W.R. Greg's article "Prostitution," published in the Westminster Review in 1850, draws an explicit parallel between prostitutes and women who marry for money. Greg, who uses the terminology of economics to describe prostitution and marriage as "transactions" undertaken in "a cold spirit of bargain," knows that the parallel will shock many of his Victorian readers. He writes, "Let not the world cry shame upon us for the juxtaposition" (458-459). Although Greg only touches on the "juxtaposition" of marriage and prostitution in an essay that otherwise focuses on prostitution, his article is among the first in the British periodical press to discuss the economic similarity between the two.

Published three years before Greg's article appeared, Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre offers a similar and more sustained critique of the exchange of male financial support for female sexual availability that often characterized Victorian marriages and has always characterized prostitution. Brontë's novel does not simply criticize marriage as a system of sexual/economic exchange, but also suggests an alternative model of marriage based solely on love. Brontë explores this complex intersection of money, sexuality, economics, and power by comparing marriage to a form of prostitution: kept mistresshood. While Jane's initial self-reliance and independence stand in contrast to the degradation and dependence of Clara, Giacinta, and Céline, Rochester's continental ex-mistresses, Jane nearly slides into a dependent position herself.

Mistresshood, which was associated with both marriage and prostitution, was a particularly fruitful vehicle for Brontë's criticism. The word "mistress" could mean a female superior or head of household, a wife (who was considered inferior to her husband), or a kept mistress. The first meaning is seldom used in Jane Eyre. A crucial exception—and, I will argue, a dramatic turning point in the novel's gender relations—is Jane's ultimate declaration of financial independence: "I am my own mistress" (458). Within the text of Jane Eyre, "mistress" most often denotes a "kept woman." Although bourgeois Victorians considered kept mistresshood a form of prostitution while they sanctified marriage, Brontë's text exposes the ways in which the two resemble one another: the relationship of mistresses to their "masters" is similar to that of wives to husbands. Mistresses, like wives, were monogamous, sexually available at all times, and dependent on men's financial support. The difference between a married woman and Céline, Rochester's French mistress, lay in the marriage ceremony, a legal formalization of what Carole Pateman calls "the sexual contract." Pateman also argues that prostitution is one of the ways in which "men can uphold the terms of the sexual contract," explaining that prostitution has been a manifestation of "patriarchal capitalism" (189).
Many Victorian writers, however, saw prostitution as a threat to patriarchal capitalism, and consequently "the great social evil" emerged as a major concern for mid-nineteenth-century Victorian society. While the controversial Contagious Diseases Acts were not instated until a decade later, rescue work to "reclaim" fallen women was on the rise, as was the production of anti-prostitution lectures and sermons. [4] Victorian definitions of prostitution assumed that mistresses, who accepted money in exchange for long-term sexual availability, were as much prostitutes as street walkers, who had a large number of short-term clients. In *Lectures on Magdalenism* (1843), Ralph Wardlaw makes this connection explicit:

A harlot is generally understood as one who makes her livelihood by whoredom . . . Among the varieties there are, first of all, your kept mistresses;—and these are of very various grades, from the first-rate style of keeping down to the lowest; but, though varying in the scale of—(since I must use the word for want of another to convey the idea, though I dislike the association of it with so vile a theme)—in the scale of gentility, all alike in that of moral turpitude. (33-34)

Despite Wardlaw's "scale of gentility," he implies a strong censure of all women engaged in prostitution through his use of the words "whoredom," "harlot," and "moral turpitude."

In *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects* (1857), William Acton also emphasizes the importance of the economic transaction in his definition of prostitution. "[I] shall assume . . . that the fact of 'hiring,' whether openly or secretly, whether by an individual or a plurality in succession, constitutes prostitution" (2). According to Acton's definition, a mistress who accepted money in a long-term liaison with a single man was unequivocally a prostitute. Brontë connects Victorian discourses on prostitution and the tropes of fallenness with mistresshood throughout *Jane Eyre*, even when she is using the word "mistress" in its most common sense, to mean a wife or a female superior. She in turn uses the concept of the mistress to show how deeply Victorian marriage was charged with the economics of sexual exchange.

The economic elements of marriage that Brontë's text deplores were crucial to both the legal and social character of the institution as it had developed in Britain up to the nineteenth century. Married women could not own property; the legal principle of coverture provided that married couples were legally one person and that the husband was the legal representative of that person. [5] As many early-Victorian texts attest, marriages of convenience—of finance rather than romance—were common and relatively uncensured. [6] Although legal reforms and changes in public attitude would transform marriage by the end of the century, no significant legal reforms had taken place when *Jane Eyre* was written. Whether social attitudes toward marriage as an economic contract were changing before feminist reform began to challenge the nature of that economic contract is another question. We might regard Brontë's attitude in *Jane Eyre* as evidence that these attitudes were slowly shifting from a conception of marriage as a socioeconomic contract to a primarily romantic union. Yet Brontë's novel is unusual in its conviction that marriage and economics should not be mixed. [7] Jane's and Rochester's reunification at the novel's end functions not as an acceptance of the status quo, but rather as a portrait of marriage as a romantic and companionate union.

Brontë's opposition to economic dependency for women has too often been assumed rather than demonstrated by critics. For example, Maurianne Adams's article, "*Jane Eyre:* Woman's Estate," discusses the problematic nature of woman's economic dependence, but focuses on Jane's economic status as one of many social and personal obstacles she must face on the road to self-realization. Similarly, Beth Kalikoff describes Jane as a potential "fallen woman" who is tempted to enter an illicit liaison as Rochester's mistress; however, she does not discuss the economic dependence that Brontë stigmatizes. No critical discussions of Jane's life have focused on her similarities to Rochester's mistresses or, therefore, to the major sexual economy of the text.

Certain critics of the novel's socioeconomic relationships have made only glancing investigations of Jane's sexual relationships. Mary Poovey's chapter on the novel in the influential book, *Uneven Developments* (1988), discusses Jane as an economic and social agent in the context of the controversy in the 1840s over the liminality of governesses. [8] Although she glosses over the degree to which Jane's salaried position as a governess represents female independence in the novel, Poovey does provide a compelling picture of the economic constraints that often governed women's lives. She is less concerned than I am, though, with exploring how those social constraints affect Jane's psyche.

Jina Politi's marxist feminist critique, "*Jane Eyre* Class-ified" (1982), argues that Brontë's novel reinforces structures of class and, correspondingly, patriarchal oppression. For Politi, Jane's refusals to be subordinate to Rochester are hollow because of Jane's complicity in a patriarchal system. Politi is perhaps over-eager to blame the text rather than to explore its genuine political complexity. [9] Any reading of the class politics of *Jane Eyre* must be tempered by a detailed look at its political and emotional heart; the relationship and eventual marriage between Jane and Rochester. I attempt to clarify the novel's often contradictory ideological positions by looking specifically at the love plot in the
context of the gender and class structures of Victorian England and, in the process, evaluate Charlotte Brontë's vexed attitude(s) toward those structures. By reading the marriage plot of Jane Eyre against the recurrent theme of mistreshood in the novel, I show how the novel criticizes the intersection of women's sexuality with their economic dependency.

The novel first hints at the interrelation of women's sexual and economic lives when Jane assumes a position as Adèle's governess. As Céline's daughter, Adèle embodies the physical consequences of her mother's exchange of sexual availability for financial support, and thus serves as a constant reminder of the consequences of mistreshood. Céline was clearly what Ralph Wardlaw might have called one of the "better class" of harlots. Rochester explicitly details the cash basis of his affair with Céline: "Miss Eyre, so much was I flattered by this preference of the Gallic sylph for her British gnome, that I installed her in an hotel; gave her a complete establishment of servants, a carriage, cashmeres, diamonds, dentelles, &c." (147). Although Jane is aware of Rochester's "former faults of morality," she does not blame him, assuming that they "had their source in some cruel cross of fate" (154). However, she and Rochester judge Céline's conduct as "treachery" (152). While they are speaking specifically of Céline's involvement with other men while she was Rochester's mistress, Jane and Rochester also suggest their sense of Céline's larger betrayal of love for financial support.

Shortly after Rochester explains his relationship with Céline, Jane admits to herself her own interest in him. But, possibly because she knows of his "former faults of morality," she admonishes herself: "It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown, must devour the life that feeds it; and, if discovered and responded to, must lead, ignis fatuus-like, into miry wilds whence there is no extrication" (169). At this point, Jane recognizes that Rochester is her superior not only because he is her employer, but because of his financial status and sexual experience as well. This recognition reminds Jane that any "secret love" between them will not result in marriage, but in mistreshood—the metaphorical "miry wilds" that she imagines here.

Jane, who is already engaged in a non-sexual exchange with Rochester as the governess of his ward, realizes that others suspect Rochester will seduce her. Even the kind Mrs. Fairfax is afraid that the employer-employee relationship between Rochester and Jane may turn into an illicit sexual and economic exchange. Mrs. Fairfax says to Jane, "'Last night I cannot tell you what I suffered when I sought all over the house, and could find you nowhere, nor the master either; and then, at twelve o'clock, saw you come in with him'" (278). At first, Mrs. Fairfax's anguish at the pair's relatively brief absence looks melodramatic, but her phrase, "I cannot tell you what I suffered," serves as a useful reminder that for middle-class Victorian women, the thought of premarital sexual activity was effectively unspeakable. Mrs. Fairfax does not have the vocabulary to warn Jane explicitly. Rather, she must deal in hints and innuendos:

'Is it really for love he is going to marry you?' she asked.
I was so hurt by her coldness and scepticism, that the tears rose to my eyes.
'I am sorry to grieve you,' pursued the widow; 'but you are so young, and so little acquainted with men, I wished to put you on your guard. It is an old saying that "all is not gold that glitters;" and in this case I do fear there will be something found to be different to what either you or I expect.' (278)

It is impossible to tell here whether Mrs. Fairfax is trying to frame a guarded warning that Rochester is already married, or simply hinting that he may not marry Jane at all. In any case, Mrs. Fairfax shocks the reader, and Jane, into realizing that the romantic marriage Rochester and Jane plan is an exception rather than the rule, and that it is particularly fraught with danger when the woman is an employee of the man. Brontë thus exposes the sordid assumptions of even the kind Mrs. Fairfax, and shows that if Jane were to marry Rochester, she would be suspected of trying to marry him for his money.

Jane exhibits a great deal of anxiety about her impending change of status before the first, failed wedding of the novel. Although the outcome of that wedding—the revelation that Rochester is already married to Bertha Mason—justifies her fears, it is important to remember that Jane has not had premonitions of Rochester's planned bigamy per se. Rather, Jane's fears stem from her anxiety about her potential economic and social dependency on Rochester, which Mrs. Fairfax's suspicions exacerbate. While Jane considers her work as a governess legitimate labor in exchange for Rochester's income, there are exchanges in which she will not participate. She asserts her independence not only by refusing Rochester's extravagant gifts, but also by securing her uncle's inheritance so that she will be Rochester's financial equal in marriage. Jane implies that there are two potential ways for a woman to gain independence: she may either bring her inheritance to a marriage or she may earn a "legitimate" living once married by working, for example, as a governess.

The conviction that financial independence is an important marker of women's personal and subjective autonomy is evident when Rochester takes Jane shopping. Jane is disturbed by both Rochester's selection of gaudy clothing and his proprietary attitude toward her:
Jane's refusal of fine new clothes is particularly significant in that "fancy dress" was one of the primary social markers of the Victorian prostitute. As Mariana Valverde observes, "medical and political discourses . . . constructed the love of finery as a chief cause of women's descent into prostitution" (170). What constituted finery was class-specific, in that finery meant clothing that was inappropriate to a woman's class or station in life: "Finery in [the] pejorative sense meant clothes that were too showy . . . what was or was not finery depended on the socioeconomic and moral status of the wearer" (170-171). Jane's fear of being brightly dressed, then, stems from the contrast between the significance of these new clothes and that of the accustomed and expected plainness of her dress as a governess. On Jane, the bright silks and satins would be inappropriate because of her class position (though not, as Valverde's argument makes clear, to her new station after her marriage) and would therefore indicate a lack of economic and sexual integrity. Brontë suggests this anxiety still further by choosing the adjective "gay" for Jane's half-censure of the shops, since "gay woman" was a common nineteenth-century term for a prostitute. [11]

While Jane does not object to the cloth Rochester selects per se, even calling the satin "superb," she insists that she will not "venture" to wear it. If she were to wear the clothes that he purchased for her, Jane realizes, she would look more like Rochester's mistress than his ward's governess. It is the association between Rochester's purchase of these elaborate clothes, which are tokens of mistreshood, and Jane's body that she finds upsetting: "Glad was I to get him out of the silk warehouse, and then out of a jeweller's shop: the more he bought me, the more my cheek burned with a sense of annoyance and degradation" (281). This feeling of degradation, linked as it is to the increase in buying, stems from both her economic position and from Rochester's glee in keeping her increasingly in his debt.

Jane immediately reads his pleasure as the smug satisfaction of "buying" her. Using the metaphor of the seraglio that Rochester later employs to describe his relationship with his Continental mistresses, Brontë links "buying" to a specifically sexual form of slavery. Jane narrates: "He smiled; and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched: I crushed his hand, which was ever hunting mine, vigorously, and thrust it back to him red with the passionate pressure" (282). Not only does his look appear to take possession of her, like a "sultan" with his "slave," but he also constantly attempts to take physical possession of her, with his hand "ever hunting" Jane's. We might read the seeking hand as a synecdoche for Rochester's obsession with asserting his own independence as he anticipates his dependence on Rochester. This feeling of degradation, linked as it is to the increase in buying, stems from both her economic position and from Rochester's glee in keeping her increasingly in his debt.

This Orientalist metaphor of Jane's sexual thrall is reinforced when Rochester picks up the thread of what Jane calls his "eastern allusion." As Rochester declares, "I would not exchange this one little English girl for the grand Turk's whole seraglio; gazelle-eyes, houri forms and all!" (282). [13] Although Rochester is actually contrasting Jane to the "houri forms" of the Turk's mistresses, his "hand-rubbing," and his concentration on women's sexual bodies strikes Jane as ominously possessive. She seizes on the metaphor he uses and seems purposefully to misconstrue it, responding as if he had asked her to behave like the "whole seraglio": "I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio . . . so don't consider me an equivalent for one" (282). This non sequitur makes clear the extent to which Jane is obsessed with asserting her own independence as she anticipates her dependence on Rochester.

In another effort to assert her independence, Jane insists on retaining her salary and work schedule even after her marriage. She declares that she will earn her keep even within marriage, thus refusing to become one of Rochester's mistresses: "Do you remember what you said of Céline Varens?—the diamonds, the cashmeres you gave her? I will not be your English Céline Varens. I shall continue to act as Adèle's governess: by that I shall earn my board and lodging, and thirty pounds a year besides. I'll furnish my own wardrobe out of that money" (283). Here, Jane tries to negotiate two separate relationships to Rochester: as his employee and his wife. In other words, she is trying to do what was legally impossible for early Victorian women: maintain a separation between the financial and emotional dimensions of marriage in order to avoid a dependent position. Jane is very clear that what she is rejecting is not Rochester's love, but the exchange of his money for her loss of autonomy. Jane's suggestion is deeply ironic, for she could not be paid by Rochester if she were his wife because he would, by law of coverture, be paying himself. Still, she seems to think that the symbolic act of working for her keep would protect her from dependency and mistreshood in marriage. At the end of the discussion, she returns to the question of her wardrobe: Mr. Rochester will not dress her, not even for her wedding. She will buy her own clothes, plain as they are, and thus demonstrate that she is neither a mistress nor a prostitute, but a loving fiancée who is in no way motivated by financial desires.
Jane not only declares her independence to Rochester, but also seeks to establish financial autonomy by writing to her wealthy uncle, in the hope that he may leave her an inheritance. "It would, indeed, be a relief," I thought, "if I had ever so small an independency; . . . if I had but a prospect of one day bringing Mr. Rochester an accession of fortune, I could better endure to be kept by him now" (281-282; my italics). Again, Jane ignores the fact that any property she were to bring to the marriage would become Rochester's. But this desire for independence, read within the larger plot-structure of the novel, helps her to avoid total dependence on Rochester. Joyce Zonana points out that it is in fact this desire that saves Jane from the bigamous marriage, for "Jane's letter to John Eyre alerts Rochester's brother-in-law, Richard Mason, to Rochester's plans . . . and Jane is freed from a marriage that would, in her own terms, have thoroughly enslaved her" (597). Brontë thus uses Jane's lack of confidence in her independence and her simultaneous feeling of degradation to illustrate how debasing the entanglement of marriage and economics is.

Because of her love for Rochester, Jane faces a dangerous paradox when he asks her to come away with him after their wedding is pre-empted. Jane is caught between her love for Rochester and her equally strong desire to maintain her independence. When she refuses to join him, Rochester accuses Jane of having tried to marry him for his wealth and social position: "you don't love me, then? It was only my station, and the rank of my wife, that you valued? Now that you think me disqualified to become your husband, you recoil from my touch" (319). Rochester thus speaks Jane's own worst fears—that the attempted marriage to Rochester could be construed as her surrender to dependency and mistreshood. Jane hardly needs the reminder; as Maurianne Adams notes, "the sudden emergence of Bertha Mason Rochester from her attic hideaway confirms and verifies what Jane had already feared, that as Rochester's wife she would be but his mistress, a kept woman, without any independent social status" (138). Rochester attempts to counter Jane's uneasiness by asserting that there will be no impurity in their setting up house together: "Never fear that I wish to lure you into error—to make you my mistress. Why do you shake your head?" (320). Remembering Céline, Rochester uses an extremely narrow definition of mistreshood, asserting that if there is love rather than a purely financial arrangement, Jane will not be his mistress. But Jane understands differently: "If I lived with you as you desire," she informs him, "I should then be your mistress—to say otherwise is sophistical—is false" (320). The repetition of the word "mistress," and Rochester's destination in France, must remind Jane of having tried to marry him for his wealth and social position: "you don't love me, then? It was by him now" (281-282; my italics). Again, Jane ignores the fact that any property she were to bring to the marriage would be nothing compared to the marginal position of one known to be the former mistress of a married middle-aged roué.

Thus Brontë shows that Jane's resistance to becoming Rochester's mistress is at least partly economic and practical: the only thing worse than being Rochester's mistress would be to be his discarded mistress. While Jane's position as a virtuous outcast from Thornfield would prove difficult, such rejection would be nothing compared to the marginal position of one known to be the former mistress of a married middle-aged roué.

While Jane is determined to maintain her independence, she expresses a certain ambivalence about her decision to leave Thornfield. She ultimately congratulates herself for choosing not to be Rochester's mistress:

> Which is better?—To have surrendered to temptation; listened to passion; made no painful effort—no struggle;—but to have sunk down in the silken snare; fallen asleep on the flowers covering it; wakened in a southern clime, amongst the luxuries of a pleasure-
Jane contrasts her two options in abstract terms: she could be either "a slave in a fool's paradise" or a "village-school mistress, free and honest." She could be a slave or free, an inferior or a superior mistress, beguiled or living honestly. If self-delusion and slavery are characteristic of mistresses, Brontë extends the definition to include wives who are involved in tainting economic exchange as well. After all, what could be more self-delusive than the appearance of respectability that marriage confers? In this sense, a Blanche Ingram, whose interest in Rochester is motivated simply by his wealth, is as shameful as a Céline Varens. Jane feels that her own marriage with Rochester—which she assumed would be legitimate—would be on the same level as the "seraglio" if she were to accept Rochester's unearned financial support. Jane's choice, then, is not just between marriage and whoredom, but between love and monetary exchange, autonomy and abject dependency.

Jane's flight from Thornfield illuminates the choice that she faces between independence and mistroundship. The difficulty of her position is demonstrated when she, a lone woman on the public roads, encounters several people who judge her harshly. Since "woman on the streets" was a common euphemism for a prostitute, this episode in Jane's life reminds us of how tenuous Jane's avoidance of sexual and economic exchange really is. When a woman whom Jane asks for employment rebuffs her, Jane realizes, "in her eyes, how doubtful must have appeared my character, position, tale" (345). Jane is denied access to respectable labor because she appears to have participated in illicit sexual exchange. Brontë's text depicts the general suspicion of even the most respectable of women: as Jane notes, "an ordinary beggar is frequently an object of suspicion; a well-dressed beggar inevitably so" (346). Her comment shows how deeply the whole of Victorian society was imbued with suspicion about the corrupt market of sexuality that permeated Victorian England. Jane's journey on the roads of North England leads her to Marsh End, where she finds, in addition to her long-lost cousins, independence as the village schoolmistress. In this section of the novel, marriage as economic exchange is de-emphasized, while Brontë highlights the importance of love in marriage. Jane's cousin, St. John Rivers, demands that she marry him and accompany him to India. Although St. John does not say he wants a mistress, he seeks a wife who will be superior to those around her but subject to him. The novel's critique of this sort of marriage of spiritual convenience is just as harsh as its denunciation of the exchange-economy of illicit mistroundship. Indeed, St. John fares much worse when he suggests marriage without love than Rochester does when he advocates love without marriage. As Jane asks herself, "Can I receive from him the bridal ring, endure all the forms of love (which I doubt not he would scrupulously observe) and know that the spirit was quite absent? Can I bear the consciousness that every endearment he bestows is a sacrifice made on principle? No: such a martyrdom would be monstrous" (427). Brontë demonstrates the importance of romantic love in marriage through Jane's reaction to St. John Rivers's insistence that she marry him without it: "[St. John] has told me I am formed for labour—not for love: which is true, no doubt. But, in my opinion, if I am not formed for love, it follows that I am not formed for marriage" (438).

Jane escapes a marriage that either mixes economic and sexual exchange or entails sex without love by holding fiercely to her own conception of equality and independence. In the end, she marries Rochester not only because she loves him, but also because she has received a large inheritance from her uncle in Madeira, which enables her to live wherever and however she desires. As Maurianne Adams maintains, "Jane reaches the threshold of marriage three times in the novel. She cannot cross it until she can meet her 'master' as his partner and equal, his equal by virtue of her inheritance and family solidarity, his partner by virtue of their interdependence" (152). In a time in which women were accustomed to a lifetime of dependency, the financial autonomy that she insists on before the marriage is both unusual and extremely important.

Jane's conception of independence, however, does not transcend Victorian paradigms about the role of women. Jane is still caught up in making sure her motives appear pure to herself and to the broader society, and she wants to be certain that she has not been bought. She can never step wholly outside of the idea that marriage is necessarily about financial status and appearance, which is why she must make her declaration to Rochester so firmly: "I told you I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress" (458). Her choice of words signals to Rochester (after his long search for a good mistress, in either sense of the word) that she is not his inferior. Jane thus redefines the word "mistress" at the novel's end. If she is her "own mistress," then she must be economically dependent on herself alone. The word, then, ceases to mean the surrender of economic and sexual power over oneself, and comes to signify—within Jane Eyre if not within Victorian culture—the independence and power of the novel's heroine.

By depicting a heroine who is able to claim a measure of autonomy, Brontë offers a solution to the seemingly insoluble problem of female economic dependence, and the resultant parallel between
prostitution and marriage. Jane's legacy from her uncle assures her and the reader that her marriage to Rochester is a wholly romantic union, with no hint of prostitution and dependency. If Jane is her own mistress, she will not be Rochester's. But Brontë's solution, which depends on the deus ex machina of a sudden inheritance, is hardly revolutionary. Further, her solution addresses the symptom of female economic dependence, rather than its cause: a patriarchal system of government and property law. Despite the relatively conservative implications of the inheritance plot that catapults Jane to economic and social power, the novel retains a progressive stance toward sexual economics, given the context in which it was written. Because it is so explicitly concerned with the problem of women's financial dependency and ends by proposing a solution through love-based marriage and female independence, Jane Eyre marks an important moment in the development of Victorian ideologies of marriage and the economic position of women.

Bibliography


Notes

1. Department of English, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. Kate Wash-ington is a Ph.D. candidate. Her dissertation, "Common Prostitution: Marriage, Sex, and Economic Exchange in British Culture, 1840-1913," discusses the economic parallel between marriage and prostitution in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Acknowledgements: I would would like to thank the Nineteenth-Century Studies Group at Stanford, particularly Stephanie Kuduk. I am also grateful to Professor Barbara C. Gelpi, who was especially helpful at the early stages of this project.

2. The Oxford English Dictionary indicates that from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, "mistress" denoted "a woman who illicitly occupies the place of wife."

3. Drawing from social contract theory, Pateman argues that the sexual contract, which includes both marriage and prostitution, underwrites and makes possible the social contract by providing the necessary precondition of patriarchal order: "The social contract is a story of freedom; the sexual contract is a story of subjection . . . Men's freedom and women's subjection are created through the original contract—and the character of civil freedom cannot be understood without the missing half of the story that reveals how men's patriarchal right over women is established through contract" (2). See especially chapters one and six for further discussion of marriage as a sexual contract.

4. The Contagious Diseases Acts (1864-9), which attempted to establish state control over prostitution, mandated that all "common prostitutes" in military garrison towns be examined for venereal disease and, if found to be infected, confined to "lock hospitals" to prevent the infection of British troops. Judith Walkowitz's seminal Prostitution and Victorian Society focuses on the passage of the acts and the feminist agitation for their repeal, both of which made prostitution a prominent national issue. See also Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight; Mahood, who focuses on Scottish prostitution; and Anderson, who provides readings of several key literary texts featuring fallen women. For two useful bibliographies of prostitution, see Nash and Bullough and Elcano.

5. Perkin offers a precise delineation of coverture. See pages 16-17 and chapters three and six. For a consideration of Victorian feminists’ responses to coverture, see Shanley, introduction and chapter one. A nineteenth-century feminist perspective can be found in Bodichon. For a discussion of coverture that is based in contract theory, see Pateman 90-100 and chapter six.
6. I do not mean to argue, however, that the majority of marriages were loveless; rather, I suggest that if we imagine a continuum between wholly socioeconomically motivated and wholly romantically motivated marriages, most upper- and middle-class marriages would have had some love entering into their makeup, but socioeconomic factors would have been the primary force motivating the marriage contract. Seven years after Brontë's novel was published, G.R. Drysdale wrote: "A great proportion of the marriages we see around us, did not take place from love at all, but from some interested motive, such as wealth, social position, or other advantages; and in fact it is rare to see a marriage in which true love has been the predominating feeling on both sides" (Houghton 381).

7. The question of when companionate marriage emerged as the norm for British families has been the subject of critical debate. Stone, Trumbach, and Shorter are the three best-known proponents of the idea that marriage had evolved into a primarily love-based rather than socioeconomic compact by the nineteenth century. These scholars' views have been effectively challenged by Okin. Okin demonstrates that changes in women's property law in the seventeenth century (e.g., provisions for the establishment of trusts under equity for married women), which scholars have taken as evidence as changing attitudes toward women and ownership, stem rather from an increase in movable property (personally) in relation to real estate and the desire of landed and/or wealthy families to consolidate their wealth through female lines, rather than from evolving property rights for women. That the practice of establishing trusts under equity survived may be attributable to parents' desire to protect their daughters from unreliable or dishonest husbands rather than a desire for egalitarian marriages.

8. Poovey writes that within debates over gender and the role of women in the 1840s, the governess was "the figure who epitomized the domestic ideal, and the figure who threatened to destroy it. Because the governess was like the middle-class mother in the work she performed but like both a working-class woman and man in the wages she received, the very figure who theoretically should have defended the naturalness of separate spheres threatened to collapse the difference between them" (127).

9. The critical divide between those who consider the novel a radical feminist text and those who qualify its radicalism, or even see it as ultimately conservative, has become particularly sharp in the last three decades. A key text for emergent feminist literary criticism of the 1970s, *Jane Eyre* was celebrated most notably by Gilbert and Gubar. In their groundbreaking study, they describe *Jane Eyre* as a novel of "rebellious feminism" (338). This tendency continued in later scholarship: see, for example, Senf. More recently, however, several critics—particularly those interested in class and race as well as feminism—have stressed Brontë's conservatism. London, for example, offers a particularly scathing, if not always thoroughly convincing, rebuttal of the claim that *Jane Eyre* functions as a liberatory text for its women readers, arguing that "for Brontë . . . as for Jane Eyre, liberty can be articulated only as new servitude" (196). Finally, Roy focuses on the fundamentally conservative class politics of the novel rather than on its gender politics.

10. Jane in fact states flatly to Rochester that she would not endure many things for a salary: "'I should never mistake informality for insolence: one I rather like, the other nothing free-born would submit to, even for a salary.'" Rochester counters her assumption (and implies that Jane is ignorant of the reasons behind prostitution and similarly degrading occupations): "'Humbug! Most things free-born will submit to anything for a salary; therefore, keep to yourself and don't venture on generalities of which you are intensely ignorant'" (141).

11. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "gay woman" first signified "prostitute" in 1825. A well-known cartoon from *Punch* in the 1850s shows two women, one a respectable working woman, the other a prostitute in shabby and half-unbuttoned finery, with the former saying to the latter: "Ah! Fanny! How long have you been gay?"

12. Joyce Zonana points out that this scene functions within a "large system of . . . feminist Orientalist discourse," arguing that "Charlotte Brontë's sultan/slave simile displaces the source of patriarchal oppression onto an 'Oriental' society, enabling British readers to contemplate local problems without questioning their own self-definition as Westerners" (593). Zonana's argument is compelling, but I would add that the use of the Oriental references also had a certain shock value for Victorian readers: if Jane's marriage really resembles a sultan/slave relationship, then (in Victorian Orientalist terms) it must be corrupt indeed.

13. Here I have chosen to read the Orientalist metaphors of *Jane Eyre* as allusions to prostitution or to problematic female sexuality. There has, however, been a great deal of work done on the Oriental and colonialist references in *Jane Eyre*, beginning with Spivak. See Zonana and Meyer for more sustained discussions of postcolonial theory as applied to *Jane Eyre*.

14. While Adams's primary interest lies in the psychological rather than the economic ramifications of "Jane's fears that as a dependent wife she would be little better than a mistress," she also points out that the central issues of *Jane Eyre* are "the status and economics of female dependence in marriage, the limited options available to Jane as an outlet for her education and energies, her need to love and
to be loved, to be of service and to be needed" (139-140). My argument focuses on the former two items of this list; Adams’s on the latter two.

15. Or perhaps it is not so surprising. After all, his dismay in the disastrous episode with Céline Varens stems not from the fact that he is buying her affection and sexual favors; he asserts that he knew that all along. Rather, he ends their relationship because he has not been able to buy complete control over her body and her emotions.

16. Victorian women on the public roads were reminded of their anomalous position not only by workhouses, but by the rescue homes that were common during the period: "hundreds of Refuges, Homes, Guardians, and Asylums [were] established throughout the country during the period in an attempt to rescue individual prostitutes and fallen women" (Finnegan 169n). Brontë’s native area, the West Riding of Yorkshire, contained a number of such homes. Frances Finnegan explains that since the homes were opened and maintained entirely through voluntary subscriptions, they opened and shut again fairly often. The York Penitentiary Society was established in 1843, and closer to Haworth, homes in Leeds and Hull shared resources, with a new penitentiary opening in Hull in 1837. Dotting the English countryside, they were often opened in country or town homes that had been bequeathed to charitable societies. The visibility of these penitentiaries was just one of the ways in which the dangers of sexuality and economic exchange recurred constantly in the Victorian woman’s imagination.

17. Jina Politi contends that “Charlotte Brontë . . . set out to liberate woman from the representations in which patriarchal Victorian ideology held her. She also set out to vindicate the socially underprivileged woman. Yet Jane Eyre comes to celebrate the very ethos upon which bourgeois capitalism and its patriarchal ideology rest” (90). Mary Poovey similarly, if less polemically, discusses the limits of Jane Eyre’s ending: “That only the coincidence of a rich uncle’s death can confer on a single woman autonomy and power, after all, suggest just how intractable her dependence really was in the 1840s” (142). I would add that besides showing the intractability of dependence, Brontë’s ending reveals the novelty of such thinking in the 1840s.