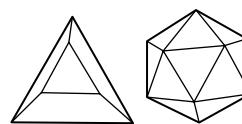


# Azadeh Akhlaghi's Attempts to Cure Historical Trauma by Re-Staging Forgotten Deaths of Iran's History<sup>1</sup>

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## Azadeh Akhlaghi's Attempts to Cure Historical Trauma by Re-Staging Forgotten Deaths of Iran's History<sup>1</sup>

Agnes Rameder

Something cruel and violent has occurred in the scene in *Fig. 1*.



Fig. 1 Azadeh Akhlaghi, South Mehrabad House, Tehran – Hamid Ashraf / 29 June 1976, 2012,  
Digital Print on Photo Paper, 110 x 175 cm.

Seven bodies are strewed across the floor of a disheveled interior. They have all been shot. Amongst the corpses lay various items—books, lumps of sugar and upended furniture. Bloodstains are visible on the victim's clothes, as well as on the curtain in front of the door to the courtyard. A man with sunglasses leads two people into the room. They are about to take off their blindfolds. Armed soldiers guard the house, while uniformed officers search the premises. Some questions arise: Who are the dead and who murdered them? Who are the officers in the house? When and where did the shooting take place?

The title of the photograph is as follows: *South Mehrabad House, Tehran—Hamid Ashraf / 29 June 1976*. Hamid Ashraf (1946–1976) was the leader of a leftist underground guerrilla movement that tackled critical political issues, some of which include the absence of freedom of speech, censorship and the growing gap between the rich and the poor in 1970s Iran. By executing assaults the group's aim was to initiate a revolution in order to overthrow the then-ruling Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (r. 1941–1979). The government responded with a relentless hunt of the guerrilla members. In one targeted attack, Ashraf and his comrades—as seen in Fig. 1—were shot by the Shah's intelligence service during a conspiratorial meeting in a house in Tehran. The day after the assassinations, governmental officials investigated the scene and identified the victims by taking imprisoned members of Ashraf's group to the bloody scene.<sup>2</sup>

The caption also states the year of origin: 2012. Fig. 1 is thus the image of a historical event that originally occurred in 1970's Iran that is then re-staged by a contemporary photographer.

**Scope of Discussion:** Azadeh Akhlaghi's *By an Eye Witness* (2009-2012), the *Nasl-e Sevvom* and Historical Trauma  
The image of Ashraf's shooting is part of a photo-series entitled *By an Eye Witness*, in which the Iranian artist Azadeh Akhlaghi (b. 1978) recreates seventeen deaths that are of significance in Iranian history. Most of these killings occurred between the Constitutional Revolu-

tion (1905–1911) and the Iranian Revolution (1978–1979).<sup>3</sup> No photographic documentation of these events is available to the public. The title *By an Eye Witness* refers not only to the original witnesses, whose memories of the events the artist partly includes in her visual representations, but also to the characters in their role as witnesses in the pictures. This encompasses Akhlaghi herself, who takes on the role of a witness in every photograph. Choosing to include herself signals that although the images depict scenes that occurred before her time, the depicted incidents have a relationship to the present and are especially significant for her generation, of which she describes herself as a "representative."<sup>4</sup>

Akhlaghi is part of the *Nasl-e Sevvom*—the "Third Generation"—, a term that can be used for Iranians who were born leading up to or in the immediate aftermath of the Iranian Revolution. The curator Fariba Farshad characterizes them as "the generation who have never known any other reality than that of post-revolutionary Iran." This means, that they have only experienced life in the Islamic Republic with its religious frameworks and had to deal with the situation imposed by the government at schools and universities after the revolution. This comprises the teaching of an official version of national history, from which certain people are excluded.

Hamid Dabashi, a prominent Iranian scholar, argues that Akhlaghi's generation has a "post-traumatic stress syndrome," of which her photographs are "visible signs."<sup>5</sup> Although, he is not explicit as to which particular trauma, and while my reading of the images differs from his, I consider it a useful starting point to address the notion of trauma that is connected to the *Nasl-e Sevvom*.

In this paper I argue that Akhlaghi's series is not only a depiction of events that caused a historical trauma, but that *By an Eye Witness* can be read as an attempt to cure it. I start by defining the term "historical trauma," followed by an analysis of the specific occurrences that Akhlaghi is addressing in her work. Further, I examine the artist's self-inclusion as a witness, and how this is linked to trauma-therapy to then explain how *By an Eye Witness* could serve the

purpose of coming to terms with a painful past by showing these significant events of Iranian history. Finally, I will discuss the reactions to the series in Iran.

The psychiatrist Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart understands in her article *The Historical Trauma Response Among Natives and Its Relationship with Substance Abuse: A Lakota Illustration* (2003) historical trauma as at least one event that happened in the past which caused “a cumulative [...] psychological wounding [...] across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experience.” The event(s) affect(s) the present in the form of the “historical trauma response” which is a collective “constellation of features in reaction to massive group trauma,” that is based on “historical unresolved grief.”<sup>9</sup>

In two essays *Trauma, Representation and Historical Consciousness* (2012) and *Trauma: A Dystopia of the Spirit* (2012), historian of psychology Michael S. Roth, who often cites Sigmund Freud’s theories of psychoanalysis, defines historical trauma as an occurrence in the past that is somehow repressed in one’s memory. In its aftermath it can neither be fully remembered, because it is not properly part of one’s historical consciousness, nor forgotten, as it is present via unconscious symptoms such as anxiety. Freud’s definition of the term “traumatic” is also relevant. He claims it can be applied to “an experience which [...] presents the mind with an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way,” therefore, according to Freud, a trauma consists of unfinished relationships to the past, that have not been left behind successfully, and can be the source for difficulties in the present.<sup>10</sup>

Roth further states that historical traumas are usually caused by “healthier groups” and suffered by “traumatized groups.” A pattern emerges: if the traumatized group has the opportunity, they often start to imitate the behavior of the former, as they have “lost [their] own orientation because a part of [their] history is inaccessible” and thus create new traumatized groups.<sup>11</sup> In short, a historical trauma consists of two stages. Firstly, the historically traumatic event(s) that

are caused by a healthier group and suffered by a traumatized group. The latter does not have the chance to openly discuss the painful incidents and therefore cannot process them normally. These historically traumatic events become repressed memories, which lead to unresolved historical grief. As a reaction to this, the historical trauma response, which is the second stage of historical trauma, is developed. In its stead, alongside other symptoms, the traumatized group often starts to imitate the behavior of the former healthier group when given the opportunity. Hence, there is a need to provide therapy for those initially affected in order to prevent them from developing into successive traumatized groups.

#### The Specific Historical Trauma of Akhlaghi’s Generation and its Visibility in *By an Eye Witness*

In order to identify the historical trauma in Akhlaghi’s work, it is necessary to look at the artist’s original inspiration for *By an Eye Witness*. She states that the idea for the project was a result of the “collective shock” following the deaths of many protesters during the *Green Movement* in Iran in 2009.<sup>12</sup> When then-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (b. 1956) announced his second electoral victory, news was leaked of electoral fraud in his favor, and demonstrations erupted in the aftermath. In Tehran millions of people protested for weeks and a huge number were killed by Ahmadinejad’s forces.<sup>13</sup> Most of these deaths were not visually recorded nor did they appear in the media. Akhlaghi says, she started “[...] to think about the power of image and photography, and also about the history of Iran and all these heroes of our history, who died in a tragic way. [...] And there wasn’t a camera to capture the moment. [...].”<sup>14</sup> She asked herself, which pictures of violence were not shown by the media and why. The notion that no publicly accessible photographs exist significantly shaped Akhlaghi’s artistic concept of reconstructing selected deaths of Iranian freedom fighters. Furthermore, the artist wanted to portray people, whose deaths marked a turning point. People who, had they lived longer, might have altered Iranian history and therefore

the situation in the country today.<sup>15</sup> Also, Akhlaghi said, in 2009 she started to think “about the revival of history.” In the last century people often died for their beliefs if they were not in accordance with the ruling forces while fighting for a better life within the country.<sup>16</sup>

As previously mentioned with reference to Roth, a traumatized group, when in power, often repeats the process of creating newly traumatized groups. During the reigns of the Qajar (1779–1921) and Pahlavi (1921–1979) dynasties, freedom fighters were killed, as Akhlaghi shows in *By an Eye Witness* with the examples of *Bagh-e Shah Tehran—Jahangir Khan Sur-e-Esrafil, Nasrollah Malek-al-Motakallemin / 24 June 1908* (Fig. 2) and *Tehran—Mirzadeh Eshghi / 3 July 1924* (Fig. 3), or the aforementioned *South Mehrabad House, Tehran—Hamid Ashraf / 29 June 1976* (Fig. 1). Since the notion of repetition is crucial to understanding the historical trauma in Akhlaghi’s work, I would like to expand on the context of the backdrop of her photographs.

Fig. 2 shows a scene of the Constitutional Revolution. The goal of the revolution was to end the Qajar’s despotism and to give more power to the people. The revolutionaries managed to establish a parliament in 1906, but, as Fig. 2 depicts, in 1908, the Shah organized a *coup d'état* and imprisoned some of the members of parliament in one of his garden residences. Among the captives were Malek al-Motakallemin (1860–1908), the main thinker of the Constitutionalists’ movement, and Jahangir Khan Sur-e-Esrafil (1876–1908), the owner of an influential newspaper that published articles directly attacking the Shah. Although the *Constitutional Revolution* eventually led to the re-establishment of the parliament in 1909, due to the fact that the Qajars were still part of the government and held much power, Iran remained a monarchy with no real democracy. In 1921, a military commander, Reza Khan (r. 1921–1941), initiated another *coup d'état*, and founded the Pahlavi dynasty that succeeded the Qajars. Following the overthrow,

Reza Khan began to consolidate his power and established a system of control, in which he executed harsh measures against dissidents. One of his victims was the poet Mirzadeh Eshghi (1894–1924), who denounced the chaotic circumstances in the country and the government’s corruption in his poems. In 1924, Eshghi vehemently criticized Reza Khan in an article, who, in reaction, ordered the shooting of the poet. Eshghi was sentenced to death by two killers in his own courtyard, as Fig. 3 shows.<sup>19</sup>

Reza Khan’s son and successor Mohammad Reza Pahlavi continued in his father’s footsteps in his actions against his political op-



Fig. 2 Azadeh Akhlaghi, *Baghe-Shah, Tehran—Jahangir Khan Sur-e-Esrafil, Nasrollah Malek-al-Motakallemin / 24 June 1908*, 2012, Digital Print on Photo Paper, 110 x 188 cm.



Fig. 3 Azadeh Akhlaghi, Tehran- Mirzadeh Eshghi / 3 July 1924, 2012,  
Digital Print on Photo Paper, 110 x 209 cm.

ponents. He sentenced dissidents to death, amongst them, the shooting of Ashraf. These three deaths show that the killing of political dissidents took place under every Iranian ruler between 1908 and 1979, which is the basic-timeline of *By an Eye Witness*. Those who fought for the end of the Qajar monarchy, and their descendants, continued to suppress political opponents as the examples of Eshghi, and Ashraf demonstrate. Moreover, the Pahlavis also tried to subdue the Islamic faction by killing and imprisoning their members, as Akhlaghi's image *Southampton U.K.—Ali Shariati / 19 June 1977* (Fig.4) reveals. The religious sociologist Ali Shariati (1933–1977)—who, in contrast to the other protagonists mentioned here, is actively remembered by the Islamic Republic—preached that true Muslims should fight against all forms of suppression and social injustice. This included, in his opinion, also despotic rulers like Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Shariati was imprisoned and upon release, he went into exile in England in 1977, where he died unexpectedly in his house as shown in Fig. 4. The circumstances of his death are not entirely clear.<sup>20</sup>

In summary, the historical trauma that Akhlaghi's *By an Eye Witness* deals with is caused by the repetitive, cumulative, cross-generational deaths and killings of freedom fighters in Iranian history. She shows historically traumatic events in her photographs. The depicted deaths are related to the present as they have shaped the conditions under which people in Iran live today. Moreover, it is uncommon to speak freely about many of the protagonists in Akhlaghi's images, especially not in schools or universities, as they are not part of the Islamic Republic's official history. Many Iranians, however, have not forgotten these events. They are present as suppressed memories, and are, as such, responsible for a historical unspoken grief. The resulting historical trauma response means that the brutality of the group in power towards those who criticized them has been continuously repeated and has not been inter-

rupted throughout the last century. Even if the traumatized group turned into the healthier group, it never ceased the methods and cruelties of its former oppressors, as proven by Figs. 1–4.

Akhlaghi addresses this repetitive cycle of killing freedom fighters in the series as a whole, and in particular in *Ashraf* (Fig.1). The artist explains, that she “manipulated history” in this image, as the officers in the courtyard wear uniforms of the *Iranian Revolution* and the ones in the foreground, left of the garden door, those of the *Green Movement*.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Akhlaghi seems to indicate that the events of 1976, 1978/79 and 2009 are related, by the fact that the healthier group resorted to violence against critical activists again and again. Due to the situation in Iran, Akhlaghi is not able to depict



Fig. 4 Azadeh Akhlaghi, Southampton, UK—Ali Shariati / 19 June 1977, 2012,  
Digital Print on Photo Paper, 110 x 168 cm.

recent deaths, but it seems, she encourages the viewers to think of similar events beyond the end of her project's time-line by showing the soldiers in different uniforms in *Fig.1* and by narrating the repetitive cycle of historical brutality. According to Akhlaghi's account of her inspiration for the project, the events of 2009 are also present in *By an Eye Witness*. During these protests, many of today's traumatized group, the *Nasl-e Sevvom* to which the artist also belongs, experienced the violence of the current healthier group.

Akhlaghi is present as an anachronistic witness to the re-staged deaths in every photograph, dressed in garments of contemporary Iran.<sup>22</sup> In her role as a passive bystander she sees what is happening and acts in her own words as a representative of her generation,<sup>23</sup> who is suffering from historical trauma response. Roth mentions that "victims often describe themselves as spectators of their own trauma" because, due to its intensity, it is not remembered normally.<sup>24</sup> Akhlaghi, like every one of the *Nasl-e Sevvom*, is too young to have seen the depicted traumatic events with her own eyes. According to Dabashi, Akhlaghi "has not in fact seen" the deaths, "but is condemned to remember."<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, she is aware of her pictures' protagonists and has thus not literally, but metaphorically seen their sudden deaths. Her life is still affected by them as she lives in Iran and has to deal with the situation in the country today. On the other hand, Akhlaghi is showing through her presence that she is also giving a testimony for therapeutic reasons.

#### Curing Historical Trauma: *By an Eye Witness* as Therapy

Akhlaghi's work can be seen as an example of a Freudian approach in dealing with psychological wounds in that she attempts healing through recollection of memories. Freud claims that it is necessary to situate oneself in relation to the past, but not to reconstruct the actual event.<sup>26</sup> Further, Roth states, that telling the story of the trauma can be a healing act.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Brave Heart recommends for this purpose "intensive psycho-educational group experience. [...] [where participants] are exposed to content [...] that stimulates his-

torically traumatic memories."<sup>28</sup> With reference to photography in particular, Susan Sontag mentions in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) that photographs can serve as shock therapy by facing traumatic experiences again.<sup>29</sup> These four statements describe how *By an Eye Witness* could be interpreted as an attempt of a therapy for historical trauma with the aim of coming to terms with the relentless losses of freedom fighters in Iran's history. Before *By an Eye Witness*, there was a "conspiracy of silence" about the depicted events.<sup>30</sup> In breaking this silence and narrating the events that caused the trauma via staged photographs, Akhlaghi tries not only to cure herself, but a larger public also. Moreover, by exhibiting them in a public art-gallery in Tehran, she initiates an attempt at group therapy, as she makes the viewers see, think and talk about the historical cycle of violence.<sup>31</sup>

It would not be possible to stage the events exactly as they happened, and Akhlaghi consciously adds anachronistic elements to the photographs such as herself or the soldiers in different uniforms in *Ashraf* (*Fig.1*). They are a reminder that the present is affected by the past, and are related to trauma therapy. It is symptomatic of a traumatized group not to have reliable memories of the historically traumatic event. As such, in order to work towards a cure, it is indeed necessary to situate oneself in relation to the past, but not to reconstruct the actual event as it occurred. In other words, there is no need to tell the truth exactly as it was; more important is the healing power of narration and revisiting past histories.<sup>32</sup>

As the large visitor numbers suggest, it was a relief for many people to see the events that have been erased for so long from public memory openly presented on the walls of Tehran's Mohsen Gallery. In addition to the usual art crowd, the exhibition was also visited by many atypical gallery goers.<sup>33</sup> Seeing *By an Eye Witness* was, as Akhlaghi said "like revealing an old, open secret" for many Iranians, as now they were given the chance to talk about these protagonists for the first time. The artist also recounted very emotional scenes, such as people crying and hugging, as they were finally able to mourn and express their grief towards the main figures of *By an Eye Witness*

both collectively and publicly.<sup>34</sup> Akhlaghi said of the exhibition: "The gallery was like a graveyard [...], in which each picture was a tombstone for a person whose death went unappreciated by all the regimes of Iran during the past century."<sup>35</sup>

### Conclusion

In her photographic series *By an Eye Witness* Akhlaghi addresses a historical trauma. In her series, she depicts the consecutive deaths and killings of freedom fighters who were active against the ruling powers in Iranian history. Most of these are not part of the Islamic Republic's version of history therefore it was not possible to talk about these historically traumatic events publicly. As such the traumatized groups were not able to come to terms with their past, which resulted in a historical unspoken grief. This led to the development of a historical trauma response, as defined by Brave Heart and others. That brutal methods are repeatedly employed across generations is a feature of historical trauma response. Experiences from the past have recurred and are still occurring in Iran, as the incidents of 2009 show. This paper focused on the *Nasl-e Sevvom* as a significant body of today's traumatized group. Akhlaghi, who includes herself in all of the re-staged images, uses her participation to show her complicity in their fight. As most of the protagonists of *By an Eye Witness* are not discussed openly in governmental institutions and died before Akhlaghi's generation was born, they have zero representation in schools and universities. Nonetheless, many still know of them since their deaths shaped the conditions under which they exist in Iran today. The historical trauma was developed because of the silence about the many deaths in Iran's past.

Therefore, I understand *By an Eye Witness* as an attempt to find a cure for this trauma. Firstly, because Akhlaghi, like the reading of Freud, Roth and Sontag suggests, narrates the traumatic events by facing them again in photographs. Secondly, by exhibiting her images in a gallery in Tehran, she encourages talking collectively and actively about the unfinished past, in order to come to terms with it.

Akhlaghi finally made it possible to mourn the protagonists publicly. Thirdly, Akhlaghi re-instates herself into the situation of the trauma, which she symbolizes by including herself as an actor in the re-staged photographs. But she does not and cannot reconstruct the events, how they actually occurred, and alters them via anachronistic elements, like herself and the soldiers in uniforms of different times in *Ashraf* (Fig.1). With these alterations she reveals that the past affects the present. In other words, since historically there has been no forum to speak openly about the trauma, it was constantly repeated. The situation in Iran today is shaped by history and it cannot be precluded that similar happenings as those depicted in the photographs are still taking place. It can be argued that Akhlaghi wants to shake up the Iranian population and encourage her people to interrupt the repetitive cycle of violence in order to make Iran's future less bloody. One day such violent cruelties like those shown in *Ashraf* (Fig.1) might be a thing of the past.



### Autorin

Agnes Rameder holds an MA in Art History from Vienna University. Her Master thesis is titled Azadeh Akhlaghi's Photograph Series "By an Eye Witness" in the Context of Staged Photography in Tehran/Iran. She has undertaken extensive field research in Iran.

### Anmerkungen

- 1 Persian words that appear in this paper were transliterated as they were found in the literature used. The dates were adapted to the European calendar.
- 2 Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton/New Jersey 1982, p. 9 – 10 and p. 483 – 489; Azadeh Akhlaghi/Mohsen Gallery (ed.), *Azadeh Akhlaghi. By an Eye Witness* (cat.), Tehran 2013, p. 36. Cited after the SAVAK Report on Hamid Ashraf; Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause. The Failure of the Left in Iran*, London 1999, p. 62 – 69; Elton Daniel, *The History of Iran*, Westport et alii 2001, p. 86 and p. 161 – 163; Peyman Vahabzadeh, *Secularism and the Iranian Militant Left*.

- Political Misconception or Cultural Issues?, in: Comparative Studies of South Asia and the Middle East, Vol. 31, 2011, p. 81 – 88.
- 3 The Constitutional Revolution lasted from 1905 until 1911 and was the first public mass upheaval in Iran. For details see Mehrdad Amanat/Nikki Keddie, Iran Under the Late Qajars. 1848–1922, in: P. Avery/G.R.G. Hambly/C. Melville (ed.), The Cambridge History of Iran 7, Cambridge et alii 1991, p. 192 – 196. The Iranian Revolution in 1978 and 1979 was the last revolution in the country's history that led to a change of the political system. I prefer using the term "Iranian Revolution" instead of "Islamic Revolution" as only the outcome of this upheaval was the Islamic Republic, but the revolutionary forces consisted not solely of religious people, but rather a mix of different factions. See also: Staci Gem Scheiwiller, Mirrors with Memories, Saarbrücken 2011, p. 41.
- 4 Azadeh Akhlaghi/Mohsen Gallery 2013, p. 49; Golnaz Fakhari, Iranian Photographer Azadeh Akhlaghi Revives History Through Staged Images – Interview, in: Art Radar, 19 September 2014, URL: <http://artradarjournal.com/2014/09/19/iranian-photographer-azadeh-akhlaghi-revives-history-through-staged-images-interview/> [15.06.2015]; Personal Interview of Azadeh Akhlaghi with the Author, Tehran 2015.
- 5 Thomas L. Friedman first used the term "Third Generation." He designates the actual revolutionaries of the Iranian Revolution as the first generation, those who grew up in the years after the revolution as the second generation, and those who were born shortly before or after the revolution as the third generation. See also: Thomas L. Friedman, Iran's 'Third Generation,' in: New York Times, 18 June 2002, URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/04/opinion/an-islamic-reformation.html> [15 August 2016]. Similarly to Friedman's "Third Generation," Fariba Farshad is using the term "Burnt Generation," which is the title of an exhibition, curated by her and held in Somerset House London from 10 April to 1 June 2014, in the Founders Gallery at the Military Museum Calgary from 9 January to 12 April 2015 and in Columbia College Chicago from 21 April to 10 July 2016. On show were works by Iranians, who were mostly born at the end of the 1970s or beginning of the 1980s. See also: Candelstar (ed), Burnt Generation. Flyer of the Exhibition, London 2014, URL: <http://www.candlestar.co.uk/assets/Burnt-Generation-Leaflet.pdf> [14.05.2015].
- 6 Gemma Padley, Iranian Photography on Show in London, in: British Journal of Photography, 23 April 2014, URL: <http://www.bjp-online.com/2014/04/iranian-photography-on-show-in-london/> [26.12.2015].
- 7 Shahram Khosravi, Young and Defiant in Tehran, Pennsylvania 2008, p. 122 - 137.
- 8 Hamid Dabashi, Remembrance of Things Past, in: Azadeh Akhlaghi/Mohsen Gallery (ed.), Azadeh Akhlaghi. By an Eye Witness (cat.), Tehran 2013, p. 51.
- 9 Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, The Historical Trauma Response Among Natives and its Relationship with Substance Abuse: A Lakota Illustration, in: Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, Vol. 35, 2003, p. 7 – 10. Although she discusses the case of Native-Americans, her basic concept of historical trauma can be transferred to any other context.
- 10 Michael S. Roth (1), Trauma. Representation and Historical Consciousness, in: Michael S. Roth (ed.), Memory, Trauma, and History, New York 2012, p. 77 – 86; Michael S. Roth (2), Trauma: A Dystopia of Spirit, in: Michael S. Roth (ed.), Memory, Trauma and History, New York 2012, p. 87 – 103; Sigmund Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, in: J. Strachey (ed.), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 16, London 1953 - 74, p. 275.
- 11 Roth (1) 2012, p. 78 – 82.
- 12 Akhlaghi/Mohsen Gallery 2013, p. 52; Personal Interview of Azadeh Akhlaghi with the Author, Tehran 2015.
- 13 For more details see: Michael Axworthy, Iran. Weltreich des Geistes. Von Zoroaster bis heute, Berlin 2011, p. 294 – 310. Many of the demonstrators wore green clothes, which was the color of Ahmadinejad's opponent in the electoral campaign, therefore the upheavals were called the Green Movement.
- 14 Personal Interview of Azadeh Akhlaghi with the Author, Tehran 2015.
- 15 Rex Butler, An Eye Witness in Iran, in: Art Collector, Vol. 70, Winter 2014, p. 108.
- 16 Butler 2014, p. 108.
- 17 Abrahamian 1982, p. 75 - 96; Amanat/Keddie 1991, p. 192 - 225; Axworthy 2011, p. 215; Sorour Soroudi, Sur-e Esrafil. 1907–1908. Social and Political Ideology, in: Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 24, 1988, p. 232 - 233. Gavin Hambly, The Pahlavi Autocracy. Riza Shah. 1921–1941, in: P. Avery/G.R.G. Hambly/C. Melville (ed.), The Cambridge History of Iran 7, Cambridge et alii 1991, p.

- 232; Michael P. Zirinsky, The Rise of Reza Khan, in: John Foran (ed.), *A Century of Revolution. Social Movements in Iran*, Minneapolis 1994, p. 57. Although Reza Khan's position was integrated in the system, he – at least shortly before the coup – was opposing the Qajars' inability to cope with the chaos, corruption and de-facto foreign rule in large parts of the country. Therefore, he was convinced that there was a need for political change in Iran, which he realized by executing the coup. The only reason why he did not experience repression by the Qajars was that his coup succeeded. Had he failed, he would probably have been killed by the ruling forces, and had thus also experienced violence by the traumatized group.
- 18 Akhlaghi/Mohsen Gallery 2013, p. 28. Cited after Mohammad Ali Sepanlu, *Four Freedom Poets. A Study on Poets of Patriotism and Democracy in Iran*, Tehran 1990, p. 204 – 208; Sorour Soroudi, *Poet and Revolution. The Impact of Iran's Constitutional Revolution on the Social and Literary Outlook of the Poets of the Time*, in: *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 12, 1979, p. 257 – 259.
- 19 Akhlaghi/Mohsen Gallery 2013, p. 28. Cited after Mohammad Ali Sepanlu, *Four Freedom Poets. A Study on Poets of Patriotism and Democracy in Iran*, Tehran 1990, p. 204 – 208; Sorour Soroudi, *Poet and Revolution. The Impact of Iran's Constitutional Revolution on the Social and Literary Outlook of the Poets of the Time*, in: *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 12, 1979, p. 257 – 259.
- 20 Abrahamian 1982, p. 9 – 10 and p. 464 – 473; Akhlaghi/Mohsen Gallery 2012, p. 41. Cited after an Interview of Sousan Shariati with Azadeh Akhlaghi, 3 November 2011 and Haj Babaei Ebrahimi Saeed/Mohammad Reza Ebrahimi, *Death of Shariati. A Review of Dr. Shariati's Death Alone with Documents*, Tehran 2002, p. 301; John Foran, *The Iranian Revolution of 1977–1979. A Challenge for Social Theory*, in: John Foran (ed.), *A Century of Revolution. Social Movements in Iran*, Minnesota 1994, p. 173 – 174.
- 21 Claire Off, *Staging Death in Iran. Photographer Re-Creates Scenes of Historical Infamy*, in: CBC, Audio-File, 17 April 2014, Minute 4:11 – 4:31, URL: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/thursday-amanda-todd-arrest-marionville-mayor-super-rat-poison-and-more-1.2903845/staging-death-in-iran-photographer-re-creates-scenes-of-historical-infamy-1.2903850> [5.12.2015].
- 22 Personal Interview of Azadeh Akhlaghi with the Author, Tehran 2015. In most pictures she is not located in the center of the composition, but somewhere on the side or in the back. Akhlaghi is stepping out of a door in the right-hand background into Eshghi's yard (Fig.3), standing in the very background of Baghe-Shah (Fig.1) and represents herself only through a mirror next to the garden door that reflects a scene from outside the photograph in the house where Ashraf was killed (Fig.1). In a few cases she also takes an active role, an example is the image of Shariati, in which she hugs one of his daughters. When I asked Akhlaghi what the reason for the activity in this photograph was, she answered, that she tried to show herself, how she really would have acted at the moment she depicted.
- 23 Fakhari 2014.
- 24 Roth 2012 (2), p. 91.
- 25 Dabashi 2013, p. 51.
- 26 Roth (1) 2012, p. 81. He refers to Freud 1953 – 74, p. 275.
- 27 Roth 2012 (2), p. 92.
- 28 *Brave Heart* 2003, p. 11.
- 29 Susan Sontag, *Das Leiden anderer betrachten*, Frankfurt am Main 2008, p. 21.
- 30 Roth (2) 2012, p. 96.
- 31 The series was first exhibited in Tehran's Mohsen Gallery from March 1 – 13, 2013.
- 32 Roth (1) 2012, p. 82 – 83; Roth (2) 2012, p. 88 – 94.
- 33 Although the series was on display for twelve days only, as gallery owner Ehsan Rasoulof told me that about ten thousand people came to the show, which was a record in the number of visitors in one exhibition in a private gallery in Iran. Personal Interview of Ehsan Rasoulof with the Author, Tehran 2015.
- 34 Fakhari 2014; Sean O'Hagan, *Atrocities Revisted. Conflict and Cruelty in Iran*, in: *The Guardian*, 9 April 2014, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/apr/09/azadeh-akhlaghi-conflict-cruelty-iran> [30 March 2017]; India Stoughton, *Azadeh Akhlaghi Finds Beauty in Iran's Bloody Past*, in: *The Daily Star*, 18 April 2014, URL: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Culture/Art/2014/Apr-18/253833-azadeh-akhlaghi-finds-beauty-in-irans-bloody-past.ashx> [30.03.2017]; Personal Interview of Azadeh Akhlaghi with the Author, Tehran 2015.
- 35 Pauline Eifermann, *Seventenn Deaths. Q & A with Azadeh Akhlaghi*, in: *Roads and Kingdoms* 2014, URL: <http://roadsandkingdoms.com/2014/seventeen-deaths-qa-with-azadeh-akhlaghi/> [30.03.2017].

**Abbildungsnachweis**

- Fig. 1 Courtesy: The Artist and Mohsen Gallery Tehran.  
Fig. 2 Courtesy: The Artist and Mohsen Gallery Tehran.  
Fig. 3 Courtesy: The Artist and Mohsen Gallery Tehran.  
Fig. 4 Courtesy: The Artist and Mohsen Gallery Tehran.