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The perceptive poets: a comparative study of Jal lu'-Din Rín Rúmi, Sant Kabír, Matsuo Bashó and William Blake

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The Perceptive Poets:

A Comparative Study of

Jal lu'-Dín Rúmi, Sant Kabír, Matsuo Bashó and William Blake

Ph.D. Submission: Volume One

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

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Doctor of Philosophy

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Michelle Shete

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Faculty of Creative Arts

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Dedicated to

H. H. Nirmala Srivastava

and

Sir C. P. Srivastava
Abstract

This thesis lies between the fields of literature and religion. The thesis argues that Jal īlu'-Dīn Rūmī, Sant Kabīr, Matsuo Bashō and William Blake are not only "mystic" and "symbolic" poets, but that they have enough in common to justify the creation of a new, more well-defined area of interdisciplinary research between the fields of literature and religious studies. This thesis refers to them as "perceptive poets" and aims to define this term.

The selected poets represent mystical branches of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. The thesis is, therefore, to some extent a comparative study of Sufism, Nāṭhism, Zen and the Gnostic tradition. The combination of poets allows for comparison of symbolism between diverse literary traditions, and also promotes examination of the crucial relationship between silent mystic experience and the creation of symbolic forms of writing.

Current literary taxonomy does not allow for satisfactory comparative studies of poets who originate from different religious and literary backgrounds, but who in fact share profoundly similar spiritual insight. No particular field of literary studies simultaneously and completely: accommodates for the poet whose first priority is spiritual life; incorporates poets from both East and West; acknowledges the difference between the mystic state of expanded consciousness and the unconscious; and recognises the relationship between the "Perceptive Faculty" affected by certain mystic experiences and the "Imaginative Faculty" associated with the creation of symbols.
This research aims to narrow the field of "mystic poetry" and enable distinction between the poet who has experienced expanded consciousness and the poet who displays random mystical tendencies. Through a comparative study of these four prominent poets, who have each been described as both "mystic" and "symbolic", the thesis identifies six common characteristics. These points of association are brought together to create a new framework suitable for the examination of similar poets from various religious and literary traditions.
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CERTIFICATION

I, Michelle Shete, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Journalism and Creative Writing, in the Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Michelle Shete

March 2008
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