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**The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas: *Man defining himself with Society***

The first scene of Omelas reveals a perfect-like society in which every member is happy. The theme of society versus individual is depicted in the first scene of the short story through the children of Omelas who exhibit the coming of age. The themes of conflict, freedom, acceptance, sacrifice and control are also portrayed in the short story and reveal man, through his actions, defines himself in the society. The actions of Omelas introduce the concept of necessity and destructiveness as significant measures of the happiness being described in the story (Le Guin 23). This essay discusses the concept of man defining himself in the society especially through social norms and punishments described in the society.

Some characters in the story disapprove the treatment of the boy in the cellar raising conflict in society. The people are so conflicted that they opt to abandon Omelas after realizing that the boy is being used as a scapegoat at the expense of others to create happiness for the people in Omelas. This reasoning may, however, appear illogical by considering that the boy is innocent but the society appears to be handling its members with the strategy. The freedom and happiness for the members of the society are dependent on the boy being incarcerated in a dark cellar (Le Guin 23). The events happen without any explanation for the boy being held as a prisoner. The definition of happiness by society is ironical because the boy is being denied happiness and freedom that every person is expected to enjoy. In this action, the boy is being sacrificed to allow others to live a happy life. The practice is a tradition in Omelas as the hierarchy chooses another child/boy in time as a ritual to ensure a continuity of happiness in the society (Trimarco 407).

The practice to bring happiness is a punishment in itself. Enjoy freedom at the expense of one person is something that fails to reveal the true definition of a man in society. It is interesting to learn that society members who decide to remain behind accept the happenings. They may have a feeling of upset for sometimes but they soon get used to the ordeal and acknowledge that the boy in the cellar is the cause of their happiness. The society appears to have lost its definition of humanity because no person in the society has an explanation of why one of its members has to undergo punishment or suffering for the sake of other’s happiness (Trimarco 409). The members are sympathetic and sensitive regarding the societal way of happiness but no person seems empathic enough to condemn the ‘cult’ and bring freedom to the boy in the cellar.

According to the author, happiness and freedom have a price and the society must pay for this price. The price in this context is the boy enduring suffering in a cellar for the sake of others. The physical appearance of the society may not be the actual sense of society. This is because the Omelas society holds secrets (Le Guin 23). The happiness that people enjoy is being 'manufactured' through a secretly held and confined member of society. The freedom being celebrated during the festive season in the Omelas is originating from massive pains of one of the members. In the opening of the story, everyone in the city is said to be celebrating jovially depicting a rather perfect society unaware of the events behind the scenes. The narrator wants the reader to expound their mind and perceive happiness as a complex emotion that coincides with suffering (Wyman 229)

The cellar itself is a representation of freedom and the arrogance of the people in authority who can easily grab and place its individuals in a confinement without explaining their actions. This is an act of madness bringing punishment to the society while letting the innocent undergo humiliation in the name of creating freedom and happiness for the rest of the members. The cellar may also a representation of the social stratifications and division of class in the Omelas (Wyman 229). The boy may be termed not worthy to be part of the Omelas. As the society dances jovially and celebrates in its happiness in the festive seasons, others have nothing to celebrate because they do not fit into the social class of the Omelas. This represents members of the society outside the cellar. This perception is with an understanding that the cellar and the boy are being used by the author symbolically to represent members of a different class of the society not worthy to be part of the Omelas (Le Guin 23).

The Omelas appears to be a true representation of people and the conflicts they encounter in society. Some people often chose to ignore the unfair treatment of others while others opt to disassociate themselves with such treatment by leaving their town city or village. Because they do not have the power or an explanation for condemning the suffering, they simply opt to distance themselves from the events (Le Guin 23). This further reveals how people in society attempt to address their problem. Some members of society opt not to find a solution to their problems despite being sensitive to the suffering of others. They Omelas appear not to understand their true identity and role in the city. Their faith that brings happiness and freedom is dependent on the person confined in the cellar. The city dwellers appear to fall short of wisdom required to guide them on important issues in the society (Trimarco 412).

The themes of happiness and suffering intertwine in the short story through drugs and war. The imagination portrayed by the author welcomes the reader to ponder how drugs and victory can exist without destroying the members of society. The theme of individual versus society emerges in the story as the author reveals that the society in the city is moving together as an organic being. The childhood in Omelas is generally portrayed as idealistic and full of joy and emotion. The narrator later reveals about the coming age of children. It is ironical to realize that the children being portrayed as the future of the city like the ones carrying the cross for the rest of the society(Wyman 232). Despite that the idealistic children initially act and react with compassion, individual children often find their ways of justifying their actions regarding inactiveness and negligence leading to the suffering. The ability to justify immoral actions of a person considers the reality on the ground. As the children age out in Omelas, they identify their places in society because they define the acts of justice and injustice for the people. The children have a role to understand and identify their place in society and avoid turning their eyes away from injustice. Living in Omelas as a child needs to understand the reality and tragic price of their society and happiness.

It is important to note that while the residents of Omelas are unhelpful of the suffering boy, they take happiness and freedom seriously because they understand they cannot enjoy happiness without suffering. Happiness cannot exist without suffering and members of the society need to accept this reality because it’s the way a society member grows, accepts reality and joins the society. Imagination and reality in the short story have a close relationship because the things that a person imagines often happen in reality and a truly happy society must exhibit their expectations through experiences. The narrator does not tell the extent of imagination that a member of the society should engage. The limits of thoughts that qualify reality are not definitive. Defining an individual's morals in society depends on the levels of imagination by the individual to discern the reality on the ground. The Omelas are living in pretence due to the large secrets of a boy in the cellar whom people silently believe is the source of their happiness. The determinant of happiness in Omelas is a rather bizarre ritual that the society ought to revive its perception about happiness and suffering. The true definition of humanity in Omelas appears to miss a mark because of the price an ‘innocent’ member pays to have the rest of the members enjoy happiness and freedom.

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