

## Translating the Madwoman in the Attic

The Madwoman in the Attic is a title of a famous study of Victorian women's writing. It refers to the character from *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife from the Caribbean who is kept secretly locked in an attic. The study examines how female characters either embody the "angel" or the "monster". Applying this idea to *Jane Eyre*, Bertha would take on the role of the "monster". Feminist and postcolonial reading of the novel, however, offer another perspective on the character. Since translators are required to make decisions about *how* they will translate a text, these approaches can also be applied to translation.

### 1. Warm Up

- Using the internet, find out what the terms 'feminist' and 'postcolonial' mean when applied to literature.

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### 2. Translating Bertha

The first translation of *Jane Eyre* into French was published as a serial in a magazine in Brussels in 1849 (i.e. only 2 years after the novel appeared in English). It was translated by a professional critic and translator, Paul Émile Daurand Forgues, who used the pseudonym Old-Nick. Old-Nick's translation injects much drama into the text with the use of interjections and eclipses. This approach can also be seen in his references to Bertha during the key scene where she jumps to her death as Thornfield is ablaze. Using a bilingual dictionary, back translate the French translations of sentences below that refer to Bertha.

Original Text	French Translation	English Back Translation
[he] went back to get his mad wife out of her cell.	[il] voulut ensuite enlever sa femme de la chambre où on la gardait....	
She was a big woman, and had long, black hair: we could see it streaming against the flames as she stood.	C'était une femme <i>puissante</i> avec de longs cheveux noirs que le vent chassait du côté des flammes....	
she yelled	elle poussa un hurlement pareil à celui des bêtes fauves....	

