

“Pamela and Lolita”: ASECS Innovative Course Design

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Context

The course I've designed to teach in the Spring 2010 semester at Binghamton University, “Pamela and Lolita,” attempts to meet several curricular objectives in such a way that enables undergraduates to bring their interest in contemporary media studies to an eighteenth-century text that they assume existed in a time before blurbs, scandalous adaptations, and product tie-ins. This course hopes to be interdisciplinary, multigeneric, transnational, transhistorical while at the same time focusing intensely on a text from the eighteenth century. While the two literary characters I draw together share an equal portion of the course's title, emphasis throughout will be on using Nabokov's more recent text as a way of understanding the media explosion that attended the release of Richardson's *Pamela*. Past experiences teaching *Pamela* have impressed upon me the utility of approaching the text's innovative qualities through the framework provided by the eighteenth-century debates that it prompted. Even without the influence of, say, Fielding's *Shamela*, students often end up reproducing the so-called “anti-Pamela” stance in our discussions—not in an evaluative way, in most cases, but rather in a way that emphasizes Pamela's own rhetorical agency and power (often making use of Pamela's assessment of the Lucretia story and other texts) and leads to the identification of a potential “counter-seduction” latent in the narrative.

Over the past several years of teaching *Pamela*, I have each semester added more response texts that take Richardson's first novel of seduction as their focus or inspiration. But in this context, the course can be accused of something of which students claim Richardson himself is guilty—offering too much of Pamela. Fatigue sets in. A revision of *Pamela* that elicited sobs, laughter, or gasps from eighteenth-century audiences now has its peculiarity washed away by tears of boredom with the hopelessly “old fashioned” heroine. My response in “Pamela and Lolita” is to

emphasize the currency of Pamela's issues by pairing her with *Lolita*, with whom she shares more than her age. More than elaborating what the texts themselves have in common (which is considerable), I am concerned with letting the relevant issues of genre, publishing, and media govern our investigation. We interpret Richardson by examining creative re-interpretations of *Pamela*, then undertake this same project with *Lolita*. Because of Richardson's almost anatomical definition of his core concept of "virtue," the overwhelming focus of these classes, like that of the majority of eighteenth-century responses to *Pamela*, recurs upon issues of gender and sexuality. My pairing of *Pamela* with Nabokov's *Lolita* constitutes my attempt to delve deeper into these issues while at the same time examining the ways these two texts—and their at least superficially similar heroines—have generated what I call a "multi-media spectacle."

Aims of the Course

The course breaks down into five units (see syllabus below). Before comparing the texts to their responses, each of our main texts first are read independently. However, so as to demonstrate the extent to which these vastly influential works were already part of a preexisting discourse network, I designed the first units on each main text to treat the novels along with what I call their "ur-text": In the case of *Pamela*, I use Richardson's way of addressing the issues that Pamela faces in his letter writing primer (this ur-Pamela actually listens to the advice of her father to depart from a house in which the master makes an attempt on her virtue and the problem is resolved in a mere two pages); in the case of *Lolita*, I use passages from *The Enchanter* and Michael Maar's recent book on Nabokov's influences, *The Two Lolitas*.

The class primarily hopes to address issues of gender and sexuality in relation to media and mediation, but within this framework several other related topics can be introduced: book history and marketing, authorial attempts to regain control of wayward characters, literary seduction and counter-seduction, the intersection between literature and the law, "obscenity" and the demands of narrative interest, cross-cultural importation of texts and ideas, the study of visual art, images and iconoclasm, interpretation and self-fashioning, the relation between pop-culture and literature, and even film study.

I hope also in this course to introduce students to an advanced kind of academic study, and particularly of the sub-discipline of eighteenth-century literary study. This course, being of the most advanced level available to undergraduates, allows me to explore with my students several trends in recent scholarship of the eighteenth-century. The choice of material allows me, for example, to incorporate the analysis of the personhood of literary characters and "character migration," as found in the work of Deirdre Shauna Lynch and David Brewer, as well as, in a later field, of Alex Wolloch.

Assignments

Being an upper-level undergraduate course, “Pamela and Lolita” asks students to aim their efforts at proposing, drafting and revising a research paper of 10–15 pages, one that offers a point of comparison between these two key texts in relation to a larger issue. Along the way, students will deliver a multimedia Powerpoint presentation to the class on a topic relating to the material (they may choose to focus this presentation on a film adaptation of *Lolita*, say, or the use of the term “Lolita” in the world of fashion or pop culture, or the court case surrounding *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, or an adaptation of *Pamela* we did not study). Because *Pamela* is the predominant focus of the course, students will write shorter essays on *Pamela* in isolation (5 pages) and an adaptation of *Pamela* (also 5 pages) before embarking on a lengthy research essay on an issue central to both *Pamela* and *Lolita*.

Research Component

In order to further assess Richardson’s attempts to control interpretation, we do some archival work by examining Binghamton University’s 1754 edition of his *Collection of the moral and instructive sentiments, maxims, cautions, and reflexions : contained in the histories of Pamela, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison* (Bartle Library, Special Collections Stacks PR3664 .H5). Attention to the material dimensions of books—their bindings, their *mise-en-page*, and their paratexts—will be extended also to an awareness of how the textbooks we use in class market and present the material we study (a presentation topic on this material could be an investigation into book covers of *Lolita*, possibly in comparison with those of *Fanny Hill*, which is referenced in *Lolita* and also released from the Olympia Press at roughly the same time). This will be a formal introduction to eighteenth-century book publishing—as much as can be covered in one class period—but also to more advanced methods of library research.

This course attempts to make practical, self-conscious use of new media as well as examine such media’s effects on our primary works. Much of the research for the presentations and ensuing final projects will be conducted online while attending to the ways that the Internet, as a relatively new medium, mediates, disseminates, controls and distorts these texts. My students, who are increasingly inclined to form their first impressions of a book by using the Internet even before holding the book in their hands, will undertake an investigation into the way Internet search engines generate context for and characterization of our core texts and debates. We will use different methods of searching (inflecting each title with keywords such as “legal,” “sexuality,” “age,” “image,” “art,” “culture”) to produce information “cloud” diagrams that help us take one view, of many, of how the texts are shaped by, and in some cases shape, different discourses, texts and media events (*viz.*, the 1992 “Long-Island Lolita” story of Amy Fisher and Joey Buttufo that increased sales of Nabokov’s novel). Students not only undertake searches to discover how the texts are currently marketed (on Amazon.com and publisher’s websites) and how our characters are depicted within various sectors of the Web. Also, by following hypertext threads away from and back toward the texts, students will see how our

primary works do not (as they never did) exist in isolation from their contexts. One student who researched into the topic of the publication of *Fanny Hill* in a past course was astounded to find over 80 different editions worldwide.

Syllabus

M | W | F
SPRING 2010

PROF. NICHOLAS D. NACE
E-MAIL: nmace@binghamton.edu
OFFICE HRS: M W 2-3:30pm & by appt
LNG 38

ENGLISH 430Y

P A M E L A & L O L I T A

This course examines the point of contact between the authorial production of two separate literary works—*Pamela* (1740) and *Lolita* (1955)—and the processes of commodification, marketing, and consumption that move those works throughout their given culture. We will begin with, and focus mostly on, the publication of *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, a novel released anonymously but soon widely known to have been written by its printer, Samuel Richardson. For both stylistic and historical reasons that we will investigate in this class, *Pamela* became a bestseller and an instant international sensation, constituting one of the earliest examples by which print culture and rampant consumerism would conspire to create what we might call a “multi-media circus.” *Pamela* and its virtue-obsessed teenage heroine were both attacked and praised by reviewers, openly “censured” and loftily “versified” in creative literary responses, as well as revised, translated, imitated, pirated, painted, and parodied throughout Europe. Richardson himself, having achieved fame precisely when his novel and its title character became uncontrollable forces in popular culture, attempted to re-assert his authority by issuing his own sequel. But *Pamela* was already an industry unto itself, with its own fame being co-opted for diverse purposes and audiences. As she stepped from the pages of Richardson’s novel into the world, Pamela could be found elevated into “high life” (becoming the subject of operas and pleasure-garden oil paintings) as well as abducted into the lower stratum (appearing in tawdry wax sculptures and cheap broadsides). Even where Pamela did not herself go, her belongings—or some just like them, featuring her image—circulated in the form of Pamela-brand merchandise, souvenirs, and product tie-ins (such as painted fans, playing cards, and enameled snuffboxes). As a way of addressing the larger issues raised in and by the *Pamela* craze, we will contemplate the more recent case of literary sensation and sensationalism surrounding Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*. The release of *Lolita* into the public involved a strikingly similar kind of multi-media explosion. The very name “Lolita” continues to echo so forcefully in our own time that it has served to characterize real-life scandals that hinge on a certain kind of winking adolescent female sexuality. The pairing of *Pamela* and *Lolita* and their “tween” heroines will allow us to focus on the tendency of a certain kind of character to come unmoored from her source text and to reappear, often in unrecognizable forms, in a variety of new media.

TEXTS

ALBEE, EDWARD. *Edward Albee's Lolita* (Dramatist's Play Service, Inc.) ISBN: 0822206838

JOHN CLELAND, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, ed. Peter Sabor (Oxford) ISBN:
0199540233

RICHARD CORLISS, *Lolita* (BFI Film Classics) ISBN: 0851703682

HENRY FIELDING, *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford) ISBN:
0199536988

ELIZA HAYWOOD AND HENRY FIELDING, *Anti-Pamela and Shamela*, ed. Catherine Ingrassia
(Broadview) ISBN: 155111383X

MICHAEL MAAR, *The Two Lolitas* (Verso) ISBN: 1844670384

VLADAMIR NABOKOV, *Lolita* (Vintage) ISBN: 0679723161

AZAR NAFISI, *Reading Lolita in Tebran: A Memoir in Books* (Random House) ISBN:
0812979303

SAMUEL RICHARDSON, *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded*, ed. Thomas Keymer and Alice
Wakely (Oxford) ISBN: 019953649X

GRAHAM VICKERS, *Chasing Lolita: How Popular Culture Corrupted Nabokov's Little Girl All
Over Again* (Chicago Review Press) ISBN: 1556526822

CALENDAR OF READINGS

January

26 INTRODUCTION, "Sauceboxes" and "Nymphettes": A Comparison

I. Ur-Pamela and Pamela

28 MARGARET ANNE DOODY, "Samuel Richardson: Fiction and Knowledge" (e-text)

30 JOCELYN HARRIS, "Pamela" (e-text)

February

- 2 SAMUEL RICHARDSON, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*; extracts from *Familiar Letters on Important Occasions*, “A Father to a Daughter in Service, on hearing of her Master’s attempting her Virtue” and “The Daughter’s Answer”
- 4 RICHARDSON, *Pamela*; PETER SABOR, “What Did Pamela Look Like?” (e-text)
- 6 RICHARDSON, *Pamela*; JOSEPH HIGHMORE, “Mr. B finds Pamela Writing” (Oil painting)
- 9 RICHARDSON, *Pamela*; HIGHMORE, “Pamela in the Bedroom with Mrs. Jewkes and Mr. B” (Oil painting)
- 11 RICHARDSON, *Pamela*; OVID, selection from *Fasti* on Lucretia’s Suicide; LIVY, from *Ab Urbe Condita*, also on Lucretia
- 13 RICHARDSON, *Pamela*; HIGHMORE, “Pamela is Married” (Oil painting)

II. “Her Pulse fluttering under my Finger, like a dying Bird” Pamela after *Pamela*

- 16 RICHARDSON, extracts from *Pamela II*
- 18 RICHARD GOODING, “*Pamela, Shamela*, and the Politics of the *Pamela Vogue*”; SABOR AND KEYMER, “Literary Property and the trade in continuation” (e-texts)
- 20 JOHN A. DUSSINGER, “What Pamela Knew: An Interpretation”; JENNIE BATCHELOR, “Reinstating the ‘Pamela Vogue’”; JAMES GRANTHAM TURNER, “Novel Panic: Picture and Performance in the Reception of Richardson’s *Pamela*” (e-texts)
- 23 ELIZA HAYWOOD, *Anti-Pamela; or, Feign’d Innocence Detected*
- 25 HAYWOOD, *Anti-Pamela* (cont’d); HENRY FIELDING, *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*
- 27 FIELDING, *Shamela* (cont’d); TERRY CASTLE, “P/B: Pamela as Sexual Fiction” (e-text)

March

- 2* FIELDING, *The History and Adventures of Joseph Andrews*; **PAMELA ESSAY DUE**
- 4 FIELDING, *Joseph Andrews* (cont’d)

- 6 FIELDING, *Joseph Andrews* (cont'd)
- 9 FIELDING, *Joseph Andrews* (cont'd)
- 11 FIELDING, *Joseph Andrews* (cont'd); “*Pamela II: ‘Written in the Manner of Cervantes’*” (e-text)
- 13 ANON., “Advice to Booksellers (after reading *Pamela*)” (1741); Poems from the *London Magazine*; JOSIAH RELPH, “Wrote after Reading *Pamela*” (1747); BELINDA, “To the Author of *Pamela*” (1745); GEORGE BENNET, extract from *Pamela Versified* (1741); ANON., “*Pamela the Second*” (1742); J— W—, “*Pamela: or, The Fair Impostor*”
- 16 :::::::::: NO CLASS :::::::::: SPRING BREAK ::::::::::
- 18 :::::::::: NO CLASS :::::::::: SPRING BREAK ::::::::::
- 20 :::::::::: NO CLASS :::::::::: SPRING BREAK ::::::::::

III. Character and Control

- 23 JOHN CLELAND, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*
- 25 JOHN CLELAND, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*; Supreme Court Case: “A Book Called “John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*” vs. The Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 27 LIBRARY RESEARCH We will meet in Bartle Library to examine and discuss Richardson’s *Collection of the moral and instructive sentiments, maxims, cautions, and reflexions : contained in the histories of Pamela, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison* (Bartle Library, Special Collections Stacks PR3664 .H5)
- 30 DAVID A. BREWER, “Lewd Engraftments and the Richardsonian Coterie Public”; ALEX WOLOCH, “Character-Space: Between Person and Form”; DEIDRE SHAUNA LYNCH, “Fleshing Out Characters” (e-texts)

IV. Ur-Lolita and Lolita

April

- 1 VLADIMIR NABOKOV, *Lolita*
- 3 VLADIMIR NABOKOV, *Lolita*
- 6 VLADIMIR NABOKOV, *Lolita*

- 8 VLADIMIR NABOKOV, *Lolita*; extracts from *The Enchanter*
- 10 MICHAEL MAAR, *The Two Lolitas*
- 13 MICHAEL MAAR, *The Two Lolitas*

V. *Lolita*, Media and The Media

- 15 JAY DAVID BOLTER AND RICHARD GRUSIN, “The Double Logic of Remediation,” “Immediacy, Hypermediacy, and Remediation,” “Networks of Remediation” from *Remediation: Understanding New Media*
- 17* STANLEY KUBRICK, *Lolita* (1962); **CAPSTONE ESSAY PROPOSAL**
- 20 STANLEY KUBRICK, *Lolita* (1962)
- 22 RICHARD CORLISS, *Lolita*
- 24 LELAND DE LA DURANTAYE, “Humbert’s Green Lane”; ALFRED APPEL, “The Road to ‘Lolita,’ or the Americanization of an Émigré”
- 27 RICHARD H. BULLOCK, “Humbert the Character, Humbert the Writer: Artifice, Reality, and Art in *Lolita*”
- 29 DANA BRAND, “The Interaction of Aestheticism and American Consumer Culture in Nabokov’s *Lolita*”; CAROL IANNONE, “From ‘Lolita’ to ‘Piss Christ’”

May

- 1 GRAHAM VICKERS, *Chasing Lolita*
- 4 GRAHAM VICKERS, *Chasing Lolita*; extract from RICHARD K. SHERWIN, *When Law Goes Pop* on the “Long Island Lolita” case
- 6 AZAR NAFISI, extracts from *Reading Lolita in Tebran*
- 8 SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR, extracts from *Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita syndrome* (1959); LINDA S. KAUFFMANN, “Framing Lolita: Is There a Woman in the Text?” in *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction*;
- 11 ELLEN PIFER, “Nabokov’s Novel Offspring: Lolita and her Kin” in *Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita: A Casebook*; RICHARD RORTY, “The Barber of Kasbeam: Nabokov on Cruelty” in *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*

POTENTIAL RESEARCH TOPICS

FILMS

Lolita (1997 film)
Lolida 2000 (1996)
Casualties of Love: The Long Island Lolita Story (feat. Alyssa Milano, 1993)
Fanny Hill (Russ Meyer, 1964)
Fanny Hill (BBC 2007)

LOLITA'S PRE-HISTORY

Nabokov, *Волиебник* (*The Enchanter*, trans. Dmitri Nabokov [1985])
Lolita and Edgar Allen Poe
Lolita and Balthasar Kłossowski de Rola (Balthus)

SOCIOLOGY/PSYCHOLOGY

M. Gigi Durham, *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It* (2008)
Marianne Sinclair, *Hollywood Lolita: The Nymphet Syndrome in the Movies* (1996)

ADAPTATIONS & CONTINUATIONS

Upton Sinclair, *Another Pamela Or Virtue Still Rewarded* (1950)
Anon., *The Son of Fanny Hill* (1970)
Pia Perra, *Lo's Diary* (2001)
Erica Jong, *Fanny: Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones* (1980)
Kim Morrissey, *Poems for Men who Dream of Lolita* (1992)
Bill James, *Lolita Man* (Harpur & Iles Mysteries, 1998)
Edward Albee, *Lolita: A Play* (1984)
Emily Prager, *Roger Fishbite: A Novel* (1999)
Graham Ovenden, *Aspects of Lolita* (1976)

MARKETING

The Olympia Press (publisher of *Lolita* and an edition of *Fanny Hill*)
Lolita Book Covers
Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure Marketing (editions, book covers, promotions)

GENERAL

ロリータ・ファッション (Japanese Lolita Fashion and/or "LoliCon")
Lolitas on the Web
"Mistress Hill" in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*
Doppelgänger (psychoanalytic concept)