

**FACT AND FICTION: SUBVERTING ORIENTALISM IN ANN BRIDGE'S  
*THE DARK MOMENT***

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**Abstract**

While postcolonial criticism has extensively traced the Western women writers's accounts of the Orient, Ann Bridge's contribution to the genre remained unheard-of. In *The Dark Moment* she tells the story of the foundation of the Turkish republic after the struggle against Western imperialism, a theme highly controversial for a British diplomat's wife. Moreover, she plays with the conventions and representational strategies of traditional Orientalist narratives inverting each in turn to create an unprejudiced awareness of the historical context and the social and cultural specificities of Turkey and the Turk thereby foregrounding dialogical transculturality over intercultural penetration.

**Key words:** orientalism, Turkey, British literature, transculturalism

The image of the seductive Oriental in Ingres's *Odalisque a l'esclave* (1842) best exemplifies what Edward Said theorized in his canonical book *Orientalism* (1978). The reclining nude with her eyes half shut with ecstasy, the slave playing music with the instrument half hiding her naked breasts, the eunuch at the background gazing away from his mistress symbolising his ineffectual, powerless, and unmasculine position bordering on absence under the gaze of an organizing painter- spectator are synonymous with a feminised Orient, which, according to Said, represents the West's deepest and most persistent image of its ultimate Other. Within this conceptual frame work, Said went on to explore the imbalance of power between Western imperial dominance and Oriental submission, giving pertinent examples from the texts of some prominent Western writers from Aeschylus to Flaubert, Renan, Marx and von Grunbaum. While his approach reveals both the possibilities and limitations of Orientalist narratives implicated in the knowledge-power paradigm, nevertheless, according to other postcolonial critics his work is directed mainly toward the discourses of Anglo-French-American males about Arabs and Islam and he defines Orientalism as a monolithic discourse by not taking into account gender, class and racial diversities as well as the historical agency of the colonized.

As feminist critics like Reina Lewis, Melda Yegenoglu and Sara Mills have observed, women travellers played an important role in the vast tradition of the Western “constructions” of the Orient required for the self-definition and justification of the imperialist venture. Western literature, especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries, is no short of women writers who mostly in pursuit of their passions for sociology, archeology, missionary activities or simply for the spirit of adventurousness and exploration wrote extensively about their travels to the East. In fact the so-called “Orient” had always been a favourite destination and inspiration for Western women who, once away from the bonds of domesticity and routine in their respective societies, were free to explore new and exciting forms of existence. They were able to transcend not just geographical and cultural boundaries but those of the private and public spheres by simultaneously providing commentaries on local cultures including dress codes and domestic arrangements and reflecting upon the crucial political events as well as social and cultural changes in the regions they had turned their gaze upon.

Amongst many other writers Mary Kingsley, Isabella Bishop-Bird, Alexandra David-Neel, Amelia Edwards, Gertrude Bell, Lilius Trotter, Freya Stark and Lady Mary Wortley Montague produced records of their journeys in which they frequently portrayed cloistered women in their private space inaccessible to the Western man’s gaze thereby revealing hitherto unknown truths to their Western readers. Bird cites a French women writer’s opening lines as emblematic of nearly all Orientalist travelogues. At the very beginning of *Les Mystères du sérail et des harems turcs* (1863) Olympe Audouard writes that: “Maintenant, chers lecteurs, si vous tenez absolument a savoir comment il se fait que moi, Française, je connaisse si bien les mystères du serail et des harems, ae que je vous parle si longoument des moeurs et usages des Orientaux, je vous l’expliquerai” [Now, dear readers, if you absolutely insist on knowing how it is that, I, a Frenchwoman, know so much of the mysteries of the seraglio and the harems, and that I can speak to you at such length of the morals and customs of the Orientals, I shall explain to you] ( Bird 2). In this way Western women were not only able to penetrate into the mysteries of Eastern women by becoming their “intimate confidante” but to carry “a little of the Oriental... a dangerous element of alterity, of other cultures and other constructions of gender identity, into the heart of the Empire.” (ibid) Yet critics have long recognized that at the heart of their work the imperial gaze was still privileged and the voice of the colonized ‘other’ remained silent. Hence Western women travel writers’s dual roles of accessing into the Orient’s private realm and “producing Orientalist knowledge over the East” (ibid 3) enabled them simultaneously to occupy feminine and masculine positions.

Ann Bridge is in many ways different from earlier women travel writers. First of all her exporation of foreign cultures is not restricted to the Orient. By the time she wrote *The Dark Moment* (1952) she was already an established novelist combining her first hand experience in countries like China, Hungary, Italy, and Albania as the wife of Sir Owen O’Malley, a diplomat in British Foreign Service with fictional elements. Each of these countries with widely differing social and political positions enabled her to adopt a diversity of positions as botanist, historian, travel writer, biographer, journalist, commentator and novelist. It was perhaps this diversity and her fluid transitions between historical facts and masterful fiction that had made her one of the most popular writers in mid twentieth century Britain and the United States.

In her memoir aptly titled *Facts and Fictions* (1968) she describes her mission as “an endeavour to describe the interplay, in an author’s mind, between actual, lived experience and the situations and events in that author’s novels; and how the real impressions and experiences had to be adapted to meet the demands of the fictional characters in the books” (ix).

She was born Mary Dolling Sanders to James Haris Sanders and Marie Louis Day in Hertfordshire, England as the seventh child of a seventh child in 1889. Her mother was from New Orleans, Louisiana, the daughter of a slave-owner while her father came from a family of presbyterians in Devon. She was raised in both cultures with a keen interest in observing and recording the intricacies of each. In her biography of her mother, titled *Portrait of My Mother* (1955), she gives the clues of what later in her life will mark her as a “transcultural” rather than a “token” travel writer:

...a daughter, slowly and almost unconsciously picking up the threads that give a clue to her mother’s life, usually shares with the mother, in some measure at least, a common background, social and national; and even more important, the visual and physical background of one country... But for me, when I began to take an interest in my Mother’s past, it was not so. Her far-away childhood lay in another continent; three thousand miles of the Atlantic rolled between her remote background and my own vividly present one. For her the Mississippi, for me the Thames; for her long summers the shores of New England, for mine the Dorset coast; my rows of wheatsheaves along the whitened stubbles at harvest-time had to be translated into her Louisiana cotton-fields, with the singing darkies picking steadily among them, and the dear familiars of my childhood, the cheerful maid-servants indoors, the gardeners and grooms without, into the devoted slaves who brought her up, with their black loving faces, gaudy bandannas, and haunting songs... It has somehow so become part of my own life...(11-13)

Ann Bridge’s first novel, *The Peking Picnic* (1932) was originally commissioned by Chatto & Windus publishers to whom she had suggested the idea of translating some Chinese short stories into English after having published “lively, first hand accounts” of China, their first official diplomatic post with her husband (*FF* 35). Instead, Harold Raymond, her publisher, asked her to write a novel about China which marks the beginning of her successful career as a novelist and the beginning of her use of pseudonym Ann Bridge for political reasons:

I must use a pseudonym, and no one was to know my real name; I must promise that. There had for a century or more been a tradition in the Service that if a diplomat’s wife put pen to paper she would either ruin her husband’s career, or provoke an international incident, or both.

Back at the Bridge End we discussed the question of pseudonyms; Jock Balfour was down again that Sunday, and suggested taking Ann from “Mary Ann” and Bridge from “Bridge End”-and so this new entity was hatched. (41)

As Ann Bridge she wrote 16 novels based on her experience as the wife of a diplomat in various parts of the world. "In each of my novels the main character is a region or a country" she states in the foreword of *Facts and Fictions*. Yet, in all these novels she also portrays strong female characters like the amateur detective, Julia Probyn, the heroine of Bridge's popular spy thriller series, Lady Kilmichael in *Illyrian Spring* (1935), Raquel in *Frontier Passage* (1942), Susan Glanfield and Gloire Thurston, the two characters based on herself in *Singing Waters* (1945) and the Marchesa di Vill' Alta, the matriarch of *Enchanter's Nightshade* (1937). *The Dark Moment* is the only novel which is set in the Orient and tells the story of the foundation of the Turkish republic after the struggle against Western imperialism, a theme highly controversial for a British diplomat's wife. Moreover, unlike her predecessors, she adopts a stance against the unifying conception of the "Oriental woman" by depicting a series of nonwestern women characters who emerge from the limitations both by way of their innate strength, courage, curiosity and ability to adapt to the changes around them. Moreover, her foregrounding the experiences of these women characters and placing the British Expatriot, who in all her other novels has always had a central role, at a secondary position as the best friend of the main protagonist firmly places Ann Bridge much ahead of her time, almost as a proto-second wave feminist acknowledging sisterhood and solidarity despite differences among women.

*The Dark Moment* is also Bridge's only work in which both the characters and the events are not based on her first-hand experience. It was during the time she and her husband were stationed in Hungary that she first met the Turkish Minister to Budapest, Rusen Esref Aydın and his wife Saliha who were among the "earliest and closest adherents" of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the legendary leader of the revolution (133). When she went to Turkey in 1940 to raise money and order supplies for the British prisoners of war, an event that would later inspire Rosina Eynsham's journey in *A Place to Stand* (1953), she was invited to their villa on the island of Prinkipo in Istanbul. For the entire six weeks she spent there, she was able to get first-hand account of the events that took place at the end of the Ottoman Empire, during the War of Independence and the early years of the Republic:

...most of the Turkish Ministers and officials were spending the summer there too,.. those men who had shared Atatürk's trials and struggles and triumphs... the subject uppermost in all their minds at that time was Mustafa Kemal, whose loss was still mostly felt, his memory fresh and warm in their hearts-Kemal and Turkey; what he had aimed at doing for Turkey, how he had set about it, what obstacles had stood in his way, what frustrations had not exasperated him. (*FF* 133-134)

Moreover the wives of these prominent men provided her with the details of their own experiences as they followed their husbands up to share in the primitive surroundings of Ankara:

Now these women-most of them were little more than girls when they went up to Ankara-had been brought up in a fantastic degree of dependence and helplessness: attendants gave them their baths in the *hammam*, or

bath-house; *dadis*, and later their maids, dressed them and did their hair; they never went outside their Gates without a female escort unless, again, accompanied by a pair of stockings in their lives... Hard going indeed, but somehow they managed; they described their struggles, in retrospect, with a certain humourous relish- what was clear was that much the worst part, what they had really minded, was appearing in public without the *pece and sans tulle*- without some form of veiling on their hair. (137)

As these accounts reveal Ann Bridge was highly affected by this great story of total transformation both on public and private levels. *The Dark Moment*, is, indeed, the epic-scale story of a people's quest from an imperial monarchy to a modern nation as represented in the journey of Feride, the heroine of the novel, from a protected childhood as the much-cherished daughter of a traditional aristocratic Ottoman family living at a spectacular mansion in Istanbul, the capital of the empire to active participation in the struggle of Independence as she learns how to endure pain, suffering and hardships together with her husband in Ankara, the capital of the new republic where she also becomes a vocal proponent of women's rights. In this way Bridge is able to narrate the key moments of change in various political, social and cultural discourses in Turkish history which thwarts one of the most important Orientalist paradigms, that of a static Orient and Oriental frozen in time and constitution.

Mohja Kahf in *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Terma-gant to Odalisque* (1999), writes that in pre-colonial Western literary works the Muslim women had been depicted as "multivalent" but from the 18th century onwards they were transformed into a single typology, as passive victims with unlimited sexuality. In fact this is very much in line with what Edward Said wrote about an Egyptian courtesan, Kuchuk Hanem who was solely defined by her sexuality, stupidity and passivity in Flaubert's accounts of the East. He observed that "she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence or history. He represented her" (6). While this is equally applicable to the writings of the majority of European women who traveled throughout the Orient *The Dark Moment* depicts women not as submissive and subjugated but as active and disruptive females. Moreover they are diverse and multifaceted, neither wholly Eastern nor Western.

The novel opens with Feride and her best friend Fanny playing hide-an- seek concealing themselves in the vast garden of the yalı overlooking the Bosphorus. The Ottoman and English girls's taking turns in hiding and finding each other is symbolic of Ann Bridge's emphasis on intersubjectivity and dialogue between the East and the West throughout the novel. Fanny lives with her uncle Dr. Pierce, an Orientalist who spends most of his time in Istanbul, the seat of the sultanate collecting folkloric art works and doing research throughout the empire. Both Fanny and Dr. Pierce are regulars at Fanny's father's Grand yalı as Pasha, himself, is a connoisseur of art as well as a much respected political figure. Pierce and Pacha's common interests and friendship underline the harmony rather than the hierarchies between their differences. As they walk "up and down beside the balustraded sea-wall, deep in conversation... Dr. Pierce's panama and the red fez both [catch] the light as they [cross] the patch of sunlight between the two" (13). Similarly Fanny and Feride often share rooms, clothes and secrets which once again subverts

the self/other and subject/object dichotomies in Orientalist writings. Moreover Fanny's frequent presence in the harem of the yalı positions her as part of it, as a Westerner she is not penetrating into the East unveiling its secrets but one in interaction with it. Hence both Feride and Fanny are "gazers" and "gazed at" occupying the same space.

The yalı itself is a combination of Western and Oriental art and architecture almost as cosmopolitan and hybrid as Istanbul itself. It is described as "[l]ight, fragile, somehow uncertain in its general effect... along the shores of Bosphorus-where for centuries East and West have, whatever Kipling may have said, met"(10). All the members of Pacha's household speak perfect French and Feride is raised by two women, Mademoiselle Marthe, a French governess and her deceased mother's maid, Dil Feride denoting the harmonious connection between the West and the East in Feride's education. Similarly Fanny speaks perfect Turkish, can write in the Ottoman script and can even translate documents to help her uncle.

As opposed to Western prejudices about the place of women in Ottoman families the person everyone in the yalı respects the most is the matriarch, Refiye Hanım. She is Feride's maternal grandmother and after the death of her mother she was the one shaping her values and beliefs with her inner wisdom. While a confidant of her son she can oppose his wishes and carry out her own decisions. Feride shows that she has taken after Refiye Hanım when she openly challenges her father's orders and beliefs throughout the novel.

Perhaps it can be argued that during the time she was writing the Ottoman and Britain Empires had already been a thing of the past therefore it was inevitable that Ann Bridge represents a break from the classic Orientalist paradigms. With the Turk no longer to be feared and the West no longer "the sole arbiter of and owner of meanings about the Orient" (Lewis 2) she was able to approach the Turkish experience beyond classificatory terms.

Symmetrical relations of power between the East and the West, the past and the present, the masculine and the feminine worlds are much nuanced in Bridge's novel. Yet of course one should not forget the fact that she did not have the opportunity to experience the events first-hand and that her source was a Turkish woman with strong connections with all of the above. That may be the reason why writing and identity are not linked in her novel as is the case in the work of other women writers like Colette whose first-hand experiences of the First World War ( Bird 48) had been a means for self-fashioning, a process of becoming by way of contact with one's others.

Throughout the novel Ann Bridge uses multiple perspectives although the narrator remains a westerner by occasionally providing comparisons between her own world and that of the Ottoman. For example as readers we are always aware that it is an English woman, in fact Bridge herself, who is describing "[the] scent of thyme-from bushy plants far larger than the creeping thyme of England"(4) and "that familiar English evergreen; Rhododendron ponticum, growing wild on its native heath" (128).

Nevertheless, as stated before, the novel revolves around Feride, the young Turkish woman from whose perspective we evaluate the events that lead to grand transformations both on personal and public levels. In fact, Ann Bridge writes that Feride is very much based on Saliha Unaydın who provided Bridge both with the details of her own experience and help in the creative process:



I told Saliha that before I went to Turkey I must have the plot of the book worked out thoroughly, so that I should know what to look for in the way of *mise-en-scene*; and together, in that hospital room...we arranged the whole thing, I propped up in bed making copious notes, she sitting beside me, frowning with concentration, while we planned the *dramatis personae*, the unfolding of the plot, and above all the names of all the characters. This was something I could never have done alone, with any real *vraisemblance*; the book is really as much Saliha's as mine. (*FF* 150)

This way Ann Bridge challenges the agency of Western writer and abolishes the traditional distinction between the active observer and passive object. Moreover by interspersing into Saliha/Feride's account detailed descriptions of historical events based on Winston Churchill's "The Aftermath" that chronicles the period 1914 to 1923 she gives equal footing to oral history, women's narration and the perspective of the "other" alongside official history.

"I intended to call the book *The Falcon in Flight*" she writes in *Facts and Fictions* (151). While the book was later on published with the title, *The Dark Moment*, its basic framework is very much in line with a popular Turkish folk-song, "I Launched my Falcon in Flight" which Bridge quotes as Ahmet, Feride's brother sings it just before he joins the revolutionary society of Mustafa Kemal fighting against both the sultanate and the occupying forces: "I launched my falcon in flight/From the one fortress to the other fortress-/But waking alone in the night/I found the darkness full of tears" (26).

Obviously the falcon has symbolic meanings on many levels. It is, simultaneously, Ahmet and Orhan, Feride's brother and husband who leave the Yalı to fight alongside Mustafa Kemal, Turkish transformation from the old regime to the new, Mustafa Kemal himself who started as a young general in the Ottoman army and ended as the founder of the Republic and Father of Turks (Ataturk), Istanbul caught between Europe and Asia, two different worlds and cultures and Feride herself, "flying" away from Istanbul to Ankara to accompany her husband. Indeed, her journey from Istanbul to Ankara, which covers 3 chapters of the book is both her journey to married life in the new capital without the luxuries she has previously been accustomed to and to a new future charged with ideologies of modernism and liberation.

As she moves further and further away from Istanbul into the poor, dusty and vast plains of Anatolia under many hardships she encounters situations that are emblematic of a new understanding of womanhood. First of all she travels with Nilufer, her sister-in-law, without the accompaniment of a man which symbolizes a significant breach of tradition. On the way she comes across Anatolian women who are not trapped in the private spheres of their homes and traditions but have the initiative, courage and both physical and mental power to fight alongside men against the occupying armies. Feride is fascinated by their casualness about the veil, a tradition which, in Istanbul, is an unquestionable symbol of a woman's modesty and integrity and by their perseverance and endurance:

Most astonishing of all, more than three-quarters of the carriers were women, some in the pink-skirted local dress, others in brightly-flowered cherry-colored trousers; quite a number were carrying a baby in their arms as well

as a shell bound on their backs, others were accompanied by two or three small children, who pattered beside them in the greasy mud...

‘This is wonderful!’ Feride said to Nilüfer. ‘What endurance! They are the caryatides of our time!’ she exclaimed, again leaning out to study the faces of the plodding women, some of which were indeed contorted with the strain. (128-129)

By way of this journey Feride, herself, becomes almost a travel writer, she observes and records in her mind all she encounters with the agency of a gazer. This is also a road Ann Bridge had once taken to follow the steps of Saliha before her. Hence Feride’s journey becomes yet another element in the novel that collapses the distinctions between fact and fiction, self and other.

With Feride’s arrival at Ankara Ann Bridge recounts how the world appeared to the women at the time of major political and cultural transformations at the end of the late Ottoman period and early Republic. After a series of victories over the occupying armies, the Ottoman Empire and the institutions under its control were abolished to construct a secular nation-state with a modern identity. The new Turkish Republic was established with the meeting of the Turkish Grand National Assembly on April 23, 1920. Together with the symbols of Islamic tradition the old Ottoman capital of Istanbul was also renounced. Mustafa Kemal and his revolutionist team chose Ankara, already the centre of the war of independence, as the new capital that would convey the spirit of the young nation.

Ankara also became the symbolic locus for the republican ideologies that promoted nationalism, modernisation, secularism and westernization as the final break from the Ottoman past which the republicans blamed for backwardness and corruption. It was also in Ankara that new gender roles were negotiated and created. The republicans backed by the ideas of Ziya Gökalp, late Ottoman sociologist, poet and political activist, gave women a central role in the creation of its utopian “New Nation” both as educators and transmitters of civilization. Based on Gökalp’s belief that in ancient Turkish tribal and Shamanistic societies women were honoured and treated equally as men Mustafa Kemal Atatürk started a major transition in the politics of gender, sexuality and public space.

Ann Bridge glorifies Atatürk’s project through both Feride and Fanny who after many years comes to visit her in Ankara. As her husband is Atatürk’s right hand Feride is often in company of the nation’s leader. In implementing a modern state Atatürk believed that a system modeled after the West should penetrate every aspect of social life. He was personally involved in demonstrating the disciplines and techniques that would create the modern Turkish identity. Bridge gives an account of his reforms by way of Feride’s presence in all crucial events thereby demonstrating how these major shifts directly affected women’s lives and their efforts in leaving the past behind and embracing, although reluctantly at first, their changing roles and lifestyles. Danielle J. Van Dobben writes that “the image of Atatürk dancing with his adapted daughter at her wedding” (86) symbolizes a major shift in social norms. Men and women in close bodily contact waltzing to Western music dressed in the latest European fashions was not easy to accept for the moslem Turks. Yet Atatürk, determined to cut all ties with



an Islamic world view insisted on these visual manifestations of change and asked the new republic's bureaucrats and their wives to socialize in ballrooms. In the novel he asks Feride to come to a ball "*en grande toilette*, if possible with a *décolletage* and even without a scrap of tulle on her head" (261):

Feride, with a reluctance which she did not allow to appear, agreed-she could hardly do anything else. But when he had gone- 'This is going to be exceedingly disagreeable!' she exclaimed to Fanny. 'With the diplomats it is all well. They know how to behave. But there will be many among our own people who will disapprove furiously, and will make themselves unpleasant, you will see.'(261)

Feride, clearly, is not an "alafranga", the stock character who represents totally westernized, dangerous, tempting loose women in the Turkish novels from the Tanzimat period to early Republican era. In fact Westernization and modernization projects are not specific to the republican period. Following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire after a series of military defeats and economic losses sultans starting with Selim III had implemented reforms based on Western models. These reforms were not accepted by all sections of the Ottoman society and were viewed as attacks on the traditional family system. As Deniz Kandiyoti argues the Ottoman/Turkish novel increasingly displayed "ultimate degradation ... reached when Westernism, in the guise of foolish and feckless young men and 'fashionable' loose women, enters the home, corroding the moral fabric of the family and by extension of society as a whole" (38). "Alafranga" women in the work of such major writers as Ahmed Mithat Efendi, Namık Kemal, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, Peyami Safa are all Western/emancipated characters marked by licentiousness and corruption. Feride, on the other hand, represents the female patriot who simultaneously preserves the honour of the nation and of herself although she has adapted herself to civilization. This, again is very much in line with Gokalp's understanding of women as emancipated but respectful and chaste, a theme running through the works of such nationalist writers as Namık Kemal and Halide Edip.

To underline this specific characteristic of Republican woman image, Bridge emphasizes the difference between Feride and Fanny. While Feride has become a modern woman she is not totally Westernized, therefore, acts differently from Fanny. Having met "the brilliant soldier, the harsh politician, the ruthless creator of a state out of the ruins of an old one" Fanny immediately falls in love with Atatürk despite the fact that she is engaged (256). Totally charmed by this great man she risks becoming *af-fichée* with him forgetting the fact that his priority is his nation. Fanny's attraction to the charismatic leader is almost reminiscent of popular Orientalist desert novels in which the Western woman falls desperately in love with the dangerous Oriental.

As Ann Bridge recounts the feelings of Feride towards her friend's behaviour she hints a disapproval of the image of "New Woman", a significant cultural icon of the feminist movements of the fin de siècle:

Feride's instincts were feminine and sure, based on a natural wisdom unclouded by modern notions of rights or economic independence or any psychopathic theories of 'self-expression' for women ; it was unaccountable

to her that Fanny should not see what she saw clearly ; that gossip about an affair between the Head of the State and foreign woman was breach of taste, a breach of style, which was altogether impossible, inadmissable. (289)

Interestingly Fanny, the English woman, represents uncontrollable desire while Feride remains an emblem of proper moral and social codes and rationality, qualities that have always been associated with the West. At the end of the novel Feride is able to convince her friend that she has misunderstood Ataturk's attention. The unfulfilled love between Fanny and Ataturk may also be symbolic of the Turkish republican policy of learning the ways of the west as much as possible yet never to be fully Westernized. As Gokalp wrote : "The mission of Turkism is to seek out the Turkish culture that has remained only among the people and to graft onto it Western civilization in its entirety and in a viable form" (33).

When her friend goes back to England Feride remains in her country to form a "feminine corps d'élite" to educate other women thereby finalizing her own journey from the private realm of her father's traditional *yalı* to the public sphere in modern Turkey endowed with a mission. Her emergence as a woman who is able to defy traditions and a carrier of new liberties and values once again defamiliarizes stereotypical configurations of Eastern female identity.

*The Dark Moment*, despite the negativity in its title, represents the key moment of the transformation of discourses of gender, sexuality and identity as Turkey changed from a theocratic, multiethnic empire to a modern and secular nation state. Rather than turning the East into a consumable narrative with stereotypical configurations in a typical Orientalist manner Ann Bridge plays with the conventions and representational strategies inverting each in turn to create an unprejudiced awareness of the historical context and the social and cultural specificities of Turkey and the Turk investing neither in desire nor repulsion. By subverting the boundaries between reality and expectation, historical fact and literary creation, insider and outsider, narrator and narratee she presents a vast canvas of various perspectives to a multitude of issues and highlights richnesses over differences and dialogical transculturality over intercultural penetration.

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