DOROTHY PARKER IN HOLLYWOOD

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GAIL CROWTHER

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In memory of my best boy, my life and writing companion,
My George (2011–2022)

And what do you do, Mrs. Parker?
Oh, I write. There's a hot job for a healthy woman.
I wish I'd taken a course in interior decorating.

—Dorothy Parker, "In the Throes: The Precious Thoughts of an Author at Work," *Life*, September 16, 1924

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INTRODUCTION

Out There

My name is Dorothy Parker. I'm not very important.
I'm a woman who writes and tries to live by writing.
I don't know quite what anyone wants to hear about me,
but Lord knows I don't want to hear about myself.[1]

By all accounts, Dorothy Parker's two favorite words were *fuck* and *shit*. Coming from such a small, genteel, quietly spoken woman, these words often made people do a double take and wonder if they had misheard. Yet this mismatch so accurately sums up what we know about Dorothy Parker, a woman who exploited the incongruity of her appearance against what came out of her mouth, and sometimes onto the page. Many words are often used to describe Parker: *irreverent*, *witty*, *mocking*, *uncontrollable*, *derisive*, *drunk*, *world-weary*, *deadpan*, and *wry*. Words less often used to describe Dorothy Parker are *subversive*, *political*, *a fearless activist*, and *a writer with an unresolved legacy*.

Parker, known for her wit on and off the page and for her brief time as part of the Algonquin Round Table, dismissed those early years as "dingy," a group of people showing off and drinking too much. In 1959, when an interviewer asked her to describe the so-called brilliant excitement of those times, Parker was having none of it: "I give you my word, it wasn't."[2] Although the Algonquin Round Table cemented itself as a legendary part of literary history, Parker apparently "forgot" about it and claimed that nobody there was really *that* special and all they needed to do was grow up and grow out of it. Which she did. Looking back, she judged her younger self harshly: "Dammit, it *was* the 'twenties' and we had to be smarty. I *wanted* to be cute. That's the terrible thing. I should have had more sense."[3] By the late 1960s, Parker's attitude toward the Round Table had hardened even further: "Just a bunch of loudmouths showing off, saving their gags for days . . . 'Did I tell you what I said?' And everybody hanging around, asking, 'What'd he say? What'd he say?' The whole thing was made up by people who'd never been there. And may I say they're still making it up?"[4] For all the fame attached to that infamous Manhattan hotel table, Parker spent just a small slice of her life there. Perhaps more significant, but often overlooked, is her long-standing love-hate relationship with Hollywood, where from 1929 she spent almost thirty-five years of her life on and off, working on film scripts, becoming politically engaged in left-wing causes, and leading a chaotic personal life of marriage, miscarriage, alcoholism, divorce, blacklisting, unemployment, and remarriage. Her work on the script for *A Star Is Born* (1937) led to her first Academy Award nomi-

nation. She worked with Alfred Hitchcock on his high-profile spy thriller *Saboteur* (1942). She cowrote, with Frank Cavett, the script for one of the first Hollywood films to tackle the subject of women and alcoholism, *Smash-Up: The Story of a Woman* (1947), which earned her a second Academy Award nomination for best writing. Along with these successes, she also collaborated on numerous other film scripts (credited and uncredited), partied hard, lived in huge mansions, bought spectacular clothes, and earned vast amounts of money. When her older sister, Helen, visited her in Beverly Hills, she was impressed that everyone seemed to know Parker. And Parker knew everyone. Her friends and colleagues included Orson Welles, James Cagney, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Harpo Marx, Fredric March, and Sam Goldwyn. She even started work on an (unrealized) script for Marilyn Monroe. Yet despite this surface glamour, Parker had real reservations. "Out there," she called Hollywood with some derision, as though it were in the alien beyond. In a 1956 interview, Parker claimed: "I can't talk about Hollywood. It was a horror to me when I was there and it's a horror to look back on."[5] Yet by the early 1960s, she was back there again. It was a town that captured her for decades and repeatedly drew her in.

It does seem easier to attach Parker to the urban chic of Manhattan. In the sepia loveliness of photographs, her bobbed hair and floppy hats make the Roaring Twenties flare into life. There is something about the wildness and potential of that decade that promises hope, the emerging from a darker time into the light. But even the most cursory look at Parker's life during those years shows that far from being carefree and happy, she

was dogged by depression, creative blocks, and romantic disasters. Battling through all of this, she began to perfect a persona, the early emergence of "Dorothy Parker" as she is most famously known—her quips, her asides, her cutting reviews. Nobody was safe from her tongue-lashing, and she was, rightly, feared. During her years working for *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and the *New Yorker*, Parker established herself as a girl-about-town, knowing and droll. This distinctive voice became her trademark, and the Hollywood studios were willing to pay her a lot of money for it. But ultimately, she got trapped in a persona that became destructive and limiting. Today many people can probably name a Parker quip; in fact, they appear in popular culture all the time. They may even be able to recite one of her better-known poems or infamous reviews. But how many of the eighteen film scripts she worked on are known?[6] The scholar Faye Hammill points out that "Dorothy Parker is primarily remembered for her public personality, evolved through her journalism and disseminated via the sophisticated magazines of New York."[7] Even as early as 1941, Parker could see where her legacy was going: "I am serious about my writing. The reputation I didn't earn and don't want has been embarrassing and harmful."[8] As much as she tried to break away from those early New York years, there was a public desire to hang on to the wisecracking young woman and freeze her in time. But in Parker's eyes, those days were short-lived and insignificant. She longed to write the perfect short story, a novel, a brilliant play. She wanted to be taken seriously: "I am not witty, and I am not funny."[9] While this seems a little disingenuous (she was clearly both), she had the perception, and dread, to know

that something amusing she might or might not have once said would outlast any of what she called the "blood sweating" she put into her serious writing. In 1956, even with a string of literary awards behind her and successful published collections, she never felt she had achieved her best and regarded writing as a tough, lonely business: "But if you write—there you are—there's you and your paper and that's all. But let us pray God you put someday something on your paper you won't be ashamed of." When her interviewer expressed incredulity that Parker could be ashamed of anything she had written, her response was kindly but firm: "Well, that's darling of you, but of course I am."[10] Yet caution is needed when it comes to trusting Parker as judge of her own work. While she was seemingly happy to dismiss her film work in Hollywood ("I never did a picture I was proud of and there was never a picture that was proud of me"), a closer revision of her Hollywood film work reveals a completely different story.[11] Parker tackled many political and social issues that were important to her, such as capitalism, the role of women, and the insidious nature of racism, and included them in a subversive but radical way. Her ability to write snappy and witty dialogue saved many pictures from being tossed completely, and reviewers often singled her out as one of the talents who created certain successful films. Parker seemed unable to see this for herself and regarded her work in Hollywood as a cautionary tale for all writers: "But oh my dear, if you want to be just a simple writer, doing the best you can, I plead with you—don't go there!"[12] Ultimately, Parker felt as though she had wasted her talent out there.

This blunt honesty and self-searching meant Parker was a woman who paid the price for somehow never quite fitting into her time. At first, in 1920s New York, she was ahead of it. She was the city's only female drama critic when she worked for *Vanity Fair*. Her reviews and verses poked fun at the untouchable wealthy elite. Collections such as *Enough Rope* (1926) and *Sunset Gun* (1928) were, for poetry, unusual bestsellers. And these continued to sell in large numbers throughout the 1930s and '40s. In 1944, a collection of short stories and verses called *The Portable Dorothy Parker* was much lauded and another commercial success. In the late 1940s, she came to the attention of the FBI, which put her under close surveillance and began to question exactly how involved she was with communist activities in Hollywood. Somehow, by the late 1950s and '60s, she got left behind, perhaps partly connected to her informal blacklisting for her left-wing political allegiances. Work dried up in Hollywood. In 1956, with her usual acerbic insight turned on herself as much as others, she claimed: "Let's face it, honey, my verse is terribly dated—as anything once fashionable is dreadful now. I gave it up knowing it wasn't getting any better, but nobody seemed to notice my magnificent gesture."[13] The only surprise many people expressed in 1967 on hearing about Parker's lonely death in a Manhattan hotel room was that she hadn't died years earlier.

Parker is a classic case of the misunderstood woman. She was a problem, and a problem that simply didn't fit in one way or another. All too often, women who refuse to conform must live and die with this temporal displacement. At the start of her career, Parker's stinging barbs and biting bons mots were seen as shock-

ingly modern—indeed, ahead of their time—and most "unladylike." By the end of her life, Parker was regarded as a relic of a time long gone, her verse anachronistic, her witticisms haunting popular culture and the rooms of the Algonquin as though she were a ghost long before she had even died.

During her life, this *out-of-timeness* made Parker feel rootless and restless. She never settled; she constantly moved around, from apartment to apartment to hotel to house, city to country, state to state, and then back again. She was looking for roots, for a time that, sadly, she never found. In her own words, in contrast to the Hollywood dream, there are no happy endings. Yet from what we know about Dorothy Parker, it seems unlikely that she would ever have had a happy ending. At certain moments in her life, joy flared and then quickly died, a promise almost within reach but never quite fulfilled. Some of this was down to circumstance; some of it was down to Parker's life decisions. Parker's hopelessness with money, her incapacity for any sort of domestic life (according to her second husband, Alan Campbell, she would eat raw bacon rather than learn how to cook it), as well as a series of romantic disappointments and seemingly perpetual writer's block were all wrapped up in a knot of desires, hopes, and wishes, but, most destructively, with her self-hatred. The playwright Lillian Hellman, who knew Parker for many years and would act as the executor for her estate, best described her as "a tangled fishnet of complications."[14] Just as Parker became well-known for the superficial put-downs of the century, she wrote a devastating short story unpacking and exposing racism at the heart of high society ("Arrangement in Black and White,"

1927). Just as she breezed around the city bouncing from one love affair to the next, she wrote a verse pondering the best way to kill oneself ("Resumé," 1926). Just as she cooed and showed delight at being introduced to a new friend at a dinner party, she ripped them to shreds when they left the room (throughout her life). And just as her name became synonymous with New York, she upped and moved to Hollywood. Dorothy Parker seemed to be a woman who was unknowable. Her friend the writer Wyatt Cooper famously wrote that whatever you think Dorothy Parker was like, she wasn't.

But if Dorothy Parker was unknowable to her friends, she is even more elusive to her biographers. Initially, looking at some of the obstacles, such as her lack of a paper trail, may make writing about Parker appear impossible. But in a curious twist, these obstacles often result in forging new, creative, innovative pathways. If we can't reach her by one route, we'll just have to use another. Each problem has a solution.

One of the first challenges is that none of her friends ever really felt as though they knew her, so any existing interviews or memoirs stress this unknowability. She may have been *this*, but then she wasn't really. Second, she has no dedicated archive. Upon her death she left no manuscripts, no poem drafts, no personal copies of screenplay scripts. Nothing. With her nomadic lifestyle of moving from one place to the next (sometimes even within the same hotel), she had very few possessions. Seeing her signature is rare. Few letters she wrote still exist and most correspondence is one-sided (not hers). Scraps can be pulled together from holdings at Columbia University and institutions in

Michigan, Maryland, Boston, Texas, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Los Angeles, and Cambridge, England. These scraps are telegrams, just a few lines long; signed checks; and inadequate grocery lists, as one might expect from the not very domestically minded Parker ("eggs" / "dogmeat" / "drugs"). One archive collection sounded promising, listing telegrams and phone messages from Parker, but turned out to be a single-line telegram stating, "Certainly wish to sign manifesto please use my name."[15] Which manifesto? Where?

Every potential lead seemed to slam into a dead end. In January 1959, Parker appeared on a TV show called *Open End* with David Susskind. Her fellow guests were Truman Capote and Norman Mailer. The promise of seeing footage of Parker was an exciting one, offering the prospect of being able to examine her mannerisms, her interaction with others, how she responded to questions, her clothes, just her physical presence. Weeks of searching finally revealed that all the *Open End* episodes from 1958 to 1966 had been erased. From those years, only ten episodes survived. Parker's interview is not one of them. No known copy exists.[16]

Wyatt Cooper revealed in his memoir of Parker that he carried out up to twelve hours of recorded interviews with her on reel-to-reel tapes in anticipation of her writing an autobiography. Because she often sounded drunk and was clearly stretching the truth, recording Parker became so uncomfortable that Cooper stopped the sessions and suppressed the tapes. After his death, his estate (and presumably the tapes) was passed on to his wife, Gloria Vanderbilt. After her death, all her possessions were

inherited by their son, Anderson Cooper. Although they've been searched for, their location is unknown. The Parker tapes are nowhere to be found.[17]

At the time of her death, Parker's hotel apartment in the Volney in New York City was quickly stripped of its few belongings. These comprised mostly books, but also some uncashed checks, her clothes, a small model set of Napoleonic soldiers, and some letters. The scholar Marion Meade managed to speak to the maid who cleaned Parker's apartment and discovered that most things had been thrown immediately into the trash. In correspondence, Lillian Hellman confirmed that there were no professional manuscripts left in the apartment.[18] However, in 1971, in her role as estate executor, she admitted in a letter to Thomas J. Hughes, a New York lawyer, that Parker did leave some letters, but that Hellman had no intention of parting with them, and that she would prefer Hughes tell people they no longer existed. In an odd parenthesis, Hellman then claimed that in truth she did not think they existed any longer.[19] There is no trace of these letters, and it is unknown whom they were addressed to, why Hellman did not want to share them, or what became of them. More mystery, more silence.

When Dorothy Parker described the money she made in Hollywood as "like small ice in your hand. It all vanishes. That's all,"[20] she could well have been describing herself. Just when you think you have captured her, she slips away again, like a maddeningly elusive ghost. But although there is a peculiar challenge in writing about her, it is far from impossible. It is simply a case

of throwing the net a little wider and looking in more unusual places. There are audio and published interviews, fragments in archives here and there, all her verses, stories, reviews, and plays, memoirs by friends containing facts and stories, contemporaneous newspaper articles, hundreds of pages of her FBI file, transcripts of political speeches, photographs, recordings of her reading her own work, archival material belonging to her friends and colleagues in which she sporadically appears, along with existing scholarship to draw on.[21] In some ways, coming at Parker from this multi-angled approach allows a fuller, more honest picture of her life and work, her achievements and her flaws.

Several features become evident when exploring Parker in this way, not least that she was not only "out there" geographically in Hollywood. She put herself out there in all sorts of other ways too. Certainly, operating unapologetically as a woman in a man's world made her unusual. The language, wisecracking, and subject matter in her published work was uncommon. So was her lifestyle of excess: fashion, exquisitely expensive lingerie, parties, drinking, staying out till dawn. Her romantic life of marriage, divorce, remarriage (to the same person), and a string of spectacularly unsuitable younger lovers was unconventional. Her commitment to left-wing politics, supporting communist causes and the Spanish Civil War, was bold and brave, both in the 1930s and a decade later when Hollywood fell under the suppressive gaze of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the FBI. This didn't stop her from helping to establish the Screen Writers Guild and the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League. Neither did she

hesitate to fight for the underdog and use her position of privilege to platform causes she truly believed in. Temporally, Dorothy Parker was always out there, ahead or behind, rebel or relic.

When Dorothy Parker left Hollywood in 1964 for the last time, she returned to New York and died alone in her apartment in 1967. She left her estate and assets to Martin Luther King Jr., a man she had never met but whose causes she spent much of her life supporting and campaigning for. Upon his death less than a year later, her estate passed into the hands of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In Lillian Hellman's papers, a 1970 letter written by Oscar Bernstien, from Parker's law firm, almost three years after her death, pointed out that Parker's ashes were still in the funeral home, and that her estate was being billed for the storage, which didn't make any sense. He asked, somewhat callously, what they should do. Have them scattered, "or what?"[22] There is no reply in Hellman's papers. But when Marion Meade began her Parker research in the 1980s, the ashes were found in a filing cabinet in the firm's office on Wall Street. The crematorium had mailed them there in July 1973. Parker's ashes were eventually moved to the headquarters of the NAACP in Baltimore, and in 2020 were returned to New York to be buried alongside her parents and grandparents in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

The fate of Parker's ashes reflects so much of her life: shelved, alone, and yet simultaneously, not quite forgotten. While Parker's remains were sitting in the drawer of an office or being shipped from New York to Baltimore and back again, very few people

stopped to ask where they were. Yet plays were being written and performed about Parker on Broadway and in London's West End: The film *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle* was released in 1994, starring Jennifer Jason Leigh. "Resumé" is recited by Angelina Jolie in the 1999 film *Girl, Interrupted*. A character in season 3, episode 7 of the long-running show *Desperate Housewives* quotes Parker's well-used quip "What fresh hell is this?" In 2018, the drag queen Miz Cracker played Parker in the season 10 "Snatch Game" episode of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. The New York Distilling Company, based in Brooklyn, produces a Dorothy Parker gin, with the label featuring a semi-silhouette of Parker's head. How many writers would be so recognizable from a small, cameo-shaped picture? It is all classic Parker. Both there and not there, both famous and hidden, both forgotten and remembered, both known and unknowable. In death as in life she blasts us with her elusiveness. She is long gone but still with us and ever-present in popular culture. What people do not know, they are happy to make up.[23]

Faced with all this, how can a book possibly capture Dorothy Parker and her years in Hollywood? Is it possible to separate the myth from the reality, the persona from the woman? Is it even important to try? Perhaps the guide should be Parker's own playful words. She doesn't mind at all what anyone writes about her, so long as it is not the truth.

CHAPTER 1

Getting There

Come, curb the new, and watch the old win,
Out where the streets are paved with Goldwyn.[1]
—Dorothy Parker, "The Passionate Screen Writer
to His Love"

Dorothy Parker didn't like films. She didn't like Hollywood and she didn't like the people who ran Hollywood. Evil, she called them. She claimed to have rarely watched movies, and she disliked the way film studios treated writers with indignity. She hated palm trees and wished that the whole film industry would collapse. Coming from New York, she found Hollywood to be too "small townish,"[2] and found writing there to be a "strenuous bore."[3] "For Hollywood," claimed Parker, "the place where they manufacture moving pictures, is as dull a domain as dots the globe."[4] Yet, on and off, Dorothy Parker spent almost thirty-five years associated with Hollywood. The obvious question to ask is why. And her answer is quite simple—money.

When she was offered her first three-month contract, in

1929, her salary was $300 a week (the equivalent of around $4,700 today).[5] By the time she moved to Hollywood on a more permanent basis in 1934, she had signed a contract for $1,000 a week (today about $20,000). Parker was open and honest about this move: "I went out there for possibly the reason many people go out there, because I was broke. I wanted to make money there."[6] But Parker's association with Hollywood is not quite so straightforward. True, she may have initially gone there lured by the high writing salary and to join the increasing number of friends and writers from New York who were moving from the East Coast to the West. But Parker's relationship with Hollywood studios was symbiotic; she needed them, and they wanted her. In fact, they wanted her so badly they were willing to pay large sums of money to be associated with the prestige of her name and trademark voice. In return, Parker was introduced to a whole new way of life: vast wealth, huge mansions, famous friends, parties full of beautiful people, and a subterranean political world that reflected sensibilities that had been brewing in her from childhood. Parker understood this trade-off, selling her talent for "things." But she also understood the emptiness of things: "I stayed there because if you stay there, you can have the most remarkable house. You could have a pool if you wished. I don't swim."[7]

But the fascinating question to consider is why did Hollywood executives in a booming movie industry want so badly to buy Dorothy Parker? What was it about her that captivated them? If this were a Hollywood film, it is the moment when the frame would freeze just as Parker breezily steps off the train

from New York to Los Angeles for the first time in late 1928, to begin her contract in 1929. After a perceptible pause, the film would shift into reverse as we whiz backward, the train traveling back to New York. We whiz farther back, through a dizzying string of unsuitable lovers, an abortion, several suicide attempts, a divorce, endless smoky nights in the speakeasy clubs of Prohibition Manhattan, back to her being the only female theater critic in New York, back to a first marriage to Edwin Pond Parker II, where she gets and keeps her surname, back to working in the offices of *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, wisecracking in the Rose Room each lunchtime at the Algonquin Hotel, hanging around with fellow writers Robert Benchley and Robert Sherwood, getting paid and published for the first time in *Vanity Fair*, teaching dance lessons to make money. Faster, we regress to the death of her father and a family member dying on the *Titanic*. And back we whiz into childhood, to Miss Dana's School, where Parker is introduced to radical political ideas, back to her expulsion from a New York Catholic school for insulting the Virgin Mary, back to the difficult relationship with her stepmother, back to the death of her mother, Eliza, back to August 22, 1893, when Parker enters the world, two months prematurely, in West End (part of Long Branch), New Jersey, during a hurricane, "the last time I was early for anything."[8] Here the film freezes as we catch our breath standing outside a summer cottage on Ocean Avenue facing the sea.

Dorothy Parker appears for the first time as Dorothy Rothschild in a seaside town during a hurricane to her well-to-do parents, Eliza (née Marston) and Henry J. Her mother

was of Scottish descent, while her father had a European Jewish heritage. Not *those* Rothschilds, Parker was keen to stress, but still a comfortable family with their own garment business ("a fairly prosperous cloak-and-suiter")[9] and a home in Manhattan on West Seventy-Second Street filled with Irish servants brought straight from Ellis Island. This was the world Dorothy Parker was born into. And in the coming years it was where several experiences ignited in her life that in many ways would make Hollywood the natural place for her to end up. These were her early education, her formative years working on developing a public persona in high-profile Manhattan publications, and a personal life that rivaled any Hollywood melodrama.

Parker's childhood was not easy despite the comfortable financial and social position her family held. Little is really known about these years because Parker rarely spoke about them, and any paper trail is sparse and incomplete. A large home with servants and regular vacations to the seaside did not prevent tragedy. In 1898, one month before Parker turned five, her mother died from "diarrhoea with colic followed by weakness of the heart."[10] Parker's biographer Marion Meade explained that her reaction upon hearing about her mother's death was to scream and scream and to somehow blame herself for it. The rain fell hard on the day of the funeral as young Dorothy Rothschild watched her mother's coffin be lowered into the ground at Woodlawn Cemetery. Judging from comments that she made later in life, if she felt somehow responsible for her mother's death, she equally felt abandoned. "My mother went and died on me," Parker told Wyatt Cooper, and then hinted that the rest of

her childhood had been an unhappy time of isolation and disappointment.[11] When she was born, her sister, Helen, was six. The age difference between her and her two brothers was even greater; Harold was twelve when she was born and Bertram nine. So great was this gap that Parker believed it was impossible to bridge. If her brothers saw her in the street, like classic elder siblings, they would ignore her. "All those writers who write about their childhood! Gentle God, if I wrote about mine you wouldn't sit in the same room with me."[12] As she grew older, however, she did develop a closer relationship with Helen, although she remained relatively distant from her brothers. Indeed, Harold simply disappeared at some point, and nobody in the family ever knew what became of him.

This early trauma seems to have been the spark for Parker's life sensibilities: always expecting the worst and never really being disappointed because the worst tended to happen. This was compounded by the arrival, on January 3, 1900, of a stepmother, a retired teacher named Eleanor Frances Lewis, whom Parker hated and refused to call anything other than "the housekeeper" or "hey, you."[13] The second Mrs. Rothschild was, according to Parker, crazy with religion and asked her every day if she loved Jesus ("Now, how do you answer that?").[14] Parker was sent to the Blessed Sacrament Convent just a few blocks away from the new family home on West Sixty-Eighth Street near Central Park, a school so evocative that fifty years later she could recall with some clarity the smell of oilcloth and the nuns' garbs.[15] The building, still standing today, is a double-fronted brownstone, with three imposing columns at the top of a short split-stone

staircase to the front doors. Above the first floor, an ornate frieze runs the length of the building. It was here that something resembling the later manifestation of "Dorothy Parker" would begin to emerge: irreverent, mischievous, wisecracking, and wry. She found herself a sidekick in the shape of Mercedes de Acosta, the daughter of a wealthy Spanish-Cuban family, and the two became the terrors of the school. They joked, they taunted, they misbehaved, they caused trouble, and they were so diabolical that one of their teachers suffered a breakdown.[16] Perhaps this was the first sign of a more unpleasant side of Parker that her lifelong friends struggled with—her cruelty. She had moments when she did not flinch from inflicting malice on her victims, whether it was warranted or not. And this cold eye was turned with equal brutality on her family. With cinematic attention to detail that would serve her well years later in Hollywood, Parker noted the eccentricities and absurdities of her father, who would take the family out to the cemetery on Sundays to visit their mother's grave. Hanging around the family plot, he would wait until he heard people approaching, then quickly whip out a large handkerchief and start crying and wailing, "We're all here, Eliza! I'm here. Dottie's here. Mrs. Rothschild is here—" and put on quite a show for the approaching audience. "Some outing," Parker noted with cold disdain.[17]

But what this seemed to instill was a habit of observation. Often, Parker appears like some silent presence in her childhood, standing back and watching it unfold. Listening to conversations, mocking, taking it all in, and mentally recording dialogue for future use. Perhaps it is little wonder that in 1959