

beginnings of lines 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, and he omits a "the" from line 8. Probably he does this in order to set a colloquial and improvisational tone for Japhy's reading on the spur of the moment from the Chinese characters. But he may also be allowing himself to make a remark as a fellow poet, wondering, "How would the poem sound without quite so many *the's*?" and playing it back that way, rather than asking the question. What Kerouac does in his transcription of the poem, in any case, is to put into practice the suggestion that Ray makes to Japhy later in their discussion—that is, to simplify the translation by removing the articles (which Japhy rather weakly excuses himself for having put in). Snyder, of course, certainly had "thought of that," for in his five-word version in the manuscript he had made exactly the kind of translation that Ray asks for.⁷

JACOB LEED

Kent State University

AN OLD TESTAMENT ANALOGUE FOR "THE LOTTERY"

More than any other short story by Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" has intrigued critics and provoked puzzled guesses about its enigmatic meaning. Seymour Lainoff early on invoked the "primitive annual scapegoat rite" discussed in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*,¹ and Lenemaja Friedman more recently has compared the stoning of Tessie Hutchinson to the festival of the Thargelia in ancient Athens and to similar scapegoat rituals of the Aztecs in Mexico.² Shyamal Bagchee has discovered the symbolism of "black magic and primitive pagan rituals" that expose the "hideous primitive faces" lurking under our "civilized modern masks,"³ and Helen Nebeker has uncovered the triple symbolism of pagan ritual, Mosaic legalism, and Christian theology in the characters' names, the sacrifice, and the three-legged stool.⁴ Richard Williams has even produced a statistical analysis complete with equations and charts to determine the mathematical fairness of the lottery and ostensibly to support Tessie's objection that "It isn't fair, it isn't right."⁵ Shirley Jackson herself steadfastly refused to explain the story either to the editors of *The New Yorker* or to the writers of the 450 letters that overwhelmed her own post office and the editorial offices of *The New Yorker*—all demanding to know what the story meant. Maintaining that "it was just a story," Jackson commented only that the story came to her in an inspirational flash.

The idea had come to me while I was 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

⁷ I am grateful to Gary Snyder for permission to use the manuscript and to Dean Keller of the Kent State University Library for the arrangements he made for my work with it.

¹ Seymour Lainoff, "Jackson's 'The Lottery,'" *Explicator*, XII (March 1954), Item 34.

² Lenemaja Friedman, *Shirley Jackson* (Twayne Publishers, 1975), p. 63.

³ Shyamal Bagchee, "Design of Darkness in Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery,'" *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, IX (December 1979), 8–9.

⁴ Helen E. Nebeker, "'The Lottery': Symbolic Tour de Force," *American Literature*, XLVI (1974), 100–07.

⁵ Richard H. Williams, "A Critique of the Sampling Plan Used in Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery,'" *Journal of Modern Literature*, VII (1979), 543–44.

daughter the stroller held the day's groceries—and perhaps the effort of that last fifty yards up the hill put an edge to the story; at any rate, I had the idea fairly clearly in my mind when I put my daughter in her playpen and the frozen vegetables in the refrigerator, and, writing the story, I found that it went quickly and easily, moving from beginning to end without pause.⁶

Following Shirley Jackson's discreet silence, the search for pagan parallels and symbols both demonic and Christian has overlooked perhaps the closest analogue, if not the source, of "The Lottery": an Old Testament story found in Joshua 7. Whether or not Jackson knew the story, she did not tell, but the parallels are there, and the contrasts point up nicely the sharp antithesis between the ironic mode of the modern story and the romance mode of its earlier counterpart. The story from the Book of Joshua recounts the abortive attack on Ai immediately following the spectacular and supernatural conquest of Jericho where Joshua had given the Israelites strict instructions to set fire to everything in the city except the silver and gold and vessels of copper and iron which were to be deposited in the tabernacle treasury. When some two or three thousand Israelites later attacked Ai, they were badly beaten, and Joshua threw dust on his head, lay on the ground before the Ark of the Lord, and lamented God's desertion of his people. The story then proceeds as follows:

- 10 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore art thou thus fallen
 11 upon thy face? Israel hath sinned; yea, they have even transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: yea, they have even taken of the devoted thing; and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have even put it
 12 among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel cannot stand before their enemies, they turn their backs before their enemies, because they are become accursed: I will not be with you any more, except ye destroy the
 13 devoted thing from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, There is a devoted thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before
 14 thine enemies, until ye take away the devoted thing from among you. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought near by your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the Lord taketh shall come near by families; and the family which the Lord shall take shall come near by households; and the household
 15 which the Lord shall take shall come near man by man. And it shall be, that he that is taken with the devoted thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.
- 16 So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel near by their
 17 tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken: and he brought near the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zerahites: and he brought near the family
 18 of the Zerahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken: and he brought near his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the
 19 son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from
 20 me. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Of a truth I have sinned against
 21 the Lord, the God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: when I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver
 22 under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it

⁶ Shirley Jackson, "Biography of a Story," in *Come Along With Me* (Viking Press, 1968), p. 211.

- 23 was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them from the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel;
- 24 and they laid them down before the Lord. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the mantle, and wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them up unto the valley of Achor [trouble]. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones; and
- 25 they burned them with fire, and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones, unto this day; and the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.⁷

Although the lottery follows the same procedure in each story and the winner claims the same prize of death by stoning, the two stories do not affect the reader in the same way. Cruel as the punishment might be, the death of Achan does not grip one with the same nameless horror and dread provoked by the death of Tessie. The story world of the Book of Joshua is carefully ordered, and its moral laws are carefully defined. The reader, like the characters, knows the rules and the consequences of breaking them. The characters are sharply delineated in black and white to reinforce the clear demarcation between good and evil. The supernatural intervenes on the side of right and good in the conquest of Jericho immediately preceding the story and in the eventual destruction of Ai following this incident. More importantly, the beneficent supernatural guides the lottery, giving instructions beforehand to Joshua and singling out the wrongdoer for his just punishment.

By contrast, the ironic story world of "The Lottery" is ruled by chance and caprice. The highest authority of the story world here is the lottery itself in which one's fate is sealed by chance irrespective of merit or demerit. Although Tessie vainly appeals to a higher law of fairness and right, the story world has no moral rules, for the lottery has rendered them meaningless. Instead of lining up clearly on the side of good or evil, the characters exist in a chillingly impersonal world of gray amorality. Mr. Summers performs equally well in organizing square dances and the teenage club or in presiding over the lottery. With equal enthusiasm Mrs. Delacroix exchanges neighborly chitchat with Tessie before the lottery and urges her neighbors to hurry with their stones after the lottery. Unlike the romance hero Joshua, who overcomes with the help of the supernatural, the ironic heroine Tessie is inferior to the laws of the story world and to the other characters. She is trapped in a predicament which she did not seek and from which she cannot escape. No beneficent supernatural exists in the ironic story world to rescue Tessie, and she suffers a punishment undeserved which can only be labeled senseless, meaningless, and capricious. With due allowance for archetypal displacement, then, the two stories follow the same plot, use the same plan for the lottery, and end with the same stoning for the winner; the major difference is that Jackson has shifted her story from the romance narrative mode of the Book of Joshua to the ironic mode of "The Lottery."

JAMES M. GIBSON

Houghton College

⁷ Joshua 7:10-26, *Holy Bible*, English Revised Version (1885).