



Malone Dies

Samuel Beckett

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Written and published in French in 1951, and in Samuel Beckett's English translation in 1956, *Malone Dies* is the second of his immediate post-war novels, written during what Beckett later referred to as 'the siege in the room'.

'Malone', writes Malone, 'is what I am called now.' On his deathbed, whittling away the time with stories and revisions of stories, the octogenarian Malone's account of his condition is contradictory and intermittent, shifting with the vagaries of the passing days: without mellowness, without elegiacs; wittier, jauntier, and capable of darker rages than his precursor Molloy. Malone promises silence, but as a storyteller he delivers irresistibly more.

Malone Dies Details

Date : Published February 20th 2018 by Grove Press (first published 1951)

ISBN : 9780802151179

Author : Samuel Beckett

Format : Paperback 120 pages

Genre : Fiction, European Literature, Irish Literature, Classics

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From Reader Review Malone Dies for online ebook

Kalliope says

Death is a Digital event and Life and Death are binary outcomes. One is alive or one is dead. There is no in between really. Death is a state with a hundred percent certainty. Of course there have been stories of resurrections, but these are supported by faith, not certainty. We also have states denominated as 'clinical deaths', when the blood and breathing stops because the heart is beating too irregularly. No matter how erratically is the heart functioning, and one is still alive. Not dead.

On the other hand, full certainty of being alive is only achieved in the instant that has just passed. Otherwise we have to accept living with one's prospective life based on probabilities that decrease gradually in our forthcoming future. A moribund person is still alive, even if the chances of an imminent death are high.

This is why the title of this novel puzzled me. Malone *meurt* / dies. It is not Malone *se meurt* / in a state or condition of dying, or Malone *est en train de mourir* / Malone is dying, or Malone *va mourir* / is about to die. Not even either is it Malone *vient de mourir* / just died. No, it is happening right at the precise moment it is stated.

And yet, the novel is about Malone who is well alive and conscious. Were it not for the title we would not surmise, while reading him—for he is writing in his *cahier* (not Proust's *carnet*) what we are reading—that his probability of dying is accelerating. In fact, other characters mentioned whose possible death is not envisioned, die before him.

And the life we witness is rich indeed. No matter that he seems to be bedridden and somewhat limited in his movements. He has a strong imagination and he invents stories: stories about a couple of people, about things and about an animal. Or may be he is not inventing them, since they inhabit his mind, no more no less than other happenings or sensations that are or were part of his life. Life is in the mind, as fed and boosted by the heart.

Writing one's life is a way of managing the time one is still alive, for while alive the time belongs to us or one becomes the time of one's life (*j'étais le temps*). Writing also is a way of postponing death even if one is wasting it away and letting it pass (*Ça passait le temps*). Or recover it, as Beckett must have been thinking that Proust did. Malone even thinks that even if he thinks he is dying, he is with his writing, engulfing all of us (*je mangeais l'univers*).

But Malone's identity, no matter what he writes in his 'cahier', remains in flux. As my GR friend Renato commented, the name sounds like 'I'm alone', or fuses into other beings whose name begin with M: Malone, Molloy, Mercier, Morand, Murphy,.. Mort. For even if the title is stated in the third person, the writing is in the I-mode. But an 'I' that sometimes becomes another. Until it arrives at the river where the crossing also brings a Binary outcome.

For even if Malone dies one cannot write about death; only about life and the imagination.

So, the writing stops. The title happens at the end.

That always happens at the end.

Gaurav says

It's another gem from Samuel Beckett, the universe of Beckett is rich, haunting, surreal and metaphorical which shudder you to the core of your existence. The misery of human nature is, as it is condemned, to feel absurd above life, the very existence of human being to the point where existence of a man is strip to nothingness; however the life we witness is rich indeed but 'death' is an absolute certainty (at least to the extent we have been able to understand our 'Universe' till yet), and the whole struggle of human nature is about to comprehend the enigma behind it.

João Fernandes says

Returning to Ireland always means reading some Beckett or Heaney!

Jimmy says

Beckett, at last, faced with the sentence, the semi-sentient, sentence-like non-sentence. Even dying, especially so, Beckett alone in the rotting body of Malone, the rolling, roiling, sacrosanct body Malloyed against the scat of Saposcat like a hat on a hill. Oh, we're getting on, alright, Macmann. Let's gasp. Let's grasp for our stick better to poke-at with, our nub of lead better to write with, this letter of cease and de cease.

For there is a joy in here that is hard to describe. On the one hand I am ecstatic about these sentences, language, syntax, humor. There is a surprising quietness too, that I love. Nevermind. There is no other hand. I was about to say something about the despair, the madness and decay. But they are intertwined like a good split brain soup.

Beckett does it to me in the first half of this book like no other. When he is on, there is no-one better. Then around 3/4 of the way in, the level drops slightly. In that the surprises, the tiny pleasures, don't come as often, or not as tightly packed as before. It becomes easier to read, smoother, lacking the constant change of direction and backtracking I loved earlier. But still, even at its weakest this stuff is miles above the others.

I remember admiring Molloy greatly, but not being able to really sink my teeth deep into it. This book on the other hand was so tactile for me, it drew me in so that I read it almost in one sitting (Molloy took weeks!). I'm not sure if this is the book's fault or mine, maybe I'm more susceptible to his rhythms this time around.

“Standing before my high window I gave myself to them, waiting for them to end, for my joy to end, straining towards the joy of ended joy.”

Σαφές αποτελεσ? συν?χεια και επαν?ληψη της ιστορ?ας του Μολλ?υ με τη μ?νη διαφορ? πως εδ? οι δυο ?ρωες που μονολογο?ν αναμειγν?ονται σε ?να πρ?σωπο.

Ωστ?σο δεν υπ?ρχει δυνατ?τητα αποσαφ?νισης μεταξ? επαν?ληψης ? αναβ?ωσης και σ?γουρα μ?σα σε ?λη την παρ?κρουση ο Μπ?κετ τον?ζει θαυμαστ? την ικαν?τητα του λ?γου να συλλ?βει ως σκεπτικ?,με αιτ?α και αποτ?λεσμα την απ?λυτη παρ?νοια.

Εδ?,αν?μεσα στον Μάλ?ν και τον Μακμ?ν που ε?ναι ?νας χαρακτ?ρας,παρεμβά?νουν εμβ?λιμα οι αμφιβολ?ες πως ?σως να μην ε?ναι το ?διο πρ?σωπο.

?μως,?τσι κι αλλι?ς (κατ? την ?ποψη μου) δεν υπ?ρχει διαφορ? στην εξ?λιξη και την καταν?ηση ε?τε ε?ναι,ε?τε ?χι.

Αυτ?ς ε?ναι ο κ?σμος του Μπ?κετ,δεν υπ?ρχει αλ?θεια και ψ?μα και αν υπ?ρξει δεν πα?ζει σπουδα?ο ρ?λο στο μυθιστ?ρημα.

Διαφορετικ?ς ανατυπ?σεις της ?διας δυστυχισμ?νης και π?νσοφης ιστορ?ας. Ελ?χιστες δι?φορες στη λεπτομ?ρεια δημιουργο?ν μια αριστουργηματικ? και καταθλιπτικ? Σισ?φεια αναγνωστικ? μαγε?α.

Ο Μπ?κετ δεν δ?νεται να διαβάστε? ?πως τα βιβλ?α με απροβλημ?τιστο υλικ? πλοκ?ς και ?μεση καταν?ηση της γρ?γορης εξ?λιξης της ιστορ?ας.

Αν γ?νει ?τσι, σ?γουρα αυτ? το αριστο?ρημα θα χαρακτηριστε? πληκτικ?,ανιαρ?,αηδιαστικ? και ανο?σιο.

Πρ?πει ο αναγν?στης να το καταπιε? γουλι?-γουλι? σαν ελιξ?ριο συλλογιστικ?ς εμπειρ?ας ζω?ς.

Και κ?θε φορ? που θα γε?εται πνευματικ? και ψυχικ? την ουσ?α των πραγμ?των να επαν?ρχεται ξαν? και ξαν? π?νοντας αργ? τη συναρπαστικ? τ?χνη του συγγραφέ?α.

?τσι μ?νο θα κατορθ?σει να απολα?σει την ισχυρ?τητα και τη δυνατ? σοβαρ?τητα του βιβλ?ου.

Παρ? το γεγον?ς της β?αιης επ?δρασης που ασκε?ται στον αναγν?στη, ο Μπ?κετ καταφ?ρνει να σε αδει?ζει και να σε γεμ?ζει απο π?νο και ελπ?δα ταυτοχρ?νως.

Τη στιγμ? που αναγνωρ?ζεις μορφ?ς και καταστ?σεις προσπαθ?ντας να συνειδητοποι?σεις το β?θος του συναρπαστικο? λ?γου,την αμ?σως επ?μενη στιγμ? σε πετ?ει σε επιφανειακ?ς και συνηθισμ?νες επιδι?ξεις σκ?ψης.

?μως ο μα?στρος το καταφ?ρνει χωρ?ς να χ?νεις καθ?λου σε αυτ? τη μετακ?νηση το ενδιαφ?ρον σου προς οποιαδ?ποτε κατε?θυνση.

Ο Μάλ?ν ε?ναι μια διδαχ?,μια πρ?κληση,?να ?λλο ε?δος εμπειρ?ας. Φτ?νει με την μ?τη του μολυβιο? που κρατ?ει μ?χρι το μεδο?λι. Σου κα?ει την ψυχ?. Σου τσεκουρ?νει το μυαλ?.

Ε?ναι απο τις εμπειρικ?ς αλ?θειες ζω?ς που ?λοι μας ενδ?μυχα αρνο?μαστε να παραδεχτο?με ακ?μη και στον ?διο μας τον εαυτ?.

Θα χαρακτ?ριζα τη γραφ? του Μπ?κετ πονηρ?, βλ?σφημη,τροπαιοφ?ρα παγ?δα συνειδ?σεων και

I read this book almost the same time as John Irving's *The World According to Garp* (3 stars). I have been doing this simultaneous reading of books. When I get tired reading one book, I shift to the other. In my mind, whichever I finish first is the winner regardless of the book's length. For most people and this is not to degrade anybody, I think it would have been the plot-driven *Garp* as a surefire winner. However, for me, I liked *Malone* more because it made me introspective especially on how I see myself as a very old man without the things that I currently enjoy: work, new books and luxuries that go with being young. Maybe I and my wife will be alone in our empty house and I will most of the time be reading my old books while lying in bed waiting for my death or something. Well, obviously, this does not mean that any book about dying man is on the top of my favorite books' list. Beckett is different. His words can make even the dropping of a pencil feels like verses from the Book of Revelation. He has, in here *Malone Dies* a disquieting mood and tone that one can't help but chase every word and phrase including the most famous line: "*Nothing is more real than nothing.*"

Then if **Molloy** has **Moran**, **Malone** has **Macmann** who is this boy that seems like actually an alter-ego of the old Malone. It is as if Beckett would not want to bore you reading a really old man's woes in the cell that he (Beckett) needs to bring you out for some action. So enters Sapo but Malone hates his name so he changes it to Macmann. The boy has an archenemy who later turns out to be a prison warden called **Lemuel**. In the end, we know that Malone is still in his cell writing the story of Macmann but we don't know what happens to that boy because in the end it is Lemuel (being the guard) who is in control of what happens to Macmann (being one of the inmates). But we know that Malone is the one in control of everything (being the writer) who is still in the cell, lying in bed, naked. He holds the pen pushing it to his paper.

Amazing. Really amazing.
