

Human Tragedy Under the Collective Unconsciousness — An Interpretation of the Theme of Shirley Jackson's The Lottery¹

Ni Wang

Foreign Languages Department, Inner Mongolia Honder College of Arts and Sciences, Hohhot,
010070, Inner Mongolia, China

Abstract: Shirley Jackson has been one of the most popular horror writers in the United States since World War II. She is best known for her O Henry Award-winning novel *The Lottery*. This paper analyzes *The Lottery* from Jung's collective unconscious theory to push human's understanding of their mental structure into a more profound and extensive cultural and historical field. Based on this research, the author hopes that more people can do a more in-depth analysis of Shirley Jackson and *The Lottery* in the future.

Keywords: Shirley Jackson; Collective Unconsciousness; *The Lottery*

Shirley Jackson has been one of the most popular horror writers in the United States since World War II. She is best known for her O Henry Award-winning novel *The Lottery*. Shirley Jackson's new and beautiful writing has been included in American students' textbooks. Many of her works have been included in the annual "Best American Short Story" list, mostly psychological suspense, horror, and dark fantasy work. *The Lottery* is a controversial novel that has attracted much attention since its publication. Supporters think that the characters described by the author are very profound and reflect the indifference of human nature. In contrast, opponents think that the author smeared the region in the book and once wrote a complaint letter asking the author to apologize.

1. Introduction to *The Lottery*

The Lottery revolves around an ancient ritual, the story took place in June 27 at ten o'clock in the morning, the whole village, gathered in the square on a mysterious ceremony at the start of the picture of the light, the boys in the square to collect the stone, the girls in the chat, men gathered in the preamble, and women were in a hurry and come, standing next to her husband Lao homely, And the beginning of the ceremony and a woman, that is, the heroine Tess Huggins comes slowly, only at the start of the ceremony, Mr Summers starts ceremony presided over dozens of years like one day, all the different response, Mr Martin has been help up box, everyone who came up the draw has different features, after finished signing Tess Hutchinson was picked, It is then that the reader learns that the person chosen is going to be stoned to death by the others, because the town has to keep its population at 300 forever.

2. Jung and Collective Unconscious

The collective unconscious is the most important basic assumption in the analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). All the "universal mental functions" are not acquired but inherited, including various associations, images and physiological functions. In other words, it refers to the instinctive response or "consciousness" that is based on the functioning

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of the innate human nervous system, which is influenced by the accumulation of various past experiences since man's emergence. Jung is the proud student of Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. He revised, enriched and developed Freud's theory in many aspects, and created analytical psychology and myth-archetype criticism. The differences between Jungian and Freudian theories mainly focus on two aspects: One is the theory of sex, the "Ribido" theory, the second is the understanding of the structure of the unconscious as content. ^[1]

According to Freud, the unconscious is primarily a gathering place for repressed and forgotten mental content, and thus has acquired personal characteristics. On the first question, Jung believed that Ribido is not a psychological energy dominated by sexual desire, but a "common life force, of which sexual love is only a part". On the second question, Jung criticized Freud for reducing the unconscious to an entirely personal trait, even though he saw that it often had ancient universal forms and qualities. Jung believed that the unconscious includes not only the individual unconscious but also the collective unconscious. Jung begins his essay *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious* by making a conceptual distinction between the individual unconscious and the collective unconscious. The personal unconscious consists mainly of what we were once aware of, but have since forgotten or repressed from consciousness; The content of the collective unconscious has never been present in consciousness, and has therefore never been acquired by the individual. Its existence is entirely inherited. That is to say, the collective unconscious is a deeper unconscious than the individual unconscious, a deep structure of the unconscious, which is innate rather than acquired, and universal rather than an individual. It is universal in all of us because it has content and behavior that are generally similar in all places and all individuals, constituting a common psychological basis of superb individuality.

Just as Freud's assumptions about the individual unconscious were based largely on medical practice, Jung's assumptions about the collective unconscious relied heavily on anthropology, mythology, and archaeology. Jung noted that certain images, expressed in primitive art, tribal legends, and ancient myths, appeared repeatedly in different tribes, peoples, and civilizations. In his view, this recurring, superpersonal primordial image reveals the common and universal structure of the deep unconscious of human beings, namely the collective unconscious. Based on this, Jung pointed out that the individual unconscious is composed of complexes, while the content of the collective unconscious is mainly "archetypes". Jung's collective unconscious theory pushes human's understanding of their own mental structure into a more profound and extensive cultural and historical field. Because of this, Jung's influence is not limited to the field of psychology but to philosophy, aesthetics, anthropology, mythology, and many other fields, and directly triggered the myth-archetypal criticism school of literary criticism.

3. Human Tragedy Under the Collective Unconscious

3.1 Town under class solidification

The story takes place in a small town, the town is kept at 300 people all year round, and every year the town holds a lottery ceremony. In charge of the lottery is the coal business Mr. Summers, the postmaster Mr. Greaves and the grocery store Martin and his son. From the description, the class of the town has been solidified:

The night before the lottery, Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves made up the slips of paper and put them in the box, and it was then taken to the safe of Mr. Summers' coal company and locked up until Mr. Summers was ready to take it to the square next morning. The rest of the year, the box was put away, sometimes one place, sometimes another; it had spent one year in Mr. Graves's barn and another year underfoot in the post office, and sometimes it was set on a shelf in the Martin grocery and left there. ^[2]

"Seventy-seventh year I been in the lottery, " Old Man Warner said as he went through the crowd. "Seventy-seventh time. " As can be seen from this sentence, Mr. Warner is a staunch supporter and supporter of the rule, and he failed to draw 77 times. Some residents say some places have abandoned the lottery, Mr. Warner said that "Nothing but trouble in that, pack of young fools. " In this paper, the author describes other languages to shape each person's personality, and the solidification of small-town contact class can be seen through language. At the end of the story, the reader learns that the lottery is to select a person to be executed to ensure the stability of the town population. However, Tess arrives late, and her dissatisfaction with this ceremony can be seen in her awakening of female consciousness, her dissatisfaction with the existing system of the town, and her struggle against the existing system of the town. And other people like Mrs. Delacroix and Mrs. Graves, they said: "Be a good sport, Tessie, " and "All of us took the same chance. "

Bill Hutchinson went over to his wife and forced the slip of paper out of her hand. It had a 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.

From the above sentence, Tess's death is inevitable, and the town's economic lifeblood is firmly in the hands of three people. Lucky draw box will hold back and forth in the three people. The residents of the small town, by such a lottery, disgruntled people not obedient will eventually become a victim. And as the town's future, the boys are very familiar with the pile of stones (the killer); not timid, the girls are also far from watching, recognizing their subordinate status. Tess for against the system, in her husband's eyes, is a disgrace, think he is not obedient, challenged the authority of their own, and finally she asks to draw, the surface is an equal opportunity, gave her the answer is yes, have already ready, is not held by her own fate, and end up in that era in the dog-eat-dog age, Tess's awakening is wrong for capital, which is not only the solidification of class, but also the tragedy of human nature.^[3]

3.2 Human Tragedy Under Collective Unconsciousness - Interpretation of the Theme of Shirley Jackson's The Lottery

Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery* in the literary world is very prominent, inspiring writers and artists worldwide. Stephen King, a famous American horror writer, was a great fan of Jackson. In his book of literary reviews, *The Devil's Dance*, he listed three of the 100 best horror books in the world. When it comes to the Lottery, he thinks it best represents the basic values of horror fiction. In his opinion: "No horror novel has turned the idea of the outsider into a symbol as thoroughly as *The Lottery*."

The theme running through the whole text of *Lottery* is that the root of all evil is not the system at all, but the darkness of human nature.^[4] The small-town bourgeoisie holds the lifeblood of everyone, and everyone must work hard to realize their surplus value. Mr. Warner must work very hard in daily life and is the defender of the class. Therefore, he was not selected for 77 times and was in the safe zone. The winners were all the heads of families or boys, reflecting the oppression of women in the patriarchal society of the town. Women wore faded home dresses and sweaters, devoted themselves wholeheartedly to their husbands, and had no objection to their husbands' decisions.

So after the lottery came out, there was a lot of discussion: "Is it Dunbar's? Is he a Watson family?" Because Mr. Dunbar had broken his leg and Mr. Watson had died, there were no workers in either of these factories, which meant that there were no workers and that they were of low value to the town. There was a great sigh of relief when it was revealed that it was Tess, and the initial enthusiasm for Tess turned into hatred for Tess. Selected winners is not really a scapegoat, really damn, but the small town of the ruling class want to transfer to your attention, let people hate is transferred to a particular person, relieve the pressure on everyone, but who is obedient, who work hard will not be selected, the selected must be the man have no value in small town, and our heroine Tess as self-consciousness awakening, As a rebel, one must be chosen. Because do not work hard is not a problem in front of the opposition and lack of labor force, this ceremony must proceed, town was able to control everyone, the ruling class to have bonus, each self-consciousness awakening, the patriarchal domination, is a small town draw the "winners" or "scapegoat."^[5] Who is the "scapegoat" does not matter, as long as it can transfer you to the town of bourgeois dissatisfaction can, when Tess is selected, you acted very disdain for Tess's rebellion, think Tess does not comply with the rules of the game, try to ask things to myself, who can speak two sentences, when everyone (including her husband children) with a stone on Tess: "It's not fair!" cried Tess. Her voice was drowned out by stones and shouts. Jung's collective unconscious refers to a kind of consciousness that we are born with, not that we are born with later, and this behavior also reflects Jung's collective unconscious.

3.3 Sinister Human Nature - Interpretation of the Theme of Shirley Jackson's The Lottery

Everyone in *The Lottery* had a distinctive image, and during the drawing Mr. Adams said to Mr. Warner, who was standing next to him: "They do say that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery." Mrs. Adams was talking too: "Some places have already quit lotteries." Mr And Mrs Adams had been discussing with others about the abolition of the ceremony and seemed to have their own ideas. However, after the scapegoat was selected at the end, Adams was the first to pick up a stone and rush to Tess, which can also show the sinister nature of human nature. He pretended to stay out of the situation and had his own opinions on various things, but as long as it did not fall on his own head, he still supported the ceremony. The Addams couple were worried that they would be the target from the very beginning, so they also hoped to arouse some resonance with others.^[6] However, after announcing the result, they were safe and immediately targeted at Tess to relieve their own pressure. In the novel, is it true that people like the Addams couple are contradictory and double-marked human nature?

When Tess was chosen, Mrs Delacroix and Mrs Graves both stressed that Tess could not afford to play, while at the

moment before, they seemed very relaxed and did not take any comfort in Tess's selection, but hoped that Tess would accept it. The other town characters did not seem flustered. Tess's husband was not upset when he heard Tess's loud cry. He felt embarrassed to keep Tess quiet. Mr. Summers said that Tess's daughters should follow her husband to draw the lottery, which Tess thought was unfair, while Tess's husband thought it was fair to draw the lottery with her husband. It could be seen that Tess's awakening of self-consciousness and struggle for women's rights, but in this abnormal town, Tess was going to be destroyed. ^[7] Women should absolutely obey men and should not have any self-consciousness. Tess's husband went to the draw first, and Tess continued to stress the unfairness, and the lack of time given to him, and made a final protest, but no one listened. When Tess's children went to the draw, their children were worried about not being siblings, but not about their mother. When it was Tess, Mrs Delacroix picked a huge stone, And called for Mrs. Dunbar to come quickly. Some of them handed stones to Tess's children, Mr Summers shouted to make it quick, Mr Warner rushed forward, and all of them strangled Tess's life.

Mr. Summers officiates this ceremony every year, seemingly active and lively, but in fact cold and sinister inside. Mr. Graves is another authority, and Martin is their follower. No one who follows the system has been selected, and Mr. Warner is still safe after 77 years. No one can question it. Mr. Summers and others had decided to choose Tess before the raffle ceremony. The raffle ceremony was just a formality and did not change the established outcome. Everyone had to obey. ^[8] The children are not surprised and sad, but the expectation of the ceremony, the boys have been as men to cultivate and look at, the girls are raised to become the men's accessories, every character in the novel is the promoter of this abnormal ceremony, no one opposes, even more people through this way to relieve pressure.

The novel *The Lottery* is too wonderful, and its unique Gothic style makes readers feel creepy at the end. In a small town under the solidification of class, everyone has rich human nature, but the dark side is more than the good side. It is the way of life for everyone to hang high and indifferent to their own interests, as long as they are not the "scapegoat", this ceremony can be preserved. ^[9] The dark side of everyone's human nature is all aroused at the last moment, and human nature is also the most difficult abstract concept to define. Kindness is worthless in the face of death, and blood relationship does not exist in the face of death. This is the distortion of human nature, and it is also what *The Lottery* wants to tell the world that the sinister side of human nature is always unpredictable. The relationship between people is not as simple and natural as we think, but with intrigue, with calculation. In order to achieve their own ends, they can kill a life, and in order to achieve their own ends, they can turn from opponents to supporters in an instant. The dark side of human nature also reaches a climax at the end of the story.

4. Conclusion

The Lottery is one of Shirley Jackson's most famous works, the author tells the story as an observer, the whole ceremony looks relaxed and natural, as if it were a routine task. At the beginning of the story, it is not clear what the purpose of this ceremony is. The author makes the readers feel relaxed through the chatting of women, the laughing of children, and the talking of men and women, which may be an interesting thing. As the event goes deeper, the author's Gothic style makes everyone realize that this is an appalling event, and the novel reaches its climax at the end. Shirley Jackson is good at writing scary stories that do not give you any sense of technique or arrangement, but rather bring you gradually into the story. *The Lottery* is worthy of Shirley Jackson's representative work. His description of human nature is penetrating and memorable for a long time. I hope that more people can do more in-depth analysis of Shirley Jackson and *The Lottery* in the future.

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About the Author: Ni Wang, (1990-), is a teacher at Inner Mongolia Honder College of Arts and Sciences. She is a master of linguistics. Her research interests include translation theory and practice, curriculum reform.