When I open my eyes, I see my native land and its lines on the horizon Black clothes, black photographs. A slightly stiff pospicture was taken. The eyes themselves provide the ture, occasionally a faintly scowling face. Who are they, contrast. They shine out as bright spots from the dark these people from Azerbaijan? An elderly gentleman, foundation, as do teeth and fingernails here and there. Asgar, perhaps 67 years old, looks like a high-ranking Because the iris and the lens appear to be a deep black, functionary of a rigidly organized, possibly commuthe eyeball is strikingly white in contrast. No one's eyes nist party. Another man, Mudhat, with a light gray are wide open, nor has anyone, except for Firuza, an moustache and dark hair, could be a wrestler or perelderly woman who may be blind in one eye, lowered haps a strong peasant who has worked hard and crushtheir gaze as if for contemplation. I Neshat deliberately ed many an obstacle with his great energy. A third man, photographs people in a uniform manner; this highlights the difference in their faces—a characteristic mark Vagif, poorly shaved, with his head slightly lowered, of this series. The expression on each of these faces is looks comparatively weak and almost sad. His life may not have been a joyride. Alongside these figures, we see alert. So there they stand, human beings in a space we young people, handsome men, beautiful girls, radiant cannot identify, gazing into a camera, holding their women. While the group in the medium-sized photos hands in a position that suggests prayer. Neshat is the let their arms hang, the people depicted in a smaller telepathic medium who directs the event. She does format-they are the majority-all put their hands not operate the camera, does not develop the prints; rather, it is she who builds trust, patiently weaves comtogether in various ways, some folded, others crossed, or with fingers intertwined, or else with the palm of plex strands of connection, conducts conversationsone hand covering the fingers of the other, as if for for instance to suggest the folding of hands without protection. What do these variations signify? There telling or showing people precisely how that is to be is stagecraft at work here. Shirin Neshat specified black done. No one is told to smile; consequently smiles clothes, dark backgrounds, dangling arms and folded appear only inadvertently here and there. Nor do these hands as a choreographer might have. How precisely men and women look grim, anxious, or perturbed, did her subjects adhere to these instructions? There is except where a particular mood was already within a woman, the particularly attractive Malaksima, who them. The sameness of apparel, background, and phydid not fold her hands but instead, perhaps inadversical position makes them seem not only comparable, but on an equal footing. They stand separately, but due tently, put a hand to her heart. But she appears to have to the homogeneous framing and positioning of the had no objection to presenting her face and body for a frontal portrait. Except she is evading the camera a portraits in the exhibition space, they appear like a little, in contrast to the rest of the group, by slightly social assembly of people who belong together. turning her head to the side. Neshat herself-who Art-historically, they fulfill the role of ancient staturegards Azerbaijan, where the subjects of her portraits es, of society portraits, of devotional pictures, perhaps were born, as a bit of home-is not concerned with also of encyclopedic attempts at capturing human facial expressions. Neshat had Titian's student El Greco clothes, and only proximately with hands. She is evidently concerned with human beings and with faces, in mind. The work is intended, she says, as a portrait but in what respect? She has captured them in a dark of a culture. But which culture? Here are characters, space, frontally posed, each of them facing the camera. in the theatrical sense of the word: the confident young As a result they have all become essentially equal, as man, perhaps Fugar; the pious innocent, perhaps Gabil; if they had been standing interchangeably in a row. A the warmhearted woman, perhaps Ilgara; the expecbrilliant white shines from their eyes, and this is not tant one, perhaps Salima; the stern Agayar, the serene only because the flash was reflected in them when the Samima, the lovely blond child Anna.

in close proximity. They are somewhat like ourselves, a paraphrase of our child perhaps, of our mother, our grandfather, or an uncle we barely knew. Yet they stand far away from us, for they appear in two dimensions and without color. It is only when one takes into account the factor of time in the reception of art that our eye meets with the skin of the portrayed persons and discovers faintly handwritten words, long and entire sentences in Farsi, inscribed everywhere on the white parts of the photographs, with the exception of the eyes, lips, and fingernails. Almost the entire surface of the skin is covered with a delicate tissue of words. Neshat aranged to have each photo filled with rich reading material, from the upper edge of the forehead to the hands and arms underneath; the execution of this part of the work was, once again, done by someone other than herself. The persons appear paratactically as individuals, each endowed with the same rights as the others, but all of them were tattooed on the photograph as if by an unknown poetry. The ink that can be seen on the photos is dry; the texts are clearly written. They are decipherable. But who, except for speakers of Farsi, can read what is written here and appreciate the contents, the cultural materials, that have been associated with the subjects of these portraits? The texts have been applied in surprisingly straight lines, apparently with the help of a stencil. In the process of being covered with script, each photo was alternately hanging and lying flat.<sup>1</sup> As stated previously, Neshat did not do the writing, but the stage directions were hers. The words begin precisely on the right side of the hairline and extend, row beneath row, from right to left across the forehead. They start at the right ear and run across the tip of the nose to the left ear. In the case of bearded men, no script was applied to the radiant eyeballs and the lips, or to the entirely black parts of the face. But on the hirsute arms and chests of the men one sees writing as well. Agayar, for example, is covered with writing, even in places where it is difficult to read. Who can read it, who might read it?

We see them-thanks to photographic technology-

What does this kind of poetry signify? One has to step up close to the people in order to decipher the writing. ¶ Neshat is concerned with a country and with a culture. She asks each of her subjects in turn what "home" means to them. One of them answers: *I soaked up the cultural, emotional and material side of home. I am home.* 

## A few hours seemed like a lifetime

What is a society exactly, what is it that a seemingly heterogenous group of people have in common? Herodotus treats of the origin of human society in his Histories, written in the 5th Century B.C.<sup>2</sup> According to him, the nomadic Iranian horse-riding people known as the Scythians believed in a first man, an original patriarch who lived in a country that was still empty. This first man was said to have had three sons. During the sons' rule four golden tools were said to have fallen from the sky: a plow, a yoke, a battle axe, and a bowl. From these tools arose the various tribes, who henceforth pursued different activities. Plow and yoke founded agriculture. The axe enabled the Scythians to arm themselves as a people. The bowl, on the other hand, as an instrument of ritual sacrifice and a vessel for the consumption of sacred drinks, engendered religion. The idea of material production, war, and culture as fundamentally different activities, and of the three human estates, had been born, and was, it seems, immediately consolidated historically-a supremely successful idea, as evidenced by other ancient texts that were widely distributed in India as well as in Persia and also in the West after Plato. The first man, the empty land, the tools that formed the foundation for various professions-all these may be legends, but they occupied the minds of poets, artists, and philosophers until far into the Age of Enlightenment. In 1784, Immanuel Kant, in his "Idea for a universal History with a Cosmopolitan aim", wrote that in the framework of this triad man is driven "by ambition, tyranny and greed, to obtain for himself a rank among his fellows, whom he cannot stand, but also cannot leave alone."3

In Shirin Neshat's works, people from particular three sons. This power is the king who presides over societies she has selected are presented as collectives in the people; he is the superordinate factor that guaranwhich the individual may be alone, insofar as he or she tees the coherence of an order, or a guiding goddess, feels alone. But-and this is the creative impact and for that would become a further possibility in our time, argument of the works-they are precisely not alone, if not earlier. In Neshat's work it is her artistic direcand are never alone. Neshat does not portray sons torship that guarantees order in the midst of diversity, and daughters of an original father who then become it is she herself who, by means of her great intuition peasants or producers or are schooled as warriors or and willpower, guides dozens of models, as well as her Amazons, priests or nuns. By dint of the darkness of assistants, the indispensable photographers, writers, her photographs, of the white that emerges from black camera people, producers, and workshop directors, like pure light, by the conscious renouncement of who see to it that her work takes the form of a collective architecture as well as details of cultural refinement, event and not a mere lexical sequence of portraits. Thus they appear as autochtonous representatives of huvirtual, thoroughly dramatized collectives take the manity. They are simpler in appearance and more elestage, with an intensity that has earned Neshat the mental than we are. They embody a rooted belonging grotesque reputation among Western critics of being we may still be seeking, if indeed it has ever occurred herself an Islamist, a champion of ideologies proto us to undertake such a quest. As regards their counmulgated by the mullahs of Iran, or alternatively an try and the age they live in, we find them somehow American who misappropriates Iranian culture, which living side by side, physically as well as geographicalamounts to a comparatively sweeping indictment. But Neshat is Homer. She reports as the Odyssee does, ly; but in other works, they are rigorously separated from each other, as a man and not a woman, as a child she fears slavery, she screams at every sacrifice, she and not an old man or woman, as human beings shut trembles at the sound of the sirens, she weeps quietin or, inversely, free under an open sky, escaped from ly and also happily when an artistic homecoming from walled enclosures, in contrast to quiet, perhaps sia fictive location has succeeded after weeks of labor. lent perseverance in an enclave. In Neshat's legend-ary She listens sensitively before she rules and divides. The series Women of Allah we see veiled, even hidden woassembly, Agora in Greek, was in ancient tragedy a men, but occasionally they are armed and show regreat event and always at the same time a place. It is the sistance.4 In other works we see groups of men taking unity of time, place, and action that in Neshat's work active and patriotic stances or, alternatively, embodyis rehearsed within a chosen construction until it is ing infinite suffering and pain. I In each case, the people finally brought into existence as if in a twelfth hour. whom Neshat seeks and finds, photographs and films, Then the separation of private interest and the comare performers. They are models of humanity. They are mon good, which is not merely a modern convention not actors, for the play is a model of the world contembut ubiquitous at all times, hence among people in plated and poetically and dramatically constructed Azerbaijan as well, seems suspended for a moment. by Neshat. She once said it makes no difference wheth-What does home mean to you? the subjects of the porer she is working in Morocco, Turkey, or Mexico. I go traits were asked. One of them, 46 years old, said, Our everywhere to make believe it is Iran.<sup>5</sup> She is Iran. beautiful land, our flag, the mountains. The viewer sees ¶ Already in Herodotus but then again in Plato as well none of that. Another participant, considerably younas in many later social theories, there exists in addiger, said, Home means family, friends, and lots of good tion to the three basic human activities a fourth power food. But Neshat's pictures show no food, nor, with just that emanates from the aforementioned father of the a few early exceptions, do her photos show any color.

هددتكران داحون مطامع يحن الأسك مأتوان سائمة أنكم اندراك حون متوا بالعجام هردي سوست كدي الى الماني و رسا فاصلت باكومسحى كانه مراى توجيعهني دادد سزيس س راي بن كلمام است اكرت رارمانتدى مد رف رادومت داری عدم حاسواده ال ونسل های آمد استعمال تخی شولدم برد استادم وزمریب جهل حاقدم رسان عدخواهى الاظليت حوف اردمك ولنكر اوتور المريع محدف با توازحاهامير اسكران ك للتحذد رهاند بانور حوداشام دو لمحيد مرزم وامد سرولنه داها كماه 1-Silint نس خامی در از بس روزی ۲ از سراسگران ۲ ارتوجامای از کسان ۲ سور از جاما و يهدو والما وحدما به موركمردم حرن مور زما به دوركم و الما محد الله تراري بدو هم و جاىدان أمزرعم حرون مرارد كمران اسى كددهل مرزمتم روز 66 ما هركم معنس تدكر حرام دمك وال يرارحا فازخوان توكاهماح الاكدارل الريدمسود مرمن بعسهماى درود كارور راحاماي كدار محرف عاسترهم در به کام کسج، دست ان مستی مهامان دیگران اسک کالس در او شار دارد اها مگر سده يتور برسنو كراب كمنت خام داود كسار دهاى دوستن كرهر سومنو كراب خام داردك ارحاهاى كماي مصفة ازكل اي مقد كراسات دل ماهی حصر سند کمی جهان را در را شورا ارجرن که او شراهن عادت کن از جاهای که اوا شو انگاه در بن ما هداختا می را بده ازاسان حودش ده زكام روزى ازمراك مدركمت ريجان مؤرا رحدهاي ازمده رعاكم ارد سكران باهداحدا مي هان كساي ن دادارو از داد ای ای ای ای از در در در در در دان کرد در استادم کان کندم کنون را کر ابتو حاجای در کر ان را با بشرازها بخان تعان کارا حدث ازمان را مازخلمت بن روى مرد به درى ما ندن است کار جاها محد البتو ماهدا خراى در حش گرد ولكاراتوارد كحران اندراك زماروى راك والتوازح بت اهان كحارا مضمزكل مكران بالزل ازحاها مي راك انماولس تكرجينك شاع دارد كارحاها ماك اردور لمصاحبان واحداد وراباها دخا به الكساف راك الانسكران يحداد باحررا حونا لأساد بالنجرن تحدادا أمكران كمادا مورا المتر لاكساف كما ان المارام ما درجس كرهراكمارد عران رايا الجا بدمى راهاما ويديك كرافتراكم حاجاى راكارا كران كددار حاها ويجون كاراها داد يتراك اراهم معدان فارابتر الزركران راز الخركة باكن الت احون از ترابحا رد احون کارا سگران ک در کران الارارورى مرازد مان كارجاما ورعم

ای مطرف شارستورالاالخبام شورااز كمارا نول إزخاعى

والمنوراك العكران الصاحدرى كالمتراك رماعا ويدارندك باسما الكارف امتوراك والمتراد وماى انعم سكران كذائد احاجلا متراب حين تورااكنان ازد سكران كسار المعورك والكاب حون الكارى والك مراعران والخرائم المرازية والماتا كالتورالكرمايع معكن استكذارها كثون ازحاها يكنين كرما الحراز متوالح أوطعا فالنور حوداشا محمد من سرارم المجاجران روزى كم دركيريا الكرال ألغة ماكرت بالعمام ومكرى حاجاى عراكترت إجان جون الكرازيتورك حوف بالمنكم ازمتو رالكران وسكسران درگران (ارا با سوائد هم الد جرت أزامت اي كالمهان إل الكرار داهان تسامن كما ازده دوكران را ديك مار خرين دورا معم مرحست الحد المورال تكسار مدردك سايه كم آن جراع المورال تكسار الدران كالمحاري الكساري الكساري الكسار جدن ما جای ۲۰۱۲ کار اس کارانگر انتراب مالک و النتر مارند جاند از سرار که در تی آن که تد جرن اسکران کار در بی مناب است «کران دانگران دار از در الکسای کا است «کران دار محرن از شور الکسای کا است « يتورك إو مردار والزديك ولن والمكران والدامن الخرجان والحرامن الخرجان والمروع ازجرمن خراب أفادت وداكر از تتروا كمر وون ازديك والما كمراح الا المعتق عدام مردار والمراح المعاديس كم مردارد ك ازديك ولا كم المعالمة ومن وراز والمراح المراح الم يتوارا بعامة ولراية المرد الرابة المردو الرائد المهدرو والموالي والمراحي والمرد المردول والمرد المرد والمرد المرد المرد المرد والمرد والمرد المرد والمرد و

كران لارىكى والجاك دركران رايرك كمالعتادم وزمركب كدد مكران كمار حلفها محما مورحودا وظلمت بدر ان کساتواز دارا از المت در کران است فد مراکد از بتوالا استام سورا ا هما عدرف ک ىد مراازدىدارتوكتونى امزرعد حون من حزات الماد ود د اك موان الزك در شورا العداد مدى كداز دىكر ان راد كام تواز مادن والدام حدداند والراست مكران والإكسار ووارحا هاي كداهم ازدوان كسامت كما والوسعيد يكران والمتوجيد هرمه الالز تتوشي الاراك

ان احدن التراب المواجد المتري عدا بالجداب ولك التوراب حدم الما الخدر المتخالف المتراع الترك التربي التك ملجد مرا ازديك ان ك الاسرال التكرين المتك ملجد مرا ازديك ان ك الاسرال الروار مراك المتران المرام المتراد مي التربي التكرين المتك التربي التكرين المتكرين التك ملجد مرا ازديك ان ك الاسرال الروام المتحد من المتحد من التربي المتحد من المتحد من المتحد من التربي التكرين المتكرين المتكرين المتكرين المتكرين المتكرين المتكرين المتحد من المتحد من المتحد من المتحد من التحد من المتحد من المتحد من التحد من التحد من التحد من المتحد من التحد من التحد من المتحد من المتحد من التحد من التحد من المتحد من الم ومنا وي المتحد المتحد المتحد المتحد المتحد المتحد المتد من المتحد المتحد المتحد المتحد من المت ن حراكد مداهان الكراز فرارك رديكران الصام محدين ماكنون الأاسم ورن ماكنون الزاسم ورن ماكنون الركسان حداجيان خالى ده كسنين والتكران بأهم حرون ماكنون ما ورفي المترا بالمحد المراد المراب المعامدة كما ويدارك المتراليات المعام ورفي المتراب المعامدة والمعان الكراز فرالم المراد المر المنحد جنان عراصا مستعلن بالعراف والمعترين باعم حدن المتعرف المستعلن والماحام خدرا المتعرف فالمساف المستعل والمستعل والمستعل والمستعل والمستعل والمستعل والمستعرف والمستع والمستعرف والمستعوم والمستعو والمستع والمست والمستع والمستع والمستعو والم والمست والمستعرف والمستع والمستعو والمست والمست والمستع والم و التورار الخام والعام والعالي والكرام والعالية والدار المروحة ومن والجرون فرا وعزان العاديكر ال العاديكر ان المديكر ال المروحة ومن الكرابة وراحاها محرون بأماكن الكروا وحدود ورزى كم تومى آمن الزوركم والمراح المحاف والكراب والكراب والكراب والكراب والكراب والكراب والكراب والمعالمة والمحاف والمحاف والمحاف والمحاف والمحاف والمحاف المراوع المراح المراح المراح المراح المراح المراح المحاف والكراب والكراب والكراب والمعالية والمحاف والمحاف والمحاف والمحاف والمحاف والمحاف والكراب والمحاف و ران کسان کردن آزان خلف تاکن درگیران راک مین اکن از مکان از منگران کا را معدیکران با منگر و نا کارن درگیران با استگرون آکارن با مستگر و ناکن درگیران با استگرون آکارن با مستگر و ناکن درگیران با استگرون آکارن با مستگر و ناکن درگیران استگرون آکارن با مستگر و ناکن درگیران با استگرون آکارن با مستگر و ناکن درگیران با استگرون اکن درگیران با استگرون آکارن با مستگر و ناکن درگیران استگرون آکارن با مستگر و ناکن درگیران استگرون آکارن درگیران از در این از در از در این از در این از در این از در از در از در از در از در این از در از در این از در از در از در از در از در این ا والارابه كارى معهدكم هرجا بدأ ستدرار وعديكران مكذرا مامر جرن أخرار كران بترراكران وراكما محداهم الكرازتوارك الاعد بإهدانس محدار المتسابق كمراتوارا المتسابق كمراتوار المسابق ومعدان والمكسان المتحدات ومرافع المراحون والمراحد المحد المحمد المعرفين المراتور المكسابي والمحد المعرفين والمراحد المتسابق المراتور المراحد المراتور المحمد المحمد المحدان المحمد المحمد المحمد المراحد المحمد المحملة المحمد المحم راد توان مك بام كرجومت از تولك اداخران والمرك الع المراحد الم والمراحد الم الم والمراحد مك الن والالكرور اهم تدماعات ماعى مار يتود مكوان ك الحدول على الم الم مراحد مع الم من الم المراحد المراحد الم المراحد الم المراحد الم المراحد الم المراحد الم المراحد المراحد المراحد الم المراحد المراح ورابحدرا الدرازمترا بلهانجاب راكدان تدراكح راكمهم كمنتاى محن متوهسرسن رااز حابها بالتررا ازكسان كرامتر راهم كم ازخوان بأبعس معسى كرسرك از ترخاى د ازآسان حوش و ازآسان حوش و ازآسان حوش و ازآسان حوش و زكانم كساس را - ilal, الدائم كمرجد نعت تدام داد والبكزت تحدم ندرجاي دالما الحارات كم العداجان جرن ول دهى والزجاي تحساري والجايي تحساري الكراحا جذيد والتابي والكراحة المراح ومدال المحاري والكراف والمحساري الكراحة والمراحة ومت المحاد من مراد المازد تحساري والمحار المحد ومن الداري المحسوب المراحة المحد ومن الدارد تحساري والمحاد من مراد المحد ومن الدارد تحساري والمحد ومن الدارد المحد ومن الدارد والمراحة المحد ومن الدارة المحد ومن الدارد تحد المحد ومن ا الداهاندي والسادر ا درصين كردرا كدارا ندار من را كدارا ندورا هالعدى كدار در دادر باهان جاى حش كردر را سادم از كرابلتوراكم كرمند ونسلم ا دروسا والا مناغا سي محدود را ساده من كدرا در بالعران كدارا ها ن جاي راكد درك را ندر الدرار المسادم ا در مساور كدارا ما يعرف المساور و المساور المس تدرك ران المكار ترجيف معته خارش تتركر وديضة مكاران كمد تاجد مرا ازسم ولمدوس ورانه دوهى كدار حاها محادرها تعص راك اردا بلهرك تعنى دوك Ionia مناكىمان غربررا بدادف كاريا مزرعه وتحران كارامتر وازحا هاى دهران راحونا زتوك حان محق حهامان دم دستك رنوان ساد احددان كأراحاها ويكدد كران كاردول ازحاها والمم موارك مراك اصادم رزمرك جل مرد وهمتوبه عايت الهى كالتورا

( از الرن ک، اسم حسر از درگر حسن جهانيان دم ست وف جهانيان ٢ باسا حاعى ده الراستان حواستم والعبك دعل مروز سيتم ر است من ر ما الترجير الما يد مور حماد ما المنه من ركر م عمارتو از المسالف را مايه نه كز حرائم دوركار باك رور المم) كاردان ندوكما مراعم حرم خرار ورك رام ورفعا تعا دمنود خاف ازد مكران كمراد Sun. 861 كالجدرجين كرهداز جلهاى راكادات وازكاره حرف عدفورا ازكاداها الكراهان جركس ازاف كسارحاها فاكد سكسور حوف تورا هم هرحابب كاوانطاز حاماتها ها مخاد سكرا الكرحون دل دهى حكر سنيد م از نو الك متربن حان واكمارا منور اكراهان كحى كازط بتورادلا كمت اى

عدد در البخار سوهم ازام

وبت رداحك ساحسم

وسكران الماها حاق رامددانه حلف أزمتر راكدارا جانى الكساني راكد امترازعسم دركيران الكرارها وركدان والماسخ المتوصل سعن معيك رانورا كالمخالفان الكرانينوراباهما كلتاى محن اكراها فجاوراكه درجس كرهراسادمكان خواندن مورا كلت اى حريقورادرانة دريكافي استعوارك إسامها اكدار نيزم زخوابنرن حصرت سامراب كمى درنه موتدر بترست اكرحاهاى راحان حبتى مهلمان راكسار التو باكسان رالكر إهم شورا باحتراز فك إرلن موجدان لأكسار بلنورا رجانى لأكمت المستعن توهسرارستك ادراحاها تكسارين راانرحها فندهكران باصلحا فاراكسان كراب ارحاق كدا حرابنداش اكرازيش جرحابك هست درعم إن بانور الزحجاي لأكما دبا تتوا الخابي راكما دا الورازجا فرادد لحيران را بامنام تواز المبتحو درهامذه ام تكرز امزرعه جون الابرزحر وسام يزعم المركس بابترا زاحا مي الد لعن ابتراك ادهم أكراز سرارا بحبار جاها محارا بأسام متواز طلست حرد رهاميده ام ماكمول الكرار كما مدم ارد جامور الكاراد دوكرايد بلوراز جاهاي كماد وكران واعى منونيا يزدارم الكرازيتورا المها خامى بابنام مترال بابدوار رحاها يراكد ديكران راسك ازخرن حروسي اما متوازحا مى راكماراكر ارتوكسام وهد ولكم لنودة مناكنون جاهالي كمنا الكرازاج وعكران فاجا محرن عاميترست كرابنام وكران كمادوا وكران ولا يتورا الهاه اجامي راكمارد مكران جراكا محام مازتر مزرعه مخاعى ده أزاسان خداين أكمزن ارتدم مام مترك ابترووزى كمرابس دهى ارازخرف حرسى اكمز از حلهاى راك ازدوراكارادها فحافاج ونعددوس جارد اس حرب ايزد كران المامروم حاكى از دركران وحرال كالما وردام الكر التراحرف الكرار حاجان والمصادخ ابى كرابك رازمة والكار الم رحون الموراك ارم اكرارا الخام سوراك ان راكا ديكران راما الم الكران را المندر العلاد الما بورا از المخد مخدر الكار شك كمتاى سنى رات المزن ارجاى راك اد الكران در فكرم ودروست از حاصان كساد بالتور ااز حسن در اازكسار حاما تكارا درا

italist, not communist. What is at issue here is the idea of a contemporary collective moment in a view that could be that of dreams, and how that moment gives rise to strong male and female characters, how it permits the invisible presence of tools as well as the ordering agency of a fictitious fourth power nurtured by the artist. The models may sing, be silent, stand, walk about, every one of them unique in these choreographed moments, yet they appear to be guided by an invisible hand. If we imagine them to be representatives of the collective unconscious, then we must conclude that the artist and her collaborators have slipped into C.G. Jung as if into a great marionette. I The protagonists are not relieved of their worries, their feelings, their life experience, their wrinkles, but their joy and their beauty are also put to serviceable use for others, for ourselves. What is at issue is art with the purpose of evoking a momentary identification. The models are assembled like parts of a machine in order to collaborate, without precise previous arrangements, for the artistic purpose. There are artists who expose their models, or who adopt disguises themselves. Neshat shrouds her people, occasionally cloaks them in quiet spaces or unleashes movement or wind around them in order to endow them with power, an almost divine impetus. At issue is the power of humanity, which may exist for moments but not in reality, only in dreams or in our religions. **A profoundly utopian vision** inheres in these works. If, according to Kant, "Enlightenment is man's release from his selfincurred immaturity. Immaturity is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another,"6 then Neshat's models are seers and not clever speakers, are enlightened men and women, not arguing intellectuals. They live in a kind of collective womb, they show, by their clothing, their gaze and through the effects of lighting on their appearance, that they are part of an entirely fictive whole. They break free without destroying this whole because they have discovered something, though as a rule that discovery is only for themselves.

Her societies are not feudal, not democratic, not cap-

It might be the idea of 35-year old Farid Abdullayev from Baku, who says, The multi-cultural heritage of Azerbaijan is what makes me proud. He says he does not mean to place his country above the destiny of other countries, or to oppose anyone else's opinion. In numerous works by Neshat, in photo series and videos, we experience the three es-tates, a seemingly triadic society that encounters itself, whether it wishes to or not, in the form of antagonistic forces and, simultaneously, overlapping groups of personalities. The fourth position in the plot, meanwhile, is not portrayed by a person: But it is nevertheless implicitly present in the writing on the photos, in the music in the films, in the artist's choreography, and is received by ourselves, the viewers, as we walk back and forth among her works, even in the case of videos, which are occasionally projected onto opposite walls. We study them, ponder them, feel them. We believe in and maybe strongly disbelieve in the society we are witnessing. But Neshat has brought together descendants of artisans, warriors, and priests, male and female, and employed her great art of theatrical staging to turn us briefly into kings and queens in the loge: very close to moments in history, for instance to these people in Azerbaijan, or, as in the video Roja, transported into a waking dream of life that moves us profoundly.

<sup>1</sup> Layla S. Diba profoundly explores the topic of writing in Neshat's work in this catalogue.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Herodotus, Histories, edited by Michael A. Flower and John Marincola. Cambridge University Press 2002. For descriptions of the Scythian Campaign, see Book 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Immanuel Kant:* Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim, Fourth Proposition (translated by Allen Wood), In: Rorty, Amélie O./Schmidt, James: Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim, Cambridge 2009, p. 13. Originally published in: Berlinische Monatsschrift, November 1784, S. 385-411. (Immanuel Kant: Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht).

Torino 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Ouoted from: Shirin Neshat. Facing History, edited by Melissa Chiu and Melissa Ho. Hirshborn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Smithsonian Books, Washington, DC, 2015, *p.19.* 

<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Kant, What is Enlightenment?, in Immanuel Kant, On History, edited, with an introduction by Lewis White Beck. Translated by Lewis White Beck, Robert E. Anchor, and Emil L. Fackenheim. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963, pp. 3–10. Originally published in: Berlinische Monatsschrift 1784. (Immanuel Kant: Was ist Aufklärung?).

Thomas Kellein: The Home of My Eyes. The contemplation of eyes that want to see the world

<sup>4</sup> cf. Shirin Neshat. Women of Allah. Marco Noire Editore.