

The Monstrous “We”: The Society as the Ultimate Gothic Creature in Shirley Jackson’s *The Lottery*

Ömer Özdemir¹

Abstract

In most cases of Gothic literature, the monster is portrayed as a freakishly different entity that inhabits the human world. Nevertheless, Shirley Jackson’s *The Lottery* declines such a conception of the monster and goes much further, endorsing the monstrosity of a Society. In this chapter, the monster acquires no supernatural connotations; rather, it becomes a self-sustaining organism composed of integrated citizens. The monster depicted here is a degraded collective, one led by the black box of tradition and operating through the mechanism of a hive mind, which renders individual moral agency invisible under the weight of the whole. Moreover, the study conducted investigates the representation of such a ‘Social Monster’, as it questions the ways the monster/method of horror produces evil through the banality of evil, which includes the use of administrative bureaucracy and civic order to mask the ritual of killing. In fact, the monster’s gratification consists in only one thing: the maintenance of homeostasis and, though only in the name of an antiquated belief, blood as the indispensable medium of exchange. Moreover, the present study highlights the Gothic relevance of such a monster and argues that the Social Monster typifies a dark allegory of systemic complicity for our time. It portrays a world in which institutional violence has become normal and collective, cruelly, yet mercilessly, sacrifices the individual to keep the status quo. Eventually, the text uncovers that the real Gothic terror is not something dark lurking, but the faceless, stone-throwing crowd that society becomes when tradition prevails over humanity.

1 Karabuk University, Orcid: 0000-0002-6733-967X

Introduction

Traditionally, the source of terror in Gothic literature has been the ‘Other’, a different-worldish anomaly, which comes in as an unwelcome guest to the ordered sanctity of the civilized world. Gothic genre, as David Punter (2009) elaborates in *the Literature of Terror*, is essentially about a “breakdown of boundaries” between the rational and the irrational, and the mentioned boundary breakdown, most of the time, is the fear of the “barbaric” past that “haunts” the industrialised present (p.5). Monsters in these texts, such as *Dracula* or *The Monk*, are beings that are cast out in order that order can be restored. Nevertheless, Shirley Jackson’s groundbreaking short story, *The Lottery* (2001), does away with this stereotype in a very different way by moving the monstrous from the dark corners of the room to the banal centre of the village square. Therefore, this chapter argues that the main villain in Jackson’s narrative is not a supernatural entity or a deviant individual, but rather a Society that acts as a single, self-regulating organism, which seems to awaken every year only to devour its own parts. Through the analysis of the story, with a focus on the “Social Monster,” I aim to reveal the Gothic framework, where the villain is the collective identity, and the fright is not caused by the disruption of order but rather by its brutal, bureaucratic, and ritualistic aspects.

An attempt to delineate the features of the “Social Monster” requires one to first ask questions of the misleading background that disguises it. The story is told on a day that seems vehemently anti-Gothic: “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” (Jackson, 2001, p. 7). There are no ruined abbeys or stormy nights; instead, there is a rural idyll of a village which is not specified. The thing is that this very familiarity is the source of the terror. The author refers to Sigmund Freud’s (2003) notion of the *unheimlich* (the uncanny) when he asserts that the fear in Jackson’s village stems from the transformation of the *heimlich* (home-like/familiar) into a place of danger. Freud posits that the uncanny is not new or alien but “something that has long been familiar to the psyche and has been estranged from it only through the process of repression” (Freud, 2003, p. xlii). In *The Lottery*, the repressed element is the primal violence inherent in community formation. By introducing the proposal of ritual murder into the midst of the banal “planting and rain, tractors and taxes” (Jackson, 2001, p. 8) conversation, Jackson succeeds in creating dissonance in which the home becomes the primary site of dread.

“Social Monsters” typically do not exhibit emotional malice, but instead

have a sociological imperative that essentially functions as a survival instinct for the collective. The village is like a hive mind that is very strict in its law enforcement, which leads to what René Girard (1988) calls “unanimous violence” being used to keep social cohesion. In his groundbreaking book, *Violence and the Sacred*, Girard argues that communities resolve their internal conflicts through the “surrogate victim” mechanism. To prevent an infinite series of reciprocal violences, such as blood feuds, that would result in the destruction of society, the group directs its overall rage at a single, totally random scapegoat, thereby solving the problem of the others (Girard, 1988). This makes for the monstrous situation, in which the mob, identified as the monster, does the killing in order to avert its own annihilation. The “Monstrous We” in *The Lottery* is after homeostasis; the ritual is not carried out because of the hatred of the victim, Tessie Hutchinson, but out of the necessity to keep the structure of the whole intact. This necessity reveals itself as a belief embodied in Old Man Warner’s ancient saying, “Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon” (Jackson, 2001, p. 18). The terror, as a result, is a utilitarian one; the monster consumes to guarantee the harvest.

Such individual consumption is contingent on the performance of a psychological rejection process. The one chosen by the black box undergoes a terrible transformation in front of the collective; the person is immediately transformed from ‘insider’ to ‘outsider’. At this moment, Tessie Hutchinson becomes the abject, as per Julia Kristeva’s (1982) terminology, the thing “opposed to I” that must be thrown out if the cleanliness and borders of the subject are to be maintained. Kristeva argues that the abject is “not me. Not that. But not nothing, either”; it is a threat that needs to be permanently put aside for the subject to live (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). Before she drew the paper with the black dot, Tessie was a very lively part of the social body. She even joked with Mrs. Delacroix to “be a good sport” (Jackson, 2001, p. 20). The instant the slip is revealed, she is no longer a neighbour but a pollutant, human waste that the social organism is obliged to eliminate in order to survive. The rapidity of this change is the Social Monster’s hallmark move: it can redefine its definition of ‘human’ in an extremely short time to justify its exploitation morally.

The identification of the collective as a Gothic monstrosity in this way is in line with Jackson’s own declared intention and the text’s historical reception. As her biographer Ruth Franklin (2017) brought up, the story’s first appearance in *The New Yorker*, led to a record number of subscription cancellations and hate letters, not because the story was unreal, but because it was a mirror. In her own words, Jackson claimed that she was aiming to “shock the story’s readers with a graphic dramatization of the pointless

violence and general inhumanity in their own lives" (Franklin, 2017, p. 235). The angry reaction of the public serves as proof of the effectiveness of the "Monster Image"; readers understood the monster not as a vampire or a werewolf, but as the faceless complicity of their own neighbours.

The Anatomy of the Beast: Critical Perspectives on the Collective

To understand the village as a monster, you should not only consider the narrative of the story but also analyse its symbolic elements. The organs of the body here mean the symbols that are contained in the story. Every organ is a symbol of the collective, a concept explored in the text. The horror of the lottery has been seen by literary scholars as the result of the interaction between the evil of the old ritual and the evil of the modern world. Helen E. Nebeker (1974) sees the story as a "symbolic tour de force" and hence objects in the ritual like the black box, three-legged stool and the stones are not mere things but it folklore artefacts binding the collective. Nebeker (1974) brings her point home by indicating that the example of the three-legged stool can be a representation of the Christian trinity or the Fates being distorted and hence the implication that the creature derives its power a perversion of the sacred or mythological one (p. 106). Here we see the "Social Monster" not as a rogue mob but as a well-organized entity supported by a regressive religious and historical dogmatic core.

Besides that, the origin of this social monster-marvel of a tale is ancient; the implication is an entity that has existed for millennia in human history. John M. Gibson (1984) compares Jackson's story directly to the Old Testament story of Achan in the Book of Joshua, where casting lots is used to identify a sinner who is then stoned by the community. Gibson (1984) notes that whereas the biblical narrative provides the rationale for the violence, Jackson eliminates the moral justification, leaving only the "mathematical" process of selection (p. 195). This marks a significant change that distinguishes the Social Monster character from its counterpart in the Old Testament: it retains the predation mechanics of the Old Testament, but now, lacking moral guidance, it is a machine of pure, meaningless efficiency.

Angela Hague (2005) points out that the monster's ability to blend in with the home environment is what she considers the story's lasting impact. In *A Faithful Anatomy of Our Times*, Hague points out that Jackson's work can be seen as the dissection of mid-century consciousness, unveiling the violence that lies beneath the surface of custom. In such a case, the monster is not an invader, but the community itself, as it is argued. In the transition from "planting and rain, tractors and taxes" to murder, the villagers show what Gorman Beauchamp (1981) calls a distorted "distributive justice"

whereby the state, or here, the collective, takes the absolute right to kill its citizens for a presumed greater good (pp. 202–203). Hence, the articles agree that the Monster Image in *The Lottery* is a hybrid monster, carrying the symbolic load of the ritual of old and the bureaucratic coldness of the modern state.

The Mechanics of Horror: Bureaucracy as a Weapon

The monster of bureaucracy is, perhaps, the most terrifying weapon of the Social Monster, i.e., the village collective identity. The horror in *The Lottery* derives from the very fine detail with which the community manages its own self-destruction. Unlike Gothic monsters caused by chaos or uncontrolled emotions, Jackson's monster is an entity that deals with administrative procedures. The horror here is about the deadliest and the most ordinary being juxtaposed, creating a system in which murder is handled with the same casual efficiency as any other civic event. The bureaucratic monster, to put it differently, is Mr. Summers, the officer who runs the lottery. He is not characterized as an executioner, but as "a round-faced, jovial man" who is also in charge of the coal business (Jackson, 2001, p. 9). His characterisation plays a major part in the monster's camouflage; he normalises the violence by making it an integral part of the schedule of the ordinary life of the village. The story goes on to say that the lottery is held by Mr. Summers in connection with "the square dances, the teen-age club, the Halloween program" (Jackson, 2001, p. 9). By putting the ritual of picking the victim at the same level of administration as social dances and youth clubs, the Social Monster downgrades human life to that of a mere logistical unit. It is noted by Angela Hague (2005) that this merging of the trivial with the tragic lies at the very core of the story's power to disturb; the horror is born of the perfect integration of violence into the domestic sphere.

The emotional distance of this operation from the audience's point of view is very close to Hannah Arendt's (1963) idea of the "banality of evil". In her study of the Holocaust's administrative machinery, Arendt found that extreme evil is very often perpetrated not by sadistic monsters but by ordinary functionaries who take the society they live in for granted. Mr. Summers is the village's terrifying normalcy personified; he is a desk murderer brought from the city to a pastoral setting. By doing the ritual as he does his coal business without losing his casual efficiency, he takes away the moral side of the act; thus, the killing of a neighbour becomes no more than a clerical procedure. As a result, the terror of Jackson's story is in line with Arendt's view that such thoughtlessness can be more destructive than all evil instincts put together (p. 252).

The local organ of this bureaucratic beast is the black box. Helen E. Nebeker (1974) identifies the box as a powerful symbol of the "dead hand of the past" and argues that its rundown state signifies the decay of the tradition it represents (p. 103). The description of the box - "splintered badly along one side to show the original wood colour, and in some places faded or stained" (Jackson, 2001, p. 10) - reflects the villagers' own ritual. They no longer know the chants or the salute, just as the box has lost its original shine. Still, they hold on to the object with great fear and disbelief that replacing the box would be "to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box" (Jackson, 2001, p. 10). The box is the monster's externalized brain; it contains the logic of the kill (the slips of paper) in its old wooden frame, thus freeing individual villagers from the necessity of thinking or choosing.

The actual agent of the monster's will is the lists, which denote the final instrument of bureaucracy. The horror is brought about through a process of mathematical narrowing: from the community to the family, from the family to the household, and from the household to the individual. Such a method of elimination gradually instils in one the sense of inevitability which, according to John M. Gibson (1984), is very much like that of the casting lots in the Old Testament, only without God's intervention. The wording used by Mr. Summers is very much that of a census taker: "Heads of families first... heads of households in each family... members of each household in each family" (Jackson, 2001, p. 11). This classification strips the victims of their humanity long before the stones are thrown at them. When Tessie Hutchinson claims that "It wasn't fair", she is not addressing morality, but procedural justice. She accuses Mr. Summers of "not giving him time enough to take any paper he wanted" (Jackson, 2001, p. 20). The monster has so thoroughly inculcated its parts that even the victim concedes to the lottery's premise, contesting only the method of its execution, not its existence.

Lastly, to understand what this monster wants, one must see the only person who gives a reason for the violence: Old Man Warner. While the younger generation considers the lottery as a bother, Warner brings out the monster's instinct to survive: "Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon" (Jackson, 2001, p. 18). The Social Monster is a utility-type beast; it wants homeostasis and agricultural prosperity. It follows a very basic economic principle where blood is the price paid for survival. Warner cannot see any good in the north village of their neighbours, who are thinking of giving up the lottery, and calls them a "pack of crazy fools" who will soon be "eating stewed chickweed and acorns" (Jackson, 2001, p. 18). The monster's desire

is, therefore, not sadistic but existential. It does kill because it thinks that if there is no sacrifice, the social and agricultural order will fall, and the village will be back to “living in caves” (Jackson, 2001, p. 18). So, the lottery mechanism of horror is basically the nightmare that the collective is ready to kill its own children, not out of hate but out of a fearful surrender to the status quo.

The Patriarchal Beast: Gender, Scapegoating, and the Feminine Abject

The village Social Monster operates on the level of a collective hive mind, but an investigation of its internal hierarchy shows that it is not a gender-neutral being. It is a patriarchal beast, fundamentally. The lottery’s mechanism is not only for saving the harvest but also for backing up a male-dominated order of society where women’s agency is involuntarily erased. If the black box is the monster’s brain, the male’s hands are the only ones that hold it. The terror of *The Lottery*, therefore, is made to have a gender aspect, which makes it doubly terrible. The monster demands submission from everybody, but from women, it requires complete erasure. This text, first of all, reveals the patriarchal structure of the monster through the performance of the ritual. The lottery is conducted by Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves, characters whose names signify the seasons (life/summer) and death (grave), thus symbolizing the world as a whole run by male authority. Women, on the other hand, are pushed to the margins. They come “shortly after their menfolk”, and stand by their husbands in “faded house dresses and sweaters” (Jackson, 2001, p. 8). This description in terms of looks points out their passiveness; they are like the rest of the village, invisible and secondary. Lynette Carpenter (1984), in *The Establishment and Preservation of Female Identity*, argues that Jackson frequently portrays a world where female identity is weak and depends on male approval. In the village square, a woman’s identity is often defined by her connection to a patriarch. This becomes clear when Mr. Summers says, “Wife draws for her husband... Don’t you have a grown boy to do it for you, Jancy?” (Jackson, 2001, p. 14). The Social Monster follows a very strict succession rule: power is handed down from father to son. A woman can only be a temporary stand-in for a man, and even then, her involvement is met with regret rather than acknowledgement.

The choice of Tessie Hutchinson as the victim is not a matter of chance, statistical anomaly, but a narrative device that uncovers the misogynistic foundation of the social beast. Tessie is the only villager who comes late, the only one who makes jokes, and most importantly, the only one who verbally

protests the black box's authority. Her shouting, "You didn't give him time enough to take any paper he wanted. I saw you. It wasn't fair!" (Jackson, 2001, p. 20), means that she is challenging the male-run bureaucracy's procedural integrity. The Social Monster reacts by activating its immune system to keep it quiet. The very first person who seizes her revolt is not Mr. Summers but her own husband, significantly. Bill Hutchinson's command, "Shut up, Tessie," (Jackson, 2001, p. 20) is a very sad moment of betrayal when the smallest unit, the family, turns into the needs of the bigger one, the collective. Roberta Rubenstein (1996), in *House Mothers and Haunted Daughters*, suggests that Jackson's fiction primarily explores the haunted domestic space, where the familiar roles of mother and wife are inverted and become a place of entrapment. Bill's denial of Tessie is his indication that his Monstrous We compromise comes before his wife's. He forcibly takes the slip from her hand, thus performing her transformation from subject to object with him.

The harsh treatment of Tessie can be looked at through Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject. As the scapegoat, Tessie stands for the chaotic, emotional, and disruptive characters that have been traditionally assigned as feminine in a patriarchal binary, which must be eliminated if the clean order of phallic law (the box, the list, the stone) is to be maintained. Her killing is definitely a ceremonial way of purging. The Social Monster is not satisfied with the killing alone; it goes to the extent of silencing her. Her last words, "It isn't fair, it isn't right", are, in fact, overwhelmed with the sound of the stones (Jackson, 2001, p. 25). Rubenstein (1996) points out that in Jackson's work, the mother character is a main source of terror, being consumed by the very domesticity she is trying to maintain (p. 319). The core horror of *The Lottery* is not just the death of a woman but that she is killed by the stones of her own children. Little Davy Hutchinson receives stones to commit matricide. It is the patriarchal beast's total triumph here: it manages to brainwash the next generation to do away with the maternal origin, thus ensuring the unbroken cycle of male violence.

Moreover, the village's Social Monster achieves terrifying conformity among the women using the lottery as a tool. The other village women do not come to Tessie's rescue. Instead, they turn into the monster's agents. Mrs. Delacroix, who a minute ago had been joking with Tessie, picks "a stone so large that both hands had to be used to lift it" (Jackson, 2001, p. 24). The betrayal here is a faithful representation of the collective's wickedness: it turns the oppressed into their own oppressors. Carpenter (1984) argues that such internalized misogyny is a woman's way of survival; by becoming perpetrators of violence, women momentarily put themselves

on the side of the aggressor's power, thus they think they are safe from being the next victim. Therefore, the Social Monster in *The Lottery* is uncovered as a specifically male entity that is masculine and brutal in essence, exploiting the female body for its sad needs, and at the same time using tradition as a shield to defend itself against the charges of systematic annihilation of women who dare to speak out of turn.

Inheritance of the Stone: The Corrupted Innocence of Childhood

The survival of the Social Monster is not dependent only on the obedience of the adults but also on the successful brainwashing of the children. For the social organism to live beyond one generation, it must have a way of reproduction, a method of transmitting the virus of the black box into children's minds. In *The Lottery*, Jackson shows a horrifying childhood picture in which the innocent are not shielded but are systematically torn down and weaponized. Village children are not reluctant villagers; they are the monster's apprentices. The terror of the story is greatly intensified by the fact that the Monstrous We has come into the playground, thus turning the children's games into rehearsals of ritual murder.

The story begins with children coming together, a point that, at first glance, suggests a typical summer holiday. "School was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them" (Jackson, 2001, p. 7). Nevertheless, their conduct soon contradicts any idea of innocent freedom. School, usually a symbol of light and progress of the society, is found to be the main factory of the Social Monster's logic. Children do not run wild; they "quietly gathered for a while", their talk was still "of books and reprimands" (Jackson, 2001, p. 7). This remaining discipline highlights the village's educational structures, which serve to enforce conformity rather than nurture critical thinking. As Amy A. Griffin (1999) notes, Jackson continually questions the hidden curriculum of social institutions, suggesting that the real lesson taught is blind obedience to authority (p. 45). The move from the classroom to the square is done without interruption because both places follow the same authoritarian rules: listen to the official, obey the rules, and wait for your turn.

The children's association with the stones is the most disquieting aspect of their corruption. Even before the adults, the boys have already been working out the details of the killing: "Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones" (Jackson 2001, p. 7). The exact terms for the stones "smoothest and roundest" show a terrifying

de-violentizing of violence. Kids handle the murder weapons as if they were collectibles or playthings, thus separating the object from its deadly function. Helen E. Nebeker (1974) suggests that stones are the primary, pre-bureaucratic counterpart of the black box; while the box represents the decaying logic of adults, the stones signify the raw, unchanging force of the mob (pp. 102-103). Giving children the task of collecting stones is a way for the Social Monster to ensure that the younger generation is already involved in violence. They are not just witnesses; they are the providers of the ammunition. Their initial complicity with the ritual ties them with it by guilt, which makes it impossible for them to later inquire into it.

The disintegration of the family unit is most evident in the way Little Davy Hutchinson is treated. He is the youngest participant, a toddler who, by all rights, should be outside the monster's influence. Yet, the story takes pains to include him in the lottery mechanism. When the Hutchinsons are to draw, Mr. Summers orders, "Harry, you help little Dave" (Jackson, 2001, p. 22). The picture of the postmaster, a state official, showing a toddler the way to the black box is a brutal mockery of civic education. Davy, as he draws the paper, laughs, not realizing that he is taking a risk with his life and his family's. This laughter may be the most terrifying sound in the story, signifying the complete unawareness of the innocent to the killing machine happening around them.

However, the very climax is where the real horror is. The Social Monster not only insists on the youngest child of Tessie's participating in her slaying but also demands it: "The children had stones already, and someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles" (Jackson, 2001, p. 24). The entire moral order breakdown is embodied in this one sentence. The community neither protects the child from the dreadful act of killing the mother; it actually makes it easier. By putting the pebbles in Davy's hand, the villagers are bringing him to the Monstrous We. He is being taught that his loyalty to the collective comes first before his biological bond to his mother. As Freud (2003) points out in his study of the uncanny, the double often signals death; here, Davy is a small double of the mob, doing what they do and not understanding it (p. 142). Ultimately, children's presence is a compelling argument against the future of any village.

In numerous Gothic stories, the child serves as a symbol of possible salvation or a new beginning. In *The Lottery*, the child is the heir to the stone. The fact that the boys were defending their pile of stones against "raids of the other boys" (Jackson, 2001, p. 7) implies that they had already taken in the tribalism and brutality of the ritual from within. They were

guarding their ability to kill. The Social Monster, therefore, turns out to be a forever entity, not because it is beyond natural, but because it can bring forth offspring in the minds of its young. Until there is a Bobby Martin to gather stones and a Little Davy to throw them, the lottery will be with us forever. The purity of childhood is not only gone; it has been eaten and processed by the beast to provide another year's yield.

The Reflection in the Mirror: The Social Monster in the Contemporary World

One of the most unsettling elements of the Social Monster in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery* is its unwillingness to stay within the confines of the page. While one can generally comfortably categorize traditional Gothic monsters, such as vampires, ghosts, and werewolves, as fantasy, the being Jackson depicts in her story undergoes a frightful transformation that enables it to fit well with the structures of reality that is not fictional. In fact, the monster in *The Lottery* is nothing but the present-day world. The *Monstrous We* that Jackson analysed in 1948 is still alive and thriving; in fact, it has evolved, exchanging the physical stones of the village square for the digital and systemic weapons of the twenty-first century.

At the core of the monster's evil the scapegoat still stands the very basis of social structures of modern times. René Girard's concept of "unanimous violence" suggests that the sacrificial victim is a timeless one, necessary for communal stability (Girard, 1988). Nowadays, the lottery has left the agrarian village behind and gone virtual. The phenomenon of cancel culture, or online shaming, is a chilling and accurate reflection of Jackson's ritual. Villagers of the story need no personal ill-will in order to throw stones at Tessie; likewise, in the modern world, digital mobs are not really outraged at the victim of moral wrongdoing but engage in destruction of reputation or livelihood as a show of their moral virtue. The secret box is no longer the algorithmic feed that chooses the victim of the day, and stones have been replaced by hashtags and doxing. In both cases, the individual moral agent dissolves into the collective "We" and thus can find shelter and release in the annihilation of the abject Other. The Social Monster today is as eager to consume the exclusion of the deviant as it was in Jackson's fiction.

Moreover, the Social Monster's most comfortable home can be found in the expanded bureaucracies of the modern state and corporate world. The lottery's frightfulness lies in the fact that the villagers follow a rule, the black box, which is very old, has been used for a long time, is somewhat dirty or stained, and is even somewhat forgotten, yet they obey it without any

doubt or inquiry (Jackson, 2001, p. 8). This is the ultimate Gothic allegory for institutional inertia. Nowadays, it is viewed as systemic violence, i.e., the harm resulting from policies, zoning laws, and economic algorithms operating without oversight, although not directly caused by individuals. When a family is forced out of their home due to an automated banking error, or when a community is pushed to the margins because of historical redlining, they are the victims of the black box. The officials, the modern Mr. Summers, are merely the performers of a tradition they didn't create and don't challenge. According to Gorman Beauchamp (1981), "the state often assumes a form of distributive justice that overpowers the individual's rights" (p. 3). Jackson's monster is there to warn that a society that prioritizes procedure over the person is already on its way to stoning the individual.

The character of Old Man Warner is a powerful symbol of the reactionary nature of modern politics. His scorn of the north village, "Pack of crazy fools. Listening to the young folks, nothing's good enough for them," is a kind of rhetoric that is heard in contemporary debates on social progress (Jackson, 2001, p. 17). Warner is the Social Monster's immune system fighting against the change. He likens the end of violence to the fall of civilization. This error, that injustice is what holds society together, can be found in today's conversations, where the mere suggestion of dismantling systemic structures of inequality is greeted with warnings of a complete wipeout of traditional values or heritage. The Social Monster survives by persuading its parts that the only alternative to the status quo is chaos. Jackson's story disproves this notion; the North Village has discontinued the lottery, and they haven't reverted to living in caves. The monster deceives in order to safeguard itself.

First, the Social Monster's relevance is corroborated by its historical and ongoing attempts to suppress the story itself. *The Lottery's* reaction, in fact, is another layer of the narrative. The society saw itself in the mirror and tried to break the glass as evidenced by scribbling up letters and subscription cancellations in 1948 and later by school curriculum challenges. Edna Bogert (1985) provides the example of the story being frequently challenged in schools, mainly by parents who say it damages children (p. 2). Similarly, Bill Brown et al. (1986) shed light on the reasons for censoring the text and give defendant voices, which describe the work's "violence" and "lack of religious hope" as their main grounds for objection (pp. 2-4). But to this, one must contend that the real reason behind censorship is the *heimlich* self-recognition. The Social Monster detests being named. By trying to prohibit the tale, the communities are performing the very rite Jackson talks about. They single out a deviant object that threatens their comfort and try to discard it in order to keep their idealized self-image intact. The

Lottery's censorship is a meta-textual stoning. It is an acknowledgment that the Monstrous We exists, that it is defensive, and that it can still be found in our school boards and libraries nowadays.

Hence, the Monster in *The Lottery* should not be considered a burden of a superstitious past, but rather a sharp and clear image of the present. It is a being that thrives in the gap between individual conscience and collective action. Whatever form it may assume, i.e., a social media mob, a faceless bureaucracy, or a book-banning committee, the Social Monster is still the ultimate apex predator of the human condition, thus proving that the scariest Gothic creature is the one that we see in the mirror every morning.

Conclusion

Shirley Jackson's "*The Lottery*" ultimately doesn't merely expand the Gothic genre; it largely uproots the Gothic genre altogether. Jackson's work, by a sort of genetic operation, eliminates the supernatural elements - the vampire, the ghost, the werewolf - and with that, she also removes the genre's number one means of comfort: the reassuring impossibility. Consequently, she reveals a monster much more terrifying, which cannot be repelled by sunlight or holy objects: the Social Monster. Hence, the argument made in this chapter is that the adversary of the story is not a single villain but the village as a whole, a self-regulated system run by bureaucratic inertia and patriarchal violence, both of which were the driving forces behind this system.

Unlike a typical Gothic "Other" that is from the outer margin and threatens the stability of civilization, Jackson's monster is "Self," a gestalt entity composed of average citizens who have relinquished their moral authority to the workings of the black box. This monster's terrifying quality is that it achieves its ends with an almost mechanical precision. It is not hidden in the darkness of the night; rather, it is under the bright light of the sun. Its deception is the normality of a "clear and sunny" day; its intellect is the rotting logic of an unquestioned tradition; and its fingers are the villagers who do not perform the act of the lottery out of malice, but due to a deadly compliance with the established procedure. Jackson shows that the biggest nightmare of the twentieth century and even the twenty-first is not the chaos caused by the lawless but rather the cruelty of the lawful. The "Social Monster" establishes a system in which killing is not an offence but an administrative necessity that is made clean and acceptable by the presence of the postmaster and the ledger.

Moreover, this monster is also a patriarchal one that feeds on the female

body to keep itself alive. The ritual is not arbitrary; it is the sacrifice of a gender where the female becomes the subject who is erased in order for the phallic continuity of the state to be preserved. As the house collapses and becomes the public square, the Social Monster perpetrates its most despicable act of reproduction: it turns the innocence of children into a weapon. Little Davy being handed pebbles is not only a deeply sad moment; it is also the very point of contamination. It is the act through which the collective guarantees its eternity, by telling the ones to come that "We" require the ritual killing of "I" in order for us to belong.

The Monster Image in *The Lottery*, to a large extent, survives; because it is the ultimate condemnation of the bystander. In our contemporary world, which is predominated by algorithmic echo chambers, systemic inequality, and the digital stoning of the abject Other, the creature of Jackson is not a thing from the past but a present-day condition. The British Gothic has been cautioning that the beasts one needs to be on the lookout for are those lurking in the moors; instead, Jackson cautions the readers about the beast that is present at the PTA meeting, town council, and family dinner. The main horror of *The Lottery* is not the monster under the bed, but rather the one reflected in the mirror, holding a stone and, most importantly, convinced of its own righteousness. We are not the ones on the receiving end of this monster's actions; instead, we are its parts.

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