Keep Your Substitute Teachers Closer

When do males come to understand gender differences and relationships? Most males do not begin to take interest in females until they reach maturity. But, what causes this interest? According to Charles Baxter’s “Gryphon,” women represent magic and men represent strength. Baxter discusses how women are like diamonds and that diamonds are a weakness to men. Men admire these diamonds, or women, and they are mesmerized by their appearance. Therefore, love is nothing more than hypnotism or even a curse.

To understand the relationship of diamonds and women in “Gryphon,” one must truly understand the two from one another. Diamonds are considered the hardest rock known to man; they represent a rarity and price like no ordinary rock. “Diamond is a stone of fidelity, with its other side of possession, and a stone of wealth (physical and spiritual), with its other side of greed” (Stein 257). This quote states that diamonds are symbolically powerful; women see this, and that’s why, according to Miss Ferenzci, they use diamonds as a curse or possession against men. Men are strong, but diamonds are powerful… this is men’s weakness. No matter how much woman deny this fact or are relative to it, in some way every woman at least wants to view themself as if they are on a pedestal; they want to be treated like princesses. “Beauty is me. Beauty is you. But most importantly, real beauty is the image of those living diamonds who represent true womanhood” (Terzol 162). This is saying that women are diamonds… and women that show true and determining womanhood are represented as diamonds; In simpler terms, its
saying that women should be represented as diamonds at their best… and if the best woman has true exertion and diamonds are a sense of power and rarity, then the two are represented as the same because they both show supremacy at their best in the eyes of woman.

Now that the relationship between women and diamonds have been discussed, the connection between Miss Ferenczi and Tommy can be deciphered. In the story, the reader can see the special kind of connection that Miss Ferenczi has with Tommy than she does with the other students; this might have a lot to do with why Tommy is the main character. “I had liked [Miss Ferenczi]. She was strange” (Baxter 251). This shows one of the first signs of Tommy having connection with Miss Ferenczi. Tommy see’s Miss Ferenczi differently than all of the other students… even though he thinks she is strange, he still finds her interesting. “She lies… she didn’t know what she was talking about” (251). No other student, besides Tommy, see’s Miss Ferenczi as a truthful individual; they think that she is crazy and that everything she spoke about was a lie. As one can still see, the connection of Tommy with Miss Ferenczi is much stronger than the rest of Tommy’s classmates; this proves a piece of the opinion associated with the nearby conclusion.

Though, the connection between Miss Ferenzci and Tommy are strong, there has to be a reason behind the bizarre association between the two. In the beginning of Baxtor’s message, the reader can see how Tommy is already becoming interested in Miss Ferenczi; he believes everything she says… “Diamonds are like magic… this is why women wear them on their fingers, as a sign of the magic…” (253). In the story, it is said that diamonds are like magic; women wear them to represent their womanhood and to make men fall in love with them because diamonds are a man’s weakness. “Men have strength… but no true magic. That is why men fall in love with women but women do not fall in love with men; they just love being loved” (253).
This quote states that diamonds are closely accompanied to being a curse against man or a captivating object. Women use diamonds against men; they are strong before women use the appearance or touch of diamonds against them. Thus, man falls short of the magic in diamonds (men’s weakness) and fall in love with their woman; why do women do this? Because women LOVE being loved… they admire the attention from someone that is committed to giving them any consideration.

While Tommy was compelled by the changes in him made by Miss Ferenzci, those feelings had forced him to think differently about his mother as well. Earlier, we discussed how Miss Ferenczi spoke to her class about how diamonds are a weakness to men, and, women use diamonds to make men fall in love with them. After the substitute teacher discusses this with Tommy and his class, the boy returns home and acts more distant to his mother, especially when this happened… “[Tommy’s mother] touched the back of her hand to [Tommy’s] forehead after [he] felt her diamond ring against [his] skin” (254). This explains why he was distant with his mother because, early in the story, Miss Ferenczi spoke to the students about the diamond ring and its properties. Tommy knows that his mother and father are married... that means the boy’s father fell victim to the diamond ring already. Tommy realizes this and is disappointed by his mother because she made Tommy’s father fall in love with her… which is stated in the story, women do not love men back; women just want to feel loved.

Tommy’s mother and father’s relationship didn’t seem great either. Tommy was talking about clueless things to his mother when he returned from school, she said to him, “… we can talk about it later when your father gets home. But right now you have some work to do” (252), which basically stated that she didn’t want to deal with Tommy’s talking so she told him to talk about it to his father. This states that she doesn’t have much respect Tommy’s father and would
rather throw all of the problems on him instead of taking the problem herself. So, it seems as if she doesn’t care for him all too much, she just loves being loved.

When Tommy was with his mother, at his house, after the day Miss Ferenzci spoke to him and his class, if the reader had not noticed, she spoke of something very important; she discussed with the class of such a curse and such a possession of man that the fact of love is now understood after the marriage of a couple. She said to the enthusiastic listeners that diamond rings in short terms… are a man’s curse and that women use diamonds to make men fall in love with them. After much analysis and consumption of time, this opinion was determined significant because Tommy’s mother touched Tommy with a DIAMOND ring. When this happened, Tommy became open to connection with women, especially the connection he partook with Miss Ferenczi; she saw this as a gateway to lure him into her control. A man looking upon a diamond ring will open up their maturity so that they can be interested in women. When men are young, they show no interest in females; they see the diamond and their mind changes. This doesn’t necessarily mean that they have to be married, but it could be in intervals. The maturity can be accomplished when they see the diamond, and then they fall for women when they are touched by the diamond.

Of course, this is illusory compared to society, but the fact that the story declares that men fall in love with women for the simple reasons of diamonds is ironic… because stereotypically women love diamonds. As shown in “Gryphon,” diamonds, from the man’s perspective, become a “curse” because, with this curse, women can control men. You could say that this was not the real Tommy; he was just cursed to connect with Miss Ferenzci. The final though provoking judgment should be: keep your enemies close… but keep your substitute teachers closer.
Works Cited


