

Vern Barnet

FOR eighteen years the weekly religion columnist for *The Kansas City Star*, Vern Barnet has been honored by Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and other groups. With three others, he wrote and edited the 740-page *Essential Guide to Religious Traditions and Spirituality for Health Care Providers*, published by here and in the UK by Radcliffe in 2013. He was the developmental editor for the memoirs of Alvin L Brooks, *Binding Us Together: A Civil Rights Activist Reflects on a Lifetime of Community and Public Service*, 2021, published by Andrews McMeel. His poems, articles, and reviews have appeared in many publications; among is favorites are essays 2015-2017 in *Spirit*, the magazine of the Episcopal Diocese of West Missouri. His interest in poetry was heightened graduate when he studied as a graduate student with US Poet Laureate Karl Shapiro.



Photo credit: *The Kansas City Star*

Barnet has taught world religions and related subjects at several universities and seminaries, and served on the faculty of the nation's first "Inter-faith Academies" sponsored by Harvard University's Pluralism Project. He has been featured in national media, including a half-hour CBS-TV national special. His civic activities, including chairing the Jackson County, MO task force studying the five-county religious situation after 9/11, have been recognized with awards, local and national, and a "Vern Barnet Interfaith Service Award" is given to a distinguished Kansas Citian each year.

He first studied world religions with Garma Chen-Chi Chang. He completed his doctoral work in 1970 at the University of Chicago and an affiliated seminary where his teachers included historian of religion Mircea Eliade, Templeton Prize winner Ralph Wendell Burhoe, philosopher-psychotherapist Eugene T Gendlin, and pioneering thanatologist-psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. He did post-doctoral work with Joseph Campbell and presented programs with his friend Huston Smith. Barnet served parishes in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Kansas before dedicating his career to promoting interfaith understanding in the Kansas City area.

Barnet remains active as minister emeritus of the Center for Religious Experience and Study ("CRES") which he founded in 1982. A biography appears at www.cres.org/vern.

Thanks for Noticing *The Interpretation of Desire*

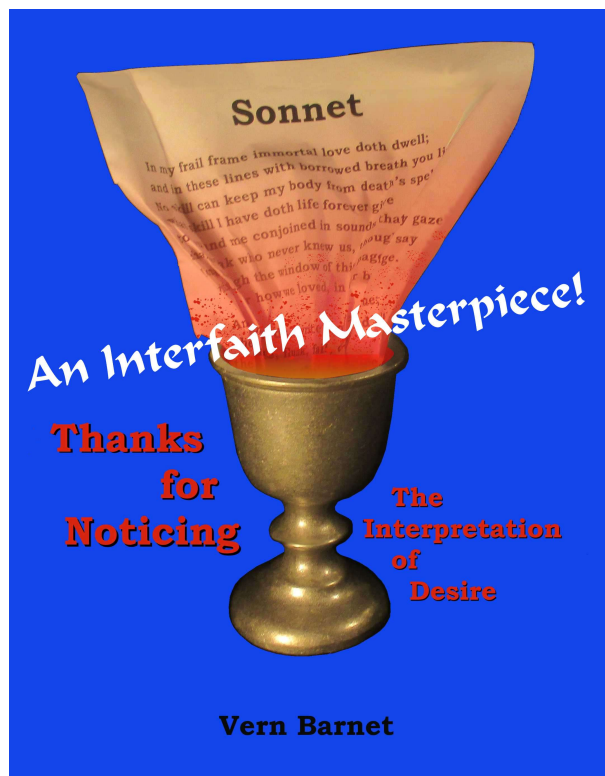
A prosimetrum of 154 sonnets,
glosses, and other commentary,
in which the sacred beauty of sex and love is explored.

Advisement

Lovers of all kinds turn to Shakespeare's 154 Sonnets for his depth of emotion and richness of thought. Most of the poems were written to a beautiful young man and some to a mysterious dark lady.

These new sonnets, similarly, range through many moods from youthful folly to maturity, using insights from the world's religions.

Because the sonnets are arranged by parts of the Mass, and some of the sonnets identify the spiritual with the erotic, some may consider the book blasphemous.



"The poetic form does not merely contain a sentiment as a glass contains water. Rather speak of the grail containing wine; the meaning of each is intensified by the other. In poetry the form and the sentiment are as intimately related as the body and the soul" —from the INTRODUCTION



From the world's spiritual traditions
this book pours the troubles and
the sacred beauty of sex and love
into the chalice of the sonnet.

*Lo! These sonnets are good!
I wish I had penned them!*



♥ “Ride along into frank considerations of sexuality, desire, love, and spirituality. The ride will leave you breathless, spent.” —**Bill Tammeus**, past president of the National Society of Newspaper Columnists

♥ Barnet “toils in an age-old tradition of spiritual gurus who delighted in the flesh as they sang divine praise. . . . [This book] belongs at bedside, each sonnet to be savored and explored, slowly – lover at your side.” —**Tom Fox**, publisher, *National Catholic Reporter*

♥ “The words are so graphic, so erotic, so real.” —**The Rev David E. Nelson, DMin**, president, The Human Agenda

♥ If Shakespeare, “the English Bard, is in these sonnets spiritually, so also is the American Bard, Walt Whitman.” —**The Rev Mark E. Hoelter**, formerly with the InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, DC

♥ “Rich in the lore of many religions, cultures, and mythology.” —**Larry Guillot**, interfaith advisor, senior graduate faculty, Park University.

♥ Barnet “does not . . . separate the worship of the sublime in a sanctuary from the worship in the bedroom. Nor is the twin meaning of the ancient blessing ‘This is my body’ lost on him.” —**The Rev Mark Belletini, DD**, prominent Unitarian Universalist minister

♥ “These sonnets . . . explore certain depths of truth and life I never could have fathomed before.” —**The Rev Robert H. Meneilly, DD**, minister emeritus, The Village [Presbyterian] Church, Prairie Village, KS

♥ Barnet “uses his knowledge of world religions to advance discussions, even of controversial areas, including the powerful emotions of love and spirituality.” —**Alvin L. Brooks**, former City Councilman and Mayor Pro Tem

♥ “This ground-breaking book represents the excellence and the continuing promise of the arts in Kansas City. —**Charles B Wheeler, MD**, former mayor of Kansas City, MO, and former Missouri state senator

♥ “A tapestry of transcendence, a bold work of art.” —**Dennis E. Thompson**, Professor of English and Humanities

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by Vern Barnet

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THANKS FOR NOTICING:
THE INTERPRETATION OF DESIRE

On-Line Features at *VernBarnet.com*

- ◆ Scores of YouTube videos of dozens of professional actors and ordinary folks reading sonnets from Vern’s book
- ◆ Concordance to sources and major themes
- ◆ Fascinating and extensive interview with Vern
- ◆ On-going blog of post-publication reception
- ◆ Commentary on individual sonnets

“I hope my book becomes a path for the reader to follow, through 154 sonnets, 154 steps that will take the reader deeper into oneself and into the reader’s relationships, especially the most intimate ones, and into an encounter with ultimate Mystery, perhaps to guide the reader into understanding others in a fresh way, and to love one’s friends and companions, to love God and the world more deeply and keenly.”

Lovers of All Kinds

Thanks for Noticing: