

To this reviewer, who has often attempted to teach *Pamela* to undergraduates, one of the most interesting essays in this collection is Florian Stuber's "Teaching *Pamela*." For five years Stuber has been teaching *Pamela* in an English composition course in a New York technical college whose students, primarily women with an average age of twenty, enter upon graduation the world of high-fashion business. The questions in Stuber's mind were would these young women find *Pamela* insupportably prolix; would they be offended by its prurience, hypocrisy, and vulgarity; how would they react to what Ian Watt called its mixture of sermon and striptease. The students kept a journal of their impressions as they read. Both Vols. I and II of the novel were read, which meant that the weekly reading and writing assignments were substantial. The comments made by these students not only surprised the instructor, but they also surprised and amused this reviewer. From those quoted by Stuber I select a few. "This book is such an up—I wish it were a movie!" "It's funny, but morals these days haven't changed all that much. A woman's value of herself gains respect from others. It still holds true today." The second letter in the novel, written by Pamela's parents, provoked hilarity. One student wrote: "The parents remind me of my own when it comes to their concern for her with males, so I am pretty much amused by them and their responses to Pamela. They're just plain ordinary folks who love their kid, so with that realization I can understand them." At the end of a dozen of Pamela's letters, reactions to the length of the novel were interesting. "So far, I'm really enjoying this book . . . I thought it would be a dud because most books assigned in English classes are duds." "I can't wait to sit down and read it." "It is almost as intimate as letters one hides in the dark recesses of a dresser or closet." That last reaction should have amused the instructor.

The intimacy and immediacy of the epistolary form led some students to address Pamela directly. "Pamela, you immature brat, get the hell out of that house or you are just asking for trouble." "When they talked by the pond, she should have suckered him into marrying her." And a male student wrote: "He tells her that he cares so much about her but just can't marry her because she is from a lower class. This is quite insulting. He wants it both ways . . . What a slob he is."

Some of the most moving passages in the students' journals were meditations on sex and maturity, revealing a profound identification with the heroine's experience. Frequently these personal comments were almost embarrassing to read. Pamela's trials with Mr. B. elicited some very personal reactions from students. "Pamela is someone I can relate to when I was about fourteen and having the big dirty seniors in high school take advantage of me . . . I feel if Pamela holds to her convictions she will be a much stronger, better person than myself." "Pamela is the character of innocence I have lost. I hope that Pamela can remain strong, and I wish for her to maintain the little girl that once survived in me."

These young readers did not find the "Virtue Rewarded" theme vulgar. Vol. II seemed to them even better than Vol. I. Some suspected a sham marriage, and wondered at the risks Pamela took in returning to Mr. B. "I have to agree with her on her uneasiness, but I would go back too. How can anyone keep from going to someone they love when

she hears he's sick and needs her?" The talk between Pamela and Mr. B. in bed together provoked sharp attacks on his male chauvinism, and arguments over how many of the rules concerning children's upbringing are valid today. The students' pleasure in reading Vol. II seemed to derive from the fact that it was about someone they had come to care for. For them, Vol. II proved that *Virtue is Rewarded*, and they definitely thought it should be.

The students also read *Shamela*, and did not like it. "The book *Shamela* was not in the least bit funny to me and I'm sorry I read it. The character Shamela is an insult to Pamela and I really felt bad about it. I saw Shamela as a contemporary street girl from Brooklyn." "*Shamela* I sold back to the bookstore, whereas *Pamela* I will keep."

Stuber's conclusion is that *Pamela* can still inspire young people. Wrote one student: "It may sound a bit strange, but as I read this book I began to draw lessons for my own life from it. I tried to follow Pamela's example of being forgiving and trying to find good in everyone, and let me tell you, it's not easy." "It has been able to reshape my character and my morals . . . I have never sent so much money to my parish!" Student reactions of this kind point to the fact that *Pamela* is indeed a current classic.

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