

## Religion and the Construction of Subjects in Beckett and Saedi's Fictional Works

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**Abstract:** This study aims to revisit the concept of subjectivity in *Malone Dies* by Samuel Beckett and *Azadaran-e Bayal* and *Shab Neshini ba Shokuh* both written by Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi. The term subjectivity is that strain in the middle of decision and dream, between forced definitions and individual cross examinations of them and between old formulae and new obligations, particularly as those pressures helps us to comprehend the convergence of artistic and different types of social representation and the basic talk of personality. For our motivation, one's character can be considered as that specific arrangement of characteristics, convictions and fidelities that in short or long haul ways, gives one a steady identity and method of social being while subjectivity infers dependably a level of pondered personality in the meantime permitting a bunch of impediments and frequently mysterious, unavoidable limitations on our capacity to completely appreciate character. This study illustrates the concept within a framework which is religion. It tries to show how the subjects in these fictional works could be read in relation to the dominant atmosphere of contemporary age within which they are produced and that is religion. All in all it demonstrates the impression of religion on the writers as the early subjects who were tucked away behind their own created subjects of obliged environment of their time.

**Key words:** Subject, subjectivity, religion, ideology, identity

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### INTRODUCTION

This study tries to explore comparatively and critically *Malone Dies* by Samuel Beckett and *Azadaran-e Bayal* and *Shab neshini ba Shokuh* both fairly translated as *The Mourners of Bayal* and *Glorious Soiree* written by Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi. This comparative study concentrates on the aforesaid works through the light of religion and its ideological workings in the researcher's societies and how the authors as subjects influenced by society have reflected this in their works. The theory takes different perspectives and theories into consideration regarding religion as an ideological apparatus in shaping and deforming the subjects and thus subjectivities in these works. In the beginning of this chapter first there is an introduction of ideology as an apparatus of society and then the following paragraphs include different views on religious background of Beckett.

As per Hall (2004), Althusser notes: Ideological State Apparatuses albeit clearly unique they are interconnected by one means or another with a specific end goal to work in a given society. The cornucopias of various ISAs for example, media, schools, colleges, religious organizations,

political gatherings and so on are commanded by the main belief systems which are in the hands of the decision classes in a general public.

The overwhelming philosophy is instructive framework. In the pre-entrepreneur society in Europe it was the congregation which commanded the religious circle as well as legislative issues, training and culture. As Hall says, "in a period in which the surety of religion is obviously disintegrating, the reasoning self is further deadened by considerations of what may happen after death". Obviously, religion some time ago tended to itself to that work of recognizing sound from neurotic action. As Beryl, Durkheim "trusted that the issues created by the breakdown of customary request would just be comprehended on the premise of investigative (Barge, 1990).

The 19th and mid 20th comprehends of how social orders functioned. On the off chance that the laws overseeing the normal world could be found through experimental perception so also could the laws of the social world". It is this fantasy of an extraordinary and great other that would restore the subject's supernatural solidarity that clarifies the religious confidence in a patriarchal God and its talk of virtue, fruition and

totality. As indicated by Mansfield (2000), Foucault claims pre-present day methods of force which depended on a religious compliance and horrible power, by the late eighteenth century, could no more adapt to the versatile and cracked nature of the human populace. Another kind of force emerged; one put resources into frameworks of social organization instead of held up in people and titles at the end of the day, a force worked around foundations (penitentiaries, workhouses, schools, manufacturing plants, healing facilities, dormitory) as opposed to around lords and nobles. All together that human populaces could be better composed, new systems of force should have been produced (Beckett, 1957).

Bryden (1998) "Beckett's initial childhood was set apart by a recognition of religious practice inside of his own family unit, maintained remarkably by a mother who fortified it with her own estimations of devotion and control. "nature for this religious recognition was that of a well-to-do Protestant minority in Dublin. Late grant has conveyed to noticeable quality what had been an under-misused measurement of Beckett studies his Irishness-and this has added to understandings of Beckett's religious mindfulness as it created inside of a certain authentic and social setting "(Bryden,1998).

"Living in the princely suburb of Foxrock, the Becketts' neighbors were overwhelmingly Protestant This is not to say that beckett did not in the end grow dear companions amongst Catholics. Tom MacGreevy is a remarkable illustration who was additionally a submitted Catholic. By and by, it is noteworthy to note that when in his initial composition, Beckett coordinates a wry, Joycean-style parody towards components of Catholic association and custom, he does as such from the point of view of a spectator as opposed to from the insider viewpoint obtained by Joyce (Cronin, 1996).

In his powerful A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett, Kenner (1973) does actually arrange Beckett solidly inside of a particularly Protestant convention: 'Beckett's work draws on two profound customs by which history has formed the particularly Protestant character the individual confirmation and the issueless showdown with inner voice'. Consequently, without ascribing to Beckett a denominational adherence, Kenner contends that, interestingly with the 'thorough externality' connected with a Catholic holy philosophy as yet 'holding on past Joyce's loss of conviction, Beckett's perpetually self-addressing heroes offer in 'a propensity for psyche that since the seventeenth century has gotten a particular religious molding, that forming being Protestant.

For Ross (1993), Beckett's self-exchange to France and to French was less a break from a problematical social legacy as a positive quest for a "transitional" or

"potential" space. Truth be told, Mercier (1977) in the long run slips out of the protective layer struck by Ross by asserting that 'Beckett's all-inclusiveness in the last investigation, does not rely on upon impatriation or exile on Irishness, Frenchness or cosmopolitanism it relies on upon the mystery of a novel self'. Beckett's own particular self-situating opposite religion at this period is comparatively equivocal. In answer to a guard counsel question in 1937 (amid a slander activity attempted by his uncle) in respect to whether he was a Christian, Jew or skeptic, Beckett answered 'none of the three'. As opposed to his mom's obviously steadfast Christian confidence and his dad's clearly resigned resistance of denominational enrollment, the status of Beckett's own religious dispositions stayed portable and temporary (Knowlson, 1997).

Beckett wished to immunize his creative generation against the infringement of religious formalism. At the point when Driver (1979) asked Beckett whether his plays managed concerns which may likewise be regarded religious, Beckett answered, referring to his experience of going in a London cab 'Yes for they deal with distress on the glass partition between me and the driver were three signs: one asked for help for the blind, another help for orphans and the third for relief for the war refugees. One does not have to look for distress. It is screaming at you even in the taxis of London' (Beckett, 1957).

Religion is used as an interpolated apparatus as a part of constructing subjects in Sa'edi and Beckett's works. As indicated by Althusser in Ferretter's book, belief system works in an extremely fragile manner, one of the mechanical assemblies is religion and therefore religion by applying various types of customs like Muharram in the feeling of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque by self-beating by a sort of sadomasochistic exercises is across the board in one society. This religion as one of the mechanical assemblies of philosophy, fills in as one of the states powers control over the uninformed and mass individuals. The same thing can be found in Malone Dies in Beckett. It was initially distributed in 1951 in French. It can be depicted as the space in the middle of wholeness and deterioration, activity and aggregate dormancy.

The establishment of St. John in Malone Dies incomprehensibly alludes to religion, in light of the fact that in this spot religion as one of the ideological mechanical assemblies is rehearsed through its extreme standards here and there. Macmann is dealt with by a medical caretaker who wears crosses worn on either ear speaking to the executing of Jesus on good Friday and a cross approached her tooth speaking to Jesus. Mr. Macmann and that elderly attendant in the end start a staggering sexual issue, yet before long she doesn't

return and he discovers that she has passed on. The new medical attendant is a man named Lemuel and there is an enmity between the two. Macmann and infrequently Malone floats into the primary individual has an issue with a stick that he uses to achieve things and Lemuel takes it away.

One of the things seen in these two novels is the illicit sexual affair between two people. In *Malone Dies* Mr. Macmann with the elderly nurse has sex although, the nurse has worn crucifix as a bracelet it is paradoxically at the same time religious and breaking the religious conventions. Eslam one of the characters in *Azadaran-e Bayal* is omnipresent. We can see him everywhere. It seems that he is a jack of all traits. There is a kind of schizophrenia in all these characters. Religion as one of the apparatuses which that ideological state has given to people has made people fragmented in the character. It blurs the distinction between reality and illusion and religion in the form of the ideology given by the state (a metaphysical form). At the same time it mingles with the superstition. It can be seen in the third story where Nan-e Khanoom says, "no, nobody will go outside of the village. We will mourn tomorrow, make votive offerings and sing dirges. Perhaps may Hadhrat pity us, forgive us and make all disasters go away."

The village of Bayal is in sheer contrast with the city life. It is uncivilized; it is in its pristine form but not in its romantic sense but in a very disillusioned one. Simultaneously it gives way to a kind of disintegrated characters. While we have poverty, misery, starvation, draught, people still cling to the superstitious acts and sometimes it strikes our minds when it is going to end. The same thing can be seen in *Malone Dies* in the institution of John of God. It seems that as if there is a kind of God or metaphysical being controlling them and they are under severe surveillance by God. This God is a kind of representation made by state apparatuses in order to control people's illusions and it alludes to the Althusserian concept which is an absolute being who is perfect.

The village is the symbol of un-civilization, superstitions, religion, poverty, starvation, disease, evil, harsh and violent nature, dark and gloomy all the time. All these symbols are in fact representations of a bigger society named Iran. In fact Sa'edi tries to closely examine this society like a doctor, dissecting all those problems and analyzing and looking at them closely and examining them in order to probably not giving any remedy or correction but at least as a kind of consolidation or something for Iranian readers. In *Malone Dies* people try to leave that place to an island for picnic but at the same

time it is considered as a resistance toward that dominant ideology. One of the other important themes in these novels is the theme of metamorphosis.

By looking at *Azadaran-e Bayal's* fourth story, "Cow", Mash Hassan is unable to confront with this fact that his cow has died. So instead of confronting with this fact, he metamorphoses himself to his property, he becomes a cow. Even the people of that village believe that Mash Hassan has become a cow because we see that in different episodes of this story, Eslam brings forage to Mash Hassan to eat. People even believe things so easily. The same metamorphosis theme occurs in *Malone Dies* when Malone as an old man narrating his story, he is talking about a character named Sapo a young boy. He reaches the point in the story that Sapo becomes suddenly a man. He even changes the name of Sapo to Macmann. There is a metamorphosis from boyhood to manhood. The people of *Azadaran-e Bayal* also believe that Mash Hassan has become a cow, the same way Sapo has become a man. We do not question the validity of this transition from boyhood to manhood.

There is a kind of paradox in the name of Eslam in *Azadaran-e Bayal*. He seems a kind of intellectual in relation to other characters in the story. He has properties (carriage, horse, goat) even Kadkhoda or the chief of village consults with Eslam and he takes his words for granted as truth. One of the themes seen in religion is the concept of God and particularly monotheism. Both Islam and Christianity are monotheistic religions. We can see that God is pieced into many different semi-gods, martyrs, Imams, Prophets and crucifixions, etc. The word *Azadaran* reminds us of a very religious theme of mourners. It means that people living in little and small societies always mourn about their life. They cry, they lament and the characters and their connections, their metaphysical and spiritual connection with that religion which sometimes we see is a kind of vast superstition inserted among people of the village.

Examining the characters can show us that these characters are religion-stricken; it means that religion is a fundamental part of their life and people's interactions with each other and also with the outsiders of that village. In all the stories of *Azadaran-e Bayal* there are some symbols which frequently give us some notions of death. For instance, sound of jingle bells heard in some parts of the story. It is like the bell of a church because every time someone dies we hear the ringing of the bell. In the story jingle bell is the symbol of death.

The names given to the characters, individuals and subjects in the story, e.g., Kadkhoda, Eslam, Ramezan, etc., connotatively suggest a kind of religious meaning. Kadkhoda represents God, king of the village. Eslam bears

the name of the religion Islam and Ramazan bears the name of one Islamic month. One of the major religious symbols in Azadaran-e Bayal is the place where they baptize or wash the dead which is a black stone near the pool in the center of village and it is paradoxically dark. Every time someone dies people mourn, people of Bayal even mourn for the smallest misfortunes of their life. Fear of death can be considered one of the stimuli for people to believe in one religion. Traditions of that village which are definitely connected with religion and superstition is part and parcel of people. The culture of that village is dominantly predominated with religion. These people represent the whole Iranians in the 1940 and 1950's after World War Two. It was the time of hunger and starvation, severe economy, inflation and other disasters.

As we can easily notice in Azadaran-e Bayal Azar pointed to the kids who were sitting silently and waiting on the stairs. Doctor returned and put the branch clip on her chest. Then the sound of jingle bell gradually faded (Azadaran-e Bayal 19). It goes without saying that when the doctor comes to examine the patient the sound of the bell which is the symbol of death gradually fades away. Aforementioned was the theme of death. Superstition and religion are in parallel with poverty and misery of that society. Religious superstitions were society's biggest problem. There is a guy in the second story which is called Aghay-e Deh, a clergyman who people ask for help in time of crisis. In the second story there is a house named Khon-e Geda Khanoom which people gather there in order to pray God and at the same time. One of the most important themes is ignorance.

According to Pour Omrani's book Criticism and Analysis of Saedi's selected works. In most Saedi's works city life is pessimistic and conversely his view for the village life is optimistic and panegyric. This kind of worldview was prevalent in the 1950 and 1960's. It was due to the dark and severe atmosphere caused by the coup d'état of August 1953. Because of this writers were more prone to highlight the miserable life of people both living in the so-called modern cities of Iran and primitive and poor conditions of the villages. It goes without saying that Saedi as an intellectual Iranian living at that time was the victim of nurturing the miserable and the poor. It can be easily seen in all his characters that are miserable, dejected and poor not only in the physical sense of poverty but also in their poor deterministic and irrational/traditional worldview.

In an interview with Saedi he emphasizes that Iranian literature in the time of so-called "strangulation" displaced to an allegorical literature. In Saedi's works there are a lot of allegorical symbols relating religion or religious themes. Saedi confesses that in constructing his characters or

subjects he did not think about how to make them but rather it was the atmosphere which pushes him into creating these subjects. "The world which surrounds me, influences me in writing" (Ferretter, 2007). Saedi as a socio-pathologist and psychologist blends reality with surreality. He entangles allegory with symbolism and goes even beyond to an extreme degree of realism which seems he is more of naturalist/pornographic writer. Saedi's works are not the simple narration of sequence of events but rather more of the construction of subjectivities. Saedi depicts his ideas and beliefs in his works through these subjects. His characters are like the author himself timid, disillusioned and marginalized. In Shabneshiniy-e Bashekoo (Glorious soiree), governmental clerks and urbane people are neurotic. Literate and intellectuals in the vicissitudes of life are lost and paranoiac.

All characters in Bayal bear the name 'Mashadi or Mashdi' which means someone who has gone a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mashhad where the eighth Imam of Shiites has been buried. Even though it seems that all characters have gone to such sacred journey they all lack religiousness and spirituality and seem even more materialistic in their worldviews. In fact, Saedi bridges the gap between the real and the surreal, the mind and the external to show this delicate dialect which always compete to outrun each other. According to Jalal Aleahmad, Bayal's character though they are naïve and run simple life in the village they depict the whole society of Iran with its primitive life needs and problems. Islam as one of the main characters has the things which make him a kind of pseudo-leader who has three things required to be that leader:

- He has a carriage
- He is sagacious

He has a musical instrument to play and thus to entertain people. In all he is a jack of all trades. He solely solves villagers' problems. He is an epitomized version of a leader in Bayal and undoubtedly he is Islam as religion allegorically incarnated. Islam also becomes the scapegoat in the end and cannot stand the villagers' sheer ignorance and escape to city to build a new life of being an 'ashiq' a peripatetic music player

Begging is considered as another good metaphor for allegorizing and it contrives a way for Sa'edi to critique the decayed religion with its superstition in his society. Another symbol can fairly be considered 'alamkhane' or where 'alams' or the holy flags are kept in. In order for the villagers to go inside 'alamkhane' they have to lower themselves to reach it which represents their everlasting lowering to their condescendingly religio-superstitious

belief systems and thus remaining ignorant and enslaved to the end. In glorious soiree, clerks and especially those who work for the government have miserable and gloomy life though they are considered the so-called intellectuals whose life should be better than this. Their bosses are described as priests and clergymen whose obedience is their utmost and foremost desire and duty for they are the chosen by the monarchic government and consequently the monarchy is ostensibly chosen by the Lord so that, obeying unquestionably their commands and orders is like obeying the covenant of God. Sa'edi cunningly depicts workings of religion and monarchy in the story. Consider this part from the story.

The second story bears the title "The Umbrella" which concentrates on the umbrella taken by the governmental clerks on the rainy days. It has become an emblem of authority and identity. That's why the principal character Mr. Hassani when apparently loses his umbrella become confused and perplexed as if he lost his ID card. Although, the umbrella is a device used as protection against rain it is not used as a protection but rather as an identity of a person which gives self-confidence in a sinister society. This umbrella plays the same role for self-confidence as of the 'magic feather' of the animated film character Dumbo, a baby elephant, who holds in order to boost its self-confidence and finally to fly. The same thing happens here in the story but unlike Dumbo's magic feather when it is lost Mr. Hassani is not able to confront this fact and becomes psychologically disintegrated. With the advent of modernity there was a washout on the religious sphere in Iran and imitating western lifestyle was the utmost goal of the harbingers of modernity and at top the monarchic government. But this parroting of modernity and its consequent secularization of the lifestyle did not pay off but lopsided. Some other fantastic elements are seen in the story when Mr. Hassani is at his dark and gloomy home there is seen an ilk of a sinister and macabre being present which is unknown to us.

But Mr. Hassani did not need the light. Mr. Hassani was always in the dark. Mr. Hassani liked darkness and was more comfortable in the dark. He could easily see in the dark. And when entered, he stretched his hand to take his old and stitched umbrella hung from the spike on the door and then he locked the door. And before departing, an unknown animal turned around him. Mr. Hassani raised his umbrella. There were so many times that in the darkness of the stairs they had been taking his umbrella and had not let it go. Mr. Hassani did not fear that uncanny being. He did not want to lose his umbrella. While going away from the garbage bins, he stepped down the stairs. There was no sign of rain outside. Black clouds were imbricating over each other and those few drops of rains had evaporated.

The third story is "Introduction Ceremony" which recounts the story of an organization where attendants, clerks and mates are gathered to be introduced to their new boss. The boss talks about innovations and how this organization should break the conventional structure of its system and pay the way for improvement. It is absurdly the parody of the so-called intellectuals' slogans said in the society. Boss after boss recounts the same trite slogans but we see no change in the overall system of the organization. Again this is another method of modernizing Iran but in a lopsided way. In his concluding speech, the new boss sums up his whole absurd philosophy of modernization:

"In the end I hope that by taking this new responsibility and position, I will be diligent and hard-working as usual. And I will show how really dutiful and efficient I will be for this country and I expect all other regional bosses to cooperate with me. Because of your support I have taken this burden over my shoulders. Gentlemen Let's be the servant of this nation and country. Let's live in a way that the poet Sa'di said to 'long live the person who led an honorable life' let's begin, gentlemen What are you waiting for?"

In other stories *My Dad's Dreams* and *Quarrels for Children* take the same theme of clerk life. In *My Dad's Dream* which is told by the son of the family whose father is an accountant the father brings home his office papers to work on them and as a result he forgets about his family life. He has obsession for numbers and fears his boss so much that at the brink of mental breakdown and delirium he assumes his son as his boss and asks him to forgive him because he has not done his job well enough. His son orders him to take his pills and go to bed. In *quarrels for children* clerks of an organization quarrels because of their children. Every morning they come and boast about their kids' achievements at school and fight over it in a fatuous way. They are hopeless and awaiting their retirement and finally death.

In stories when it becomes Noon and inspector again takes as their theme the clerk life. In when it becomes Noon a teacher who has a severe stomachache and suffers from gastric ulcer doesn't go to the doctor to get operation because he is scared of it. He finally falls in the street and dies. In latter story which bears the name *Inspector* tells the story of a school where the staff are waiting for the coming of an inspector. Every time they prepare themselves for the coming of the inspector, he does not show up. They have to wait another week. They lose their trust and belief for the coming of the inspector the story begins with a verse from Koran 'tell everybody's waiting you should wait as well' which sums up the whole story and the author insinuates that waiting is meaningless and parodies this as a futile effort. Waiting

as a religious concept in monotheistic religions plays a very fundamental role in make-believe world of absolute happiness and according to the philosopher and critic Ernesto Laclau authority applies 'empty signifiers' to insert its ideology into people and to keep them silent and inert.

In stories "The Circle of the Departed" a narrator as a clerk receives a letter from his cousin. His cousin asks his help to find a job for his son there and he immediately responds to him that 'send your son here the job is available for him.' The condition of the office is cold, severe and decayed. One cannot help remembering Beckett's waiting for Godot's famous quotation that 'Nobody comes. Nobody goes. It's awful.' They work day in day out without even going out to see the outside world.

Life facilities are almost available. Just give him your umbrella. Perhaps he would be going out on the first days and for a clerk it's a necessary thing. An umbrella is always useful. Although, I don't go out, I still have my own umbrella. And whenever I get scared I hide under the umbrella. An umbrella protects men. An umbrella separates us from others. An umbrella is a little and dark sky which keeps us in its dark womb. I have decided to teach him how to make artificial flowers. But I am sure it won't continue and even better. Flower shop in the Circle of the Departed! What a pathetic thing! Flower making and selling in the departed! Hurry up! I'm looking forward to your son. Hurry up.

In stories "A Letter of Resignation, Ridiculing Orphanage and Farewell Ceremony", the same line of thought is seen. In A Letter of Resignation, the principal character makes himself ready to resign. His schizophrenic character does not allow us to distinguish the fact whether he has become mad or there are just his hallucinations. In farewell ceremony, the staff waits for the coming of a new boss. All principals talk about the deceased bosses and how good they have been. After a couple of hours with the arrival of car everybody gets happy and eager to see the new boss. But instead of the boss his servant gets off the car and goes to the podium to say some unintelligible words to the principal. The audience gets anxious and surprised. Finally they are announced that the new boss has just passed away. The story concludes with the concept of death as its principal theme. It goes without saying that the whole collection of the stories plays around the concepts of death, decadence, religion and disintegrated characters in a corrupted society.

Malone Dies is the continuation of the same journey of Beckett in his importance making out of the bedlam and hullabaloo of his general public and specifically

life. Malone expect the parts of the characters from Beckett's past works. He tries to describe stories to withstand his repetitive life. He is as far as anyone knows going to kick the bucket. He doesn't know where he is or even who he is. Transience and spatiality is the main things workable for the metaphysics of his stories. That is the reason his narrating is futile on the grounds that he remembers everything fragmentedly. We can't make sure whether his diminishing is genuine or just only his creative ability. Even the very name of Malone suggests solitude (m+alone) me alone is going to be in the end. The character/narrator is alone and lonely so in order to kill the time he has to tell stories to pass it.

Malone as the key storyteller and story teller is a human stripped out of his sentimental garments of the purported cutting edge humankind. The creator Beckett was raised in a Catholic family where in a state of banishment he found an outlet to express his critical and solid sentiments both in dismissal of his old and conventional conviction and building up his new worldview of turning into a "genuine" individual. Malone is Beckett resurrected who tries to make another account of his own and amuse himself as well as us as perusers. The procedure of portraying a story is really accomplished for the purpose edifying and captivating. For Beckett the most vital thing is to make void another space for importance appearing well and good that void has dependably been viewed as agnostic in its simple thought (Graver and Federman, 1979).

## CONCLUSION

In the end what it can be seen that it is the impact of the authors' contexts in creating the works which owe to their time and talent. Religion as a dominant ideology has played a fundamental role in these writers' lifestyle and their battle to cleanse it out of its hegemonic inbuilt structure in people's belief systems.

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