

Student's Name

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Course

Date

Poetry Analysis of Interview by Dorothy Parker

Dorothy Parker (1893-1967) was an American writer, satirist, critic, civil rights activist, and poet. Parker wrote many poems, most of which were a few lines long but conveyed an important message. In her poem titled *Interview*, Parker discusses the characteristics that men find attractive in a lady. At first, a reader may think that Parker is advising women to embrace specific attributes if they want men to be attracted to them. While Parker's poem loathes an ideal lady and it is also evident that she focuses on criticizing men's judgment of women.

Parker calls her poem interview, perhaps to compare dating to job interviews. Similarly, the poem describes several qualities that men examine during the "interview" of finding their ideal woman. Although the poet does not clarify how her poetry is an interview, she wonders why men would find certain ladies attractive despite these ladies having qualities that Parker considers thoughtless and redundant. Since Parker does not consider herself having the qualities she describes in her poem, she could be telling her reader that anyone who "interviews" her should expect something different from what is described in the poem.

Parker begins her poem by displaying course sarcasm and wit when she includes the words "I've heard" in her first line (Parker, line1). These words give the reader an idea that she does not possess the qualities that she includes in her poem. These words also tell the reader that the poet may have been repeatedly told to embrace the qualities described. Parker describes the supposed attractive ladies as those who would rather "stay at home at night" and would "not stay

awake till three” (Parker, lines 4 and 5). These lines define a kind of morality that was expected from a woman during the Victorian era. Staying away from home was not acceptable because women were required to build their lives around the household environment.

A Victorian lady was expected to adhere to Victorian ideals, which specified the behavior and conduct herself as a proper lady. A Victorian woman was to be respectable, polite, classy, and morally restrained. Moreover, society required women to demonstrate sexual restraint. This view is expressed in Parker’s poem when she describes an ideal woman as one who stays away from erotic poetry and does not “recognize an overture” (Parker, line 8). Proper women were also obligated to have sexual relations with no one else but their husbands. Possibly, Parker’s comparison of women with candles that produce “a single light” elucidates this expectation. In many ways, Parker appeared to be challenging the expectations that were placed upon women during the Victorian era.

While describing these qualities satirically, Parker appears to loathe these ladies for their condition. In the last line of Interview, Parker demonstrates her lack of remorse for being different from the ladies she describes. One can tell that Parker describes herself as quite the opposite of the woman described in this poem. She is a well-rounded and intelligent lady who perceives herself as under-appreciated by the men. The problem that Parker faced in the 19th century is the same challenge that many women face today. Parker realized that the men those days did not appreciate or like smart, strong, intelligent, and successful ladies.

The sarcastic tone that Parker uses throughout the poem demonstrates the folly nature of the qualities that men use to identify ideal women. By attacking these qualities, Parker empowers women, such as herself, who does not fit into the stereotypical reserved housewife described in the poem. Parker encourages her audience to be themselves and not try to fit into society’s

stereotypical description of who they are supposed to be. Parker encourages her readers to do the exact opposite of what she describes in her poem. She tells them to “read erotic poetry”, “to sanction the impure” and to “recognize an overture.”

The speaker of the poem explains that she would rather be independent and impactful instead of being an uneducated woman who spends most of her time at home. Even though our speaker recognizes that her indifference towards the “ideal” woman may cost her many suitors, she still thinks that it is more important for her to be true to herself. By poking fun at the men who desire certain characteristics from women, she is sending the message that the kind of man that she desires in her life is one who will empower and encourage her, instead of enslaving her to societal expectations. She ends her poem by stating that she has “had no complaints” perhaps to suggest that she would rather live as her genuine self, even if it means being alone, than to live with someone who makes her feel like a fraction of herself.

In her poem *Interview*, Dorothy Parker despises the characteristics of the women that men of her days admired. This poem explains how these descriptions were in line with societal expectations during the Victorian era. It is not just the ladies with the said characteristics that are attacked in this poem, but also the men who desire these qualities in a lady. The poetess also lets her reader know that she does not have the attributes illustrated in her poem. Parker uses her poem to encourage women to be different and to empower women like herself.

Work Cited

Parker, Dorothy. *Interview*. Poetry Foundation, 2020,

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March 2020.

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