Name

Instructor Name

Art 101

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Poetry Explication

Dorothy Parker was an American short story writer, satirist, poet and critic. She was born in West End Village, New Jersey on 22 august, 1893. After a long time of hardships, Parker published her first poem in 1914 in the journal Vanity Fair. After a few months, she got a job as editorial assistant for the magazine, Vogue. She worked there for two years and also started working as an author for Vanity Fair. Originally, Parker's style was not very serious, but gradually she developed it and used themes such as bourgeois complacency and unrequited love. She expressed a sense of sadness, insightful humor and serious attempts at satire. Her romantic lyrical ballads are rich in images and symbols. Critics often described her poems as trivial, sentimental and melodramatic because of the sharp humor.

The poem ‘Afternoon’ was written by Dorothy Parker. This poem shows very well the poetic talent of Dorothy Parker. Here, in sixteen simple lines, it miraculously conveys the serenity one can achieve in old age. She is living in the present and writing about the future. She illustrates her tasks that she will be doing at her old age. She describes the future very peacefully. There is no noise and irritation that can be seen in her description. Although she is old but she is enjoying all the comforts that she desires. She believes that at this age she will have smooth and calm memories. She will live a life that will be opposite of her previous hectic life. She gives the picture of her old age by describing about her hair and hands. She describes how her hair primly pull back in bands and how she will rest her ‘fragile’ hands on her lap. She believes that she will have a neat lifestyle even when she gets old. She will wear a dress with high lace collar. She will keep herself away from the hustle and bustle of the people outside. She will have a cup of tea without bitter thoughts of her past. This is the blissful picture of an old age but in the end she depicts the reality of life. Although the age is very soothing but she does not want it to come very soon.

Parker uses the strong imagery to make readers visualize her feelings and emotions. Her imagery evokes the perception of sight. For instance, from lines 5 to 12 she uses visual imagery, “watch my cool fragile hand(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*)”, “draw my curtain to the town(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*)”. She personifies memory and peace by stating that she will share her bed and fire with them. The rhyme scheme of the poem is ABABCDCDEFEFCGCG. She uses the technique of end rhyme as well as internal rhyme to make the poem melodious for the audience, “I'll comb my hair in scalloped bands/

Beneath my laundered cap(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*)” (5-6) “And watch my cool and fragile hands/ Lie light upon my lap(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*).” (7-8). Her poem is full of enjambments which refers to the continuation of a sentence. The mood and tone of the poem is calm and peaceful even though she ends her poem by stating bitter reality, she shows that she will enjoy the old age. She will not remember the bitter memories of her past in that age. It is the reality that one day everyone will become old but she does not want it to happen too soon. From line 1 to 14 she foreshadows the reality of life by expressing the benefits of old age. In line 15, she removes the suspense by using words like, “But oh,” she suddenly remembers that those years are blissful but they are coming very soon.

The poem is another projection of the future. In the case of Parker, however, the life of a passionate woman is coming to an end. While so many of Parker's poems show her preoccupation with a preventive and joyless death, "Afternoon" presents dying as a quiet moment when the speaker is “old, and comforted, / and done with this desire(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*)” (1-2). She is no longer subject to other people, but she is only accompanied by "Memory" and "peace"(3, 4). She prepares herself physically for death by combing her hair in “scalloped bands / Beneath my laundered cap(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*)” (5-6) and donning “a spriggèd gown / With lace to kiss my throat(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*)” (9-10). She sits in her rocking chair to think about “cool and fragile hands / Lie light upon my lap(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*)” (7-8). Neatly folded in her cap and her dress, this woman seems to be ready to be stowed. The quiet description of these objects reinforces the idealized order and its inherent peace old age has. The speckled pattern of her dress, though reminiscent of the flower is used to hide her body, hinting at the grave she will soon be lying in, she herself will be hidden underground. The calm, circling motion of her hand as she is stirring her tea is a noticeable resistance reassuring proof that the fires of youthful passion is thoroughly removed. But it is the speaker herself who dispels her own imagination as she mourns for the inevitable and wishes that “those blessed years / Were further than they be!(Afternoon, *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*)” (15-16). These idealized objects of age and death, though possible, remain an imagination embodied only in the poem itself.

**Reference**

Afternoon. *Afternoon by Dorothy Parker*. https://allpoetry.com/Afternoon. Accessed 2 Nov. 2019.

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