



SRII SPRING LECTURE

February 27, 2018, 19:00

Istiklal Caddesi 247 (Beyoglu - Tünel)

Professor

Helena Bodin

University of Stockholm

**Seclusion vs. accessibility – the
harems of Constantinople in
stories by Elsa Lindberg-Dovlette**



This lecture focuses on stories by the Swedish writer Elsa Lindberg-Dovlette (1876–1944), in which life in the Ottoman harems of Constantinople in the early twentieth century is portrayed from the perspective of female insiders. In 1902, she married a Persian diplomat and prince, Mirza Riza Khan Arfa (Arfa`al-Dawla), and lived in his harem in Constantinople as his sole wife, where she gave birth to two children. Her stories provide an example of the particular intersection of the Swedish and Turkish languages and cultures in Constantinople, as well as of Christian and Muslim beliefs, with special regard to the situation of women. The harem as a cultural space in Lindberg-Dovlette's fictions is distinctly hybrid, combining Parisian fashion, European languages and Ottoman traditions. The 'world-making' of her stories is informed by the limited and distorted perspective both from inside the harem and from behind the veil, but simultaneously also by the distinctive perspective of a young and – as it seems – emancipated Swedish woman, voluntarily living in a traditional Turkish harem.

Admission only after registration event@sri.org.tr !