benefactor. That is why many critics accuse Pamela of hypocrisy, for, once she attains her ends, she is no longer hostile to her former persecutor. The accusation is invidious, for if Pamela represents middle-class values and Richardson's ideal, then middle-class people and Richardson are hypocrites, too. This criticism is out of place, for to be benevolent one has to forget one's past bad experience after the cause of such experience is removed. In addition, one cannot deal with personal interest apart from social benevolence and forgiveness, for society itself is a body of individuals living together because of their mutual interests.

*Pamela* portrays some aspects of the aristocratic class and of its counter-part, the middle-class. For instance, Mr. B. (as well as his class) has some privileges and prerogatives which are not allowed to other classes simply because of the financial status of the aristocracy, which brings along with it a good standard of living, power and influence. Mr. B. has two estates, the Bedfordshire estate, and the Lincolnshire estate. He is also connected with the peerage and with Parliament. Mr. B. represents legal authority, for he is a justice of the peace. His
post entitles him to exercise whatever power he wishes with no restraint from any superior power. He even has control over the Church (as manifested in his relation with Williams), because the aristocracy helps to finance it. It is interesting to know the vast power of justices of the peace in the eighteenth century, not only from Pamela but also from other literary works such as Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, which demonstrates the almost unlimited power of Sir William Thornhill and his nephew.

Along with power comes the idea of dominance. The aristocratic class tends to dominate other classes; Mr. B. has the money, class distinction, and power to pursue his end. No one can stop him from doing any kind of mischief to the poor or the unprotected. Before his marriage, Mr. B.'s treatment of Pamela is a result of his aristocratic education. The novel portrays the physical mastery of Mr. B., and later his moral mastery over Pamela before and after the marriage. Before marriage, Mr. B. controls the fate of Pamela; she cannot go home without his permission. Quite often, we see him standing over her while she is prostrating herself on the floor begging his mercy. After their marriage, Pamela accepts his dominance humbly and submissively; she tells Mr. B. that she is the “work of his bounty.” In trying to oblige Mr. B. and win over Lady Davers, Pamela humbles herself: “If Sir, the most humble deportment, and every thing showing a dutiful regard to good Lady Davers, will have any weight with her ladyship, assure yourself of all in my power to mollify her.” Although Mr. B. becomes a good husband, he has still the tendency to dominate; he sets a list of rules that Pamela should abide by. He wants to revive the “good old fashion” in his neighborhood which seems to me ironic in this particular context because Mr. B. himself has violated the aristocratic code by marrying his mother's maid.

The aristocrats’ tendency towards dominance is linked to their pride. Mr. B. confesses his aristocratic pride, perhaps to give himself an excuse for his past treatment of Pamela. In fact, the reason Mr. B. has hesitated to marry Pamela is that his pride prohibits him from marrying a lower class woman. Aristocrats are so educated as not to see anything of importance outside their selfish ends. What they need, as Richardson puts it in *Pamela*, is a re-education and a re-formation of their values. Ironically, middle-class people seem to have no prejudice or envy towards the upper-class; on the contrary, they regard their social superiors with respect and adoration. Pamela, for example, wishes to Lady Davers “grandeur of soul joined with grandeur of birth and condition.” Upper-class people, however, are unwilling to tolerate middle-class people as their equals in human feelings. Take for example the ladies who visit Mr. B. in the wake of the death of his mother; they assume that Pamela is going to be Mr. B.'s mistress. Another example of the aristocrats’ lack of consideration for the poor is Sir Simon
Darnford, who, when asked by Williams to help Pamela get out of her imprisonment in the Lincolnshire estate, says to his wife, "why, what is all this, my dear, but that our neighbor has a mind to his mother's waiting maid: And if he takes care, she wants for nothing. I don't see any great injury will be done her. He hurts no family by this." Sir Simon ignores the fact that the only important value of Pamela's family is her virtue, that is, her chastity. Lady Davers also refuses to accept Pamela as her sister-in-law. Her behavior is attributed to her ego, for she sees Pamela as a rival for Mr. B.'s affection. As John Dussinger puts it, "Lady Davers' morbid insistence on sleeping in the room of her birth at Lincolnshire - the same that B. and Pamela now occupy - and her violent frenzy at witnessing them there the next morning parody upper class pride in breeding as something incestuous."

However, Mr. B. explains her behavior as a result of her education. Mr. B. is aware of this aristocratic tendency. He tells Pamela that she will face the pride and slights of the aristocrats. It must be noted that the good behavior of the upper-class people to Pamela after her marriage does not necessarily change their basic attitude to the lower classes; they respect Pamela because she becomes a lady, their social equal; this is evident in Mr. B.'s assuring Pamela that he will protect her against the slights of upper class: "I know the duty of a husband, and will protect your gentleness, to the utmost, as much as if you were a princess by descent."

I have already noted that Richardson is an admirer of the aristocracy, but he wants it to adopt some middle-class ethics. Aristocratic people, he thinks, are capable of rendering all kinds of benevolent services to the poor once they get rid of their narrow selfishness. Richardson believes that the aristocracy should have generosity. In Pamela, Mr. B. gives Pamela her money, which he finds in the pocket of his dead mother. He also bestows on her (and the other servants) gifts which she accepts hesitatingly. Her acceptance of his gifts leads the anti-Pamelists, especially Fielding in Shamela, to attack Pamela. Mr. B.'s gifts are paralleled later by Pamela's gifts to the servants and the poor. Mr. B.'s generosity at the beginning is questioned because he means to achieve his base aims. After his marriage, Mr. B.'s generosity is the proper one praised by Richardson; when Mr. B., for example, gives Pamela a large sum of money to dispense as a charity she repays him by sweet kisses which show her benevolence and gratitude. In a letter to George Cheyne, Richardson says, "... and to turn even the fondness of ye pair (Mr. B. and Pamela) to a kind of intellectual fondness; for I never make them rise (to it) in their fondness of each other, but for some laudable behavior of conduct; Benevolence on his side, which obliges her; or gratitude on hers, and when she hopes he is governed by the best and most solid motives ..."

The counter-part of the upper-class, which completes the picture of eighteenth-

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century English society, is the middle-class. As a middle-class printer, Richardson wishes to promote the values of his class to the upper-class. He also wants to bridge the social gulf between the two classes by inter-marriage, through which all the unpleasant features of the two classes disappear. On the whole, Richardson praises the middle-class for their moral values, honesty and diligence. The good housekeeping of Mrs. Jervis, for instance, and the other servants' honesty, portray Richardson's views of the positive values of the middle-class. Middle-class people regard themselves as superior to the aristocracy in their moral values. Pamela's triumph over Mr. B. is the triumph of middle-class morality over the "decadence" of the upper-class. Pamela ends not only with the marriage of the heroine to the rich aristocrat, but also with his re-education and changing attitude towards sex and marriage.

The middle-class presented in Pamela consists of tenants and servants, who are incapable of helping Pamela out of her predicament in spite of her appeals to them. Pamela's parents are helpless. What strikes me most is the absence of her parents' influence or rights over her. In her letters, Pamela refers to her father as poor and helpless; and, in fact, he is helpless, because he begs Mr. B. to let his daughter go. Originally, Mr. Andrews belongs to the upper middle-class; he has been a teacher for a long time, but he has financial troubles which bring him down to become an agricultural laborer. Mr. Andrews has lost his claims on his daughter simply because she serves an aristocrat. I think that Mr. Andrews's incapacity to rescue his daughter is due to the fact that in the eighteenth century women-servants used to be bound to their masters until they reached the age of twenty-one. Sometimes, the masters refused to let their women-servants marry and kept them. Although Mr. B.'s marriage to Pamela is an individual act, he still illustrates my point by detaining and abducting her to his Lincolnshire estate, and by pretending to marry her to Mr. Williams without her father's consent.

Pamela has improved her mind a great deal under the patronage of the old lady B., who has taken care of her education. After the death of Lady B., Pamela faces serious problems: how to keep her chastity, which is threatened by Mr. B., to whom she owes obedience by the virtue of her social status as his servant and the eighteenth-century common law that servants belong to their masters; and how to keep and improve her social status. Pamela knows that it is hard to live in poverty with her parents. To go home means to lose her aspirations for social improvement. Perhaps she hopes that Mr. B. may marry her, for it is obvious from her first letters that she has an unconscious inclination towards him; she discovers after her free home-coming in the Lincolnshire section of the novel that she loves him. To stay, she must face the possibility of losing her chastity, her only social identity.
Pamela's desire to keep her chastity is a challenge to the aristocratic people who regard her chastity as nonsense. Mr. B., for example, sees her as a kind of Lucretia, that aristocratic Lady who regarded her body as sacred. Chastity is the common identity of middle-class people; they pride themselves on being more virtuous than the aristocrats. Pamela's struggle against Mr. B.'s machinations can be seen as the middle-class struggle to have the social identity of their class protected from upper-class domination. Pamela, however, insists on acknowledging her social status; when Mr. B. allows her to go home in the Bedfordshire section of the book, she changes the clothes that she owes to Mr. B.; instead she wears plain clothes appropriate for her new situation as a daughter of an agricultural laborer. Pamela also rejects Mr. B.'s articles in which he proposes to keep her as his mistress in lieu of giving her bounteous gifts and subsides, simply because they violate her moral code and social identity. If upper-class people are proud of their education, money and power, middle-class people are proud of their virtue, religious values and diligence.

It should be noted that in spite of middle-class people's insistence on their social identity (here chastity), they try to promote their social status, and they aspire to attain what the aristocrats have. Despite Pamela's pretense that she prefers to go home rather than stay with her master, it is clear enough that she tries seriously to improve her social situation, first by learning and then by aspiring to marry Mr. B. In her letters she implies that she loves Mr. B. (in fact, in her later letters she confesses that she loves Mr. B.), and she sees no substantial reason against his marrying her. This may be taken as an analogy of the middle-class longing to attain some of the aristocratic prerogatives and social life. Pamela demands full recognition of herself in whatever social position she is called upon to occupy. Once Mr. B. announces his marriage proposal, Pamela immediately behaves ladylike to those who deal with her. For instance, she refuses to pour wine to Lady Davers until she is forced to do so by Jacky. Pamela, the new lady, feels that she must adjust her life to her new situation. She must win Lady Davers, and she must adjust her behavior towards the servants. She enjoys reinstating the Bedfordshire servants who incur Mr. B.'s displeasure because they side with her. Richardson expounds through Pamela the values of the middle-class, for she becomes a benefactress to the poor.

In this social milieu, the struggle centers on the conflicting ideas of the aristocracy and the middle-class. Richardson points to this social struggle through presenting a struggle between two individuals in terms of triumph and defeat. Both Mr. B. and Pamela are in conflict with each other, on the one hand, and with their society, on the other. As far as Pamela is concerned, Richardson sides with the family authority; Pamela quite often refers to her poor parents, and to their distress if she compromises her chastity. At the same time, she has
been developed as an individual human being demanding full respect and recognition of her rights to her body and soul. Pamela fights with Mr. B. and with the world which backs him as an individual; she demands freedom to choose or reject her would-be husband. Her marriage to Mr. B. exemplifies her triumph over society. She is aware of the criticism of other ladies, but she does not care about the envy and slights of other ladies as long as Mr. B. loves her.

Mr. B. himself is in a similar predicament; failing to satisfy his desires through temptation and violence, he wants to fulfil his individual desires by marrying Pamela. He is aware of the social opposition engendered by his marriage to Pamela, for he tells her that his pride and social status stand against this marriage. Aristocratic society here can be seen dually; it encourages individual urges (at least as far as Mr. B. is concerned, for his class sees no harm in his advances to Pamela); and it demands restraint on some issues, for upper-class people object to this misalliance as it is exemplified by Lady Davers. Mr. B.'s decision to marry his maid-servant is a challenge to his class. Although by setting a list of rules to abide by he claims to revive "the old fashioned world," he, in fact, breaks down that world which does not tolerate Mr. B.'s marriage. Mr. B.'s story points out a contrast between an old fashioned aristocracy and a new one which is influenced by a changing middle-class. The novel shows us the first step towards a breakdown of social barriers between classes. By breaking the rules of his class, Mr. B. wins the sympathy of the modern reader.

Despite the constant struggle between the individual and society, the novel indicates that the characters cannot live outside society. It is true that there is a conflict between self-withdrawal and acting out in society, at least as far as Pamela is concerned. Pamela, who acts against Mr. B. according to the dictates of her conscience by resisting his advances, badly needs society to help her. And Mr. B. needs audiences to hear him to justify his action. He, for example, tries to recruit his servants' help against Pamela. After his marriage, Mr. B. invites his upper-class friends to see Pamela. And all Pamela's correspondence demonstrates her successful manipulation of society in trying to release herself from Mr. B.'s captivity. The novel indicates that Pamela's characters are both individuals in trying to be independent of society, and social beings who act before indispensable audiences.

Pamela shows the social position of women in the eighteenth century. Ian Watt argues that women's future depended on their being able to marry and on the kind of husbands they found. It was difficult for many lower-class women to marry. Richardson writes about the aspirations of women who, like Pamela, face the seductive machinations of men and find it difficult to marry. Pamela symbolizes the aspirations of middle-class women, who constitute a large section of the reading public, to shake off all difficulties which hinder their freedom.
Richardson realizes that economic and social changes make marriage more important to women than at any previous time. He tries to put a model relation between man and woman. The novel shows the problems of everyday life and the conflict between sexual and moral codes, which Richardson thinks are best solved by marriage. The social and literary reaction to *Pamela* which came in the wake of its publication in 1740 shows that the novel was a successful book largely because it appealed to women readers. In fact, Richardson expresses their interests, for his letters and autobiographies show that he was happiest in female society. This is clearly shown in the minute details he uses in writing of Pamela’s possessions. Richardson attempts in his novel to defend woman’s rights. A survey of eighteenth-century magazines and periodicals which deal with feminine subjects offers us a picture of how extensive was the spread of education among women. Among these magazines are: *Ladies’s Mercury* (1693); *Female Tatler* (1709); and *Female Spectator* (1744). In *Pamela* we find evidence of the spread of education among women in the heroine, who has her own closet which gives her privacy to write down her thoughts and reflections, and in her ability to write her autobiography in a good style. Mr. B. himself recognizes Pamela’s ability to write, and later he encourages her to continue writing her letters.

Before leaving the social issues of the novel, I would like to refer briefly to an important social phenomenon which I hesitate to classify either as upper-class or middle-class; that is, the position of the Church. Certainly bishops and high ranking clergymen live with the aristocrats and make important decisions. But the lower ranks of the clergy live in poverty and at the mercy of the aristocrats. Although Mr. Williams is an Oxford man, he depends on Mr. B.; actually he is in debt to Mr. B. The same picture of the powerless Church is given in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, in which the vicar is under the dominance of the Squire. *Pamela* provides us with a picture of the decline of the Church in the eighteenth century. I believe that the existence of a strong Church indicates a high level of moral values, for if the majority of people embrace and support the values of the Church, and if the Church is independent of the interference of the financiers, decadence and immorality will decrease. As a matter of fact, both Richardson and Goldsmith portray their clergymen as ridiculous. Mr. Williams, the only representative of the Church, is humiliated when he is beaten by Mrs. Jewkes’s men, who are Mr. B.’s men, too.

The cultural aspects of *Pamela*, which include its genesis and other literary influences on Richardson, reflect the social aspects of the novel. In a letter to Aaron Hill, Richardson states that he owes his novel to an actual story told to him by a friend: “About twenty-five years ago, a gentleman with whom I was intimately acquainted (but who, alas, is no more!) met with such a story as that
of *Pamela* in one of the summer tours, which he used to take for his pleasure..."  

The landlord tells him that the house belongs to a Squire B., and the lady of the house "was one of the greatest beauties in England, but the qualities of her mind had no equal..." The letter runs on to describe the same events which take place in *Pamela*; the Lady B.'s kindness to her maid; the maid's poor parents who were ruined by (sureship); the design of Mr. B. on the maid, and finally the maid's triumph by marrying her master. Richardson's letter manifests the social structure and the class struggle which I have discussed earlier. His letter ends with a reconciliation between the two classes, "... she made herself beloved of everybody, and even by his (Mr. B.'s) relation, who at first despised her, and now had the blessings of rich and poor, and the love of her husband."

Obviously Richardson's letter indicates the genesis of the novel. The other literary influences which may have influenced Richardson's treatment of his social ideas include drama, fiction and mythology. Richardson is indebted to eighteenth-century drama, especially to the drama of manners, which is concerned with social and moral issues. It is important in this connection to know Richardson's reaction to the drama of his age. In 1733, Richardson published a manual called *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum; or, Young Man's Pocket-Companion*, in which he warns young men not to waste their time in going to the theater, and he complains as well of the immorality of theater. There is a reference to this in *Pamela II* when the heroine describes the insulting behavior of the audiences who turn themselves in their boxes, pits and galleries, where the ladies are, to see how they look.

Richardson employs character types and situations common with the playwrights who advocate virtue in women. The most common themes of Restoration drama deal with seduction and sex. The moral drama which appears in the early decades of the eighteenth century is a reaction against the sexual freedom of Restoration drama. *Pamela* is related to this type of drama, which attacks lust and praises virtue. Moral drama reflects the values of the middle-class and the immorality of the theater. Perhaps Richardson is directly indebted to Charles Johnson's play, *The Country Lasses; or, The Custom of the Manor*, which was written as early as 1715, and performed in 1740, the year of *Pamela* 's publication.

The major plot of the play is about the romance of Modely and Heartwell, who go to the country for diversion. Each of them tries to seduce an impeccable county maid. The relationship between Heartwell and Flora is similar to that between Mr. B. and Pamela; Heartwell tries to buy the chastity of Flora, but she refuses to sacrifice her virtue for money:
Heartwell: Come, my love, this dialect is as affected as t'other; take this Jewel, accept it, wear it as a token of the most pure affection. You shall live with me, command me and my fortune. I'll take you from this cottage and this old man and you shall live as your beauty and your wit demand you should, in all the various pleasures this gay world can give you.

Flora: Here, Sir, Take your toy again; I thank you humbly for the mighty favor; I feel no beauty—what would you barter with me for myself?—Bribe me out of my person?—Tis poorly done; but know Sir, I have a heart within, that proudly tells me no price shall ever buy it. But is it honest in you to tempt that Innocence you shou'd protect?"12

Heartwell also offers yearly financial subsidy to her and her illegitimate children from him, provided she becomes his mistress. Flora defends her chastity and her poor father, who has taught her to be virtuous. Obviously Flora replies to Heartwell's proposals as Pamela does when she rejects Mr. B.'s articles to keep her as his mistress in lieu of his bounteous gifts. Like Pamela, the play is concerned with the everyday social life; the characters' belonging to different classes; and the problems of sex and marriage.

There is also a possible fictional work which may have influenced Richardson in one way or another to write Pamela. This work is a French novel called La Vie De Mariame by the French writer Marivaux, who was also a dramatist. An English translation of the novel appeared in 1736, so Richardson might have read the translation. Clark L. Thomson indicates that there are some similarities between Pamela and the French novel; both heroines are beautiful and both are tempted. Both novelists choose their heroines from the middle-class. However, Thomson concludes that "though Richardson may have seen Marivaux's book, it had very little influence on him."13 It is not my concern in this paper to investigate the extent of Richardson's indebtedness to Marivaux. But one can ascertain that both writers "have much in common because the forces that shaped them were common to both."14 And their works deal with common subjects; a scrutiny of the two novels indicates that both writers present in their respective novels social themes and ideas pertaining to the class-structure, the conflict between classes and the position of women within the social context of their contemporary life.
Besides the possible literary influences on Richardson, which I have already discussed, Richardson makes use of the Cinderella myth which was popular in the early eighteenth century to accomplish his social theme-class differences and reconciliation. The Cinderella myth revolves around a prince who marries a poor girl because of her beauty and graces. The myth suggests that society consists of those who have and those who have not. Normally, the "haves" try to improve their social conditions to become like those who have, here through inter-marriage which gives them a chance for the betterment of their life. The parallel to the story of Pamela is clear; the poor girl becomes a princess, thus, like Pamela, improving her social and financial status; and the prince is individualistic, for, like Mr. B., he marries a girl far below his class and dignity. And the marriage of the prince to the poor girl metaphorically breaks the barriers between classes and reduces their social differences.

Richardson has been involved in a social theme which is of great importance to the man of the eighteenth century. He shows the numerous social forces which work throughout his time, mainly the class-structure of eighteenth-century England; the conflict between classes; the rise of the middle-class; and the improvement of women's position in society. The spread of education helps to abridge class differences, and marriage is considered important to facilitate class reconciliation. Richardson's views have been influenced to some extent by different literary and other sources: contemporary dramatic themes and forms, fiction, and mythology which have accommodated themselves to social themes, such as the class-structure and sex.
Footnotes

3 Kinkead-Weekes, pp. 12-33.
7 Richardson, *Pamela*, p. 249.
Bibliography


