

Compare and contrast the songs of innocence



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William Blake, with his Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience, and Jean Rhys, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, utilize extensive symbolism and imagery in their respective works. They use imagery related to nature to symbolize Heaven/Hell or good/evil. They also use this imagery to emphasize the morals of their literary works and indicate, in the case of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, how the current events would lead to the conclusion of the book. Not only do their books share extensive usage of symbolism, but they also share common themes, (at least the Songs of Experience and *Wide Sargasso Sea* do) and ideas.

These ideas could include the decay of good into corruption and the duality of the human nature which stretches from virtuous morality to corruption. William Blake uses extensive symbolism to create points that epitomize his vision of the opposing facets of the human soul. In *The Clod & the Pebble* in the Songs of Experience, Blake takes the conventional idea of love, that it “ builds a Heaven in Hell’s despair,” and denounces it by saying that it, in fact, “ builds a Hell in Heaven’s despite.

This poem ties in with the plot of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in that even when Antoinette tried desperately to find love, but found her love for another lead to her own living hell on earth. She was crushed spiritually. This symbolism is reflected in *Wide Sargasso Sea* when, in the end of the book, the house is burning around her (page 170). “ It was red and all my life was in it. I saw the grandfather clock and Aunt Cora’s patchwork, all colours, I saw the orchids and the stephanotis and the jasmine and the tree of life in flames. In this instance, the fire symbolizes the spiritual death Antoinette has undergone.

This death has been brought about by Antoinette's attempt to find love. She thought it would solve all her problems, but it did the exact opposite and destroyed her. Blake and Rhys also use imagery based nature to convey symbolism which illuminates subtle, but important points that are important to the overall themes of their works. Examples would be the incident at the orange tree and abandoned house in the woods, Wide Sargasso Sea, and in The Garden of Love. In the Wide Sargasso Sea (page 95), " There were ruin of a stone house and round the ruins rose trees that had grown to an incredible height. At the back of the ruins a wild orange tree, covered with fruit, the leaves a dark green. " Rhys uses this imagery to act as a mirror into Rochester's character as well as allude to the Garden of Eden and its fall into corruption. In this case, the ruins represented the once perfect and its destruction.

The tree was also subtly important in the overall scheme by symbolizing the festering hate contained in Rochester which was flourishing in the ruins of perfection or love. In The Garden of Love, Blake uses imagery to communicate a sense of loss. This loss is revealed by " A Chapel was built in the midst, Where I used to play on the green" and " I turned to the Garden of Love.

And I saw it was filled with graves, and tomb-stones where flowers should be. In this, Blake shows that what had once been a great place, filled with love and " sweet flowers," has been transformed into someplace ugly. It has turned into a place devoid of feeling, understanding, life, vibrancy, love, and beauty. This highlights the general theme of the Songs of Experience: that the human nature is basically immoral and that the rancid soul of humanity

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corrupts and tarnishes everything it comes in contact with, even if it was originally good. These uses of symbolism by Jean Rhys and William Blake expose key elements of the plots of their individual works.