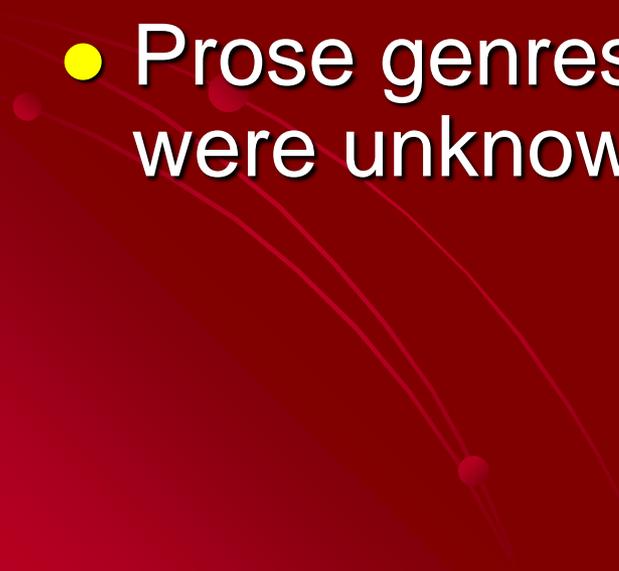


Islamic Literature: The Arabian Tales

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Islamic Poetry

- Monorhyme: single rhyme used throughout the poem, whether long or short
 - 16 different meters: poet could not change meter within a given poem
 - Prose genres like novel and short story were unknown until the modern era
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Quasida

- Pre-Islamic Arabs
- Ode of 20-100 verses with monorhyme
- Prelude or Love Story; Poet's Journey (description of camel or horse); Tribute to patron or Tribe or even the poet himself
- After Islam, it was adopted as a form used to eulogize Muhammad or God or Saints

Ghazal

- Love lyric
- 5-12 verses
- Originated as the first part of the Quasida
- Could be secular or religious in content
- Umar ibn Abi Rabi`ah (644-712?): Sang of the ladies who came to Mecca on pilgrimage
- Medieval love poetry; lovers who die like martyrs; gave inspiration to French Troubadours and establishment of Chivalry and Roman in Europe

Example of Ghazal in English

- Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell tonight?
Whom else from rapture's road will you expel tonight?

Those "Fabrics of Cashmere—" "to make Me beautiful—"
"Trinket"— to gem— "Me to adorn— How— tell"— tonight?

I beg for haven: Prisons, let open your gates—
A refugee from Belief seeks a cell tonight.

God's vintage loneliness has turned to vinegar—
All the archangels— their wings frozen— fell tonight...

- (Agha Shahid Ali)

Roba'i

- Pre-Islamic Persian Origins
- Quatrain Form
- First, Second, and Fourth Lines Rhyme
- Rubáiyát' of Omar Khayyám (1048-1123);
<http://www.okonlife.com/poems/>
- I resolve daily that at dusk I shall repent
For a night with a cup full of wine spent.
In the presence of flowers, my resolve simply went
In such company, I only regret that I ever resolved to
repent

Book of One Thousand and One Nights

- <http://www.arabian-nights.org/>
- Persian Book: Thousand Myths; forms basis
- Arabian, Persian, and Indian Folk tales
- First Compiled in 8th century, Baghdad
- 9th century Translated into Arabic

Plot

- Sultan Shahriar's wife
- Vizier's daughters; Sheherazade and Dinarzade
- By telling a story and leaving it unfinished she stays alive
- Stories are varied: include Aladdin's Lamp; Sinbad the Sailor; Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves

Aladdin

- Poor boy in China recruited by a magician named Maghreb to steal an oil lamp from a magic cave
- Aladdin keeps the lamp
- Summons a Djinn; becomes rich and marries a princess
- Aladdin's wife is tricked by the magician, who gets the lamp
- With help of a lesser djinn summoned by a ring he defeats the magician and recovers the lamp and his wife
- Theme of the Low-class Trickster
- Anti-semitic part of story: a Jewish merchant who tricks him out of the silver plate and bowl; a kind Muslim goldsmith sets Aladdin straight

Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves

- Ali Baba, a Persian wood cutter overhears thieves
- Opens cave with treasure. Open Sesame
- Brother Cassim goes back and forgets the secret password to get out; killed; Ali baba retrieves the body
- Thieves track him down; pretends to be an oil merchant with 40 jars of oil; Servant pours oil in jars, killing them; Servant freed.
- Returns as a merchant again; servant does 'dance of daggers' and kills him; Servant rewarded with marriage to Ali Baba's son

First Story: Merchant and the Genius

- Accidental Death of child Djinni
 - Gentlemen's agreement to return for punishment
 - Three Old Men: one with a Deer; one with Two Black Dogs;
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Old Man and Deer

- Agreement: IF story is marvelous; one third the punishment will be remitted
- Childless merchant; had a son with slave
- Wife was a witch; turned child into calf and wife into cow
- Sacrifice for feast day
- Servant informs merchant and wants to marry son as reward; water over the back transforms him
- Girl changed wife into a deer

Old Man and Two Black Dogs

- Same arrangement; one third
- Three brothers
- Brother one traveled and lost everything; the merchant helped him
- Brother two did the same and the same result
- They convinced him to go away to get goods
- A beautiful, poor woman approached him; he married her
- Jealous brothers throw him off ship; wife is a fairy and saves him; transforms brothers into black dogs
- Dug up some of his saved money and started over

Little Hunchback Story

- Drunk Hunchback goes to Tailor's house for dinner; dies on a fish bone
- Hunchback is brought to Jewish Doctor
- Doctor and wife puts him down Muslim neighbor's chimney
- Muslim props him up against a Christian merchant's house
- Execution by Chief of Police is deferred, one by one
- Sultan wants to hear everybody's story, including a talkative Barber, who hosted the original party where the hunchback got drunk
- After his story, the Barber cures the hunchback, who is not dead after all

Summary

- Taboos: Don't open the door; Don't ask questions; **Obedience** of being a Muslim
- Obedient Servant is Rewarded
- Appeals/Supplication—deferred or remitted by a good story
- **Mercy** is a Muslim virtue, and the virtuous in the stories are rewarded themselves
- While there is **anti-semitism** in Aladdin story, the Hunchback story seems to promote **Tolerance** of all three religions
- **Love** is an on-going theme; influence on Chivalric romance is evident