IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)
Volume 31, Issue 11, Series 1 (November, 2026) 12-18
e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845.
www.iosrjournals.org

The Woman Pays: Wollstonecraft's Reputational Economy and Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

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Abstract
Thomas Hardy subtitled Tess of the d'Urbervilles "A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented," a claim that makes sense only if purity and reputation can be pulled apart. This article argues that Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) supplies the most exact vocabulary for that separation, not because Hardy borrowed it but because the two texts anatomise the same mechanism. Wollstonecraft diagnoses a reputational economy in which a woman's moral worth is converted into sexual reputation, an asset administered by others and lost irreversibly. Reading the novel's phases "Maiden No More" and "The Woman Pays" through that diagnosis, the article shows how the economy produces and books Tess's fall, how it survives in the educated, freethinking Angel Clare, and how Tess's baptism, confession and killing contest it from its margins. It then argues that Hardy extends Wollstonecraft in two ways. The novel shows that the economy lives in desire and idealisation as well as in opinion, so that a liberal conversion of belief does not dissolve it; and it shows that when Angel's views do change, the change arrives after poverty and dependence have already collected the price. Hardy thereby dramatizes the material half of Wollstonecraft's programme, the half her own late fiction began to explore. The article closes by asking whether the subtitle's vocabulary of purity remains inside the economy it contests.

Keywords: *Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Hardy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, reputation, double standard, education, economic dependence, Victorian fiction*

Date of Submission: 23-10-2026 Date of Acceptance: 04-11-2026

I. Introduction

When *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* appeared in 1891, its subtitle provoked as much argument as its plot. To call a woman who has borne a child out of wedlock "a pure woman" was to claim that her purity lay somewhere other than where her society looked for it (Hardy, 1891). The claim was costly. To satisfy the editors of *The Graphic*, in which the novel was serialised, Hardy replaced the seduction with a sham marriage and set aside the baptism of the dead child, restoring both for the book and publishing versions of the two episodes separately (Gatrell, 1988; Grindle & Gatrell, 1983). His essay "Candour in English Fiction" (1890) had already complained that the magazines and circulating libraries made an honest treatment of sexual relations all but impossible. The history of the book's making thus belongs to its subject: the conditions under which a woman's sexual history could be spoken of were themselves governed by a calculus of reputation.

Critics have long read the subtitle's claim through Hardy's sexual politics, through the late-Victorian debate on the New Woman, or through the novel's fatalism (Boumelha, 1982; Jacobus, 1976; Morgan, 1988). Jacobus and Blake examined what "pure" can mean when the novel refuses the chastity that conventionally defined it (Blake, 1982; Jacobus, 1976). Boumelha and Ingham have shown how the narrative wavers between sympathy for Tess and a narrating gaze that aestheticizes her (Boumelha, 1982; Ingham, 1989). Morgan has argued for Hardy's frankness about female sexual feeling (Morgan, 1988), and Garson has read the book's anxiety about the integrity of the female body as an anxiety about the integrity of the text (Garson, 1991). This article proposes a frame that treats a different text not as background but as an analytic instrument: the work of the thinker who had argued a century earlier that purity, as society understood it, was a counterfeit of virtue. That thinker is Mary Wollstonecraft.

Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is usually remembered for its case for women's education and its quarrel with Rousseau. Less often remarked is that it contains a systematic account of how a woman's reputation comes to stand in for her character, and of what follows when that reputation is lost. I call this account a *reputational economy*. The metaphor is not mine alone to impose. Wollstonecraft's own vocabulary of "establishment," "fortune," "character" and "reputation" belongs to the language of credit and

property, and her argument is that women, denied independent means, are obliged to treat their persons as capital. Later feminist theory has described the exchange of women as a system by which kinship and property are secured (Rubin, 1975), and cultural historians have shown how the ideology of the proper lady did economic and political work (Poovey, 1984, 1988); the *Vindication* is an early and unusually exact statement of the same insight. In the economy as I reconstruct it, a woman is educated to value the opinion of others above her own judgement, her moral worth is reduced to a single sexual measure, and the loss of that measure is final in a way that no equivalent loss is for a man.

The comparison needs a methodological word, because it can be misread as a claim of influence. I do not claim that Hardy read the *Vindication* or drew on it, and nothing in the argument depends on that. The claim is analytic first and historical in a looser sense. Analytically, Wollstonecraft's text names the components of a mechanism more precisely than the Victorian discourse around the novel does, and the test of the frame is whether it explains features of *Tess* that other frames leave unexplained: why the novel's decisive scenes are organised around accounts and payments, why the educated and freethinking Angel Clare fails Tess more thoroughly than the unlettered do, and why Tess's real acts of moral agency do nothing to alter her position. Historically, the questions the *Vindication* raised were live in Hardy's time. The sexual double standard was written into the divorce law of 1857, which allowed a husband to divorce for adultery alone while requiring more of a wife. It structured the Contagious Diseases Acts, whose repeal in 1886 followed a long campaign (Walkowitz, 1980). It entered the popular press in the agitation of 1885 over child prostitution and the age of consent. And it was the target of Mill's *Subjection of Women* (1869), whose author Hardy admired (Millgate, 2004; Mill, 1869). Wollstonecraft's own name was by then being recovered from the odium that had attached to it after her death, a recovery that accompanied the New Woman debates (Gordon, 2005; Taylor, 2003).

The argument runs as follows. I first reconstruct the economy from the *Vindication* and from Wollstonecraft's late, unfinished fiction. I then read Hardy's first two phases as the production and the booking of Tess's fall, and his fourth and fifth as the collection of its price, with Angel Clare as the economy's most instructive agent because he has every advantage that Wollstonecraft's programme could supply and still collects. Next I ask what power over herself Tess retains and how she uses it. I then argue that Hardy extends Wollstonecraft in two ways: he shows that the economy is carried in desire and idealisation, where reform of opinion does not reach it, and he shows that when opinion at last changes it changes too late, after dependence has already extracted its price. A final section takes up the objections the argument invites, including the possibility that the subtitle's own vocabulary of purity remains inside the economy it contests.

Wollstonecraft's Reputational Economy

The *Vindication* does not treat female virtue as a private possession. It treats it as the product of an arrangement, and the arrangement has four components that matter for Hardy.

The first is the distinction between reputation and virtue. Wollstonecraft's chapter "Morality Undermined by Sexual Notions of the Importance of a Good Reputation" argues that society has taught women to guard the appearance of chastity rather than to cultivate the rational self-government that would make chastity a real virtue (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chap. 8). Reputation is the opinion of others; virtue is a quality of the self. A woman trained to care for the former becomes dependent on the judgement of those who confer it, and her moral life is outsourced. The distinction is the hinge of what follows, because it makes available the thought that a woman might be spotless in reputation and corrupt in character, or ruined in reputation and sound in character. Hardy's subtitle depends on the second possibility.

The second is manufactured ignorance. Wollstonecraft insists that women's supposed innocence is frequently a lack of knowledge, deliberately cultivated, and that it leaves them defenceless against the very seductions from which it is meant to protect them (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chap. 4). Her aim, she says, is not that women should have power over men but over themselves: "I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves" (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chap. 4). The sentence is easily misread. It identifies self-rule as the true object of her programme and treats power over men as the corrupt substitute to which dependent women are driven.

The third is the irreversibility of the fall. Wollstonecraft observes that a seduced woman is shut out of the means of return, that the world will not readmit her, and that the same society that made her ignorant now drives her into ruin while the seducer keeps his place (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chaps. 8 and 9). Here the economy's asymmetry is plain. A man's loss of chastity is a private matter, a woman's a public ruin, and the difference is not moral but economic: it concerns who is allowed to recover.

The fourth is economic dependence, and it matters most for what follows. A woman denied independent means must look to marriage for what Wollstonecraft's age called an establishment, and so must treat her reputation as the condition of her livelihood. This is why the economy is an economy and not merely a code of manners. Wollstonecraft's remedies accordingly reach beyond education. She argues that women should be able to follow professions, suggesting that they might study medicine and be physicians as well as nurses, and she

argues that they ought to have representatives in government (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chap. 9). Her late, unfinished novel *The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria* (1798) turns the same analysis toward the poor. In the history of its working-class keeper, Jemima, seduction, dismissal and destitution follow one another with the regularity of a mechanism, and the law, the workhouse and the market are shown to complete what reputation begins.

Together these components make a closed system. Education produces ignorance; ignorance produces vulnerability; vulnerability produces the fall; the fall is then read as evidence of the character that the education prevented from forming; and dependence ensures that the woman who has fallen has nowhere to stand. Historians of Wollstonecraft's thought have stressed how thoroughly this analysis ties moral psychology to social structure (Kelly, 1992; Poovey, 1984). It is the structure, rather than any single sentence, that Hardy's novel enacts.

The economy also governed the reception of its own diagnostician. William Godwin's *Memoirs* of his late wife (1798), written in a spirit of candour, disclosed her unmarried relationship with Gilbert Imlay, the birth of her daughter Fanny and her suicide attempts, and the disclosures were taken as confirmation of the damage the *Vindication* was supposed to have done. Horace Walpole's private epithet for her, "a hyena in petticoats," has often been quoted as the type of the hostility she attracted (Gordon, 2005; Taylor, 2003). Wollstonecraft's reputation was collected like Tess's, and for the same reason: the economy reads a woman's life as the evidence against her opinions.

From "The Maiden" to "Maiden No More": Producing and Booking the Fall

A note on the novel's structure sharpens the point. The seduction, or rape, occurs in the last chapter of Phase the First, "The Maiden," and the phase that follows, "Maiden No More," begins only after it, with Tess's return home. The phase title therefore names not the event but its entry in a social ledger: the change of status that follows when others know. This is how reputational economies work. The loss occurs once, privately; it is booked repeatedly and publicly. The titles that follow continue the grammar of account, a "consequence" and then a payment, and Hardy's habit of naming his phases for statuses and transactions rather than for events is itself an argument about where the novel locates its tragedy.

The conditions that Wollstonecraft lists are assembled in the first phase with some care. Tess is sent to claim kinship with the wealthy d'Urbervilles not because she wishes it but because her family's poverty and her parents' hopes make her a possible asset. The d'Urbervilles are themselves a purchased name, adopted by a family of retired tradespeople, so that the lineage to which Tess's family looks for rescue is a commodity (Hardy, 1891). Her father treats the discovery of his supposed descent as capital, and her mother treats her daughter's looks in the same spirit. Wollstonecraft argued that women denied independent means are driven to make an establishment of their persons (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chaps. 4 and 9). The novel's opening movement illustrates the proposition. Tess is not the agent of her fall but the site where a family's economic hope and a man's appetite meet.

Tess is not uneducated in any narrow sense. She has passed the Sixth Standard under a trained teacher and moves between the dialect of her home and a more standard English (Hardy, 1891, ch. 3). Her ignorance is of the one thing that matters, the sexual economy in which she is about to be made an object. The point is Wollstonecraft's: it concerns what women are permitted to know, not merely whether they attend school. Joan, her mother, knows the risk and says little about it. When Tess later reproaches her, the reproach is exactly Wollstonecraft's: "Why didn't you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn't you warn me?" Ladies, Tess adds, "know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance o' learning in that way, and you did not help me!" (Hardy, 1891, ch. 12). Ignorance has been called innocence. The remark about novels complicates the frame, since Wollstonecraft was no uncritical advocate of novel-reading, but Tess's point concerns information and not taste: the leisured woman is prepared for danger by a literature, and the labouring woman is not. The novel does not excuse Joan, but it places her in the economy. A woman who has absorbed the idea that a daughter's marriage is the family's only route to security cannot easily teach that daughter to distrust the men who might provide it. When the time comes, Joan's counsel is silence, the management of appearances that the economy teaches its members to prefer to truth.

Alec d'Urberville occupies the position of the seducer whom Wollstonecraft describes as retaining his place. The novel withholds a clear account of what happens in The Chase, and criticism has long debated whether it is seduction or rape (Jacobus, 1976; Morgan, 1988). Wollstonecraft's framework makes the debate's stakes visible. In a reputational economy, the difference between consent and coercion does not change the ledger. Whatever occurred, the loss is entered under Tess's name and not Alec's, and her "fall" is assigned before any question of her will has been heard. The novel's publication history repeats the logic. The version of the event that could be printed for *The Graphic* was a sham marriage in which Tess is deceived, so that her reputation could be protected only by making her wholly a dupe, a revision that leaves the ledger intact and merely changes the entry (Gatrell, 1988). The book's refusal to say what happened is more consequential, because it declines to supply the evidence on which the economy would adjudicate.

The consequence arrives in the figure of the child. Tess's baptism of the infant Sorrow, which I consider below, is her first act of moral self-government. But the child is also the economy's receipt: the visible, social

proof of a transaction she did not authorise, and the object around which the community's judgement organises itself.

"The Woman Pays": Angel Clare and the Educated Double Standard

If the novel stopped with Alec, it would be a study in ignorance and exploitation. Its most original move is Angel. He is the book's liberal: a clergyman's son who has refused ordination because he cannot accept the Church's doctrine, a man who prizes thought over convention, and the one character from whom a Wollstonecraftian reader might expect justice. He represents, in short, what the *Vindication* hoped an educated man would become.

The novel turns on the failure of that hope. His attention to Tess's mind is real, but it takes the form of tutelage: she is a pupil to be formed and a nature to be admired, not a thinker to be met. He does not first meet Tess as a person but as a figure. Hardy's narrator says that Angel saw her as "a visionary essence of woman," and he gives her the names of goddesses, Artemis and Demeter (Hardy, 1891, ch. 20). This is the sentimental idealisation that Wollstonecraft attacked in Rousseau, whose Sophie is formed to please and whose virtue is defined by her relation to a man's need (Rousseau, 1762/1979; Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chaps. 2 and 5). Wollstonecraft's objection was not only that such ideals are false but that they cannot survive contact with the woman they describe. The ideal is brittle because it was never about her.

The wedding night sets the two confessions side by side. Angel confesses a brief episode of dissipation in London, and Tess, who has been trying for days to tell her own history, forgives him at once (Hardy, 1891, chs. 33 and 34). When she tells it, the idealisation collapses, and Angel's reaction exposes the logic of the economy. "Forgiveness does not apply to the case," he says; "You were one person; now you are another." The woman he has been loving, he adds, is "another woman in your shape" (Hardy, 1891, ch. 35). He answers a confession of what was done to her as if it were a revelation about what she is. His own history is received as pardonable, and the asymmetry is complete. The phase title "The Woman Pays" is accurate in the most literal sense: Tess's honesty is the occasion of the price, and Angel's equivalent honesty is not. His behaviour shows that the double standard is not simply a prejudice of the uneducated. It can survive freethinking and sincere liberal conviction, because it is built into what he finds beautiful.

The economy's gendered distribution of redemption is dramatised from the other side in Phase the Sixth, "The Convert." Alec is converted to an ardent evangelical Christianity by the preaching of Angel's father, the Reverend James Clare, and takes to the road as a preacher: a man whose past is not merely forgiven but made the raw material of a new public identity (Hardy, 1891). The orthodoxy that Angel has rejected finds absolution for the man; the liberal creed that Angel has adopted finds none for the woman. Neither supplies what Tess needs, which is a standard by which what was done to her would not count as what she is.

This is where the novel is most Wollstonecraftian and also most challenging to her. Wollstonecraft argued that a woman raised to please would become a creature of reputation, and that a man raised to command would become a creature of appetite (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chap. 4). Angel is neither a brute nor a conventional moralist. He is a man whose sincere ideals take the same shape as the convention. What the *Vindication* describes as a social structure acts through him as a taste. Wollstonecraft anticipated the sentimental man in her attack on Rousseau, but she located the correction in reason and friendship. Angel is shown to possess reason and to offer something he calls love, and the correction does not take.

Power Over Herself: Baptism, Confession, Return and Killing

Wollstonecraft's own measure of a woman's freedom was power over herself. By that measure the novel gives Tess more agency than its fatalism suggests, though never enough to change the economy.

The first and clearest act is the baptism of Sorrow (Hardy, 1891, ch. 14). Tess, finding the child dying and her father unwilling to admit the parson, baptises him herself. It is a small, private, ritual act, but in its context it is a claim to moral authority. She appropriates a priestly function, names the child, and treats the sacrament as hers to administer. The act matters because it reverses the economy's usual direction: the institution that would judge her is bypassed by the person it judges. The episode is also the one that Hardy was obliged to set aside for the serial, which suggests that his editors understood its force. The Wollstonecraftian point is that a woman capable of self-government will act on her own conscience when institutions fail her.

The second act is confession, and the novel is careful to show how the economy defeats it. Tess's first attempt to tell Angel is a letter slipped under his door that lodges beneath the carpet and is never read (Hardy, 1891, ch. 33). Her own narration has, literally, no reader. Her further attempts, which she delays and finally makes aloud, show a woman trying to govern the terms of her own disclosure. The novel treats the delay with sympathy and not condemnation. Her fear that telling will cost her the love she has found is not weakness but an accurate reading of the economy. She has understood, before Angel has, what the price of honesty will be.

The third act is her return to Alec, which is the novel's hardest. Hardy gives its material cause precisely. When her father dies, the family loses its cottage because the Durbeyfields hold it as lifeholders and the tenancy

ends with his life (Hardy, 1891, Phase the Sixth). Abandoned by her husband, with her family homeless, Tess accepts Alec's protection. Critics have read this as defeat, and it is one. But in the terms of the *Vindication* it is also the economy's final logic. A woman denied independent means must trade her person for security, and Tess, having been rejected by Angel, makes the trade that the world has always said she would (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chap. 9). It is the scene in which the reputational economy most completely wins, and the novel gives Tess a sentence that could stand as its law: "Once victim, always victim—that's the law!" (Hardy, 1891, ch.47).

The killing of Alec is the novel's last claim to self-rule (Hardy, 1891, chs. 56 and 57). It can be read as the one act in which Tess refuses the role assigned to her. She does not wait to be judged or to be rescued. She acts, accepts the consequence, and in the days that follow is allowed a brief interval with Angel before her arrest. Hardy's final sentence refuses both the community's verdict and any redeeming one: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess" (Hardy, 1891, ch. 59). The scare quotes around "Justice" turn the word against the institution that administers it. The novel's last judgement is on the arrangement, not on her.

The pattern across these acts is consistent. Tess's agency is real but works at the edges of the economy: in what she does with a dying child, in how she tells a truth, in what she does with a crime. None of it changes the ledger, which is why the novel needs its subtitle.

Where Hardy Extends Wollstonecraft: Testing the Remedy

Wollstonecraft's remedy is often summarised as education, and a first reading of the novel suggests that Hardy tests it and finds it wanting. The summary is too thin, and so is the verdict. Her remedy has four parts: a reformed education for girls, including the day schools in which boys and girls would be taught together; marriage as rational companionship, a friendship of equals in place of a traffic in appearances; economic independence through employment; and a voice in government (Wollstonecraft, 1792, Chaps. 9 and 12). The hope that binds the parts together is that when both partners value character over appearance the economy will lose its grip.

Hardy tests part of this by supplying some of the conditions it requires. Angel is educated, sincere and loves Tess, and the courtship at Talbothays has the look of the companionship Wollstonecraft recommends. When the test comes, the remedy fails, and it fails for a reason her framework can explain but her programme did not anticipate. An objection should be met at once. Angel is not the man Wollstonecraft's programme would have produced: his education is self-directed rather than egalitarian, and his love, in her terms, is a passion of the imagination rather than a friendship founded on esteem. But that is the novel's point. His is the version of the remedy that a real late-Victorian man of conscience could actually possess, a liberal conversion of belief unaccompanied by any change in what he finds desirable. What is tested is not the whole of Wollstonecraft's programme but its most easily adopted portion, the reform of opinion in the individuals who benefit from the economy. An economy that operates in the aesthetic and emotional life of a man, in what he finds lovable, is not corrected by a change in his beliefs. Angel can renounce dogma and keep the double standard, because the standard was never a doctrine.

The novel then complicates its own pessimism, and the complication is the article's second claim. Angel does change. In Brazil, ill and thrown among men whose indifferent remarks on women's lives unsettle him, he comes to see that he judged Tess by what was done to her and not by what she is, and he returns to find her (Hardy, 1891, Phase the Sixth). The late change is real, and it is what Wollstonecraft's programme would predict: reflection, suffering and wider acquaintance with human life do enlarge a man's sympathies. What the novel shows is that the change comes too late, and why. By the time Angel returns, the economy's other half has completed its work. Tess's father is dead, her family is homeless, and she has accepted Alec's protection to keep them housed. Her reproach to Angel that it is "too late" is a statement about the order of events and not about love: belief can be revised in an afternoon of conscience, but dependence has a schedule of its own.

This is the novel's most precise contribution to the argument that began with Wollstonecraft. Reform of belief in the men who benefit from the economy is necessary but not sufficient, because the economy has a second mechanism that is material, and that mechanism does not wait for belief to catch up. The point places Hardy closer to the late Wollstonecraft than to the author of the *Vindication*'s chapter on national education. *The Wrongs of Woman* does not renounce the hope of that book, but it gives far more attention to law, property and the labour market, and to women who have no one to educate them or to marry them. Hardy's novel does not so much refute the *Vindication* as carry forward the movement of its author's own later thought, from a politics of education to a politics of dependence. It also reintroduces a variable the *Vindication* addressed chiefly to middle-class readers: Tess is a labouring woman of fallen gentility, and her options, once the economy has booked her, are those of the agricultural labour market and the men who control it.

Objections and Qualifications

The frame invites four objections. The first is anachronism: that an eighteenth-century rationalist treatise is an unlikely instrument for a late-Victorian novel steeped in evolutionary pessimism. The reply is that the article claims a homology and not a lineage. The two texts differ in their metaphysics, since Wollstonecraft's confidence in reason and Hardy's in the indifference of the universe are far apart, but they describe the same social mechanism, and the mediating discourses of the nineteenth century, from Mill to the repeal campaign, show that the mechanism was still in view.

The second objection is that the subtitle is itself implicated. To defend Tess as "pure" is to accept that purity is the question, and a strict Wollstonecraftian would say that the economy is contested by rejecting its measure, not by contesting its entries. There is force in this. Hardy's subtitle disputes the ledger's verdict on Tess but retains its vocabulary. Two things qualify the point. The novel's practice partly escapes the subtitle, since it dwells on Tess's moral action, on baptism, forgiveness and the killing, far more than on her sexual status. And "pure" may in context mean something nearer to integrity of character than to chastity, which is how Blake's reading of the word invites us to take it (Blake, 1982). Even so, the residue of the economy in the novel's own title is the strongest evidence that the economy is not simply an object of the novel's critique but a condition of its speech.

The third is that the narrating voice is not innocent. Feminist critics have insisted that the narrator often lingers on Tess's body with the kind of attention that the plot attributes to Alec and Angel (Boumelha, 1982; Ingham, 1989). If so, Hardy shares the idealising habit his novel indicts, and the claim that he extends Wollstonecraft must be held alongside the recognition that he also partly reproduces what she attacked. I do not think this undoes the argument. A text can diagnose a structure and be marked by it, and the unevenness is part of what the novel shows: the economy is not outside the observer.

The fourth is that the novel's cosmic language, its President of the Immortals and its sacrifice on the stones of Stonehenge, points to a metaphysical rather than a social explanation. I do not claim that the social account displaces the metaphysical idiom. The two work together: the cosmic language names the economy's apparent inevitability from the inside, the way it feels to those from whom it collects, while the social analysis names the mechanism. Hardy's sentence about the President of the Immortals is ironic precisely because it attributes to a god what the community has done.

II. Conclusion

Reading *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* through Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* shows that the novel is built on a theory of how female virtue is converted into reputation and then lost irreversibly. Hardy's phases name the economy's transactions, since the fall is produced in one phase, booked in the next and collected in a later one. His Joan, Alec and Angel are its agents, and Tess's baptism, confession and killing are the acts through which she claims the power over herself that Wollstonecraft set as the measure of freedom.

The article has argued that Hardy does more than illustrate Wollstonecraft. By giving Angel a liberal education and a sincere love and having him collect the price regardless, the novel shows that an economy living in desire and taste is not undone by better opinions. By letting Angel change, but too late, it shows that the economy's material half runs on a clock of its own. These conclusions give Wollstonecraft's critique a longer life than the century that produced it, since they explain why reform of belief so often leaves the structure standing, and they connect the *Vindication* to the later turn of its author's thought toward law, property and dependence. They also give Hardy's pessimism a social shape alongside its metaphysical one. The President of the Immortals is a poor explanation of what happens to Tess. The reputational economy is a better one, and it is an explanation that readers can still use.

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