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Samuel Richardson
Love and the Novel: Pamela
Class Structure and Social Status

The Rise Of The Novel

18th century
Novel



Letter 32

“And pray, said I, walking on, how came **I to be his property**? What **right has he** in me, but such as a thief may plead to stolen goods?—Why, was ever the like heard? says she.—**This is downright rebellion, I protest!**—Well,” p.95

This passage begins with Pamela’s **bold defence** of herself and, as likely, her **class**. She asserts to Mrs. Jewkes that although she is Mr. B’s servant, **she is not his property**. This kind of attitude from Pamela evokes a similarly bold reaction from Mrs. Jewkes. Mrs. Jewkes protests Pamela’s very idea that she is entitled anything more than such. She reacts to Pamela’s idea of having a will of her own as **rebellion** of someone of **her class** to someone of Mr. B’s.

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“shew the dear girl all the respect that is due to one I must love, if she will deserve it, as I hope she will yet; and let her be under no unnecessary or harsh restraints. But your watchful care is not, however, to cease: and remember that you are not to disoblige me, to oblige her; and that I will not, cannot, yet part with her.

Mrs. Jewkes looked very sullen, and as if she would be glad still to do me a good turn, if it lay in her power.” p.147

Here, Mr. B addresses the mistreatment of Pamela, not only by himself, but more so by Mrs. Jewkes. This imploration to Mrs. Jewkes is a great departure from Mr. B’s former attitude towards Pamela. Not only does he admit that he loves her, he asks that Mrs. Jewkes show her respect. This is a pivotal point in the novel because kindness towards a servant is one thing, but respect is quite another.

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“He put his arm round me, and his other hand on my neck, which made me more angry and bold: and he said, What then am I? Why, said I, (struggling from him, and in a great passion,) to be sure you are **Lucifer** himself, in the shape of my master, or you could not use me thus.” p.149

Clearly, in this passage, Pamela is still untrusting of Mr. B. His demeanor towards her has been fickle, to say the least. Pamela feels that she must remain guarded to protect her virtue since she is unconvinced of his true feelings. She, likewise, struggles with her feelings towards Mr. B. There are times when he shows kindness to her that she finds it difficult to resist him. On the contrary, as clearly seen in this passage, she compares him to Lucifer (another name for satan) . This is an allusion to the devil in the Bible as he is referred to as “Lucifer” in Isaiah 14:12: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations” (King James)!

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“O sir, said I, my virtue is as dear to me, as if **I was of the highest quality**; and my doubts (for which you know I have had too much **reason**) have made me troublesome.” p.153

This concept is ever present throughout the novel, but it is best stated here. This statement of Pamela's sums up the major themes in this novel of class as well as Pamela's precious virtue. Pamela is of a low class, which is looked down upon by many. She is not rich or powerful by her society's standards, so that is why she must protect her virtue with such zeal. Her virtue is all that she has. It makes her rich and powerful in the sense that with it, she becomes equal to Mr. B. Her virtue is rewarded as she gains equality of class with Mr. B in marriage.

Also, note the word (**reason**) in this context. It is telling in itself about the middle class women and their position in England at that time.

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“Then I'll tell you, replied he; the difference is, a man ennobles the woman he takes, **be she who she will; and adopts her into his own rank**, be it what it will: but a woman, though ever so nobly born, debases herself by a mean marriage, and descends from her own rank to his she stoops to.

When the royal family of Stuart allied itself into the low family of Hyde, (comparatively low, I mean,) did any body scruple to call the lady, Royal Highness, and Duchess of York? And did any body think her daughters, the late Queen Mary and Queen Anne, less royal for that?” p.290

In Mr. B's discussion with his sister, Lady Davers, they argue whether marrying below one's class is as bad for a man as for a woman. In Mr. B's argument, he claims that a man who marries below his class raises a woman to his class, while a woman who marries below her class lowers herself to her husband's class. As is evident in his opinion expressed here, Pamela did gain equality of class with Mr. B, although he clearly does not feel that she is his equal because she is still a woman.

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Williams however questions the equality of class because of the example he used of Queen Anne. Williams contests that her marriage to Charles II “was usually cited as the classic example of everything an unequal match ought not to be. It is certainly a most inauspicious precedent for Mr. B’s marriage to Pamela .



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