
Sentimental Properties: Pamela and Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure

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SENTIMENTAL PROPERTIES: *PAMELA AND MEMOIRS OF A WOMAN OF PLEASURE*

BY ANN LOUISE KIBBIE

A Maid is like the golden Oar,
Which hath Guineas intrinsical in't
Whose Worth is never known, before
It is try'd and imprest in the Mint.
A Wife's like a Guinea in Gold,
Stamp'd with the Name of her Spouse;
Now here, now there; is bought or is sold;
And is current in every House.

John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*

At the beginning of *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* the heroine Fanny Hill recounts the inspiring reports she has heard of "how several maids out of the country had made themselves and all their kin forever, that by preserving their VIRTUE, some had taken so with their masters that they had married them, and kept them coaches, and lived vastly grand."¹ The Fieldingesque "low," comic spelling of virtue and the simplistic version of the *Pamela* plot may lead the reader to expect that Cleland is planning a pornographic satire of Richardson's novel. This expectation turns out to be a false one, however, as the actual plots of *Pamela* and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* resemble each other only in the most telegraphic summary: small-town girl makes good. In order to understand the relation between *Pamela* and *Memoirs*, we must look beyond the isolated and inconclusive similarities in plot between the two novels, to the larger issues raised by the relationship in each between female character and competing forms of property. Both *Pamela* and *Memoirs* are concerned with the tension between two ideas of female character, represented by two versions of property: a narrative of currency, in which personality is constructed on the protean model of money and plot follows the pattern of serial exchanges in the world of the marketplace; and a sentimental narrative, in which character is ideally fixed and constant—virtuous—and is sustained by the model of real property or estate.² In the literature of the eighteenth century, the conflict between a current and a fixed self is the central drama of the female character, as her

own status as alienable property compromises or makes vulnerable the constant, abstract virtue that she is supposed, ideally, to represent. Profoundly and essentially implicated in exchange, the female character provides a focal point for anxieties about the alienability of the self, while in the constancy and virtue that she is supposed to embody she can also exemplify the value of the ideally inalienable properties of personality. While Richardson does not so much resolve this tension between the mercenary and the sentimental as elide it through the matrimonial ending of *Pamela* and the dissolution of the heroine's character such an ending effects, Cleland collapses the distinctions between these modes, enlisting the sentimental in the service of his narrative of currency.

In *Pamela*, Richardson presents the estate as proof of the heroine's character, the property that confirms her notion of selfhood and also serves as a material representation of her inner worth. However, while the self-possession that Pamela insists upon in her trials (her claims to the proprietorship of her own person) provides her character with its interest and the novel with its drama, such self-possession would be finally incompatible with the notion of female character expressed in the very marriage that enacts her reward. Pamela's character, therefore, must be revised in the ending of her story; and this revision, which effects the end of Pamela's character, is the project of the considerable narrative that follows her wedding to B. In this way, what happens after the wedding is not so much a *continuation* of the plot as an *undoing* of it. The accession to estate effects the transformation of Pamela herself into B.'s property, a transformation that his assaults on her person could not accomplish.

Pamela uses the word "virtue" to sum up her belief in the inviolable property she owns in herself, her personal integrity. Virtue, in this sense, is that inalienable and incorruptible property in the self that would make everyone, in some essential way, equal. "My virtue is as dear to me, as if I was of the highest quality," asserts the servant girl, and Pamela's insistence upon the worth of this property of virtue *in* and *to* herself finally succeeds in undermining B's aristocratic notions of value.³ Yet while the articulation of virtue as a property of the self asserts an equality of persons that would render other kinds of property irrelevant, it also makes both Pamela and her author vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy and crass materialism, as the language of the marketplace and the narrative of currency encroach on the virtuous narrative—an encroachment sig-

naled by the very word “dear” in the passage above. In *Pamela* the abstract, private property of personality, the integrity of the self that Richardson sums up in the word “virtue,” comes to seem too closely associated with the specific physical property of maidenhead.

The possibility that Pamela’s narrative may turn into a narrative of currency is evident from the outset of the novel, which begins with a letter and four golden guineas. The letter is from Pamela to her parents, describing the death of her mistress, and the guineas (themselves “wrapt close in paper, that they mayn’t chink,” and sealed [4]) are a gift to Pamela from her new master. Pamela’s parents grant narrative priority to this gift, not to Pamela’s account of it. Reading the coins as a kind of footnote in which the true meaning of the letter is revealed, the Andrewses immediately envision Pamela’s seduction by money: “I hope the good ’squire has no design,” her father frets in his return letter, “but,” he adds portentously, “when he has given you so much money . . .” (6). In the Andrewses’ view, the coins speak for themselves, telling a story that runs counter to Pamela’s naive description of her master’s disinterested generosity: money sets in motion a story of desire and exchange. “We *fear*,” Mr. Andrews goes on to warn his daughter, “you should be *too* grateful,— and reward him with that jewel, your virtue, which no riches, no favour, nor any thing in this life, can make up to you” (6). As a euphemism for Pamela’s maidenhead, the image of the jewel allows Pamela’s parents not only to avoid naming the thing itself but, at the same time, to make it *more* material. This materiality suggests the reification involved in the Andrewses’ idea of virtue.

While the language of property provides the abstract qualities of personality with an expression of value, it also seems to undermine the ideally unmarketable nature of this value by placing it in the context of the world of exchange. Once Pamela’s virtue has been described as a jewel it is, necessarily, commodified, and this is where Richardson’s heroine is haunted by an analogy between the woman and the tradesman. The coins that circulate with Pamela’s first letter summon up the very narrative of exchange against which Richardson’s novel militates, evoking an alternative story for its heroine that threatens to subvert Richardson’s narrative of virtue.

To escape this currency model for the female character, Richardson turns to the property of the estate. An alternative to currency, the estate offers a model for a self whose value consists in its con-

stancy or fixedness, its invulnerability to the vicissitudes of the market, its freedom from avarice. In its own ideal imperviousness to the market, real property represents and sustains the inalienable properties of personality: the rights each person has to liberty and to the proprietorship of his or her own person. Its freedom from the market and, hence, from the appetite of exchange (whose synonyms are avarice and desire); its hereditary nature, which would grant it and, by extension, those attached to it, a kind of constancy in time; and its claims to a privileged relation to the "real," as opposed to money's problematic association with the fictional or imaginary: all of these qualities link the physical property of the landed estate to qualities associated with the personal or moral property of virtue—moral autonomy, constancy, and an absolute standard of value. Along with the ideal of virtue that the landed estate offers comes the tragic sense that this ideal has already been corrupted, is hopelessly lost. The ideal of the estate is always informed by a certain amount of nostalgia, the longing for a world before the fall, and the stories of the transformation of the corrupt estate into the virtuous one are romances of a return to Eden.

The struggles between Mr. B. and Pamela that form the dramatic and didactic focus of Richardson's novel center on the corruption and redemption of the estate. The estate may offer an end to the narrative of currency that threatens Pamela, but first this estate itself must be transformed. "We would have you flee this evil great house and man" (20), the Andrewses advise their daughter when Mr. B.'s intentions become clear to them. The construction of this warning is worth noting. In it, the house itself is not only animated by the word "evil," but seems to take priority over B. himself as a threat to Pamela. The "evil great house" stands as a physical representation of all the danger that B.'s abstract "estate," his power and wealth, holds for Pamela. This symbol of the evil estate becomes even more explicit when Pamela is kidnapped and held a prisoner in B.'s Lincolnshire house. She describes her first impressions of the Lincolnshire estate thus: "About eight at night, we entered the court-yard of this handsome, large, old, and lonely mansion, that looks made for solitude and mischief, as I thought, by its appearance, with all its brown nodding horrors of lofty elms and pines about it" (109). This passage is unlike any other in *Pamela*. Although its heroine's eye for detail is evident throughout her narrative, nowhere else does she exercise her descriptive powers on such a grand, pictorial scale. What is most striking about Pamela's

reaction to the sight of the Lincolnshire estate is its highly aesthetic quality. The solitude of the scene, the obscure and forbidding landscape: Pamela's personal response is suddenly and uniquely mediated by the literary conventions of the sublime.

Why should this particular moment summon up such energies? For an explanation of Pamela's response we must turn to the struggle between the current and fixed self that I have referred to as the central drama of the female character. Pamela looks at the estate, and the loss of self represented in the sublimity of the moment is, in its way, a more highly aestheticized version of the fainting fits to which she is subject during B.'s assaults on her person. An essential point in this passage, however, is B.'s absence from the scene. The confrontation is between Pamela and the estate itself, between her own alternative properties of selfhood. While Pamela will infuse the estate with her virtue, this redemption of the corrupt estate will allow her reinscription as, or absorption into, the fixed property that is both her validation and a kind of death.

Captive at B.'s Lincolnshire estate and kept under close watch, Pamela taunts her guard Mrs. Jewkes for her constant surveillance: "Are you afraid I should confederate to commit a robbery upon my master?" When Mrs. Jewkes responds that "to rob him of yourself, would be the worst that could happen to him, in his opinion," Pamela returns grandly, "And pray, how came I to be his property? What right has he in me, but such as a thief may plead to stolen goods?" (129). According to the precepts of those around her, however, Pamela's legal argument here is flawed. If she insists upon viewing herself as stolen property, who can she point to as her rightful owner? Pamela bases her argument upon a self-possession Mr. B. and his confederates do not recognize. Referring to B.'s abduction and confinement of Pamela, Sir Simon jocularly sums up the aristocratic attitude toward the claim that Pamela makes to her own person: "Why, what is all this . . . but that our neighbour has a mind to his mother's waiting-maid! And if he takes care she wants for nothing, I don't see any great injury will be done her. He hurts no *family* by this" (138). For B., and for his peers, Pamela does not count as her own proprietor, and Sir Simon's reference to "family" points up one of the central conflicts in the novel: the conflict between the individual and the family that Pamela will come to symbolize for B. His desire for her will require that he revise aristocratic notions of family along with aristocratic notions of honor. While Sir Simon's remarks and the attitudes they convey about

aristocratic privilege are clearly meant to be morally repugnant, the beliefs Richardson exposes as callous and immoral when they assert the power of one class over another—as B.’s property, Pamela does not own herself—are recuperated later in the novel when they are presented as the prerogatives of matrimony. His engagement to Pamela settled, B. has recourse to the same metaphor of robbery used by Mrs. Jewkes. Reproaching Reverend Williams for an “attempt to secure to yourself a prize you would have robbed me of, and that from my own house” (297), B.’s articulation of Pamela as his property goes unchallenged, either by Williams or by the recorder of this scene, Pamela herself.

In the revision of their relationship and of their characters that takes place after their marriage, B. becomes not only Pamela’s lawful owner, but her creator as well: “It will be a pleasure to me,” she tells him, “to shew every one, that, with respect to my happiness in this life, I am entirely the work of your bounty; and to let the world see from what a lowly original you have raised me” (286). The tone of this declaration is a far cry from Pamela’s earlier assertions of her own intrinsic value and of her rights to herself. In the transformation of Pamela’s character by marriage, the heroic rhetoric of personal freedom, with which Pamela has resisted becoming another’s property and asserted her right to self-possession, must be replaced by a new rhetoric of subjection. Matrimony resolves the threat of feminine self-possession, Pamela’s insistence in the face of B.’s authority that her rights in herself are inalienable. What has been repeatedly referred to as B.’s “wicked will” has been reformulated by marriage. “I should be unworthy,” Pamela tells her new husband, “if I could not say, that I *can* have no will but yours” (286). Later she strips this statement of its conditional nature: “I have no will but yours,” she declares simply (291). By the end of her narrative, Pamela’s will has been both rewarded and dissolved.

The revision of the heroine’s character that takes place within *Pamela* opens Richardson’s novel up to revisions from without: the cynical or satiric versions of *Pamela* that charge both its heroine and its creator with hypocrisy and vulgar materialism. The most incisive critic of this confusion of properties in *Pamela* is Richardson’s contemporary, Henry Fielding. “I once thought of making a little fortune by my person, I now intend to make a great one by my virtue,” says Fielding’s comically mercenary Shamela, and this calculating servant girl who uses her spurious “virtue” to trap her credulous master into matrimony has dogged Pamela Andrews ever since.⁴

Fielding's parodic exposé of *Pamela* presents the heroine as a canny bargainer, her pretense of chastity only a shrewd manipulation of supply and demand. This parody retains its force by making explicit the troubling tension in the novel between Pamela's belief in her own inviolable inner self, and the identification of this inner self with the physical intactness that is, paradoxically, her most emphatically alienable or marketable property as a woman.

While in *Pamela* the marketplace casts its shadow over the sentimental narrative of virtue, Cleland's project in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* is to reconcile the sentimental and the mercenary. This project depends on the interplay of three elements in his novel which, because of their function as organizing principles or systems, we may refer to as economies: commercial, sexual and sentimental. In *Memoirs*, Cleland describes a fluid economy (of money and of the body) which dissolves distinctions between forms of commerce. It may be useful to think of a sentimental spectrum, along which we can place Richardson's *Pamela* and Cleland's *Memoirs*, the latter work both making use of and commenting upon the sentimental qualities of the former in its own pornographic version of the ideal of sensibility.

The heroine effects the redemption of the estate in *Pamela* through her role as a pedagogue of sentiment: the decisive moment of B.'s reformation—his transformation into a virtuous, rather than vicious, master—occurs as he reads Pamela's account of his own imprisonment of her. Using her text as a way of reimagining his material estate (he employs her account as a kind of map of his own property, following her descriptions of it as he walks in his gardens), B. experiences his own sentimental conversion. "And when he came to my reasonings about throwing myself into the water," Pamela reports, "he said, Walk gently before; and seemed so moved, that he turned away his face from me; and I blessed this good sign" (252). The good sign is confirmed just a bit later. "O my dear girl!" he exclaims, "you have touched me sensibly with your mournful relation" (252).

Virtue and the visible, physical registration of sentiment are inseparable in *Pamela*, an identification most crudely represented in the orgy of tears that accompanies the heroine's departure from her late mistress's house. One after another, Pamela's fellow servants enter the scene to shed varying amounts of tears, which attest to the nobility of their feelings if not their stations. These tears are carefully calibrated so as to reveal the individual servants' moral states:

the eyes of the reluctantly treacherous John merely fill with tears, while the simple, uncorrupted “poor little scullion-boy,” “ready to run over for grief” (100), proves himself a virtuoso of sentiment. Tears—obsessively measured—themselves act as a kind of currency in the sentimental economy. Like the “universal solvent” of money, they are capable of creating their own value, levelling the hierarchies of class as (carefully documented) they establish their own distinctions based on expenditure. They are the produce of a full heart. Representations of both the economy of the body and the distribution of wealth through exchange are interdependent: the description of one will turn inevitably to the imagery of the other. As the body is organized, so too is commerce: nature repeats one essential model in both, varying only in scale.

In economic writings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, proponents of trade frequently point to the vast network of seas and rivers which, by allowing merchants to penetrate the separate bodies of land, proves the divine sanction of trade expressed in nature. Such an insistence on the naturalness of trade is inseparable from an insistence upon its morality. Thus, trade proves itself capable of being sentimentalized, most famously in the following passage from *The Spectator*:

As I am a great Lover of Mankind, my Heart naturally overflows with Pleasure at the sight of a prosperous and happy Multitude, insomuch that at many publick Solemnities I cannot forbear expressing my Joy with Tears that stoln down my Cheeks. For this reason I am wonderfully delighted to see such a Body of Men thriving in their own private Fortunes, and at the same time promoting the Publick Stock.⁵

An overflowing heart, tears of joy: for Addison at the Royal Exchange, the spectacle of thriving commerce triggers sentimental effusion.

Addison's tears at the Royal Exchange provide an emblem for the collapse of distinction between the commercial and the sentimental; and the same fluidity that makes these two economies comparable also links them with a third, that of sexuality. Writing in *The Other Victorians* of the metaphoric connection between the sexual and the economic realms, Steven Marcus observes that “the principal imagery in which sexuality was represented in consciousness was largely drawn from the sphere of socioeconomic activity and had to do with concerns and anxieties about problems of accumulation, production, and excessive expenditure.”⁶ As the above dis-

cussion of the language of trade reveals, the inverse of this model is equally true: the principal imagery in which the economic was represented in consciousness was largely drawn from the sphere of sexual activity. If we agree with Marcus that the sexual may derive from anxiety in the economic realm over accumulation, production and expenditure, we can also see that sexuality may provide economics with a vision of the resolution of such anxieties through a perfectly organized, natural circulation of liquid wealth. This is most evident in *Memoirs*, in which an erotic fluid economy dissolves distinctions between the sexual and the commercial.

In *Memoirs*, the liquid sentimental economy is carried out not only with tears, although tears are in evidence, but more frequently with the “dissolvent” (148) similarly quantified in her narrative: the body’s sexual fluids. The sentimental scene of a natural sympathy registered in the body itself becomes, in Cleland’s novel, pornographic: natural sympathy reveals itself in the communication of arousal and orgasm. Of her first sexual encounter (with her bed-mate Phoebe), Fanny writes, “Tears of pleasure gushed from my eyes” (49). Spying on the sexual gymnastics of Polly Philips and her Genoese merchant, she and Phoebe “could not . . . be unmoved at so warm a scene” (69).

Fanny’s education in sensation is also an education in sentiment. Her susceptibility to being moved, registered in the transports and meltings of the body, indicate—as do the tears of Pamela’s fellow servants—a natural benevolence and goodness of heart. The sentimental desire for a direct communication between people, a union of souls, is fulfilled in Cleland’s novel by the communion of orgasm, which Fanny describes as “that agony of bliss” in which the man sends “his soul, distilled in liquid sweets, up the body” of the woman (154). Again, we are led to the liquidity of the sentimental economy, to images of overflowing and excess. Such sentimental excess is evident in the following passage in which Pamela, finally convinced of B.’s honorable intentions, describes the state of her heart: “My poor grateful heart was like a too full river, which overflows its banks: and it carried away my fear and my shamefacedness, as that does all before it on the surface of its waters” (289). For her description of orgasm, Fanny seems merely to have expanded the Richardsonian passage:

What floods of bliss! what melting transports! what agonies of delight! too fierce, too mighty for nature to sustain: well has she therefore, no doubt, provided the relief of a delicious momentary

dissolution, the approaches of which are intimated by a dear delirium, a sweet thrill, on the point of emitting those liquid sweets in which enjoyment itself is drowned. (80)

The sentimental effusion of the first passage becomes the sexual overflowing of the second. Fanny's sentimental education culminates in her orgasmic reunion with Charles, her first and only love. Fanny describes their meeting after years of separation: "We exchanged hearts at our eyes" (215). Their sexual union is a kind of transfusion of souls, providing an erotic version of the immediate sympathy so central to the goals of the sentimental novelist: "In a delicious enthusiasm I imagined such a transfusion of heart and spirit as that, coaliting [coalescing] and making one body and soul with him, I was him, and he, me" (221).

The complement to this language of sentiment is the jargon of trade: the men Fanny meets are "chapmen" (51, 133), her personal charms (and particularly her maidenhead) are her "commodities" (131) or her "stock" (124, 131), sexual liaisons—even when, as with her one true love Charles, they are not financially motivated—are "bargains" (54, 60, 74, 83, 87). Fanny describes the male genitals variously as "that wondrous treasure-bag" (82), "that treasury" (83), an "inestimable bulse" (118), and, in one of her slyest puns, "that capital part of man" (63). Correspondingly, she describes the female genitals as "held out like a beggar's wallet for its provision" (62). When, describing the purchase of her favors, Fanny writes that her client "drew out his purse" (96), the reader may experience a temporary confusion. Is this "purse" yet another instance of her fondness for figurative language? This momentary confusion of the literal and the figurative exemplifies the interchangeability of metaphoric terms in Fanny Hill's commercial and sexual transactions.

Fanny herself is both merchant and merchandise in the perfectly organized and self-enclosed economy of the novel. Orphaned, she journeys to London, needing to find "any sort of being before [her] little stock should be consumed" (43). Her quest for a living brings her to the "intelligence" or employment office where she is taken in by the ostensibly respectable Mrs. Brown, who is actually the keeper of a brothel. With the clarity of hindsight, Fanny describes the intelligence office as "a market where Mrs. Brown . . . frequently attended on the watch for any fresh goods that might offer there, for the use of her customers and her own profit" (45). The brothel itself she describes as a place "of the hottest to trust the

keeping of such a perishable commodity in as a maidenhead" (51), and because of the threat that her overheated environment poses to the particularly precious and fragile ware that Fanny has to offer, Mrs. Brown is concerned with converting Fanny's maidenhead into money as quickly as possible. In the conversion of her perishable commodity (her "fresh goods") into coin, Fanny will find an alternative, and more durable, image for her personal value—an image that is also, paradoxically, capable of subverting the very notion of value that it is supposed to express.

When Fanny learns of the potential monetary value of her maidenhead, she begins to think of herself as containing a "hidden mine" (77), a clichéd image of female chastity. Fanny's cynical use of this image, however, reveals the threat of false value that lurks within it. A budding economist, Fanny describes her virginity as "that trinket of mine, which bears so great an imaginary value" (60). The word *imaginary* asserts the similarity between her maidenhead and money. It is the *imaginary* nature of money, its fictive value, that Fanny emphasizes in her own economic relationship to her body, and it is a short step from an imaginary to a counterfeited value.

Explaining the necessity of the stamp to guarantee the purity of specie, Adam Smith imagines a past before the advent of the stamped coin, when "people must always have been liable to the grossest frauds and impositions," receiving in exchange for their goods "an adulterated composition of the coarsest and cheapest materials, which had however, in their outward appearance, been made to resemble those [precious] metals."⁷ Fraudulent value in the realm of commerce hints at another kind of imposture as well: the falseness of women. Like the coin to which it is often compared, the maidenhead is the meeting place of what is supposed to be the thing itself—the precious and unique property of virginity, which is of intrinsic value—and the purely conventional representation of this value—the "stamp" of the hymen, the sign that makes such property legible or visible. As is also the case with the stamp on a coin, the maidenhead is meant to allay anxieties about what is fundamentally a purely imaginary or conventional value, to grant such value a visible and objective reality. The hymen is supposed to vouch for the purity and worth of a woman. Fanny's association of her maidenhead with money, or the raw substance of money, functions as a critique of the two standards of value: her use of the

analogy between money and virginity plays on anxieties about the imaginary nature of both values. Fanny asserts the fictiveness of both systems of worth.

In *Pamela*, the golden guineas threaten the heroine with their own narrative of currency; in them, Pamela's parents see an image of their daughter—an image of the circulation of the “coin” of her sexual property. “We accept kindly your dutiful present,” Mr. and Mrs. Andrews write upon receiving the guineas, but “cannot make use of it, for fear we should partake of the price of our poor daughter's shame” (7). Pamela's parents would make of the coins a figure for Pamela's inner virtue, as they invest them with a superstitious power: they will preserve the money unbroken until they are sure that Pamela remains similarly intact in B.'s household. This association of the coins with Pamela's personality quickly dissolves (for the reader, if not for Pamela's parents). As Pamela's situation seems to be worsening, her father confesses, “I am uneasy about those same four guineas; I think you should give them back again to your master; and yet I have broken them” (32). The coins will circulate, despite the Andrewses' best intentions. The “breaking” of the four guineas does not have the import we, or Pamela's parents, might expect, however. While the Andrewses are not wrong to see in currency an *image* of Pamela's personal value, the collapse of this association—when the “breaking” of the guineas does not herald Pamela's own ruin—asserts the inappropriateness of seeing currency as identical with Pamela's personal value.

In *Memoirs*, the heroine's maidenhead is transformed into coin in the act of its loss. Fanny describes the loss of her virginity to her lover Charles: “First he put one of the pillows under me, to give the blank of his aim a more favourable elevation” (78). The “blank of his aim”: the phrase is resonant, since “blank” connotes not only emptiness or nothingness (the lack that is the woman, the “beggar's wallet”), something unmarked or uninscribed (a kind of virgin text), but also, and most significantly in light of the novel's pervasive economic imagery, an unformed ingot of metal. The loss of her virginity “coins” Fanny's sexuality: creates it and sends it into circulation.

In Fanny's case this coining is, of course, illicit, and the illicit nature of her sexuality finds its most important articulation in her construction of a “fictitious maidenhead” (130). Fanny's insistence upon the imaginary nature of her virginity, her refusal to privilege this sign with real value, leads her to exploit the “advantages of the

traffic for a counterfeit maidenhead" (164). With the help of a sponge dipped in red liquid and carefully hidden in a bed post, Fanny successfully cheats her client, "fallen into a taste of maiden-hunting" (166), with the appearance of virginity. Money provides Fanny Hill with a model for her own sexual property: she can convert her one valuable, but perishable, commodity into coin. But the coin also provides her with a model for the manipulation and subversion of this value. Her very grasp of the imaginary nature of this sign of value leads her to counterfeiting. Fanny's manipulation of a worth that is purely imaginary subverts both the maidenhead and the coin to which it is compared. It is her most extreme articulation of the fiction of both money and virginity. Fanny's fictitious maidenhead is a version of, indeed an exploitation of, the materialist equation between unbroken currency and personal virtue that Mr. and Mrs. Andrews express.

In her reminting of herself, Fanny turns to the model of counterfeiting, and the image of the counterfeit is a suggestive one not only for the version of female character presented in the novel, but for Cleland's pornographic project as a whole, as his erotic and evasive goals lead him to coin his own euphemistic vocabulary. Perhaps the most well-known and often-repeated fact about the *Memoirs* is its linguistic "purity"; not one obscene word appears in Cleland's novel. Historically, the novel's claims to a literary, rather than to merely a pornographic value have rested on this stylistic point. Fanny's own ostensible stylistic project, however, is quite different from Cleland's. "Truth! stark naked truth, is the word," she writes to the fictional recipient of her autobiographical letters at the outset of her narrative, "and I will not so much as take the pains to bestow the strip of a gauze-wrapper on it, but paint situations such as they actually rose to me in nature, careless of violating those laws of decency, that were never made for such unreserved intimacies as ours" (39). Fanny evokes a language stripped of ornament and falseness—the true corresponding language that is the sentimental goal. Fanny's stylistic manifesto is not, however, an accurate description of what follows: Cleland's realistic (even physiologically graphic) aims seem to be at odds with his actual style. Cleland presents Fanny's story in a hyper-figurative language which seems to conceal as much as it exposes, and which protects the author as much as it protects decency. By the beginning of the second letter, Fanny must acknowledge this disjunction between her claims for a language of unadorned realism and truthfulness, and the elaborate

style in which her memoirs are presented. She now complains of "the extreme difficulty of continuing so long in one strain, in a mean tempered with taste, between the revoltingness of gross, rank, and vulgar expression, and the ridicule of mincing metaphors and affected circumstances" (129). By the end of the narrative, she admits that she is "conscious of owing" her correspondent an apology for "having perhaps too much affected the figurative style" (207).

Cleland's invention of euphemisms will remind us of Locke's moral objections to coining words or phrases and to figurative language in general. In his discussion in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* of remedies for the abuse of words, Locke has recourse to a monetary image to convey his objections to such coining. Because words are "no man's private possession," but are rather "the common measure of commerce and communication," Locke insists that "it is not for anyone at pleasure to change the stamp they are current in."⁸ Here words are a means of exchange, a kind of coin, and the idea of privately coining words is as threatening as the idea of privately coining money. Earlier, in a chapter of the *Essay* entitled "Of the Abuse of Words," Locke has turned his attention to figurative language in particular, lamenting that "*figurative speeches* and allusion in language will hardly be admitted as an imperfection or *abuse* of it," and himself admitting that "in discourses where we seek rather pleasure and delight than information and improvement, such ornaments . . . can scarce pass for faults." "But yet," he adds, "if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric . . . all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong *ideas*, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheat" (508). To insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, mislead the judgment, cheat: Locke turns from this catalogue of the crimes of figurative language to the image of the "fair sex." "*Eloquence*, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And it is in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving wherein men find pleasure to be deceived" (508).

Locke's anxieties about language in these passages, his objections to coining words or using them immorally to move the passions, to please while deceiving, turn into anxieties about other systems of exchange, monetary and sexual, and about the stability and truthfulness of their signs: coins and women. As Locke's com-

plicated constellation of images indicates, to doubt the trustworthiness of the sign of one economy (the word, the coin, the woman) is to throw the other systems likewise into doubt. In Locke's analysis, the desire for private or personal pleasure undermines the ability of signs of worth (the word, the coin, the woman) to present real value: "anyone at pleasure" might decide to alter the stamp that words or coins are current in; "in discourses where we seek . . . pleasure and delight" we will allow ourselves to be seduced by a false rhetoric; in the realm of both linguistic and sexual commerce, "men find pleasure" in being deceived. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* the subversiveness of the pornographic project should extend not only to ideals of the virtue of women and money (their ability to represent an intrinsic value), but to language itself.

Two languages operate in Cleland's novel: the intensely figurative language of his prose, the highly rhetorical sentimental style (what Fanny refers to as "every flower of imagination" [207]), and the direct communication of the body's own kind of language, its own system of signs such as tremblings, blushes, meltings, swoonings and stiffenings ("Truth! stark naked truth" [39]). Such a contrast between the language of rhetoric—the very proliferation of which evidences the failure of words to provide a true, direct language of the heart—and the language of the sensitive body is, of course, part of the stock sentimental critique of language. In the sentimental novel hearts communicate directly with hearts through the language of the body, and the reader is supposed to be the final link in this chain of responsiveness. (The sentimental and the pornographic share this goal of "getting to the body" of the reader: the body of the reader is the ultimate text of both.) Rather than viewing Cleland's figurative style as at odds with the erotic intent of his novel, we can see it as, itself, a strategy in such eroticism, as his elaborate figures require the reader to complete the "writing" of the erotic scene, both through his interpretive attention, and with the language of his own body.

With this analysis of the relationship of the reader to the text, we must turn our attention from one sign of exchange, the coin, to another, the letter. As is the case with *Pamela*, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* turns to marriage for the resolution of the problems its heroine has raised. After a happy and prosperous career as prostitute and kept mistress, Fanny Hill ends her memoirs with a picture of herself as the heroine of quite a different story. She has become

the loving wife and mother of a domestic fiction. Married at long last to her first love, Fanny is finally removed from the world of the marketplace, a closure hinted at in her description of the ecstasy of her sexual reunion with Charles: "All the thought I was capable of was that I was now in touch at once with the instrument of pleasure and the great-seal of love" (219). The image here, that of the seal of authority that authenticates official documents, revises the earlier one of the private, illicit forging of the "blank" of Fanny's sexuality. No longer merely the "instrument" of an unauthorized "pleasure," the phallus has become the stamp of authority.

Through the authorizing act of matrimony and the version of "estate" (of status) it offers, both Richardson and Cleland would seem to remove their heroines from further currency. However, because Cleland's novel is, like Richardson's, an epistolary one, the image of the "great-seal" may remind us of another kind of seal—the seal of a letter. With this evocation of the epistolary, we return to the world of circulation. The letter itself is another sign of exchange, an erotic exchange between writer and reader. The pornographic project of *The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* asserts that the destination of Fanny Hill's letters is the desiring body of the reader. The model for this relation between reader and text is found in *Pamela*, as B.'s desire for the heroine's person is diverted to the letters that come to stand for her body. The identification of the letters with the female body becomes most explicit in the scene where, terrified by B.'s threats to strip her, Pamela relinquishes the papers she has sewn into her clothing. B.'s response to Pamela's admonishment that she would take his returning the letters "without breaking the seal" as "a good omen" is to break "the seal instantly," declaring, "So much for your *omen!*" (250). The reader repeats B.'s act of penetration in his own relation to the text of *Pamela*, as the scene of reading itself has been eroticized, an eroticization revealed most powerfully in a letter from one of Richardson's contemporaries: "If I lay the book down, it comes after me.—When it has dwelt all Day long upon the Ear, It takes Possession, all Night of the Fancy."⁹ *Pamela* remains a scene of erotic exchange despite Richardson's attempts to remove his heroine from the implications of the sexual marketplace, and it is this endless circulation of feminine sexuality (in the coin, in the letter) that Cleland exploits for his own literal erotics of trade.

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NOTES

¹ John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, ed. Peter Wagner (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974), 41. Further references cited parenthetically in the text.

² J. G. A. Pocock's comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the estate and concepts of virtue in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975) informs my understanding of the significance of the estate to writers in eighteenth-century England.

³ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), 225. Further references cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴ Henry Fielding, *Shamela and Joseph Andrews*, ed. A. R. Humphreys (New York: Everyman, 1973), 24.

⁵ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, no. 69 (19 May 1711).

⁶ Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), xiii.

⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. James E. Thorold Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 26.

⁸ John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 514. Further references cited parenthetically in the text.

⁹ Letter from Aaron Hill to Richardson, included in the introduction to the second edition of *Pamela* and reprinted in T. C. Duncan Eaves's and Ben D. Kimpel's edition of the novel (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 10.