

Leguin's and morrison's view on utopia

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Introduction

Can utopia be attained and maintained without suffering or subjugation? This perennial question has garnered the attentions of authors Ursula K. LeGuin and Ewan Morrison in their discourse against the dangers of utopian societies. LeGuin, who wrote the esteemed short story “ The One Who Walks Away from Omelas,” argues that the suffering of a few is inevitable for the happiness and joy of the majority. In Morrison’s investigation of utopian communities, which has been documented in his article “ Why Utopian Communities Fail,” he posits that communities based on utopian ideals are maintained not because the people are inherently perfect, but rather due to the regulations that call for perfection.

Ursula LeGuin

“ The One Who Walks Away from Omelas” tells the story of an idyllic, fairytale-like city where its citizens have everything they could ever want. What makes this story exceptionally unique is the author’s invitation towards her readers to imagine the city to their own likings. In doing so, she asks us how we define our own utopia. As we nonchalantly imagine the many things that make us happy, it is revealed that a neglected child is the source of the happiness in the city. LeGuin further asserts that “ they all understand that their happiness, the beauty of the city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, the wisdom of their scholars, the skill of their makers, even the abundance of their harvest and the kindly weathers of their skies, depend wholly on this child’s abominable misery” (LeGuin 282). This allows us to assume that the people of Omelas understand their

collusion in suffering and are taught to reject any form of guilt. Those who are unable to overcome the guilt sacrifice their own happiness by leaving. As we delve deeper into LeGuin's perspective of the relationship between suffering and utopia, we can begin to draw parallels between Omelas and the world we live in. As a capitalist nation, we depend on the suffering of others to benefit ourselves. This may include the migrant workers who pick the food that we nourish ourselves with, or the children across the globe who tirelessly sew the clothes that keep us warm. Do we choose to walk away? The majority would answer "no." LeGuin is, thus, critiquing the manner in which our world venerates personal happiness over justice.

Ewan Morrison

Morrison's analysis of utopian intentional communities in his article, "Why Utopian Communities Fail," reveals that such communities are kept in order through subjugation and repression. One way in which they do so is by prohibiting individualism. Having unique skills or talents such as painting or singing is believed to cause a disturbance in their egalitarian values. It would cause some to feel inferior, which would consequently place people in different "levels" (Morrison 156). Hence, people are forced to conceal what makes them who they are. Furthermore, in fear of "contamination from the outside world," such communities censor certain words and prohibit its people from providing suggestions or speaking out. Through these examples of the way of life in utopian communities, Morrison may be suggesting that utopia itself cannot be perpetuated without force and suffering. People living in these communities are misled to a certain degree, promised that being a part of a classless, stateless community would bring them happiness and joy.

Conclusion

Both LeGuin and Morrison's views of utopia corresponds with each other as they bring to light the inevitable suffering and subjugation brought about by attempting to attain or maintain utopia. The most evident differences between the works of these two authors would be the work itself. While LeGuin composes a short story, Morrison's work can be assumed to be a form of academic writing. A similarity between LeGuin and Morrison's arguments is the manner in which they reflect real life scenarios. LeGuin's story can be comprehended as a reflection of the pervasive utilitarian mindset in today's capitalistic society. The communities mentioned by Morrison is a reflection of the communist nations that had once brought great devastation to our world.