“Women as Temptation” Motif in Of Mice and Men and Pop Culture

The mention of women as a temptation in literature and popular culture indicates that men are tempted and lured into bad situations due to women. This is very clear in Of Mice and Men. Women as temptation appears multiple times throughout the book. It is meant to symbolize a trap and to grasp the weaknesses of the main characters. It is also a symbol of demonizing women which was common in the time period of the Great Depression. The motif ultimately ends up in a negative outcome. This motif occurs twice with Curley’s wife. She is a woman who is by herself on a ranch which is full of men. An example from an outside source is the song “Memphis” by Justin Bieber. In this song, the singer has fallen trap to the fact that men do foolish things around women.

The first example of women as the temptation is Curley's wife. She is young and very lonely. The men are tempted by her both emotionally and physically. They only restrain because she is the wife of the boss's son. Unfortunately, Lennie is not able to resist her. Curley’s wife and Lennie meet in the barn. This confrontation results in her death. Curley’s wife says “When I’m doin my hair sometimes I jus’ set an’ stroke it’ cause it’s so soft… Here-feel right here.” (Steinbeck 45) After this Lennie loses control and Curley's wife says “You stop it now, you’ll mess it all up. She moved her head to the side, and Lennie’s fingers pushed on her hair and hung on. Let go,” she cried. “You let go!” (Steinbeck 45.) Right after this Lennie kills Curley's wife accidentally. This scene shows the temptation of women to get to Lennie, as he is attracted to touch Curley’s wife. Although it was Lennie who caused the harm, Curley's wife and influenced it. This leads to the end of a farm. This is a great example of women as temptation influencing harm.

Another example of women as the temptation is when George warns Lennie about Curley's wife. George is aware of how women can cause harm, but Lennie doesn't listen. When George and Lennie are having a conversation, George says, “Listen to me. I don't care what she says and what she does. I've seen ‘em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jailbait worse than that.” (Steinbeck 17.) Another example is when Lennie says “You gonna get me in trouble just like George says you will.” (Steinbeck 45.) This is a great example of women as temptation because we know the outcome from the last paragraph. This quote demonstrates that George and Lennie are both aware of women. It's a shame that Lennie happened to be in the situation and fall for the trap.

A third example of women as temptation in the book Of Mice and Men is from early on when George and Lennie get kicked out of the town Weed, due to Lennie's temptation. Lennie was very tempted to touch a girl’s red dress. When she pulled her dress away, Lennie became very scared so he grabbed her dress. George had to stop him by hitting him in the head. George says “Well, that girl rabbits in an’ tells the law she been raped. The guys in Weed start a party out to lynch Lennie.” (Steinbeck 21) The girl then proceeded to accuse Lennie of rape, which made George and Lennie hide in a ditch. This was so that they could escape a lynch mob. This ruined all the chance that George and Lennie had in Weed, so they had to leave. This shows the negative outcomes of women as temptation.

An example of women as a temptation from an outside source is from the song “Memphis” by Justin Bieber. The song is about a desperate man who has been attracted to this girl and will give up everything to be with her. He lets out all his emotions throughout the song. A great example of the singer falling into the trap of women as temptation was “Girl you're on my mind like 24/7 every single time that I'm not with you” (Justin Bieber stanza 1). This song is a very good example of women as temptation. The singer is saying the girl is always on his mind. Then the singer says “Cause I love you, need you, need you here to stay.” These two quotes imply that the singer’s whole life revolves around the woman, and as a result, he is making idiotic decisions, that harm himself. An example of this is when he says “I'd like to give you what you need.” This really goes to show how he has fallen for the trap because he is now giving the girl money, all because he is attracted to her. This relates to Of Mice and Men because Lennie has two instances where he gets sucked into the trap of women as temptation. The outcomes were getting kicked out of a town and killing an innocent woman. All in all the motif of women as the temptation is a very recurring and important motif. Women as temptation ultimately represents a trap and many negative outcomes.

Works Cited

1. Steinbeck, John. Of Mice and Men. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 1994. Print.
2. “Justin Bieber (Ft. Big Sean & Diplo) – Memphis.” Genius, 23 Dec. 2013, https://genius.com/Justin-bieber-memphis-lyrics.