

Textual Authority and Dynamics of The Narrative Structures in Richardson's Pamela or virtue and Fielding's Joseph Andrews

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the narrative structures, techniques and forms of writings in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela or virtue* and Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*. Fielding's novel has allegedly been a response to Richardson's novel in a way that the former corresponded to the latter in term of the theme and narrative style, in which Fielding suggested an opposite paradigm for fiction. Richardson's *Pamela* is an epistolary novel which consists of a collection of letters and private journals, on the other hand, Fielding's novel is a third-person narration that the reader is told the story through a pervasive narrator along with interpolated tales, essays and digressions. This paper is aimed at giving an exploration of the ways Richardson's narrative removes the distance between readers and the text through personal letters that enables Pamela to improve her psychological status, as well as her socio economic status, as well as earning the readers trust while Fielding attempts to offer the opposite with an intrusive narrator who reminds the readers of the text's fictiveness to avoid their identification with the text which arouses disbelief in the narrator and the text.

Keywords: *Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Narrative, Joseph Andrews, Pamela*

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

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Notions Dec. 2019,
Vol. X, No. 3,
pp.18-32

Article No.09

Online available at :
https://anubooks.com/?page_id=6318

Introduction

Samuel Richardson was a real supporter of didacticism in literature and was instantly appreciated and contested on the moral objectives of his previous texts at different journals, however; his first novel *Pamela or virtue rewarded* made a dramatic and abrupt impact never seen previously; proved itself as a pioneering piece, especially in creation of genuine characterization and narrative technique.¹ The counteracted reception of *Pamela*, with its compelling attempts to have textual authority and well-developed characterization of a hit, led to a sort of new subgenre that hit public celebrity in which counter arguments were created by many authors those who engage in the discussion ended up in a battle between those who support *Pamela*'s didactic purpose and the opposite. As an allegedly provocative book *Pamela* attracted many harsh responses and Henry Fielding was one the most famous author that challenged and parodied Richardson symbolic authority in its narrative technique, and yet he, in writing *Joseph Andrews*, applied an ironically inverted paradigm of this technique to close down *Pamela*'s didactic narrative, as well as developing an alternative. Therefore, this paper aims to analyse the narrative structures, techniques and forms of writing in two novels which are *Joseph Andrews* by Henry Fielding written in 1742, and *Pamela or virtue rewarded* originally written and published in 1740 by Samuel Richardson, and recently edited and published by Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely in 2018. The synopsis of *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams* novel, which is universally labelled as *Joseph Andrews*, outlines the chronology of the life of Joseph Andrews, describing him as a footman voyaging across London with his friend, mentor and parson, Mr. Abraham Adams. The book is themed on sexual immorality, love, betrayal, as well as robbery and crime. Moreover, themes of religion and death are majorly explored in novel. The second novel, *Pamela, or virtue rewarded*, takes the style of an epistolary novel that documents letters describing the life of Pamela Andrews, a 15-year-old maidservant, who was predisposed to unwanted and inappropriate sexual advances from her employer and land owner following the demise of his mother. Determined to merge religious teachings with her wish for her employer's approval, Pamela uses letters and journal entries to communicate with her insolvent parents. Equally, the synopses set up themes entailing sexual immorality, marriage, violence and crime, social class and gender roles, which the author sought to define a moral paradigm in the society. Below is a comparative explication of narrative structures, techniques and forms of writing of the two authors.

Narrative Structure

Since the 1960s linguists have aimed to understand the structure of narratives due to the fact that effective communication has been the key interest among the writers, readers and any society in the world. Many studies assert that narrative is a basic unit and form of human and societal mode of communication since it is believed that narration is the primary form of language.²³ Narrative is believed to have been extracted from various things and then embedded in the present myths, legends, fables, novella, and epics among other forms. All the dialects, language groups and societies are believed to have developed their own narratives to be used as sources of entertainment, education, cultural maintenance and unity development tool as these narratives are shared among specific ages. For instance, each society has developed narratives for adults and those for children. Bruner maintains that narratives are as old as life itself.⁴ Due to diversity in the human cultures there is no specific definition of the term narrative although Porter holds it that narrative should be simply defined as the genre that organizes our minds giving the basic understanding of time.⁵ The notion of narrative structure can be traced from the ancient Greek philosophers (such as Aristotle and Plato), who first viewed it the content found in a given story and the way in which the story is told. Modern linguists have however asserted that narrative structure simply refer to its plot and setting. In this case the plot is viewed to be the chronological order of events as they occur in the story while the setting is either the factual or fictional place where the story is set. Depending on the narrative type, the plot order differs although mostly narratives use common step to present events. The commonly used model of plot is the one developed by Gustav Freytag in 1963 which is based on Aristotle's theory of tragedy.⁶ The model starts from exposition as the first phase of narration, rising action, climax, falling action and lastly the denouement phase that marks the end of narration.

Pamela was written in epistolary style, a structure that has been pivotal in novel development in the 18th century considering the role of letters and letter writing in as a persuasive medium of communication of the time. Letters were a necessity in communication in continuity of traditional relationships within the changing society, with the influence of letter writing stretching outside the bounds of personal messaging. For instance, in consideration of the setting Richardson used in the novel, the migration of middle class people to suburbs into the Georgian new style of housing entailing private spaces, letters enabled development of private relations since people, particularly women, were more isolated from the conventional communities, with whom they communed previously.⁷ In a classic study, Ian Watt places candid arguments

in his book, *The Rise of the Novel* that Richardson's Pamela was the leading epistolary novel and asserted that the integration of epistolary form in fictional novel introduced 'a subjective and inward direction' in literature, a structure that highlighted the uniqueness of *Pamela* from related prose fictional works of the day.⁸

The novel consists of thirty-two letters and private journals that mostly written by Pamela, a serving maid, who gradually develops her character and socio-economic status throughout narrative. Illustrating Pamela's consciousness through collection of personal letters and journals is a clever method which paved the way that leads her to self-development via describing her self-reflexive perspective through that epistolary form needs more critical analysis. Richardson utilizes this form to construct cordial relation and remove distance between Pamela and readers by decreasing his authorial voice. Rather than a traditional third-person narrative, readers follow events through the eyes of heroine that portrays her psychological status and personal development without any mediator. This narrative provides immediacy and instantaneity that the letters or personal journals are nearly written while or immediately after the events as Richardson calls, 'writing to the minute' positioning the reader and Pamela in the same place where the upcoming events are unknown to anybody. Thus, readers feel as if they are natural part of the Pamela's narrative, as they discover the events simultaneously with Pamela, they also experience her psychological status. Richardson presents reflection of Pamela's sentiments to raise sympathy of the reader via private letters written by her, while simultaneously, letters and private journals silence Richardson's voice owing to authorship of Pamela. Notably, the physicality and immediacy of the letters provide Pamela with authorial voice in the book unlike the dominant patriarchal narratives of the period. This form brings another issue, that is, exploitation of the private letters belonging to a young lady to be exposed to public, however, as this book aims to be morally didactic one, Richardson intentionally gives perspective of young working class Pamela whose soul is, 'equal importance with the soul of a princess' perspective through the letters to impact woman of the period (p. 158). Moreover, as the subtitle suggests 'Virtue Rewarded', the letters stand for as a proof of Pamela's virtue via ethical and sentimental feelings in them that make them appropriate to be addressed to the public.

Notably, another significant point Pamela's narrative suggests is that her existence is co-dependently attached to her writings, that is, Richardson vocalizes a young lady who controls the narrative, which is unusual in a patriarchal and oppressive period and that privileges Pamela to construct the narrative, as well as her identity through textual reality and language. Subversion of the dominant narrative situates

Pamela in a position where she resists and threatens traditional structure, and that, leads her to challenge idealized forms of male texts in which women are silenced as she claims her right to describe her own story via authorial voice. For her, then, letters and journals are a medium to affirm her authority over textual reality considering the oppression by her master illustrates her self-empowerment through writing. As suggested by Nancy Armstrong, 'on her language alone depends the power of her resistance'⁹ that is to say, she not only writes to illustrate setting or events, she consciously shapes the world around as her version of reality to be determined by her, and that suggests, Richardson allows Pamela to centralize herself in the middle as the heroine who gains power through writing her own story. Readers encounter with a distressed serving-maid in the first letter, and they witness her self-elevation through her marriage in the end, she is naïve, vulnerable to any danger, however, Richardson provides her with a pen to shape her own narrative that she empowers herself as she writes to establish a source of empowerment. Moreover, Pamela's journal plays important role to construct her present and future identity, she records her real identity in the journal in case of situations that affect her throughout the narrative, it reminds her of values maintaining her self as whole. As a consequence of the epistolary format, Pamela is well aware of being heroine of the text that let her take the opportunity to form and improve her psychological and socio-economic status.

Writing letters and journal functions not only to form her own autonomy, but also allows her to emancipate herself from the severe reality of life and escape from the burdens to stabilize her identity. Pamela adds that, 'Let me write and bewail my miserable hard Fate, tho' I have no Hope that what I write will be convey'd to your Hands!', she consoles herself through writing out of distress, and also states that, 'now it is all the diversion I have, and if God will favour my escape with my innocence', suggesting her approach towards her writings as a tools to support her psychologically (p. 82-97). Considering journal as diversion in the narrative, she reflects her most intimate portrait within them and that allows her to write and reread her own self, providing self-esteem on the road to reach higher social status by marrying her ex-master. It is possible to read her development throughout the novel as narrative progresses and these diversions help her control her emotions and maintain virtuousness.

In the novel, Richardson's narrative structure brings about the question that whether reader is told true story as Pamela's perspective is the only version of it. Since the readers need to participate alongside Pamela, they are unable to see bigger

picture due to absence of omniscient perspective, and that, filters whole story through Pamela's perspective. The limitedness of the perspectives in the book where almost all characters are silenced or possibly censored increases ambiguity and that impacts her credibility. Although the editor guarantees the letters in the preface, 'have their Foundation in Truth and Nature', it is narrated by Pamela, except for a short adding by editor, in a limited perspective which comes from her 'heart' so as to make reader sympathize with her, yet it may not offer a true version since she is the embodiment of the attributed virtue. The whole plot revolves around Pamela to give ultimate moral message as a lesson written by her, and that, in this point she idealizes her own image to be instructed to the women of the period. As suggested by Laura Willis, 'Richardson gets tangled up in this impossibility, focusing so much on making his heroine a paragon of moral conduct that he forgets to make her real.'¹⁰ Pamela herself becomes an idealized form of virtue depicting it through her self, that decreases her reliability and she is merely an imagined, 'example of virtue.'¹¹ Furthermore, Richardson adds religious allusions and fables in her narrative to support her ultimate authority indicates manipulating sacred texts to stabilize her status, however; it diminishes her credibility rather than increasing. Richardson uses references to other texts and intertextuality in the novel to assure its narrative a sense of authorial truth via providing documentation to empower its claims. Obviously, Richardson demonstrates Pamela's education through her references including the rapes of Lucretia and Tamar, Aesopian fables, the Bible and other tales that she read. The habit of enriching her narration with sophisticated stories and biblical allusions invokes an attempt to strengthen her claim to be reliable through supporting them with sacred and secular texts. In sum, characterization of Pamela and the narrative of the text is interdependently related to each other since she is both the heroine and narrator, a narrative technique that is new in the period. As a didactic novel, it conveys its very message through a subjective reality in which Pamela is rewarded virtue by constructing her identity against oppression despite many inconsistencies in her narrative.

On the other hand, the narrative structure of *Joseph Andrews* is embedded on a distinctive form of fictional expression that builds a dynamic relationship between text and the reader, with Henry Fielding developing particular narrator roles to configure the general structure of the novel. The narrative creation defines an intermediary narrator who is at liberty of making commentary on actions, characters, and different situations in the book. Fielding uses essay form predominantly to espouse character thoughts. Nevertheless, letters are used to permeate character thought,

which in both books present some consequences in the text narrative. Fielding himself defines his own form 'comic Epic-Poem in Prose' which hasn't been 'attempted in our language' indicating his intention to escape from present narrative forms in that period. Writing epic in prose form provides Fielding with liberty to write a detailed lengthy text with absurdities and comedic elements in the 'style and manner' of Cervantes in a flexible approach. By forming text unlike traditional forms, that is, the narrative includes many digressions, narrator's comments, departures from main story and humour that Fielding himself declares it cannot be classified, 'be prevailed on by any Booksellers, [...] to make his Appearance.' and rejects conventional classification.

In *Shamela*, Fielding's other work, it is obvious that Fielding doesn't embrace contemporary forms such as epistolary and subjective narratives since it's a parody of *Pamela* by Richardson and he challenges its idealized epistolary form through his book *Joseph Andrews* that presents a sequence of incidental events in third-person voice who is in a domineering position compared to Pamela's limited subjective voice via documentation which Richardson aims to urge readers to believe its reality, on the contrary, Fielding's narrative with his own adding, digressions and narrator's voice emphasizes artificiality of the text as he addresses in 'Of division in Authors' and 'Matter Prefatory in Praise of Biography'. The narrator is ironic, cynical and intrusive one that serves as both insider and outsider in the text, who observe, comments, criticize and mocks the characters throughout his narration. Notably, Fielding disregards 'authenticity' of epistolary format by his interventions and narrator's direct speech with readers to illustrate the artificiality of it and set psychological barrier between readers and text while Richardson impels readers to identify with the characters. Judith Hawley adds, 'Fielding [...] deliberately sets the reader at a distance from his characters and the action by means of ironic narration.'¹² Apparently, the narrator plays an important role to keep readers at a distance by controlling almost all narration, theme, events and characters, and that, offering cynical and ironic comments on characters in his direct speech with reader to highlight fictionality of the text. As declared Fielding, 'describe not men, but Manners; not an individual, but a species.' he illustrates the artificiality of the characters and warns reader that each character represents specific classes in the society, that is, the reader are asked to understand and question the character's allusions rather than establishing sentimental attachment with them. Furthermore, the story is supposed to be about Joseph's experiences, however, narrator transforms it into his own stage through his interventions and presents a dominating perspective over the events via third person voice, and yet he

doesn't urge readers to accept his own authority, in fact, he acts like a mediator who discourage sentimental reading through his ironic and mocking voice. As Bridget Brennan suggests, 'The narrator strives to ensure that readers of his novel do not approach his text the same way that they might a romantic novel like Pamela by satirizing the way readers, particularly of sentimental novels, become very emotionally invested in the plights of fictional characters', he assures a paced narration from one scene to another with diversions that readers cannot identify with characters due to the lack of psychological description.¹³ In sum, he stands as an authorial voice between reader and text, describes what he sees in an anti-romantic tone to illustrate the artificiality and fictionality of it to make the reader question rather than forming emotional attachment.

In the main structure of the narrative, Fielding employs different methods to convey his ideas through digressions, letters and episodic structure in the text. There are three interpolated tales and long religious or political discussions caused by Parson Adams, engendering twists and shifts in the main plot which halt the flow of the narration. Through the three tales and long discussions, readers feel they're distanced from the main plot, because the contents of the extra stories don't intersect main plot and 'easily skippable'.¹⁴ The interpolated tales are 'The Unfortunate Jilt' by Leonora, Wilson's story and 'The History of Two Friends' read by Parson's son, each tells different stories which seem useless in terms of the main narrative. Fielding uses these three tales for different purposes that readers are shown weakness, folly and vanity of humanity, and they also function as break in main plot for readers. Readers may read or just skip them because they don't affect the main plot, they tell different tales for the reader to listen independent tales which are, 'they are imitations of romances, or Fielding's own attempts at writing romance.', that each can be seen as criticism of exaggerated romances of his period.¹⁵ Since Leonora's tale describes a hypocrisy of a lady and the second tale talks about debauchery that they seem to carry moral messages for the readers through conventions of romance genre, that is, Fielding employs a different genre in his novel as 'a burlesque of the suspense characteristic of Richardson', through these tales and letters.¹⁶ Fielding seems to form his novel through incidental events, digressions and humour to emphasize its artificiality and 'provide ironic commentary on adjacent chapters, that they have an intertextual or allusive function, or that they throw into relief the novel's status as art and our presence as readers', while Richardson aims to present well-structured uninterrupted structure to strengthen its reality.¹⁷

Moreover, these digressions pause main plot, offer playfulness and irony in them, however, they also serve as means to convey viewpoint of other characters rather than only of narrator along with the letters in the book. In *Pamela*, readers are told the story via one single subjective voice of Pamela, Richardson filters all story through her perspective, that limit readers' perception of other characters' viewpoints and psychological developments. On the other hand, Fielding tells the story through an intrusive narrator who not only describes but also comments on the characters and events, however, his perspective is not the only one throughout the book. Obviously, the first two interpolated tales offer pause, different genre and moral messages for the readers, as well as for the narrator, since each story is told by two different people, that is, narrator's voice is silenced. Readers are offered more than one voice and perspectives in the text that nobody else can control or intervene. Moreover, Fielding also utilizes letters as a device for similar purpose as interpolated tales have, that is, these letters presents unfiltered perspectives of different characters and let reader communicate with the characters without narrator. As suggested by Bridget Brennan, 'it creates a forum for the voices of the characters and even competing ideologies and breaks up the monologism of the text created by the dominating, authoritative narrative voice.', they surpass the authorial voice of narrator and present different voices.¹⁸ Since the narrator doesn't have authority on these two letters by Joseph and five letters by characters in the tales, readers not only hear different voice, they can also expect to feel sentiments in the letters due to the lack of narrator's satiric voice. So that, Fielding provides readers with subjective perspective of characters while Richardson offers only one perspective as authorial voice throughout the book, and that Fielding manipulates Richardson's narrative technique in his novel to challenge his subjective narrative.

In the explication of narrative in both novels, a three-part model, which encompasses story, discourse, and story worlds, based on Alan Palmer's conclusions in the book *Fictional Minds*, is used, a story is defined as "the content plane of the narrative, the what of a narrative, the narrated".¹⁹ Secondly, a narrative assumes a discourse, which Palmer associates to "the how of a narrative, the narrating" (18). Thirdly, a narrative is equated to a story-world, a narrative theory strategy embedded on an analytical philosophy. In view of epistolary form, letters in a novel constitute the primary discourse of telling the story, while the epistolary discourse defines the language used to hypothesize the possible world as is the case in *Pamela*. From a different angle, the development of a story-world using essay form is dependent on particular media type since essays present mono or multi-relations between character

and narrative, the same way different letters and narrative are distinctly related, causing narrative elements to involve numerous subcategories.

Vivid Description

The style of writing engaged by Fielding is pure, vivid and explanatory such that the novel lacks many literary terminologies in the text. The assumption is that Fielding intended to reform the society of the day, making him remain simple in his description to allow layman to decipher his writing. Additionally, he presents realism in his writing as described in the preface by saying, ‘no other species of writing can differ more widely than the comic and the burlesque. The latter is ever the exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural’, while ‘the former we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature’ (Preface). In *Pamela*, vivid descriptions constituted the major success factor of the book, mainly when Richardson describes the psychological activities of the heroine in the novel. According to Zhang and Fan, the inner world of Pamela, ‘is incompatible, she suffered a lot from the upper class, and she was longing for an independent life and social position’.

Tone

Analysis of the temperature of a narrative provides a candid tone implied. The tone in *Joseph Andrews* is didactic and light-hearted. Presumably, the objective of Fielding was to assess ‘the only source of truly Ridiculous [...] affectation’ (p. 15). The implied tone is light-hearted in approach considering the superficial viewpoint of his writing. Although definite themes are covered in the novel, Fielding regularly engages light humour in the behaviour and dialogue of essential characters, particularly in characters that were self-considered seriously, phenomenon labelled ‘pretension’. The best example is Parson Adams, who is depicted a pious, who always wore an obvious headgear. Moreover, Fielding ensures his comedy brought out their meaning and teaching, pointing virtue, hypocrisy, and realistic refinement. In this regard, his didacticism is left open, bringing a point home without being lame and boring.²⁰

In *Pamela*, Richardson uses an enthusiastically pious tone. For instance, it is set that while Pamela is immersed in her darkest moment, she clings firmly to her faith in higher power in trust that she will be safe. In the event when she contemplates suicide via drowning, Pamela confides in God seeking His protection from the clutches of Mr. B saying:

Tho’ I should have praised God for my Deliverance, had I been freed from my wicked Keepers, and my designing Master; yet I have more abundant Reason to praise God, that I have been delivering from a worse Enemy, myself! (p. 17)

Whereas God isn't answering her prayers regarding the punishment of her assailant, the expectations of Pamela are fulfilled when God saves her from committing suicide. In another excerpt towards the end when Pamela successfully barricades Mr. B, and life presents an excellent opportunity, she says:

All that I value myself upon is that God has raised me to a Condition to be useful in my Generation, to better Persons than myself; this is my Pride: And I hope this will be all my Pride. For what I was I of myself! – All the Good I can do, is but an inferior third-hand Good; for my dearest Master himself is but the Second-hand. God, the All-gracious, the All-good, the All-bountiful, the All-mighty, the All-merciful God, is the First: TO HIM, therefore, be all the Glory! (p. 2)

In consideration of emphasis laid in her conversation with God using capitalisation and explanation marks, Richardson displays the new world of Pamela as an enthusiastic fit, including that of the readers.

Forms of Writing

Different types of writing are congruent to the forms that authors use to outlay their text. A writer may use one or more forms of writing as a reflection of their voice, personality, or approach of reaching their audience. On the other hand, every text a writer pens down is intended for a specific purpose, leading to a definition of distinct forms of types of writing. In this analysis, Richardson uses a persuasive style where Pamela is writing letters to her parents to telling the reader (her parents) of the predicaments she is undergoing. Essentially, in line with the definitions of persuasive style, Richardson is presenting the opinions and biases of Pamela evidencing the justification of her position. In Joseph Andrews, Fielding uses a narrative form of writing, providing a narration of Joseph's life history, and that of his friend. Narratives are primarily employed in fictional writings, such as the presentation of Fielding. In this narrative, no justification was required, but the construction of the story in the communication of thought, setting, characters and themes.²¹

Conclusion

Based on the provided accounts of narratives, it is evident that there are some similarities as well as differences between the structures and techniques according to their purposes. While Richardson aims to convey his moral message and convince his readers about reality of the story, he structures the narrative via letters of a young lady to create a realistic impact that documentation can provide, Fielding opposes this version of narrative as he subverts and mocks it through ironies, allegories and digressions to deny this truth-claiming and subjective authorial

voice. When one examines the plot and synopsis of these two texts, it comes out clear that *Joseph Andrews* is in relation to *Pamela* and it can be seen as a response to it, therefore, there are similarities and differences between these two texts.²² Even though the narrative in *Joseph Andrews* illustrates the plot and synopsis of two different individuals; that is Andrews and Adams, *Pamela* only conveys story of Pamela through her voice. In the first narrative, Fielding employs different techniques, and that readers are told the story by an intrusive narrator who is ironic and domineering on the characters, on the other hand, Richardson lets Pamela tell her own story without intervention through documentation.

As discussed above, the narrative structure of *Pamela* is epistolary format that Richardson employs in the text as a self-reflexive method for Pamela to illustrate her own psychological status and urges readers to identify with her through private and intimate letters to support her stance. Through this technique Richardson succeeded to give a depth in his character via illustrating her psychological development throughout the book. In *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding structures an unconventional narrative to surpass traditional narrative patterns through his interventions, ridiculous characters, stories and irrelevant humorous anecdotes to subvert any restrictive genre or narrative style. Finally, it is fair to say that Fielding aims to urge the reader to ask questions and discover the text rather than identification via his narrative technique, on the other hand, Richardson intends to take the reader on his narrator's side to impose her own limited version of the reality.

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(Footnotes)

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