

**Paper: 02; Module No: 27: E Text**

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**(B) Description of Module:**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Description of Module</b>
<b>Subject Name:</b>	English
<b>Paper No &amp; Name:</b>	Paper 02: English Literature 1590-1798
<b>Module Id &amp; Name</b>	27; Samuel Richardson
<b>Pre-requisites:</b>	Basic knowledge of English language and literature
<b>Objectives:</b>	To provide a detailed information of 18 <sup>th</sup> century literature with a focus on Samuel Richardson
<b>Key Words:</b>	Samuel Richardson, 18 <sup>th</sup> Century, English Novel, Rise of Novel

## **About the Module:**

This module shall focus upon the life and works of Samuel Richardson, one of the most influential of the English novelists. In the process it shall also try to look at the major characteristics of the age that conditioned both the man and his works. Eighteenth century is one of the most important periods of English history which brought a paradigm shift into the entire intellectual landscape of the country. As a consequence the idea of literature underwent a radical change. Aptly called the 'Age of Prose and Reason', the literature of this age was characterized by the developments brought about the Enlightenment. A very new notion of realism which was the byproduct of the empirical school of philosophy led by John Locke, marked by a pronounced emphasis on human rationality and its ability to reproduce the external world as it was, colored the literary production of the world. As prose was believed to be the natural heir to reason novel became the most important genre of the time. It was a new form of writing and the module shall try to address the issues that provided a fertile ground for its growth. Samuel Richardson was a product of this milieu. To have started his writing career much later in his life he could only write three novels in his life time. But all the three novels- *Pamela*, *Clarissa* and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* are representative texts of the time which are discussed in details in the module. These texts are remarkable for the ways in which these uphold the dominant behavioral patterns of the time, at times critiquing the stereotypes that help consolidate these processes.

## **The Enlightenment and the Rise of the Novel:**

It is undeniable that the development of the novel was conditioned by the advent of the Enlightenment. The emergence of print culture, circulating libraries, along with new literacy, reading practices and rapid dissemination of a huge corpus of texts, provided the framework in which the novel was shaped. The rise of empiricism, along with the concept of the *tabula rasa*, actually provoked the interest in recording and analyzing experience, which in turn provoked an explosion of prose narratives; periodicals, autobiographies, biographies, rogue stories appeared, out of which, the novel gradually took its birth. Publishing became a profitable business thanks to the spread of literacy and reading became a popular form of entertainment among the wealthy middle class. The professional writers began to appear. They did not have rich patrons but earned their living by writing essays and books. Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne dominated the market. This new situation, together

with the creation of the circulating libraries which lent books in return of a small subscription fee, increased the numbers of readers.

### **The Middle-Class Origin of the Genre:**

The English novel was, to a great extent, the product of a new class consciousness that characterized the English society at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The rise of the English novel coincided with the emergence of the middle classes in England and worked in large measure towards a consolidation of the middle class values, ideals and sensibilities. In the middle of the eighteenth century the novel took the place of the theatre which was now losing its vigor and originality. Many, chiefly the middle classes, objected to going to the playhouses; they preferred to stay at home and read some story of personal adventure or descriptive society at large (234 Legouis). The theatre seemed to have exhausted its material. The novel with its greater spaciousness could lend itself to new developments, could cater to the new demands of patriarchal morality. The use of the rise and fall from one class to another, a recurrent motif in the novels of the time, as reflecting critical developments in character and fortune indicates the middle-class origin of the genre.

### **The Sources and Characteristics of the Novel:**

David Daiches identifies the literary sources of the novel in the Elizabethan prose tales, picaresque stories, the psychological portraits of the seventeenth century character-writers, the narrative style of Addison and Steele, and also in Defoe's journalistic and pseudo-autobiographical kinds of writing. Some of the seminal texts that have been influential in shaping the English novel are Sidney's *Arcadia*, Congreve's *Incognita*, Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (700-01). But what marked the departure of the eighteenth century novel from all its sources was the question of the treatment of truth. All the older texts allowed for a loose mingling of facts and fiction; credibility was not an indispensable criterion of narration. Now came books in which practically everything was drawn verbatim from current everyday reality. Replacing adventures to unknown and faraway places this new brand of novels focused upon the characters and their emotions within the boundaries of the world as we know it. The novels not only pretend to offer densely particular, virtually evidentiary accounts of the physical and mental circumstances that actuate their characters and motivate the causal sequences of their plots, but these novels also attempt to frame the subjectivity of their characters within editorial objectivity. In his seminal

study Ian Watt used the term “formal realism” as the defining characteristic of the early novel, based on:

the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details of which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms (32).

The whole development of the realist plot too borrowed the terminology of Enlightenment logic – “probability” and “possibility” are two terms that are used for example in *Tom Jones*. Fielding unequivocally declares, “Nor is possibility alone sufficient to justify us, we must likewise keep within the rules of probability” (43).

### **Samuel Richardson- Life and Works:**

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) is one of the pioneers of the English novel who set the major trends of writing novels in English with identifiable themes like “love followed by marriage, quarrelling and reconciliation, gain or loss of money or of social status” (Daiches 700). Richardson happened to be a printer who discovered his talent to be a novelist at the age of fifty-one while in the process of compiling a volume of letters meant to teach letter-writing to people not sufficiently educated. He was working on this collection in 1739, perhaps writing letter number 138 entitled, “A Father to a Daughter in Service, on hearing of her Master’s attempting her Virtue”-when it occurred to him that he might work up a complete novel out of a series of letters written by a virtuous servant girl to her parents in the intervals of dodging her master’s attempt at rape. He temporarily dropped this collection of letters and in two months produced *Pamela* (1740). But the novel owes its forms to the letters from which it was born; it is written in the epistolary form. It was with the idea of turning his readers and especially his female readers ‘from the pomp and parade of romance-writing’ that he wrote his first novel (235 Legouis). The publication of *Pamela* was a massive cultural event, inspiring praise and condemnation, imitations and parodies. Richardson’s first follow-up was a sequel, *Pamela in her Exalted Condition* (1741), which he designed primarily to override the unauthorized sequels afloat in the marketplace.

### ***Pamela*- Brief Overview: Issues of Virtue and Morality**

*Pamela* is a curious tale of class mobility that exploits a well-known folk theme of character- transformation. Most of the story is told by the heroine herself. On the death of Pamela's mistress, her son, Mr. B, begins a series of stratagems designed to end in Pamela's seduction. These failing, he abducts her and then uses an elaborate ruse that results in a threatened, if not attempted, rape. Pamela faints, and, when she recovers, Mr. B claims that he had not offered "the least Indecency"; he soon afterward offers marriage (Sale n.pag). Though *Pamela* was immensely popular, Richardson was criticized by those who thought his heroine a calculating social climber or his own moral vision dubious. Pamela is, ultimately, a fifteen-year-old servant who faces a dilemma because she wants to preserve her virtue without losing the man with whom she herself has fallen in love and whose family employs her. However there remains a question how far Pamela loves the man himself and how far is she attracted by his social status and affluent life-style.

Though there has been a feeble attempt on Richardson's part to give it an air of love, to suggest that Mr. B is struggling with having fallen in love with a servant, who, traditionally, would have been merely a target for seduction or sexual violence, it did little to stop the critics from questioning. In a clever twist, Mr. B is shown to be converted by her letters, which he has been intercepting and reading. But there can be no denying of the fact that the novel was implicated in Richardson's idea of class which claimed that success depended on individual effort rather than on family status. This gives an ironic ambivalence to the moral pattern of the novel. While on the one hand it challenged the hierarchical structuring of society on the basis of birth and lineage, something which the declining aristocracy tried to sustain, on the other it did not really care to judge the moral efficacy of the techniques adopted to achieve social and economic success to the point that it even advocated for a commodification of virtue in *Pamela*. But what makes the novel worthy of critical attention is the way it captures the grey areas of human nature, the complex negotiation between morality and psychological motivation.

After Mr. B's first attempt on her, Pamela very properly decides to go back to her parents but she keeps on finding excuse after excuse including finishing the waistcoat she was weaving for Mr. B to postpone her departure till Mr. B actually manages to get her trapped. And though she professes to prefer honest poverty to vicious luxury, she makes it quite clear in her letters home that she has become sort of used to a better kind of living than her parents can afford back home. She mentions all the fine clothes given by her late mistress

in her letters. The fact that she sets out to attract her master from the very beginning even before she or her creator is even aware of it, forms the cultural unconscious of the text. When Mr. B finally releases her she leaves with a reluctance that surprises herself, “I think I was loth to leave the house. Can you believe it?—...I wonder what ailed me” (125). The instantaneous popularity of *Pamela* led to a spurious continuation of her story; Richardson wrote a sequel, *Pamela in her Exalted Condition* (1742), a two-volume work that did little to enhance his reputation. The second part of the novel is a dull marriage manual showing the ideal couple in action, with a mild break in Mr. B’s extramarital affair with a widowed countess at a masked ball.

### ***Pamela*: Publication History and Formal Experimentation**

Richardson’s objects in writing *Pamela* were moral instruction and commercial success, perhaps in that order. Richardson felt that the best vehicle for a moral lesson was an exemplary character; he also felt that the most effective presentation of an exemplary character was a realistic presentation that evoked the reader’s sympathy and identification, as opposed to an ideal one that rendered the character as inhumanly perfect. For the project of rendering an exemplary character in a realistic manner, he reasoned that the novel was the most appropriate form, as it had ample scope in which to flesh out the psychological complexities and mix dominant virtues with smaller but significant flaws. *Pamela* achieved extraordinary popularity among three groups whose tastes do not often coincide: the public, the litterateurs, and the professional moralists. It went through five editions in its first year and inspired a market for *Pamela*-themed memorabilia, which took such forms as paintings, playing cards, and ladies’ fans. Pre-publication hype doubtless encouraged sales, as the novel’s backers secured and publicized endorsements by such major literary figures as Alexander Pope, and there is some indication that Richardson, with his many connections in the London literary world, may have incentivized some of this “buzz” under the table.

The novel had a legitimate claim to its wide audience, however: in addition to its moral utility, there was the aesthetic achievement of Richardson’s narrative method, quite avant-garde at the time. The epistolary form presented Pamela’s first-person jottings directly to the reader, dispensing with the imperious traditional narrator and allowing unmediated access to her personality and perceptions. The intimacy and realism of this method, which Richardson called “writing to the moment,” a technique similar to the one used in modern soap operas: each letter dealing with the present has got elements whose consequences will



happen in the next letter thus letting the reader wait, combined with the liveliness of Pamela's language and character, proved highly attractive (Yost).

### ***Pamela: Reception and Aftermath***

What makes the publication of *Pamela* such a phenomenon in English literary history is the controversy that greeted it and the legion of detractors and parodists it inspired. A Danish observer went so far as to say that England seemed divided into two different parties, Pamelists and Antipamelists. The Pamelists would look on this young Virgin as an Example for Ladies to follow; on the contrary, the Antipamelists discovered in it the behavior of a hypocritical, crafty Girl who understands the Art of bringing a Man to her Lure" (Yost n.pag). Some critics, then, accused *Pamela* of being less innocent than she puts on to be and of simulating sexual virtue in order to make herself more desirable, Joseph Fielding heading this group. Among the numerous imitations and parodies of *Pamela* that appeared was an anonymous spoof attributed to Fielding (but never claimed by him) – *Shamela*, published in 1741. In *Shamela*, the "heroine" boasts: "I thought once of making a little fortune by my [physical] Person. I now intend to make a great one by my Vartue" (n.pag). The following year, Fielding published *Joseph Andrews* (about Pamela's brother) in which he directed his considerable wit and learning against what he believed to be Pamela's shallow, sentimental morality – and against the general political and religious corruption of his day. And, as he later did in *Tom Jones*, Fielding used Joseph Andrews to set out his alternate view of what a novel should be. Fielding's savagely funny send-up was one of many parodies of Richardson's novel; Eliza Haywood's *Anti-Pamela* is another notable contribution; it burlesques not only the moral pretensions of Richardson's heroine but also her vulgar tongue and her penchants for recording voluminous detail and writing in real time. For instance, Shamela happens to have her pen by her and goes on scribbling during one of her Master's rape attempts.

### ***Clarissa: A Brief Overview - Issues of Family, Marriage and Loss of Agency***

The eight volumes of *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747-8) form Richardson's masterpiece. This is more of a tragedy, with a heroine of more culture and dignity than Pamela. Clarissa, the virtuous, beautiful younger daughter of the wealthy Harlowes, with a fortune of her own left by her grandfather (but which she finally surrenders to her father), is a victim of the tyrannies of her own family, the lust of the licentious Lovelace and finally the last days of the life of a

fallen woman. Clarissa's capacity of enduring suffering makes her almost a Christ-like figure in the text. The moral-psychological pattern of the novel is much more complex than that of *Pamela*. The struggle between individual morality and integrity and loyalty towards one's familial and parental obligations is the crux of Clarissa's development. Richardson explores the borderline area between how far children should obey their parents and how far parents should apply force on children in the name of family-honor and discipline. Richardson is also delving deep into the idea of marriage- whether it is to be treated merely as a social institution or as a source of individual fulfillment. The much anticipated marriage of Clarissa and Mr. Solmes causes the conflict between Clarissa and her family.

Everyone of the family insists on the match for personal, selfish reasons; Clarissa's brother who sees financial advantage in this; her sister Arabella who is jealously suspicious of Clarissa being in love with Lovelace whom she herself secretly loves; her gouty father for reinforcing his authority and maintaining family honor; her mother too weak to oppose others adds her own persuasions. In such a situation Clarissa finds her only way out in a reluctant clandestine affair with the lustful Lovelace not only to escape her imminent marriage with Solmes but also to save the family from Lovelace's bloody revenge who had a serious row with her brother. The picture of family pressure operating on Clarissa including locking her to her room is drawn with extraordinary vividness in the novel. Also occasional glimpses into the character of Lovelace give an added complexity to the text; especially when it is revealed that he is the mastermind behind all the family politics. He is driven on the one hand by love for Clarissa and on the other by vengeance towards the Harlowe family. While he conspires to ensure that Clarissa is forced into marriage by her family, at the same time he also presents himself as a source of refuge to her. Finally, when it looks as if she is to be physically compelled to marry Clarissa momentarily yields to Lovelace's offer of rescue, only to revoke her acceptance of his offer shortly afterward. But Lovelace refuses to take cognizance of her letter of revocation and awaits her at the garden gate with all necessary equipment of the escape. On her going out to inform that she cannot take advantage of his offer, he contrives a scene which enables him to whisk her off, and henceforth she is in Lovelace's power.

### ***Clarissa: Issues of Rape, Violation and Tragic Strength***

The second movement in the novel deals with the struggle between Clarissa and Lovelace. He contrives matters so that Clarissa is made more and more dependent on him. Eventually he brings her to an apparently respectable-looking lodging house in London which



is actually a brothel run by an old friend of his and is staffed by girls he has ruined. Richardson is at the height of his skills in capturing the movement of Clarissa from being impressed by Lovelace's apparent kindness to the stoic acceptance of the revelation of the harsh reality of his moral repugnance. The incident where he attempts her virtue by arranging a mock fire, bringing her out of her room in her nightdress to escape the supposed conflagration and she sees through his purpose and discovers the trick to successfully repulse him demands special attention. As a consequence Lovelace is repentant and offers her marriage which she proudly rejects. And this is where Clarissa stands apart from her predecessor Pamela who has readily consented to marry her seducer and in whose moral universe marriage exempts a man of all his prior wrong-doings and rewards a woman for all her sufferings and submissions. Clarissa escapes from Lovelace ignoring his frenzied appeals for forgiveness and marriage as atonement. Lovelace uses a variety of tricks to get her back and finally succeeds in maneuvering her back to the house of ill-fame where he with the help of the inmates drugs and then violates her. In the meanwhile her family and relatives consider her a fallen woman, a wicked runaway who has voluntarily chosen the wrong.

Richardson is here deliberating on the idea of respectability in the context of eighteenth century English society. Respectability is the outward and visible sign of prudence and earthly prosperity is the most obvious symptom of it but it has got nothing much to do with true virtue or goodness of heart. The third and the final movement of the novel deals with Clarissa's vindication and sanctification. Until her death she remains cut off from all of her family and friends. Finally when she dies it is no less than an example of *ars moriendi*, the high art of dying like a true Christian (Daiches, 706). She sells her clothes to buy herself a coffin, writes farewell letters, makes a will and dies. The will witnesses that Clarissa has forgiven everyone, who had committed her evil. She starts with a wish to be buried next to her grandfather. She forgets none of her relatives, and asks not to pursue Lovelace. After her death both her family and Lovelace are overcome by a deep sense of remorse realizing the true worth of Clarissa.

### **Clarissa: Issues of Chastity, Virginity and Purity of Heart**

Marriage, in the novel is that point of juncture that oscillates between reformation and violation in the entire discourse of character-transformation. Prior to her violation Clarissa had been prepared to think of marrying Lovelace for the purpose of reforming him; but that temptation is over once the rape has taken place. Henceforth her thoughts are committed to

her journey to the other world. The entire argument here is predicated upon a very narrow idea of chastity which is all about virginity and not about the purity of heart. Chastity is the most valuable of all the salable commodities of the marriage market. Richardson in this way anticipates the nineteenth century Victorian moralists. In continuation to this he also confuses guilt with misfortune. The innocent girl who has been wronged by fate is often held guilty by the society and there is nothing that can be done to change the situation.

David Daiches makes the point that Clarissa's inability to escape from the house where Lovelace has imprisoned her is a symbol of her inability to escape from this mundane world; the only refuge available to her now is her escape to the other world. At one point in an ambiguous note she says to Lovelace that she is going back to her father; what she actually means is the Universal Father and not her earthly father return to whom is no longer possible (708). In the meanwhile Clarissa continues with her correspondence to Anna Howe who is revealed to be a witty woman, whose greatest pleasure is teasing the worthy gentlemen whom her mother wants her to marry and whom she would eventually marry. Also Lovelace is shown to be keeping correspondence with his friend Bolford. In his letters he discusses all possible aspects of man-woman relationship; he congratulates himself on being a rake and introspects his rakishness with incredible self-consciousness.

### ***The History of Sir Charles Grandison: A Brief Overview - Issues of Moral Perfection and Religious Conversion***

*The History of Sir Charles Grandison* is the third and the final novel of Richardson, published in February 1753. It marked a major departure from two of his previous novels as he opted for a male protagonist for the first time in this novel. He tried to present his hero in the form of a true Christian gentleman, a man of principle respected by all. But the novel lacks in *Pamela's* vitality and freshness and also in *Clarissa's* tragic strength. Sir Charles Grandison is almost inhuman in his perfection; he has everything that one aspires for- good looks, wealth, prudence, great character. His scruples make him seem unnatural. According to Carol Flynn Sir Charles Grandison is a "man of feeling who truly cannot be said to feel"(47). Flynn claims that *Grandison* is filled with sexual passions that never come to light. Four ladies are engaged in rivalry for his attention and affection; he likes two of them almost equally and weighs the matter in the scale of duty to decide who should finally stay in his life. The first is the beautiful and virtuous Harriet Byron whom he first meets while rescuing her from being kidnapped by the villainous Pollexfen. After Pollexfen recovers from

the attack, he sets out to duel Grandison. However, Grandison refuses on the grounds that dueling is harmful to society.

After explaining why obedience to God and society are important, Grandison wins Pollexfen over and obtains his apology to Byron for his actions. She accepts his apology, and he follows with a proposal to marriage. She declines because she, as she admits, is in love with Grandison. But Grandison reveals to her his complicated entanglements in Italy where he got involved with the lovely Clementina but could not marry her for a difference in religion. The novel also intervenes into the contemporary religious debate of the efficacy of conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism and vice versa. Grandison, is unwilling to change his faith, and Clementina initially refuses to marry him over his religion. Grandison attempts to convince her to reconsider by claiming that "her faith would not be at risk"(Kinkead-Weekes 70). Although potentially controversial to the 18th century British public, Grandison and Clementina compromise by agreeing that their sons would be raised as Protestants and their daughters be raised as Catholics (Ibid 71-2), though the plan never materializes.

But nowhere is Grandison shown to be involved in a real emotional struggle or any kind of dilemma; unlike Pamela or Clarissa he is a flat character who does not really evolve over time in the novel. Despite some lively and witty passages in the novel like that of Lady G's accounts of her tiffs with her husband the novel fails to make an overall appeal. Another major loophole in the novel is the way it publicizes the emotional lives of its characters. While the epistolary format is meant to emphasize the need to keep the private from the public *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* is exceptional in which letters are extensively shown, copied and exchanged and everyone knows the 'truth' about everyone else. In Richardson's previous novels, the letters operated as a way to express internal feelings and describe the private lives of characters; however, the letters of *Grandison* serve a public function. The letters are not kept to individuals, but forwarded to others to inform a larger community of the novel's action. In return, letters share the recipients' responses to the events detailed within the letters. This sharing of personal feelings transforms the individual responders into a chorus that praises the actions of Grandison, Harriet, and Clementina. Furthermore, this chorus of characters emphasizes the importance of the written word over the merely subjective informal utterances, as it is said that "Love declared on paper means far more than love declared orally" (Flynn 258).

### ***The History of Sir Charles Grandison: Receptions and Responses***

The novel gave way to both favorable and not so favorable kinds of responses. While Sir Walter Scott openly despised the novel claiming that there is little in the plot to require attention or minute reading, a plot overburdened with long conversations on moral and religious topics, something which can be easily followed even after a short nap (xIv-vi), Jane Austen resorted to mild, affectionate mockery of the novel also adapting it to a dramatic lampoon later (Doody 200-24); she took inspiration in the fashioning of a heroine after Harriet Byron, one who is an expert in fainting, at times so frequently that she would hardly get a chance to recover from one fit to have fallen into another (Nokes, 109). It is possible that Richardson's work failed because the story deals with a "good man" instead of a "rake", which prompted Richardson's biographers Thomas Eaves and Ben Kimpel to claim, this "might account for the rather uneasy relationship between the story of the novel and the character of its hero, who is never credible in his double love – or in any love" (367).

### ***The History of Sir Charles Grandison and its Relation with Tom Jones***

Since the publication of *Pamela* Richardson had been subjected to a lot of hostile criticisms most of which were led by Fielding. By the time he wrote *Sir Charles Grandison* he decided to reply to Fielding. According to many *Sir Charles Grandison* was a response to Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, which parodied the morals presented in Richardson's previous novels. The character of Charles Grandison was designed to improve upon the moral faults found in the character Tom Jones who has a notorious reputation of being involved in sexual liaison with a number of women, some of them of a questionable character. In 1749, a friend asked Richardson "to give the world his idea of a good man and fine gentleman combined". Richardson hesitated to begin such a project, and he did not work on it until he was prompted the next year by Mrs. Donnelland and Miss Sutton, who were "both very intimate with one Clarissa Harlowe: and both extremely earnest with him to give them a *good man*" (Dobson 142). Near the end of 1751, Richardson sent a draft of the novel to Mrs. Donnelland, and the novel was being finalized in the middle of 1752 (Ibid 144). As with his previous novels, Richardson prefaced the novel by claiming to be merely the editor, saying, "How such remarkable collections of private letters fell into the editor's hand he hopes the reader will not think it very necessary to enquire" (Sabor 146).

However, Richardson did not keep his authorship secret and, on the prompting of his friends like Samuel Johnson, dropped this framing device from the second edition. In a "Concluding Note" to *Grandison*, Richardson writes: "It has been said, in behalf of many modern fictitious pieces, in which authors have given success (and *happiness*, as it is called)

to their heroes of vicious if not profligate characters, that they have exhibited Human Nature as it *is*. Its corruption may, indeed, be exhibited in the faulty character; but need pictures of this be held out in books? Is not vice crowned with success, triumphant, and rewarded, and perhaps set off with wit and spirit, a dangerous representation?" (Ibid 149). In particular, Richardson is referring to the novels of Fielding, his literary rival. This note was published with the final volume of *Grandison* in March 1754, a few months before Fielding left for Lisbon. Before Fielding died in Lisbon, he included a response to Richardson in his preface to *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (Ibid).

### **Richardson: A Master hand at the Psychological Exploration of Characters**

The epistolary mode that Richardson so effortlessly used in his novels offered him a scope of concealment that paved the way for a special kind of identification with his characters. But implementing this technique had its pitfalls too. There remains a fundamental breach between his plot execution and characterization. According to Levin, "...though Richardson shaped his plots and fitted his characters to a general design, his characterization is often an improvisation of qualities fitted to the fantasy of the moment and subsequently rationalized. This qualification means that the novels cannot be read as finished wholes. For example, it is not possible to state finally whether Mr. B has meant to harm Pamela or Lovelace dies repentant;"(25).

Richardson decides the ends towards which his novels must strive beforehand and then starts planning the entire plot of the novel. The things that he intends to uphold in his novels include the projection of specific human qualities and the defining of social relationships. There is a complex negotiation between the eighteenth century idea of Fate and individual human agency which adds different dimensions to the psychological exploration of Richardson's characters. The most telling example of this is how Clarissa accepts her tragedy not only as deserved but most importantly as destined despite Richardson's best efforts not to portray her sufferings as the punishment of her imprudent decisions (of leaving home and of not being able to judge Lovelace). Her pious comment in one of her last letters that roses do not grow without thorns is typical of the Puritan ideas of guilt and atonement. The issue is even more critical and complicated in the case of Pamela, the heroine who continually baffles the reader about her real character and contributes to the intense moral confusion of the novel with her strangely hypocritical comments. Again and again in many of her letters she admits to be driven by the predatory side of her character and acknowledges having character traits



as questionable as her master Mr. B's. Statements in which she says her happiness is a result of her well-calculated machinations or where she doubts the very reliability of human wisdom speak of her contradictory motivations. One of the ways to resolve the problem is to claim that Pamela's ambiguity stems from the fact that contemporary societal codes did not allow a woman to express her love for a man unless the man proposes her marriage. But then the question that still haunts is that how far Pamela was in love with the man and how far with his money and status.

While the culture Richardson belonged did not really distinguish between the two we as modern readers must pay attention to these nuances. It ultimately remains for us to decide whether the threat of rape that hangs in the air of the novel is the punishment of Pamela's objectionable behavior or is it the pain associated with the rejection of an ardent lover. The most remarkable aspect of Richardson's psychological realism is, as convincingly argued by Gerald Levin, that his heroines "suffer from an indefinite guilt that must be expiated; the motives of guilt are usually vague and tentative" (16). In *Sir Charles Grandison* Clementina suffers intensively after rejecting Grandison; she even has hallucinatory visions and death-wishes. Towards the end of the novel she concludes that this was God's justice for her pride and now she must submit to Him. While there is no such instance in the novel that suggests that Clementina rejects Grandison out of pride and the reason for her rejection is as simple as that of her Protestant belief, Richardson gives it a different dimension. His intention to portray her character as being strengthened by her sacrifice and suffering must bring in the idea of guilt to make it work. When the guilty suffers only then repentance makes sense. While it is possible to read this female suffering as drawing its source from the Christian narrative of Eve's Disobedience and arguing for the need of the male authority in society, Levin points out the disadvantage of this argument with the observation that the men of Richardson's novels suffer too.

Most notably Lovelace suffers; he is "haunted by fatality" (16) and Pollexfen, Harriet Byron's abductor echoes Lovelace in *Sir Charles Grandison*. Richardson grants these villains some amount of heroism in their death-beds by making them suffer from feelings of guilt and repentance. Levin has read this in the light of Freud's idea of 'moral masochism', a feeling that tempts one to sin and then subjects him to the reproaches of sadistic conscience or the chastisement of Fate or Destiny (18). But according to me what is latent in Richardson's novels is the association of guilt with human sexuality. Sexuality is seen as the most

dangerous force of temptation that makes man or woman deviate from the path of goodness. This is the anxiety which is particularly associated with rapes and seductions, references of which abound in all the novels of Richardson.

For Richardson the novelist, virtue and goodness reside in human heart only as potentials which do not work spontaneously. The natural evil must be experienced and then held in control in order for the good to bloom. His novels intentionally blur the boundaries between sadism and masochism. When Lovelace repents and Clarissa accuses her own imprudence the long-accepted binary gets problematized; or when the novels shifts its attention from the elaborate descriptions of Pamela's sufferings to the possibility of a long-contrived marriage the reader has to rethink the categories of the victim and the victimizer. Whether conscious or not but Richardson's treatment of ideas like sexuality, temptation, guilt, suffering and repentance gives his characters a rich psychological complexity and mark his novel quite ahead of its time which are otherwise easily termed as reactionary and hypocritical.

#### **Richardson-Fielding Literary Rivalry:**

Allen Michie has rightly pointed out, "More so than any other novelist Henry Fielding and Samuel Richardson are placed in a personal and literary rivalry which began in 1741 with the publication of *Shamela* and which shows few signs of abating even today" (13). According to Ian Watt, "The main reason for the vitality of the controversy is the exceptional range and variety of the issues-the opposition is not only between two kinds of novel, but between two kinds of physical and psychological constitution and between two social, moral and philosophical outlooks on life" (260). He continues to make the point that the Dr. Johnson's, the man who is considered one of the most authoritative voices of neo-classicism, strong but ambiguous support for Richardson played a significant role in the shaping of the debate. Johnson distinguished between the characters of Fielding and Richardson as that of between 'characters of manners' and 'characters of nature'. Of course he ranked 'characters of manners' much lower for they are to be understood by a more superficial observer while to fathom the 'characters of nature' one must dive deep into the recesses of human heart (261).

According to Ian Watt, there are considerably similar and identifiably close parallel scenes in between *Clarissa* and *Tom Jones*. For example both use scenes where the heroine is forced to receive the addresses of the hated suitors and both have sequences of father-daughter conflict on the issue of the selection of the suitor (262). But there is a fundamental difference in the

treatment of the same thing in the two novels. While Fielding's chief functional device is comedy Richardson is dependent upon what Watt has called 'formal realism'. As he explains, "Fielding does not attempt to do more than to make us understand the rational grounds on which Clarissa acts what she does-...whereas Richardson's epistolary technique, and the intimacy of Clarissa with Anna, encourages him to go far beyond this, and communicate a host of things which deepen and particularize our picture of Clarissa's total moral being" (267). The eighteenth century novelists in the process of their writing were participating in the Enlightenment construction of femininity.

Fielding and Richardson gave two models of femininity which often countered each other. Nina Priytua observes, "...Fielding deliberately emphasizes the full-breastedness of characters like Fanny in order to celebrate an ideal of female virtue that--unlike that of Richardson's *Pamela*--deliberately attempts to accommodate within itself the possibility of an active female sexual desire" (190). On the other hand Janet Todd points out that the rise of the cult of sensibility at the middle of the century was embodied in, "Richardson's eponymous heroines ... which redefined the feminine as characterized by intuitive sympathy susceptibility, emotionalism and passivity, chastity and suffering" (110). To put it in a nutshell, while Richardson's heroines suffered because of their failure to protect their bodies, the most valuable of the resources a woman could boast in the contemporary society, Fielding's heroines found a way to celebrate their bodies drawing a kind of subversive power from their sexualities. So the question of standardizing human behavior prevailed in the dominant consciousness throughout the century that distinguished 'good' and 'bad' women, 'strong' and 'weak' men according to parameters that were made to serve the dominant discourses of the time silencing any kind of deviance. And our novelists negotiated with the task in their own ways, sometimes endorsing and sometimes subverting the stereotypes.

### **Summary of the Module:**

In this module we have seen how a new structure of society was coming up at the time replacing the old value system. And the novels of the time best capture this transition. Relationships of class and gender hierarchy are interrogated in a new light in the novels of Richardson. The novels intervene in the contemporary debate over morality, problematizing the concept of virtue. At the same time these novels explore the complex relationship between money, marriage and social status. The novels also demand critical attention for bringing to light the issue of sexuality and its complex negotiation with the idea of chastity.

The module has also discussed in some details Richardson's much controversial relationship with one of his contemporary novelists Henry Fielding. Their very different ways of writing the novel and dealing with the problems of the time speak of the rich socio-political, cultural diversity of the age.

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