

# **"The Lottery" as Misogynist Parable**

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ANOMALOUS AMONG American short stories, Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" has appeared in print almost without interruption since its publication in 1948, despite women writers' marginal and discontinuous representation in literary anthologies.<sup>1</sup> "It was not my first published story, nor my last," Jackson herself comments, "but I have been assured over and over that if it had been the only story I ever wrote or published, there would be people who would not forget my name."<sup>2</sup> In fact, "The Lottery" has been anthologized, dramatized, televised, and turned into a ballet. It continues to be widely taught in high school and college curricula, largely as a psychological allegory of scapegoating or as a cautionary political fable,<sup>3</sup> but cultural resonance, not artistic merit, accounts for its success.<sup>4</sup> My argument in this essay is that "The Lottery" discloses a powerful misogynist parable, satisfying the commonest and most widespread cultural scapegoating even as the "political" aspect of the story seems to dispel another.

Initial audience response to "The Lottery" was largely negative, letters turning on "bewilderment, speculation, and plain old-fashioned abuse," in Jackson's recollection of them.<sup>5</sup> "The Lottery's" stark story of ritual sacrifice, told as if without moral coloration, and in a formal and simple style coincidental with the ceremony it describes, seems to destroy a number of cherished American myths. It exposes, for example, the fiction of idyllic small-town life towards which, in 1948, many Americans looked to recover a pre-war, even a pre-century, innocence. The story also reveals the fragility of the nuclear family, which is necessary for the ritual of the lottery, but which the lottery effectively divides into competing individuals whose survival needs are at odds with one another. Far from being the "haven in a heartless world," the family unit puts its members at risk. Then, too, "The Lottery" suggests that progress is an illusion, especially when one believes it has been attained:

Mr. Summers had been successful in having slips of paper substituted for the chips of wood that had been used for generations. Chips of wood, Mr. Summers had argued, had been all very well when the village was tiny, but now that the population was more than three hundred and likely to keep on growing, it was necessary to use something that would fit more easily into the black box.<sup>6</sup>

"Forward-looking" Mr. Summers pushes against the regressive tide of conservatives like old Mr. Warner, who fears a return to caveman life, and against the inertia of citizens to whom "he spoke frequently . . . about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box."<sup>7</sup> Jackson dramatizes all these "heresies" in a New England locale itself popularly associated with the beginnings of democracy and the "town meeting," but the ritual inverts the democratic ceremony of voting: individuals draw rather than enter "ballots," they do not choose, but are chosen; and election to high office is replaced by selection for death. The story addresses both the shock and the sense of superiority of a readership caught between recent history — the Holocaust, with its explosion of the myth of Western Civilization — and the McCarthy era with its wholesale scapegoating of "unAmericans" nearer home. When Jackson's editor at *The New Yorker* changed the date of the story to coincide with that of the issue in which it first appeared,<sup>8</sup> he contemporized it, drawing its unresolved "fiction" and current reality so closely together that, unsurprisingly, many readers "wanted to know . . . where these lotteries were held, and whether they could go there and watch."<sup>9</sup> The first reactions to "The Lottery" set in motion the political interpretation of this ambiguous story which remains dominant even today, and which obscures Tessie Hutchinson as the victim of the story's own virulent antifeminism.

The ritual of the lottery itself, like the society it seems to preserve, is patriarchal. Men — Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves — conduct it; a head of household, typically male, selects the first ballot; members of the selected household draw in inverse order of their chronological positions in the family hierarchy, except where age breaks down before gender and the wife draws before her husband, who thus becomes "first and last" in the scheme. Men have choice; women choose only when they are already at risk in the lottery pattern. Furthermore, marriage, the patriarchal purchase and renaming of women, preempts blood, so that any married daughter draws her lot within her husband's clan, not her mother's; she moves from man (father) to man (husband). Finally, the lottery's formality and inherited procedures, which may be lost but not voluntarily changed, extremize that order kept by men in explicit opposition to women:

Buddy Martin ducked under his mother's grasping hand and ran, laughing, back to the pile of stones. His father spoke sharply, and Bobby came quickly and took his place between his father and his oldest brother.<sup>10</sup>

The rollcall of potential victims progresses in an orderly way, that is, patronymically, by (male) surname. Against it, two women, Mrs. Delacroix and Mrs. Graves, make choric small-talk, exemplifying the verbal role women have in the ceremony, as commentators rather than full participants in an orality which begins with the name of the first father, "Adam(s)" and ends with the sacrifice of a contemporary Eve. In their choric displacement, the women resemble Old Man Warner, who also comments more than he participates; presumably, although he is still a male, his age has feminized, i.e. weakened, him.<sup>11</sup> In any case, the male alphabet continues over the women's voices, defining the ritual despite them, for, in "The Lottery," untoward and vocal females like Tessie Hutchinson will be "shut up."

Exceptions accommodated by the patriarchal order include women who, by default, have to act as men, have to draw for their families:

Mr. Summers consulted his list. "Clyde Dunbar," he said. "That's right. He's broke his leg, hasn't he? Who's drawing for him?"  
 "Me, I guess," a woman said, and Mr. Summers turned to look at her. "Wife draws for her husband," Mr. Summers said.<sup>12</sup>

The incident makes clear that this is a necessity rather than an ideal, for Mrs. Dunbar, properly subservient, only "guesses" at her surrogate place, while the (male) authority of Mr. Summers confirms it. What is more, she stands ready to have her own son assume the burden of choice for her, and regrets that he is not yet old enough to do so.

"Wife draws for her husband," Mr. Summers said. "Don't you have a grown boy to do it for you, Janey?" . . .  
 "Horace's not but sixteen yet," Mrs. Dunbar said regretfully. "Guess I gotta fill in for the old man this year."<sup>13</sup>

The diminutive "Janey" infantilizes Mrs. Dunbar, eliciting sympathy for her need to assume her husband's rightful place and reducing any sense of her usurpation of maleness. In fact, she "fills in for the old man" with dignity and stoicism, like those women who recently held war jobs and who, presumably, were now eager to return to the hearth. Those around her understand necessity and encourage Mrs. Dunbar.

"Dunbar," Mr. Summers said, and Mrs. Dunbar went steadily to the box while one of the women said, "Go on, Janey," and another said, "There she goes."<sup>14</sup>

She is then seen quietly holding her slip of paper, standing with her "two sons." She is presented as a vessel of maleness, and, needless to say, her family is spared, news her son carries home to "father."

The lottery also serves as a male rite of passage for the "Watson boy," "drawing for m'mother and me" apparently because his mother is widowed.<sup>15</sup> He is sketched as a late adolescent, raising his hand in schoolboy readiness, "Here." It is his first time. "He blinked his eyes nervously and ducked his head." Others therefore encourage him. "'Good fellow, Jack,'" they say, and "'Glad to see your mother's got a man to do it.'" <sup>16</sup> Implicitly, he will attain a manhood which seems to protect women; ironically, of course, it is through the man's luck of the draw that most of these women will be saved *or* imperilled. As he goes forward, then, the Watson boy secures approval: "'Don't be nervous, Jack,'" and "'Take your time, son.'" <sup>17</sup> When accident or death requires it, exceptions to the patriarchal order are tolerated, but nevertheless the exceptional characters are marked. Once the names of families are drawn, "all the women began to speak at once, saying, 'Who is it?' 'Who's got it?' 'Is it the Dunbars?' 'Is it the Watsons?'" <sup>18</sup>

Throughout the lottery process, male dominance — patriarchy's choice, however "blind" — is interpreted in a traditional way, as a burden rather than as a privilege. There is an air of duty and "good form" about the men as a group, and when Summers and Graves ask for help with the black box, a reluctance dignifies their sacrificial purpose. "... when Mr. Summers said, 'Some of you fellows want to give me a hand?' there was a hesitation before two men, Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, came forward to hold the box steady. ..." <sup>19</sup> Such restraint continues to the end of the account. It is a man, Mr. Summers, who urges, "All right, folks ... Let's finish quickly," <sup>20</sup> and *no* man is seen holding stones or actually stoning Tessie, though two women are presented as armed. A narrative whitewash covers patriarchal order.

But if the ordering of the lottery is patriarchal, its ancient purpose of human sacrifice in the name of crop fertility remains associated with the matriarchal worship of earth goddesses in an archaic time.<sup>21</sup> Significantly, the men, seemingly reluctant yet duty-bound to perform the ceremony, relish its actual bloodshedding less than either women or uninitiated boys.

Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones; Bobby and Harry Jones and Dickie Dellacroix — the villagers pronounced this name "Dellacroy" — eventually made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of other boys. The girls stood aside, talking. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Here we see how the gender roles already marked in childhood, the boys' territorial protectiveness and the girls' exclusion, begin. But the boys' eager and childish cruelty will turn into the sober reluctance of their fathers, whereas the childish apartness of the girls will become the grown women's blood lust. For if the daughters stand apart, the mothers do not. It is Mrs. Delacroix who is first seen, stone in hand, about to cast it, and Mrs. Dunbar who, despite infirmity, tries to keep up with her.

Mrs. Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands, and turned to Mrs. Dunbar. "Come on," she said. "Hurry up."  
Mrs. Dunbar had small stones in both hands, and she said, gasping for breath, "I can't run at all. You'll have to go ahead and I'll catch up with you."<sup>23</sup>

To put it simply, women "grow up" to become like boys, immature men. It follows patriarchally that men not only can, but *must* control women if the appearance of "due process" and ritual form is to veneer the savagery of the stoning.

At first male control over women is silent and patient, as when Bill Hutchinson seems to ignore his wife's first protests. When she persists, he takes charge verbally, saying, "Shut up, Tessie."<sup>24</sup> His *commandment* alone, however, fails to control her, so that, as she disturbs the ritual by refusing to show her black-marked slip of paper, he forces it out of her hand. Male force, then, is presented as "justified" by female dissent, even as male order both accommodates and keeps in check the ritual of goddess worship now obsolete, but, tragically, still followed.

In the story's world of fixed gender roles and complex power alignments, the lottery itself is not, as critics have tended to think, an "issue of life and death turning upon pure chance."<sup>25</sup> It *seems* random because the critics, like the villagers, accept patronymic place as a given rather than as a significant factor in the fates of individuals. The family's luck depends first of all on the father's in "The Lottery," although their survival does not depend on his (for he himself may be sacrificed to the larger "family of the community"). In the lottery scheme, a woman ordinarily draws her lot only when she is at greater danger, and from a smaller pool than that of the initiating males. Significantly, her chance of survival then is highest when she has many children, *especially sons* who will not marry out of the family and increase her risk. A sheerly quantitative ability to reproduce becomes salvific in this story. Like Old Eve, a woman may literally be "saved" by childbearing. (Ominously, there are no grown spinsters in the ritual.) Given these narrative circumstances, by what criteria is Tessie Hutchinson selected for sacrifice?

Marginality marks her late arrival on the scene. The others in her family

have already assembled "near the front" of the crowd, curiously without having waited for her or reminded her of a day she almost "clean forgot." She sees them only "through the crowd," and her misfit status is emphasized by her haste and disarray: "She came hurriedly along the path of the square, her sweater thrown over her shoulders, and slid into place in the back of the crowd. . . ." <sup>26</sup> Drying her hands on her apron, she has abandoned housework, which she seems to mock in a teasing comment to Mr. Summers: "You wouldn't have me leave m'dishes in the sink, now, would you, Joe?" By implying that washing the dishes is *almost* as important as the communal rite of sacrifice, she ridicules both the triviality of woman's work *and* the game-playing quality of the male ritual.

As the lottery progresses and her family's surname is called out, Tessie Hutchinson's image as the good wife and mother frays. She takes charge verbally, urging her husband to "Get up there, Bill," at which those around her laugh as at the village character, the nagging or henpecking wife. Soon, however, the laughter stops when Tessie shows herself to be unmotherly, eager to sacrifice her married daughter for her own more probable safety. "'There's Don and Eva,' Mrs. Hutchinson yelled. 'Make *them* take their chance!'" <sup>28</sup>

In an inversion of the Persephone myth, a mother would sacrifice her daughter — *and* her daughter's husband, since she is a coupled woman. Were she to achieve her desire, the blood tie between the women would displace the patronymical and matrimonial one which establishes hierarchy's order for kinship. Therefore patriarchy saves the daughter — who may yet contribute biologically to its continuation — while it selects the "bad," the offspring-destroying and older mother, near or at the end of biological usefulness, for execution. Tessie has forgotten the rules and is almost to be pitied, but Eva (Eve?) has already, through patriarchy, been redeemed.

"Daughters drew with their husbands' families, Tessie," Mr. Summers said gently. "You know that as well as anyone else." <sup>29</sup>

But, of course, Eva did *not* actually draw: the male head of her husband's family drew in her name, which, like her loyalty, has been subsumed. This incident may be seen as an example of how patriarchy divides mother from child, woman from woman, through its rituals. But its stronger and more lingering effect, I think, is to condemn Tessie Hutchinson as an unnatural, selfish parent, a bad mother. She may be sacrificed, then, because she is not sacrificial enough.

"The Lottery" also presents its ultimate victim as the classic scold, too vocal

a woman. She first jokes, then, when the initial selection is made, "shouts,"<sup>30</sup> "yells,"<sup>31</sup> tries to argue for her case "as quietly as she can,"<sup>32</sup> and ultimately "screams"<sup>33</sup>. Her crescendo of protest overrides her husband's attempt to cut off her objections with "Shut up, Tessie," so that she is portrayed not only as a woman who is unwilling to be sacrificed for her family and neighbors, but as the antithesis of the old ideal of the demure and *silent* woman.

Even Tessie's depiction as a "bad sport," a seemingly gender-free indictment, is not without sexual bias. Her resistance, which erupts only after her own family has been selected, takes the immediate form of an accusation against a specific male, "a round-faced, jovial man" for whom people feel sorry "because he had no children and his wife was a *scold*."<sup>34</sup> Her vocal charge of "unfairness" — a charge she levels three times within one page and twice again before she is stoned — contrasts with her husband's dignified demeanor.

People began to look around to see the Hutchinsons. Bill Hutchinson was standing quiet, staring down at the paper in his hand. Suddenly, Tessie Hutchinson shouted to Mr. Summers, "You didn't give him time enough to take any paper he wanted. I saw you. It wasn't fair!"<sup>35</sup>

What seems "unfair" to her at this point is that the men have not played by the rules. But, significantly, it is other women, not men, who at first bring her back into line. They, too, believe the lottery to be truly random, therefore "fair."

"Be a good sport, Tessie," Mrs. Delacroix called and Mrs. Graves said, "All of us took the same chance."<sup>36</sup>

The women who argue for form typify patriarchy's use of "acceptable" and "included" women to regularize the rebellious, to ventriloquize patriarchy's mythos while seeming to speak for themselves. (Mrs. Delacroix will be the one to lift "a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands," that is, a stone a man might more easily carry.<sup>37</sup>) In challenging the fairness of one man, Mr. Summers, Tessie exposes the entire proceeding, which is based on a male sense of contest, inverted so that, at the end of the "game," there will be a team of winners and a single, dead loser. She also suggests that her husband is unable to defend himself and his rights, demoting him almost to the status of a child she would protect: "You didn't give him time enough to take any paper he wanted." Bill Hutchinson restores the balance in favor of his dominance by telling her, "Shut up, Tessie." Then her resistance becomes physical.

"Tessie," Mr. Summers said. She hesitated for a minute, looking around defiantly, and then set her lips and went up to the box. She snatched a paper out and held it behind her.<sup>38</sup>

Now she *embodies* resistance, in direct contrast to the “good girl” portrait of her own twelve-year-old, decorous daughter:

Nancy was twelve, and her school friends breathed heavily as she went forward, switching her skirt, and took a slip daintily from the box.<sup>39</sup>

When Tessie resists the patriarchal ritual altogether, withholding her slip of paper from public view, male physical force is required. We are reminded that the black mark itself was made by a man.

Bill Hutchinson went over to his wife and forced the slip of paper out of her hand. It had the black spot on it, the black spot Mr. Summers had made the night before with the heavy pencil in the coal-company office. Bill Hutchinson held it up and there was a stir in the crowd.<sup>40</sup>

Appropriately, it is not a stranger, but her husband, who exerts this force, for husbandly violence has, until recently, been viewed as legitimate, natural, necessary, and even theologically sanctioned. Only a husband has the legitimate right, too, to open his wife’s body, in this case, to extract order from her confining flesh. The slip of paper acts not only as the symbol of that order, but as a piece of evidence against Tessie herself, now stereotyped as the uncooperative, dissident, overly vocal, unmotherly “bad sport.” There is a certain justice in her selection as the story’s characterization of her and the lottery’s outcome coincide. What will be stoned to death at the end of the account is a traditional image of the “bad woman.”

Stoning itself is ignoble, brutal and communal. It destroys the human image and obliterates the identity of its victim. As a mode of execution, it requires only the most primitive technology, one which “Mother Earth” ironically supplies. “Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones.”<sup>41</sup> The cultural associations of stoning are ambiguous, evoking both innocence — the stoning of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr — and guilt, the stoning of the adulterous woman. Allusively, a kind of fragmentary Christian allegory threads in and out of “The Lottery,” sustained mostly on etymologies like “Delacroix” (“of the cross”) and names such as Adams and Eva.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, at the last moment, Tessie Hutchinson achieves a vision that jolts from social emphasis on “fairness” to her discovery of a wider moral order: “‘It isn’t fair, it isn’t *right*,’ Mrs. Hutchinson screamed and then they were upon her.”<sup>43</sup> “Fairness” is based on performing the rules of a given ritual; “rightness” questions the premise of the ritual itself. But Tessie’s status as an innocent victim of mindless communal ceremony is counter-balanced by her presentation as the nonconforming scold. I believe that both these aspects of her as a character collide in her own name.<sup>44</sup>

Tessie's surname and the New England locale of the story associate her with Anne Hutchinson, who was excommunicated from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for misbehaviour, for preaching (as a woman) without permission though it was on the technicality of the antinomian heresy that she officially was turned out. Hutchinson herself has remained an ambiguous American heroine, standing simultaneously for private conscience and free speech, but also for communal disruption in the name of those virtues. Tessie Hutchinson lacks private conscience, as, apparently, do all her neighbors, but she does exemplify a kind of "free speech," and she does "preach," though minimally and in bad faith, to her community. Unlike Anne Hutchinson, however, she is not expelled, but isolated and yet confined in "the center of a cleared space."<sup>45</sup> Her ultimate fate is more like that of the New England witches than of her apparent colonial counterpart. Stronger than the lingering image of Christian martyrdom, then, is the image of the Biblical death reserved for the adulteress, the unfaithful woman who endangers patriarchy by ignoring her place as marital property and procreative vessel. Foremost in the crowd prepared to stone her, we see "Steve Adams" and "Mrs. Graves," an unmarried couple standing in for Adam and Eve, our primordial ancestors.<sup>46</sup> Since "Eva" (Tessie's daughter) has already been redeemed — we might imagine her outside the crowd, almost a Virgin Mary — the name of "Eva" cannot be used again. But Eve's ancient denigration as the bringer of death can be evoked, as it is in an "Adam" and "Eve" who are "Adams" and "Graves." In retrospect, even the title of the story suggests the disobedient wife, for the "Lot" in "Lottery" echoes the Lot whose spouse, *turning back*, turned into a pillar of salt.<sup>47</sup>

"The Lottery's" conclusion confirms a misogynist level in the story. Left unfinished, the stoning carries over into the imagination of the reader, making him or her an accomplice, witness and vicarious participant, in its grim end. Tessie's untoward voice is cut off by the crowd at once "upon her," so that her husband's admonition that she "shut up" takes on horrible and absolute force. But the image is also one of *visible* obliteration, for in stoning a body falls, is itself covered with stones, and is obscured from view by the cluster of executioners around it. Although the reader's share in Tessie's imminent death implies that savagery is within all of us, I believe that such a hopeful interpretation is *ex post facto*, and that the stronger case may be made for imaginative experience in which Tessie's antifeminist portrayal *permits* us to engage. The date of the story's composition and publication supports its ultimately bicameral structure, which exposes and seems to condemn political scapegoating while sustaining and seeming to uphold sexual scapegoating: 1948 brought not only the political optimism of the establishment of the

United Nations, but also, in fashion, the New Look, which literally corseted and crinolined women into a neo-Victorian image, and which prophesied the conservative domestic values of the coming Eisenhower era. Both movements are addressed in "The Lottery."

Perhaps with some justice, "The Lottery" placed its author in something like Tessie Hutchinson's exposed position. While the agent who sold but disliked the story and the editor who disliked but bought it foresaw some controversy, Jackson did not. She received a deluge of letters indicating that "people who read stories are gullible, rude, frequently illiterate, and horribly afraid of being laughed at."<sup>48</sup> An author whose avowed purpose in writing was to "uplift and enrich and delight" her audiences,<sup>49</sup> Jackson unwittingly wrote a work that secured the disfavor even of her own mother, and which convinced her that "I was very lucky indeed to be safety in Vermont, where no one in our small town had ever heard of *The New Yorker*, much less read my story."<sup>50</sup> Her response, both at the time and twenty years later, was a retreat into disavowing, reconstructed innocence on two levels, that the readers' reactions were somehow atypical themselves, and that she had not *intended* (and was therefore presumably not responsible for) the volatility of her own material. Such innocence, recurrent in her memoir of the story, must strike contemporary readers as overdone. "I have all the letters still, and if they could be considered to give any accurate cross section of the reading public, or the reading public of *The New Yorker*, I would stop writing now."<sup>51</sup> Yet what other readership do the letters reflect?

Jackson's inveterate or reconstructed innocence becomes ignorance once she treats the composition of "The Lottery" itself, which, she recollects both at the time and two decades later, was "just a story I wrote," and "just a story."<sup>52</sup> It is not unusual for writers themselves to be ignorant of the source and even the pattern of their writing process; but few believe that their work is "merely" fiction. Indeed, Jackson's account of the genesis of "The Lottery" shows that her innocence is not, finally, impermeable. It came to her while she was engaged in strenuous woman's work, "pushing my daughter up the hill in her stroller — it was, as I say, a warm morning, and the hill was steep, and beside my daughter the stroller held the day's groceries — and perhaps the effort of that last fifty yards put an edge to the story. . . ."<sup>53</sup> It reflects the dilemma of the creative but domestic woman of that time, to whom writing was not, as Jackson said elsewhere, "honest work" when she spent "50 percent of my life . . . washing and dressing the children, cooking, washing dishes and clothes, and mending." Her more publicly acceptable mask was to adopt writing as a hobby, motherhood as the real job: "It's great fun, and I love it. But it doesn't tie any shoes."<sup>54</sup>

The writing of "The Lottery" went "quickly and easily from beginning to end without pause, a circumstance "not . . . usual" for her. Nor did she spend time in revision. "The story I finally typed up and sent off to my agent the next day was almost word for word the original draft."<sup>55</sup> An "automatic" story often touches primal recesses which revision, a form of authorial censorship, may hide. If Jackson's account resembles antique seductions — "He drugged me," "I didn't know what was happening until it was too late" — it nevertheless may present the public face of a real private innocence, the blank and terrible innocence of children who commit myth and murder in a casual way.

Whatever the societal influences or the psychic caves from which "The Lottery" emerged almost forty years ago, the story has endured to become a classroom classic. (When, recently, I asked a group of sixty college students how many of them had read the piece, fully three quarters responded affirmatively. I know of no other single work which would have elicited such response.) Taught simply as a writerly *tour de force* of suspense or as an example of "the awful doubleness of the human spirit,"<sup>56</sup> "The Lottery" readily yields a self-congratulatory interpretation: if we acknowledge that "it can happen here," it won't. Or, to put it another way, because we have read "The Lottery" we are equipped to detect bigotry and irrationality in our own "free" society.

Yet neither communists nor Jews nor blacks are the literal scapegoats of the story: a woman is, and is insofar as she departs from the stereotype of the "good woman." This makes Shirley Jackson's story doubly useful in a patriarchal world: its author passes for an "exceptional" woman successfully combining motherhood and career, whose work is good enough to be anthologized despite the under-representation of her sisters'; and her story itself perpetuates the cautionary tale of the "bad" woman who ends up disfavored and dead. So long as "The Lottery" is disseminated and taught without attention to its covered misogynist parable, it will sanction and even advance anti-feminism by seeming to expose scapegoating even as it scapegoats Tessie Hutchinson, impressing in the readers' minds a strong, subliminal and unquestioned sexism.

## Notes

1. See Joanna Russ, *How To Suppress Women's Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), especially sections 8, "Anomalousness," and 9, "Lack of Models."
2. All references to Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" and to her memoir of its composition follow the texts in *The Story and Its Writer*, ed. Ann Charters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983) because both are available in one readily accessible volume. "The Lottery" is also included in the recent reissue of Shirley Jackson's short stories, *The Lottery and Other*

*Stories* (New York: Ferrer, Strauss and Giroux, 1982).

3. Jackson herself agrees with such a meaning: "Explaining just what I had hoped the story to say is very difficult. I supposed, I hoped, by setting a particularly brutal ancient rite in the present and in my own village, to shock the story's readers with a graphic dramatization of the pointless violence and general inhumanity in their own lives" (*The Story and Its Writer*, p. 942). Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, in their *Understanding Fiction* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1959), concur that "the story comments upon the all-too-human tendency to seize upon a scapegoat and to visit upon the scapegoat the cruelties that most of us seem to have dammed up within us" (p. 74). Almost a decade later, in *Insight I*, eds. John V. Hagopian and Martin Dolch (Frankfurt am Main: Hirschgraben-Verlag, 1967), John Hagopian sees the story epitomizing: "... the cruelty that can be inflicted on innocent people whenever a community acts irrationally in concert ... as in the Inquisition, or under Nazism, and Communism, or during the McCarthy era in America. ..." (p. 131). Later commentators embellish the theme following Seymour Lainoff's retrieval of the anthropological backgrounds of the piece. ("Jackson's 'The Lottery,' *Explicator*, XII (March, 1954, Item 34); Lenemaja Friedman's comparison of the story's ritual with Thargelia's festival in ancient Athens (*Shirley Jackson*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1975, p. 63)) and Shaymal Bagchee's "Design of Darkness in Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery,'" in *Notes on Contemporary Literature* (IX, December, 1979, p. 8-9) continue this archeology of the tale, which we find also in the more recent article "An Old Testament Analogue for 'The Lottery,'" by James M. Gibson (*The Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 11, 1984, p. 193-5). Even Helen Nebeker, in "'The Lottery': Symbolic Tour de Force" (*American Literature*, 46, 1974), while noting the narrative's "patriarchal order," sees it finally as statement that "man (sic) is a victim of his unexamined and hence unchanged traditions which engender in him flames otherwise banked, subdued" (p. 107).
4. A number of writers have cited "The Lottery" for artistic deficiency, among them, Robert Heilman in *Modern Short Stories* (New York: Harcourt, Brace 1950, p. 384-5), and, less rigorously, Brooks and Warren. Nebeker tries to refute this charge by enlarging on the symbolic level of the story in her "'The Lottery': Symbolic Tour de Force," and the work is sometimes taught as example of writerly craft. On the whole, however, it is the theme of scapegoating, not the quality of the prose, which marks "The Lottery's" popular history.
5. *The Story and Its Writer*, p. 1194.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 943.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 1193.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 1195.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 942-3.
11. Christine Conti, formerly a graduate student at the State University of New York at Binghamton, suggests a more radical reading of Old Man Warner, within the story as the ventriloquized mother of the author, whose negative response to "The Lottery" was to contrast her daughter's gloomy generation with an earlier, less melancholy one.
12. *The Story and Its Writer*, p. 945. Nebeker believes the "grown boy" Mr. Summers refers to may have been the victim of a previous lottery (p. 104-5).
13. *Ibid.*, p. 945.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 946.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 945. Nebeker conjectures that the boy's father may also have selected for the lottery in the previous year (p. 105).
16. *Ibid.*, p. 945.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 947.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 947.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 943.

20. Ibid., p. 948.
21. See Lainoff for a basic treatment of "The Lottery" as solstice rite.
22. *The Story and Its Writer*, p. 942-3.
23. Ibid., p. 949.
24. Ibid., p. 947.
25. Brooks and Warren, p. 72. More recently, Richard H. Williams argues that the lottery is *mathematically* unfair in "A Critique of the Sampling Plan Used in Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery'" (*Journal of Modern Literature*, VII, 1979, p. 543-4). The older view that the lottery is "random" and its victim "accidental" prevails, however.
26. *The Story and Its Writer*, p. 944.
27. John V. Hagopian interprets this scene very differently. Having asked, "What does it mean when Mrs. Hutchinson arrives late explaining that she 'clean forgot what day it was' and then jokes that the others 'wouldn't have me leave m'dishes in the sink'?" he answers himself: "Three possible meanings are involved here. 1) Mrs. Hutchinson subconsciously rejects the ritual of the lottery and really doesn't want to participate in it; 2) but she is an 'other-directed person who doesn't dare even to admit to consciousness the possibility of rebellion against tradition — she wants to be a 'normal' member of the community; 3) and there is great irony and a touch of pathos in the fact that *this cheerful wife and mother* rebels only when she is the victim, the scapegoat, and that she *will never wash dishes again*" (p. 131-2). (Emphasis mine.)
28. *The Story and Its Writer*, p. 947.
29. Ibid., p. 947.
30. Ibid., p. 947.
31. Ibid., p. 947.
32. Ibid., p. 947.
33. Ibid., p. 949.
34. Ibid., p. 943.
35. Ibid., p. 947.
36. Ibid., p. 947.
37. Ibid., p. 949.
38. Ibid., p. 948.
39. Ibid., p. 948.
40. Ibid., p. 948.
41. Ibid., p. 949.
42. See Nebeker for a full etymological and symbolic treatment of these names.
43. *The Story and Its Writer*, p. 949.
44. Nebeker regards "Tessie Hutchinson" as "the end product of two thousand years of Christian thought and ritual, Catholic and Puritan merges . . ." and sees her and her fellow citizens "all equally victims and persecutors" (p. 106).
45. *The Story and Its Writer*, p. 949.
46. The fact that Mr. Adams' first name is "Steve," a shortened version of the name of the first Christian martyr, implies that Christianity itself has come under the repossession of Old Testament blood sacrifice; "Steve" is not free to act because he is old "Adam's" (Adams') son.
47. Jackson has, in fact, a story entitled "The Pillar of Salt," which appears in "*The Lottery* " and *Other Stories*. It turns on the mental disintegration of a housewife/mother who, leaving her New Hampshire home and children, comes to New York with her husband only to crack under the strain and vacuity of urban life. Her disintegration rapidly accelerates after they find an amputated leg on the beach. Here, as in "The Lottery," no "moral" is drawn, but it is strongly implied that she should have stayed in New Hampshire rather than trying to recover a past (unmarried?) life.

48. *The Story and Its Writer*, p. 1194.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 1194. Nevertheless, much of Shirley Jackson's fiction explores the borders of insanity and the gothic.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 1194.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 1194.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 1193.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 1192.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 941.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 1192–3.
56. Brooks and Warren, p. 76.