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## extra

### Buried alive!

#### Cyrus Abbasian

Sadeq Hedayat (1903–1951), a 20th-century pioneer of modern Persian literature, was particularly notorious for his Kafkaesque psycho-fictions. Franz Kafka was undoubtedly a great influence on Hedayat, who was the first Persian translator of *The Metamorphosis* (1915).

Hedayat's tortured soul informed his detailed writings on suicidal tendencies, especially in the short story *Buried Alive* (1930). He alludes to the comforting notion of an imminent death: 'No one decides to commit suicide . . . suicide is within some of us, as an essence and disposition'. He adds, 'it's terrifying when death doesn't want and rejects us.' Despite the social stigma attached to suicide within the Persian culture, Hedayat was uplifted and comforted by the option of an imminent death. During a walk in a cemetery he writes, 'I envied the dead . . . I consider death as joyous; a miracle that no one is given easily.'

Hedayat first attempted suicide by jumping into the Seine before writing *Buried Alive*. Therein he further details the processes preceding suicide, outlining the desire of inducing grave physical illness before overdosing on drugs. He fantasises about slowly dying after taking aspirin with opium, preoccupied with the need to 'sense death properly' and the reaction of those who discover his corpse.

Finally, in 1951, a series of adverse events, including financial and emotional ruin, contribute to his ending. He meticulously planned and executed his suicide and was buried at Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Although no final note was left, Hedayat's writings remain his testament.

Cyrus Abbasian is a consultant psychiatrist. The translations are the author's own from the original Persian.

The British Journal of Psychiatry (2011)  
199, 397. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.111.095844