



# Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France

*Clare Haru Crowston*

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In Old Regime France credit was both a central part of economic exchange and a crucial concept for explaining dynamics of influence and power in all spheres of life. Contemporaries used the term *credit* to describe reputation and the currency it provided in court politics, literary production, religion, and commerce. Moving beyond Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of capital, this book establishes credit as a key matrix through which French men and women perceived their world. As Clare Haru Crowston demonstrates, credit unveils the personal character of market transactions, the unequal yet reciprocal ties binding society, and the hidden mechanisms of political power.

Credit economies constituted "economies of regard" in which reputation depended on embodied performances of credibility. Crowston explores the role of fashionable appearances and sexual desire in leveraging credit and reconstructs women's vigorous participation in its gray markets. The scandalous relationship between Queen Marie Antoinette and fashion merchant Rose Bertin epitomizes the vertical loyalties and deep social divides of the credit regime and its increasingly urgent political stakes.

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