

The Birth of Psychedelic Literature:

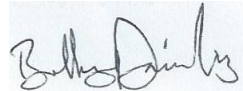
Drug Writing and the rise of LSD Therapy 1954 – 1964

Submitted by Robert John Dickins, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English, September, 2012.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Dickins', is placed on a light blue rectangular background. Below the signature is a horizontal dotted line.

Abstract

This thesis examines hallucinogen drug literature published between 1954-1964 in Britain and North America. By arguing that these texts are medically and culturally contingent to psychiatric research that was being undertaken with various hallucinogens during the period, including Lysergic acid diethylamide and mescaline, via the development of three psychiatric models—the psycholytic, psychotomimetic and psychedelic—it seeks to establish the relationship between psychiatric practice and the form and content of the texts. Furthermore, it examines an inter-textual dialogue concerning the medical, spiritual and philosophical value of these drugs, which has a direct effect on the development of the aforementioned psychiatric research models. In doing so, this thesis also traces the historical popularization of these drugs as they left the clinical setting and entered in to wider society, as propagated by the literature. Broadly speaking, through these analyses, it establishes the primary texts as representing a minor literary movement—Psychedelic literature—through the emergence of a psychospiritual narrative.

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