

Gaslighting in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*:

A Comparative Study

Department of Foreign Languages

National Chiayi University

摘要

在 (*Wide Sargasso Sea*)中，作者珍·瑞絲(Jean Rhys)讓柏莎·安東尼特·梅森(Bertha Antoinette Mason)作為主角，以此揭露她與愛德華·羅徹斯特(Edward Rochester) 充滿虐待、歧視和暴力的婚姻之間的真相。透過與夏綠蒂·勃朗特(Charlotte Brontë)的《簡愛》(*Jane Eyre*)互文，瑞絲補全了柏莎瘋狂的真相：她的瘋狂僅是羅徹斯特為贏回天真的簡愛的一面之詞。羅徹斯特所用的心理操縱手段和「煤氣燈效應」(Gaslighting)非常相似。「煤氣燈效應」一詞出自喬治·丘克(George Cuker)在一九九四年的同名電影《煤氣燈下》(*Gaslight*)；現在作為一種心理學上的用詞，用於形容一種頻發於親密關係之中以及家庭暴力之中的心理操縱手段。透過對比閱讀，本論文意在分析羅徹斯特如何利用性別刻板印象、社會上和性別上的不平等來對柏莎·安東尼特和簡愛操作煤氣燈效應。我的研究也將說明羅徹斯特的煤氣燈效應沒有在柏莎·安東尼身上產生作用，卻成功讓簡愛原諒了他犯的重婚罪。

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ABSTRACT

Jean Rhys uses the character Bertha Antoinette Mason, a silenced character in *Jane Eyre*, as the primary character in *Wide Sargasso Sea* to reveal the hidden secrets, abuses, racism and violence of the marriage between Edward Rochester and Bertha Mason—issues which are overlooked in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. With intertextuality, Jean Rhys makes *Wide Sargasso Sea* a dialogical novel and uncovers the true nature of Bertha Antoinette's "madness" devised by the scheming Rochester to regain the innocent Jane Eyre's heart. Such crazy-making tricks used by Rochester are comparable to a psychological mind-manipulating tactic called "Gaslighting." The term first comes from George Cukor's 1944 eponymous film *Gaslight*; nowadays, it is a ubiquitous term used in psychology to analyze social phenomenon among intimate relationships, especially in domestic violence. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how Rochester gaslights Bertha Antoinette and Jane Eyre by making use of gender stereotypes and social and sexual inequality. My study shall explain that Rochester's gaslighting fails to work on Bertha Antoinette whereas succeeds in getting Jane Eyre's

full forgiveness of his bigamy.

Keywords: *Jane Eyre*; *Wide Sargasso Sea*; gaslighting; gender stereotypes; social inequalities; patriarchy.

**Gaslighting in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*:
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It is in your mind to pretend she is
mad. The doctors say what you tell
them to say. The man Richard says
what you want him to say – glad
and willing too, I know. She will be
like her mother.

—*Wide Sargasso Sea* (145)

I

This epigraph shows Christophine's accusations about Rochester's malicious scheme that is intended to drive Bertha Antoinette crazy, or at least to convince others that she is insane. Essentially, this passage captures the psychological mind-manipulation tactic known as "Gaslighting" in which the abuser aims to make his victim seem or feel like a lunatic so that he can dominate and take advantage on her. The term first comes from George Cukor's 1944 eponymous film *Gaslight*, a movie

that tells the story of Paula (Ingrid Bergman) and her new husband Gregory (Charles Boyer) who aims to undermine her sanity by dimming and brightening the gas lights and then insist she is imagining it. His notorious strategy subsequently becomes a prevailing catchphrase that describes the mind-manipulating tactics used against the victim in an intimate relationship.

Prior research on gaslighting has mainly dealt with psychological aspects; seeing it as a form of domestic violence. It is undeniably true that gaslighting often happened in domestic violence since gaslighting is basically a kind of mental abuse which makes its victims feel isolated, abandoned and trapped. With those sense of insecurity, the perpetrators can totally control their victims by gaslighting them. Once gaslighting succeed, the victims would be fully emotionally dependent on the perpetrators.

However, Paige Sweet argues that gaslighting is primarily a sociological rather than a psychological phenomenon. It should be understood as rooting in the social inequality, including gender, executed in power-laden intimate relationships, races, nationality, and sexuality (851). In her view, gaslighting has its power due to social characteristics, and it is gender-based structural factors that allow it to happen. Her research shows that women are more likely to be the victim of gaslighting, the "gaslightee," and men are more likely to be the abuser, the "gaslighter," in a toxic relationship. As she mentions:

Gender inequality is a condition of possibility for gaslighting. Decades of social research indicated that all forms of abuse between adults are more commonly used by men against women. This is not to say men never experience abuse or abuse tactics, but rather that gender inequality makes women more likely to be victimized than men. (Sweet 854)

Theoretically, anyone can be the victim and victimizer of gaslighting, but “women do not typically have the cultural, economic, and political capital necessary to gaslight men” (Sweet 852). Moreover, men have historically been seen as rational, logical, and reasonable creatures who can control their emotions. Women, in contrast, have been seen as irrational, emotional, and easily being hysteria. What people have defined are men of non-reason/nonconformity rather than men of madness (Ni 103). Due to these circumstances, women have long been labeled as “crazy,” and “madness” seemed to have been internalized in their nature. Because of those gender stereotypes, women are at a higher risk of being gaslighted than men.

Gaslighting become most powerful in a patriarchal society when it comes to gender-based discrimination, particularly sexism. Among all those gender-based

inequalities, sexism is the most powerful and devastating weapon against women. “If *everyone else* thinks the woman who is pointing to sexism is crazy. She won’t then have social standing to dispute the gaslighter’s view, in the ordinary sense that no one will take her challenges seriously” (Abramson 10). The purpose of gaslighting is to isolate its victims, create a surreal atmosphere, and make the gaslightee believe that the gaslighter is the only person who can trust and rely on. As soon as gaslighting succeed, its victims will be excluded from the moral society that no one, including their relatives, friends, and even governmental agencies will accept their claims, because their independent and psychological standing are destroyed. Being undermined by gaslighting, the gaslightee will easily falling into the gaslighter’s hand. By the way, what is worth our notice is that “people who engage in gaslighting often also want to maintain a relationship, sometimes even a close relationship, with their targets” (Abramson 12).

Three kinds of gaslighting vales are used against the gaslightee. First two valves are more effective when they mobilized in intimate relationships; they are separately: the love and empathic ability of the gaslightee. Loving someone, *ceteris peribus*, plausibly gives us reason to give their views a little extra credence (Abramson 20). Love involves commitment. In this way, trust is the prerequisite for the gaslightee to build an intimate relationship with the gaslighter. And that gives the gaslighter a tool.

In a toxic relationship, the most common and typical gaslighting tactic involves denying and questioning. Continuously denying and questioning will create a sense of self-doubt and thus lead the gaslightee to a false sense of self-reflection. As long as the gaslightee takes the gaslighter's word no matter how doubly or loyally, she is downgraded and undermined eventually. The empathic ability does the same and can also be employed in gaslighting. This involves a familiar sexist trope that women are and should be more empathetic. Women have been depicted as a compassionate and docile mother-like character who is and should be tolerant to every bad thing that happens to her. This kind of sexist trope exposes women into a higher risk of being gaslighted.

The last fundamental gaslighting tactic is the authority of naming the madness, which involves the stereotype of illness lies in patriarchy. The patriarchal society finds ways of, depicting the "inter alia, illogical, submissive, dependent, narcissistic, and overly emotional" nature of the woman (Mukhuba et al. 13858). In Victorian period when Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre* were set, the prevailing gender discrimination was that women were not only physically weaker but also morally inferior to men. "The most common examples of gender discrimination can be found in social, economic, religious, and political spheres of life. ... Moreover, avoiding or denying an opportunity because of their race, color, ethnicity, nationality,

religious bias and more particularly on the basis of sex” (Anees et al. 1079). Despite the race and color bias, women are universally condemned by their own femininity which has long been regarding powerless, vulnerable, dependent, emotional and hysterical. “Women are already gender-primed by the time gaslighting begins. They’re gender-primed because the initial situation about which they’re being gaslighted involves sexism” (Abramson 20). Additionally, androcentric social contexts have empowered men to abuse their power to control their wives in outrageous yet legitimate ways. The power inequality mainly refers to the property ownership. Women in Victorian age could not possess their own property; all their property was supposed to be leaved to their husband eventually. Like Virginia Woolf writes in “A room of One’s Own” that: “the law denied them the right to possess what money they earned. ... For all the centuries before that it would have been her husband’s property” (2445). Even a woman herself can be seen as a part of her husband’s property. The husband, as well as the father, has the right and power to punish his wife or daughter if she disobeys his authority. Wife beating was a recognized right of man and was practicable to high as well as low, and the daughter who refused to marry the man of her parents’ choice was liable to be beaten and locked up in the room. This power relation alike the relation between physician and patient. The physician, as a father-figure, holds the authority of the diagnose of

insanity. The patient, on the other hand, is in the inferior position as a child who is under constantly surveillance and judgment. On this power relation, Foucault writes that: "Everything at the Retreat is organized so that the insane are transformed into minors. They are regarded 'as children who have an overabundance of strength and make dangerous use of it. They must be given immediate punishment and rewards; whatever is remote has no effect on them.'" (Foucault 252).

Overall, gaslighting is a maid-manipulating tactic that enables the gaslighter to take advantage on the gaslightee and control her in a comparatively less violent way. Sometimes it hard to identify whether someone is being gaslighted; even the victim herself may not have an awareness of it. If gaslighting succeed, then the gaslightee would be expelled from the moral society and she would lose her standing as an individual. The authorities do not help either. Gaslighting draws on women's institutional vulnerabilities which are especially effective at keeping women isolated and entrapped. These institutional vulnerabilities depend on gender, sexual, and racial inequalities, which are built into the way women are "read" and treated in institutional settings (Sweet 865). There is a subconscious gender bias in institutional settings that men's words are more convincible than women's, especially when the woman is suggested of being mad. Once the husband reported his wife to the police or physician that she is mad, then the wife would be doomed without any chance of redemption.

II

Jean Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a rewriting and critique of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys aims to criticize the idea of British imperialism, colonialism, and patriarchal gender ideology in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and thus speak up for Bertha Mason, the "mad" white Creole wife of Rochester, by employing her as the heroine and giving her a new name—Antoinette Mason. The narrator switches from Bertha Antoinette to Rochester and later to Grace Poole, the woman who Rochester paid to guard Bertha Antoinette, in the course of the plot. By doing so, Rhys provides a space for Bertha Antoinette's self-justification which stands against Rochester's hypocritical argumentation in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* after his fake wedding is interrupted and further confirmed that Bertha Antoinette is not mad.

Contrary to Brontë's *Jane Eyre*'s nomological structure, Rhys makes *Wide Sargasso Sea* a dialogical novel through intertextuality. The novel is separated into three segments; each segment is written in the first-person point of view of different characters. Readers can clearly see through the narrator's inner thoughts and thus get the whole picture of the situation in the novel. Comparing with the two texts, there is a huge irony between Rochester's self-justification of his marriage with Bertha Antoinette in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester justified himself that it was his father to blame for the marriage to Bertha, and he was cheated

by the Masons for hiding Bertha's family history of "madness." He makes himself seem like a passive victim. However, his inner monologue in *Wide Sargasso Sea* goes completely against his sadfishing excuse. He certainly knows that Bertha Antoinette is not mad, and it is he intentionally drives her mad in order to exploit her. Bertha's undoing in *Jane Eyre* is the result of Rochester's gaslighting strategy.

Rhys accordingly lays bare the social and cultural contexts which the plotting Rochester exploits to scheme against Bertha Antoinette and to abuse his authority as the patriarch to confine her in the attic of Thornfield in nineteenth-century England (Ni 104). The Invalidism prevalent in nineteenth-century England reinforces the power of gaslighting to the tropical women like Annette and Antoinette. There is a prevailing assumption in nineteenth-century England that European women colonists will break down and suffer from neurological disorder much easier and sooner. People in that period of time believed that "the heat and the environment of tropics have exerted a destructive impact on the white Creole (especially women) in the West Indies and thus made them emotionally high-strung, lazy, and sexually excessive" (Ni 104). Moreover, if a woman who was diagnosed or considered mad, then her husband could legally abandon her in the madhouse or just incarcerated her in the attic. Annette (Antoinette's mother) and Antoinette separately suffered from the consequences.

As it points out in the epigraph of this paper, Christophine (Annette and Antoinette's nanny) says to Rochester that: "She will be like her mother." (Rhys, 1992: 145). Annette was driven into craziness by her second husband. The old Cosway (Antoinette's biological father) committed suicide after the implementation of Emancipation Act. He leaves his wife and daughter marooning in the hostile environment where they are discriminated by both the black and the white. Those bankrupted white ex-slave-owners are regarded as "White cockroach" for the black, and "white niggers" for the mainlanders. Despite being bankrupt, those landowners remain wealthier than the black in Jamaica. Annette, from morning to night, must keep an eye on the black men that wandering around Coulibri (her mansion) and trying to rob her. The hatred between the white and the black in the colonial society has even been internalized into children's mind. After escaping from a firing Coulibri in a riot of the black, Antoinette finds her childhood friend Tia and run to her. However, the greeting is not a hug but a stone:

When I saw the jagged stone in her (Tia's) hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face and tears on her. (Rhys 41)

Under this circumstance, the only way for Annette to protect her children and maintain their living is to find a new husband as soon as possible. Even though she knows that the man is marrying for her property. Bereaved wealthy woman like her is an idea instrument for those sly and greedy mainlanders to gain more wealth. As Christophine says: “New ones (new Britain merchant) worse than old ones (ex-slave-owners) —more cunning, that’s all” (Rhys 24). It is also a common sense for all the Jamaicans that the mainlanders come and make money by marriage, as they mocked: “Dance! He (Mr. Mason) didn’t not come to the West Indies to dance —he came to make money as they all do. Some of the big estates are going cheap, and one unfortunate’s loss id always a clever man’s gain” (Rhys 27).

The marriage to Mr. Mason is the fighting chance for Annette to leave Jamaica. Annette tries to convince Mr. Mason that the black people are envy at their wealth and they are seeking for a chance to rebellion. However, Mr. Mason does not take her word for it and just simply replays it with hearty laughs and certainly denials. He used to say that: “Annette, be responsible,” “Annette. You imagine enmity which doesn’t exist,” and “You talked so wildly. ... And you are so mistaken” (Rhys 29-31). Mr. Mason’s certainly denials to Annette’s requests are based on the gender discrimination in the patriarchal culture contexts. “It’s part of the structure of sexism that women are

supposed to be less confident, to doubt our views, belief, reactions, and perceptions, more than men. And gaslighting is aimed at undermining someone's views, beliefs, reactions, and perceptions" (Abramson 22). After the riot of the black and the death of Annette's younger son Pierre, she finally burst out and "(she)began to scream abuse at Mr. Mason, calling him a fool, a cruel stupid fool" (Rhys36). Things go more dreadful when she tried to attack Mr. Mason and threaten to kill him. Annette, therefore, is put in the madhouse. Even though Antoinette and Christophine know that Annette is not mad, the men, Mr. Mason, believes that Annette is insane depends on her dare to rebel against him. After all, it is the man, the husband, who has the authority to name the madness and decided how to "treat" his wife. As Christophine claims: "They drive her to. When she loses her son, she herself for a while and they shut her away. They tell her she is mad; they act like she is mad. Question, question. But no kind word, no friends, and her husband he goes off, he leaves her. They won't let me see her. I try, but no. They won't let Antoinette see her. In the end —mad I don't know —she gives up, she cares for nothing" (Rhys 142-143).

Gaslighting includes tactics such as "1) minimizing, which is achieved through making light of the abuse and not taking the victim's concerns about it seriously; 2) denying, which occurs through explicitly saying the abuse didn't happen; and 3) blaming, in which the perpetrator shifts responsibility for the abusive behavior or says

that the victim caused abuse to occur” (Rives Knapp 315). Through the practice of minimizing and denying, Mr. Mason “unintentionally” drives Annette crazy. What is noticeable is that “those who engaged in this form of emotional manipulating are often not consciously trying to drive their targets crazy” (Abramson 2). That is the case for Mr. Mason’s “unintentionally” gaslighting to Annette. For Mr. Mason, Annette’s anxiety and warning are all a fuss about nothing. He holds a preconceived sexist notion about woman’s behavior that they are hysterical and unreasonable. Gender is the name of behaviors and manners, rights and duties, tasks and responsibilities socially determined for women and men that perceived to be true (Anees et al. 1079). It is the internalized gender discrimination and the sexist patriarchal cultural contexts that gives Mr. Mason the power and right to gaslight Annette. In the aftermath of Annette’s outburst and her intention to kill Mr. Mason, he abandoned her into a madhouse because she is no longer a suitable wife who was tender and obedient.

Annette’s madness subsequently cast a momentous impact on Antionette. There is a roomer in the town saying that Antoinette has a family history of madness and herself inherited her mother’s craziness. Children in the neighborhood used to bully her with mocking words like:

Look the crazy girl, you crazy like your mother. Your aunt frightened to have you in the house. She sends you for the nuns to lock up. Your mother walks about with no shoes and stockings on her feet, *she sans culottes*. She tries to kill her husband and she tries to kill you too that day you go to see her. She has eyes like zombie and you have eyes like zombie too. (Rhys, 1992: 45)

This kind of so-called faulty genetic predisposition to madness and the scandal later becomes one of the gaslighting valves for Rochester to gaslight Antoinette.

Rochester, like many Britons, goes to Jamaica to make a deal with the wealthy daughter of the ex-slave-owner to inherit her property. Through this process, he can become rich overnight. Before Married Women's Property Act in 1882, married women had no legal right of possessing property, everything belonged to her husband; even woman was herself a possessive (Anees et al. 1078). Due to the expectation of wifeliness in Victorian era, Antoinette is naturally inferior to Rochester in their relationship. She is depowered by many kinds of inequalities which include gender, institutional, and power inequality. As mentioned above, through the Invalidism prevailing in 19-century England and the tropical sexist ideology, white Creole woman like Antoinette is considered more emotionally vulnerable and unstable than

men. Furthermore, her attachment to Rochester also put her at the risk of being gaslighted.

Antoinette devoted herself wholeheartedly into acting a good wife, an “angel in the house” in other words, in their marriage. She, in the first flush of marriage, endeavored to share her life and memories with Rochester by continuously talking her memories of Jamaica and taking him to the places she used to visit. However, Rochester always turned a deaf ear to the culture of Jamaica and Antoinette’s passion of love. He holds a strong bias toward the tropical Jamaica and his “White Creole” wife. As he confesses blatantly:

Tears —nothing! Words —less than nothing. As for the happiness I gave her, worse than nothing, I did not love her, I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did. (Rhys 84-85)

In contrasted with Rochester’s arrogance and racism that discriminates against Jamaica and his wife, Antoinette shows her strong attachment to him. The meaning of Antoinette’s life and happiness has been projected onto Rochester. As the conversations between Bertha Antoinette and Rochester:

‘Why did you make me want to live? Why did you do this to me?’

‘Because I wished it. Isn’t it enough?’

‘Yes, it is enough. But if one day you didn’t wish it. What should I do then? Suppose you took this happiness away when I was not looking ...’

...

‘If I could die. Now, when I am happy. Would you do that? You wouldn’t have to kill me. Say die and I will die. You don’t believe me? Then try, try, say die and watch me die.’

‘Die then! Die!’ (Rhys 83-84)

This dialogue shows the strong sense of insecurity of Antoinette and her hearty attachment to Rochester. Her insecurity is rooted in the hostile environment where she grows up. She has already been diminished and undermined by the hostility of the black and British people, as well as the scandal which frames her having a family history of madness. Antoinette shows her eagerness to feel protected when Rochester says: “you are safe.”

Antoinette’s attachment to Rochester may not all come from love since she never determined to marry him. It mostly comes from the patriarchal gender ideology and

the common practice in the Victorian period that women are born and tough to be a wife. An ideal husband in that period should be responsible for the family and his wife, since the wife herself is an appendage of her husband. Antoinette hands her happiness and the meaning of life over to Rochester, allowing him to direct her life and will. The sexism, patriarchal gender ideology, and Antoinette's financially and emotionally dependence on Rochester which all placed her in an inferior position that allows her to be easily gaslighted. After receiving the blackmail from Daniel Cosway, Rochester knows that he can exploit his patriarchal authority and sexist cultural contexts to gaslight Antoinette as so to totally control her and to revenge himself on her simultaneously. He wants to revenge himself on her because of his despise of the white Creole, the self-abasement of being called that he is bought by Antoinette, and Antoinette's failure to be an angel in the house in his eyes since she consequently challenges his racist discourses of Jamaican culture. He started his scheme by giving Antoinette the name "Bertha", which is the middle name of her mother Annette. This name serves as an obeah spell in making the person who is being called to have the same character as the name's original owner. Rochester knows how people fasten bad words on Antoinette and her mother, seeing her as a madwoman as her mother. Rochester aims at gradually distorted Antoinette's sense of reality by denying her identity. "He never called me Antoinette now. He has found out it was my mother's

name” (Rhys 103). Antoinette tries to prove her sanity by frankly describing the roomer of her mother in a claim and reasonable way. However, Rochester simply turns a deaf ear to her explanation and justifies himself that his intention of calling her Bertha is merely because he likes it: “Because it is a name I’m particularly fond of, I think you as Bertha” (Rhys122).

Gaslighting emerges as a sense of “surreality,” confusion, and distortion systematically experienced by victims (Sweet 853). By constantly minimizing the emotional damage of calling Antoinette the wrong name, Rochester tries to distort Antoinette’s perceptions of minor details of everyday life. However, his scheme does not work out effectively. Realizing that Antoinette would not go crazy so easily, Rochester committed adultery with Amelie (Antoinette’s black servant) right next to Antoinette’s bedroom with only a thin partition between them. In so doing, Rochester successfully evokes Antoinette’s rage. Antoinette alike her mother, is forced into outburst by her husband. She bursts out and attacks Rochester as he narrates that:

I manage to hold her wrist with one hand and the rum with the other,
but when u felt her teeth in my arm I dropped the bottle. ... Then she
cursed me comprehensively, my eyes, my mouth, every member of my
body, and it was like a dream in the large unfurnished room with the

candles flickering and this red-eyed wild-haired stranger who was my wife shouting obscenities at me. (Rhys 134-135)

Because of English law, Antoinette does not have any place to go and money to defend or protect herself. Once she is disliked and being singled out by her husband, she basically loses her standing on the society, not even the law would protect her. As her helpless speech with Christophine shows: "That is English law" (Rhys 100). It is the institutional inequality that reinforces the power of gaslighting, therefore, cast the ultimate undoing of Antoinette. Rochester is confident about his scheme against Antoinette because the prevailing gender ideology and the sexist English law empower him to gaslight his defenseless wife. Christophine's frank accusation of Rochester "You fool the girl. You make her think you can't see the sun for looking at her" illustrates Rochester's power, scheme and malice (Rhys 138). Rochester's unashamed statement "It was like that, I thought. It was like that. But better to say nothing" also exposes his enjoyment in power abuse and gaslighting (Rhys 138).

Compared with Annette, Antoinette is not successfully gaslighted by Rochester since she never gives up fighting for her freedom. Failing to drive Antoinette into real madness, Rochester brings her back to England and locks her up in the attic. Being incarcerated in the dark attic for fifteen years, Antoinette still keeps her sanity. She

patiently waits for the chance to take revenge on Rochester's gaslighting and abuses.

Grace Poole, the woman Rochester paid to guard Antoinette, knows clearly that she is not mad. She is awed by Antoinette's determination of revenge. Her statement "I'll say one thing for her, she hasn't lost her spirit. She still fierce. I don't turn my back on her when her eyes have that look. I know it" confirmed Antoinette's sanity (Rhys 160).

There is also an evidence that shows Bertha's rationality in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. However, the evidence is easily been overlooked by Jane's limited and distorted impression of Bertha. In Jane's perception, Bertha is a vampire alike figure who constantly tries to harm Rochester. Thus, at the day they first meet, Jane does not even dare to open her eye to see Bertha's face. At the day before Jane's wedding with Rochester, Bertha finds her way out of the attic and sneaks into Jane's bedroom. She savagely destroyed Jane's wedding veil, tearing it apart and trampling on them. Before leaving Jane's bedroom, she stands by Jane's bed and quietly looks into Jane's face. She leaves Jane without hurting her. She knows that it is not Jane to be blamed for the illegal wedding. Bertha's rational behavior goes against Rochester's malicious description of Bertha that she is a savage and aggressive lunatic. The gestures of broken Jane's wedding veil symbolized her attempt to thwart Rochester's plot to trick the young and innocent Jane to become his mistress. However, Jane cannot identify

Bertha's signals since she has been misled from the first day of her employment at Thornfield.

In Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, there are many events that might reveal Rochester's clandestine confinement of Bertha. However, through gaslighting, Rochester successfully averts those crises and therefore distorted Jane's impression of Bertha and her narrative on Bertha's madness. At the night when Jane rescues Rochester from the fire, Rochester quickly keeps control of the whole situation and commands Jane to stay in his bedroom without calling for anyone. When he is certain that Jane has no idea of the criminal, he guides her to believe that it is Grace Poole to be responsible for the fire. To prevent Jane from learning the truth, he orders her not to say a word of it. Submissively, Jane obeys him even though she is still full of suspicion. The second event happened when Richard Mason, Bertha's stepbrother, visited them unexpectedly. In the night, Richard is attacked by the enraged Bertha. Rochester asks Jane to help him press Richard's bleeding wound and gives order to both Jane and Richard that do not talk to each other while he is leaving. "I shall have to leave you in this room with this gentleman, for an hour, or perhaps two hours ... You will not speak to him on any pretext—and—Richard—it will be the peril of your life if you speak to her: open your lips—agitate yourself—and I'll not answer for the consequence" (Brontë 178). The same as last time, Jane obeys Rochester's command

submissively with a mind full of questions. It is Rochester's manipulative instructions and Jane's obedience that prevent her from learning the truth. She never doubts Rochester's command and firmly believes that it is Grace Poole, the woman on the attic, to blame for all the accidents.

The third event that almost exposes Rochester's secret occurs after Bertha successfully sneaks into Jane's bedroom and tears the wedding veil apart. This time, Jane is certain that the ghost-like woman in her bedroom is not Grace Poole. Denying is Rochester's response to Jane's inquiry of the "Vampire" in the Thornfield. He attempts to convince Jane that the creature she saw is merely a hallucination of her "mental terror." He excuses himself to Jane that: "The creature of an over-stimulated brain; that is certain. I must care my mistress: nerves like yours were not made a rough handling" (Brontë 242). Again, through minimizing and denying, he attempts to undermine Jane's cognition, makes her submit herself to his judgment and takes his command as usual. When Jane continuously challenges Rochester's excuse with the evidence of her torn veil, he once again takes Grace Poole as his pretext. As for why he keeps such an odd woman in his house, Rochester promises to give Jane the answer only a year and a day after their marriage. A year and a day are the time period for the fulfillment of various legal contracts. He exploits Jane's ignorance of law to cheat her into his mistress. By doing so, he can maintain his "legal rights" with Jane.

Even though Jane is not satisfied with Rochester's response, she accepted his decision out of her love for him and her temptation to please him.

I reflected, and in truth it appeared to me the only possible one.

Satisfied, I was not, but to please him I endeavored to appear so—
relieved, I certainly did feel; so I answer him with a contented smile.

(Brontë 243)

Jane's youth, innocence and love for Rochester make her gullible and therefore fall prey to Rochester. Her obedience allows Rochester to shape her thinking and prevail over her.

The secret eventually exposed when Richard and his lawyer show up in the church, stopped Rochester's plan to marry Jane and revealed the truth that Rochester had married Bertha. Facing with Richard's accusation, Rochester presents himself as a deceived victim instead of a calculating victimizer in his marriage with Bertha. He justifies himself:

Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; —idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard! —as I found out after I web the daughter:

for they were silent on family secrets before. Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parent in both points. ... Briggs, Wood, Mason, —I invite you all to come up to the house and visit Mrs. Poole's patient, and *my wife!* You shall see what sort of being I was cheated into espousing, and judge whether or not I had a right to break the compact, and seek sympathy with something at least human. (Brontë 249)

He invited all the people in presence to his house because he believed that he can convince them of Bertha's madness. Fifteen years of impressment has not destroyed Bertha's sanity yet Rochester knows that Bertha is furious at him and always seeking her chance to kill him. He distorted Bertha's rage and outburst as evidence of her madness. Rochester subsequently gives out a long rhetoric speech about his past and his suffering, attempting to evoke Jane's pity and thus forgive him. His scheme successfully convinced Jane that he is the victim of the marriage with Bertha, and according get her full forgiveness. As Jane's confession to the reader: "I forgave him at the moment, and on the spot. There was such deep remorse in his eye, such true pity in his tone, such manly energy in his manner: and, besides, there was such unchanged love in his whole look and mien—I forgave him all: yet not in words, not outwardly; only at my hearts" (Brontë 255). Apparently, Jane has lost her critical

power at this moment. She naturally accepts Rochester's justification and likewise accepts Bertha's incarceration without even having a pity on her.

Jane's loyal obedience to Rochester suggest that she no longer possess the rebellious spirit which she used to have in her young ages. Jane's character changed dramatically after "studying" in Lowood school. Before Jane was sent to there, she was a rebellious and eloquent girl who dared to fight with her cousin and talked back to her aunt as for fighting against the injustice. She challenged her aunt's authority with heavy words: "I'm not deceitful: if I were, I should say I love *you*; but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world expect John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I." (Brontë 30). This well-organized statement fully demonstrates Jane's ability of judgment. However, after the years in Lowood, she was disciplined by the Christianity and the gender ideology of being a lady, or an "Angel in the house," subtly inserted into her mind. Rochester's first impression of Jane: "You have lived the life of a nun: no doubt you are well drilled in religious forms" further confirms that she has been shaped into behave in an opposed way she used to be (Brontë 105). Her relationship with Rochester maintains alike a master and a servant even though Rochester promised to treat her equal footed. As what has discussed in the paragraph above, Jane tends to let Rochester to take the charge in most of the

time. It is her love to Rochester that further undermined her critical ability and thus being gaslighted by him.

Some feminine critics see Jane as a feminist in pursuing true love and equality, and a heroine of fighting patriarchy gender ideology. “Jane Eyre is a perfect epitome of a woman who moves from a life of poverty and suppression to independence. Jane goes against the expected pattern of the age by refusing subjugation, disagreeing with her patriarchal monarchs, standing up for her rights, and venturing creative thoughts” (Anees et al. 1089). However, Jane never “fought” for gaining the equal standing with Rochester. First, Jane’s seeming equal position in the relationship with Rochester is actually a privilege given by Rochester’s favor. In most of the time Rochester tends to directly order Jane to do things he commanded. As for Jane, she seems quite acceptable for this kind of interaction as she mentions: “I did as I was bid, thought I would much rather have remained somewhat in the shade: but Mr. Rochester had such a direct way of giving orders, it seemed a matter of course to obey him promptly” (Brontë 111). Second, Jane becomes independence because of the inheritance of her uncle’s property instead of her hard working. The standing of Jane and Rochester uttered at the end of the novel, Jane becomes wealthy and independent and Rochester, on the other hand, becomes disabled and dependent. However, it still not maintains Jane as a feminist character.

My comparative study shows that, Rochester successfully undermines Jane's power of judgment through gaslighting, distorted her impression and narration of Bertha with his malicious misinformation. It is Jane's love and manipulated empathy that make her fall into the clutch of gaslighting. Her full forgiveness of Rochester's doing and her "natural" acceptance of Bertha's imprisonment completely defies the prevailing critical assumptions that Jane is a feminist in pursuing equality and true love. In sharp contrast, Bertha Antoinette was once at the edge of madness because of Rochester's gaslighting strategies. However, she keeps her sanity even being confined in the attic for fifteen years. Bertha Antoinette patiently waits for the chance to revenge herself on Rochester. Furthermore, Rochester's failure in gaslighting Bertha lies in her attempts to thwart Rochester's plan of making Jane his mistress, burning down of Rochester's mansion and, ultimately, symbolic castration of Rochester.

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