

The expedition of humpry clinker research paper samples

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



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Introduction

Tobias Smollett is regarded as one of the most important novelist in the 18th century Great Britain. The 18th century is when the first true novels emerged as a new form of literary expression and Smollett introduced notable works during the era such as the “ The Expedition of Humpry Clinker”. The novel follows the epistolary form where a series of documents such as letters were resembled to create the novel. This literary approach was popular during the 18th century where the aforementioned novel by Smollett was published.

The objective of this critical analysis is to examine the components of Smollett’s literary work under the lenses of the epistolary novel concept. It is apparent from the first look that the novel was simply in terms of structure as the epistolary form lends a straightforward approach putting pieces together in a chronological order. However, the novel also encompasses a picaresque characteristic, which features an episodic element that addresses varying levels of the society depicted in the novel. On the other hand, the novel lacks one of the fundamental elements of telling a story, which is the narrative voice.

Critical Analysis

The lack of a narrative voice constitutes a critical issue in the novel “The Expedition of Humpry Clinker”. One of reasons for the lack of a narrative voice can be attributed to the literary approach constituted by the epistolary form. In a short snapshot of the novel, the Bramble family embarked on a tour from Wales to the highlands of Scotland and picked up Humpy Clinker along the way. The family members exchanged opinions about the places they have seen through letters, which encompasses the development of the characters and Smollett’s intention to establish the narratives of the novel. There are only five main characters in the novel that creates the direction of the plot and at the same time presents events in the story in their own voice rather than a narrator talking to the readers. The characters do not interact directly with the readers, but a choice for the reader to get involved in the conversation between through letter exchanges seems optional. Smollett used the conversations between the characters to establish his voice in the novel and the letters had served its purpose to function as a tool in delivering the narratives. Another notable character in the novel is Lydia Melford, she can be considered as an important element in understanding the truth about the travels.

However, the character is considerably unrepresented in the story despite the important role that she plays in the development of the plot. It appears that Smollett is trying to minimize the elements that will provide the readers a straightforward clue about the narratives. It can be recalled that the novel lacks narrative factor, but the underrepresented character embodied such element. One of the reasons that Lydia Melford’s character is limited at the

sidelines is because the main characters overshadow the presence of Lydia Melford in the novel. Furthermore, the readers overlook the importance of the Melford because the author (Smollett) appears to intentionally highlight the other elements regarded as more valuable in describing the society depicted in the 18th century Britain. Disregarding the wrong person for a good reason is a method to encourage prejudice among the readers of the novel and allowing the construction of the commentaries about the values that the novel represents. It is synonymous to the having to look at an abstract painting where a flow of varying perceptions and opinion arises. On the other hand, the more prominent characters in the novel commands a greater degree of respect, which can be described as characters of experience. For example, Matt Bramble is a well-travelled and educated man in the novel; hence, he encompasses a great deal of authority in the story. The same can be said about Jeremy Melford whose letters with Matt Bramble makes up a major part in the novel and are exceedingly lengthy. To compare the stature of the prominent male characters in the novel with the frail female Lydia, Smollett intentionally kept the letters of Lydia short to keep the character at its minimal exposure. In addition, the character appears to be dependent of the authoritative characters for advice and guidance considering that she is the key to narratives of the novel. Character positioning was well defined in the novel, which makes the reader to agree to such assumption because of the way the male characters exerts their influence over the supporting characters.

In terms of settings, Smollett took a great deal of emphasis in describing details of the pubs, local women, town, baths, and even the ailments. The

emphasis put forth on the aforementioned elements also reinforces the reader's perception about the less prominent characters such Lydia. To put this observation in the context of a live action film, Lydia gets minimal camera time although is the key to the story. It is like putting a starring cast to the story with insufficient credits in return. Further in the novel, supporting characters like Lydia can be described as neglected much like the society disregards her. Putting into consideration the fact that Lydia as more powerful characters overshadowed a character in the novel, it is safe to assume that the novel is Lydia's and not the other way around. There was a great deal of concealment to the truth about the characters in the novel particularly in terms of decisively hiding the key component of the story in a least important character. Such method leaves a lot of question on the part of the readers in terms of understanding the context of the novel.

Over the course of the length narratives, it becomes more apparent that there was a great formation and reinforcement of prejudice in the novel. Out of the five characters, the author (Smollett) put emphasis on the untainted characteristics of the four characters Winifred Jenkins, Tabitha, Matthew Bramble, and Jeremy Melford. Three of the four characters, however, make reference to Lydia before the reader gets to encounter Lydia. Matt introduced her in the novel by telling about an incident that happened involving his niece Liddy, which Bramble refers to Lydia. The introduction puts Bramble in a position where he mentioned being laid up with another fit of the gout (5). On the other hand, Winifred gets more specific by suggesting that " Miss Liddy had like to run away with a player-man," but only stops to abide to Tabitha's orders that she should not " speak a word of it to any

Christian soul" (7). Meanwhile, in Jeremy's first letter or at least the last letter referring to Lydia finally explains the matter of a young man that shows questionable intentions, " I found her a fine, tall girl, of seventeen, with an agreeable person; but remarkably simple, and quite ignorant of the world" (8). Based on the excerpts from the novel, it appears that every character had their own way of introducing Lydia. Moreover, the mentioning of her name in some of the letters by the other four characters suggests that her presence in the novel has been known since the beginning by directly and indirectly mentions.

Ironically, the effort of Smollett in demonstrating the effect of these descriptions was made to reduce the prominence of Lydia's significance to the novel. In addition, the narrative was also structured to put emphasis on Bramble's descriptions of Lydia. On the other hand, Tabitha refuses to mention her at all, which makes a critical reader to question if there was a conflict between Lydia and Tabitha. Jeremy on the other hand provides brief and occasional reference to Lydia by mentioning her involvement in his daily affairs and citing " a foolish quarrel" to describe involvement (8). Despite the occasional descriptions by Jeremy, he never mentioned the name of Lydia. Smollett made Lydia's character the fundamental inspiration that influences the novel's narratives citing the immaturity and inexperience that resulted to her being taken out of Wales. At the same time, the reader was led to believe that she was not important, and, therefore, devaluates her value in the novel. A critical reader may not help to notice the bias created by Lydia's family on her and the prejudice that manifests in the predisposition of her being inexperienced, foolish and regarded as an incidental progression in the

novel.

In Lydia's opening letter, she did not do anything to deter the assumptions made earlier about her and her involvement in the novel. The first two letters was introduced in a succession and was composed four days after the family left for the expedition. There was evidence of apology and weakness in her letters, which constructed the defense of her behavior and at the same time supports those of Jeremy and Matthew's opinion about her.

" I confess," she writes to Mrs. Jermyn, " I have given just cause of offence by my want of prudence and experiencebut I was ashamed to mention it; and then he behaved so modest and respectful, and seemed so melancholy and timorous, that I could not find in my heart to do any thing that should make him miserable and desperate" (9). The passage conforms the description about Lydia and her weak position in the novel. On the other hand, it cannot help to notice how the title of the novel mentions a certain Humpry Clinker when as a character he was not as well regarded as the others.

Conclusion

The novel ends in the discovery of Humpry Clinker as Bramble's son embarked on the revelation of Wilson's true personality and ultimately of Lydia's vindication. However, it is apparent that the epistolary novel features unbalanced character development. There was a clear distraction on the way people was emphasized in the novel.

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