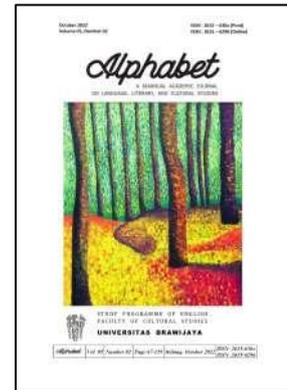


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Utopian Delusions in Shirley Jack-son's *The Lottery*: A Psychoanalysis Approach

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Utopian Delusions in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*: A Psychoanalysis Approach

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Abstract

This study reveals the relationship between the plot, characterizations, point of view, and symbols-allegory in the short story *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson. Through the psychoanalytic approach proposed by Carl Gustav Jung, this qualitative research also looks at the correlation between the utopian delusions that occur in the story. Based on the results of the textual analysis, it was found that the utopian delusion relation was found in three parts, including (1) the delusion of fidelity to tradition, (2) the delusion of time, and (3) the delusion of utopia. The application of psychoanalytic theory will propose a different point of view from previous studies which are still more focused only on the symbol-irony relation of tradition. In fact, the conflict, setting, actions of the characters, and symbols in the story are related to the human subconscious which requires perfection of action that results in delusions.

Keywords: delusion; utopia; psychoanalysis; tradition; time

Etymologically, utopia is a non-place (imaginary) that is simultaneously formed by the affirmation and rejection movements. Quoted by Vieira, the concept of utopia was first put forward by Sir Thomas More (1477 - 1535) in the literature entitled *Utopia*, which was inspired by the story of the explorations carried out by Amerigo Vespucci, Christopher Columbus, and Angelo Poliziano, where the explorers discovered new places in various parts of the world that had never been exposed before. More coined the word *utopia* from the Greek *ou-topos* which means *no place* or *nowhere*. These words are a play on words from the Greek *EU-topos* which is almost identical in meaning to *good place*. More's writings raised an important question in various circles at that time: is it true that a perfect world can be real-

ized? Many argue that the literature is a serious projection of a better way of life or even a satire that More deliberately presented an unclear picture of the direction of European politics in the 15th century. More is also aware of the otherness that appears to be a strong basis for legitimizing the discovery of the other space, namely with the other person, a different life order must be formed. Since this was a novelty at the time, this new order required a new word (Vieira, 2010). However, even though it is imaginary, according to Taylor, a utopian order that exists in the midst of society can occur in disorders of disconnection. In disorders of disconnection, a person can be stated to lack empathy and have a highly individualistic attitude. This triggers a person to become overpowered and feel the most right. The per-

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son sees his existence to have unlimited power and only serves hierarchical power (Taylor, 2021).

Despite its imaginary nature, utopia has become an idealism of perfection for various groups in living a life that is considered better. In a utopian life, there is an expectation of a future vision that shows that life is not based on destiny alone, but on humans who determine their own destiny (Vieira, 2010). A living projection with a perfect vision of the future can have consequences for its adherents. The existence of an imminent attitude of professionalism and not being able to accept differences or mistakes is a characteristic of one of the utopian ideals. This symptom is also very closely related to the symptoms of delusions. One of the symptoms of delusion in question is the existence of a belief that is believed to be true, even though this belief can be wrong and can harm others (Kiran, 2009). According to Hossain, Carl Jung stated that there will always be a relationship between human behavior in myths and legends. This also explains that psychoanalysis has a mutual relationship with literary works. The problem of this utopian delusion, in fact, can also be found and studied in various literary works (Hossain, 2017).

Psychoanalysis is a discipline branch that specifically examines the human psychic condition, which was first coined by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). The influence of Freud at the beginning of the early 20th century on literature and culture is hard to ignore. Although in the early days of his career and his work drew a lot of criticism, Freud's findings in the field of psychoanalysis became the main basis that made psychoanalysis important to study and at the same time became a new method for analyzing the experience of human emotions. One of the cornerstones of psychoanalysis that he discovered is that a person can have self-assumptions, and these assumptions can be split through the mind between the conscious and the subconscious. Freud coined the term *psychoanalysis* and began to study it himself in 1897. In 1900, he began to develop various concepts and principles of psychoa-

analysis, resulting in his first major work entitled *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud found in the case of narcissism, the id, ego, and superego emerge as the root cause of the problem. Freud's studies focus on the structural model of the mind and the conflict between eros, the libido, the drive or instinct for life and self-preservation, and Thanatos (death). Miller also pointed out Lacan's invention in *The Invention of Delusion* that delusions occur because of a phenomenon that places a person in an alienated condition, alienated with anxiety, and has no roots in personality, awareness, and even personal characteristics. If a person experiences these delusional symptoms, his delusions will manifest as things he believes to be true and may even influence his way of thinking. Delusions can be believed to be true, although this belief can be wrong and harm others. Social background, education, and culture can also influence the development of delusions. People from lower social class backgrounds and inadequate education can influence how people think, which can also create a culture or tradition based on subjective thinking. This subjective way of thinking is also a result of the absence of the development of reason or logic. In other words, actions are taken only based on what a person believes to be the right action. As a result, the belief becomes immanent in a person because the belief is carried out of habit, and then there is a rejection of the work of reason or logic, and there is a negative manifestation attitude (blaming or punishing someone) for the non-conformance of tradition to people who reject the same belief. This subjective way of thinking is also a result of the absence of the development of reason or logic. In other words, actions are taken only based on what a person believes to be the right action. Miller also stated that Carl Gustav Jung noted how delusional people unhesitatingly project their own assumptions about hating or liking other people. Self-reflection is considered not too important or even difficult, so most of them prefer to judge others without holding back. This action without realizing it is a practice that only projects and makes oneself a victim of mere illu-

sions. Jung also saw how delusional people have an attitude of not taking into account injustice, and they never consider the loss of personal character. This action is used by other people who are deemed necessary to get the injustice. Projection of assumptions, attitudes, and values toward other people, apply if there is a person or group of people who do not like other people, are considered to have negative attitudes, or hold unwelcome values. With these projections, we are led to believe that the breakdown of personal relationships and the occurrence of havoc in society, is a reason to legitimize the unfair treatment of people who are hated or feared. Attitudes and actions like this are part of the foundation of the delusion of the perfection of a community (Miller, 2008).

Since psychoanalysis has been applied to some literary works, several researchers have also conducted *The Lottery* analysis using the psychoanalysis approach. Although there are quite a lot of analyzes with a psychoanalytic approach, the focus of this research is different from the previous researchers. In research written by Intan Siti Nugraha and Sutiono Mahdi from Padjadjaran University, entitled *Transitivity System on Building Character of Mr. Summers in The Lottery by Shirley Jackson*, they examined the characterizations in the short story using the transitivity Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) approach. The focus of this research is on one of the characters, Mr. Summers, and see the verbal use that constructs the characters. Further research by Essy Sham, entitled *Symbol and Irony in Shirley Jackson's The Lottery Short Story*. In his research Sham uses Jung's psychoanalytic theory approach for explaining the symbols and irony. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between symbols and irony that show ancient traditional practices that no longer see family kinship or close people. The next study was carried out by Fuyu Chen entitled *A Representative and a Scapegoat: Analysis of Mrs. Hutchinson in The Lottery*, in which the focus is on the psychological condition of all the characters in the short story. Based on the results of the study through a psychological the-

ory approach, Chen presents the character Mrs. Hutchinson as a victim of cruel rituals due to the psychological conditions of the city dwellers who have carried out the ritual of *brutal primitive ceremonies* for several generations. Subsequent research has been carried out by Novalima Pradnya Paramitha, entitled *Social Domination and Marginalization in Shirley Jackson's The Lottery: Critical Discourse Analysis and Appraisal Study*. In her research, Paramitha uses critical discourse analysis theory related to the study of metanarrative and scrutinizes the concept of doxa and symbolic violence in the story. She also examines how the relationship between the use of diction in *The Lottery* is closely related to domination and acts of violence. The next research is conducted by Siqui Long entitled *Silence or Collusion, Civilization or Barbarism: Collective Violence in "The Lottery" and "The Knife Thrower"*. Long compares the thematic similarities of violence that occur in the two short stories that are correlated with the ritual attributes of a community's tradition. Contrasting with previous researchers, this research focuses on the existence of utopian delusions and will prove that the delusional attitude of utopia related to the manifestation of the behavior of a community can occur in the midst of urban communities as well as the practice of community traditions that should not be reprehensible.

METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. This method explains that qualitative research is one of the research procedures that produces descriptive data in the form of speech or writing and the behavior of the people being observed. The qualitative approach is expected to be able to produce descriptions of speech, writing, and or observable behavior of a particular individual, group, community, and or organization in a particular context that is studied from a complete, comprehensive, and holistic perspective. However, this research will not only be a descriptive explanation but also answer the questions argumentatively, based on the corpus, the formula-

tion of the problem, and the theoretical basis used (Creswell, 2007).

Additionally, the focus of this research is to see the relation and manifestation of how this utopian delusion can occur. The first step is to describe the background of the problem. The second step is to present evidence of the problems that occurred. The data obtained from words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in the short story *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson were studied using the psychoanalytic theory promoted by Carl Gustav Jung.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher will describe the results of the analysis of the psychoanalytic theory approach in the form of data exposure and its relationships that prove the existence of utopian delusions in the short story *The Lottery*.

Results

After doing the research, data showing the relation of delusional utopia will be described in three parts, namely (1) Delusion of Faithfulness to Tradition, (2) Delusion of Time, and (3) Delusion of Utopia. The results of this analysis are described in detail in the discussion subsection.

Discussion

Delusions of Faithfulness to Tradition

According to Lacan, the existence of an imminent attitude toward the faithfulness of tradition is evidence of the occurrence of delusions of the perfection of a community (Miller, 2008). All actions taken must follow traditions that have been practiced for a long time and must not be changed, whatever the reason. The practice of behavior that must conform to this tradition is described in the opening story of *The Lottery*, where the women in the city wear the same dress and position according to the order of the family hierarchy before the lottery draw begins.

The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-

summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The women, wearing faded house dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk. They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip as they went to join their husbands. Soon the women, standing by their husbands, began to call to their children, and the children came reluctantly, having to be called four or five times. Bobby Martin ducked under his mother's grasping hand and ran, laughing, back to the pile of stones. His father spoke up sharply, and Bobby came quickly and took his place between his father and his oldest brother (Jackson, 1995, p. 78)

The quote describes how the women dress in simple clothes with gloomy colors. This is in contrast to summer fashion in general, where most people wear lighter colors and lighter fabrics. However, women in the city are described as wearing sweaters. In addition, it is also explained how the wives posit themselves. When their husbands arrive and begin to gather in the town square, the wives are depicted following their husbands and calling for the children as soon as possible. The position of children, particularly sons, is between their father and older brother, whereas the wives are right next to their respective husbands.

There is also a supporting tool for drawing the lottery. It is explained that it is very ancient. This can be seen in how the tool's material and the color of the wooden box used to store the lottery are both faded.

There was a story that the present box had been made with some pieces of the box that had preceded it, the one that had been constructed when the first people settled down to make a village here. Every year, after the lottery, Mr. Summers began talking again about a new box, but every year the subject was allowed to fade off without anything being done. The black box grew shabbier

each year: by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly along one side to show the original wood color, and in some places faded or stained. (Jackson, 1995, p. 79).

The quote describes how a very old faded black wooden box is still used to maintain tradition. Suggestions for replacing the old box are always put forward but never get a response. This incident demonstrates the attitude of the city's residents who try to preserve tradition even if it is in the form of material that is actually unsuitable for use. The black wooden box is the key to the center of rituals and traditions that must be followed, including the town's oldest figures. This quote also demonstrates the practice of sticking to tradition as the key to controlling the community and respecting the hierarchical power that has existed for generations. Furthermore, the replacement of the black wooden box appears to imply a shift or even disloyalty of tradition.

"They do say," Mr. Adams said to Old Man Warner, who stood next to him, "that over in the north village they're talking of giving up the lottery. "

Old Man Warner snorted. "Pack of crazy fools," he said. "Listening to the young folks, nothing's good enough for them. Next thing you know, they'll be wanting to go back to living in caves, nobody work anymore, live that way for a while. Used to be a saying about Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon. ' First thing you know, we'd all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There's always been a lottery," he added petulantly. "Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody. "

"Some places have already quit lotteries," Mrs. Adams said.

"Nothing but trouble in that," Old Man Warner said stoutly. "Pack of young fools. (Jackson, 1995, p. 82)

One of the characters in the story, Mr. Adams, explained to the city's elder, Old Man Warner, that the tradition of drawing lotteries is no longer practiced in some cities. Hearing this, Old Man Warner was furious and said it would be foolish to give up the lottery drawing tradition. From the words of the city elder, it can be seen that the tradition of drawing the lottery is related to the welfare of the city and as a form of respect for their predecessors. Old Man Warner believes that if the lottery tradition is not carried out, the city will suffer a catastrophe in the form of food shortages. In other words, places that have abandoned the lottery tradition are considered abnormal. The practice of this ancient tradition is otherwise considered normal.

The ancient practices in the story prove the occurrence of delusional bonds due to an overestimation of traditional practices as well as a manifestation of a sense of being invaded by anxiety as proposed by Miller (Miller, 2008). The townspeople are described as *insanely* loyal to this tradition not because they are happy doing it but because there is an overlap in belief for generations; if they ignore the tradition, it will bring death. They are ruled by anxiety, not by their logic, which makes them reluctant to leave or change the tradition. Being anxious equals acting not according to tradition and that will bring punishment and disaster. This evidence is in accordance with what was conveyed by Lacan (Miller, 2008) that a delusional attitude indicates a rejection of the work of reason or logic, and a negative manifestation attitude, namely blaming or punishing someone for a non-conformity with tradition.

Delusion of Time

According to Lacan, as quoted by Miller, one of the symptoms of delusion is the presence of a state of alienation from things. Past, present, and future are all seen as *non-existent* times because they have no significance. The present, or *now*, is the time that seems to be open. The past and future, on the other hand, are merely dimensions and are not actual (Miller, 2008). In *The Lottery*, it is highlighted that

citizens have continually followed the lottery custom in the time by their own definition.

When the technical instructions for the lottery are being announced, most of the townspeople at first do not even seem to care much because they already know exactly what steps to take. However, what happens in that town is that the time seems non-existent as they have been accustomed to the tradition along with its rules. They also do not count the time because time has been frozen by centuries-old practice. It should be practiced and recognized as such from generation to generation. This is why the townspeople have an indifferent attitude toward one another and pay no attention to their surroundings; time does not exist for them. They behave like robots and are unconcerned about reality. Despite hearing that another town has abandoned the tradition, this town's residents see nothing significant in abandoning the tradition. Nothing else matters because of the lottery. The townspeople are trapped in the illusion of time, which isolates them from others.

There was a great deal of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open. There were the lists to make up—of heads of families, heads of households in each family, members of each household in each family. There was the proper swearing-in of Mr. Summers by the postmaster, as the official of the lottery; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; some people believed that the official of the lottery used to stand just so when he said or sang it, others believed that he was supposed to walk among the people, but years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse. There had been, also, a ritual salute, which the official of the lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box, but this also had changed with

time, until now it was felt necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching. (Jackson, 1995, p. 80)

Over time, there are some rules that are completely followed by the residents, but there are also rules that they ignore. The complex rules followed by the villagers show that the lottery tradition is still an efficient logical ritual with a crucial purpose, while the rules that are starting to be ignored indicate the form of ritual in this tradition has undergone many adjustments. The adjustment here is when Mr. Summers tries to maintain tradition by following an elaborate system of rules for preparing lottery papers and compiling a list of families in the village. As the lottery draw begins, he explains a series of specific rules to the townspeople, including who has to take the paper from the black box and when they have to open it. When someone is unable to take the lottery, there are rules about who should be next in line. At the same time, there are traditions that gradually fade until they are completely abandoned by participants, such as saluting and singing songs that accompany Summer's lottery preparations, which are no longer practiced. In this case, Mr. Summers, the lottery draw coordinator, is the only person who can decide when to do or not do the things listed in the lottery draw. He *freezes* time for the townspeople in order to ensure that they follow the tradition.

On the other hand, Old Man Warner's character in *The Lottery* also emphatically states that he had carried out the lottery tradition *seventy-seventh times*, the number of times Old Man Warner considers a reminder of how many times the lottery tradition has been and will continue to be, not as a count of Old Man Warner's age number, but as the time of operation for the lottery. He also explicitly said that the community that no longer practiced the lottery tradition he considered as stupid people because those who decided not to practice the lottery tradition were willing to accept a new perspective which he considered unnecessary for this city. This means they believe the replacement of tradition is a manifes-

tation of their rejection of new things in their lives, and they believe they will be weak as a result. They claim to reflect on the past, but this tradition seems to be able to stop time. The past is made like the *present* and that is the truth by the townspeople's definition. Changing traditions is unacceptable because it equates to proclaiming to look to the future and accept new views, thus, they always make the past like the present. This evidence is in line with what Miller has proposed; the existence of a condition of alienation from things is one of the symptoms of delusion, according to Lacan, quoted by Miller. Past, present, and future are all seen as non-existent times because they have no significance. The present, or now, is the time that seems to be open. The past and future, on the other hand, are merely dimensions and are not actual (Miller, 2008).

Delusion of Utopia

Utopia is a picture of a place where one community has similarities in terms of the social order of life, including traditions, in order to guarantee a perfect life. In *The Lottery*, there is a tradition practiced as a manifestation of the regularity of the order of life, in which every individual in the city is required to affirm the tradition of the lottery; even though the tradition would take one's life. Doubt about tradition is considered as an assumption of refusal not to do tradition anymore. In this case, this attitude is seen as a threat to the sustainability of a community and to hierarchical power (Thomas, 2012).

The social order in *The Lottery* has been maneuvered and obliged for decades by planting traditional ideas for generations, and as a result, they have already gained a deep understanding of the lottery tradition without looking back or following any guidelines.

"All right, folks," Mr. Summers said.
"Let's finish quickly."

Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones. The pile of stones the boys had made earlier

was ready; there were stones on the ground with the blowing scraps of paper that had come out of the box. 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." (Jackson, 1995, p. 84)

The story shows that the children have collected stones in the town square for the stoning tradition. Other children have made a mound of stone in a corner where all the residents gathered. When the lottery is gotten by one of the community members, each community member including children will automatically erase their empathy. Although family ties are an important aspect of the lottery tradition, each member can easily turn against another if one of them is chosen. The bitter fact of this tradition is that the implementation of the lottery tradition is based on family ties. They gather in certain groups in the town square, following the patriarchal rules to determine who is obliged to take the paper from the black box. Family ties in the lottery tradition don't exist any longer and those ties are quickly broken when it comes time to stone the target of the lottery's persecution. When Mrs. Hutchinson is found to have received the lottery, that is, a paper with a black circle, her husband and three children no longer see her as someone to be pitied, as the rest of the townspeople do. At that moment, there was no longer the figure of a wife or mother in Mrs. Hutchinson. She has lost her identity and status. Mrs. Hutchinson is no longer part of the community because she is considered part of the tradition that needs to be sacrificed. The stoning is led by the most powerful person in the community, Old Man Warner, who makes sure the tradition will never be gone.

Mrs. Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head.

Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams was

in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs. Graves beside him.

"It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her. (Jackson, 1995, p. 85)

In this story, Mrs. Hutchinson knows that she experiences injustice in the drawing of the lottery. Her opinion and her cry are not heard by the city's elders and other residents because self-reflection was considered a waste of time and against tradition. The townspeople in the story refuse the term *injustice* because for them there is no such thing. Injustice is only an illusion of rejection of the rules of the traditional order that should be carried out. This practice is equal to what Miller proposed that regardless of whether some people like or hate another person, people unreservedly project their own assumptions about them. Self-reflection is regarded as unimportant, even if it is troublesome and difficult, so most people prefer to judge others without reservation. Without realizing it, this action is a practice that only projects and makes one a victim of mere illusions. Such people do not consider injustice or the loss of personal character. Nevertheless, it is employed by others who are deemed necessary to correct the injustice. Projections of assumptions, attitudes, and values onto others are likely if a person dislikes other people or has negative attitudes, or holds unwelcome values, such projections can harm and cause havoc in society (Miller, 2008). This assumption leads to believing that doing things unfair to the majority of people is an acceptable act because such attitudes and actions are part of the foundation of a society's delusion of perfection as what townspeople do in *The Lottery*.

Based on the lottery tradition in *The Lottery*, it can be inferred that the lottery is a medium of delusion of utopia. The alienation of time and place, as well as the faithfulness for the unquestionable tradition, is considered perfection in handling the community. Although they're disconnected from the outside world, they consider they have run the best practice in society. In addition to the statement by

Thomas, even though it is an imaginary, utopian order present in the midst of a society that can bring disorders of disconnection, some people keep going on with this imagination (Thomas, 2012). Furthermore, in the practice of disorders of disconnection, a person can become overpowered and feel the most right. The person sees his or her existence to have unlimited power and only serves hierarchical power. This condition is in accordance with the phenomenon of restless city dwellers, who do not have the roots of personality, awareness, or even personal characteristics, and believe that what they practice is right, even though these beliefs can harm others (Miller, 2008). *The Lottery* shows the delusion of utopia by creating the so-called perfect society just because they keep the lottery tradition where questioning the rules will cause death. The delusion is imminent; something that is strongly believed to be the truest. It openly shows a rejection of the work of logic and a negative manifestation attitude like blaming or punishing someone for non-conformance with traditions.

CONCLUSION

The Lottery by Shirley Jackson has provided readers with the allegorical message of the story which states the truth about how old tradition could be strongly planted in someone's mind. This story not just provides us with an eerie story but also how the consequences for those who disobey tradition will lead to death. The story also shows the possibility of how ancient practices might still be brought and practiced in today's life as the most human dream of life's perfection. In addition, the practice is considered the most suitable one to maintain society's order, and alienation from time is mandatory. Thus, this condition is linked to the delusion of utopia where perfection is imaginary and unreasonable.

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