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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Drinking in the Panopticon
Female Drinkers in Dorothy Parker's Stories

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Women and alcohol in the nineteen twenties

When the First World War ended in 1918 it was the starting point for the roaring twenties, the jazz age. The roaring twenties were years of optimism. A new culture among young people was formed with new music, especially jazz, and new dances. At the time New York was very fashionable and a lot of new trends were set there. After years of war and an old generation with ideals such as graveness and moderation the younger generation wanted to catch the day. The roaring years of optimism would last for a decade but ended in 1929 when the great depression came to dominate the world economy.

In addition, the 1920s was a paradigm shift for the women's moment. The women's suffrage movement was inspired by liberalism and in the beginning of the 20s liberal thoughts achieved enough support to finally give all women in the US the right to vote. During the 20s women began to enter other male domains, areas where only men had the privilege before. The main reason for these things to become possible was the First World War, which the US had entered in 1917. When a lot of men went to Europe, women could do things that had not been possible before. Women had to take over the duties men traditionally had in order to keep the industry and society going.

Not only did women start to work; they also attended public places such as bars to have a drink or two. The war ended but women kept drinking in public places. According to author Dominic Rowland, the complex social changes in Britain with a change in working patterns were described by author Ernst Shelley in his book *The English Public house* already in 1927 (Rowland 83-84). Increasing mutual dependence because of the absence of men, widowhood and single life are presented as explanations to the increase in women's drinking. A similar development can be seen in the US; although the US did not participate as long as Britain in the war and the loss of American men was less extensive.

In retrospect, the 1920s were also the years of prohibition in the entire US. The law against all types of liquor had strong support among various churches. It was also generally supported by women. The least support for the prohibition was found in the big cities in which new black markets grew. There was a lot of money to be made in the bootlegging business because during prohibition it became fashionable to drink in certain social groups, especially among the middle class. A lot of people attended speakeasies, illegal bars which had emerged as an alternative to the saloon. At the speakeasy men could meet and drink and sometimes women could meet and drink together with men too. People drank in mixed groups because it was still not socially accepted for women only to drink together or alone at the speakeasy. Another way to meet and drink was to arrange your own cocktail party at home.

Female drinkers were a marginalized group who mainly drank together with men. Women did not enter pubs alone because respectable women could not do so unless they were comfortable with the fact that they would be mistaken for prostitutes. According to Rowland (82-83), "This stigma on women's public drinking was widespread." However, associate professor of English and women's studies Rhonda S Pettit argues that the paradigm shift for the women's movement included a shift in values, away from Victorian morality and towards increased sexual experimentation outside of marriage (75). Some women had the possibility to spend more time away from their homes which also opened up the opportunity to drink alcohol.

During the roaring twenties the New York author Dorothy Parker was at the peak of her career. Parker was able to attend formerly male dominated areas and earned her living as an author. She had published her first collection of poetry, *Enough Rope* (1926), and it turned out to be a success. She was also a frequent writer in *The New Yorker*. Parker herself was a heavy drinker, as were many of her writing friends. Drinking had become fashionable,

and in the words of Marion Meade, Parker was “living a hectic social life and staying up late, drinking a lot, but handling it well” (189). Her short stories are mostly about fashionable young people living their life in New York City. Modern people like Parker were influenced by modernism, the movement in art, music and literature which professor of English Peter Barry claims, rejected traditional realism in favour of experimental forms (82), which is visible in Parker’s narrative point of view. The modern woman was also a woman who drank and drinking women occur frequently in Parker’s stories.

In this essay I will look at how Parker portrays women who drink. My main focus will be on the short story “Big Blonde” but I will also look at, and draw parallels to, women drinkers in other stories: “A Dialogue at Three in the Morning” (1926), “A Terrible Day Tomorrow” (1928), “Just a Little One” (1928), and “A Young Woman in Green Lace” (1932). On the basis of these stories I will sort out who the female drinker is and what her drinking signifies. How is the female drinker described by the narrator? What are the codes that govern women’s drinking together with men? How are women positioned in this male dominated context?

On a general level, there are two types of female drinkers in Parker’s stories; “The Modern Woman” and “The Controlled Woman.” The modern woman is breaking free from conventions and she is radical because she is adopting a male drinking pattern; she often drinks too much. She does not long for marriage and her male friends are her drinking buddies, she is sometimes self-centred. She drinks without emotional outbursts and she is not sexualized in her drinking environment. The modern woman spends time around men, she socializes with men and she behaves in a way that is considered masculine. Not being very emotional is coded masculine and so is self-centredness. By not actively promoting herself as someone who wants to get married, she distances herself from conventional femininity. The

modern woman looks at marriage as something undesirable, in contrast to the other type of female drinker who looks at marriage as essential.

The other female drinker is the controlled woman. The controlled woman is drinking for other reasons than the modern woman. It could be because it is fashionable or because a man wants her company. The controlled woman is always watched by men when she drinks. Men are watching her to judge if she has a conventional feminine manner, which is desirable. The controlled woman watches how men around her react to her behaviour and she responds to their reactions by punishing herself if they disapprove. The controlled woman longs for marriage and she is eager to please men by paying them constant attention, because the ultimate goal for her is to catch a man to marry. Often she has emotional outbursts when she drinks and she is sexualized by men in the drinking environment. An emotional outburst is considered feminine by men but not desirable. She is sexualized because she is attractive as long as she will not get drunk or self-centred; drunkenness and self-centredness are not considered feminine. Although the controlled woman is the most frequent drinker in Parker's stories the modern woman is visible from time to time. I will argue that both of these women exist in Parker's stories and I will also argue that the protagonist in "Big Blonde" is both, although not at the same time.

Inspired by Ellen Lansky's¹ study on female drinkers in modernist literature, I will apply Foucault's theory about "Panopticism" in my reading of female drinkers in Parker. Ellen Lansky uses Michel Foucault's theory about "Panopticism" to describe men's control of female drunkenness. Panopticism is explained as a way to discipline prison inmates. In the Panopticon, the inmates are visible all the time from a central tower which is occupied by a supervisor.² However, the inmates can not see their inspector. Permanent visibility of the inmates is the ultimate automatic function of power. When the inmates learn to accept the

¹ Ellen Lansky. "Female Trouble: Dorothy Parker, Katherine Anne Porter, and Alcoholism," *Literature and Medicine* 17.2 (1998) 212-230.

² Henceforth referred to as inspector.

Panopticon they start to punish themselves (Lansky 216-218). As Lansky points out, “Foucault’s discussion of the Panopticon and Panopticism can, and indeed must, be extended beyond all-male institutions and men...Panopticism also fixes its relentless gaze on women” (217). Lansky observes that traditionally, the female Panopticon was the house and the woman’s inspectors were all the men around her, especially her husband. In the context of drinking in the speakeasy, the supervisors are other men who watch and manipulate the woman who drinks. Their ways of doing so can be many; counting drinks and disapproval of drunkenness for instance. The inspector wants absolute control, and therefore he makes it clear to the woman that she is in a male environment. Every time she does something he disapproves of he makes sure she knows it. Grounds for disapproval could be anything from the topic of conversation to the mood a woman is in. The rules of the speakeasy are set by men and women in Parker’s stories accept it.

While Panopticism can serve as an explanation of female drinking behaviour in Parker’s stories, one also has to look at alcohol and drinking in a cultural and historical perspective in order to understand how states of drunkenness have been valued differently through time, and how the alcoholic and alcoholism figure as phenomena in history. In the middle of the nineteenth century an anti-drunkenness movement created new definitions regarding intoxication and habitual drinking: “Habitual drunkenness now was stigmatised by such terms as ‘Intemperance’ and ‘Inebriation’” (Crowley 3). Intemperance as a word is a religious and moral marker for intoxication and used regarding habitual drunkard. The term Alcoholism was also introduced during the nineteenth century. First, it was a medical term for the toxic effect of alcohol on the human body. Later it became a definition for the actual state of habitual drinking (Crowley 4). The word inebriation meant that the addiction was considered a disease.

During the late nineteenth century two views on alcohol existed side by side. One was that alcoholism is a disease, the other that drinking is an expression of moral weakness. To drink because of moral weakness, was the common presupposition among ordinary people at the time. Since the Victorian ideals held willpower and character high, an alcoholic suffered from moral weakness bordering on madness “the disease was defined in terms of moral bankruptcy, a form of moral insanity, terms deriving from similar formulations in insanity” (Crowley 5). During the Victorian era women would never drink in public if they were not prostitutes who occasionally visited bars. Hence, even if the alcoholic was conceived of as man without character, the alcoholic had to be a man because a female alcoholic did not exist. A female drinker had to be a prostitute or someone who already suffered from moral “insanity,” for whom drinking would only be a symptom of this moral deficiency. In theory the female alcoholic did not exist yet, because the word alcoholic as a noun could only refer to a man. The term female alcoholic was impossible to use because there were only male alcoholics. You could only say “an alcoholic female” because the noun “alcoholic” was gendered male (Crowley 118).

However, after the First World War something happened. Among men drinking and decadence became somehow associated with success and the good life. The cocktail party was a new invention and a new way to associate. Drinking began to signal individual freedom. Crowley observes that “public drinking became so fashionable that both decent and indecent women went to the speakeasy, even though the old-time saloon had been a male reserve, occasionally spotted by prostitutes. “For women too, liquor became a flag of their new freedom” (117). There were other things than alcohol that signified this new freedom, fashion and consumption for instance. Women became participants in this new movement which was a reaction to the old Victorian idea of how a woman should dress and behave. In the 20s, the new loose fitting cut and androgynous clothes become flexible enough to dance

the Charleston in. New economic possibilities for a new middle class made consumption fashionable. Women indeed faced new values, and Rhonda S. Pettit points out that the modernist forms of advertising sold images instead of products. According to Pettit, these images promised liberation through consumption (75).

Sue Vice observes the woman drinker in literature during the 20s as less interested in the object and signifiers of drinking such as the glass, the bottle or names of drinks. While women love the effect of alcohol and the way it makes them feel, men describe the feeling of love for the object, the bottle or the drink (133). The modern woman in the 20s loves her drink but she is not attached to a specific drink, brand or bottle, she drinks everything. Women get drinks from men but own nothing more than their drunkenness while men can be the free vagabond to whom specific brands or drinks are closely linked. Women want what men have, they want the same freedom. The fascination with consumption which promises liberation is visible in Parker's stories. On the market men are the active consumers. One has to remember that the female drinker does not yet exist. Women are passive consumers who drink in the shadows of men and who need their approval to drink. Often men provide women with drinks suitable for women; men are the experts on the brand, bottle and the drink.

Clearly, the ideals of consumption take shape in the early twenties century are linked to the new middle class. One example from modernist literature is the character Great Gatsby, in the novel with the same name by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The Great Gatsby buys a toilet in solid gold and throws cocktail parties all night long. It is said to be too much by other rich characters in the novel who have inherited their fortune. This conveys attitudes about the newly rich and the younger generation during the 20s who believed in consumption as a route to prestige and freedom. It was possible for men to consume if they had the money but because of the Panopticon women could only consume if a man approved to it. If you were a

woman you could consume through a man, but then he wanted something in exchange. Sacrifices of control in order to consume at speakeasies lead to restrictions in women's drinking. Therefore, women end up owning nothing more than their drunkenness.

As I will point out in this essay many of the female drinkers in Parker's stories are stigmatised. However, they do not have a fixed position in a drinking environment. They are controlled by men they drink together with. All the women in the stories desperately want to be liked by men. Therefore, women know it is important to be a "good sport" around men. Men, on the other hand, want women drunk in order to control them.

"Big Blonde" and other female drinkers in Parker's stories

My main focus in this essay will be on the short story "Big Blonde."³ I will link this story to other stories by Parker to be able to clarify who the female drinker is. The main character is named Hazel. The story is divided into three parts and all three parts are told by an omniscient external narrator who uses internal focalization. Part one is about Hazel and her marriage. It starts with her marriage and ends with Hazel as a mistress; part one also describes Hazel's path from non-drinker to alcoholic. Part two is about her life in bars and the men she sees. Hazel's behaviour changes through the first two parts. In the first part her husband is more important than the drink. In part two her lovers become less important; for instance her lovers are dealt with in fewer pages per lover as the story continues. Her marriage lasts for three years and it is covered in 13 pages in part one. When part two starts she dates Ed for three years and he is present in five pages. After Ed she dates Charlie for a year which is covered in one paragraph. Her other men; Sydney, Billy and Fred are mentioned only briefly

³ Henceforth referred to as "Blonde"

(Burstein 245). Part three in “Blonde” covers Hazel’s attempt to commit suicide. The other stories analysed in this essay are, “Dialogue at Three in the Morning”, “A Terrible Day Tomorrow”, “Just a Little One” and “A Woman in Green Lace”. The three first ones take place at a speakeasy and the last one at a cocktail party.

“Dialogue at Three in the Morning”⁴ is told by an omniscient external narrator using zero focalized narrative. A woman is holding a monologue about how mistreated she has been by a non present person named Jeanette. A man wants her to listen to something he has to say, but without success. In the end a waiter appears “Presently, you felt, he would cover them with leaves (“Dialogue” 48). Meaning, they will continue for a very long time. This story and the story “Just a little One” are monologues held by women but this story is different because the woman speaking takes no notice about the man present.

“A Terrible Day Tomorrow”⁵ is also told by an omniscient narrator using zero focalized narrative. A man and a woman in a speakeasy are drinking in a hurry. The man persuades the woman to have more drinks with him because he has to face a terrible day tomorrow. His talk about this terrible day tomorrow is an excuse to drink, and he wants her to pity him. They have a conversation about his terrible day tomorrow, about which the reader knows nothing. They also speak about drinks. The story ends with the two of them ordering one more drink and the narrator ends the story with the sentence “And so on” (“Tomorrow” 91). In this story the woman has very little to add to the conversation. She responds to the man’s questions but she is very sensitive about his reaction to her respond.

“Just a Little One”⁶ is a monologue held by a woman. A man, Fred, is present and sometimes he gets a question but the reader will not hear his reply to it. However, the reader understands he replies in some way because the woman reacts to things he says. The woman is talking about how lonely she is, and how she has no friends. She is worried about

⁴Henceforth referred to as “Dialogue”

⁵Henceforth referred to as “Tomorrow”

⁶ Henceforth referred to as “One”.

Fred spending a lot of time with another woman in the speakeasy, and claims she does not want to see him hurt. She wants them to go out, she and Fred, and capture stray dogs and cats but first they order one more drink. In this story it is more obvious than in “Tomorrow” how women continuously are forced to submission by men who runs the conversation, even though one man, Fred, is quiet. These women are at the speakeasies to entertain men.

The last story is a bit different from the other and takes place at a cocktail party and not at the speakeasy. The characters do not know each other; they start their conversation in the beginning of the story. In all the other stories the reader understands that the characters have met before. The story, “A Woman in Green Lace”⁷ is told by an omniscient external narrator using internal focalization. It is a dialogue between a man, which character the reader gets to know in the first paragraph, and a woman newly returned home from Paris. His clothes are carefully selected in a way that “must be backed up a fine self-belief” (“Green” 165). He is hitting on her and serving her new drinks constantly.

All these stories are short and contain just slices of life. It can be a conversation or a monologue. Unlike the women in all these stories Hazel in “Blonde” has a past and a future. The reader only gets to know a fragment from the other women’s lives, in a bar or from a cocktail party. In contrast, Hazel has a past and the reader, almost directly, knows what the narrator of “Blonde” thinks about her. The protagonist is, as the title signals, big. She has been a model in her youth when “it was still the days of the big woman, and she was then prettily colored and erect and high-breasted” (“Blonde” 105), the narrator’s attitude indicates that the days of big women are over and that Hazel has seen her best days. The Victorian days are over and the roaring twenties hold new ideals. In Hazel’s middle thirties she is an alcoholic and suffers from the long term effects of the drug she uses in her life as a party girl and “her old days were blurred and flickering sequence, an imperfect film” (“Blonde”105).

⁷Henceforth referred to as “Green”

These are the first things the reader gets to know about Hazel. The reader then gets to know Hazel's life from her marriage to her attempt to commit suicide. The reader also gets to know men's attitude towards Hazel whose appearance made "some men when they used the word 'blond' to click their tongues and wag their heads roguishly" ("Blonde" 105). This attitude indicates that men had a certain opinion about a girl like Hazel. Her blondness is linked to a stereotype, the Bimbo. However, men like Hazel because she is a "good sport," and Hazel thinks that being liked is something good.

When Hazel marries she enjoys her life far away from the life she has lived earlier, she does not want to be a "good sport" anymore. Susan L. Bunkers claims that Hazel then moves from being one stereotype and becomes another, from the "good sport" to the "tender and submissive wife" (159-160). This is visible in the novel when Hazel marries and becomes very sentimental and cries when she thinks of all tragedies in the world. She cries a lot and "to her who had laughed so much, crying was delicious" ("Blonde" 107). Hazel changing from one stereotype to another is one reason why she eventually becomes an alcoholic. Her new way of behaviour, her crying and her mood swings are not liked by her husband who encourages her to have a drink or two to cheer up. Hazel who wants to be liked has a drink or two together with her husband to get closer to him.

In the beginning of Hazel's life as a drinker she is a "controlled woman" but understands that men want her to be a "good sport" and that it is a role she plays. Her life as a "tender and submissive wife" is also a role that she plays, "She fell readily into tears during the first year of her marriage" ("Blonde" 106). Hazel had no opportunities to cry when she was a "good sport"; men did not like a woman who had emotional outbursts at the speakeasy. Hazel's biggest problem is that she can not control these roles or quit playing them. She is the "good sport" because it leads to male approval. She plays the tender and submissive wife which she thinks is an appropriate role for a married woman, but this does not lead to

approval. Importantly, these two roles are performed to Hazel's inspectors. As a party girl she plays the role of the "good sport" for all the male inspectors who pass her way. The "tender and submissive wife" is played for her husband when he becomes her inspector but he likes her performances as a "good sport" better. Her husband is not amused by Hazel's new way of behaviour. When Hazel starts to drink it is because her husband wants her to be fun and a "good sport" again. He wants her company if she is a "good sport" and he becomes tired of her emotional outbursts when she thinks about stray cats and other things she considers sad.

Hazel plays different roles in her life in order to become liked by men. Men are her inspectors because they approve or object to the role she plays. Eventually, Hazel will go back to the role of, "the good sport", one that will lead to the approval of the inspectors. There is also something for Hazel to gain when she plays "the good sport". If she does it well men buy her nice things.

When women in Parker's stories will not play the role of "the good sport" they need to come up with something else to distract their inspectors. Both the woman in "One" and Hazel become sad when they think about stray animals or the horses, dragging the old horse-cabs. Men approve of that behaviour because talking about animals is considered feminine even if it does not interest the men who are listening. Hazel tries to talk to her husband about sad things that concerns her and the woman in "One" wants to go out with her drinking partner Fred and "pick up lot of stray dogs" ("One" 95). The talk about stray animals is used when the women want to be cute. The woman in "One" starts to talk about these animals when Fred demonstrates disapproval of something she has said by being quiet. Then she starts to talk about these animals to punish herself for being boring, like the inmates in the Panopticon who punish themselves when they think they have done something that the inspector might not like.

Hazel is watched by her inspector all the time and she is expected to be a “good sport”. As Lansky points out “sometimes being a good sport means drinking with the inspector, but only if the inspector approves” (Lansky 221). Like Hazel, the woman in “One” is controlled by an inspector, Fred. Fred has not got a voice in the story, but from the woman’s monologue, the reader can tell if he approves or disapproves to what she has to say. In the end of the story when she wants to go out and catch stray animals he is quiet to show his disapproval of her mood.

In Parker’s stories a woman can be controlled by her inspectors in many ways but the control is implemented by different men. When a woman gets rid of one inspector she eventually gets a new one. When Hazels starts to drink on a regular basis her husband eventually leaves her. Being drunk or hung-over is not considered desirable and he is not happy when Hazel counts his drinks because it seems like she tries to control him. It is ok for him to be drunk but it is not attractive when she drinks too much. He shows his disapproval of her drinking too much just before he leaves her. She mixes them both a drink and he says in disapproval of her drunkenness, “Cockeyed again for a change, aren’t you?” (“Blonde” 112) One last time he manifests his position as an inspector and then he leaves her.

However, she is still married when she starts to attend parties in her new neighbour Mrs. Martin’s flat. Hazel is barely controlled by an inspector in this part of the story. Hazel’s husband is seldom at home and Hazel drinks and entertains herself in Mrs Morse’s flat together with Mrs Morse’s “special friend,” a man she is not married to, and a group of men who visit Mrs Morse to party. In the beginning during these occasions Hazel appears to be a “modern woman.” She has decided not to talk about her problems in life and she has no emotional outbursts, she just entertains herself. She drinks too much but the others in the group like her and she becomes popular. She is still controlled by her husband when he is at home. If he is home she stays at home with him. He is often away, sometimes several

days at the time but when he is home she wants to please him, but she is aware that he is about to leave her. However, “There was always her thin and wordless idea that, maybe, this night, things would begin to be alright” (“Blonde” 110). Somehow Hazel wants the attention her husband gave her when he controlled her full time. She breaks her inspector’s rules and there is no punishment, but that is because her inspector, her husband, is tired of her and about to leave her.

Hazel has a “special friend”, Ed at Mrs Morse’s apartment. He is not an inspector from the beginning even though she is his mistress, but he becomes an inspector eventually, “Again, she could not find a definite day, to fix the beginning of Ed’s proprietorship” (“Blonde”111). Ed takes over the ownership from Hazel’s former husband. It happens automatically, Hazel behaves like a “modern woman” in Ed’s presence in the beginning, but she has an inspector at home who watches her at that time. When he leaves, Ed automatically takes over the role of the inspector and it is no longer possible for Hazel to do things he disapproves to without a punishment.

The woman in “Dialogue” is the closest Parker gets to the modern woman. The protagonist distances herself from the converted femininity in her monologue. The man present is unable to make her listen to him, “Will you please listen just a minute?” “Yeah listen,” she said. “That’s fine. Listen. Well I’m trough with the listening stuff” (“Dialogue” 47). The character is self-centred but disapproval is visible in the narrative. In the last paragraph of the story “From the unknown, a waiter appeared. He chirped and fluttered about them. Presently, you felt, he would cover them with leaves....” (“Dialogue” 48). The narrator informs the reader that this woman character is tiresome holding a monologue at a speakeasy and eventually she will be covered with leaves. The character’s faith will be shared with the man who is stupid enough to listen to her.

The “modern woman” faces a lot of problems. The woman in “Dialogue” has adopted a male drinking pattern. At first she orders water but then changes her mind, “Or nevermind about the water. Hell with it. Just straight Scotch” (“Dialogue” 47). She behaves like a modern woman but then the author informs the reader what to think about a woman like her. In “Blonde” it is not possible for Hazel to break free even though she does not long for a new marriage. She and other women at the speakeasies drink like men but they are still sexualized in the drinking environment because it is considered high status among men to control a woman at his side, especially one who is not his wife.

Laurie J. C. Cella argues that Hazel is at the mercy of her narrator. This means that Dorothy Parker knew that Hazel’s unhappy and destructive life would kill her and despite that knowledge she chooses to portraits Hazel as a Bimbo with a blurred self image. The narrator is aware of the way women are looked upon in a male-dominated society and, as Cella points out, Hazel never “responds to the reductive stereotyping that she constantly faces” (48). This means Hazel just wants to be liked by men, but she never questions why. She does whatever it takes to make the men around her happy, she dresses up the way she thinks men prefer big blonde women. Like one of Pavlov’s dogs Hazel learns how to respond to men’s demands and how to behave to be petted by men.⁸ Hazel reduces herself to a stereotype which clearly makes her miserable but she is unable to do anything about it. She reduces her personality to the “good sport” only.

The most desirable for Hazel is to be provided for by a man. As mentioned earlier in this essay, consumption and drinking were closely linked; both were fashionable during the twenties. Pettit claims that women’s consumption was a false indicator of liberation. Hazel consumes services which Ed pays for. Hazel loves to be taken care of. Her lover Ed hires a woman to take care of Hazel’s housework because she says she is “through

⁸Pavlov’s dogs associated a ringing bell with food and could not control their behaviour when the bell rang even when no reward was coming.

with that housekeeping stuff” (“Blonde” 114). Hazel loves the idea of herself as a divorced woman who can get her former duties done by another woman bought with money from her lover. She does not realize that when Ed buys her things or services, his ownership, and hence his position as her inspector deepens. He feels twice a man when he can hire a housekeeper for her. In exchange he owns her, meaning she has to drink with him and be in the mood he likes, “the good sport”.

In “Blonde” there are more examples of stereotypes, Hazel is no exception. Female drinkers in “Blonde” all look the same. They all have the same physical appearance as Hazel. They also seem to appear in the same way as Hazel, “They laughed loud and often” and also “They were comfortable women, and friendly and irrepressibly matronly” (“Blonde” 114-115). These are the women Hazel sees at the speakeasy Jimmy’s. All of them are “good sports.” They use their first name together with their husband’s surname “This gave at the same time the solidarity of marriage and the glamour of freedom” (“Blonde” 114-115). This indicates that the freedom of being divorced is something desirable among the women at Jimmy’s. Obviously, these women are a marginalized group in society; they do not follow general norms. They are convinced they are free and therefore comfortable, almost lazy. They are constantly laughing, cheerfully to get their bills paid by men. Many of these things can be applied to other female characters in Parker’s stories.

One example is the protagonist in “Tomorrow”, she wears a leopard skin coat, an expensive attribute. Her name is Gus and she could be one of Hazel’s friends, a female who drinks together with men because she needs money. Gus is a controlled woman. The man she is drinking with wants her company and she is constantly paying attention to everything he has to say. She assures him that she loves him and that she understands that he has a terrible day tomorrow. When she gets tired of pitying him he gets mad and tells her she does not care about him. She has second thoughts and again she assures him that she loves and

cares about him. He says, "If you cared anything at all about me, you'd finish your drink, so we could have a little nightcap" ("Tomorrow" 90). The man is Gus's inspector and he wants her to drink with him without questioning his drinking. He wants her to behave feminine which in this case is to pity him who has much to do tomorrow, assure him that she loves him and cheer him up. Like Hazel, Gus too has this role at the speakeasy. The man also wants her to drink as much as he does, in sympathy, so that he gets an excuse to drink as much as he does, "Really, dear, you've got to get over that habit of sipping your drinks. That keeps you up so late" ("Tomorrow" 90). This is very much alike the situation Hazel has in her marriage. The reason she starts to drink is that her husband wants them to drink together because he has a drinking problem. In "Tomorrow" the man tells Gus that they are in a hurry because he has a terrible day tomorrow and needs to come home early; he can control her drinking better. By forcing her to drink in a hurry she drinks more and he can seduce her when she is drunk which obviously is one of his goals.

The woman in "Green" drinks because it is fashionable, but this does not mean she is not controlled. She is too preoccupied with being fashionable so she does not see that the man serving her drinks is flirting with her. She drinks because she wants to be continental, Paris is the most fashionable place she can think of, "And there are all these cute little places where you can have a drink, when you want" ("Green" 167). If you can have a drink whenever you want in Paris, you can have one whenever you want in America, if it is the right drink of course. She acquired the habit of drinking champagne when she was in Paris; the man assures her that plain gin is the best substitute for champagne when she drinks at a party in America. Again, it is the man who decides what drink that is appropriate for a woman. He is the active consumer of drinks and brands.

The man's intentions are clear "For the third time he went and came. For the third time he watched her when she drank" ("Green" 169). He has become an inspector and he

watches her drink to be able to seduce her and control her. She drinks because it is fashionable and because he listens to what she has to say about Paris. This woman came to the party alone, she thinks she is a “modern woman” who travels to Paris and attends parties all by herself but she is a woman who has bought the false image of liberation through consumption. In the end he tries to call her baby to see if she disapproves, she accepts it and after that moment she is under his control, he becomes her inspector. He is a fashionable man himself and likes the fact that she is feminine. One of the first things he notices before he starts to talk to her is that she wears “possible pearls” with her green lace (“Green” 165). Possible pearls, an indicator that she is a woman with high social status.

When Hazel in the end tries to commit suicide she is the “good sport” even when she is alone at home. Like one of Foucault’s inmates she has started to punish herself by behaving in a way that the inspector in the Panopticon likes. When she takes the pill she makes a joke, “Gee I’m nearly dead” (“Blonde” 120). As the “good sport” she is, she is cheerful even when she is almost dead. She also says the same words as she did when she and her husband drank their final drink together before he left her. A joke and a phrase used to cheer up male inspectors in her home and in bars, “Well, here’s mud in your eye” (“Blonde” 120). Hazel lives the lie Rhonda .S Pettit describes, she wants nice things and men can buy nice things for her. Hazel has bought the image of fake liberation through consumption. She can only consume as long as she is controlled by a man. She is definitely not happy but she repeats phrases all the way through the novel, even though her inspectors can not see her. It is hard to tell if she believes in the fake liberation and in herself as a good sport or if she does it to please her inspectors, only.

All women are controlled by inspectors but somehow without the awareness of the control. Even if they feel uncomfortable in a situation they never question why. The reason can be found in the Panopticon because these women are so used to inspectors that

they will not question why they are inspected. They have systematically been forced to submission and know that they will be punished if they will not do as the inspectors say. As a consequence Hazel in the end of the novel tries to commit suicide, the ultimate punishment for not being a good sport. Hazel can no longer play the role; therefore she is no longer entitled to live. Even if there are no inspectors present in Hazel's apartment she punishes herself like the inmates in the Panopticon who have learned to punish themselves even when the inspector does not watch.

Conclusion

The purpose with this essay was to look at how Dorothy Parker portrays women who drink. I have argued that there are two types of drinking women in her stories, the "controlled woman" and the "modern woman." The controlled woman is the most frequent character and the "modern woman" has problems with her existence mainly because she is forced to submission. My analysis has proved that Foucault's Panopticism can be used to describe masculine control of female drunkenness. The woman herself behaves in a certain way to please her inspector in the Panopticon. However this is a structural pattern which the drinking woman is not always aware of. As an inmate the woman learns to accept the Panopticon and starts to punish herself. As Lansky points out "Panopticon and Panopticism can, and indeed must, be extended beyond all-male institutions and men (217). Therefore, the modern woman can not exist for a longer period of time. She is constantly forced to submission in the narrative, like this analysis shows in "Dialogue." The protagonist in "Dialogue" behaves like a modern woman but the narrator ends the story with her own disapproval of the behaviour of the protagonist.

In the 1920s women were a new phenomenon at speakeasies. Because of some major changes in society women were able to attend public places such as bars for their own entertainment only. The First World War and new economic possibilities had opened up these areas for women. The 20s were years of optimism because of the good economy and the middle class found new ideals linked to consumption. Unfortunately, women did not gain as much as they thought they would from all this. Modernity brought alcohol which was fashionable, but women could never enjoy it on an equal basis. In a decadent life women only own their drunkenness while men own the image attached to that lifestyle. Women are passive consumers while men are active. As Rhonda S. Pettit points out (75), women tried to buy these images attached to the new fashionable life which also promised liberation, but with no money to consume a woman had to depend on money from a man. All these things kept women controlled by men.

All women in Dorothy Parker's stories end up as controlled women in an environment completely dominated by men who use women as status symbols at the speakeasy. At the speakeasy women have to play the role of the "good sport" to be accepted and cared for economically. As the main character in the story "Big Blonde," female characters in Parker's stories never question their struggle to be liked. Hazel in "Big Blonde" assumes that being liked is something good because being liked means men buy things for you. A woman in Parker's stories is a tragic being with no self-image. Women play the role of someone they think men like and they carefully attend to how men around them respond to their performance. In a drinking environment a woman can play the role of the "good sport", the one Hazel constantly plays. She can also pretend she knows what she is doing, like the woman in "Green" who drinks because it is fashionable. The problem is that she loses her self-control when a man takes advantage of her vanity to get her drunk in order to control her. The speakeasy is an area controlled by men where women have to behave in a way of which

men approve which is visible in “One” and “Tomorrow.” In these stories the women are very aware of how the men respond to what they say. If they say the wrong things they will be shut out, their focal point is to listen to what the men have to say or to simply entertain men.

To conclude, Parker’s portraits of women who drink brings out that it does not matter if women are a “modern women” or “controlled women” to begin with, since a “modern woman” will automatically be forced to submission by Panopticism. Women are locked in the Panopticon and can not drink by choice; they drink at the mercy of men.

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