his part that those of us who are interested in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iranian history as reflected by the Persian press, whether students or teachers, are looking forward to reading. Together with the present study and Keivandokht Ghahari's recently published dissertation on nationalism and modernism in Iran based on her study of *Kāveh*, "Irānshahr and Āyandeh (Nationalismus und Modernismus in Iran in der Periode zwischen dem Zerfall der Qajaren-Dynastie und der Machtfestigung Reza Schahs," Berlin 2001), which will soon be published in English, this study will provide readers with a useful and comprehensive examination of the journal *Kāveh* and its contribution to the Persian "modern age".

Anja Pistor-Hatam
Universität Kiel

The Persian Sphinx: Amir Abbas Hoveyda and the Riddle of the Iranian Revolution, Abbas Milani, Washington, D.C.: Mage, 2000, xviii + 399 pp. ISBN: 0-943211-61-2 (cloth).

For years Amir Abbas Hoveyda (Amīr ᶜAbbās Huvaydā) was dismissed as the archetypical servant of the shah's autocratic regime at its height, a man who played the constitutionally prescribed role of prime minister while himself admitting that he took orders from the ruler; a figure more remembered for his trademark pipe, orchid, and cane than his policies and accomplishments. How astonishing, then, that his biography should have aroused so much interest among the general reading public, as attested by the fact that no fewer than three versions of Milani's book have appeared in Persian.

This is no ordinary biography. In the manner of Symons's classic *The Quest for Corvo*, Milani tells the story not only of a rather colorful life, but also of his own quest for the details of this life. Like Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo), Amir Abbas Hoveyda was an enigmatic man, a man in whom the highest ideals coincided with behavior that was inconsistent with these ideals. Disentangling the various contradictory strains in his life and career set the author on a voyage of discovery that ended up being also a voyage of self-discovery. For those interested in politics, *The Persian Sphinx* yields fascinating insights into the petty rivalries in the shah's camarilla, rivalries of which Amir Asadollah Alam already gave us an inkling in his diaries.[1]

This essay, however, will eschew direct engagement with the mundane political history contained in *The Persian Sphinx*.[2] Instead, in the spirit of Oscar Wilde, who wrote that the critic's task is to "translate into another manner or a new material his

1. For a scholarly analysis of these tensions see Vali Nasr, "Politics Within the Late-Pahlavi State: The Ministry of Economy and Industrial Policy, 1963–69," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32:1 (February 2000): 97–122.

2. These are exhaustively dealt with in Kamran Dadkhah's review in *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis* 16:2 (November 2000): 101–103; and Afshin Matin-asgari, "The Transparent Sphinx: Political Biography and the Question of Intellectual Responsibility," *Critique*, No. 19 (Fall 2001): 87–108.

impression of beautiful things,"[3] it proposes an interpretation of the puzzle posed in the book's title, for *Sphinx* suggests riddle, enigma, impenetrability. This interpretation rests on the hypothesis that Hoveyda, consciously or unconsciously, constructed his persona along the lines of the classic European dandy.[4] Here "dandy" does not connote an overdressed and slightly effeminate man, but denotes a social type whose attributes were first defined formally in the mid-nineteenth century by Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808-1889) and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867).[5] The most basic characteristic of the dandy is that he is a conformist rebel, in the sense that dandyism, while respecting conventionalities, "plays with them. While admitting their power, it suffers from and revenges itself upon them, and pleads them as an excuse against themselves."[6] The dandy, then, is a liminal figure in Victor Turner's sense of an entity that is "neither here nor there" and "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial."[7]

Milani briefly alludes to this trait when he writes that as a young man in Beirut and Europe Hoveyda "was something of a dandy. In pictures from the period, he is always sharply dressed, sometimes in a bow tie, occasionally with a dapper chapeau on his head" (68). But dandyhood is about more than meticulous dressing: it is an attitude to life, an attitude embodied by André Malraux's Baron de Clapique, whom Hoveyda

3. In the "Preface" to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

4. Given the wide range of Hoveyda's reading, one is never quite sure to what an extent his life imitated art. For example, how can the scene where, traveling to Europe by boat, the smell of *bifteck frites* makes him feel that he is already in France (65) not remind the reader of the famous passage in J.-K. Huysman's *A Rebours* (available in English in two translations under the titles of *Against Nature* and *Against the Grain*), where the novel's hero, the Duc des Esseintes, before crossing the English Channel, eats at a restaurant near the Gare St. Lazare and finds that his roast beef reminds him so much of England that he no longer needs to undertake the trip, having already experienced the sensation of being on the other side of the La Manche?

5. The first theoretical study on dandyism was Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's 1844 essay *Du dandysme et George Brummell*, inspired by the most famous of all dandies, George ("Beau") Brummell. For an English translation of this seminal work see *Dandyism*, translated by Douglas Ainslie, (New York, 1988). This was followed in 1863 by Charles Baudelaire's essay "Le Dandy," part 9 of his "Le peintre de la vie moderne." The present essay will quote from the English translation: Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne, (New York, 1986). More recent theoretical works on dandyism include Otto Mann, *Der Dandy: Ein Kulturproblem der Moderne* (Heidelberg, 1962); Françoise Coblence, *Le dandysme, obligation d'incertitude* (Paris, 1988); and Marie-Christine Natta, *La grandeur sans convictions: essai sur le dandysme* (Paris, 1991). The best historical study is Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (Lincoln, Neb., 1978). For the literary aspects see Michel Lemaire, *Le dandysme de Baudelaire à Mallarmé* (Montreal, 1978); Hiltrud Gnüg, *Kult der Kälte: Der klassische Dandy im Spiegel der Weltliteratur* (Stuttgart, 1988); and Jessica R. Feldman, *Gender on the Divide: the Dandy in Modernist Literature* (Ithaca, 1993). For an attempt at Freudian analysis of the dandy see Bernard Chervet, "Dandysme et confection de fétiche ou comment habiller un vide," *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* 58 (April–June 1994).

6. Barbey d'Aurevilly, *Dandyism*, 23.

7. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, 1977), 95.

admired (57–58),[8] and theorized most famously by Baudelaire, whom Hoveyda "could easily quote" (61).[9] It is not far-fetched, therefore, to surmise that Hoveyda found in classical French dandyism the models of a behavior that struck so many of his compatriots as somewhat odd. In the following we will explore the various dimensions of Hoveyda's dandiacal persona, as revealed by *The Persian Sphinx*. This quest will take us to consider in turn his liminality in the context of Iranian society, his dandiacal persona, and the timing of his prime ministership.

Hoveyda's Liminality

Historically, many dandies have had their family roots not in the mainstream of society but in a marginal social stratum, the classic example being Benjamin Disraeli, who overcame the social handicap of his Genoese Jewish roots to lead the world's largest empire.[10] Conventional wisdom in Iran had it that Hoveyda was a Baha'i, but Milani shows that he never joined the faith. The misperception of the late prime minister by large segments of the Iranian population stems from the fact that in a traditional patriarchal society religious identity is ascriptive rather than a matter of personal choice, and it is transmitted by the father: and Hoveyda's grandfather and probably his father were indeed Baha'is. Disraeli converted to Christianity as a teenager and Amir Abbas Hoveyda was officially a Shi'ite Muslim who even went on the pilgrimage to Mecca, but a certain marginality remained in both cases, the "betwixt and between" state theorized by Turner.

Hoveyda's Baha'i ancestry was perhaps not unrelated to his cosmopolitanism, for the Baha'i faith preaches world government, a universal language, and the unity of all religions, ideas that it is not implausible to assume to have—at least indirectly—informed his upbringing. True, Hoveyda spent his early and formative years in Beirut, where East and West, Islam and Christendom, Arab and Latin cultures met, but so did many Iranians who did not become cosmopolitans. Close contact with other cultures can heighten one's own sense of difference rather than lead to acceptance of and fascination for the Other, but Hoveyda was, in Milani's words, "the first true cosmopolitan . . . to reach the pinnacles of power in Iran" (175). By the 1960s, cosmopolitanism was on the wane in the Middle East,[11] one more reason why Hoveyda was marginal to an Iranian society that became increasingly obsessed with "authenticity."[12]

It is congruent with a universalist frame of mind for Hoveyda to have become a freemason. Milani expresses bewilderment at his joining the Furughi Lodge, and

8. Curiously enough the literature on dandyism has so far overlooked the figure of Clapique. A connection is hinted at in Marylène Delbourg-Delphis, *Masculin Singulier* (Paris, 1985), 95.

9. See footnote 5.

10. For an analysis of Disraeli's dandyhood see Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*, pp. 84-104; and Françoise Coblence, "Disraëli: du style dandy en politique," *Critique* 405–406 (FebruaryMarch 1981): 276–99.

11. See Roel Meijer, ed., *Cosmopolitanism, Identity and Authenticity in the Middle East* (London, 1999).

12. See Jean-François Bayart, *L'illusion identitaire* (Paris, 1996), 85–92.

ascribes it merely to a desire to get ahead in politics or follow the footsteps of his mentor, Abdollah Entezam (115). In light of Milani's frequent willingness to bend backwards to give Hoveyda the benefit of the doubt, it is puzzling why he should not have considered even the *theoretical* possibility that Hoveyda joined the transnational fraternity out of conviction. Masonic lodges were one of the very few venues in Iran where Iranians and foreigners, Muslims and non-Muslims (except, ironically, Baha'is, who were barred from membership both by their own religious authorities and by the highest instances of Iranian freemasonry) interacted regularly and on an equal, *fraternal*, footing, something that must have appealed to a man so indifferent to primordial loyalties of either the ethnic or religious variety. Moreover, the Furughi Lodge that he joined in 1960 was founded under the auspices of French masonry,[13] which, in comparison with Anglo-Saxon masonry, is less permeated with religion—Voltaire, after all, died a freemason. Hoveyda's friendship with the prominent French politician Edgar Faure, the most famous mason among the Gaullists, would seem to indicate that his membership in the Order had little to do with Britain, the power with which common Iranian prejudice associates masons.

Hoveyda's Dandyism

The title of a French book on dandyism, *Masculin singulier*, points to a key feature of dandyism: whatever his sexual orientation, the dandy is not a family man.[14] Milani treats this much gossiped-about aspect of Hoveyda's life with tact and what the French call *pudeur*; that is, without pandering to readers' voyeuristic inclinations. In his youth, Hoveyda boasted that he had never fallen in love (205), which dovetails with Baudelaire's observation that "the dandy does not . . . regard love as a special target to be aimed at."[15] But as that other great dandy, the late Sherlock Holmes, discovered in "A Scandal in Bohemia," even a confirmed bachelor can fall for a woman once in his life, and so it was with Hoveyda and his beloved Laila (209), who, it is implied, came to appreciate his love fully only after he was gone.

The second trait of the dandy is his meticulous attention to appearance. Hoveyda is forever remembered for the orchid in his lapel, which always matched his tie (22).[16] But a note of caution is needed:

> Dandyism does not...consist, as many thoughtless people seem to believe, in an immoderate taste for the toilet and material elegance. For the perfect dandy these things are no more than symbols of his aristocratic superiority of mind. Furthermore to his eyes, which are in love with *distinction* above all things, the perfection of his toilet will consist in absolute simplicity.[17]

13. See *EIr*, s.v. "Freemasonry III. In the Pahlavi Period," 216.

14. Marylène Delbourg-Delphis, *Masculin singulier*.

15. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 27.

16. Perhaps this orchid was the fetish that masked the void, to adopt the central thesis of Bernard Chervet (see footnote 5).

17. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 27. Emphasis in the original. For an elaboration on this theme of simplicity see Coblence, *Le dandysme*, 115–20.

In Hoveyda, this superficially paradoxical taste for both distinction and simplicity took the form of plain white shirts—but not any old white shirts: every time the prime minister traveled to Europe, we read (68), he brought back a dozen Lanvin white shirts. Moreover, his obsessive care for personal hygiene—he is said to have devoted two hours in the morning to it (209)—is in the best tradition of dandyism, for let us not forget that it was George Brummell, the *ur*dandy, who invented the habit of taking a daily bath.

A third key aspect of dandyism is "the joy of astonishing others, and the proud satisfaction of never oneself being astonished."[18] Hoveyda's "controlled eccentricity" (215) shows him to have been a conformist rebel who enjoyed startling others by doing the unexpected, like driving to work himself in a Peykan while occasionally picking up passengers on the way, or joking "in the vulgar tongue of the street,"[19] and dancing "suggestively at parties" (214-215).

Timing

In his essay on dandyism, Baudelaire makes the intriguing observation that

> [d]andyism appears above all in periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and aristocracy is just beginning to totter and fall. In the disorder of these times, certain men who are socially, politically, and financially ill at ease, but are all rich in native energy, may conceive the idea of establishing a new kind of aristocracy, all the more difficult to shatter as it will be based on the most precious, the most enduring faculties, and on the divine gifts which work and money are unable to bestow. Dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid decadence.[20]

In other words, there is a temporal dimension to dandyism's liminality as well. The twelve years of Amir Abbas Hoveyda's premiership were precisely such a period of transition, for it was in the period between the White and the Islamic revolutions that the social background of Iran's political elite changed.[21] The White revolution broke the power of the old landed elite to which Hoveyda did not really belong in spite of being related to it through his mother, but it did not inaugurate mass participation in politics, which, although in a more ochlocratic than democratic mode, was the fruit of the

18. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 28.

19. Which is of course reminiscent of the most famous dandy of Spanish literature, the Marqués de Bradomín, who also told off-color jokes at the court of the Carlist pretender, as told by Ramón María del Valle Inclán in his *Sonata de invierno* (Winter Sonata).

20. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 28. Of course Baudelaire uses "democracy" in its Tocquevillean sense of status equality.

21. See *EIr*, s.v. "Class System VI: Classes in the Pahlavi Period," 678–79, for data on how this was reflected among members of parliament (if one can call centrally appointed members of parliament a political elite!).

Islamic revolution of 1978–79. Here, too, the monarchy's last major prime minister fits dandyism's paradigm.

Conclusion

The dandy is disrespectful but obedient, but ultimately Hoveyda was only obedient. In him one finds none of the insolence, none of the ironical distance from those who hold power, that characterize the true dandy.[22] Instead one sees an abject sycophancy vis-à-vis the shah that is incompatible with the dandy's ethos, which is characterized above all by stoic independence.[23] At the end of the day, Hoveyda was more, to indulge in an Anglo-Arabic neologism, *mutadandī* than dandy. If the thesis of this review be correct, the Baudelairean dandy was a model that Hoveyda, in Seyyed Fakhraddin Shadman's words, "inadequately mimic[ked]" (quoted on 164).[24]

As the unquestioning servant of a despot, Hoveyda made too many compromises to elicit our admiration as a politician or as an intellectual. But *The Persian Sphinx*, especially its haunting last chapters, makes it clear that, whatever his multifarious shortcomings, Hoveyda was, both intellectually and morally, head and shoulders above the canaille who presumed to sit in judgment over him after his fall. In the end, as he refrained from fleeing the country while he could, and instead tried to gather materials for a rational defense of his record in office, he proved one last time how alienated he was from his own people, for he simply could not conceive of the depths of sheer baseness to which the likes of Sadeq Khalkhali, his henchmen and his mentors, were capable of sinking. Abbas Milani's book is a welcome antidote to the emotional populism that still infuses much scholarly writing on the Islamic revolution and its aftermath. There is good reason why it has been so popular in Iran.

H.E. Chehabi
Boston University

Islam and Central Asia: An Enduring Legacy or an Evolving Threat? Ronald Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower, eds., Washington, DC: Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 2000, 255 pp. ISBN 0–9670233–2–7.

The study of Islam in contemporary Central Asia can yield extremely fruitful insights about Islam in the modern world. After seventy years of Soviet-style modernization and secularization, what does Islam mean to the people of Central Asia? What contests over the place of Islam in society are underway now? How has the often traumatic experience of the twentieth century shaped and reshaped Central Asians' understanding of

22. For a discussion of the dandy's insolence see Coblence, *Le dandysme*, 82–89.

23. Unless one were to take his obsequious fawning before the shah *au second degré*, for which, however, there is no evidence.

24. The same holds true for his masonry, for in Europe freemasonry has historically opposed despotism rather than serve it.