

Interpretation of Pamela's Multiple Social Identities: Imprisoned Woman, Vested Interest Holder or Moral Guardian

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Abstract: During the period of 18th century, British classicism prevailed, praised values of rational, order, stable and so on. Samuel Richardson is the representative of epistolary novel; *Pamela* is one of his outstanding epistolary novels. With the development of capitalism, individualism prevailed, people more and more concerned about their own interest, and morality gradually became worse. In order to save the gradually deteriorated social morality, Richardson wrote an epistolary novel *Pamela* with the aim of setting up a good moral example for woman, and further to maintain the stability and good morality of traditional society. Pamela as the heroine of this novel, there are some arguments about her image which is the core issue of this article. The image of Pamela is various, so, I will explain Pamela's three identities in detail.

Keywords: Pamela; Morality; Feminism

1. Introduction

Pamela, a kind of epistolary novel, degenerated by Samuel Richardson during the period of 18th century. The plot of this novel is fixed but the image or social identity of Pamela is multiple, some people believe that Pamela, in fact, is the product of anti-feminism and still a "doll" of patriarchy, repressed by the traditional society all the time, other people celebrate her noble and courageous behaviors because Pamela herself not only offered a successful path for female to cross class but also achieved the combination of middle class's good morality and the authority of upper class, to some extent, reconstructed traditional morality. This article will focus on this conflict, discuss about Pamela's three chief social identities: imprisoned woman, vested interest holder as well as moral guardian.

2. Discuss about Pamela's three social identities

2.1 Pamela: Imprisoned woman

First and foremost, in this novel, we could see that Mr. B utilize discourses to tame Pamela. Mr. B set up some commanding rules for Pamela and Pamela need to bore them in mind sincerely. There are many commanding demands which subliminal defined Pamela as his appendage, and according to Pamela's attitude, we could find that she had been totally imprisoned in patriarchal society but found no way to escape. From this perspective, we could see that Pamela's final happiness, in fact, was attained by exchanging with devil's commanding demands, so, she still is an imprisoned woman.

What's more, Mr. B achieved his "taming drill" through restricting and supervising Pamela in a mansion, in this way to transform Pamela. In the mansion, the housekeeper Mrs. Jukes always follow and control Pamela, even sleep with her every night to keep watch on Pamela's every actions. The whole mansion seems like a practice ground in which everyone followed by Mr. B's asks to treat Pamela. When Pamela prepared to run away, Mrs. Jukes would take some punishments such as hid her shoes, limited her outside activities, locked her in room, these above behaviors made Pamela feel really shamed, and in this way to practice her to comply with Mr. B. Finally, Mr. B touched by her noble virtue and got married with her but actually Pamela just moved from "restricted mansion" to "imprisoned marriage". Mr. B realized his "taming drill". Pamela sacrificed her freedom to fetch her master's shelter.

According to my above discusses, we learn that Mr. B tried to tame the heroine Pamela by his commanding discourses, restricted control and so on. Pamela's end also was the result of special social background under which woman was imprisoned by the term "virtue". During 18th century, woman was imprisoned in the cage of virtue. Virtue, at that time, not means the innocence of soul but only refers to physical virtue. If woman lose her physical virtue, she would get discrimination, even go on the path of perish. However, man's sexually attack would be regarded as normal phenomenon and even could be forgave. Thus, women were constricted among a tiny space of physical virtue which hin-

ders woman's development and independence. In this novel, Pamela was imprisoned within this cage, so, when she suffered from her master's attack, she felt fear and sorrow, she could not escape from this cage but chose to yield to it in the end. From this perspective, we know the fact that Pamela's marriage actually was not the optimal end but a sort of restriction for woman's virtue. Thus, Pamela is an imprisoned woman.

2.2 Pamela: Vested interest holder

There are some people regarded Pamela as a vested interest holder for she got wealth, authority and even cross class via marriage. Confronted with Pamela's innocent virtue rewarded story, some people believe that she was hypocritical who resorted to her virtue to exchange more power from Mr. B. Henry Fielding, another outstanding writer in 18th century, felt dissatisfaction about Pamela's utilitarian behaviors, and created a novel named *Shamela* to laugh and criticize Pamela. From this perspective, we could see that Pamela, to some extent, made virtue utilitarian, virtue became a method for female to cross class and fetch authority. Thus, some people regard Pamela as a vested interest holder.

First and foremost, let us view this phenomenon from positive perspective, Pamela's behavior lessened the distance and difference between middle class and upper class, offered a fresh and feasible way for female of middle class to fetch authority and cross class. During the 18th century, there were few working opportunities for women, expect for some trifle works. It's also really hard and even impossible for women to achieve the process of crossing class. At first, she prepared to leave away her immoral master but when she knew that virtue must be rewarded, she began to dress up beautifully and utilize it as weapon to fight against her master's oppression. On the one hand, Pamela toughly refused the lure of Mr. B, on another hand, she also showed up her virtue and beauty which indicates that Pamela actually held some expectations for Mr. B. Pamela struggled with Mr. B until he finally understood her moral value and noble behaviors. When Mr. B agreed to get married with her and share his authority with her, she felt excited for her virtue rewarded. From what I discussed above, we could see that Pamela's virtue actually boasts the hue of utilitarian. Pamela seems like a cunning merchant who carefully make calculation about her goods. Resort to morality, Pamela realized the maximize of her personal interest which is slightly emotionless but more feasible and reasonable. Thus, rather than an imprisoned woman, Pamela is a vested interest holder who take advantage of her virtue to protect herself against patriarchy and exploit a broad world for woman.

2.3 Pamela: moral guardian

Morality is a key issue even in the modern world, so, it's impossible for us to ignore Pamela's moral and education function. Some people praised Pamela as moral guardian. Pamela reconstructed morality in public space through combing her personal noble virtue with upper class's authority. Samuel Richardson believed that literature has the power of education and revolution. Virtue, as Pamela's good quality, holds personal attribute, however, Pamela utilized her personal virtue as a weapon to reconstruct the good moral atmosphere of the whole society, so, further added the attribute of social publicity to virtue. Personality and social publicity have intricate relationship, if personality wants to be accepted by society, it has to be legitimate, only in this way could personality become a part of the society and attain relative authority. The author hopes to transform Pamela's personal quality to a sort of political power or authority, realizes the combination between two classes, further to reconstruct social morality. In other word, Pamela is a moral guardian who purify the social morality via her own good behaviors.

Confronted with the sexually assault of Mr. B, Pamela deeply knew the truth that there was no way to fight against her master expect for her cherish virtue. Pamela stretched her good morality to the public level. She had many chances to leave away from her master, however, she chose to stay here, strived to tame Mr. B and transformed him to be the award of her virtue. The aim of Pamela is not to show readers who is she, but to exhibit what she did and then achieve social reform. Pamela changed Mr. B's mind and achieved his moral awakening. Mr. B transformed from a playboy to a noble guy who deeply touched by Pamela's virtue. He said: "You make me awakening, I find a kind of quality from your body which is really noble and impossible to find from any other women in the world." Before, he regarded Pamela as a plaything, but now he saw her as his treasure, from Mr. B's transformation, readers know the power of keeping good morality and obeying social rules. Mr. B, a playboy of upper class, gradually recognized that Pamela's noble quality holds the same value with his social status, authority and wealth, so, he said "I am sincerely willing to share my property with you." Mr. B got married with Pamela in the end, and then formed a new role who consists of middle class's virtue and upper class's authority. Pamela's beautiful appearance made Mr. B her lover, and her noble soul pushed her master to be her husband. Through marriage, Pamela became a member of upper class and burdened the responsibility of hurling social morality meanwhile Mr. B shook the root of upper class who only concerned about wealth, status and identity previously. Pamela combined middle class's good morality with the authority of noble class, set up a good example for the whole society. Readers then know that good morality has the equal value with social authority, good morality is the indispensable material for upper class meanwhile authority only be the award for those who choose to insist on good morality but not for those who were depraved. Virtue became a useful tool for Pamela to

achieve efficient social mobility, cross the class and reconstruct social common consciousness. Aristotle once said: “every city-state is a sort of community and all communities are established for some good causes. All human actions are aimed at achieving the goodness in the heart, so, the pursuit of the highest community must be the ultimate goodness.” Pamela’s virtue is a sort of Aristotle’s goodness which is the ultimate pursuit of community. So, Pamela is a moral guardian who purified social morality and made a good combination between good morality and social authority.

3. Conclusion

In this article, I focus on Pamela’s multiple social identities. To explore who is Pamela? There are three chief social images of Pamela: Imprisoned woman, vested interest holder as well as moral guardian. I discuss above three identities in detail. In fact, the identity of Pamela is multiple and various, we should accept her every identity, only in this way could we get a better understanding of this character as well as this epistolary novel Pamela.

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