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17 September 2019

Critical Response 4

In *The Life of a Sensuous Woman*, the topic of love is very much a centerpiece to the story. However, tandem to it, is the idea of lust or desire. A strong argument can be made about this story emphasizing that the woman is merely experiencing lust because of its heavy Buddhist influence. All throughout the story, Buddhist “worldly temples”, the “Five Hundred Disciples of the Buddha” and the “Boat of the Buddhist Dharma” are mentioned. All these Buddhist symbols emphasize the influence of the Buddhist doctrine to the work. One of the key points to Buddhism is the idea that life is suffering which is caused by desire. Therefore, as the story progresses, the reader is getting glimpses of the various desires that the woman is experiencing instead of love. When describing her “love” for the Samurai she does not describe affection or a profound connection but instead a simple “yearn for him”. The woman casually mentions her connection to him as “we were able to make love”. Furthermore, after the Samurai died, the woman “completely forgot about the man”.

However, the real relationship between this emphasis on love being desire is when the Sensuous woman leaves society. The woman was encouraged to “let your death come when it comes”, and embrace a life away from society, and away from “love” or sexual desire. As she accepted this advice, consistent with the Buddhist doctrine, her removal of desire allowed her to have a more enlightened mind. The old woman even says, “I feel my mind now shining bright as the moon”.