Clare and Francis: Conversations of Divine Love  
Bussey, M P, Bussey, M

Research Background

The tension in the Western poetic tradition lies between the individual as poetic instrument and the object of poetry. This research recognizes this dimension but seeks to extend it via reference to non-Western literary traditions such as the Sufic ghazal and the song tradition of the north Indian baul as represented by Mirabai and more recently in the work of Rabindranath Tagore.

Research Contribution

The poem cycle Clare and Francis addresses the dilemma of people caught in a romantic love tradition – the Courtly Love tradition of medieval Europe. It explores through metaphor and allusion how erotic passion is sublimated in both Western and non-Western traditions. It offers insights into taboo as a vehicle for aesthetic expression within an inter-civilisational context. It also explores issues of temporality and historical veracity as domains of poetic and mystical being that stand beyond time and local tradition.

Research Significance

The significance of this research is that it challenges received historical tropes on the story of two medieval saints. By drawing on aesthetic traditions beyond the European it offers a new interpretive lens into an iconic relationship while suspending historical and literary conventions that define the relationship as existing in a moment in time. The historical persons themselves then cease to be ‘in time’ and become eternal signifies for common human dilemmas around taboo and individuation.