Portrait of Isabella Bird

About this letter

This text is an extract from Isabella Bird's letters to her sister, Henrietta, regarding her travels in the Rocky Mountains.
The letters were subsequently published as a book in 1879.
Bird was a prolific and intrepid 19th century female traveller who became well-known through her published journals, magazines and travel books.
Due to her being a missionary and explorer who travelled all over the world, her occupation different to that of many women in the 19th century England.
She travelled to a vast amount of places, including Canada, Scotland, Australia, Hawaii, Colorado (which this extract was about), India, Tibet, The Persian Gulf, Japan, Chica, Korea and Morocco.
She wrote 5 books from 1856-99, and was the first woman to be rewarded an honorary fellowship by the royal Scottish Geographical Society (1890). She was also the first female member of the Royal Geographical Society (1892).
GRAMPS
Genre: Letter
Register: Informal
Audience: Her sister, the public.
Mode: Personal letter, travel/autobiographical style of writing.
Purpose: Initially to inform her sister, eventually to educate and inspire Victorian Women.

Analysis

Introduction to her letter **fits the frame of expectation** for the letter and also tells us she is recollecting in the letter. Fits the conventions of a letter.
Archaic reference to a woman "got up" in "paint" shows Bird's **condescending tone**, combined with the **tricolon** of opulence "-emerald green velvet, brussels lace, and diamond" shows Bird's contempt to frivolous women.
Use of "inundated" shows that Bird looks down on this form of "vulgarity" and suggests she shows contempt to those who dress like the women she mentioned earlier.
"Inundated" gives **connotations of an overwhelming nature to the people**, as if Bird could feel trapped by their presence.
"I was a salient point for the speaker's next sally" gives a **colloquial** nature to the letter due to its informality. The **sibilance** in this line suggests that Bird could feel contempt towards this speaker, as if she is hissing out these words.
"A ladylike Englishwoman" this **subclause places power** in the notion of an "Englishwomen" reinforcing Bird's contempt to "vulgar" American woman.
"The neighbourhood and its wild beasts, especially bears." "I dreamt of bears so vividly" Bird's litotes when discussing the "bears", used throughout the whole letter, shows her confidence, which is very incongruous due to her being a solitary female traveller.
"Furry death hug at my throat, but feeling quite refreshed" The **nonchalant tone and oxymoron** of the "furry death hug" and her "-feeling quite refreshed" reinforces her lack of fear and her confidence due to her experience as an explorer.
"Cinnamon-coloured bear with two cubs" This **alliteration** of the "cinnamon-coloured bear" emphasises her description of the bear, making it vivid as she uses "cinnamon" **rather than a more subject-specific colour** word like "brown".
"The mother might acquit me of any designs upon her lolloping children" use of formal "acquit" and conditional "might" makes light of the danger these bears pose, could also be slight overconfidence, but she has extensive experiences with bears as she had travelled to 4 different places this trip.
"Ungainly, long haired partly crossed the river" emphasises inhuman nature to the animals, **tone** implies she looks upon the animals as improper due to their "ungainly" nature. **Personification** of the "party" emphasises her high expectations of these animals to be prim and proper.

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