

Saadi: The Matter of Reality and Imagination

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Abstract : Is it true to say that Saadi was an idealized embodiment of his moral teachings in Gulistan and Boustan? The body of criticism on Saadi's works suggests that his biography provides no clear and valid information to judge about the extent to which Saadi acted what he preached. His moral teachings depict a sort of individual and social morality which is defined in relation to power and falls in the category of political ethics. Political ethics appear as for the noble and the subordinate in Gulistan and Boustan. Ethics for the noble include all his teachings for governors and rulers in eulogies. On the other hand, ethics for the subordinate include all his suggestions for the public in relation to power position. Here, Saadi puts forward some conservative recommendations that trigger some contemporary critical commentaries. However, there are some cases where he takes up a third person narrative position to narrate the story of a king and a mendicant. In these stories, the mendicant is a witty man with bitter criticism on society, implying that one should relinquish earthly pleasures and advantages if he wants his criticism to be acceptable. First person narratives fall in two categories determinate and indeterminate narratives. Indirect speeches reflecting biographical facts are indeterminate narratives which give no information about the poet's personality. Other narratives are more of an autobiography that report probable observations. These latter narratives demonstrate Saadi as a man quick at repartee that feels free to disclose his poverty and some cases of impiety. Therefore, they provide no idealized picture of the poet in terms of ethical principles.

Keywords : Saadi, ethics, Boustan, Gulistan, first-person narrative

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