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The Garden of Love

Title

There are 2 possible gardens the poet is speaking about. The first one is the Garden of Eden before the fall of humankind. Where they were able to love without shame and self-consciousness. The second one is found in the old Testament which is an erotic poem in which garden imagery is used as a **metaphor** for sexual enjoyment.

Tone

Shock, Dismay, Anger, Frustration

Mood

Despondency

Rhyme Scheme

ABCB/DEFE/GHIJ

Themes

The distortion of Christian belief about the future life, 'Falleness' on repression of sexuality and other emotions.

Stanza 1

- 1 I went to the Garden of Love
- 2 And saw what I never had seen:
- 3 A chapel was built in the midst,
- 4 Where I used to play on the green

This stanza speaks to us about his discovery and his personal reactions about it. The poet revisited this open green piece of land where he used to play with all genders. He was dismayed and frustrated to see a Chapel where they used to play. Chapel is capitalised which gives it a central place in this garden.

It represents man-made oppression, Institutionalised religion destroyed the harmony between man and nature. Nobody can ever experience the sense of joy and freedom.

Stanza 2

- 5 And the gates of this chapel were shut,
- 6 And Thou shalt not writ over the door;
- 7 So I turn'd to the Garden of love,
- 8 That so many sweet flowers bore.

"Shut" indicates finality like it will never change or open. "Thou shalt not" inspected on the door goes back to the ten commandments and there should be no love. This is the source of all inequality and helplessness amongst society. Line 7 is **juxtaposition** "Sweet flowers bore" this past tense indicates that due to the church - the flowers won't be able to flourish anymore.

Stanza 3

- 9 And I saw it was filled with graves,
- 10 And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
- 11 And priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
- 12 And binding with briars, my joys and desires

"And" is a use of **Anaphora** [Repetition on Purpose]. The garden portrays an aura of total unease and misery. Adverse changes has taken. The beauty and joy of flowers are forbidden by the church. The graves represents the death of freedom. In this case the church is going against catholic belief of supporting nature. **Internal Rhyme** in last two lines. "Black gowns" are symbols of despair and mourning. "Walking their rounds" seems methodical, mechanic and associated with no compassion and forgiveness. Final line has **alliteration** shows restraints against desires. This indicates the painfulness the people can experience. Physical pleasures are denied by the church and are labelled as sins. This brings to light the idea of **hypocrisy** as priests talk against these acts but also commits them.

The Garden could also be symbol of a place where we hide our primal emotions

Length of Stanzas

- First one is short which indicates the short lived place of freedom.
- The last one is long and shows decay, death and sorrow

Explanation of themes

Distortion of Christian belief about the future life

Blake attacks the approach of Christianity which encouraged the denial of sexuality in the present in the hope of future reward and bliss

The effects of 'fallenness' on repression of sexuality and other emotions

Inhibitions lie primarily in the mind. Society makes its fears, guilts and shame into rules and laws which are adopted by religion.