

Misogyny in hangover square



**ASSIGN
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Patrick Hamilton represents women in such a misogynistic manner in Hangover Square that we do not get insight on a single positive portrayal of a woman that George, the novel's protagonist, meets on his journeys. Instead, we only hear a remotely positive attitude about a woman when we either hear about George's Aunt at the beginning of the novel or about George's sister, who has died; even then, neither of these two women are met directly by the reader. Mainly, the representation of women is portrayed through Netta. Through Hamilton's use of free direct discourse, the reader may assume that the ideas in the narrative are unbiased and separate from George's thoughts because the novel is not written in first person. We think that we are outside of his consciousness; however, the narrative shows us insights into George's thoughts, which in turn provoke the reader to empathize with him and understand his opinions. Because of this design, the reader's opinions of Netta and the other women in the novel are crafted to encourage negative thoughts on women.

The first woman we meet in the novel other than George's Aunt is the woman on the train who joins George in his compartment. George has not even spoken to this woman before, nor has he ever seen her before, and we are instantly met with a 'cold woman' who 'rudely and ruthlessly seized' the handle of the door. This tells the reader that George's attitude to women is not a positive one; this woman merely opened the door to a compartment to sit down, and George finds the maneuver insulting and intrusive. This woman, 'apparently of the servant class' (p. 26), is portrayed as common and rambunctious, similar to the way in which the group of girls in Brighton are portrayed further into the novel. We learn that another woman standing

on the platform wearing a hairnet had been ‘intentionally’ (p. 27) trying to hurt George by making him think of Netta, as if women are constantly out to ‘torture’ (p. 27) him and purely exist to cause him pain. Hamilton directly informs the reader of George’s feeling of deeply-felt pain and torture merely at the slight thought of Netta; this is the fault of two strangers who, in reality, did not do anything at all wrong.

When we do meet Netta, as George arrives at Netta’s flat in Earl’s Court, we are also met with George’s fear of her. Netta’s ‘loveliness’ is described as a ‘weapon from the arsenal of her beauty.’ This statement shows how George sees their relationship as a war or a game, in which he is losing due to his weaknesses being among her ‘weapons.’ His love for her makes him weak, and the fact that this is revealed to the reader shows that he is aware of his love and weakness. This depiction of something essentially positive (her ‘loveliness’) being compared to a ‘weapon’ shows how Hamilton creates a misogynistic narrative in the respect that women are destructive and pernicious. Furthermore, the characters’ greeting is referred to as a ‘game of calling people by their surnames.’ This description gives a feeling of coldness, and the reference of their relationship being a game suggests that perhaps George is aware of the fact that he is losing this game or war but does not take it so seriously; he is so infatuated with Netta that he makes the negative aspects of their contact seem less real by referring it something that is ‘just a game.’ Hamilton thus shows the reader that even though George loves Netta, there is also an underlying hatred which the reader too is meant to intuit.

Further on in the novel, the narrative briefly switches from George's insights to Johnnie's, and we learn about his view on Netta and women in general; despite Netta being 'decidedly attractive' he does not actually like the look of her. She is described as 'ill-natured' and 'ungracious' and is then associated with women that used to come up to the office 'in shoals'. This image gives women an animalistic characteristic (a shoal of fish), and with the connotation of fish suggests that they are perhaps simple creatures with little intellectual capacity and poor memories. Because Johnnie has an 'extensive knowledge' of different types of women and their 'modes of behaviour,' the reader would perhaps be more inclined to trust his opinion; it is weighted with more validity and justification. The women are also described as having their 'nails dipped in blood and their faces smothered in pale cocoa' (p. 104). Their nails are painted red, but the use of the word 'blood' has connotations of danger, destruction and sinister. If Hamilton had simply used the word 'red,' it would have been more ambiguous; it could have meant danger but it could have also meant sex and lust. However, by using 'blood,' the author directly connotes specific ideas of danger, which foreshadow Netta's death.

Hamilton also describes the manner in which the women's foundation or 'pale cocoa' is deposited on their faces, and by describing it as 'smothered' suggests an unsightly application of such make up. The reference to 'cocoa' could perhaps be a reference to racial prejudice, which would suggest women's inferiority, especially as the time when the novel was written was a time of considerable prejudice and segregation with regards to people who were not white and were thus considered inferior. On George's trip to

Brighton, he comes across a group of 'violent girls' who work in a cigarette factory in London. Instantly we are met with 'girls' as opposed to 'women,' a new clue which suggests the immaturity and inferiority of the girls. They are described as going about 'in threes or fours' as if they are a species of animal whose nature is being described. Their ways of 'sprawling' and 'permeating' suggest an untidy and inelegant manner, as they 'affect the quality' of the town. They are seen as lacking class, as ruining and spoiling a good town because they are loud and trashy, 'bold' and 'violent.' Moreover, we learn about Eddie Carstairs' opinion on women when he, George, and Johnnie are having a conversation. He essentially says that their sole purpose is to please men; if a woman doesn't give a man what is desired, then a man should 'throw her out the window.' This opinion objectifies women and suggests that they are nothing but sexual objects to be used as men please. Eddie's joke about throwing them out the window is ironic, since Netta hasn't given George what he wants (which is actually her love); earlier on in the novel, when he considers different methods of killing her, he even thinks of pushing her out of the window.

The fact that only Netta gets a voice in the novel is key; however, even then her voice is heard through George's perceptions. The novel seems to portray women at large as an inferior class whose purpose is simply to please men, and after numerous references to women being prostitutes and animal-like, we discover that these women are nothing but irritating objects to Hamilton's men. After all, the only two women who are positively portrayed in the novel are George's family members, whom he seemed to have a certain degree of respect for, but not a great deal of it (since they do not get

as much of a voice as any male character in the novel). Even Peter, whom George he deeply dislikes, gets more of voice than any woman in the novel. Thus, Hamilton's view on women seems to be extremely negative, and this negativity is prominently portrayed throughout Hangover Square.