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Due: January 29, 2001
English 9-Mr. O'Toole

In Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre Bertha Mason and Jane Eyre share various attributes in their characters: passion, restlessness, and a will to follow their nature. Later in the novel Jane sees Bertha's burning passionate nature and it warns her that she will only become the maniac that Bertha has if she follows her passion and her temptation for her one love Mr. Rochester. In this way, Bertha and Jane serve as doubles for one another how are described with passion and fire, how their moods are reflected through nature, and how Bertha serves as a warning for what Jane's passion, like Bertha's own, could become.

Throughout the book Jane is described even from when she was young girl as "such a picture of passion" (p.12). Being passionate in the Victorian Era was associated with not being pleasant and useful, these attributes were looked for to be married which was the ultimate goal of any Victorian woman. But Jane was trying to escape the typical Victorian women's life, which is why she did not conceal her passion. "I have seen what a fire-spirit you can be when you are indignant. You glowed in the cool moonlight last night." (p.392), Rochester describes her. Her passion for Rochester is so strong that it takes over her mind and makes her go insane as she says, "I am insane--quite insane' with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs." (p.475) This passion made her become "more restless than ever...I could not sit still, nor even remain in the house..."(p.414) Jane's fiery passion led her to insanity of which she could not. It was her nature of which she says should not be kept all bottled up inside a women, "they need to exercise for their faculties, and field for their efforts as much as their brother's do." (p.115) So Jane exercised her passionate nature for everyone to notice.

Alike to Jane, Bertha has a passionate nature too. At Jane's first sight her appearance was described as "the fiery eye glared upon me-she thrust up her candle close to my face...I was aware of her lurid visage flamed over mine..."(p.425) Bertha is described with the same fire as Jane is. Bertha's passion has affected her in worse ways than Jane's has. Bertha's passion leads her to such insanity that she has fits and tantrums like when she bit her brother, Mason. Rochester describes Bertha: "on all fours, it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal..."(p.425), "a fanatic with burning eternity" (p.461). She is a maniac because she cannot control her fitful passion like Jane refuses keep her passion inside of her. Their natures are full of passion and fire, which they allow the whole world to see flaming.

Nature reflects Jane and Bertha's moods. Because they reveal their own nature it is reflected through the nature in the settings of the novel, unlike any of the other women in the book. When Jane is overcome with happiness the day after Rochester confesses his love for her the weather is depicted as "A brilliant June morning had succeeded to the tempest of the night...Nature must be gladsome when I was so happy."(p.384) This also occurs when Jane's feeling of passion for Rochester takes over her actions making her very restless, her passion is described by the nature around her, "loud as the wind blew, near and deep as the thunder crashed, fierce and frequent as the lightning gleamed,

cataract-like as the rain fell during a storm of two hours' duration.”(p.383). As Jane's passion was described with fierce thunder and rain so is Bertha's. As Rochester discovers Bertha's passion is leading her to madness “the storm broke, streamed, thundered, blazed...”(p.462). Both of their passions through nature depicted as fierce and damaging. Though both natures described in this way Jane doesn't become mad and violent as Bertha does, she sees herself in Bertha and knows she must leave what has been giving her this fiery passion, her love Mr. Rochester.

Bertha's madness serves as a warning for Jane's developing passion. Jane says, “I could not help it: the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes.”(p.114) As it was in both of their natures, but Jane knew she must resist the temptations of her passion before she became insane as Bertha was. “Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do... and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. When thus alone I not infrequently heard Grace Poole's laugh, the same peal, the same low, slow ha! ha!” (p.115) Grace Poole's laugh though, was not really Grace Poole. Jane was told it was Grace Poole's to hide Bertha's identity so it was really Bertha who laughed after this description of the role of women. They should be able to experience what men experience: freedom. In several instances as well as this, Bertha would laugh as a reminder of how this passionate nature drove her to madness. The laugh symbolized a warning for Jane to escape this passion of temptation that is taking over her mind leading her to what could be Bertha's state.

Bertha also serves as a warning to Jane a few nights before her wedding day. Jane was dreaming one night, “the rain pelted me, I was burdened with the charge of a little child, a very small creature, too young and feeble to walk, and which shivered cold in my arms and wailed piteously in my ear.” (p.421) The child symbolizes the fitful passion that Jane had when she was a child that caused her to have tantrums as she had in the red room of Gateshead and as Bertha has locked up in her room. That same passion was developing now which is why it was making her go “insane” as she said. At the moment the dream ended Jane woke up to Bertha, “it removed my veil from its gaunt head, rent it into two parts, and flinging both on the floor trampled on them.”(p.442). Bertha ripping the veil into two was a warning that Jane's fitful passion from when she was a young girl that was reoccurring now could result in Bertha's fitful passion as a woman. This reminded Jane to resist the temptations of her passion and not to be Rochester's mistress when she couldn't be his wife because of Bertha whom she was ashamed as he was, he was married to. In Bertha Jane saw what could become of her so she strongly resisted what she wanted the most.

If Jane and Bertha weren't doubles of one another then Jane would not have seen herself in Bertha and the consequence of her passion's temptations. This would result in madness of Jane and would not make Jane the hero that forced herself out of the typical role of women in the Victorian Era. Jane found her passionate nature in Bertha and used Bertha as a warning of what may have become of her. Jane refused to conceal her passion and refused for it to make her a victim.

