

**“Blackselves”
(cross-genre)**

Shushan Avagyan

Translated by Milena Abrahamyan

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Blackselves[\[1\]](#)[†]

Without another word the women left us, taking the taper with them and locking the door.

Through the long night we waited—for what we did not know.

—from Aurora Mardiganian’s testimony, 1917

You probably won’t jump with joy, my dear, if I start writing about myself. If I don’t put pen to paper, I will forget. But before I do that, let me summarize what I would have liked to write and didn’t. Today I was reading Platonov’s *Dzhan* in English.

It’s hard for me to start something new. At first I feel perplexed and begin to distort old sayings.

Say, the harsher the censor tries to silence a piece of writing, the more the reader is drawn to the text. But being drawn to something is rarely the same as grasping or comprehending it.

Here I was going to reflect on why everyone would be incapable of understanding the relevance (modernity) of S. Kurghinian today, and why *Lone Woman* has still not found its audience. I should have also written about the general disinterest and ignorance of Armenian women, and how they have lost themselves in the (hi)stories of others and given in to forgetting those writings, which are addressed to them. But Lara, this has already been discussed.

One of the most important things in art is to situate the objects, which have already been situated a thousand times before by others, correctly. Yet, what do we mean when we say “correctly”? Artsvi was asking yesterday (once again) whether it is really easier to translate from English to Armenian, but I have already addressed the question of why it is easier (for me) to work from Armenian to English in my first

book, Artsvi: I am trying to understand myself in a foreign environment. I think it was Bakhtin who wrote that identity becomes even more real and conceivable in a milieu of “foreignness,” during the (imperative) process of being made foreign.

Maya Deren’s short films of the 1940s. A black and white photograph: my grand mother with her wide brimmed hat.

The other day, I said that I won’t let you cry, my dear, I won’t tolerate your tears (externalized grief). To write every day; write every day. Remember when I was reading Celan’s “Todesfuge” out loud?

“Black milk of daybreak we drink it at sundown, drink it at noon / in the morning we drink it at night / drink and drink . . . / Your golden hair Margarete / your ashen hair Shulamith.”

But who wants to take the shortcut? Shortcuts are a misconception. A true work of words does not fly under any flag, it exists for itself.

Cultural trauma is even more unbearable, since—being deprived of reality—memory preserves the Terror of someone else’s life and appropriates it.

Nika Shek’s film about women football players, which, in essence, is not about football. My grandmother says that I will never understand her pain, dark half-moons beneath her eyes. How to counter(situate)act the words so that the piece would become a poem.

Maya Deren returns to New York from Geneva and begins to research African voodoo dances. Buys a 16mm Bolex photo camera with money inherited from her father and films her most famous work, *Meshes of the Afternoon*, in 1943.

Rhythm alludes to life’s bizarre existence. I keep thinking of Yerevan with its narrow alleys and neat four-story buildings. An intermediate passage.

We are testing in this book the possibilities of writing the self where the “inter-dimensional” and the “periodical” meet.

Or rather, we are counter-writing anything that may accidentally cause a misconception. If you don’t understand one of our languages, find a translator.

I write every day; I am discontented with my writing every day. Valentina Calzolari said that she is in Yerevan and would like to meet, “I am grateful beyond measure for your novel,” and so forth. I am paging through Stein’s *A Novel of Thank You* at St. Mark’s bookstore in Manhattan. This time the city seems more solemn, even familiar.

According to the project, each of us will write in the language in which we express ourselves with ease. Or the opposite, each of us will write in a language, through the difficulty of which we will articulate simple thoughts, which perhaps require a new evaluation. Or to put it in easier terms, the book that we are writing is founded on metonymy, a structure whereby names find substitutive meanings—each section is presented as an entirety.

My respected compatriots! Please let me return to Yerevan, arm in arm with Sarah, I want to—

Let me start again.

Rhythm alludes to life's bizarre existence. I keep thinking of Yerevan with its narrow alleys and neat four-story buildings. An intermediate passage.

On my round table lie the book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, green Orbit chewing gum, keys, an empty beer bottle, a photograph of Djuna Barnes, and “a thousand and one trifles.”

This arrangement, which seems utterly provisional or inconsistent, may be considered one of the main principles of a work of words: to counter(situate)act existing things in such a way so as to create new relational connections, imaginary associations, and versions of riddles that have numerous solutions.

I had expressed a wish in *Book-Untitled* with the hope that it would be read by our daughters, who would maybe show some curiosity regarding their past, but “maybe” is a relative word. Maybe, says Nancy, there is no connection between us. How can we create that relative connection, how can we appropriate a language that separates us?

Let's leave the classroom and see what's happening outside the academia, perhaps even on this very page. Do I contradict myself, Artsvi, when I say that it is easier to feel the earnest cadence of Armenian over the monotonous rhythm of English? Here once again I must highlight the need and importance of translational work, but not in technical terms. We must all become our life's translators and through comparison, deconstruction and resignification, we must find a new relational pattern or structure. Maybe this is the purpose of our book?

Once again I am patiently looking for a just approach; I am traveling without a map. It's imperative to decide which direction to take in order to get there.

When Kaputikyan writes in her famous poem, that it's possible to forget the mother, but it's impossible to forget the mother tongue, she contradicts herself, since “mother tongue” signifies that which comes from the mother.

Nancy writes (September 14, 2006) that the Utopiana seminars have been restarted and that the debates on post-Soviet Armenia are ongoing.

A photograph of Lake Van hangs on one of the walls in her living room. My grand mother with her foresight. I should have written about silence here, about how my grand mother would weigh each word, and, bending from their weight, how she had transformed into a scale. But first let me write about why this section of the book is called “Blackselves.”

Gayane Chebotaryan was also a descendent of Armenians from Rostov-on-Don. She was born in 1918, received her degree in piano from the Leningrad Conservatory in 1943 (under Kushnaryan). She

composed a symphony titled “Celebration” (1945) for the Yerevan orchestra and choir on the occasion of the end of World War II. She also wrote the cantata “Armenia” (1947) for orchestra and choir, and from 1948 taught at the Yerevan Conservatory.

I have often been interested in disrupting the kind of mentality that lacks the capacity for critical analysis. In other words, the kind of mentality that originates from a narrow source.

In a dream my grand mother is walking fast through a narrow street and I am following behind. I am trying to catch up with her, calling for her to stop, but she does not turn and continues to walk. When my grand mother finally stops and turns toward me, her face is a mirror instead of a face.

What do we understand when we say “post-Soviet reality”? Every Tuesday, at nine in the morning, the woman with dyed hair comes to clean your apartment, but you never see her. She always walks on the tips of her toes. Once upon a time she was a dance teacher, but what does “once upon a time” mean?

The critics think without a doubt that they are doing us a favor by explaining, clarifying and discovering—or believing that they are discovering—our rough black drafts. He knocked, opened the door halfway and asked: “Will you have some coffee?”. . . and I lost my train of thought again.

I open the first page of Marcom’s *The Daydreaming Boy* and read: “We are naked like Adam and the blue wide band now becomes what it is, the long sea rises before us, the notfish become what they too are, so that we see: water; white-capped waves stretched out into infinity; but not salt, warm, sad.”

In her book, “we” signifies people without childhood.

In this book, “we” means something else. Although who’s to say that these blackwords (draftwords) wish to be clarified? Critics still don’t know how to approach Marcom’s book, from which side to open it, from which page to start reading. James Barton’s thick manuscript has not yet appeared on their desks, where on page 225 they can find the story of a four- or five-year-old girl who was found in 1918 in one of Syria’s streets. When they attempt to clarify who she is in the orphanage, she has no answer. She doesn’t understand Armenian at all and only when she is asked in Armenian “Who is your mother?” does she flinch at the word “mother” and her eyes come alive for a moment.

In Marcom’s book this fragment appears on page 182 with very few changes. Almost everything is repeated, but in the new context descriptions become re-signified, everything is understood in a new way.

Our book poses a question. How can “we” reconceive ourselves in this blackafflicted body?

In her last years my grand mother was only sixty-one kilograms. Sixty-one kilograms of grief.

In the process of denial the denier eliminates various parts of the original and replaces them with newly formulated scripts. In other words, the movements of the ossified fingers change.

To write so that everything becomes unfamiliar, unalive. In other words, to kill off the words and sentences. Or like this: there is no passion, not today and not tomorrow. I am sad, Lara, tie your shoes, take your bag, come to me.

Hip-hop music: sweaty faces: smoke: I take out the bottle of beer from my breast pocket and (quickly) take a sip. He approaches me, extends his hand and says: Peace. And something bubbles up, swells, and explodes in my throat almost like a laugh, (peace for what?) and then Frenchie (Céline) approaches and saves me from a tactless situation.

Adapt, change your clothes: get in drag.

I am editing “our” life with its torn desires. Nancy, your face—like a half moon—is sometimes inaccessible to me, sometimes dark and unbearable.

In yesterday’s dream three breastless women with long thick hair sit perched around something, howling and scratching out their eyes with their fingernails. Or maybe three priests, wrapped in their capes, whisper long prayers in almost feminine voices, singing, weeping, mourning. There they coerce blackus to occupy unmemoried spaces (to lead an inexplicable existence). Here, drunk with reality, Beyazit stands in front of me, frozen, as it were, with his hand hanging in the air.

My translations don’t contain random words.

Step by step we begin to understand not only our everyday lives and activities, but the meaning behind the structure of this book, the reasons for its unity and motivations.

Last autumn when they expelled us from the Yerevan State University building, where we had a room with a small window filled with books and copies of the journal *Kanayq hayots*, Lara moved everything to the small apartment on Tumanyan street. It was cold, the boxes of books were heavy. The new center was almost like her fourth child: she would carefully take the books out of the boxes and in the same manner of care situate them on the new shelves. Those were probably the same bookshelves that held her unfinished comparative work on Zabel Yesayan and George Sand.

First of all, it is important to clarify how we understand the word “we,” and then, what we attempt to do with that “we” in this book. How do “we” relate with one another, what are the connecting/unifying elements and what are the preventing/separating ones. It is imperative to read the three of us at the same time, in three different languages, in different voices and in different rooms, much in the same way as we are working on the book’s construction right now. I don’t read French, Nancy is not familiar with Soviet mores, Lara is not yet disappointed with this life.

It is important to understand the conditions allowing for the existence of three extreme views side by side, how differences can be constitutive of an integral unity.

I am running after my grand mother . . . I want to, I try to, impatiently, an awful need, this desire. I must see her face, but she disappears behind the arched wall.

In a monologue one person speaks and the rest listen/are silent. No new perspective or thought is created as a result.

In a polylogue several persons speak at the same time, argue with one another, explain and discover, reveal and become revealed.

Before knowing or having any idea about her own book, Marcom had opened Andranik Zarukian's memoir—not unintentionally, of course—and read the part about Boghos on page 31, which describes in detail the disciplinary work and punishments taking place in the orphanage. Here is a small excerpt:

Every morning before being picked up from the floor, the beds would undergo a thorough scrutiny. Those who had wet the bed were separated and subjected to a variety of punishments. A first offender would be deprived of breakfast. If the offense was repeated, he would be denied food all day. At night, the wretch would be sent to bed with a public beating. (Men Without Childhood)

We are writing in order to understand the meaning of “we.”

In his book James Barton views the disciplinary work of the orphanages as something positive. He believes that discipline returns orphans to a “normal life.” In Marcom's book Vahé is not able to return at all. The elemental question is: a return to where?

Laws try to “disappear” us, silence and constrain us, but we continue to blackwrite, excavate and experiment.

Dionne Haroutunian writes in her letters that she has always been interested in questions of loss, recovery and integration. One of her works is titled Self-Portrait During World War I.

In the forefront of the print is a figure. It is unclear whether it's a figure of a woman or a man—

it is actually an outline of a figure presented in an utterly strange, unnatural position, almost as if caught in the moment of falling backwards.

The posture of the hands is constrained and helpless. They are just as unbearable as the hands in Egon Schiele's numerous self-portraits: the long and thin fingers in the moment of stretching the tendons in such a way it seems they will never find a natural position, that they will instead stay that way for years and lifetimes evermore, almost as if paralyzed.

In the background is the field, black and dark red, having almost no depth, or rather, the contextual texture consumes, almost swallows the shrinking body.

Beyazit's sweaty hand. Hanging in mid-air.

And besides, they knew very little about psychological trauma during World War I and only after the catastrophe, in military hospitals, in Freud's notebooks did the terms and explanations, symptoms and etiologies gradually appear. Clearly Barton was unaware, he didn't know about all this, he was only a missionary, but he was one of the first people who was faced with and had to deal with the traumatic memories of those who survived. This was one of the main discoveries of Marcom's book.

Vahé's notmemory, his illegitimacy—his story is about those born in the harems (there were so many of them, did you know?).

I am eight years old and I am not yet a skilled reader, my grand mother's library is unattainable for me (literally, the cabinet is much too high for my height, built into the wall, a glass drawer for books rests upon a cabinet with wide wooden doors) and extremely tempting.

On Saturdays my parents always take me to her house to stay the night, and in the evening when she and my grand father watch television together I carefully approach the cabinet armed with a chair and select a book based on the color of its cover. Then I get down and hide (enter the/a moment) behind the wide doors in the middle, light a candle and with my heart racing, I open the book.

My grand mother is a doctor and many of her books contain descriptions of diseases, images of misshapen bodies, enlarged microscopic bacteria. This time I accidentally choose a thin book with a blue cover where there are almost no pictures.

After flipping through the pages for a while I finally find one black and white photograph in which people wearing plain nightgowns are laying down side by side.

The two in the foreground seem to be sleeping: the father holding his three or four year old child in his left arm, but I don't know why they are laying on the ground without a pillow or cover.

There are men in uniform standing next to them.

Without understanding, but with an uncanny feeling, I close the book and return it back to its place. This becomes my secret. Every Saturday evening, with the punctuality of a ritual, I take out the book with the blue cover for my "reading hour" and examine its only photograph.

There are no words in *Meshes of the Afternoon*; it seems as if the woman passes from one dream to another, as if trapped in the meshes.

But here is another established fact: censors will attempt to eradicate, while some of us will persist in our interest and discovery.

Later, when I was finally (impatiently) able to read (tracing every word with my index finger) the caption beneath the photograph, I never opened the book with the blue cover again.

Upon reading Marcom's book my students ask, how could Vahé recover his loss when the mairigs of the orphanage tried to fix everything with beatings and water? What about the tongue, speech, expression,

what about the mind that constantly asks questions, what about language with its healing capacities, isn't it called "mother tongue" after all?

Loss feeds on silence.

Even your hand, Beyazit, hanging in mid-air, at this moment, years and lifetimes past, has no meaning, has already lost its capacity to heal.

I come from a culture of mourning, I don't know how to mourn. Instead—through incoherent details—I try to complete my grand mother's story, which I never got to know fully.

Let's get back to this book's construction and how we are attempting to create a unity full of differences, which should express the complex internal world of our relations. Today is a day of repetitions.

There are books, which you can accidentally lose or put under flowerpots, and do it not out of negligence. But there are books, the publication of which (also existence of the manuscript) is a joyful occasion, and among those is Mariam Tumanyan's concise (414-page) biography.

Here I would have liked to write about Artsvi's unusual effort and how he discovered Mariam Tumanyan, who of course has nothing to do with Hovhannes Tumanyan. I didn't write about it not because it's not an important topic or that I am not interested in it, but simply because it will distract us from our purpose. Besides, let me give others the chance to have something to write about.

Seventy years later, the Melkonian Educational Institute, which had opened its doors in 1926 for orphans like Vahé, continues to train generations of Armenians (with almost the same methods) each morning, standing in line in front of the central building, with the song "Aravod Luso," monotonous, our voices echoing those who came before us.

On one of those mornings when I couldn't get out of the bathroom, when everyone was already standing outside of the building, each class in its own row, and I was standing under the flow of cold water, that song transformed into something else in my ear: I was hearing my grand mother's voice, the flapping of black wings and "I've come to take you away with me."

Lara says that in order to live a woman must first kill her parents. She says it right here, in these pages, and I repeat: in order to live I tore her black wings and nailed them firmly to my shoulders.

One of the students says that the difficulty of the book results from the fact that it lacks a chronological sequence. It seems the text is woven around elements of repetition and fragmentation, and the act of reading itself transforms into a traumatic experience of comprehension.

The entire plot is revealed at the beginning of the novel, and throughout the novel the plot is deconstructed and reconstructed in a number of ways. The reader is barely able to hold onto any thread and follow the plot, when Marcom suddenly diverges from the storyline and begins a new version. The versions complete one another; each version is a whole.

Here is yet another version: my grand mother's father was a military blacksmith in Van. In 1915 they moved to Armenia with the Russian troops.

Marcom speaks on Vahé's behalf when she says: I would have liked to know what I don't know: the fact that I don't know my own Terror makes me even more terrible.

The unwelcoming walls of the Melkonian Institute and us standing beneath those walls, wearing our blue uniforms and black ties. Every night at ten o'clock Ms. Bekarian comes to check the cleanliness and orderliness of the rooms, probably in the same way Vahé's mairigs did, and if she doesn't like something she confiscates the ward's monthly pass to the city.

Marcom's book is a translation of men without childhood, or let me say it like this: it is the repetition of the same story but with another structure, with another syntax.

Vahé is waiting for his mother, he writes letters from the orphanage; the man without childhood escapes from his mother to an orphanage; two different boys from the same mother, or the same boy from two different mothers; the only things that are essential are the sea and the weather, the change in weather and the repetition, stability, return of the faithful waves (that is—grief).

Zarukian's book desires to end in anticipation, on the sea shore: "After the cruel grounds of the orphanages, where my childhood faded, and against the life opening in front of me, into which I projected my first step, that small notebook wrecked the blue sky of optimism, the love and faith and hope of which I had kept inside of me, even on the most depressing and cold days in the orphanage, just as a prisoner would longingly dream of a peaceful place, which awaits him inside the sweet promise of a free life . . ." Here the splash of the waves consumes the reflections of the man without childhood and Vahé's nightmare begins.

The book of the man without childhood is unfinished. Marcom attempts to finish it with another book, and that's her mistake. She becomes aware of this, but too late, since she discovers only in the process of writing that the book may come to an end, but it does not have a closure. In more than two hundred pages she tries to return, to understand, to find—that is, to find some closure—but she is unable to, or rather, it is impossible.

What I was going to write about and didn't: about Marc Nichanian's anti-critique and how I found myself in-between literature. I didn't write about Nancy, about Lara, and about myself. About how we would meet every Tuesday and talk about the structure of this book in a small room where the walls are painted an indescribable color.

If we are repeating one another it means that this book has reached its goal.

As punishment for not speaking in Armenian, Mairig would teach Vahé obedience, one blow after another with a rod; for speaking in this language the Zaptieh would silence Vahé's mother in a dark cellar through the use of violent force, but this language did not submit to any disciplinary measures, and this is what Marcom is showing in her book, in her notwords and notsentences, that Vahé's godlessness should not have been resolved through the rod, that the wound of the tongue, the

disruption, the severance of language should not have been healed through blood-letting, but only through care, letter by letter, word by word, by studying, (exa)mining, understanding, translating.

Each of our different inquiries demonstrates one thing: the error of imagining and representing Armenian women in a singular way, that is to say, the error of simplification.

I wanted to write about Beyazit, about how he was trying to shake my hand in a bar one day, and how I was unable to, how my herculean strength would not give in, how I had frozen and become inert, otherwise I would not have ignored the gesture and would have wholeheartedly reached toward his extended hand.

I was also going to write an exercise-like dialogue where the speakers, the critics Hovig Tchalian and Ara Oshagan, would speak on the topic of Marcom's novel. Of course we know that such a thing exists, such a dialogue has already taken place, only in my imaginary meeting the critics would have a serious discussion and Hovig Tchalian would not repeat himself incessantly in the three pages assigned to him: "I found the novel's style instead to be for the most part contrived and too deliberate, far too involved in its own sense of experimentation," and Ara Oshagan would not interject: "For some books, the writing is done for the writing, not for the reading." But it's already too late, we have already reached the publishing house and besides, editors don't like changes.

I repeat and without irony that Marcom's novel does not merely bring to the fore psychological or historical themes (already discussed a multitude of times), but that this is where the language of the man without childhood is deconstructed, where the mother tongue is broken down. One comes to a very important realization: there is no return; it is pointless.

But I have once more strayed from the topic at hand, and this time irretrievably so. Forgive me.

When I was asked to translate a piece for Absinthe, accompanied by a short introduction that focused on the mechanics of translation, I proposed to do something else instead: to submit one of my own texts, "Sevamenq," and to write a commentary on the text and its translatability, or perhaps a postscript about deficit. The deficit of faithful translations of Armenian literature in English, the deficit of interest in translation in general in the English-speaking parts of the world, and more abstractly, the deficit of originals and the voids of meaning that are filled in with simulacral effects, as in the case of Aurora Mardiganian's testimony. So I come to this journal both as a writer and translator, more as a writer who has learned how to write by translating other writers.

"Blackselves" was written between 2006-07 as part of a triptych on displacement co-authored with Nancy Agabian, who wrote her part in English, and Lara Aharonian, who wrote hers in French. It is a fragmentary essay, where nearly every sentence references another text. I was probably interested in putting these fragments in new relationships and constructing a certain intertextuality through allusion, quotation, and reference that would change the trajectories of the various hypotexts and lead to new

links—insights. For instance, the epigraph is taken from Aurora Mardiganian’s testimony, which was orally narrated in her native Armenian, interpreted by so-called “native informants” into English, and transcribed into English by American screenwriter Harvey Gates in 1917. Although Gates didn’t know any Armenian, he appears as the interpreter of the Armenian narrative, which exists only in its translated form. The epigraph that appears in “Sevamenq” is not a back translation from the English text, but a new sentence that passes as a statement by Arshaluys Mardiganian (her signed name), standing as a witness to the ruptures and prostheses out of which Ravished Armenia was born.^[2] And this (in)fidelity to fact, then, is the logic in which “Blackselves” operates, threading disconnected bits of my own recollections of childhood, post-Soviet amnesia, Micheline Marcom’s novel *The Daydreaming Boy*, a drunken conversation in a pub in Illinois with a man named Beyazit, and so on. These seemingly disparate threads evolve through a recurrent question around the notion of menq or “selves”—which might possibly refer to the authors of the triptych—Agabian, Aharonian and myself. The question of “selves” might also refer to a single construct, such as Marcom’s fictional narrator Vahé Tcheubjian, who is composed of multitudes of voices, all contradicting one another. Or it could refer back to the epigraph, where the word “selves” does not occur, but which can be inferred from the self-mention marker “we”: “Through the long night we waited—for what we did not know.”

But linked with the word sev or “black”—the new compound word “blackselves,” and the entire piece, becomes an extended metaphor of Paul Celan’s “Todesfuge.” In the age of “postmemory” (Marianne Hirsch) we are not drinking black milk anymore, we have completely consumed and appropriated death, we have naturalized and neutralized grief, we no longer feel the compelling tension between “black” and “milk.” The replacement of “milk” with “selves” in Armenian, written as one word—sevamenq—creates yet another association with the word sevamaghdz (սևամաղձ), which means melancholia, literally—black bile. But this wordplay, of course, is not made explicit and not every reader will make these connections, though Celan is cited in the text. Still, if Celan is lost in the continuity of formation and deformation of meanings, the experimental text allows for another wordplay, which is more explicit and which poses a genuine challenge for the translator. The verb sevagrel or “to draft” would have had a very conventional sense in another text, but it compels a new emphasis, a new perception of drafting—literally, black-writing—when positioned against the backdrop of “blackselves.” And the title of the work itself changes in the light of this verb—to draft, in other words, to be involved in the process of (re)writing the different versions of self, a process that requires resilience, elation, and exuberance. But then, herein lies the difficulty of translation—how to choose which meaning(s) to select from a web of references that construct an elaborate hypertext and how to transmit it/them to the reader, so that the reader doesn’t feel completely lost or overwhelmed? After all, from its very beginnings, Armenian literature has attracted perhaps only two or three Anglo-American readers/translators (George Byron or Alice Stone Blackwell don’t count) who have truly appreciated and seriously engaged with the Armenian letters.^[3]

Shushan Avagyan

1. [†] Blackselfes is the original translation of the author for the title of this text. Although originally the translator found this English title to be problematic, since in English the word carries a different cultural weight from the Armenian, the translator respects the author's wish to maintain her original translation of the title. Alternative titles offered by the translator include: Draftselfes or simply Sevamenq, an English transliteration of the Armenian neologism. ↗
2. Mardiganian's narrative was a unique testimony of the Armenian genocide, which was adapted for the silent screen—the first of a number of motion pictures made by the Near East Relief about Armenian survivors. After losing her family and being forced into the death marches, during which she was captured and sold into the slave markets of Anatolia, and after escaping to the United States via Norway, Mardiganian was approached by Gates who proposed to make her story into film. The testimony was published in English language first as Ravished Armenia by Kingfield Press in New York in 1918 and as The Auction of Souls in London by Odhams Press in 1919. It was translated into Armenian as Hokineru achurte [The Auction of Souls] by Mardiros Gushagchian and published in Beirut in 1965. ↗
3. I am infinitely grateful to Milena Abrahamyan for her radical generosity and trust in what George Steiner has called “as yet untried, unmapped alternity of statement.” I would not have entrusted the translation of “Sevamenq” to anyone else, including myself. ↗

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