CHAPTER 6

Credit and Credulity
Political Economy, Gender, and the Sentiments in The Wrongs of Woman

> I have rather endeavoured to pourtray (sic) passions than manners.
>
> The sentiments I have embodied.[1]

Wollstonecraft's final major work, her novel *The Wrongs of Woman, or, Maria,* was left unfinished at her death in September 1797. Published as a 'fragment' the following year by her bereaved husband, William Godwin, his introductory note suggests the work is a sketch of what, had it been completed, 'would perhaps have given a new impulse to the manners of a world'. As it stands, *Wrongs* offers 'melancholy delight' to 'minds of taste and imagination' which find pleasure in contemplating the 'unfinished productions of genius'. The work is thus presented as inviting a very particular 'sentiment' of mournful appreciation by those best able to judge 'talents' with 'the greatest accuracy and discrimination'.[2] Writing here becomes a literary relic, an object for taste, and a peculiar species of pleasure, for those capable of such appreciation.

Wollstonecraft's own prefatory note – itself, Godwin relates, incomplete but 'worth preserving' – situates the work in relation to the passions in a markedly different way. Contrary to Godwin, Wollstonecraft asserts that she has sought to portray 'passions', not 'manners', specifically to show the 'misery' felt by women which is caused by the 'partial laws and customs of society'. If any improvement might be made to the 'manners of a world', as Godwin suggests, it would be through attending to the tales of such passions. The passions thus underlie or precede the manners on which much of her earlier writing has focused: they are where the effects of manners are felt, where their wrongs are experienced, and where an argument for change must begin. This commitment to affect as the ground of experience brings with it in turn a reformation of literary method. Rejecting (as her early fiction, *Mary* had too) the unreal models of female characters offered by other novelists, Wollstonecraft chose instead to 'embody' the

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

sentiments, to create the tale of 'woman', rather than an imagined individual, and to 'restrain' her fancy so that the 'invention of the story' told the tale of female 'misery and oppression'. At the same time, she rejects the anticipated criticism that the work is merely the result of her own bad feelings: the 'abortion of a distempered fancy, or the strong delineations of a wounded heart'. Where for Godwin, the literary work is a manifestation of 'genius' to be appreciated by 'taste', for Wollstonecraft, the object of attention is the lived affective experience of a 'woman of sensibility' who is forced to 'renounce all the humanizing affections' and suffer degradation of 'the mind'. Whilst she agrees that the 'delineation of finer sensations … constitutes the merit of our best novels', it is clear that any such depiction serves the larger purpose of showing the consequences, for a woman's 'taste', her 'perception of grace and refinement of sentiment', of the 'matrimonial despotism' depicted in her novel.[3] Although it is not spelled out, such degradation of female capacity for feeling, under the conditions depicted in her novel, points to the limits of women's participation in the sentimental approbation of genius sketched out in Godwin's ostensibly gender-neutral account. Before women are able to appreciate objects of taste and before the novel can be approached as such by them, more fundamental concerns need to be addressed.

The passions and sentiments, then, are the grounds on which what would be Wollstonecraft's final account of 'things as they are' (to use Godwin's original title for his 1794 novel, *Caleb Williams*) would rest: the means through which she would show the consequences of existing 'laws and customs of society' and trace the links between established social and political oppressions to the lived experience of individual lives. Less a record of lost genius, an object for contemplation by connoisseurs of taste, her novel stages passion, in its many forms, to uncover the affective experience of female lives in late eighteenth-century commercial society. Such a return to the passions as the grounds for examining commercial modernity is apt, for, as we have seen in earlier chapters, political economy itself stemmed from a theory of human nature which newly emphasised the individual's experience of the world less through rational processes than through desires, sensations, and feeling. Indeed, in one reading, political economy can be seen as one of a number of attempts to harness and regulate the potentially wayward impulses in humankind: to make social, as well as economic, sense of a human nature whose passions are both destabilising and powerful. In his recent account of the historical and epistemological formation of modernity, Clifford Siskin has suggested that, through the mid- and late eighteenth century, political economy was 'a primary site for

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

the totalizing and rationalizing of the social'.[4] Wollstonecraft's turn to the literary genre – the novel – which attends to the relation between social structures and human feeling shows a determination to place passions and sentiments centre stage. Yoking a narrative of female feeling – of affective events and episodes which often involve constraint, degradation, renunciation, even abandonment – to the material, legal, and economic, structures which follow from political economy's systematisation of social lives shows how the 'misery' and 'oppression' of women are one of its outcomes.

Political Economy and Belief in Crisis: Credit and Credulity

The relation between the affective, the social, and the political economic was thrown starkly into relief by events on a national scale, even as Wollstonecraft was working on her novel. In February 1797, worries about a shortage of coin, perhaps prompted by hoarding due to fears of an imminent invasion, caused William Pitt and the Directors of the Bank of England to prohibit the Bank from issuing specie in cash payments until further notice, an order which became law in May 1797 and whose provisions, although initially proposed as a temporary measure, remained in place for the next twenty four years.[5] The Bank's suspension of cash payments produced a political crisis in which it became clear how much the nation's economic system depended on and was sustained by investments of belief and affect – a relation represented in gendered terms both in parliamentary debate and print satire. In many ways, the Bank's move simply consolidated the use of numerous instruments of credit (bills of exchange, bank notes, and paper money) which had been in widespread circulation in Britain and beyond for well over a century.[6] But the withdrawal of the guarantee to convert paper money into specie appeared as a broken promise, rupturing the sustaining forms of agreement and belief on which the economy, and economic actors, depended. Given the close links between the Bank of England and the government (the Bank had been founded a century earlier to provide state-backed loans to fund military activity), this was a rupture too in the unspoken contracts which existed between subjects and government. Robert Mitchell has suggested that in periodic moments of crisis and financial panic, systems of state finance become 'visible *as* a "system"' that connects people 'to one another through affective bonds of belief, "Opinion", and desire'.[7] 1797 was precisely such a moment: a crisis through which the affective bonds which constitute forms of governmentality are revealed. All this was underway just as Wollstonecraft worked on

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

a novel which revealed the cost to women, measured in affective experience, of the larger social, economic, material, and legal systems to which they were bound.

As commentators in and beyond Parliament weighed in on the implications of the Bank Restriction Act, it was to the nature of credit itself – that entity which was at once economically fundamental, yet also curiously intangible and elusive – that they often returned. The crisis not only made evident the extent to which Britain's economy operated on credit: it offered a dizzying image of an economy in which credit circulated endlessly, without reconversion into the reassuringly material form of gold. It thus posed the question of what exactly credit was, if not backed by, or convertible into, metal assets. By removing the fiction, sustained by belief, that credit was a temporary replacement for some more solid form of value, it made it possible to ask quite what it was that was sustaining the nation's economic activity (and hence the social and political life which depended on it). Credit was defined, on the one hand, through a technical and abstracted language of political economy, as when Pitt referred to paper money simply as a 'circulating medium' or 'medium of exchange', and on the other, through the symbolic and gendered language used to describe, even personify, credit over the course of the preceding century, including by supporters of the Whig mercantile regime seeking to familiarise public opinion with a credit economy.[8] Lord Shelburne's assertion that a gentleman should 'shudder at the scene of the attack' on the 'delicate frame of public credit' thus repeated a long tradition of moralised and sexualised rhetoric which placed a personified and feminised credit, the object of chivalric gentlemanly attention, at the heart of Britain's new identity as a commercial nation.[9] Pitt's Act thus became an attack on the 'morals of the constitution', which undermined the 'sacred reverence for that most delicate and indefinite thing, called public credit'.[10] Such sexual logic, in which 'delicate credit' was dependent on gentlemanly propriety, but vulnerable to its predations, was made explicit in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's personification of the Bank as an elderly lady nearly seduced by Pitt, a characterisation which inspired James Gillray's famous image of the 'Political Ravishment' of Old Lady of Threadneedle Street (Figure 6.1). Meanwhile, Lord Grey's description of credit as 'an edifice reared by the hand of simplicity, upon the basis of truth', obtained through 'belief' not 'admiration', and 'confidence' not 'power', further elaborated credit's perceived moral foundations.[11] Such assertions enabled Charles James Fox to describe the suspension of payments as an act of fraud, which precipitated a widespread crisis of belief: in the Bank, in Pitt, and in Parliament itself.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007



Figure 6.1 James Gillray, 'Political-Ravishment, or, The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street in Danger!'

Credit, he implied, was foundational to political and moral relations, in the investments of belief which bound subjects to governmentality.[12] For Pitt to refer to credit, in neutral language, as a 'circulating medium', was thus to sidestep a whole set of deeply rooted assumptions about the bonds of belief which sustained not only Britain's economy but also its polity, and even its morality. His linguistic move marked an attempted shift in the whole discourse of politics and government, in which the relations of subjects to each other, to their government and the nation, had long been understood. What Fox attacked as Pitt's questionable 'new terms' thus signalled an attempt to replace an older, gendered, and sexualised Whig discourse of political, economic, and social order, with political economy and its abstract, technical terminology. The debate over the Bank Restriction Act, as well as staging a crisis in the forms of belief fundamental to liberal governmentality, thus also enacted a struggle over the authority of the new discourse of political economy and its account of relations between government and subjects.[13]

Both sides of this debate, ongoing as Wollstonecraft worked on her 'troublesome' novel, were likely to have been anathema to her.[14] Where

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

political economic language used technical terms to erase notions of political community, Whig political discourse could only express social bonds in sexualised terms whose basis would appear, to her eyes, entirely objectionable. The necessary bonds of belief through whose circulation society inheres, however, remained, and demanded expression. It is precisely these questions of belief and credit, of proper and improper forms of social relation and morality, of broken bonds and financial impropriety, and of the forms of affective connection which should, and perhaps might, exist between persons in the system of society, which are at the heart of Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel.

One strand of this concern can be traced through the story of the novel's protagonist, Maria, whose leading characteristic is the 'extreme credulity' which she shares with her romantically minded uncle, part of whose fortune, given to Maria at her marriage, funds the questionable 'speculations' of Maria's husband Venables. Credulity is linked too to the novel's persistent preoccupation with the work of fancy, imagination, and speculation: terms which have usually been approached by literary critics in the context of Romanticism's interest in the imagination as a creative capacity. But it is also possible to consider how Maria's credulity, her vulnerability to the alluring, perhaps deceptive visions offered by the 'magic lamp' of her imagination, identifies her as a descendant of Lady Credit, the allegorical personification at the heart of the elaborate cultural work which, earlier in the century, smoothed the path to acceptance of the new Whig credit economy.[15] Read this way, Maria, like Lady Credit, marks the question of the relationship of affect to the world of economic activity inhabited by her husband, and suggested by his name; but unlike Lady Credit, Maria is exiled from that world rather than being harnessed by it, or serving as its symbolic figurehead.[16] Wollstonecraft's figure of female credulity thus revisits the Whig trope of feminised and personified credit to investigate and destabilise it, but she also complicates the figure of inconstant, fickle, female feeling both to trace the causes of female credulity in Maria's upbringing in the gendered social unit of the family, and to move beyond it to depict more assured forms of feeling in the sympathy and sensibility which eventually emerge as the basis for new forms of social bond.[17] As the novel opens, Maria is imprisoned, forcibly removed from the sphere of public life to a space which is the gothic 'other' to the throne room at the heart of government in which Lady Credit is often presented. Re-echoing with the sounds of Maria's fellow incarcerated, the 'mansion of despair' is also suggestive of the destabilised mind itself, whose vulnerability to 'gusts' of feeling Wollstonecraft had earlier traced in her second *Vindication*.[18] As such, it is the binary 'other' to the male world of

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

rationality and action, and of exchange under the sign of credit. Maria's forced displacement ensures that the illegal financial acts of her husband, Venables, which exploit existing credit systems, can continue without interruption, in an inversion of the ritualistic centrality of Lady Credit to mercantile activity in the allegories of Addison and Defoe. Equally, as Maria's narrative later reveals, the chivalric wooing, the careful attention lavished on Lady Credit in the latter, has been overturned in Venables' attempt to prostitute Maria to his creditor to stave off repaying his debts.

To view the 'woman of sensibility' whose story is announced in Wollstonecraft's Preface as in some way a descendant or relation of the figure of 'extreme credulity' embodied by Lady Credit in the early eighteenth century is to illuminate how Wollstonecraft's radically new envisaging of fiction doesn't just rewrite the usual courtship and marriage plots of so many eighteenth-century novels, it also recasts the economic romances such stories so often contained. It underlines how the question of female feeling has accompanied, and disturbed, commercial society from its outset, as both extrinsic but also somehow necessary to it. As such, *The Wrongs of Woman* can be viewed as a text which repeatedly demonstrates, and troubles, the mutual imbrication of financial and sexual economies in the late eighteenth-century commercial society to which the early-century Whig settlement gave birth. It therefore continues, and focuses, the preoccupation with political economy's 'rationalization' of the social which, as we have seen in previous chapters, runs across Wollstonecraft's work. As Gillian Russell has commented, public credit at this time had long been represented as an inconstant woman to be 'tamed by the rational masculine subject', a representation which replays, and genders, the ongoing relationship between emotion and regulation which, as Jon Mee has shown, was fundamental to thinking about the place of affect in polite society in eighteenth-century moral and political philosophy.[19] But, by tracing a different route for credulity (an affect closely related to the enthusiasm on which Mee focuses) to that of regulation, or education, or containment, Wollstonecraft resists telling the tale traced by Russell in which the 'irrational, dizzily speculative' feminine is the binary 'other' to masculine rationality. Her attention to credulity, and its opposite, prudence, unpicks the story of credit which sustains contemporary political economy, and indeed informs the whole affective model of personhood associated with commercial society.[20] At the same time, credulity, or a capacity for belief, finds a formal home in the novel genre which was to be Wollstonecraft's last weapon with which to engage the political economic 'truths' of her time.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

Wollstonecraft's tale of 'a woman of sensibility' is thus, among the many different and competing iterations of 'sensibility' in her time, an account of how one particular kind of sensibility, its formation and expression, is a deliberate counter to the forms of feeling on which, according to political economy, commercial modernity rests. In commercial society's founding tales from Smith onwards, sensibility, as a marked capacity (often excessive) for feeling, was feminised and domesticated, relegated to the home as 'unfit for the world' as Smith would have it, whilst her more worldly brother, prudence, brought home the bacon.[21] Any account, therefore, of the 'wrongs' suffered by a 'woman of sensibility' would need to address too the gendered story of affect offered by political economy. *The Wrongs of Woman* shows how Wollstonecraft recognised that, in order to rewrite the late eighteenth-century's received account of gender, the story of credit and belief would need retelling too. Political economy's narrative of feeling, of the forms of feeling which are allowed and disallowed – those whose effects are allowed to flourish in shared social and political life, and those which must remain at home – runs parallel to, and is deeply imbricated with, the account of gender with which Wollstonecraft had long been at war. Her story of the woman of sensibility thus rewrites the affective economy of credit on which political economy rests and reimagines the system of gender which it perpetuates.[22]

Thus, although presented initially as a fault, Maria's credulity – a term defined by Samuel Johnson as both 'easiness of belief' and 'readiness of credit' – ultimately provides a route to the experience, self-reflection, and self-education which Wollstonecraft so valued as a means of social and political reform. This is the means whereby *The Wrongs of Woman* critiques the account of the moral sentiments which for Smith underpin and produce political economy, a critique which rejects a Smithian valoration of prudence in favour of a more wide-ranging, if at times mistaken, capacity for affirmation and belief. Prudence was central too to parliamentary defences of credit, as well as being linked to 'proper' notions of female conduct, as Sheridan's depiction of the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street's inexcusable '*faux pas*' reminds us. Depicting prudence, instead, as weak-spirited and too easily counterfeited, Wollstonecraft searches for an alternative formulation of relations between morality and commercial society: between affect and money. In all this, the questions and issues which were fundamental to the parliamentary debates on credit were reconsidered in the register of novelistic discourse. *The Wrongs of Woman* ultimately rejects both a regime of credit founded on a chivalrous model of sexual relations and the amorality of political economy, to instead mobilise an alternative

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

economy of social feeling, which can reform a selfish and sexualised commercial economy based on self-interest. In the process, this novel about credulity remodels what credit might be, and what it is that might be circulated to social advantage. It also, by addressing such concerns within the socially shared literary form of the novel, contests the separation of economic issues, and their related terms, into a distinct area of technical knowledge. The ability of the novel form to circulate as an object of shared knowledge which stimulates the generation and circulation of readerly sentiments – its association with the powers of circulation on which Godwin insisted as he defended his decision to publish the novel's 'fragments' following Wollstonecraft's death – also explains Wollstonecraft's return to the novel form which she had famously disparaged in her earlier *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

The 'History of the Human Mind': Prudence, Credulity, and Belief

Early on in *The Wrongs of Woman*, Wollstonecraft brings together her two soon-to-be-lovers, Maria and Darnford, and the jailor, Jemima, to present a triptych of their personal autobiographies, which, in overlapping and divergent ways, offers a stark and critical account of the behaviours and passions of late eighteenth-century society. In particular, Darnford's tale, which links inherited wealth to sexual, social, and financial dissipation, offers a condensed version of the critique of eighteenth-century commercial society which Wollstonecraft had already set out in her two *Vindications*. Darnford's parents, people of fashion united in an arranged marriage, exemplify the dissipation of the upper classes attacked too in Wollstonecraft's early novel *Mary*; Darnford's inheritance, following his parents' death, is squandered in similar financial and sexual excess. Emigration to America offers a fleeting possibility of an escape, but there Darnford witnesses how America, seated on 'her bags of dollars', has also been corrupted, her pioneer spirit having 'now turned into commercial speculations'. The national character, Darnford observes, 'exhibited a phenomenon in the history of the human mind – a head enthusiastically enterprising, with cold selfishness of heart'.[23] Darnford's insights are notably divorced from any moral self-regulation, however. On return from America, he resumes his hedonistic lifestyle, only briefly interrupted by his incarceration and liaison with Maria; his later inheritance of a second fortune enables his resumption of further sexual and financial dissipation. Darnford's tale exemplifies how moral failings – failings of character,

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

feeling, belief, and sentiment – flourish in a commercial culture allied, on both sides of the Atlantic, to inherited wealth and 'selfish' enterprise. It is not enough simply to be hostile to commerce: Darnford asserts, readily enough, that he 'detested commerce'. Rather, the crucial question is how the 'history of the human mind' might be rewritten to point in a different direction, so that the 'cold selfishness of heart' on which credit culture rests might be reformed at the very root. It is precisely such reformation of feeling in Maria, and Jemima too, which the rest of the novel traces.

As we have seen in previous chapters, the dominant late eighteenth-century 'history of human mind' was written by the same Scottish philosophers who also theorised political economy. Their account of commercial society was underpinned by a science of man, or theory of human nature, in which belief, credit, and credulity loomed large, whether to inform David Hume's account of the role of passions in his sceptical critique of reason, or, in the form of sympathy and the moral sentiments, which Adam Smith harnessed into a fully-elaborated description of moral, and eventually economic, behaviour. When Pitt and others used a putatively neutral political economic vocabulary in parliamentary debates over the Bank Restriction Act, they contributed to the establishment of political economy as a distinct area of technical knowledge quite separate from the moral philosophy and jurisprudence which Smith had taught at Glasgow University. And once established as a university discipline from the early nineteenth century, political economy became a knowledge practice quite separated from social, ethical, psychological, and affective concerns. In its Smithian origins, however, the moral and the economic were closely linked, as is apparent when the role of prudence and credit in Smithian philosophy is traced. Prudence, belief, and credulity as presented in both *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) illuminate the theory of personhood, and the regulation of feeling, elaborated in the account of human nature from which political economy stems.

The development of Smith's thinking about prudence is a good illustration of the relation of the moral thinking of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to the economic thought of the later *The Wealth of Nations*. In the earlier text, prudence is a central part of Smith's moral system, proclaimed as a virtue despite its strong associations with utility, industry, and self-advancement. Combined with benevolence and justice, Smith claims that it makes the most perfect virtue, but he also devotes considerable space to elaborating how the prudent man's attention to his health, wealth, rank, and reputation can, when yoked to industry and propriety, produce multiple rewards: 'wealth, and power, and honours of every kind', Smith asserts,

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

are the 'natural consequences of prudence, industry, and application'; it is through prudence and its associated qualities of industry, frugality, and even parsimony that men of 'inferior rank' raise themselves to public notice, even in the face of the 'jealousy' and 'resentment' of 'all those who were born their superiors'.[24] In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, then, prudence is a virtue, even if it is 'of all the virtues that which is most useful to the individual', but *The Wealth of Nations* extends this analysis to emphasise the economic implications of the good judgement, self-command, and reason in which prudence consists.[25] In *The Wealth of Nations*, prudence becomes a quality, even the touchstone, of economic sense and judgement; and given what the *Theory* observes is our approval of the prudent man, prudence is also the basis of the credit which an economic actor might get from others. Prudence, then, is fundamental to the behaviour of individual economic actors, both, as its relation to credit implies, where that behaviour is the object of judgement by others, and in its relation to the pursuit of self-interest. Even the division of labour itself, Smith conjectures, was 'naturally introduced by the prudence of individuals'.[26]

The centrality of prudence to the economic system is perhaps most evident in Smith's observation that the circulation of paper notes – in the 'great wheel' of circulation – is only possible where there is trust in the prudence of the banker:

> When the people of any particular country have such confidence in the fortune, probity, and prudence of a particular banker, as to believe that he is always ready to pay upon demand such of his promissory notes as are likely to be at any time presented to him; those notes come to have the same currency as gold and silver money, from the confidence that such money can at any time be had for them.[27]

This description of how belief in the prudence of the banker underwrites the circulation of money makes evident how the refusal to exchange paper for gold, as instituted by the Bank Restriction Act, constituted a crisis in credit. It also underlines how, in Smith's eyes, the operation of the economic system is underwritten by a system of faith and belief. Wollstonecraft, for her part, when discussing paper money in her *View of French Revolution*, comments that it is in the nature of the 'spirit of commerce' to extend it beyond what should be its proper limits: a suggestion that the system of belief and prudence which for Smith should regulate paper money would give way under the pressures of the 'spirit of commerce'.[28]

But whilst Smith extends prudence from being a virtue in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* into the quality which motivates and underwrites the

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

economic system itself in *The Wealth of Nations*, his treatment of credulity, perhaps the flipside of prudence, differs markedly between the two texts. In the first, Smith admits that credulousness is natural to us, a childlike quality which is difficult to suppress entirely even as adults:

> There seems to be in young children an instinctive disposition to believe whatever they are told. […] Their credulity … is excessive, and it requires long and much experience of the falsehood of mankind to reduce them to a reasonable degree of diffidence and distrust. In grown-up people the degrees of credulity are, no doubt, very different. The wisest and most experienced are generally the least credulous. But the man scarce lives who is not more credulous than he ought to be, and who does not, upon many occasions, give credit to tales, which not only turn out to be perfectly false, but which a very moderate degree of reflection and attention might have taught him could not well be true. The natural disposition is always to believe. It is acquired wisdom and experience only that teach incredulity, and they very seldom teach it enough. The wisest and most cautious of us all frequently gives credit to stories which he himself is afterwards both ashamed and astonished that he could possibly think of believing.[29]

But credulity is mentioned only once in *The Wealth of Nations*, in an aside defending established religion as a means to restrain alternative 'ghostly practitioners' from preying on the 'credulity' of the population.[30] At the same time, Smith's account in the *Theory* of the horrors of not being believed emphasises how much we want to be in credit with others:

> It is always mortifying not to be believed, and it is doubly so when we suspect that it is because we are supposed to be unworthy of belief and capable of seriously and wilfully deceiving. To tell a man that he lies, is of all affronts the most mortal. But whoever seriously and wilfully deceives is necessarily conscious to himself that he merits this affront, that he does not deserve to be believed, and that he forfeits all title to that sort of credit from which alone he can derive any sort of ease, comfort, or satisfaction in the society of his equals. The man who had the misfortune to imagine that nobody believed a single word he said, would feel himself the outcast of human society, would dread the very thought of going into it, or of presenting himself before it, and could scarce fail, I think, to die of despair.[31]

Smith's imagined scene of the man 'outcast' from human society because 'nobody believed a single word he said' anticipates Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, which explores both how central bonds of belief are to sociality, and how readily such beliefs can be manipulated or corroded by power. (It also attacks as 'barbarous prudence' the excessive devotion to his self-image of Caleb's nemesis, Falkland).[32] But even in Smith, the extreme desire to be in credit with others, combined with the fundamental credulousness

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

of human nature, suggests a fault in the affective system founded on prudence which otherwise sustains Smith's political economy. If, as the passage continues, even in 'the most cautious the disposition to believe is apt to prevail over that to doubt and distrust', we are likely to believe too easily in the prudence of others, thereby short-circuiting the system of moral and economic judgement which prudence is supposed to uphold.

From this perspective, Smith's extensive attention to prudence in the *Theory* looks like an attempt to insert a fail-safe into an affective economy in which human nature doubly conspires for credit readily to be given by the credulous. This repression of our powers of, and desire for, belief is all the more striking given the importance of sympathy (a form of belief in others) in Scottish moral philosophy, and especially given the extensive attention given to belief, and its powers over reason and the passions, by Smith's close friend David Hume. From this perspective, the *Theory* appears a self-contradictory book, which both insists on the work necessary to sustain others' belief in ourselves even whilst insisting, from its first sentence, on our fundamental fellow-feeling for others. From the perspective of *The Wealth of Nations*, meanwhile, it is as though Smith doesn't want to risk undermining the importance (both moral and economic) of being believed in, and being creditable, by admitting how credulous we all are: how freely available and ready to circulate belief is, how readily credit is actually given, and how easily it might circulate. This account of the treatment of credulity and belief in Smith suggests that *The Wrongs of Woman* might be read as addressing some of the following questions: what might a moral economy of the credulous look like? What would happen if our powers of belief were not restrained, for instance, by prudence or propriety? And what would it mean to free ourselves from the necessity of others' belief in us, so that, in place of Smith's yoking of prudence and industry to personal advancement and enrichment, the powers of belief inform a renewed circulation of social sentiments?

We saw above how, in Smith's account, trust in the banker sustains the circulation of paper money, and prudence and belief underwrite and assure economic activity to the benefit of all. But the fragility of a circulatory system sustained by affect is betrayed later, when the circulation of paper money is described as 'suspended upon Daedalian wings'.[33] The use of paper money, Smith argues, stimulates economic activity, by enabling banks' otherwise 'dead stock' of gold and silver to circulate. But when commerce and industry are 'suspended upon the Daedalian wings of paper money', they are less secure than when they 'travel about upon the solid ground of gold and silver', being especially liable to accidents

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

and misuses from which 'no prudence … can guard them'. As well as banks over-issuing paper money, abuses include 'fatal circles' of merchants drawing and redrawing bills of exchange in 'fictitious payments', or the fraudulent use of accommodation bills, which Venables uses in *The Wrongs of Woman*.[34] Smith's image of Daedalian wings, which he describes as a 'violent' metaphor, asks us to perceive the belief which sustains circulation as potentially flimsy and fragile, echoing the fear present in the *Theory*'s observation of human credulousness. But Daedalian wings might also be understood differently, to recast the significance of the belief which they signify. In mythic accounts of Daedalus, his wings are used to escape from the tower in which he is imprisoned by the King of Crete in order that his knowledge is not circulated. As well as signifying Daedalus's inventiveness as craftsman, artist, and innovator, his wings thus also figure the power of his belief in material form to effect escape, to resist the obstructive operation of power, and to assert the possibility of artistic creation in the service of the circulation of knowledge. Daedalian wings occur too, in a failed attempt to escape the happy valley, in one of Wollstonecraft's favourite novels, Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759), a text which addresses the 'credulity' of its readers in its very first sentence and which she references late on in *The Wrongs of Woman*. If in *Rasselas*, as in the Greek myth, the Daedalian wings fail, it is nevertheless on the wings of belief – fostered by sympathy, nurtured through the collective sharing of personal testimony, and a willingness to invest credence in the words of others – that Maria, Jemima, and Darnford escape their own imprisonment from oppressive power in Wollstonecraft's novel.

Passions and Prudence in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: A 'Natural Course of Things'

As we shall see, Wollstonecraft's treatment of prudence and credulity in *The Wrongs of Woman* constitutes a direct critique of the Smithian affective economy. The lines of this attack were already present in remarks on education in Chapter 5 of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* which, whilst ostensibly responding to Lord Chesterfield's advice letters to his son, also address other, unnamed men who have 'coolly seen mankind through the medium of books'.[35] In her engagement with the 'unmanly, immoral system' of Chesterfield, Wollstonecraft counters as an over-reliance on precept and prudence by insisting on the value of learning from experience, even where mistakes may occur, for the passions are the 'winds of life'.[36] Her defence of youthful feeling, of youth as a time of feeling, and her

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

rejection of 'dry caution', maps out a position elaborated in her depiction of Maria in the later fiction, where 'youthful ebullitions of animal spirits and instinctive feelings' mature, despite 'worldly mischances', into the 'enlarged social feeling' of humanity.[37]

At the heart of Wollstonecraft's argument is a recognition that feelings and habits, not principles, are the foundation from which people act. From this, it follows that the work of education is to allow 'natural youthful ardour' to flourish, as it is from this that 'not only great talents, but great virtues', even 'vigorous exertions of genius or benevolence' will flow.[38] This means that Chesterfield's recommendation, that young people should acquire an 'early knowledge of the world', is misguided, for this 'turns to poison the generous juices which should mount with vigour in the youthful frame, inspiring warm affections and great resolves', an observation which Maria repeats, near verbatim, in *The Wrongs of Woman*.[39] A youth formed by instruction and precepts, by contrast, renders the heart not merely cool, but hard. Instead, reading will produce 'speculative knowledge' and 'natural reflections', and whilst this means that a young person will 'enter the world with warm' and perhaps 'erroneous expectations … this appears to be the course of nature' which should be followed: 'for every thing … there is a season'.[40] All this is risked if young people are shown the world 'as it is': instead of being given a 'hasty unnatural knowledge of the world', they should be allowed to gradually discover both its imperfections and its virtues.[41] In comments which point to her own youthful friendship with Fanny Blood, depicted in *Mary* as the protagonist's intense relationship with Ann, Wollstonecraft defends the 'enthusiastic attachment' of a young person who deifies the 'beloved object' in a first friendship.[42] Although 'mistaken', the attachment is harmless, and might lead to higher sentiments, as indeed it does for the unnamed spirit, in Chapter 3 of the early fiction *Cave of Fancy* (1787), who learns to look beyond a romantic infatuation with the unattainable object of a married man to religious feeling.

Setting out her argument, Wollstonecraft deploys organic comparisons with the natural world to counter Chesterfield's 'system'. Just as trees over time are able to grow, develop roots, and survive a storm, so too should the mind similarly be allowed to mature from youth through experience: 'every thing' is 'in a progressive state'.[43] This perspective enables her to return to the scene of the insights of old age which in Smith's tale of the poor man's son in his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* sees the old man realising that his life's exertions towards achieving the conveniences of the rich have been worthless. Wollstonecraft agrees that we realise in age that

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

'all that is done under the sun in vanity', but asserts that, if the insight of age is shared with the young, to 'prudently' guard against 'the common casualties of life', this would be to replace 'the nobler fruit of piety and experience' which would otherwise be attained, with the mere 'wisdom of the world'.[44] Indeed, it would be to interfere with 'the natural course of things': a phrase which, as we saw in Chapter 2, is used by both Smith and Burke to describe the economic system set out in *The Wealth of Nations*. In Smith, as we saw in Chapter 3, the history of the human mind through life progresses from desire and aspiration to effort and disillusionment, but in the philosopher's eyes, the despair of age weighs little against the realisation that each life's work is the means through which civilisation is built and human progress is made. Wollstonecraft's perspective is different: whilst she shares Smith's sense of the stadial nature of life, the 'natural course of things' should have a different outcome: experience should enable attention on worldly things to be replaced with 'piety'.

Wollstonecraft's differences from Smith are crystallised in the *Vindication*'s attack on the Smithian virtue of prudence – a quality which 'early in life' is, she claims 'but the cautious craft of ignorant self-love' – and which culminates by associating prudence with the pursuit of 'ease and prosperity on earth', eclipsing any attention to the soul.[45] In a 'circle of life and death' which is untroubled by any sense of 'futurity', 'moderation' is 'supreme wisdom': prudence would 'procure the greatest portion of happiness' and 'knowledge beyond the conveniences of life' would be 'a curse'. But in what she terms a 'vegetable life', the passions, the 'powers of the soul' would be of 'little use' and would likely only 'disturb our animal enjoyments'. In such an existence, whilst 'the letter of the law' would be adhered to, few would 'rise much above the common standard' or 'aim at attaining great virtues'. That we are raised above such a 'prudent' perspective through our passions means that 'the regulation of the passions is not, always, wisdom', a point reinforced with the observation that men often have 'superior judgement, and more fortitude than women' as 'they give freer scope to the grand passions, and by more frequently going astray enlarge their minds'.[46] By exercising their reason, they fix on stable principles through the 'force of their passions', even if nourished by 'false views of life'; in a Rasselasian image to which she returns in *The Wrongs of Woman*, they are 'permitted to overleap the boundary that secures content'. Another literary reference, to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, shows how the bestial passions of the Yahoos, and the passionless rationality of the Houyhnhnms are equally undesirable. If 'generous feeling' is dampened by the 'cold hand of circumspection', we would be left only with 'selfish

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

prudence and reason just rising above instinct'; rather, fostering the passions encourages the 'habit of reflection' and offers self-knowledge and the growth of reason.[47] Given that passions constitute the 'common stream' which runs through our natures, they cannot be escaped; experience, as Rousseau asserts, is necessary to cultivate reason, understanding, and sensibility. The value of experience as a route to knowledge appears again in what reads as a veiled reference to Smith's impartial spectator: 'the world cannot be seen by an unmoved spectator; we must mix in the throng and feel as men feel, before we can judge of their feelings'.[48] From experience comes reflection, and hence virtue will be founded on the 'the clear conviction of reason' not 'the impulse of the heart', and morality will rest on a rock 'against which the storms of passion vainly beat'.[49]

Perhaps unconsciously, Godwin echoed Wollstonecraft's image of the rock in his *Memoirs of the author of 'The Rights of Woman'*, putting it to quite different effect when he described her in the midst of her affair with Imlay as 'like a serpent upon a rock' appearing with the 'brilliancy, the sleekness, and the elastic activity of its happiest age'.[50] As his deletion of the sentence in the second edition of the *Memoirs* suggests, the image, with its emphasis on physical being and sexual satiation, conveys an entirely different attitude to the passions than Wollstonecraft's rock image would suggest. Behind her engagement with Chesterfield and the other unnamed moral writers is a reorientation of the relationship to affect, but not an indulgence of it: a recognition that emotional experience must be the basis of an education which moves through youthful enthusiasm to reflection and rational growth. Feeling is here released from a regulatory hold not in order to flow in unconstrained freedom but rather as the experiential basis for cultivating the reflection and reason through which virtue is attained. Wollstonecraft's vision of organic moral growth through affective experience thus avoids the binary of wild, Rousseauvian nature opposed to culture and civilization, or of sensibility versus reason, but rather understands, as Maria puts it, the 'culture of the heart' as necessarily accompanied by that of 'an improving mind'.[51]

The Wrongs of Woman and the History of the Passions: Prudence, Credulity, and Sensibility

In *The Wrongs of Woman*, Wollstonecraft returns to these themes, attacking prudence as often a superficial deception and tracing a history of the passions from youthful credulity to mature social feeling. Unfinished though the work is, Wollstonecraft adds a further element to her ongoing critique

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

of commercial modernity by linking financial corruption to affective failings, and she begins to sketch out a means for affective reform. In America, Darnford had witnessed a 'phenomenon in the history of the human mind': the 'head enthusiastically enterprising, with cold selfishness of heart'.[52] The story of Maria's husband, George Venables, and his father, Venables senior, enables Wollstonecraft to personalise this 'phenomenon', to 'embody' the sentiments, as she put it in her preface. By showing the 'history' of such sentiments in George Venables' upbringing and formation, she yokes her attack on the moral failings underlying commercial society with her earlier attention to the role of education in the formation of character; the history of Maria's sentiments, by contrast, points in a different direction.

Wollstonecraft had already condemned, in her *View of the French Revolution*, the merchant who 'enters into speculation so closely bordering on fraudulence, that common straight forward minds can scarcely distinguish the devious art of selling any thing for a price far beyond that necessary to ensure a just profit'.[53] Her account of the Venables offers a more extended critique of commercial and moral fraud, which attends to affective formation. Venables senior, who makes a brief appearance in the narrative, is a merchant who exemplifies Smithian values, following a 'prudential plan' in business and engaging only in 'narrow … and cautious speculation'.[54] It is not a good sign, however, that the unremitting care with which he attends to business ruins his health and brings about his death. His son George, whilst apparently sharing his father's creditable character, uses this as a 'mask' behind which his 'habits of libertinism' are concealed from his 'commercial connections'.[55] Prudence, which oils the wheels of a Smithian economy, is easily counterfeited, its fakery a threat not only to commerce, but in the moral and sexual spheres too. Venables' 'reputation of being attentive to business' explicitly informs Maria's uncle's approval of their marriage, 'for habits of order in business would, he conceived, extend to the regulation of the affections in domestic life'.[56] Venables' 'mask' of prudence is thus a significant factor in a marriage which will consign Maria to financial and sexual exploitation. Writing to her daughter with the wisdom of hindsight, Maria notes that Venables' reputation for prudence was won simply by maintaining silence in her uncle's company, apart from an occasional question or deferential remark. Compared with the 'youthful ebullitions' stemming from the 'animal spirits' of other young people, this proved effective in building Venables' reputation, but, in terms which echo Wollstonecraft's analysis in the *Vindication*, Maria observes that there is a troubling absence of passion in Venables and his like: 'these prudent young men want all the fire necessary to ferment their

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

faculties, and are characterized as wise, only because they are not foolish'. George's silence is not prudence but 'sheer barrenness of mind, and want of imagination'.[57] In his discussion of the 'influence of belief' in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume had used similar language to argue that a 'ferment of the blood and spirits' is capable of so disordering the imagination as to make it impossible to distinguish 'betwixt truth and falsehood'.[58] Maria's critique inverts Hume's worry about 'the influence of belief' to present the opposite danger: an absence of the very passions which even for Hume give 'vigour' to our mental functioning.[59]

In place of the 'fire' which might 'ferment' his faculties, Venables displays only a 'gambling desire to start suddenly into riches'.[60] To that end, he obtains money by 'violating the laws of his country' and by forging Maria's signature, but his 'despicable speculation' also involves accommodation bills, fraudulent versions of credit instruments widely used by traders.[61] Venables' practice of drawing and redrawing bills is described by Smith as being used by 'chimerical projectors' to raise money which they can never hope to repay, drawing creditors into a 'fatal circle' which might ultimately result in the failure of banks.[62] Such fraudsters exploit the difficulty of distinguishing between 'a real and a fictitious bill of exchange' – one which reflects an actual business transaction and one which doesn't. In the context of local or regional business transactions, knowledge of the credit-worthiness of individual actors might be secure, but Venables is able to operate beyond the purview of a prudence which Smith hoped would secure economic transactions, exploiting a serious faultline in commercial practice and exposing the flawed security of prudence on which commerce was founded.[63]

The vulnerability of the credit on which much economic activity depended had of course long been recognised: it was in part the cause for the numerous writings on credit in which Lady Credit herself featured. Wollstonecraft's innovation is to link the economic fragility of credit to its effects in the social and sexual spheres, in a text about the woman of sensibility. She does this by showing how Venables' main object of speculation is Maria herself. Her dowry of £5,000 is used by Venables to fund various unsuccessful projects, before Maria herself is further mined as an economic, and in a disturbing continuity, sexual asset, by her husband, in his quest for further sums and loans. Speculation is thus linked not only with financial fraud, but also personal or sexual fraud, as Venables tries to trick Maria into sexual relations with one of his creditors, in a scene which rewrites, in starker and more shocking form, Gilray's image of the Pitt's assault on the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street. Like the Bank of England, whose propriety should be assured by gentlemanly credit practices, Maria is the female object

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

of male financial and sexual depredation, no longer protected but instead asset-raided. The parallel enables Wollstonecraft to expose the flipside to the chivalrous defence of delicate, feminine credit lauded in Parliament, by demonstrating the intertwined nature of financial and sexual exploitation, in a culture where women are not extrinsic to commercial society but objects of exchange within it, on whose sexual value men attempt to capitalise. Meanwhile, hampered by credulity and the social expectations which the *Vindication* has already outlined, women are ill-equipped to make judgements about the behaviour and character of others, and instead of acting with prudence, fall back on its empty shell, propriety. Even that, as Maria's fate shows, cannot protect them from determined assault.

From all this, it follows that commercial, sexual, and social reform must happen together, so it is only appropriate that Maria's eventual rejection of 'prudence', and what she terms 'little concerns', occurs at the moment of the sexual consummation of her relationship with Darnford. From this sentimental revolution eventually stems a transformation of credulity into a wide-ranging capacity for belief and affirmation. Already enacted by Maria, Darnford, and Jemima's sympathetic listening to each other's personal testimonies, and repeated in Wollstonecraft's readers' own acts of reading, sympathetic belief, a new kind of credit, eventually finds a wider horizon in a moment of apotheosis which indicates how further social transformation might be founded.

Maria's relationship with Darnford – itself perhaps a 'little concern' – is short-lived, but it is part of a sentimental regeneration in Maria which soon moves beyond the narrow confines of the sexual to a more expansive social engagement. Such a refiguring of what credulity might become is perhaps surprising in a text whose opening scenes clearly present the dangers of overindulged fancy. Wollstonecraft herself observed, when attacking Burke in her first *Vindication*, that enthusiasm, a close relative of credulity, can too easily tip into madness; excessive, enthusiastic, belief had long been associated with women in particular. Yet Wollstonecraft's description of Maria's ability to 'trust without sufficient reason' – given, with provoking irony, at the moment of her sexual consummation with Darnford – throws such dangers to the wind:

> There was one peculiarity in Maria's mind: she was more anxious not to deceive, than to guard against deception; and had rather trust without sufficient reason, than be for ever the prey of doubt. Besides, what are we, when the mind has, from reflection, a certain kind of elevation, which exalts the contemplation above the little concerns of prudence! We see what we wish, and make a world of our own…[64]

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

In an apparent *volte face* with the text's initial exposition, it appears that Maria's tendency to 'extreme credulity' may point a route beyond the difficulties in which prudence too easily gets bogged down: difficulties of judgement, doubt, and deception. Credulity might not be a quality to be restrained, but one whose energy, like the 'animal spirits' of the ebullient young people mentioned earlier, might be a 'fire' to 'ferment the faculties', and raise the mind beyond 'little concerns'. It was precisely a failure of such spirit which Darnford identified in his account of how the energy of the American pioneers had morphed into 'commercial speculations' carried out 'with cold selfishness of heart'. The 'peculiarity of Maria's mind', her willingness to 'trust without sufficient reason', revalues, in socially positive ways, the credulity which Smith saw as natural to the human condition, and as persisting into adulthood despite the regulatory processes of education and the moral self-surveillance outlined in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. If for Smith there is a need to reign in the tendency to believe which for him is both a mark of the child and a natural condition of humanity, *The Wrongs of Woman* essays a refiguration of credulity to point to forms of belief which might reform social, sexual, and financial circulation itself. And if Smith's adult is vulnerable to the eruptions of childish fantasies, against which he must always be on his guard, Wollstonecraft places her faith instead in the process of maturation, by which feelings might become, as the *Vindication* puts it, a kind of 'rock'. Where Smith's valoration of prudence in the *Theory* condenses into the praxis of self-interest in *The Wealth of Nations*, we shall see that Maria's credulity – in line with the *Vindication*'s advice to allow passions to mature through experience – eventually opens out into a discovery of the 'substantial happiness' of 'social pleasure' produced through a flowering of the 'real affections of life', comparable to the unfettered pleasure of 'roving through nature at large'. Such a 'state of mind' is only brought to an end with the release of the 'dogs of law', in the form of the adultery case against Darnford, which makes clear both the need for larger social reforms and the difficulty of realising them.

If Maria's trust in Darnford ultimately proves a failed investment, it is nevertheless a route to other forms of social reconnection. Jemima's witnessing of the relationship also plays a part in her parallel emotional regrowth. And, just as Maria's credulity enables the later flowering of more extensive and substantial social feeling, it is notable that both Maria and her uncle (whose benevolent impulses are strongly marked by what Wollstonecraft describes as a kind of petrified romantic feeling) attempt to use money, otherwise strongly associated in the text with

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

corrupt financial transactions, to ameliorate social relations and enact social justice. In this, Maria presents a contrast with other female figures who in various ways are presented as resisting economic circulation: whether Gilray's 'Old Lady of Threadneedle Street', fending off Pitt's attack; or America seated cold-heartedly, in Darnford's depiction, on her bags of dollars; or even Jemima, Maria's jailor, who hoards her wages in an act presented as the only way she might escape the cycles of exploitation in which she herself circulates as an object. Like Jemima, Maria is associated with sexual, social, and monetary circulation, passing from father to uncle to husband to lover, in a way which illustrates the transactional nature of social relations, and the sexualised nature of financial ones. But Maria is also an active financial agent, causing money to circulate, often for socially benevolent ends: whether raising charity for the destitute Peggy, supporting Venables' illegitimate child, establishing her siblings in financially secure positions, or paying Jemima's wages; she also pays household bills from her own pocket, and is the guardian of her daughter's inheritance from her uncle on his death.[65] Admittedly, it is also her money, originating from her uncle, which funds Venables' 'despicable speculations', but nevertheless, the two figures (Maria and her uncle) who attempt to circulate money in positive ways are both marked by forms of 'romantic' feeling – in contrast with Venables' calculating, speculating, prudence. At the same time, money is clearly an imperfect means by which to circulate social feeling. Venables' sole act of charity, a contribution for Peggy, is a calculated, counterfeit gesture designed to manipulate Maria's perception of him; the fact that it is his own father's rent collector who is the immediate cause of Peggy's distress only underlines the empty performativity of the act. As the hidden motivation of Venables' charitable donation suggests, Maria is able to be effective in this particular 'project of usefulness' in part due to the effects of her youth and beauty: 'my eloquence was in my complexion, the blush of seventeen'.[66] As shown too by the unwanted kiss Maria receives from the attorney to whom she pleads on Peggy's behalf, female benevolence remains vulnerable to, and dependent on, the men whose sexual predations constitute their own 'projects'.

The 'Real Affections of Life'

Maria's capacity for social feeling is set out in a little commented-on paragraph from the penultimate chapter of *The Wrongs of Woman*, which follows her escape from the madhouse:

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

> The real affections of life, when they are allowed to burst forth, are buds pregnant with joy and all the sweet emotions of the soul; yet they branch out with wild ease, unlike the artificial forms of felicity, sketched by an imagination painfully alive. The substantial happiness, which enlarges and civilizes the mind, may be compared to the pleasure experienced in roving through nature at large, inhaling the sweet gale natural to the clime; while the reveries of a feverish imagination continually sport themselves in gardens full of aromatic shrubs, which cloy while they delight, and weaken the sense of pleasure they gratify. The heaven of fancy, below or beyond the stars, in this life, or in those ever-smiling regions surrounded by the unmarked ocean of futurity, have an insipid uniformity which palls. Poets have imagined scenes of bliss; but, fencing out sorrow, all the extatic (*sic*) emotions of the soul, and even its grandeur, seem to be equally excluded. We dose (*sic*) over the unruffled lake, and long to scale the rocks which fence the happy valley of contentment, though serpents hiss in the pathless deserts, and danger lurks in the unexplored wiles. Maria found herself more indulgent as she was happier, and discovered virtues, in characters, she had before disregarded, while chasing the phantoms of elegance and excellence, which sported in the meteors that exhale in the marshes of misfortune. The heart is often shut by romance against social pleasure; and, fostering a sickly sensibility, grows callous to the soft touches of humanity.[67]

As she does elsewhere, Wollstonecraft describes affective states with the language of the natural world, giving 'wiles' (tricks, dangers, or deceptions) material form, to 'lurk' as features of the landscape. The 'pathless desert' inhabited by serpents recalls the barren setting of her early fictional fragment, the *Cave of Fancy*, whilst the 'happy valley of contentment' references Johnson's *Rasselas*, to which the opening paragraph of *Cave of Fancy* had also alluded. The contrast between artificial or imagined scenes, and natural ones, recalls the prefatory Advertisement to *Mary*, whose attack on the usual representations of women in fiction also contrasts 'insipid', measured steps on the 'beaten track' with authentic 'rambles' in nature; the opposition between artifice and originary experience underpins the late essay 'On Poetry' too.[68] Such density of reference, combined with the wrought language and elevated register, points to the importance of the thoughts being sketched here, and the persistence of Wollstonecraft's preoccupation with them, as well as something of Wollstonecraft's aims in relation to fiction itself, especially with regard to female feeling, and female lives.

The unmistakable reference to *Rasselas* foregrounds Wollstonecraft's concern with credulity, as shared with that text. At its outset, *Rasselas* presents itself as a cautionary tale on the dangers of credulity, addressing '[y]e who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and peruse with

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

eagerness the phantoms of hope'.[69] Given fiction's dependence on readerly belief, acknowledged in Johnson's *Rambler* essay on fiction, which states that we require scenes that we can 'credit', it is a curious warning.[70] The first paragraph of *Cave of Fancy* similarly warns against a 'life lost in desultory wishes'.[71] But where Rasselas's extended journey from the happy valley offers no clear resolution – in its conclusion, 'nothing is concluded' – and *Cave of Fancy* points past the 'delusion of the imagination' to suggest that '[e]arthly love leads to heavenly', Maria finds happiness in the 'real affections of life', the pleasures not of romantic but of social happiness.[72] The rejection of the 'heaven of fancy', the 'scenes of bliss' sketched by poets, suggests that full weight should be given to the 'real' of Maria's 'real affections'. Her happiness has been arrived at by overleaping the boundaries of the 'happy valley of contentment', as the *Vindication* had shown that men, but not women do; to stay in the bounds of contentment is as stupefying as cottage life. The sage Sagestus in *Cave of Fancy* also 'overleaped the boundary prescribed to human knowledge'; the fact that he gives his name to his adoptive daughter suggests that she too will repeat such transgressive feats.[73] Maria has arrived at the 'happiness' of social connection not on what 'On Poetry' calls the 'silken wings of fancy', but through navigating the 'pathless deserts' of 'real' experience, alert to the 'soft touches of humanity': an experience traced too, if vicariously, by the young Segesta as she listens to the tale of educative spirit in the *Cave of Fancy*'s last chapter.

Karen O'Brien has suggested that throughout her writing, Wollstonecraft was 'struggling to define and bring into being a stage of society beyond the stage of commerce'; this passage suggests that allowing the 'real affections of life' to 'burst forth' is a means to that end.[74] These, perhaps, are the Daedalian wings on which the happy valley might be escaped, in what is nevertheless a difficult enterprise: 'danger lurks in the unexplored wiles'. As Wollstonecraft's highly metaphorical writing suggests, even naming such 'real' forms of affect is tricky, although distinguishing them, in a familiar move, from 'sickly sensibility' is a start.[75] Rather than becoming bound down in such difficulties, Wollstonecraft's imagery does suggestive work, asserting the proper 'roving … at large' of the affective female subject, the branching out of 'wild ease'. Where 'sickly sensibility' suggests enclosure in the claustrophobic bubble of romance, connection with others is emphasised in such 'roving': Maria finds herself able to appreciate 'virtues' in others which she might otherwise have overlooked. In the 'social pleasure' of such humanity, Wollstonecraft recasts the fraught, slippery, and overworked discourse around female feeling to locate it firmly in the world and to emphasise its emancipatory, experiential pleasures.[76] In releasing feeling

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

to found and constitute social connection, she resists Smith's confinement of female feeling to the home, as in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, where humanity, 'the virtue of a woman', 'consists merely in the exquisite fellow-feeling' of a spectator, which, whilst agreeable, is 'unfit for the world' and is in part described through its lack of other qualities: it requires 'no self-denial, no self-command, no great exertion of the sense of propriety'.[77] Smith contrasts humanity with the masculine quality of generosity, the examples of which are located in the public, active world: an ambitious man ceding to another an office at which he had long aimed; the soldier sacrificing his life; Brutus defending the Roman republic even against his own sons.[78] The 'unbounded attachment' seemingly lauded in Maria's 'roving through nature' is distinct from the 'dissolving' tenderness which Godwin suggests characterises readers' responses to the *Short Residence*; and it differs too from the 'gusts' of sensibility which blow women off course as described by Wollstonecraft in the second *Vindication*.[79] Locating the 'real affections of life' in a metaphorical natural landscape of experience contests women's exclusion from public life, whilst the image of existence as 'roving through nature at large' resists the very categories of public and private used since Smith to enforce a gender divide, and still operative, if complexly, in today's historiographical literature on eighteenth-century female lives.[80]

As Pamela Clemit has noted, many radical writers in the 1790s, inspired by Rousseau, looked to the affections to inspire social or political change.[81] Even the most 'dangerous' affect, enthusiasm, as Jon Mee remarks, if contained within the confines of literary culture, could be viewed as 'a means of returning an alienated society to values that were seen as more essentially human'.[82] The potential of particular forms of affect to enlarge 'the sphere of our happiness', in the philosopher's words, can also be traced to Hume's essay 'Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion', which discussed how, whilst extravagant passions were liable to take the individual beyond prudent bounds, 'taste' focused on cultural objects could provide a safer form of pleasure.[83] In Hume, this distinction between objects of taste and life (objects of passion) marks a fear of emotional extravagance or excess which is self-protective: whilst passion can cause misery and disrupt happiness, 'delicacy of taste' contains and regulates emotional excess by providing a safe outlet for affective experience. The availability to taste of particular categories of aesthetic objects to do such work helps to preserve the rest of experience from the dangerous eruptions of affect to which humanity is all too susceptible. Wollstonecraft's assertion of the 'real affections of life' rejects such a separation by demanding that the 'enlarged sphere of our happiness' is located not just in the realm of cultural objects, but in

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

the social exchange of existence itself. She thus refuses what would come to be considered as the separate sphere of the aesthetic as a privileged arena for enacting happiness, and frees our capacity for happiness to 'roam' at will in the world. That the aesthetic would also come to be distinguished from the economic, a separation articulated by the distinction between different forms of value (beauty and pleasure versus use), gives additional significance to Wollstonecraft's refusal to compartmentalise and segregate different areas of human experience.

What new forms of social relation and community might be founded on the 'real affections of life'? The 'merely … habitable' buildings which Maria views from her window at the start of *The Wrongs of Woman* suggests that these are urgently needed.[84] One possibility is indicated by the temporary community constituted by Maria, Jemima, and Darnford as they share their life stories with each other, modelling the sympathetic reception of personal narrative which Wollstonecraft asks of her readers; another is suggested in the later triangle of Jemima, Maria, and her daughter, which, in pointed rejection of the social norm of marriage, is sketched in one possible ending of the text.[85] A community founded on sympathetic feeling, whether of readers or listeners, offers a different model of society from that founded on the rational exchanges of civil society's public sphere, which constituted one eighteenth-century self-image. As discussed in Chapter 3, eighteenth-century civil society was also property society: its foundation on property excluded most women and many men, and its rationality was, Terry Eagleton claims, 'articulable only by those with the social interests which property generates'.[86] To recognise the rationality of the public sphere as the expressive mode of property society is to recognise the oppositional potential of affect in commercial society. Daniel White has demonstrated that, for dissenters such as Joseph Priestley, John Aiken, or Anna Letitia Barbauld, sensibility and other forms of 'humane' feeling were deployed to achieve an accommodation with commercial society: taste and feeling would, in Priestley's account, restrain, regulate, and reform the more extreme, rebarbative effects of commercial society.[87] Godwin's *Enquirer* similarly hoped that polite refinement would regulate and reform, an aspiration echoing too in Godwin's presentation of *The Wrongs of Woman* as potentially giving 'a new impulse to the manners of a world'.[88] But to place the 'real affections of life' centre stage as the basis of the primary exchanges which constitute social existence goes further than this. It is to assert humane feeling not as a secondary means of regulating the acquisitive and aspirational impulses on which commercial society depends, but as itself a fundamental, constitutive social structure: feeling

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

is not a secondary, delayed, regulatory force which lags behind the energy of commerce and softens the oppressions and inequalities of property, but is itself an originary mode of engagement with the materiality of the world and its people. In terms of the opposition to which Wollstonecraft returns repeatedly in her writing, this is to regard the commercial world as fake and artificial, and the world of 'real affection' as the nature in which to 'rove'. As well as rejecting the Smithian confinement of female 'humanity' to the home, this version of 'real affection' refuses too the Smithian repression and regulation of forms of affect (credulity, belief, passion more broadly) which are necessitated in the turn to commerce, to public life, and to adulthood. Instead, 'real affection' is cast as constituting the fundamental and primary mode of existing in and engaging with the world.

Wollstonecraft's assertion of 'real affections' thus strongly challenges a political economy whose account of human feeling pins human lives – cut through with wants, desires, aspirations – into the shape of their economic existence. By engaging with political economy at its affective foundations, Wollstonecraft reorients the relation of human subjects to their feelings and traces new stories and social outcomes. Maria's rejection of 'little concerns', her enjoyment of fleeting social pleasures, counters Smith's narrative of material acquisition (as in the tale of the poor man's son, for whom desire is contained under the sign of property) with an alternative narrative of affective spontaneity, of immediate, not delayed, pleasure, and of pleasure, too, achieved in ways other than through material acquisition of alienated objects.[89] Where pleasure in Wollstonecraft *is* object-oriented, feeling is exercised in relations with the natural world or in social connection, not in the man-made world of goods. Even if at times swayed by the 'chimerical' imagination, feeling can also be its own object – unlike in Smith's instrumental positioning of feeling as being goal-oriented, a motivation or stimulus to something: a 'spring' towards labour or acquisition. Given that Smith turns to feelings to explain how and why humans do things, affect is always yoked to a teleological narrative. As sketched by Wollstonecraft, whether in her remarks on fiction or on poetry, or as embodied all too briefly by Maria, affect is potentially or actually anti-teleological, as suggested by its characteristic movement of 'wandering' and 'roving'. It may thus be capable of reorienting an energy geared towards progress, development, improvement, and wealth, all located in the future, and finding instead present sufficiency and satiety. Unbounded 'roving' in nature may thus provide an alternative means of accessing the contentment marked elsewhere in Wollstonecraft's writings by the more ambivalent sign of the modestly sufficient cottage.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

In line with Wollstonecraft's choice of literary form for what was to be her last major work, perhaps it is the novel itself which best expresses this mobility of feeling, of feeling freed to roam at will, to perhaps be credulous, and to bud forth with wild ease. The novel, after all, especially in the form of Wollstonecraft's affective history of a 'woman of sensibility', explores states of mind and episodes of feeling, and rouses those of its readers. Something of this is anticipated, perhaps unintentionally, in *Rasselas*. In the description of the joys of winged flight given by the artist – 'with what pleasure a philosopher, furnished with winds … would see the earth, and all it's *(sic)* inhabitants' – it is almost as though the invention being described is that of the pre-eminent literary flight mechanism, the novel itself, which, as we saw at the end of the previous chapter, was praised by Montesquieu a few years before the publication of *Rasselas* as opening new forms of vision and connective insights to its reader.[90] In *Rasselas*, however, the art of flying is enacted only on condition that it is not shared; the 'art shall not be divulged' as it may enable others to invade the happy valley, and states of bounded contentment might be breached.[91] In the event, as with the original myth of Daedalus, the attempt at flight fails; perhaps the warning against credulity at the text's opening has been too fully ingested.[92] Having the 'strength to believe' is, by contrast, reiterated a number of times in *Cave of Fancy*. The absence of belief in Sagesta's mother, who had no 'courage to form an opinion of her own', is lamented; Sagesta herself is commanded by her adoptive father to 'ever trust to the first impression', especially in distinguishing between affected social virtues and real ones; a third, unnamed male character, is suggested to have been someone able to silence those 'who doubted' because lacking the 'strength to believe'.[93] The capacity for belief, of course, perhaps more so than the Godwinian taste, is required of the novel reader, but it is not limited to that object: Maria's feelings, roused by her readings in books loaned by Darnford, soon seek expression beyond the literary object.[94] Maria's reading releases feeling to become a transformative social force, as perhaps Wollstonecraft hoped would be the case for her readers too. The feeling associated with the literary object is not contained there, but circulates – roves – more widely. If the regulation of credulity is required by Smithian political economy, the novel's dependence on credulity is necessary for reformative, transformative feeling to circulate, in a metaphor which, ironically, replicates the circulatory movement of the economy itself.

We saw earlier how, whilst *The Wrongs of Woman* is in part about male exploitation of different kinds of credit, Maria puts money to benevolent

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

ends. Money is a potent emblem of her capacity for credulity: George's donation of a guinea for a charitable cause seals Maria's feelings for him: the 'magic touch' of the coin 'invested' him 'with more than mortal beauty'.[95] Maria's eyes are later 'opened': experience, as the *Vindication* asserts, brings reflection and maturity, whilst not stifling humanity and generous feeling.[96] The financially circulatory role which Maria plays throughout the text might be regarded as just one expression of her capacity for social connection as celebrated in the passage we have been reading. Her generosity contrasts with Smith's claim that 'the fair-sex, who have commonly much more tenderness than ours, have seldom so much generosity. That women rarely make considerable donations, is an observation of the civil law'.[97] Maria's ability to unite generosity and humanity explodes Smith's attempt to differentiate, and gender, these qualities; the monetary expression of her generosity, as a mark of social feeling, counters too his attempt to exclude such unprudent acts from the world of commerce and exchange, to separate social feeling from economic enterprise, to exclude the enthusiasm of youth from the experience of age.

As noted above, Wollstonecraft's late essay 'On Poetry' returns to the opposed qualities of artifice and 'real' experience which she had long explored in her writing. Here the familiar opposition between the artificial and the authentic is elaborated by further distinguishing between fake and real feeling; between immediacy and spontaneity as against labour, memory, and rational cognition. As in her earlier writings, Wollstonecraft's late exercise in aesthetic theory valorates feeling, authenticity, originality, fancy, and sensation, and it downgrades instruction, precept, copying, and rules. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft had exploited a well-established link between poetry and excessive feeling in her attack on Burke: his 'fine phrensy', like the 'enthusiasm of genius', was thinly divided from madness.[98] 'On Poetry', by contrast, encounters a different problem: not excess of feeling but its suppression and weakness, an underdevelopment associated with the modern commercial era itself, where books are a 'hot-bed in which artificial fruits are produced' and where 'luxury' has made 'calm sensations' unsatisfying even for the 'moderate pursuer of artificial pleasures'.[99] As Daniel White has noted, the figure of the poet has a reforming role to play here: he is presented as a moderating and unifying force, capable of blending 'fire of enthusiasm' but 'enlarged by thought'.[100] Just one year after the publication of Wollstonecraft's essay, Wordsworth too would celebrate the poet's ability to recollect passion in tranquillity, in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, but the more such regulatory, moderating capacities were associated with the poet, the more they

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007

risked removal, into more rarefied literary air, from the arena of commercial society itself. Wollstonecraft's essay moves beyond its discussion of the poet, however, to note that 'gross minds are only to be moved by forcible representations', and that the 'thoughtless' must be roused by 'objects … calculated to produce tumultuous emotion'.[101] As well as a critique of the failure or corruption of affective response in 'the present state of society', such words arguably point beyond the efforts of the poet to the methods required by her own objectives as a reforming novelist.

Located as she is in the 'merely … habitable' structures of commercial society, mixing 'in the throng', as Wollstonecraft recommends in the second *Vindication*, Maria, the woman of sensibility whose 'humanizing affections' are under siege as she navigates a world full of 'wiles', performs a role arguably comparable to that of the poet, blending passion and originary experience, enthusiasm and reflection, but continuing to 'rove through nature at large'.[102] Such 'roving' recasts the figure of circulatory exchange central to political economy, just as the novel, as an alternative site for imagining social existence, counters political economy's claim to 'rationalise the social'. Yoking the figure of female feeling to that of circulatory 'roving', Wollstonecraft finds a means to regulate her potential excesses, to expose her to the education of experience, yet also to release her socially beneficial effects, whilst resisting political economy's valueless account of circulation as simply the accumulated transactions of the 'medium of exchange'. That Maria ultimately runs up against a legal institution whose representative, the judge, thrice rejects the possibility of 'letting women plead their feelings' and calls her incarceration a 'prudent measure', only underlines the need for reform, and the limits of rational discourse to achieve it.[103] At the same time, the figure of circulation is linked, in the prefatory notes written by both Godwin and Wollstonecraft to the fates both of women and of the novel itself. Wollstonecraft's assertion that nothing can be worse for a woman than to be 'bound … for life' to such a man as Venables claims for women the emancipatory possibility of circulation; and Godwin asserts for the unfinished novel text itself (elsewhere described as a 'project of public interest') the same possibility of a circulation which will establish the text's value, as well as improve the 'manners' of the world.[104] It is only fitting, after all, that fiction, itself an instrument of credit, dependent on a readerly capacity for belief, should not be turned against credulity, but rather mobilise its powers to reform the world in which it circulates.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 03:59:22, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009395823.007