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**Novel Panic:
Picture and Performance
in the Reception of
Richardson's *Pamela***

And he said, taking me about the Waist, O my dear Girl! you have touch'd me sensibly with your mournful Relation.

—Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740)¹

Interspersed throughout the Whole, there are such Scenes of Love, and such lewd Ideas, as must fill the Youth that read them with Sentiments and Desires worse than ROCHESTER can. . . . It is impossible to read it without endeavouring to gratify the Passion he hath raised; let us view Pamela then, divested of the Drapery in which she is enclos'd, tho' not hid, and then her Charms will appear thus: The wise Father will never think it proper for his Son's Closet, and the careful Mother banish that with other Novels and Romances from her Daughter's Cabinet.

—*Pamela Censured* (1741)²

RECEPTION SEEMS TOO MILD A WORD for the Pamela craze that swept through eighteenth-century Europe and inspired emulation in virtually every medium. Its irritating fascination was felt by Prévost, Fielding, Voltaire, Goldoni, Diderot, and Mozart. If we said Europe was “touched,” the pun would be appropriate, conveying an enthusiasm that supporters viewed as sentimental identification and skeptics diagnosed as a contagious madness, allied to methodism and sexual mania. Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* borrows the name “Tickletext” to denote this “epidemical Phrenzy,” whose symptoms are babbling eulogy punctuated by spontaneous gasps (“—I feel another Emotion!”).³ So Fielding represents the “ticklings” of a text that claimed to be written “to the Moment” by a pubescent girl, structured around climaxes that even well-wishers characterized in terms of physical transformation. If the new novel operates on the body as immediately as a hand, does this make the narrator-heroine a soliciting prostitute or a sentimental evangelist? This double meaning of *touch*, which echoes throughout the Pamela controversy, originates in the text itself. When Mr. B. plays the wicked squire, his physical touches always indicate sexual aggression and the drive to establish a clear identity as master: “He put his Arm round me, and his other Hand on my Neck; which made me more angry and bold, and he said, What then am I?” (181). But after he changes from Don Juan to Prince

Charming, he can “take her about the Waist” and reciprocally admit that her letters have “touch’d him sensibly.”

If the “touch” of *Pamela* produces respectful love in the English squire and a willingness to marry his chambermaid rather than merely exploit her, it had the opposite effect on the culture at large. The novel inspired a tidal wave of texts and objects, a riot of consumeristic exploitation; recent critics compare *Pamela* to modern industrial products like Superman or Minnie Mouse. A keen *Pamela* hunter in the 1740s could buy the novel in large or small format, with or without Francis Hayman’s engravings and Richardson’s sequel, plus *The Life of Pamela*, *The Celebrated Pamela*, *Pamela in High Life*, *Pamela, or Virtue Triumphant*, *Shamela Andrews*, *Pamela Censured*, *Joseph Andrews*, *Pamela, or the Fair Impostor*, *The True Anti-Pamela*, and *Anti-Pamela, or Feign’d Innocence Detected*, the last by Eliza Haywood, who also published her own translation of the Chevalier de Mouhy’s *Paysanne parvenue* (Richardson’s most striking antecedent and rival). She could visit two *Pamela* wax-works, drop in on Joseph Highmore’s studio to see his twelve *Pamela* paintings and buy the set of his engravings, then see David Garrick in *Pamela, a Comedy*. (With luck she could avoid the Newcastle ballad-opera version, with its gruelling emotional climax “I’m sad, if my *Pammy*’s not there.”) The day would end in Vauxhall Gardens, sitting in front of Hayman’s *Pamela* murals, cooling herself with the *Pamela* fan, and opening a magazine to read “Remarks on *Pamela*, by a Prude.” The next day she would slip across the Channel, picking up for the journey *Pamela, ou La vertu recompensée, traduit de l’Anglois* (rumored to be by Pré-vost), the Abbé Marquet’s *Lettre sur Pamela*, the French translation of Haywood’s *Antipamela*, and a different novel called *Antipamela, ou Mémoires de M. D.* In Paris she would take in the pathetic comedy *Pamela*, the burlesque *Déroute des Paméla*, Voltaire’s *Nanine, ou Le préjugé vaincu* (also available in two different editions and an English translation) and Louis de Boissy’s *Paméla en France, ou La vertu mieux éprouvée*, a comedy that miraculously turns into an opera in the last act.⁴

Aftershocks continued throughout the century. Diderot’s “Éloge” on the death of Richardson spurred new interest in this original genius. The de Boissy musical was reissued in the 1760s with a score for home performance. *Pamela* was translated into Dutch, Danish, German, and Welsh; “acomodada á nuestras costumbres” in Madrid; and adapted to the Venetian taste by Carlo Goldoni, who squeezed at least two plays and two libretti out of this story. His 1750 *Pamela nubile* was reanglicized as *Pamela, a Comedy* and converted into French by François de Neufchâteau just in time to be condemned by a revolutionary tribunal. (Goldoni, like most of the English adapters, sidesteps the class issue—the nobody *Pamela* turns out to be a somebody, the daughter of an exiled Jacobite nobleman—so “Citoyen François” had to re-Richardsonize the play and assert its republican principles.) Goldoni’s Pameloid libretto *La Cecchina, ossia La buona figliuola* was set first by Egidio Duni and then by Niccolò Piccinni. This very successful opera was expanded with arias by other composers, and inspired a *Cecchina* craze that out-

ran even the vogue for Pamela. Further imitations reclaimed their own national traditions: the French *Opéra comique* version, with the same title and music but many differences in the script, restores features found earlier in de Boissy; Isaac Bickerstaffe turns *La buona figliuola* into an English *Maid of the Mill*; and Mozart plays variations on it in his Munich festival opera *La finta giardiniera*.⁵

Literary critics and historians have applied various interpretive models to this Pamela frenzy. The issues may be schematized as follows: whether to separate the original text from the discourses and artifacts it provoked; if so, where to assign canonical or epistemic value; if not, how to understand the cultural phenomenon without losing sight of the specificity of each object that constitutes it. Thus Marxist social history reads *Pamela* and its progeny as “cogs in a culture industry” or as organizing forces of the public sphere, understanding the original less as a novel than as the “sacred scripture” of a new bourgeois religion. The most thoughtful recent study of this proliferation, by Terri Nickel, convincingly analyzes those earlier critics who deprecate the Pamela cult, but offers only a generic psychoanalytic explanation of the vogue itself: imitators follow “the logic of substitution that characterizes the fetish,” parodists reveal their anxiety about the multiplicity of female sexuality. Modern debates over the relative value of Richardson and his satirists replicate the eighteenth-century division into warring Pamelists and Antipamelists, collapsing textual criticism into *ad feminam* arguments about the person of the heroine and reducing fiction to polemic by defending either the purity of the original text or the epistemic authority of its exposure in *Shamela*. Richardson’s biographers document the vogue thoroughly but relegate it to a mere ornament or historical curiosity; Fielding’s biographer, more obviously partisan, simply equates *Shamela* with the truth (“The absurdities and pretensions of *Pamela* have been exposed once and for all”).⁶ As several critics have shown, such excessive claims for *Shamela* express a masculine “eagerness to expose, penetrate, or triumph over Pamela (or *Pamela*),” which “suggests that woman or novel poses a threat that requires exposure and redress”—though even sophisticated feminists can fall into this language of revelation. In contrast to this family conflict among analysts of literature, historians of other art forms emphasize the common features, of sensibility and story line, that link the original novel to its adaptations in rococo painting and opera: “conscious informality and anti-heroic insistence on the human dimension,” “the affective immediacy of the heroine and the use of distinctions in class for emotive purposes,” the capacity to “slip invisible” into interior states and yet render them fully in public.⁷

Since the age of Diderot and Johnson, “the divine Richardson” has been associated with a gift for the *internal* and the *empathetic*. For Diderot he “brings the torch into the depths of the cavern,” for Johnson he reveals the inner mechanism rather than the broad clock face, while for Edward Young he explores the most intimate human interiors:

To touch our passions' secret springs
Was his peculiar care;
And deep his happy genius div'd
In bosoms of the fair.⁸

Aaron Hill, the model for Parson Tickletext, praises the quasi-physical invasive power of *Pamela*, which transforms him into every character in turn. Pamela herself follows him after he has put the book down, and comes to visit him “all Night long”—much to the amusement of writers like Fielding who espouse a more distant and spectatorial notion of authorship.⁹ This conflict of internalist and externalist criticism still divides Richardsonian interpretation. One way to avoid assuming these dichotomous positions—a perennial danger when studying the cultural conflict they cause—is to question the underlying polarity of private and public, using the paradox articulated by Peter Brooks: the novel “can make private life the object of its concern only through invading the private sphere by opening it up to the irrevocable publicity of writing.”¹⁰ But Brooks does not make the most of this insight, and in practice overemphasizes the private, silent aspect of the novel. In what follows, I seek to implicate the original text in the raucous public trading that disseminates it and to analyze the terms actually used by contemporaries to explain the Pamela wars, trying to find common ground between the opposing parties.

Richardson's novel precipitated a complex cultural struggle in which the means of literary production (in the theatrical as well as the industrial sense) became invested with moral and epistemological significance, associated in the heat of the moment with truth and lies, virtue and depravity. Competition raged on four fronts, at different stages of the production process: alluring fiction versus improving didacticism; invisible epistolary narrative versus explicit third-person presentation by an acknowledged author; private reading versus public recitation; print versus stage and picture. The underlying issue—whether a particular effect could be induced by a particular expressive form—led partisans to characterize the reader or spectator as an automaton, overwhelmed by passions beyond her control or programmed by subliminal messages from the concealed author. Inexorably, both sides equated this textual response with sexual arousal, valorized according to the polemic as genial warmth or onanistic frenzy, beguiling witchcraft or invasion of the body snatchers. Thus each position in the *Pamela* debates assumes that producing subjectivity renders it physical, supplying a body for the fictional “nobody.” In order for Pamela to be “touching” we must imagine her embodied and located; the sentimental or internal-empathetic reception therefore relies on the scenic or external-spectatorial imagination that the novel's critics use against it.¹¹ Pamelists and Antipamelists, whether they see her as endangered or provocative, equally “body forth” the heroine.

**“Retailings of the Story”
in Richardson’s Discursive Circle**

Richardson and his supporters denounced the proliferation of *Pamela*s as a “lewd and ungenerous engraftment,” driven by a “bad Passion.” Dropping his claim to have been merely the editor, Richardson gave vent to frustrated anger, feeling that something, or *someone*, that should have been his property or his daughter has been “basely Ravished out of my Hands.” Quite unlike a Disney-style modern corporation, a mass of small entrepreneurs exploited the fact that, whatever their individual sensibilities, authors and publishers could *not* own characters and ideas. Beneath these expressions of outrage, however, we can detect a certain complicity in the novelist’s language, which shares the commercial, sexual, and maternal imagery that he himself applied to the original creation of *Pamela*, when the women of the house teased him to give them “a little more of Pamela” every night, when he “almost accidentally slid” into writing and “gave way to enlargement.” In old age he wrote, with some obstetric and mercantile pride, that “the Publication of the History of Pamela gave Birth to no less than 16 Pieces, as Remarks, Imitations, Retailings of the Story, Pyracies, &c &c.”¹²

Even before *Pamela* appeared, Richardson took pains to ensure its dissemination, orchestrating a publicity campaign that provoked a curiosity analogous to the production of sexual desire. His own claims to modesty and propriety in the forematter, also used as advertising copy, spell out all too explicitly the transgressions they eschew. Richardson creates a sort of negative template, invoking libertine representation by making its absence conspicuous; the announcement and title page of *Pamela* proclaim it “intirely divested of all those Images, which, in too many Pieces calculated for Amusement only, tend to *inflamm*e the Minds they should *instruct*.”¹³ The preface defies logic by promising not to “rais[e] a *single Idea* throughout the Whole, that shall shock the exactest Purity, even in those tender Instances where the exactest Purity would be most apprehensive” (3). The reader must inevitably anticipate these “tender” moments, “apprehending” the prurience that is and is not present, “raising” the shocking idea in the very act of repudiating it—as Richardson does himself in making his boast. Such claims echo a letter by Richardson’s friend and business partner the Reverend William Webster, which appeared in the *Weekly Miscellany* a month *before* the novel itself and again in the first edition forematter. Webster insists that the novel’s miraculous events come about virtually without human agency: the heroine converts the libertine into the husband without “the least previous Design or Thought for that Purpose: No Art used to inflame him, no Coquetry practised to tempt or entice him, and no Prudery or Affectation to tamper with his Passions.” Yet inexplicably, every action of this nonagent and nondesigner has the effect of precisely those scandalous arts that the novel has “divested”: “The very Means she used to guard her Virtue, the more indanger’d it, by inflaming his Passions.” Webster’s list of

arousing verbs seems even more provocative when we know that it first appeared, not as an interpretation, but as a preview of coming attractions; just as Pamela multiplies desire in B. by the very device she chooses to subtract it, so these proclamations of innocence “inflare” the reader’s anticipation. Within the novel, the most striking example of this display-without-intention is the country dress that allows Pamela to express both her readiness to embrace rustic poverty and her delight in her own beauty; the responsibility for thrusting her into B.’s presence is transferred to the good housekeeper Mrs. Jervis, whose action seemed to contemporaries “like pandering to her Master’s Lusts.” Appropriately, Webster reproduces this scenario in his exhortation to publish, casting the “editor” Richardson as the innocent procuress and the public as the inflammable squire: “Produce her to us in her neat Country Apparel.”¹⁴ The publicist conflates two traditional metaphors—language as the dress of thought, truth as a sculpture unencumbered by “Drapery”—with the living presence of Pamela, the book-as-body, “produced” like an actress on the stage.

After the first publication, Richardson solicited letters that then clustered around the original text and begged to be printed with it, a process that recalls popular medical works like *Onania*. The novelist printed the most effusive of these letters, preserved them all in bound volumes, and later emended them as if they were extensions of his own epistolary fiction. He sent interleaved copies of *Pamela* to Astraea and Minerva Hill, so that they could write their responses directly onto “white Emblems of her Innocence,” in effect creating a parallel novel. These pages, the surrogate daughters promised, will “receive our Admiration while its Force is new and Warm, and our touch’d Hearts continue fill’d with the whole Joy of her Impressions.”¹⁵ With their father he enjoyed an even more rapturous correspondence, much of which found its way into print as the forematter of the second edition. Aaron Hill expands Webster’s (un)dress metaphors into a fully fledged poetics of arousal:

The *Thought* is everywhere exactly *cloath’d* by the *Expression*: And becomes its Dress as roundly, and as close, as *Pamela* her Country-habit. . . . When modest Beauty seeks to hide itself by casting off the *Pride* of *Ornament*, it but displays itself without a *Covering*; And so, becoming more distinguished, by its Want of *Drapery*, grows *stronger*, from its *purpos’d Weakness*. (*Pamela*, 12)

(Fielding needed to change only a few words in this passage to create the onanistic letter by Tickletext that prompts the story of Shamela: “Oh! I feel an Emotion even while I am relating this: Methinks I see *Pamela* at this Instant, with all the Pride of Ornament cast off!”; *Shamela*, 322.) Hill even proclaims that “this Author has prepar’d an enamouring *Philtre* for the Mind, which will excite such a *Passion* for Virtue, as scarce to leave it in the Power of the *Will* to neglect her” (*Pamela*, 17). This artificially stimulated “Passion” can be transferred to the figure of Pamela because she embodies Virtue, and likewise her uncanny presence in the

night can be explained in the same way that B. explains his infatuation, as erotic sorcery: the "Witchcraft in every Page . . . is the Witchcraft of Passion and Meaning" (10).

Hill clearly responds to Richardson's "powerful little Piece" (9) as if it were Pamela herself, and openly admits his vicarious pleasure in scenes that emphasize her physicality; when B. wraps his hands around her waist, for example, Hill breaks out in man-to-man jests about female "Roundness" and tight-laced critics (16). His interpretation of this "round" and "close" text depends upon his erotic imagination of the heroine's body, and his favorite verb for aesthetic arousal is *to glow*. What he values in Richardson is the "picturesque glowing Likeness to *Life*" (10), a vivid corporeality analogous to painting but more intense—indeed, more heightened than reality itself. The Antipamelists jeered at Hill's praise of a representation that "resembling Life, outglows it," but the phrase makes sense as a fusion of the traditional theory of high art (an improvement on mere reality) with the new valuation of emotional intensity, the new cult of "sex and sensibility."¹⁶ As Hill later remarked of *Clarissa*, the author "give[s] a body, and material *tangibility*, to fancy!" Moreover, this is not the pure and guarded body of official morality, but an excitable and prolific body, "glowing" and deliquescent, roaming in the night, unbound to a particular gender, slipping out of the control of language, "prattling" and choking over the inexpressible. For Hill, bodily reaction becomes an integral part of true reading. The paradigm of literary response is the six-year-old boy who weeps over *Pamela*, prominently described in the second-edition preface and thus serving as a "*certain* Fore-taste" or prescription of the novel's affect (*Pamela*, 19). Little Harry reveals the transforming power of fiction in his speech (he "talks in no other Language but hers") and in his tears, which form "two sincere little Fountains" on the carpet; like the cold sweat that convinces B. of Pamela's integrity, or the ejaculations that assure Fanny Hill of mutual pleasure, these fluids contain the very essence of truth. Though all listeners greeted Aaron Hill's dramatic readings with "applausively eloquent" tears (18), this juvenile response to the novel generated the greatest outpouring. Far from enforcing privacy and destroying the "communal participation of a live audience," as Brooks argues, the novel stimulates a positive orgy of sentimental, erotic, and commercial exchange: "All the Ladies in Company were ready to devour [Harry] with Kisses"; Hill joins him in embraces of "so hard and so clinging an eagerness, that it was impossible . . . to dispossess him of his hold, or his rapture"; and the author repaid the gift of tears with books, paper for his own writing, and a free apprenticeship to the printing trade.¹⁷

Richardson liked to present himself as a lofty moralist, forced into writing novels "only by way of Accommodation to the Manners and Taste of an Age overwhelmed with a Torrent of Luxury, and abandoned to Sound and senselessness"; like the heroine herself, his pure message stands apart from a medium corrupted by a consumeristic and spectacle-crazed society. But this "Accommodation" shows

him deeply implicated in that spectacular culture, not only in his marketing strategy and his passionate cultivation of “new Impressions,” but also in his metaphors of luxury display and performance. In several ways, he initiates the “Retailing” process that he denounces in others. Already within the novel, Pamela’s father anticipates the pleasure and moral profit to be derived from reading “a *Pamela*”—as if she is already a product.¹⁸ Although Mr. B.’s attempts to brand Pamela as an “artful” actress suggest the radical opposition of authenticity and theatricality, a scenographic vocabulary still creeps into the heroine’s narrative, as if she already sees her story as a spectacle for excited ticket holders. The good Mrs. Jervis “had prepar’d her Master for [a] Scene” of voyeurism by concealing him in the closet. The remote Lincolnshire house is identified as the “Scene of my Ruin,” and the climactic moments in that house are further marked by allusions to dangerous publicity. Pamela tells her mother to withhold one intense passage from her father—thus guaranteeing that hostile readers will focus hypnotically on that episode, when she finds herself spreadeagled naked in bed by Mr. B. and Mrs. Jewkes—and in the sequel she begs her new sister-in-law not to read certain “Scenes” in the company of gentlemen, who will treat them with embarrassing “Levity.”¹⁹ As she rises in the social scale, then, she adopts an elite critical discourse shared by the novelist’s genteel correspondents: the poet Mary Barber reported that, for Dublin society, “the Scene where the Master and Mrs. Jewkes had her in Bed between them was a little too strongly Painted,” and an anonymous “Lover of Virtue” justifies those passages of “the strongest Colouring” by finding descriptions “full as strong” in *Paradise Lost*.

Indeed, Richardson himself defends these “necessary” episodes in language that combines intense corporeality with painterly and theatrical imagery. He refers to “Tender Scenes,” “warm Scene[s],” or “deep Scenes,” and promises Stephen Duck, disappointed at the lack of distress in the sequel, “a strong Jealous Scene.”²⁰ Though the upper-class villains in *Pamela* use terms like “speaking Picture” or “pretty Image” as an insult to trivialize and objectify their serving maid, Richardson does not scruple to use the pictorial to give his project prestige; in a dedication intended for a new edition, he assured an unnamed Lady that it was *her* “Picture” that he drew in the novel, *she* who “sat, in the Writer’s Mind” for Pamela’s virtues (though not her lowly status). He even commissioned two sets of illustrations, raising a storm of discussion over whether the reader, “jealous in Behalf of our *inward* Idea of PAMELA’s *Person*,” could bear to see a “figur’d Pre-tence to Resemblance.”²¹ If Pamela is to touch the reading public “sensibly,” her “mournful Relation” must be mediated through the *sensibilia* that the audience is prepared to receive.

The first step in understanding the Pamela phenomenon culturally, then, is to show how the author and his supporters share a critical language with the detractors, a set of assumptions about the text and the reader. As we shall see, both camps assumed that “Pamela” (text and character) could be discussed as an

autonomous embodied person; that the author's representation is something *done* to that person, marking the body or procreating from it sexually; that the successful novel approaches the condition of painting and theater; that its most significant moments can be identified as *scenes*; and that dramatic immediacy operates directly to arouse the spectator, male or female.

***Paméla mise à nue par ses bacheliers:*
The Hostile Responses**

The "hilarious" approach to female subjectivity and social mobility, best exemplified by Fielding's *Shamela*, now seems motivated more by anxiety than confidence. Specifically, the rise of Pamela (and the fall of his own father, who had recently married a former servant) led Fielding to revive the longstanding association between paintings and novels in their effect on the female imagination, both entailing monstrosity on future generations: as a seventeenth-century moralist argued, "since Mothers cannot look at certain paintings without affecting their children, why should we not think that lascivious Histories and Novels may have the same effect on our imagination and always leave some stain on our soul?"²² Fielding's authority figure, the fatherly Parson Oliver, principally objects to the "many lascivious Images" in Richardson's novel, "very improper to be laid before the Youth of either Sex" (*Shamela*, 355). Like Charles Povey, another Antipamelist speaking in the voice of an aged clergyman, Oliver conceives the act of reading as a viewing of images "laid before" the consumer, rather than an imaginative identification with the character from within. Povey claims that "the Sight of such Instances" as the attempted rape would inspire women to emulate, not the heroine's resistance, but her proximity to the male in a scene of sexual opportunity. Like Pamela's own father, he assumes an already-fallen female subject and effectively pornographizes those situations that for Pamela herself provoke terror rather than erotic reverie.²³ A similar spectatorial theory of reading and a similar assumption about female responsiveness vitiate Parson Oliver's ostensibly moral concern. He imagines the encounter with *Pamela*, not as the sublime "possession" experienced by readers converted to Richardson's epistolary method, but as a visual feast; when he refuses to "agree that my Daughter should entertain herself with some of his Pictures" (*Shamela*, 324), he makes it sound as if she is enjoying a set of "Aretino's Postures" under the bedclothes. As an example, he contrasts his daughter's presumed arousal with his own ability to "see the Girl lie on her Back, with one Arm round Mrs. *Jewkes* and the other round the Squire, naked in Bed, with his Hand on her Breasts, &c." without emotion, chastened as he is by "Age and Temper." But this "seeing" of the erotic scene, this framing of Pamela's nakedness for the eye of a supposed observer on B.'s side, takes place largely in Oliver's own mind, since Pamela narrates the incident from her own perspective.

Fielding is of course denouncing this spectatorial approach; to adapt Michael Fried's terms, he attempts to trounce a sexualized "absorption" (in *Tickletext*) by revealing its affinity to "theatricality" (in *Pamela*). But the words that articulate the voice of parental concern, the *mise en scène* that shapes the presentation of iniquity, reduplicate the young man's perspective and amplify the very lewdness they expose. To this extent, Fielding's figure of denunciation participates in the eroticized sensibility he condemns, the "glowingly painted" responsiveness of Aaron Hill, Mr. Booby, and Parson *Tickletext*.

The anonymous *Pamela Censured*, like Fielding's *Shamela*, rests on the idea that the representation of subjectivity operates on the young and susceptible reader "almost without the Intervention of the Will." (The phrase comes from Johnson's famous *Rambler* essay on fiction, a reminder of how widespread was this fear of novel-induced automatism.) According to the Censurer, the images interspersed throughout *Pamela* "must necessarily," "directly," and "infallibly" inflame the reader; it is "impossible to read it without endeavouring to gratify the Passion" it raises. The view of *Pamela* that B. obtains through the keyhole, for example, "must naturally excite Passions of Desire"; only the elderly could read that scene without wishing to assume the master's privileged (and self-evidently erotic) viewing position. Oddly, the Censurer takes an extreme voluntarist position when ascribing "artful" motives to *Pamela*—her keyhole swoon becomes a deliberate taunting self-display, like "what Ladies of Fashion do to their Footmen every Morning, shew themselves in Dishabille"—and yet posits a female reader totally lacking in will or interpretive ability.²⁴ And he ascribes to the novelist himself the seductive agency implicit in critical terms like *paint* and *touch*. "The Passions [are] so strongly touch'd that it is impossible for Youth to read it without Sympathy, and even wishing themselves in such a Situation" (23). When the "Modest Young Lady" reads that Mr. B. touches *Pamela*'s breast, "her own soft Breasts must heave at the Idea and secretly sigh for the same Pressure"; when the scene of struggle moves to the bed, she will automatically form the "criminal Thought" appropriate for that setting, and "privately may seek Remedies which may drive her to the most unnatural Excesses" (23–24). This onanistic scene of reading comes far closer to *Thérèse philosophe* than to anything deducible from the pages of Richardson, where we find the different passions of horror, pain, and confusion. By developing an exclusively sexual perspective, *Pamela Censured* shuts out the obvious objection that a reader "naturally" prone to relive every impression must be influenced more strongly by *Pamela*'s explicit terror than by any eroticism implicit in the silences of the text.

While "Miss" masturbates uncontrollably, in the teenage family romance projected by the Censurer, her brother stalks the corridors in the grip of a different kind of emulation, more situational and strategic. Richardson writes "so agreeably and warmly" that "the young Gentleman Reader will at best be tempted to rehearse some of the same Scenes" with a servant in his own house (23). Arousal

here works not by a quasi-physical “touch,” as if the author caresses the reader’s breast directly, but by dramatic introjection. The young man hollows out whichever onstage character enjoys the best view of the female body (suppressing any sense of the character’s individual experience), and inserts himself into the empty space that remains. So, for example, when Pamela twirls around in her rustic dress, “no young Gentleman who reads this, but wishes himself in Mrs. *Jervis’s* Place to *turn Pamela about and about and examine all her Dress to her under Petticoat*” (36). (Richardson’s “Conduct” in enticing the reader corresponds exactly, in this critique, to Mrs. Jervis’s actions as a “Procuress.”) Confident that he is appealing to a like-minded audience, the Censurer assumes that “few Youths” would not “secretly wish to be in the Squire’s Place” when he attempts to rape Pamela. Having occupied this “Place,” they “naturally conclude they would not let the Nymph escape so easily,” and so in imagination supplant the incompetent B., finishing the job efficiently and triumphing over their fictitious rival (41). Similar assumptions—that young gentlemen automatically read novels as instruction manuals in sexual assault, that they will identify with B. only as rampant male and boast that they would have scored in the same position, that *Pamela* is a failure because the hero is a “Booby” rather than an adroit rapist of chambermaids—surface throughout the casual and facetious responses initiated by *Shamela*. As the Fieldingesque *Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela* (1754) later puts it, “by giving so circumstantial an account of Booby’s fruitless operations” the novelist has “pointed out to young gentlemen, who may have the same designs, the quite contrary method, by which they may assuredly promise themselves better success.”²⁵

Pamela Censured thus supplements Richardson’s voyeurism in the very act of denouncing it. Novelistic representation acts as a licensing device, “permitting us to fill our Fancy with the naked Charms of the lovely *Pamela*” (34)—as Sterne would later invite the amorous reader to fill in Widow Wadman according to his own fantasy. This “luxuriant” visualization serves as the paradigm for both readerly response and authorial agency. The Censurer conceives erotic representation as a sort of studio demonstration, in which the likeness emerges before an enchanted audience. When B. touches Pamela’s breasts in the Lincolnshire bed scene, for example, “the Scene rises, the Colours begin to glow and rise to the Life” (41–42). Here and throughout *Pamela* he searches for a model of authorial agency that combines painting and theater into a single spectacle, where the medium is female flesh and the effect male arousal. He imagines a Richardson figure who worries that “his Male Readers should have no Entertainment” when Pamela collapses, and who therefore “spread[s] her upon the Floor, for all who will peep thro’ the Door to surfeit on the Sight,” Her agitation serves only for aesthetic effect, to make the *tableau* more *vivant*. Bringing “hidden Beauties” to light, the author-artist “takes care to put them in Life by a Flurry lest they should appear too dead and languid” (28–29). Richardson supposedly includes “all the

pretty little necessary Things that the most luscious and warm Description can paint, or the fondest Imagination conceive" (31); Pamela has passed out and describes nothing whatsoever in this episode, but the narrative situation "permits" the critic to perform some strong painting of his own.

It would oversimplify the history of the novel's reception, however, to arrange it into good or bad readings according to their sympathy with the original. Significantly, the Antipamelists develop the painterly and carnal imagery used by friends like Mary Barber and Aaron Hill, and the Pamelist counterattack replicates the Censurer's scenography of arousal. Several readers noticed the libertine narrowing and intensification of the focus in *Pamela Censured*, and interpret it as a pornographic "Curlism," covertly stimulating demand for *Pamela* by creating lascivious expectations. A rival plagiarist even discovered, in the Censurer's ability to construct an arousal scene out of terror and violence, a forerunner of the Marquis de Sade: "The Shrieks of a Woman in Labour would excite his Passions, and the Agonies of a dying Woman inflame his Blood, and stimulate him to commit a Rape."²⁶ John Kelly—interested in protecting the Pamela character because he had plagiarized it for his own *Pamela's Conduct in High Life*—points out that "the Warmth of Imagination in this virtuous Censurer supplies" the inflaming images it condemns (1:xiv). Kelly provides an unusually clear account of textual amplification as sexual activity, and spells out the illicit and violent compact between critic and reader:

You must imagine as lusciously as he does; if the Letter has not discover'd enough, the pious Censurer lends a Hand, and endeavours to *surfeit your Sight* by lifting the Covering which was left by the Editor, and with the Hand of a boisterous Ravisher takes the Opportunity of *Pamela's* being in a Swoon to —— But I am writing to a Lady, and shall leave his gross Ideas to such as delight to regale their Sensuality on the most luscious and *enflaming Images*. (1:xv)

In an infinite regress, to imagine this ravishing of propriety the counter-critic must himself entice the reader into an imaginary rape scene, playing the dance of veils with dashes at the climactic moment. Kelly does understand the process of introjection whereby the libertine reader triumphs over B.'s lack of expertise, but he duplicates it in the paraphrase intended to expose it; the Censurer "thinks him a silly Country Booby, a half-paced Sinner, a Milk-sop to be capable of Compassion, and no doubt would gladly have had him gone thorough, that he might have had the Pleasure of imaginary Pimping, and have *surfeited his Sight*" (1:xvi).

Can we then assume that, while all these secondary figures "Retail" or "Pimp" their debased Pamelas, the author operates in a different and purer realm? In many cases, Richardson does achieve effects of empathy and discrimination that the critics and imitators, whether hostile or friendly, simply fail to grasp. Frequently, these followers ignore the particularizing detail or significant silence supplied in Pamela's "own" letter and journals, supplanting it with a generic per-

spective and an impersonal female body. Nevertheless, those readings that stress an affinity with pornography are not entirely wrong. Richardson can neither control nor dissociate himself from the participatory, projective, emotive reading process that he himself initiated by choosing the novel form, placing “a poor Girl’s little &c.” at the center of the story, valorizing sentiment, investing significance in the “touch,” transforming narrative into “Scenes” of increasing passion, and pitching the whole work to an excitable public as a conduct book, a stimulus to action. He himself recognizes that readers *do* things with texts rather than passively consuming them, and admits that he bears this interaction in mind as he composes. When Richardson justifies the detail of his own “warm” scenes, he assumes (like *Pamela Censured*) that male and male-identified readers will project themselves into the “room” created by the scene and then rewrite it more pornographically, unless forestalled by precisely the physical description that critics find objectionable. In *Pamela* part II, for example, Lady Davers endorses Pamela’s account of B.’s assaults (and thereby answers critics of part I) by asking, “If you had not recited all you could recite, would there not have been Room for any one, who should have seen what you writ, to imagine they had still been worse?” She herself, had Pamela “been less particular in the Circumstances,” would have assumed that B. had actually raped her; vivid descriptions “put a Bound, as it were, to one’s apprehensive Imagination” (3:45–46). Richardson seeks to establish writing as containment or “Bound,” but despite all his efforts readers will create a “Room,” a displacement. Indeed, his own proliferation of revisions and sequels, including *Clarissa*, only provides fresh “rooms to imagine.” In his defense of the *Clarissa* fire scene, the novelist himself acknowledges being influenced by the accusation, from just those libertine-associationist readers, that Lovelace had not mounted a sufficiently skillful campaign.²⁷

Throughout the *Pamela* literature, then, interactive and semipublic models of the reading process produce a kind of visual “Pimping,” more blatant than the original novel but evidently motivated by competition for the same resources and effects. In *Memoirs of the Life of Lady H—, the Celebrated Pamela*, for example, the love interest depends entirely on a steamy scene of nudity and voyeurism; the baronet falls for the scullery maid after glimpsing her naked breasts at the sink, “which suddenly inflamed his Imagination, and caused a Tumult in his Spirits.” The author of this chapbook morality, which eulogizes the virtue of its real-life heroine even more extravagantly than Richardson praised his fictional Pamela, then recreates these charms for the benefit of the audience.²⁸ The 1741 *Life of Pamela*, which reduces the epistolary novel to third-person narrative in the interests of plain truth, adds elaborate fashion-magazine descriptions to those passages where B. attempts to seduce Pamela with the splendor of his clothing (75) and his library (84)—scenes where Richardson had made Pamela suppress the details, to show her confusion. When Richardson himself introduces elaborate description into *Pamela* part II, the context suggests aristocratic decadence; the

errant B. and the alluring Countess—the source of the “strong Jealous Scene” that raises the temperature of this sequel—compare her face with Pamela’s feature by feature, like connoisseurs.²⁹ He thus creates a “Room” for critique and emulation of these rival narratives.

We would expect the narrow boundary between visual realism and voyeuristic procurement to shrink still further in theatrical adaptations, where the heroine’s purity and authenticity must be acted out in painted scenes by dubious bodies. Even when the dramatist shares the sentimental values and respects the language of the novelist, the necessities of spectacle may shift the perspective toward voyeurism, placing the audience in the “room of the squire.” So in *Pamela, or Virtue Triumphant* (1742), intended for the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, Mr. Beaulove amplifies the words of the novel and projects his intimate visual and tactile experience into the larger space of the auditorium, making libertines of the public.³⁰ In the novel, B.’s gesture of groping her breasts terrified Pamela, causing an absence in the narrative as she faints or falls into convulsions; but here the master holds the stage: “These moist Lips, this swelling Neck, these heaving Breasts that sue for Pressure, justly reproach me with Cowardice. . . . These snowy Globes are capable of tenderer Passions than mine—dissolving Softness!” He then “*put[s] his Hand on his Bosom,*” according to the printed text, though both text and context cue the actor to reach out toward Pamela (21–22). The ambiguity is telling; in whichever direction the hand follows the script, the language of sensibility has been made to stand in for the most blatant sexual appropriation. Rather than being “touched” by Pamela’s narration, actor and audience conspire to do the touching.

Speaking Pictures

Dramatic and pictorial adaptations of the Pamela theme reliteralize the pervasive imagery of scenography and “strong painting” that, as we have seen, unites the opposing camps in the literary debate. Questions that haunt all modes of fiction become insistently concrete: how to supply a body for “nobody,” how to describe without exploiting, how to express interiority and authenticity, whether to show or tell. The “room of the squire”—the spatial-perspectival arrangements that channel power and desire—may be left implicit in narrative, but must be rendered precisely in the oil painting and the stage picture. As Joseph Highmore writes, “the Painter is at Liberty to choose his Distance” and “Station,” but must decide whether to compose “a Picture with respect to which the Spectator is not confined” or one where “the Station of the Spectator becomes necessarily fixed, and unalterable.”³¹

What “Station,” then, does Highmore choose when he reinterprets *Pamela* on canvas? Selecting moments that combine narrative and painterly qualities, he



FIGURE 1. Joseph Highmore, *Pamela Fainting*, 1743–44. Oil on canvas; no. 3 in series of 12 (Felton Bequest, 191). Reproduced by permission of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

shows the first notorious bed scene as a Gothic drama, just after Pamela has fainted; the intense contrasts between the figures and the bed curtains, the silvery skin tone (matching the “rich silk and silver” of B.’s gown), and the exposure of the “Neck” all suggest a sensuous fascination with the swoon itself (fig. 1). Highmore seems to emulate less Richardson than Marivaux, whose Marianne thus describes a fainting Englishwoman: “I have never seen anything as touching as that face, on which the image of death had been painted—but an image that inspired tenderness rather than fear. . . . With that unlaced body, that beautiful head hanging down [and] those beautiful eyes closed, I can think of no object more interesting, no situation more capable of moving the heart.”³² Highmore exploits a similar “interest,” focusing the attention on “ce corps délacé, cette belle tête penchée” in their deathlike immobility. Later in the series, however, he presents the second bedroom scene as a reverie in burgundy velvet and warm flesh

tones, choosing a time when Pamela is still awake and undressing, before B. emerges from his female disguise and attempts another rape (fig. 2). The master has been displaced to the dark edge of the composition, so the scene is not literally framed from his point of view; but the painter still chooses the most voyeuristic station and moment, “fixes” on the display of skin, and arranges the light to perform what B. would like to do himself: unlace the garter, peel back the shirt, and caress the exposed body. As in many critiques of the novel, the painter’s eye supplants the Booby Squire.

The tradition of the nude, adapted to the intimate scale of these genre- and conversation-pieces, allows a more direct expression of the bodily fixation we have seen in the literary versions. The squire in *Virtue Triumphant* who reaches out for “dissolving Softness,” or the baronet in *Memoirs of the Celebrated Pamela* who falls in love with the maid scrubbing dishes, really seeks a pictorial image of the



FIGURE 2. Joseph Highmore, *Pamela in the Bedroom with Mrs Jewkes and Mr B.*, 1743–44. Oil on canvas; no. 7 in series of 12 (NO 3574). Reproduced by permission of the Tate Gallery, London.

pert working woman slipping out of her clothes, like Hogarth's Harlot (rising from bed in her "desabille") or Philip Mercier's *Woman Taking Off Her Stocking*.³³ Mercier produced both official portraits and "fancy pictures" of playful children and women in seductive undress; interestingly, the real-life baronet commissioned him to paint his ex-servant wife, the supposed original of "the Celebrated Pamela." When he paints "nobody," however, Mercier relaxes the formalities of the portrait and pushes carnal display to the edge of pornography. In several paintings of Pamela, as in the "Beautiful Print . . . of Pamela rising from her Bed" alluringly advertised throughout London, he transfers erotic agency and consciousness to the heroine herself. Mr. B. initiated his seduction attempt by indecently mentioning the stockings he bequeathed to Pamela from his late mother's wardrobe; Mercier (like Highmore) captures her taking those garments off and eliminates secondary figures to leave her alone with the viewer, glancing into the wings with a look that suggests reverie and anticipation (fig. 3). Mr. B. lurked in the housekeeper's closet or under female draperies to penetrate the secrets of the bedroom; Mercier's Pamela opens her bed curtain and her clothing toward the spectator (fig. 4).³⁴ For the orthodox Richardsonian, this image represents a complete and shocking reversal of the true Pamela, "far more suitable as an illustration to Fielding's *Shamela*."³⁵ But there is nothing meretricious or coyly "virtuous" about Mercier's figure, whose face engages the viewer with a frank, personal gaze more direct than the conventional "charms" of the body. Pamela's openness and *fraicheur* form a visual counterpoint to the letter that lies open at the right of the picture, signed "your dutiful and ever-chaste daughter"—a glimpse of the freshly written original that Richardson could only render in the secondary medium of print. The picture becomes a *paragone*, an invitation to compare the resources of painted and written intimacy.

In the theater, as on canvas, the physical and performative "production" may come to occupy the foreground. Despite neoclassical restraints and the new aspiration to genteel refinement, the theater still depended on glamour and self-promotion; it pays to advertise the "snowy Globes" of the actress, to dramatize the flesh by, as it were, giving speaking parts to the breasts and hands. (As Beau-
love exclaims in *Pamela, or Virtue Triumphant*, "these heaving Breasts that sue for Pressure, justly reproach me with Cowardice.") The casting system demands a greater role for B., supplanting Richardson's technique of showing the master only through the eyes of the servant; in all the dramatizations, increasing attention is given to the male characters' point of view. Certainly this objectification of Pamela is a potential rather than a necessity, and most stage versions preserve respect for her virtue, privacy, and personal integrity—at least enough to guarantee a soft core of "sentiment" available for communion. A skillful dramatist like Goldoni can find intensely physical means of expressing interiority on stage, without resorting to the leering descriptions and broad gestures of *Virtue Triumphant*: all the harassment and "sauciness" have been removed, and the interaction



FIGURE 3 (top). Philip Mercier, *Pamela* (?). Oil on canvas. Christie's catalog, 24 November 1978, lot 102. Location unknown.

FIGURE 4 (bottom). Philip Mercier, *Pamela*. Oil on canvas. Christie's catalog, 29 June 1934, lot 35. Location unknown.

between Pamela and Bonfil reduced to a restrained but effective parting scene; powerful emotion literally wells up as she kisses the master's hand in a formal farewell, wets it with her tears, and then must dry it on her apron. The "dissolving Softness" of sensibility even spread through the male characters as the 1740s progressed, to judge from the diminution of attempted-rape scenes and the increasing tendency to faint; in Henry Giffard's *Pamela* and "Mr. Edge's" ballad-opera the father swoons, and in Goldoni, Bonfil himself suffers an "orrible svenimento" at the critical turning point of his struggle between love and honor.³⁶

Despite this pursuit of sincerity, however, professional comedy still at times punctures the sentimental flight, hints to the audience that all is illusion, makes its own performativity visible. Giffard casts Mrs. Jewkes as a man, and sends the audience home with a bawdy epilogue; Edge adds lewd details to the wedding narrative that causes old Andrews to faint. Goldoni suppresses Mrs. Jewkes, but coarsens Mrs. Jervis by having her make running commentaries on Pamela's success in snaring milord; her closeness to Pamela makes them both seem like conspirators. De Boissy and Voltaire introduce a stage-yokel gardener to form a love triangle with Pamela and tempt her to mate within her own class. *Virtue Triumphant* plays an interesting variation on the question of sincerity, exploiting the inherent illusionism of dramatic representation. When Squire Beaulove looks at Pamela's first faint "through the Crack of the Door" he assumes it is genuine—"Ha! she lies trembling on the Floor, what an Agony she's in, 'twere barbarous to pursue further now"—but once Mrs. Jervis comes in, bravado makes him assert that her collapse is "pretended," as Mr. B. does in Richardson. This histrionic and metatheatrical interpretation then sticks to him, even when he finds himself alone: "This is but a studied Farce," he maintains in a soliloquy, "to try the Strength of my Inclinations" (22, 23). The actor draws two opposite conclusions from what he sees: ocular demonstration as absolute truth, staged spectacle as falsehood incarnate.

All these metatheatrical elements unite in Louis de Boissy's *Paméla en France*, which celebrates the resourcefulness of theater, the public availability of fiction, and the seductive power of art.³⁷ This hybrid of "studied Farce," sentimental comedy, and opera continues the Anglo-French cultural wars that began when Richardson chose a French writer to puff the first edition; the *envoi* to Jean-Baptiste de Freval's epistle invites Pamela to cross the Channel and reform the corrupt manners of France (5). The Abbé Marquet responded by interpreting every coarse gesture of Mr. B. and Lady Davers as an endorsement of "les manières anglaises." B. failed to seduce Pamela because he utterly lacks the "sentiment délicat" and the "plaisir vif" that derives from satisfying another person and cannot understand or act upon the signs of arousal that the French critic finds so easily in Pamela, the "sensibilité" that throws her into convulsions (*Lettre sur Pamela* [1742]).³⁸ In this cultural translation, sensibility acquires its primarily sexual meaning. In de Boissy's expropriation, Pamela has actually been rescued

from her Lincolnshire prison—before anything serious develops with Mr. B.—by a mysterious French countess. At her manor house in rural France, the subtitle explains, her virtue will be *mieux éprouvée*—better tested than in England, where the loutish B. never learned to stop treating her as a servant. This exaggeration conceals some indebtedness on de Boissy's part: in fact Richardson's B. *had* softened Pamela by ushering her into a splendid library decorated with "rich Pictures," praising her "charming manner of Writing," and begging her to cast aside the master-servant relationship (*Pamela*, 82–84). In effect, he invites her into the aesthetic realm, and this is precisely how his French counterpart prevails with her, as we shall see.

This transplanted Pamela defies the narrow categories provided by the English Shamela controversy. De Boissy gives her considerable refinement, but (like Voltaire) refuses to make her an aristocrat by birth. She is "connoisseuse" (as Marquet had complained of the novel character), but not in a whorish way.³⁹ She can articulate her own desire more effectively than the English waiting-maid, and frankly wishes for a lover who could combine the gardener's "roundness" and "straightness" with the aristocrat's looks and style; she imagines a male Pamela, who joins "close" and "round" rusticity with marriageable accomplishments. At times, too, she seems archly aware of her preexistence as an artifact, a product of the Pamela cult: at the start of act 1 we see her at the canonical writing desk, expressing relief that she will not have to pen a "second volume," and at the end, when the countess throws off her disguise and reveals herself as an amorous marquis, "I ought to faint, but the Public——" On stage, this nobody never lets the audience forget that she is a somebody—no less than Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, star of the Italian comedy and soon to become a novelist and dramatist in her own right.⁴⁰

The three-act structure allows the marquis three approaches to seduction, and several scenes are devoted to discussions of methodology with his confidant, the local chevalier. Female dress intrigues but does not fire her. Good French manners elicit an important confession: she begs him to behave as badly as the English squire, so that she can remain indifferent, her *délicatesse* not *ménagée*, her *sensibilité* not *excitée* (*Paméla en France*, 37, 39). But exaggerated Parisian courtship, as rehearsed by the chevalier, only makes her laugh. The marquis rejects the suggestion of open violence (when his friend proposes forcing her into a coach at the garden gate, as Lovelace would later abduct Clarissa) but finally adopts a technique that both men label "douce violence" (56, 67, 91). In the genre-bending third act, he makes the representation itself the seductive agent, the object and the figure of desire. Just as in Richardson Pamela's letters become the agent of B.'s transformation, so here de Boissy and his production team hypostatize set painting, music, and dance. Before her gaze, the walls of the manor change to a splendid palace and music pours from the wings: "*Mon coeur sensible a peine à s'en défendre*; my feeling heart can scarce defend itself, my eyes are enchanted, my ear

is ravished" (76). As if involuntarily, she starts to declaim, then to sing recitatif, and then to burst out in full song. Music becomes the theme as well as the medium: he invites her to interlace hearts like the arms of the dancers, to blend with him like the harmony of flute and *musette*; she admits that "La voix de ce qu'on aime, / De tous les instrumens est le plus séducteur" (86). Their arias become performative in the sense used by speech-act theory, enacting what they say. And along with this transformation of setting and delivery, the very identity of the characters is subsumed into their singing roles: the marquis becomes "Le Plaisir," Pamela becomes "La Sagesse," and their conflict is resolved in a quartet with two wholly allegorical figures, Decency and Gaity. As in Aaron Hill's "glowing" fantasies of the body of Virtue, allegoresis increases physical involvement. Pamela/Sagesse breaks out of her restraint and joins Decency in song and dance; the marquis/Plaisir sets aside his class pride and accepts her insistence on marriage. In a synthesis typical of the 1740s, esteem and desire combine, transforming mere "Pleasure" into a higher "Volupté." Self-parody and sentiment weave precariously in this sublime apotheosis; after the most tender and intricate duo, de Boissy risks a Parisian in-joke, a teasing flash of theatrical self-reference. As the god of love descends, the marquis hails his chariot as if it were a taxi, as if the entire cast had already decamped to the metropolis, shuttling between its fashionable performance spaces: "Fly as fast as you can to the Opéra!"⁴¹

It might be tempting, after de Boissy's meta-aesthetic extravaganza, to explain the Pamela controversy in terms of properties inherent in the medium or mode of representation. In the beginning, Pamela touches Mr. B. with her "Relation" because she presents it in a form considered authentic—the spontaneous letter that gives readers, from Aaron Hill onward, the sensation of living within the character's mind. Richardson's ability to "bring the torch into the depths of the cavern" clearly depends on his narrative method. Whether or not one reads between the lines, the protagonist is articulating her own experience from within, "to the moment," setting authorial "Bounds" and denying "Room" for indecent speculation. Her own sexuality can be seen first as an overhasty denial, then as a gradual increase in introspection; Mr. B.'s normally privileged sexuality can be seen from the victim's point of view, its attraction vastly outweighed by its encroaching menace and dangerous inconsistency. Reformatting this original Pamela—in criticisms like *Pamela Censured*, in parodies like *Shamela*, or in cross-media adaptations like Mercier's painting or de Boissy's operetta—would reassert control over her fascinating but threatening subjectivity. Internalists like Diderot continue to value the "invisible" epistolary mode, but the public demands a Pamela more objectified and artifactual, embalmed in waxwork or fluttering on the fan. The story flourishes in media that express or draw forth the private, inward *sentiment* of the character (in blushing paint, thrilling aria, throbbing vio-

lins) but do so in spectatorial forms that place the consumer securely in control, in the audience or in perspective, observing and taking pleasure in Pamela's emotions through the frame of the painting or the proscenium of the theater. To adopt Highmore's term, these "Stations" define the heroine as B. had originally approached her, as a performer and as an object of pleasure rather than as a sincere and feeling fellow subject. Subtler forms of this perspectival control reinterpret the "touching" component of sensibility, recognizing the emotion but interpreting it as desire rather than pathos. And the move from discursive to extralinguistic expression (painting, bodily movement, music) confirms the ideology that underlies both the moralistic critiques and the spectacular adaptations: the belief, sometimes stated as a fear and sometimes as a hope, in the automatic and thus irresistible operation of "inflaming Images."

The problems with this approach are obvious: the "original" letters are in fact male-authored fictions that stage female subjectivity according to their own agendas; the "sincerity-effect" is itself a learned, culturally mediated response; though many of the Shamelite criticisms are demonstrably wrong, Richardson's novel still cannot be seen as absolutely different, aloof from contemporary modes of soliciting desire and marketing interest. Furthermore, generalizations about the properties of different art forms can be attacked on two fronts, empirical (many paintings and operas do *not* foreground the seductiveness of their own medium) and theoretical (to posit inevitable effects is to adopt the very automatism one is trying to analyze). Nevertheless, the politics of form does *help* to explain the continued expropriation of Richardson's character, and some contemporaries did couch the Pamela problem in exactly these terms. Clearly, the novel as a *genre* raised anxious questions about reference and identity, female sexuality and class mobility, even though the answers to these questions cannot be predicted mechanically. Richardson himself acknowledged the corrupting effects of the "mere Novel," and ascribed the power of his own fiction to its "Narrative Manner," arguing that a third-person account would have been merely a "dry Collection of Morals," unable to "Entertain and Divert."⁴²

Once again, the counter-critics agree in their underlying assumptions, even when they draw opposite conclusions. *Pamela Censured* identifies the source of Pamela's troubling sexuality in its form and its concealed fictionality. Demolishing Richardson's claim merely to have edited *papiers trouvés*, it then tries to brand fiction itself as problematic (despite having just commended *La Paysanne parvenue* as an exemplary moral romance): whenever narrative departs from literal truth "*Fancy must take Place, and where that presides, any Gentleman who is too much troubled with it, knows the Consequence*" (7). Epistolary fiction only compounds the problem, spinning an illusory web of empathy, a veil of virtuous subjectivity. Like the redactor of the *Life of Pamela*, the Censurer rewrites the text as third-person narrative, explicitly dismissing all the circumstantiality of the letters and all the attempts to render Pamela's subjectivity, as a mere decoy. Only in this

reduction will “the loose Images”—what the novel is *really* about—“be the more connected, and glare the stronger” (25). This exhibitionism, this mounting and spotlighting of the softest touches and warmest scenes, is presented as a truth about the original novel rather than a product of the Censurer’s masculinist reading. But this truth must be revealed by an act, a performance upon the body of Pamela-as-text precisely analogous to the violation supposedly censured. In the words of the passage cited as my second epigraph, the Censurer invites us to “view *Pamela* then, divested of the Drapery in which she is enclos’d, tho’ not hid.” Can the process of reading fiction ever escape the endless circle of enclosing and displaying, divesting and investing, an imaginary body?

Notes

1. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, ed. T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel (Boston, 1971), 208. All subsequent references to the novel and its forematter come from this edition.
2. *Pamela Censured* (1741), 24–25.
3. Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, ed. Douglas Brooks (1971), 322–23 (all subsequent references to *Shamela* from this edition); the name *Tickletext* comes, appropriately, from Aphra Behn’s *Feign’d Curtezans*. (Unless otherwise noted, the place of publication for all texts cited is London.)
4. This is a composite of works produced at various times during the decade, taken from the standard account in T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography* (Oxford, 1971), chap. 7; cf. also Richardson, *Pamela*, xvii–xxii; and the Garland facsimile series *Richardsoniana*. Of the two waxworks, the one showing her “in High Life” was on a larger scale.
5. E. Purdie, “Some Adventures of ‘Pamela’ On the Continental Stage,” in *German Studies Presented to Professor H. G. Fiedler* (Oxford, 1938), 365–66; Mary Hunter, “Pamela: The Offspring of Richardson’s Heroine in Eighteenth-Century Opera,” *Mosaic* 28, no. 4 (1985): 61–76 (a reference I owe to Kay Hettich). In *La Buona figliuola, Opéra comique en trois actes, parodiée en français sur la musique du celebre Piccini* (Paris, 1772), cf. the formalized contest of “la tendresse” and “la sagesse” (34), the duo in which both pray for success in the love struggle (35), and the final refrain “Tout est plaisir, plus de chagrin” (36); these resemblances to de Boissy may be stock elements of the “Italiens” repertoire.
6. Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford, 1982), 6 (like Superman, *Pamela* is “less a ‘novel’ than a password . . . merely the occasion or organizing principle of a multimedia affair, stretching all the way from domestic commodities to public spectacles” [my emphasis]); Terri Nickel, “Pamela as Fetish: Masculine Anxiety in Henry Fielding’s *Shamela* and James Parry’s *The True Anti-Pamela*,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 22 (1992): 37–40, 47–48; Martin Battestin, cited in Nickel, “Pamela as Fetish,” 39. For a nontraditional variant on the denial of the body and restitution of the “pure original,” see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford, 1987): “Richardson

stages a scene of rape that transforms an erotic and permeable body into a self-enclosed body of words" (116); Pamela's protest that she really is "*Pamela, her own self!*" reveals that "seduction becomes the means to dislocate female identity from the body and to define it as a metaphysical object" (117).

7. Tassie Gwilliam, *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender* (Stanford, Calif., 1993), 27 (and cf. 28); Kristina Straub, "Reconstructing the Gaze: Voyeurism in Richardson's *Pamela*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 18 (1988): 419–31, a convincing essay on the problematics of the gaze in *Pamela* that still uses terms that endorse Fielding's truth claims (*Shamela* "exposes a voyeuristic economy" in *Pamela*, "reveals" an important truth "about Richardson's text"; 419); Elizabeth Einberg, "Joseph Highmore, 1692–1780," in her Tate Gallery catalogue *Manners and Morals: Hogarth and British Painting, 1700–1760* (1987), 156; Hunter, "Pamela," 63, citing a review by Francis Jeffrey.
8. Denis Diderot, "Éloge de Richardson," in *Oeuvres esthétiques*, ed. Paul Vernière (Paris, 1959), 32; Samuel Johnson cited in *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Ronald Paulson and Thomas Lockwood (1969), 438 (and cf. 396, where Richardson earlier uses the identical clock analogy to praise Sarah Fielding at her brother's expense); Edward Young cited by Pat Rogers in *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Cambridge, 1989), 212.
9. Unless otherwise indicated, citations from Aaron Hill come from Richardson, *Pamela* (here 10). As Donald Wehrs points out in a review of Doody and Sabor's *Tercentenary Essays* (*Scribnerian* 25 [1993]: 224–25), even sympathetic scholars can adopt a "spectator's stance" that belies the intense personal involvement still experienced by untutored readers of *Pamela*; he refers to the testimony of students at a design college, described by Florian Stuber.
10. Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (1993), 32.
11. This formulation of the upcoming argument has been greatly helped by Catherine Gallagher's concepts and comments.
12. Aaron Hill, letter in Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Forster MSS (hereafter FMS) 13.2, fol. 52; Samuel Richardson, *Selected Letters*, ed. John Carroll (Oxford, 1964), 41, 43 (cf. "Scandalous Attempts of Ingrafting," 44), 133, 298; FMS 16.1, fol. 56 (the trembling hand allows us to read this as one of many late emendations of this MS letter collection by Richardson himself). On a letter from Solomon Lowe, praising the work he has created for the publishing trade by inspiring critiques and parodies (fol. 78), Richardson penned another version of the "Birth" statement.
13. *Pamela Censured* quotes these title-page words on its own title page; for early advertisements, see Bernard Kreissman, *Pamela-Shamela: A Study of the Criticisms, Burlesques, Parodies, and Adaptations of Richardson's 'Pamela'* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1960), 3 (Richardson's own advertisement) and 6 ("The pleasures of conjugal love revealed [i.e., Nicolas Venette's popular sex manual] of the same Letter and Size with Pamela, and very proper to be bound with it").
14. Richardson, *Pamela*, 7; *Life of Pamela* (1741), 68 (one of many attempts to correct the corrupt Richardson by supplying the true original version of the story); cf. *Pamela Censured* on Mrs. Jervis as "Procuress in Ordinary" (36, 46). For Webster, see Eaves and Kimpel, *Biography*, 58–60, 91 (the essay was certainly published and probably written by Webster); for links between Webster's praise and Pamela's "strangely incautious" dressing up, see Tom Keymer, *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* (Cambridge, 1992), 24; and Gwilliam, *Fictions*, 29–30.
15. Letter from the Hill sisters, 30 December 1740, FMS 13.2, fol. 56. A number of letters in FMS 16.1 offer their contents for inclusion in subsequent editions, among them the

- effusions of an eleven-year-old girl (fol. 51, and cf. 50v, 81, 82, 88v); other fans sent whole new episodes already written as letters, e.g., fols. 27–33 (by George Psalmanazar the “Formosan,” himself a complete fiction) and 68–71.
16. Richardson, *Pamela*, 12 (the phrase ushers in the country-dress passage that Fielding found so voyeuristic); Fielding, *Shamela*, 323; *Pamela Censured*, 10. When Sarah Fielding adopts a similar passionate vocabulary to praise *Clarissa* (“I am all sensation; my heart glows; I am overwhelmed; my only vent is tears; and unless tears could mark my thoughts as legibly as ink, I cannot speak half I feel”), is she following Hill’s trend, or did Henry Fielding react so violently to Hill’s *Pamela* letters because they reminded him of how his sister already responded to novels? See *The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding*, ed. Martin C. Battestin and Clive T. Probyn (Oxford, 1993), 123. For Hill’s response to *Clarissa*, see *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill* (1753), 2:267–69.
 17. Richardson, *Pamela*, 19; Brooks, *Body Work*, 28; Hill, letter to Richardson, December 1740, in Anna Laetitia Barbauld, ed., *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, Selected from the Original Manuscripts* (1804), 1:64 (for more on this boy, Harry Campbell, see 1:59–66, 70–72; and Eaves and Kimpel, *Biography*, 120–21).
 18. Carroll, *Letters*, 117; Richardson, *Pamela*, 142 (I owe this observation to Kathleen Inman).
 19. Richardson, *Pamela*, 78, 102, 176; Richardson’s sequel, added to the novel as vols. 3 and 4 with title pages alluding to her “Exalted Condition” (1742), 3:36 (hereafter *Pamela* part II).
 20. Eaves and Kimpel, *Biography*, 122; FMS 16.1, fols. 50 (letter of 22 June 1741 from “Philaretus”), 53v (Barber), 73v (Richardson to Duck); Carroll, *Letters*, 49, 50, 232. Cf. approving uses of picture- and paint-imagery by Duck (fol. 76), the Ladies of Reading (fol. 17), and the Dean of Christ Church (fol. 79v).
 21. Richardson, *Pamela*, 21 (Aaron Hill, cited in the forematter), 58, 144; FMS 16.1, fol. 10. The first illustrations, by William Hogarth, were indeed rejected, but Richardson did publish a deluxe edition with engravings by Francis Hayman and Hubert François Gravelot.
 22. Jacques Du Bosc, cited by Jean-Paul Desai in Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge, eds., *A History of Women in the West*, vol. 3, *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes* (1993), 272.
 23. Charles Povey, *The Virgin in Eden* (1741), 69.
 24. *Pamela Censured*, title page, 21, 25 (see epigraph above), 31, 60 (and see Gwilliam, *Fictions*, 38–41). Several visualizing moments in the Antipamela literature anticipate *Joseph Andrews*; cf. “*Pamela* is dress’d in Airs, that cannot but raise vain Desires even in Men as chaste as *Joseph*”; Povey, *Virgin*, 68.
 25. *Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela* (1754), 36.
 26. John Kelly, *Pamela’s Conduct in High Life, Publish’d from Her Original Papers* (1741), 1:xiii; like Kelly (*ibid.*), Hill thought that *Pamela Censured* was a puff, much to Richardson’s chagrin; Kreissman, *Pamela-Shamela*, 67. The publisher of *Pamela Censured* also sold William Webster’s *Weekly Miscellany*, the strongest booster of Richardson’s novel; cf. *Pamela Censured*, introd. by Charles Batten Jr. (facsimile edition, Los Angeles, 1976), 65.
 27. Samuel Richardson, *Answer to the Letter of a Very Reverend and Worthy Gentleman, Objecting to the Warmth of a Particular Scene in the History of Clarissa* (1749), ed. T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, *Philological Quarterly* 63 (1984): 401–6, esp. 404 (“The Licentious would have been ready to censure *Lovelace*, and boast what They would have done on the like Occasion, were they not shewn, that *Lovelace* wanted not either Boldness or

Resolution . . . had not the Attempt been particularly described, the *Licentious* would have been induced to *imagine*, and the *Virtuous* to *apprehend* . . . that the Indignities offered to her were of an *higher* and *grosser* Nature, than now there is room to suppose they were"). Carla Hesse's response to an earlier draft helped to clarify the concepts in this paragraph.

28. *Memoirs of the Life of Lady H—, the Celebrated Pamela* (1741), 13; this "true" version purports to be the life of Hannah Sturgis, who did in fact marry her master Sir Arthur Hesilrige in 1725. Did Philip Mercier's 1738 commission to paint the Heselriges (n. 30 below) contribute to his later fascination with Pamela?
29. Richardson, *Pamela* part II, 4:239–44; Margaret Doody notes the "particularly good setting" of this description scene, in the library of the Countess's Windsor house, in *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford, 1974), 91.
30. *Pamela, or Virtue Triumphant* (1742).
31. Joseph Highmore, *A Critical Examination of Those Two Paintings on the Cieling of the Banqueting-house at Whitehall in Which Architecture Is Introduced* (1754), vii, 1.
32. Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux, *La vie de Marianne, ou Les aventures de Madame la Comtesse de * * **, ed. Frédéric Deloffre (Paris, 1957), 350–51; for a 1743 English translation, which omits the "corps délacé," see William Harlin McBurney and Michael Francis Shugrue, eds., *The Virtuous Orphan, or the Life of Marianne Countess of * * * * **: *An Eighteenth-Century English Translation by Mrs. Mary Mitchell Collyer of Marivaux's La Vie de Marianne* (Carbondale, Ill., 1965), 263. This episode came out in 1737, though it was not translated until 1741; the editors discuss the vexed question of Marivaux's influence on Richardson on pp. xxxiii–xxxv, 525–26.
33. Ronald Paulson, ed., *Hogarth's Graphic Works*, 3rd ed. (1989), 76, citing George Vertue's account of the painting, not currently known, that prompted the *Harlot's Progress* series; Christie's catalog, 14 July 1989, lot 72; John Ingamells and Robert Raines, "A Catalogue of the Paintings, Drawings, and Etchings of Philip Mercier," *Walpole Society* 46 (1976–78): 1–70, entries 205 and 206; for the Heselriges, see entries 68–69. I am most grateful to John Ingamells for letting me consult his copy of this catalog, extensively enlarged with MS notes and information from the sale rooms.
34. Christie's catalog, 24 November 1978, lot 102 (identifiable as Pamela from similarities with lot 103); Ingamells and Raines, "Mercier," entry 174. Mercier painted at least four versions of this evidently popular image, listed in Ingamells's catalog (and MS additions) as entries 174, 175, and 175a–c (where he also records Christie's catalog, 24 November 1978, lot 10, used on the cover of the 1986 Everyman edition of *Pamela*). Kreissman, *Pamela-Shamela*, 65, cites the 1750 advertisement but fails to identify the engraving by Jean Heudelot, after fig. 4 (included in the same Christie's lot). In *Pamela Censured*, B.'s embarrassing use of the word "Stockens" (31, 32) becomes evidence of Richardson's attempted seduction of the reader: "Here, says the Author, I'll just give my Readers a soft Touch to see how they will entertain amorous Reflections" (26).
35. T. C. Duncan Eaves, "Graphic Illustration of the Novels of Samuel Richardson, 1740–1810," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 14 (1950–51): 363.
36. Carlo Goldoni, *Pamela nubile* (1750), cited from the bilingual edition, *Pamela, a Comedy* (1756), 100, 122; Henry Giffard, *Pamela, a Comedy, As It Is Perform'd, Gratis, at the Late Theatre in Goodman's Fields* (1742), 56; "Mr. Edge," *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded: An Opera* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1742), 61 (the adapter adds extra bawdy details to Giffard's text, having Mr. Andrews arrive while the newlyweds are actually doing "a Job" together in bed, and faint on hearing this news).
37. Louis de Boissy, *Paméla en France, ou la vertu mieux éprouvée, Comédie en vers et en trois*

- actes, "Nouvelle édition augmentée de la Musique" (n.p., n.d.), 21 (all subsequent references from this edition, the only one to contain the musical score, which has been collated with the Paris editions of 1745 [reissued in de Boissy's *Oeuvres de théâtre* {Paris, 1758}] and 1746); my thanks to Evelyn Walker of the University of Rochester Library Special Collections and Anthony Bliss of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, for making available copies of the 1746 and 1766 versions (the latter has no date on its title page, but has evidently been detached from vol. 9 of Louis de Boissy, *Oeuvres de théâtre . . . corrigée et augmentée* [Paris, 1766]).
38. *Lettre sur Pamela* (1742), ii, 15.
 39. Marquet complains that Pamela is "connoisseuse en oeuillades" when reporting the way milord looked at her in the summerhouse (*Lettre sur Pamela*, 8); unfortunately the suggestive word *oeuillades* (seductive glances) appears only in the translation; *Pamela, ou La Vertu récompensée* (1741), 1:20; and cf. *Pamela*, 34. Like Henry Fielding, who married his servant only a few years after writing *Shamela*, de Boissy was an expert in cross-class unions; his police dossier reads, "He was a gentleman. He married his laundress"; Robert Darnton, "A Police Inspector Sorts His Files," in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), 172.
 40. De Boissy, *Paméla en France*, 6, 15, 24, 70; this speculative identification of the casting of Pamela (in the original run that began 4 March 1743) is based on Daniel Heartz's suggestion that Mme. Riccoboni's husband would probably have played the marquis, in discussion following a 1994 performance organized by the Bay Area Eighteenth-Century Studies Group with musicians from the Department of Music, University of California, Berkeley (I would like to thank Jennifer Griesbach in particular for reconstructing the music and staging this performance). Mme. Riccoboni, though self-described as "cold" and lacking in talent, received great acclaim for her debut (in a play by de Boissy), for her "noblesse," and for her authorship of the dialogues she performed to open and close the season; see Emily A. Crosby, *Une romancière oubliée: Mme. Riccoboni, sa vie, ses oeuvres, sa place* (Paris, 1924), 22–25. Her later fame as a novelist, and perhaps her association with this role, inspired the spurious attribution to her of *Pamela Française, ou la vertu en célibat et en mariage* (Amsterdam, 1768); this epistolary novel "in the taste of Clarissa and Grandison" is actually a reissue of Françoise Albine Benoît's *Lettres du Colonel Talbert* (Paris, 1767).
 41. De Boissy, *Paméla en France*, 93. Claude Godard d'Aucour's one-act *Déroute des Paméla* (Paris, 1744; performed by the same Italiens on Christmas Eve, 1743) takes this meta-theatricality still further. The original English Pamela comes to Paris in search of her errant daughters, the languishing "French" heroine of Nivelles de la Chaussée's five-act comedy and de Boissy's successful "Italian" version. The drama evolves around three themes paradigmatic for the history of the reception of *Pamela*: a) the cross-media debate between the serious original novel and the shallow "copies" displayed on stage, b) the intratheatrical war between *comédie larmoyante* and musical spectacular, c) the rise of popular literacy. The mother-Pamela first denounces de Boissy's character as a "fade Copie," too easily taken in by "un Danseur / Et deux Chansons" (12, 13). She in turn appeals to the audience, who *like* her "En musique, en ballets, en décorations" (14). But all three Pamelas are finally swept up and danced off by a new cultural phenomenon and a new kind of mother, "La Mère bleue," publisher of the *Bibliothèque Bleue* (35–46).
 42. Carroll, *Letters*, 45, 158. Here, as before, I am indebted to Catherine Gallagher's speculations on the issues raised by eighteenth-century fiction.