

**PLSJ**

Vol. 4 No. 5-6, 2015

DOI: [10.22099/jps.2015.3717](https://doi.org/10.22099/jps.2015.3717), ISSN: 2322-2557

pp. 69-70

Hedayat's Neighbour: The Fictional Legacy of Gholam-Hosayn Sa'edi, Ghahreman Shiri, Tehran: Butimar, 2015. pp. 284<sup>1</sup>.

**Mostafa Hosseini**

Assistant professor  
English Literature, Bu-Ali Sina  
University, Hamedan, Iran  
[hosseiny.mostafa1352@gmail.com](mailto:hosseiny.mostafa1352@gmail.com)

Gholam-Hosayn Sa'edi, (1936 – 1985) was an assiduous and prolific writer. He tried his hands at writing short stories, novels, plays, scenarios, and travelogues. Sa'edi even wrote some pieces of poetry and translated a few books. However, his today's fame rests largely upon his short stories, and plays.

*Hedayat's Neighbour* is a monograph about one of the most influential writers of modern Persian Literature. The book, as its subtitle indicates, is a critical analysis of Sa'edi's fictional legacy. It is neatly organized, consisting of five chapters (The Life and Works, Short Stories, Novels, Criticism and Plays, and The Summary of the Novels and Novel-like) and two appendices, including a bibliography, and an index of names.

---

<sup>1</sup> همسایه هدايت (ميراث داستان نويسي غلامحسين ساعدي)، قهرمان شيري، تهران: انتشارات بوتيمار، ۱۳۹۴.

In the first chapter, the author reviews Sa'edi's life and works. This short critical biography covers different aspects of Sa'edi's turbulent life, e. g. political, literary, and professional. The author tries, on the basis of published documents especially his personal letters, to give a life-like picture of Sa'edi's eventful life. This chapter is like a long escape short story, full of ups and downs, which reads very smoothly and enjoyably.

Chapter two examines at length Sa'edi's short stories which are collected in eight separable volumes. This chapter is full of novelties and perhaps the most informative part of the book. The stories, because of the repressive political atmosphere of the time, are clouded with a halo of mysteries. Shiri tries to decipher the hidden levels of the stories. To do so, he puts them in their historical contexts, then enumerating their thematic and formal features, and finally decodes and analyzes them. In my opinion, this chapter is his towering achievement in the whole book.

Chapter three is devoted to Sa'edi's novels. Although Sa'edi wrote seven novels, four of them remained unfinished. Here, the author has discussed just the three finished novels, e. g. *The Cannon*, *Stranger in the Town*, and *The Grinning Tartar*. According to the author, Sa'edi's novels are not as well-made as his short stories. Since his involvement in political activities and his wandering life, he had not enough time to elaborate on them.

The fourth chapter itself is divided into two parts. The first part is about the diction and the style of his works through the eyes of some of famous Iranian and foreign critics like Shamlo, Golshiri, Al-Ahmad, Brahani and Christophe Balaÿ. The second part deals with Sa'edi as a dramatist. The author ranks Sa'edi, together with Radi and Beizaie, as the three great modern Persian dramatists. This part is very short (239-249), and just can be regarded as an introduction to Sa'edi's plays. Unfortunately, the author's critical voice is rarely heard in this part.

---

In the final chapter the author summarizes Sa'edi's novels and novel-likes, so as to refresh the reader's mind. He regards *The Mourners of Bayal* (including eight stories) and *Fear and Trembling* (including six stories) as episodic novels and gives a summary of them. At the end of this chapter the summary of *The Cannon*, *Stranger in the Town*, and *The Grinning Tartar* is presented.

Two important points have escaped the attention of the author. One, there is no reference to the influence of Chekov on Sa'edi's works. One can find some of the characteristics of Chekov's style of writing on Sa'edi. Interestingly, Sa'edi himself in his short autobiography refers that he was heavily influenced by Chekov. Two, the recent papers, books, and theses written abroad (e.g. *Modern Persian Drama* by Giselle Kapuscinski, "Up from the Underground: The Meaning of Exile in Gholam-hosayn Sa'edi's Last short Stories," by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, and *Iranian Drama* by Mohammad Reza Ghanoonparvar, to name only a few) are not consulted. Of course, it must be born in mind that the accessibility to foreign references is a laborious task.

Despite these criticisms, *Hedayat's Neighbour* gives an attractive and comprehensive analysis of Sa'edi's short stories and novels. The book is a must for lovers of Sa'edi fictional legacy, whether scholars or general readers and future studies in the field will not be able to escape reference to Shiri's scholarly book.