

experience in Muslim households and their lifelong compunction for the compromise they had made. In my readings, I had seen the suffering of women on the road to deportation, which was no less than a prolonged agony. Most of the time, death on that road or in concentration camps was a coveted blessing. The life of women in Turkish harems, I surmised, could not have been less painful than death itself. Their life too was a prolonged agony. Despite this extrapolation, I always hoped that this missing link in the history of the Turkish-Armenian relationship would come to light someday.

A small corner of the reality of women survivors in Turkish homes (harems) was briefly illuminated by Sevda Sevan, a second-generation survivor-writer living in Bulgaria. In her novel, *Rodosto, Rodosto*,⁹ Sevan focused on the aftermath of the 1894-96 massacres, creating her protagonists on the basis of a true story embellished with the stories she heard from Armenian survivors who took refuge in Bulgaria.

Hermine/Filor is one of these survivors whose life as a contracted wife of a Muslim and thus ostracized from society, typifies that of many surviving Armenian girls in the aftermath of the 1894-96 massacres, that is, before the complete expulsion of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire. Hermine/Filor, a beautiful Armenian girl, survives the horror of witnessing the slaughter and beheading of her father and

⁹ Sevan's *Rodosto, Rodosto* was written in Bulgarian and published in 1981. The Armenian translation was published in 1989. A chapter of her novel was also published in *Otaralezu hay groghner* (Armenian writers writing in foreign languages) (Yerevan: Yerevan State University Press, 1989), pp. 404-56.