

DYSTOPIAN SOCIETY IN SHIRLEY JACKSON'S "THE LOTTERY"

May Mohammed Baqer Twayej (Ph D)

Mays Salman Turkie

University of Baghdad/ College of Education

College of Education for Human science (Ibn Rushd)

The city of Baghdad, Iraq

ABSTRACT

As literature reflects life and social issues, the development in social, political and economical lives are intentionally or unknowingly combined with the literary works of writers. Utopian and dystopian fiction seizes up the forces of its age, they often defined as the emotional climax of the society, utopia channels individual's hope while dystopia reveals his fears and anxiety, it also portrays the political clashes and social tensions through the writer's vision. Shirley Jackson lived in the mid of all these circumstances, she created a dystopian society which it is the same of our reality portraying the human's evil and cruelty especially when he in institutionalized. "The Lottery" attests the culture and traditions of American society, highlighting the political and ideological concept in the Post war era.

Keywords: dystopian society, "The Lottery", Shirley Jackson, Freud, inhumanity

INTRODUCTION

Dystopian world is the creation of fictional society which full of corruption, injustice and lack of morality which makes society frightening to the extent that make people wish to be a mere fantasy. The dystopian works related to reality and the events are related to absolute evil and bloody conflicts, power, repression, poverty, destruction and disasters, in short, the main philosophy underlying the Dystopia What happens when a human becomes a machine or a monster lost its ethics, principles, values, and lose his humanity.

Among the most important issues discussed by Dystopia are the political, religious and moral issues in societies. Dystopia is an outlet for writing on topics not directly written about politics and religion. The work projections are always politically, socially and morally in the present time. The rise of the Dystopian fiction indicates that the dystopian literature is closer to being a truly realistic phenomenon in society.

As a result of the Dystopian world in which writers and novelists lived, they began to express themselves from the collapsed city which is represented in the architectural ugliness, the tyranny of regimes and the authoritarian outlook prevailing in society. It seems to us that the writers through their writing about the chaotic society which the writer himself looking for order. Through Dystopia, they search for the lost utopia, or they probably predict the end of Utopia. They

express in this way their categorical rejection of reality In fantasy, imagination is their own realities. Dystopian literature portrait the worst scenarios and the worst cases result in warnings the social change or necessary caution. Malicious narratives always reflect fears From a contemporary culture prevalent.

Shirley Jackson (1919-1965) was a prominent American short story writer and novelist who belonged to no particular school. She remained a part from all fashionable, intellectual and literary current of her time. At her time, she was famous and won her reputation for her short story " The Lottery"1948 published in the New Yorker when they described her as the "author of the horror classic". In this very short story, she angrily described social evils through the graphic dramatization of the cruelty and inhumanity of the people in the village. It is an allegory of man's dark nature. Hyman described her story as "a sensitive and faithful anatomy of our times, fitting symbols for our distressing world of the concentration camp and the bomb" (Murphy 28).

In her "experience and fiction", she stated that the originality of any fictional work had to be the human experience. She believed that a careful examination and balancing of feelings and structure world bring an effective piece of writing. Her characters experience deep emotions of fear and anxiety, they struggle against insanity, loneliness and hatred for others. She considered a human being to be the inventor of his troubles. Evils of people exist anywhere and

man cannot control it. In her fiction, there are characters who question the rules of society, and all citizens carry a fear of the outside world who adhere to homogenous rules of society.

"The Lottery" explains the violence and inhumanity in Jackson's real life. Thus she portrays the American society the same way she presents the Lottery's society. There is Correspondence between the writer's personal experiences and the image of society, she depicts in "The Lottery". The village that Jackson described in the story seems to be similar to the rural area in which she lived when she had written the story. Even the villagers' violence towards each others in the story may have its origin in an incident of Shirley Jackson's life. She creates the story when some school children throw her with stones while she had been going home. Tessie Hutchinson has always feared from the society and its rejection to her, on the other hand, Shirley Jackson suffered from the same thing as she had a lack relationships with her friend and neighbors. North Bennington, where she wrote "The Lottery" and she had admitted that the village as a model for the setting of the story. She had an insightful commentary on the cultural traditions showing the reader the dark side of the human nature. Human being's cruelty that she depicted in the story is not from her imagination, she highlights this notion as human really has a dark side and each individual have a dark corner in his soul and he will release this cruelty when he gets the suitable chance. He has a potentiality for cruelty and this happen when he submits to the tyranny of the status quo. When an individual lives in tyranny and cruelty, he will be able to be cruel and violent as the government lets the individual to harm each other with a cold blood. Authority is the tool of justice, it must do the best for the benefit of the community. When the authority does not take the responsibility and there is no justice at all, and when the wrong persons start to obtain power and influence, the people will be miserable and live in dystopia each day. The ruin of the state generally commenced with the corruption of its government. The villagers believe unconsciously that their commitment to a work ethic will grant them some magical immunity from the selection of the black box. This work ethic prevents them from understanding that the lottery's actual function is not to encourage work, but to reinforce an inequitable social division of labor. This town is considered a mechanical society and people had a high degree of regulation and the thoughts and actions of individuals within the society.

The United States during the late 1940s and 1960s was largely a patriarchal society, in which women were expected to stay at home and raise children. Thus Jackson was commenting on the role of women in the American Society. The story is set in a village which seems to the reader that it is a normal village which seems progressive not primitive with post office, gardens and schools. With its title and its opening paragraph, most of the reader from the first reading think that

it is a desired lottery that someone might win a big prize. Far from that, it held every year and the lucky scapegoat will stone to death. The people of the village will select a paper from a wooden box and who pick the paper with black circle will stone by the villager as a kind of a weird ritual that the village hold every year, so the lottery hold for the benefit of the community. This sacrificing ritual, or corruption has been as stated by Helen E. Nebeker, "codified in religion, mores, government, and the rest of culture, and passed from generation to generation"(Nebeker 172). in this story, Shirley Jackson criticizes the aggressiveness of society toward individual that spread in society like "inner demonic cancer" from microcosm to another (Parks 18). This small community represses the individual and dehumanizes him and this is the mostly criticizes by Shirley Jackson. She lived in a small town called Bennington which she witness all the dehumanization, repression intolerance and malevolence. Tessie Hutchinson arrives late to the ritual as she was doing her domestic duties and she was the hapless victim, she draws the fatless paper and she protests "isn't fair" and her husband instead of protecting her, he asked her to "shut up". From this standpoint, male dominated female in society and she must obey him even if that cost her life.

On the other hand, children are participating in the lottery. Adults make children participating in this cruel lottery. Children are the seeds of the future and if these children learn violence from an early age, dystopian society is the future. The purpose of the lottery is to make the social body pure from any endeavor to resist social codes and to make capitalist regime immortal and no one can resist it. There is no key element in the story that Tessie's selection is made in advance. The text made the point that anyone is expected to win the lottery regardless of gender, health, status and age. Shirley Jackson's selection of the unknown place for an indication that first: anyone who reads the story can identify himself with the victim in the story as the false consciousness dominate most of peoples' mind in society, and second: she told us that anything could happen if the individual reside civilization codes and will not make changes to make his life better, society dominates him mentally and physically.

Shirley Jackson realizes the hidden side of human nature, which it is the inner identity which lurks beneath human minds to conform society's expectations or ignore it. She was haunted in her personal life by the repression of society and her individuality and express that hauntology in her writings. From an early age, she did not feel comfortable because of the society around her. She prefers to sit in her room alone rather than joining children outside (Oppenheimer 16). In her own room, she created the world that fits her and the alternative ego that her family and society did not understand she said " I will not tolerate having these other worlds called imaginary, she insisted" (Oppenheimer 21) The

lottery start happily "clear and sunny, with [the] fresh warmth of a full summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green" (The Lottery 291). The opening beautiful paragraph promised the reader with a happy ending. The villagers are normal people in an ordinary town. People are friendly and happy and the children are around them, thus it is a perfect place to live in. The description created a sense of tranquility and peacefulness. The setting creates an image of a normal village in a normal day. It sets in summer in a beautiful morning day. Besides, she mentioned that the school just end and the children spread here and there, she also describes the grass as "richly green" and "the flowers were blooming profusely" (The Lottery 292). The detail description makes the reader feels himself as he is one of the members of this rural village and there is nothing wrong with it. She also mentioned the place and description that the people gathers in it "between the post office and the bank" this setting is important as the story will end in itself (292). She describes children as "boisterous play" and men are talking about "planting and rain, tractors and taxes" and the women of this town as "exchanging bits of gossip" until this there is nothing up normal in the village and everything seems comfortable (293). She does not mention any authority like church, churchmen, governing body or police office which is responsible for the safety of this town. She points out that children are making "a great pile of stones in one corner of the square" as normal children gathering rocks as a kind of enjoyment that most children did (293).

The description of the black box is the turning point of the story from normal to up the normal atmosphere as people become afraid when they saw it, the black box related to the act of immorality to the villagers as they "kept their distance" from it (294). The introduction of the black box makes the villagers' mood changes and they became unease. It is foreshadowing for wired thing that will happen to the villagers as the black box, enter suddenly into the description of a village that seems very comfortable.

When the reader starts to feel uncomforted step by step, the villagers seem very normal as if there is nothing wrong will happen, they remained normal even when they kill Tessie Hutchinson. When the story is about to end, one of the women tells Tessie to be a "good sport" because they will stone her to death. Everyone in the village participates in that cruel murder of that innocent woman as if there is nothing happen to her. The stoning of Tessie Hutchinson does not take place individually, even her husband agrees with stoning her, they murder her and consider their awful action as a ritual. Their violence leads to another violence and it is a never ending cycle.

The people as a collective do not ask their society to change their ideologies, they keep their thoughts to

themselves. They follow the aggressive traditions and obey it without rejection or rebel against it. The people inherent the unfair act as it involves the killing of innocent people. The arbitrariness of selection of victim haunted the villagers and makes them live in dystopia as they do not know who is next to be stoned. There is a feeling of unease.

The story can be read as a kind of changing human case from dystopia to utopia by changing the kind of world he lives in. The story is an attack to the blind obedience to authorities, a criticism of mindless people and cultural conformity, it explores the hidden evil of man. People in the village know that this ritual is needless, they began to question why this ritual continues to hold every year and they began to talk about the other villages that stopped holding lotteries. The reader feels uncomfortable when he sees the blind obedience of tradition among the villagers. The selection of killing the victim is chosen by race, gender and class. the villagers forget the notion of reality as they are blinded from the truth that they are institutionalized. The gathering of people in the village square seemed to be a routine that they used to do every year. They prepare for the lottery as if they do an easy work, they used to be violence and killing each other. The civilized people remain primitive inside their mind, behind the boundaries of unconsciousness. Human unconscious saved the traditions and norms of his ancestors without knowing or realized that. Thus, in Jackson's story, the villagers seems to be brainwashed by their traditions and they are brain washed even the "original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago" and "so much of the ritual had been forgotten or discarded"(The lottery 292).

Jackson uses a third person narrator in the lottery and the reader is unaware of him. Then ,he seems that he disappear in the crowd of people and the reader is left alone to make judgments and conclusions. She presents the events and the attitudes of people and left the reader to decide why they hold such a lottery. She present moral and humanitarian scene and left the reader confused. Most of the villagers are nameless, they are like the audience in a theatre and participate in the lottery silently as if they are robotized. They smile only without a laugh, they do not ask why this executions are occur. The authorities have convinced them that they do this for their own interest. The story seems to be an illusion and irony to what happen in every place and people does not question the government why this happened. Such the meaningless wars as world war I and world War II. People lose their lives on the battlefield meaninglessly. The war will never hold without soldiers. If soldiers rebel, they authorities will not be able to talk and punish them. Then, why the people obey the authorities and they were the leading device of their destiny. Actually, the people owned the government, not the

government owned them. If they harm the people interest, they can rebel and change the rules according to their own benefit. But people obey the authorities and they know that they will lead them to hell. They institutionalized them and the people keep silent.

The general meaning of the story is that Jackson portrays the events as an obvious attack to the blind obedience to traditions and norms that created by dictators. But beyond this, the reader gains some insight into his own acceptance to traditions, even the simple things. He obeys illogical matters so he can belong to certain civilization that he like to be with, even if this cost him his freedom and desires so the civilization will not expel him.

It seems that not only the traditions and norms that make the people sacrifice human and act severely, but it is their hidden cruelty and evil that keeps them holding such norms and still holding it. The cruelty of people feeds this evil customs and keep it a life, not their own stick to it. There are no human bonds between the villagers, each one turned into a monster when the act of stoning began even against their family. This is what happens to Tessie Hutchinson no one from her family, even her children do not defend her, there is no familial loyalty. Tessie was happy and talking with the villagers before the lottery starts, but when they chose her, she began to rebel. If they chose another one, she will participate in stoning him, she will accept that and stoning him to death.

Shirley Jackson motivates the reader to rebel against the reality of modern traditions by presenting the lottery. People in modern societies know the consequences of the execution of an individual and they have preconceived ideas about everything happens around him, but he is blinded himself from the reality. The repressive rules have been pulled over individual's eyes to blind him from the truth. He is a slavlike, he born into a prison, he cannot smell or taste or even touch, it is a prison to his own mind and logic. Why this have done? and what the purpose from it? A lot of people are guilty as they accept the traditions and customs without questioning it. People are institutionalized into this process from an early age of his life. In the lottery, the reader realizes that the children gather the stones, they are getting ready to stone someone, they even stuff their pockets with stones as if they are racing to kill the victim, each one seems to be racing with each other to kill the poor victim as if it is a game.

The use of stones, slips of paper and the black box represent the solutions to provide the community with an alternative way instead of the old tools to hold the lottery and the people accept such solutions as they been always done the lottery and do not care about the original tools. The original

tools represent the tradition. They leave the traditions and stick to the act of killing no matter what the sort of the tools, original or new, which indicates that they only concerned with the killing to release the monsters inside themselves and too convinced the cruelty that hidden inside their souls. The lottery has lost it significant as most of its tools has been lost. The black box becomes old and lost its color, Mr. Summers suggested to replace it with a new one but this solution makes the people upset as the tradition involves in it. They replace the wooden clips with papers, the wooden clips originally used, but with the increase of population numbers the wooden clips are no longer enough to the populations of the village as they become three hundred people. Thus, they replace it with papers. They replace the technique of the lottery but they do not leave it.

Government can hold absolute power over people but that power nonetheless resides in the people themselves. The people reside the authority that allows citizens to destroy each other. The lottery does not excuse the children from the lottery, even Nancy and Dave Hutchinson draws from the black box and take their chance in the lottery. They participate as the adults do. Nancy and her brother become happy when they draw empty paper, they do not care about their family, there are no familial ties among the villagers. Mr. Hutchinson pulls the paper from his wife's hands and show it to the crowd. He does not have any sympathy toward her, and finally he participates in stoning her.

The villagers seem that they live a normal life, they work married, and live as ordinary people. They construct families and brings children and they know in advance that their children will participate in the lottery and if they have chosen, they will be stoned to death. They do not care about their life or their families. The authorities blinded their minds and makes the people kill each other. It is a mass murderer.

They accept to sacrifice themselves and their family blindly without changing their case. They will do everything to belong to this village without leaving it and without rebel. The tragic death of the people will not bring any sympathy between them. When the reader sees them for the first time, they seem that they are united and each one care for each other, but with the end of the story, the reader will discover that the winner will be killed by his own people. Thus, every time the lottery will hold, a human life will take for the sake of the community.

From a Marxist point of view, there are those who control the society and those who submit to the rules. The ideal society will fulfill when everyone has the same power. Thus, the black box decides the life or death of individuals in society and the people accept whatever it decides, they follow the black box and kill each other foolishly and they do not have the courage to challenge the authorities. At the Very end,

Tessie Hutchinson challenges the traditions, but she is very late and she lost her life. Marx said that the working class should rebel in order to be social justice and to have an ideal society, but the ideal society will never achieve if people are silent and accept the severe rules of the dictators.

The Lottery is not only about harvest and they sacrifice innocent people, but also they sacrifice individuals in order to purify themselves and their community from their own violence, community needs violence in order people can live in harmony.

“Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones...Mrs. Delacroix selects a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands” (The Lottery 300)

They forget the traditions of doing the lottery, but they do not forget the violence as these stones feeds their aggressive nature. This woman chooses the largest stone she can hold to feed her thirst for violence. The whole group participated in this action so no can blame for the death of an innocent person. The modern reader doubt these people sanity when he sees this violence as they represented as civilized, modern community. The villagers do not want to speak about the injustice of the Lottery as they afraid of social isolation. They want to belong to this community rather to be exiled and lose the security of belonging to place in a civilization.

The story may be an allusion to the execution of black people by the white. They feed their violence upon these victims. They even killed the people who want to be free from the injustice of civilization. When authorities began to exclude people because people in cold war era poison the brain of communities, they exile everyone who threatened society in that era. People are forced to follow authorities or else they will exclude them. People, as Freud said, do everything in order to belong to civilization. The characters have free will and choice, but they do nothing, they are afraid of being in the canon of change.

Freud said that there are three levels of the human psyche which are Id, Ego, and Superego. Id have the largest role in the human psyche, it is the unconsciousness and human does not aware of it and cannot control. In the lottery, the villagers seek for a scapegoat to make their inner savagery shines. When Tessie wins the lottery, they stones her to death and their instinct desires appears, their unconscious instinct of violence which Freud calls it “death drive”, this drive brings destruction to society as Freud states that death drive links with aggressiveness and death, they do not feel sympathy or love with her anymore, even “the children had stones already, and someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles”. The villagers gave Tessie’s children stones in order to stone his mother.

The part of the ego is that the characters are aware of what they are doing. One of the crowd suggested that some villages stop lotteries as they see it as a wrong act against humanity and it is meaningless. Tessie rebels in order to save herself and her family, but it is too late and the rest of the villagers cannot rebel as the forces of authorities still want lotteries to hold every year. They just want to satisfy their animal instinct and replace their humanity with inhumanity which it is very clear when they gather around Tessie and stone her. Tessie’s death does not serve the ritual of the village, but serve the villagers’ blood lust.

People should conceive that society or the world is not a utopia, they should avoid such a dream. Society is less perfect than human imagine, if he dreams of utopia, he achieves only dystopia. Enslavement of human society and domination of the natural world.

CONCLUSION

Jackson depicts the American the same depiction in "The Lottery". She always fears society and its rejection to her. She asserts that the surrounding people have a huge influence in building a healthy psyche of the individual. She highlights the cultural traditions through this story. She depicts the authority in "The Lottery" as tyrannical and cruel and how authority can influence the happiness or misery of the common people. People turn into monsters and cruel like their leaders. Even the children, the example of the innocence are used to be violent and aggressive as they participate in the action of stoning. The authority supposes to be the tool of justice and brings utopian life to the citizens, but they brings only dystopian life in order to serve their interest. Civilization turns to dystopia when the individual does not feel safe and secure, even in his home. Modern civilization is a mere wasteland, full with pain and agony, chaotic and each individual has hidden fears. Most of the people say that the modern world is coming to an end, modern man is spiritually dead. Jackson criticized the false consciousness and the blind obedience to the authority. The blind obedience to the traditions is the result of what Karl Marx called false consciousness. People do lottery without question its legitimacy. Society, during the class development, does not ask or doubt the legitimacy of social relationships. "The Lottery" presents warning to people from the social relationships. In the very story, people do not need to destroy each other for the sake of forgotten rituals.

"The Lottery" does not attack religion, it criticizes the act of cruel people and justify their aggressiveness in the name of religion. "The Lottery" does not make any sense and purpose for the benefit of people, it should be forgotten for the sake of healthy society free from fear and violence. The story is a modern parable which intends to warn people not to let

traditions decided to do and what to not do. She portrays the story in a horrific and harsh situation to present the danger of conformity.

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