

Commentary miss clarissa harlowe to miss howe



The extract taken from Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* is a letter from Miss Clarissa Harlowe to her sister Miss Howe. In the letter, Miss Clarissa expresses her situation and her feelings, as she slowly builds up her trouble to the point where she becomes powerless and entangled. Her trouble is that she's in a situation where she's trapped by the events caused by two people whom both she dislikes, Mr. Lovelace who bothers her with improper suggestions and Mr. Solmes, who she's soon going to be married to. The extract is written in first person, since it is the actual letter itself where the writer describes her using the most common form "I".

This gives a more clear view towards the writer, Clarissa's inner emotions and thoughts. It is a piece of epistolary writing, where the passage is constructed by short paragraphs that add intensity to the content. The passage starts with a factual tone where Miss Clarissa Harlowe describes her illicit correspondence with Mr. Lovelace by mentioning the letter he deposited in the private garden. The phrase "private place" suggests secrecy and illicitness of the correspondence and adds a sense of mystery. Speech marks are open in the second paragraph but there's no direct speech but only a summary of the situation, concerning time and place.

In the factual summary, there's the omission of the names of people, and this implies that her sister Miss Howe knows the characters she mentions, and further, they must have a close relationship for her to know them. This implication is corresponded with another implication that Miss Howe is not confused by the numerous pronouns used, that suggest she knows the situation well. The third paragraph is a complaint, that's slightly unfriendly

and abrupt. The phrase " no one" gives a strong sense of accusation towards Mr. Lovelace.

There's a sense of real trouble that builds up as the passage moves along. Her sister's, as well as herfamily's dislike towards Mr. Lovelace are expressed in the insults " upon him" and the preferring of M. Solmes stead of him. Trouble is suggested by the adding of bad relations of her family with Mr. Lovelace that makes the illicit correspondence dangerous. Mr. Lovelace's words about himself being more suitable for marriage than M. Solmes are polite and serious. He speaks of settlement, that includes wealth, money, land, which are all proper considerations of marriage.

The " regularity of his life and manners" is a more serious expression that he had no bad habits. However, his bad habits are before his addresses to her, which implies that he had bad habits before. The politeness is suggested in the word " addresses", as well as the phrase " he will not disgrace himself" and " hope of my favor". However, contrary to Mr. Lovelace's polite offerings, the family and him are at bad terms, implied by the use of the imperative word " must" in his proposals, which suggest that the family will not likely accept them.

Clarissa continues to use revelatory language to describe her situation with Mr. Lovelace. Her language reveals what Mr. Lovelace wants, says and what he will do in his letter. For example " he will submit to any measures that I shall prescribe, in order to bring about a reconciliation. " Along with his polite offerings, Mr. Lovelace tries to show that he has no bad intentions by the suggestion of a meeting " attended by whom I please". Mr. Lovelace's

suggestions are all improper, wild and impossible. Young women do not meet men at nighttime in some garden because reputation mattered.

It was improper to offer her an asylum when she should be tyrannically treated and it was almost impossible for her friends to drive her into a foreign protection. She is offended towards the suggestions because she mentions them. M. Lovelace's suggestions condemn itself because its impossibility and impropriety are all implied. The paradox exists when she mentions, " I had given him great encouragement" as well as the improper suggestions that she's offended to. It emphasizes the impropriety of the suggestions and her feeling of being offended. Clarissa's retelling of Mr. Lovelace's description of himself, contrasts with Mr.

Lovelace's improper, impossible suggestions. One is polite, serious while the other abrupt and offensive. The contrast further intensifies the feeling of being offended by Clarissa. In contrast to her strong feeling, her comments are reduced to only four lines while the majority of the description is about Mr. Lovelace. She moves to the inequality between man and woman where she finds women are too complaisant or bashful. There's an indication of the arrogance of men where women are entangled by old supposals and offers. However, inequality is only pinpointed with a few lines.

There's the omission of detail of the inequality she mentions, as well as the omission of detail in her descriptions of her situation. Further there's the omission of Mr. Lovelace's emotions although he is the one that offers and suggestions. Later, she reanalyzes her own background, where she uses the alliteration " drawn and driven" that presents a sense of entrapment and

powerlessness. Her emotions are shown through her heart, that condemns the "mere lover-like correspondence". The sense of entrapment is further shown by the idea of things that crowd on her, where she could not "break it off".

The paradox between her being crowded by the idea of things and her being alone also strengthens the sense of entrapment. The demanding of advice from her sister suggests her aloneness and that she has to confide to someone not living there to seek her help. She sees love as entanglement, as she condemns the lover-like correspondence. The correspondence had caused the unhappy situation, "more and more entangled". She not only dislikes Mr. Lovelace, but also Mr. Solmes, as she mentions that she wants to break off the marriage. She's eager to escape the entanglement and seeks to be free, shown by her wishing to "put an end to it".

This is supported by the desperate tone she has, as she points clearly to her suffering by obvious words such as "unhappy". Her tone is also pessimistic, as she uses words such as "extricate", which has a negative meaning. My personal response is that her entanglement is very difficult to resolve since she's going to marry soon. If she breaks off the marriage, it would cause Mr. Solmes to misunderstand her that she accepts his improper suggestions. Her problem is tragic and inevitable to avoid. For that, I feel sorry for her.