

MYSTICISM
AND THE MUSE

RLA LECTURES 2000

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Edited by Colette Rayment



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PREFACE

When these lectures were being commissioned it seemed prudent not to attempt what so many have declared impossible, namely, a definition of mysticism. Consequently each speaker was invited to reflect in his or her unique way upon the interface between ineffable (some would say, religious) experience and literature and the arts.

Since this series of lectures was presented over a period of several months the opportunity to absorb them as a complete project is only now available. Not surprisingly each of them iterate in an individual way some of the hallmarks of a mystical apprehension of the world – journeys, for example, are regarded as metaphors for life and for the creative act itself, felicity is found amongst others or in communion with land or landscape, and there is the constantly reiterated passion for the wording or painting or shaping of these things.

Importantly, all of the lectures face into the truth of pain and death as if there were cause to link them with the experience of and the expression of the seemingly inexpressible.

Perhaps the most commendable aspect of all the pieces is their refusal to paraphrase their own art forms. Like the late Elias Canetti each speaker has seen the wisdom hidden in the unsaid: all of them ‘Explain nothing. Put it there. Say it. Leave.’

C.R.