
Allegory, Utopia And Imagery In The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas

In the short story "The Ones that Walk Away from Omelas" by Ursula K. Le Guin the narrator uses many different literary devices. Some of the devices are allegory, utopia and imagery. Although you see many themes throughout the short story one of the biggest ones is morality. With these literary devices and themes together, the author is giving an open invitation for you, the reader, to become the main character yourself. To make that story ending choice of staying or leaving.

The story begins with the author describing the setting of this perfect city. Here we are building the city of Omelas which is drawn out to be a Utopia. Which is an imaginary ideal world where laws and social conditions are perfect for everyone. Where you can be part of what religion you choose, drink, smoke, and have sexual pleasure without any human authority to say anything about it. In the selection the author says "O miracle! But I wish I could describe it better. I wish I could convince you. Omelas sounds in my words like a city in a fairy tale, long ago and far away, once upon a time." (Le Guin 250). The author is using imagery to put this picture of a perfect city inside your head. She is leading you to think of your own kind of perfect world. Your world where your just free. Free to be who you want to be and do what you want to do at no cost.

Now that the author has spent this time to build this paradise in your mind, she then gives you the catch, but this catch is quite normal. The city is nothing but one big complete deception. It is a prison for say that provokes the smiling wonders of the Utopia. The author reveals that all the good in Omelas is only possible due to a child. A child that is tortured and abused daily so that the other citizen doesn't have to. This is major factor that makes this short story to be considered an allegory. The child that we don't know why is chosen to be sacrificed for the better of the community is a symbol that can be represented as political or religious allegory. Political being how the wealth and privilege given to the upper-class people is often dependent on the denial of the lower. Religious being suggested that the child is a Christ-like figure, sacrificing oneself so that the many may live. All of this to try to convey a message to the readers or even teach them a lesson. That wherever there is yang there will always be yin. Also referred to as wherever there is light there will always be dark. This perfect place of pure happiness and joy, this city of Omelas can not exist in the real world. There will always the one or many that suffer for the enjoyment of others. By presenting such a dilemma, the author forces the reader to consider which is more important to them. Having unlimited happiness or their morality.

Now that your told of this glorious Utopia but also of the one that suffers for it. The author talks about how some of the citizens of the city cannot bare to stay in a city like this. In the story Le Guin says "They go on. They leave Omelas, they walk ahead into the darkness, and they do not come back. The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness. I cannot describe it at all. It is possible that it does not exist. But they seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas" (Le Guin 253). These who choose to walk away from this city represent morality. By walking away from the glory of this fine city they are stating that no one person should have to suffer this way for the

good of the life of others. When the ones who walked away from Omelas leave they are giving up this perfect Utopia for something lower in society. It may not be perfect, but they don't have to live with the guilt. Knowing that their enjoyment is due to another's suffering.

So, we see how the author has shifted the tense throughout the story from the happiness and worth that you felt from the description of a Utopia. To the sadness or guilt that you felt your heart as you found out why this city is indeed so great. All being used as some form of manipulation by the narrator to be forced to be her main character. To be forced to make a choice. Forced for your mind to decide to stay or walk away.

Works Cited

1. Le Guin, Ursula K. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing, by X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, 13th ed., Pearson, 2016, pp. 249–253.

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