

SPACE, ENVIRONMENT, CHARACTERS IN S. RICHARDSON'S NOVEL "PAMELA"

Domestic spaces in Samuel Richardson's "Pamela" are central to the questions and solutions that they pose about master-servant relations, female virtue, male desire, and social hierarchy.

In this novel, the hallways, staircases, and doorways of Mr. B's Bedfordshire and Lincolnshire estates enable interactions between a servant girl and her wealthy master, and they structure the transformation of a seduction plot into a marriage plot.

In "Pamela" staircases, hallways, and closets, spaces that ideally promote household organization, actually enable events that scramble social hierarchy and household order. The design and function of these spaces enable the temporary reversal of social and moral roles: the master spies on the servant, the servant behaves as if a lady, aggressor and victim slide into performances of the roles of husband and wife. The scenes of temporary destabilization result in astonishing upward social mobility for the lady's maid and a subsequent re-ordering of the space of the household to reflect the servant's new position as mistress of the house.

By enabling the dramatic interaction of Pamela, hallways, staircases, and closets dramatize the conflicts between traditional conceptions of social order and new potential aspects of the relationship between masters and servants, including the possibility of mutual esteem and marriage.

Most critics have tended to treat space in "Pamela" as symbolic of Pamela's psychological state and the degree to which she demonstrates individual agency or its lack. The small, enclosed spaces in "Pamela", like closets, wardrobes, and bed chambers have been recognized repeatedly as important elements in Richardson's writing, and they are usually interpreted as representative of the heroine's body, mind, or status.

Gardens are sites of attempted seduction or illicit behavior, and they are also spaces of female sociability, spirituality, and meditation. In this novel, the garden clearly links Richardson's novelistic treatments of space in general to the authors of amatory fiction.