

Sample essay on comparing fluted girl with the ones who walk away from omelas

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



The idea of slavery and sacrifice has always been a potent one in fiction and art; the concept of other people suffering for us (and how we let them do that) calls up emotions of guilt and gratitude. In the short stories “ The Fluted Girl” and “ The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas,” and the songs “ Right Where It Belongs” and “ BYOB,” this idea of perfect but hollow worlds propped up by our own slavery, or that of others, is expressed clearly. In these works, society is illustrated to be a system that favors the wealthy and privileged at the expense of the poor, who must suffer in order to make the system work.

In “ The Fluted Girl,” Paolo Baciagalupi gives the audience a science-fiction dystopia where the privileged world most live in comes at a price. The titular fluted girl is a performance artist who has had her body modified in order to perform for the rich. This simple act exposes the dark side of these kinds of societies; people who are not rich must sacrifice themselves to appease their wealthier masters. In this case, she and her sister must endure multiple surgeries, pigment drugs, Revitia treatments, and more, changing everything they are at the whim of those who hold the power. The poor are all at the whim of the wealthy, even Stephen, who is higher up on the Belari food chain - he and Lidia are “ two servants each calling the other slave,” dividing them instead of uniting them (Baciagalupi 37).

The poor-as-slave comparison is much clearer in Le Guin’s “ The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas,” in which the utopian town of Omelas has a distinct culture and sense of refinement. However, this comes with a price; a single child must be made to live a filthy, miserable life, and the rest of the people must live with it. Interestingly enough, there are those who do reject this

system and leave the city; Le Guin shows the rest of the townspeople as not understanding this perspective. “ 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 it does not exist” (Le Guin 262). The “ ones who walk away from Omelas” are the ones with a conscience, the ones who refuse to participate in this backwards system.

The world of music also expresses these ideas, but on a much more histrionic scale. Nine Inch Nails’ “ Right Where It Belongs” exposes the lies of a stratified society in its chorus, asking questions like “ What if everything around you / Isn't quite as it seems? / What if all the world you think you know / Is an elaborate dream?”. In System of a Down’s song “ BYOB,” the artists rage about the ostensible “ freedom” that is handed to the American people at the expense of those who fight (and are killed) for it. The song’s refrain of “ Why don't presidents fight the war? / Why do they always send the poor?” makes clear the unfairness of those in power being distanced from the real effort taken to defend the country or protect its interests; the poor must do it.

In conclusion, these four works of art explore what it means to live in a society that demeans and sacrifices the poor to maintain the stability and happiness of the rich. In all these works, that system is deeply criticized, as people either “ walk away,” rebel (like in the songs) or lose themselves completely. These sacrificial lambs present themselves as the necessary offering to this world, which allows it to keep going.

Works Cited

Bacigalupi, Paolo. "The Fluted Girl."

Le Guin, Ursula. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

Nine Inch Nails. "Right Where It Belongs."

System of a Down. "BYOB."