



Golden Odes of Love-- Al-Mu'allaqat

Desmond O'Grady

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Arabic literature sprang into existence between the middle of the sixth and the middle of the seventh centuries AD, before the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad and the advent of Islam, with an outburst of poetry. All over northern Arabia poets appeared reciting qasidas (odes), in which a series of themes are elaborated with vivid imagination in richly varied language and cast in complex rhythmic and rhyming schemes.

These seven odes are collectively known as the Mu'allaqat, the 'suspended' poems, because they were transcribed in letters of gold on linen and suspended in the shrine of the Kaaba at Mecca as masterpieces of the qasida form.

Irish poet Desmond O'Grady's verse renderings of the seven odes vividly capture the rhythm and the spirit of this vibrant body of ancient poetry. The known facts of the seven poets' lives are given in brief historical introductions to the odes.

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