



P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

Pamela

PAMELA

SAMUEL RICHARDSON was born in Derbyshire in 1689, the son of a London joiner. He received little formal education and in 1706 was apprenticed to a printer in the capital. Thirteen years later he set up for himself as a stationer and printer and became one of the leading figures in the London trade. As a printer his output included political writing, such as the Tory periodical *The True Briton*, the newspapers, *Daily Journal* (1736–7) and *Daily Gazetteer* (1738) together with twenty-six volumes of the *Journals* of the House of Commons and general law printing. He was twice married and had twelve children.

His literary career began when two booksellers proposed that he should compile a volume of model letters for unskilled letter writers. While preparing this, Richardson became fascinated by the project, and a small sequence of letters from a daughter in service, asking her father's advice when threatened by her master's advances, formed the germ of *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740–1). *Pamela* was a huge success and became something of a cult-novel. By May 1741 it reached fourth edition and it was dramatized in Italy by Goldoni, as well as in England. His masterpiece, *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady*, one of the greatest European novels, was published in 1747–8. Richardson's last novel, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, appeared in 1753–4. His writings brought him great personal acclaim and a coterie of devoted admirers who liked to discuss with him the moral aspects of the action in the novels. Samuel Richardson died in 1761 and is buried in St Bride's Church, London.

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SAMUEL RICHARDSON

PAMELA;
OR, VIRTUE REWARDED

Edited by Peter Sabor
with an Introduction
Margaret A. Doody

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CHRONOLOGY

- 1689 Samuel Richardson baptized at Mackworth, near Derby, the son of a London joiner, who later returns with his family to the city.
- 1706 Apprenticed (printer) to John Wilde for seven years.
- 1715 Freeman of the Stationers' Company and of the City of London.
- 1719 Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*.
- 1721 SR in business as a stationer and printer near St Bride's Church, off Fleet Street; marries Martha, daughter of his former master.
- 1722 Delated to the Secretary of State as an extreme Tory printer. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*.
- 1723 Probably printing the (Jacobite) Duke of Wharton's twice-weekly periodical, *The True Briton*.
- 1724 Starts printing the *Daily Journal*. Defoe, *Roxana, or, The Fortunate Mistress*.
- 1727 SR elected Renter Warden of the Stationers' Company.
- 1728 Frances Hutcheson, *Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*.
- 1733 SR, now a widower, marries Elizabeth Leake, daughter of a former employer; writes and publishes a pamphlet, *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum; or, Young Man's Pocket Companion*.

- 1735 Starts to print the pro-Government *Daily Gazetteer* (to 1746).
- 1737 SR's revision of the fourth edition of Defoe's *Complete English Tradesman*.
- 1738 SR *et al.*, revision of second edition of Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*.
- 1739 SR's extensive revision of L'Estrange's *Aesop's Fables*.
- 1740 SR completes *Pamela*, written in a few months; 6 November anonymous publication, 2 vols. 12°.
- 1741 SR's *Letters written to and for Particular Friends, on the most Important Occasions...*, begun before *Pamela* and prompting it, published by Rivington and Osborn. Henry Fielding, *Shamela*. February: second edition of *Pamela* with changes. March: third edition. May: fourth edition; spurious *Pamela's Conduct in High Life*. September: fifth edition of *Pamela*; French translation of *Pamela*; SR elected to Court of Assistants of Stationers' Company. 7 December *Pamela II* published, not so successful as part I.
- 1742 Fielding, Joseph Andrews. *Pamela*, de luxe 8° published, vol. i.
- 1743 *Pamela*, de luxe 8°, vols. ii and iii published; second edition of *Pamela II*.
- 1744–6 Drafting and revising *Clarissa*.
- 1747 1 December *Clarissa* vols. i and ii published.

- 1748 28 April *Clarissa* vols. iii and iv published. 8 December *Clarissa* vols. v, vi and vii published. Smollett, *Roderick Random*.
- 1749 June Second edition of *Clarissa* (vols, i–iv revised). Fielding, *Tom Jones*.
- 1750 SR begins serious consideration of *Sir Charles Grandison*.
- 1751 Prévost's French translation of *Clarissa* (severely cut, mostly in last two vols.; removal of 'low' scenes). April third edition of *Clarissa*, 8 vols. 12° (adding 'Moral Sentiments' table); SR, *Letters and Passages Restored from the Original MSS of the History of Clarissa*. Smollett, *Peregrine Pickle*. December: Fielding, *Amelia*.
- 1753 SR, *Sir Charles Grandison* starts publication; vols, i–iv in 12° (first edition) and 8° (second edition). II December vols, v and vi. Smollett, *Ferdinand, Count Fathom*.
- 1754 14 March *Sir Charles Grandison* vol. vii, 12° and 8°. 19 March 7 vols. 12° (third edition). Death of Fielding. SR elected Master of the Stationers' Company.
- 1755 SR, *Moral and Instructive Sentiments... contained in... Pamela, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison*.
- 1760 Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* vols. i and ii.
- 1761 4 July death of SR. Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Diderot, *Éloge de Richardson*.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* appeared in two volumes in November 1740 it was soon what we should call a 'best seller', the first example of that phenomenon in the history of English fiction. Everybody read it; there was a 'Pamela' rage, and Pamela motifs appeared on teacups and fans. Many praised the novel enthusiastically both for its liveliness and its morality, but some condemned the work as undignified and low, seeing in the servant girl's story a pernicious 'levelling' tendency. *Pamela* has never ceased being a controversial work. It is certainly a revolutionary book. It changed the life of the novel as a literary genre, pointing out new directions in subject, style and form.

By the standards of polite society, the author, Samuel Richardson, was scarcely less 'low' than his narrating heroine. Richardson (1689–1761), son of a respectable working-class man, had had a little schooling (we still do not know quite how much) and always loved reading, but by the standards of his contemporaries he was not an educated man, as he had no knowledge of Latin and Greek, and he was certainly not a gentleman. In his early teens he was apprenticed to a printer, and until middle age his life was spent in building up his own business. Before he became a novelist he had done a little writing connected with his trade, such as composing prefaces, and he had produced a handbook for apprentices and a version of Aesop's *Fables*. Then in 1739 Rivington and Osborn, booksellers, asked him to produce a little book of sample letters, the sort of book which provides models of business and personal letters to assist the semi-literate. The 'letter-writer' had been a minor genre of popular literature for over a century, and it was customary for authors to indulge in a certain amount of character-drawing and humour, especially in capturing the phrases and cadences of country bumpkins. Richardson became unexpectedly fascinated by his new project,

and a small sequence of letters from a daughter in service, asking her father's advice when she is threatened by her master's advances, became the germ of *Pamela. Familiar Letters on Important Occasions* was put aside until the novel was finished.

The inspiration of creating Pamela's narrative in letters and of letting her speak for herself in her own manner (which might be termed the country style) Richardson owed to the letter-writer. But he owed another and larger debt to English popular fiction of his lifetime. Until recently, literary historians have been largely content to deal only with the early masters of the novel, Defoe and Richardson, but in fact, as MacBurney and Richetti have shown, there were a great number of novels appearing between 1700 and 1740, though few of these had a very long life or attracted widespread attention. A large proportion of these little novels were by women, and dealt with the experiences of women in the trials of love. Some are stories of love and courtship, others of love and seduction (or even rape). The authors show their heroines, however constrained by law and convention to endure restriction and passivity, as women who think, feel, analyse, react. Woman takes the centre of the stage as a consciousness. In the novels or novellas of writers like Elizabeth Rowe, Mary Davys, Jane Barker or Eliza Heywood, the heroine, however disadvantaged, can implicitly defy the world of masculine authority around her by becoming the centre of the narrative, with masculine characters only figures in her story.

Richardson adapted this popular feminine and domestic fiction, seeing in it the possibilities the earlier authors only hint at; he raises this 'low' fiction to another level. It becomes part of the tradition of the novel, in the mainstream not only of English but also of European fiction. It is remarkable that Fielding, who writes consciously within the classical and continental tradition, had a great influence on English literature, but little immediate effect on other European works, whereas the novels of Richardson, homegrown as they are, were to have considerable importance

in the development of European literature. *Pamela*, which we with hindsight can see presages the era of the French Revolution and of Romanticism, was to influence Rousseau, Diderot, Goethe and Pushkin.

The novel is revolutionary in its depths, not just on the surface, though there are overt statements which have far-reaching significance. When Pamela says 'my *soul* is of equal importance with the soul of a princess', she is, as Roger Sharrock points out, making an obvious Christian statement, and the statement has social implications. Pamela is threatened by Mr B., who uses and abuses his power as a man, as an employer, and as a member of the governing class. He is the local J.P., so Pamela cannot turn to the law because her oppressor is the law. He subjects her to a form of imprisonment, and threatens rape. The novel is constructed out of Pamela's power of defiance.

'And pray,' said I, (as we walked on) 'how came I to be his property? What right has he in me, but such as a thief may plead to stolen goods?' 'Was ever the like heard!' says she. 'This is downright rebellion, I protest!'

The virtue that is rewarded is in large measure the virtue of rebellion.

It is not just the occasional phrase which gives the reader this contact with revolt, with the questioning of hierarchy. The novel itself lacks (ostensibly) the controlling, authoritative and soothing presence of the monarchical author. The real author refuses to appear, calling himself an editor (this device was not in itself new). The heroine tells her own story, but in that telling she has no final authority. Heroines like Roxana or Jane Eyre tell their stories after everything is finished and the pattern of a life can be seen – they know what the end is, what the point is. Pamela as she tells her story is always in the middle of her own experience. Her narration is fresh, even to herself; she hasn't the advantage over us of having thought it through, of having arranged her experience over the years. There is only

one point at which Richardson lets go of this method of narration, the linking passage explaining the abduction; in *Clarissa* he was to achieve complete disappearance.

The novel in letters had existed before Richardson, but not in any work of the same scope. Since the success of *Lettres portugaises* (1669), which was thought of as a collection of real-life letters by a Portuguese nun to the French cavalier who had abandoned her, the epistolary mode had been recognized as presenting the voice of love – and of course there was the classical and poetic precedent of Ovid's *Heroides*. The authors of English popular feminine fiction had used the epistolary mode occasionally, but customarily only for heightened passion; the more intensely feelings are expressed, the less we see of individual character or local circumstance. Richardson, coming to the novel from the direction of the 'letter-writer', creates a disconcertingly individual character and very definite social circumstances. The kind of novel which Richardson discovered in *Pamela* and developed in *Clarissa* exploits the idea of 'the moment'. The heroine writes 'to the moment'; all her actions and thoughts take place in a moving halo of time. Pamela is confusedly aware of the significance of particular moments, but she cannot create a novelistic plot out of these moments, any more than we can in our own lives as we move from Tuesday into Wednesday. Her attempts to see pattern or something like novelistic plot are, like our own, fragmentary, soon superseded by something else. When she tries to get up a 'plot' with the feeble Williams (and she is quite delighted at her own cleverness) it crumbles very rapidly, and nothing much has happened.

It has often been said – and rightly – that *Pamela* begins a literary tradition which leads to the novels of Proust, Joyce and Virginia Woolf. But letters do not provide a Woolfian 'stream-of-consciousness'. Writing a letter supposes some degree of articulate wakefulness, a sense of order and a desire to communicate. Thoughts are no longer in the muddle of the psyche,

but are moving outward into the world; in Dryden's phrase the writer is 'moving the sleeping images of things towards the. light'. Richardson's imagination is deeply fascinated by the point where unconscious personal (and archetypal) feelings and perceptions come from the deeps to the surface – where the planes of the outer world and the inner meet. All Richardson's major characters are, in effect, authors, as if the authorial occupation were in itself a great primary image of the work of consciousness in the human being. Pamela wishes to correspond, in all senses of the word; it is part of her frustration that at times her letters cannot get through to anybody, and a more important and constant frustration that her letters as they emerge into the outer world do not quite correspond with the mind of anyone else in that world (save, of course, the minds of the readers of Richardson). She is alone; her perceptions, her integrity, her passions do not seem to fit in with the world, or other people's ideas. Her parents are good-hearted but inadequate readers of Pamela (they wish her to marry Williams); Simon Darnford and Parson Peters reject and rebuff her; Mr B. is infuriated and mocks her. Ultimately, Mr B. becomes her reader, almost the ideal reader, allowing her freedom of choice and then initiating a real, not dictatorial, correspondence with her. They correspond.

The effect of the novel depends upon Pamela. Richardson has given his character an enormous job to do, for it is her voice alone which is to carry the narrative. She must have a language of her own. All novelists have to wrestle with at least two languages – their own, and that of at least one character. We might find a phrase and call these 'fictional dialects'. Actually, an author has several dialects, and so does each major character. Pamela's language is the central problem for the novelist, as Richardson showed in his continual revisions; responding to criticism of novel and heroine as vulgar, he refined the language to some extent, as we can see in the differences between this, his last version of the novel, and the first edition. Generally, the refinement consists in giving Pamela fewer words

and more connected sentences rather than in sweeping away striking phrases or vulgar usages. Indeed, the author's constant interest in vulgarisms, varieties of common speech – in dialects – can be seen in the rewritten and amplified scene at the farm, where the farmer is now given direct (instead of reported) speech, in country language: '*he will not come NERST her*', '*a quite otherguess light*'. The author also provides new psychological motivation for the farmer, a despiser of women who wants to use Pamela as an object lesson to his own daughter. A little family tyrant is well created in the new scene with its physical objects and gestures: 'pulling out his spectacles', 'then slap went his hand upon the board'. Richardson was always fascinated by the power politics of small groups, especially families, and the gestures which manifest power struggles and emotional tensions. Even when personages were originally conceived merely to serve the narrative, Richardson was not satisfied with leaving them as blank counters, but went back and worked them up into full-blooded characters.

His revisions were by no means all in the cause of refinement Mrs Jewkes's crude sexy joke about Pamela's not wanting to marry a clergyman is an addition, and there are other extra touches of description: her neigh of laughter, her 'ugly horse-lip'. Mrs Jewkes was evidently in some sense one of Richardson's favourite characters. Her rewritten appearances in the second volume give her heightened comic importance; at Pamela's wedding-party, Mrs Jewkes 'waddled to us with two bottles of Rhenish, (what she herself dearly loves)'.

All these comic characters are communicated to us through Pamela; it is, after all, her language which gives us the description of Mrs Jewkes's horse-lip, of her waddling and neighing. Pamela has to convey the other characters' essence so it is felt in what they say or do. Pamela's own language fits in with theirs and is in contrast to it. When she is talking to or of Mr B. her language is sometimes much more elevated than his, but it is

often strikingly colloquial ('Hay, you know, *closet* for that, Mrs Jervis!'), blunt in contrast with his uneasy pretensions. She always has a greater range of 'fictional dialects' than any other character in the novel. Richardson never wished to relinquish any of Pamela's various dialects, though he toned down some in places so as not to overshadow others too much. He wants to maintain the common style, the self-dramatization, the bounce, and the vigorous if limited sense of humour which are all aspects of his character. We cannot get away from her fascinating and irritating lowness:

I have read of a good bishop, that was to be burnt for his religion ; and he tried how he could bear it, by putting his fingers into the lighted candle: so It'other day tried, when Rachel's back was turned, if I could not scour a pewter plate she had begun. I see I could do it by degrees; it only blistered my hand in two places.

All the matter is, if I could get plain-work enough, I need not spoil my fingers. But if I can't, I will make my hands as red as a blood-pudding, and as hard as a beechen trencher, but I will accommodate them to my condition.

Several fictional dialects are blended together here: one is derived from Protestant martyrology, another from the practical language of the kitchen. The latter is then touched with the language of beauty-care, and this in turn is overthrown by the vigorous image of 'blood-pudding', in a sentence that begins with the language of the cot, rather than of the kitchen of the Great House, and ends with two high, abstract words that are still in keeping with the general tone.

Someone who can scour pewter may be a servant; someone who can speak of making her hands as red as a blood-pudding and as hard as a beechen trencher is certainly of the servant class. This is no fine lady masquerading as a country maid. Pamela's voice is insistent, unignorable, like a physical presence. The letters embody her and she them – that this is

more than a metaphor can be felt in the scene where Mr B. reaches into her bodice to grab her manuscripts. The letters are physical objects within the story. This is a very physical book. We can believe it is really about sex and sexuality, not because we are told so but because we can feel this is in the narrative, with its forceful earthiness. The imagery throughout is of plain physical objects, appealing to the senses: 'earth', 'wool', 'beans', 'sunflower', 'shoes', 'cow', 'wine', 'cake', 'grass', 'brick', 'pond'. These things all belong to Pamela's world, her frame of reference. Pamela is, I believe, the first important heroine in English fiction who works for a living, and could earn a living by the work of her hands. She thinks like a servant, because she is one. We see this in the very first letter, where real regrets for the loss of the dead lady are mixed with worries about the security of her job and a lively interest in the four guineas paid as honest wages and sent home, carefully if cynically wrapped up. No other heroine has burst upon the world with such an inelegant concern over a few coins.

Pamela is not daintily free of her social position – it has conditioned the way she thinks, speaks and acts. Pamela is an individual in particular social and historical circumstances of which she is less conscious than the (absent) author. The novel as a genre has always accommodated this vision of unimportant people in history; in reading novels we hear the news about people who are not kings and queens and great chiefs, who have never been heard of before. Lazarillo and Don Quixote and Gil Bias and Pamela and Tom Jones are not legendary, and not leaders; they do not control their society but are trying to make their way in it. But, as Ronald Paulson has pointed out, the early novel, embarrassed by classical tradition, could deal with unimportant characters from the low to middle classes only by treating them satirically. Richardson's *Pamela* gives us an unsatiric view of a lower-class person. Defoe's characters offer the only precedent in English fiction, but Moll and Roxana have a raffishness, a sort of gallows-foot dash, in their outlaw position as thieves and whores. Richardson's character is an honest and well-meaning person from a fairly stable background and she wants,

like most of us, to live an honest life within her own social world. When this seems impossible she is heroic enough to choose an unsuccessful position as the alternative to doing wrong and losing her own identity. She is as heroic as Maggie Tulliver in her moral choices (though better treated in the end) but the heroism is indivisible from her whole personality, and she is a teenaged servant girl.

It is sometimes difficult for the twentieth-century reader to understand what Richardson's contemporaries would have grasped immediately – the full meaning of Pamela's social position, which might well be compared to that of a black servant girl in the American South in the earlier part of our own century. Her use of language indicates her background, origin and status – and these make her, in Mr B.'s world, an inferior, commonly thought of almost as another species of being. Readers who have pointed out that Pamela is in love with Mr B. from the outset have always been partly right – but she does have real reason to fear him, and genuinely rebels when he tries to make an unchristian and perverse use of their feelings for each other. Mr B. himself is not individually guilty, for he has been conditioned by the assumptions of his own class. Sir Simon Darnford says

'Why, what is all this, my dear, but that our neighbour has a mind to his mother's waiting-maid!... I don't see any great injury will be done her. He hurts *no family* by this.'

Mr B. is both promulgator and victim of a code which deliberately sets up not just a double but a triple standard. Men of all classes are expected to take casual sexual pleasure – though it's better for poor men not to roam too much. Middle- and upper-class young ladies have chastity most explicitly demanded of them (for worldly reasons of family and descent) but lower-class girls are not supposed to set any such value on themselves – they are there for sexual convenience. So thoroughly has gentle society accepted this notion that a lower-class girl who makes any fuss about

yielding her virginity must be guilty of hypocrisy — after all, one knows what they are all like, really. Richardson was horrified at being taken for a leveller, but this pernicious code he attacks unsparingly, and the extirpation of it demands new assumptions about class, property, authority and identity.

Pamela rebels against this code, but she has no illusions about her social condition as one of the ‘poor people’. She knows that marriage cannot be expected as the logical outcome or possible result of her resistance. It is the reader who sees that marriage is the only right end to the story, the only sexual relationship which allows of equality and integrity, acknowledges Pamela’s value as a person, not a thing.

The story is of course a highly charged love story with a happy ending. But Mr B. is not a dashing hero like Mr Rochester (though the resemblance between their two novels has been seen since one of the first reviews of *Jane Eyre*). The narrative permits us to see Mr B. through Pamela’s eyes, so in the context of the novel he is subordinate to her, and the authority of masculinity and class is overthrown here too. We know more about him than she does; we don’t see the awe-ful person she sees. He is the ruler of her small world, but the reader realizes that this fox-hunting young country squire would be considered something of a bumpkin himself at St James’s; going to court is a big occasion for him, and he wants to show Pamela his get-up – no lord or earl would behave in this naïve small-beer manner. We see that Mr B. is rebelling against his mother’s influence over him, and trying to fit in with the conventions of his peer-group in becoming a swaggering seducer, an abductor. He tries on a great many roles before us and Pamela; he is alternatively aristocratic, friendly, magisterial, blustering. We can see the weaknesses in this unromantic hero-villain as he sulks and shows off. But Pamela too has a (feminine) power of analysis, and she writes down what she thinks, learning more about him as she goes on. She captures Mr B. in words, even more thoroughly than he captures her in his