**WEEK 2 SEMINAR- Exotic and the Fantastic**

* **Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei**- landmark work for contemporary German literature, inventive, humane in approach, linguistically challenging with Turkish idioms translated into German leaving the reader to decipher. ‘Literarisches Ereignis’.
* **East-** exciting, exotic, titillating also dangerous, childish etc.
* Mechanism for justifying western power over the east- east does not respond- **Colonialism**
* Orientalism- underpinned that colonial project eg. Jane Austin novel placed in upper class, no one asking q where money comes from? - **slave and sugar trade**
* Othering- to feel superior need another that is inferior that justifies taking over
* Genre treated with mistrust by critics- saying it enforces stereotypes etc. rather than challenging them.
* Migrant writers use depictions of home countries to arouse cultural curiosity eg. Syria, middle east etc. they diffuse ‘otherness’ – hard to maintain them as the ‘other’, equalises relationship between writer and reader- writer takes charge and is put into power and then is able to manipulate the reader.
* Reader reflects on prejudices- eg. Family relationships are similar- difficult to think as them as the other, connect on human level. Writer uses depiction to implement political criticisms- question power relationship eg. Dojnaa- breaking down cultural barriers, equating experience, de-othering family structures. Reflect on domestic violence in our own society.
* On one hand plays up to ‘exotic’, underneath undermines the whole project- literature challenges it.

Die Sehnsucht der Schwalbe (2000)

* Swallows always try and nest in the same place/ Lufti- always tries to migrate to Germany but same policemen always finds him, but he always comes back to Germany.
* Graphic description of racism in Syria- inviting reader to make cross comparisons between circumstances in both- connect with German audience so they reconsider their attitude towards economic migrants.
* Exotic setting of Syria connected with German would as a strategy would not alienate German reader- not offending German readers but would feel a ‘nerve press’.
* ‘Laut und lichtig erzählen’- narrating stories in ‘colourful’ way but slipping in social criticism whilst you read the exotic depiction, ‘sugar coating’.
* Connect with German readers whilst maintaining credentials.

Political criticism- ‘pro-Arab’

Use parts of mechanism that also work against orientalism- what the reader likes to criticise western attitudes.

Group C- Ein ehrlicher Handel

* Dictated by financial earning
* Mother reads the story- another power struggle
* Woman’s role- can’t be strong in most obvious sense, no financial power but can support them in other ways- good example of woman being in that role eg. Taking care of the household, giving him a piece of wisdom. THEME OF STORYTELLING
* Debt- giving dad a small victory but in the long term will help his family.
* Performing male stereotype, challenged by son then causes conflict.
* Critique- re- accruing cycle when his sons becomes an adult
* Where is core of power in the family? – mother seems to be mediator, regulator.

Mein Vater und sein Radio

* Family proud of dad
* Radio- father buys radio spends money etc it gets broken- he helps other people when fixing it, benefiting the community back home
* Humanisation of the radio- treated as a child ‘als ware es ein krankes kind
* Map on the back- how the east perceives the west- neither is ‘magical’, matter of perspective, more similar in certain aspects.

Hande aus Feuer

* Family- tells his mum the situation, mom doesn’t care just wary of the husband finds out, mum just lets the men ‘play the game’.
* Mum wants to help the other woman- wants his son to treat her
* Adapts a passive role
* Mum reinforcing her son playing a male role- although relationship may seem strange she’s nurturing him into a man who treats the other woman nicely.

Religion

* Provide understanding of how the religions co-exist
* Storytelling an important aspect as a genre as well
* Religious tiff- two different tree story. Metaphor for co- exist.
* When it comes to destruction their both equal.
* Indication of underlying tension that are unresolved
* 2 parents never spoke but 2 kids stayed friends- generational differences
* 2 potato sellers disagree- turns into something with religious underline, changes its codes, misuse of religion to create tribal identities.

Group B- Syria in 20th century

* Politics- cold war- America trying to neutralise both sides, able to plant bases in turkey
* History of Palestinians- 1948 division of Palestine, one a terrorist region, in constant conflict the entire time. Kurds, regime,
* Position and treatment of minorities
* (Als der Angstmacher) Uncle Salim- doesn’t fear the regime. Presence of informer does alter their behaviour. Children encouraged not to play with the spy children. No one afraid to express their opinions by the end of the story. Informant oversteps his mark. Military has strong hand in who comes into power.
* Fragile situation when one person takes on the informant everyone else shies away.
* 1980/89- impact on German readers. Parallel to Berlin wall- trying to deal with situation but it brings more attention in fact, suggests there is a problem within the system.
* Both political position and how the informants operates would be like West German situation that was occurring in the East.
* ‘Bukra’- parallel between Syria and Germany. Obsession with news. ‘promised land’- promising a better future in fairy tale terms but they struggle to deliver, rich and poor demand, bans use of word ‘tomatoes’, - poor get poorer, rich get richer. Criticism of contemporary society- promise of future gets further away from them. Parallel to Syria itself- soviet money comes in, most used on armed forces, gov aligned itself with Soviet Union- officially part of soviet gov- adopts propaganda, promise of future etc.
* Similar aspects familiar to narrative in East Germany. **Deliberate alignment-** braking down differences, otherness.

Hände aus Feuer- family relationship development/ position of women

* Mother’s want best for their children- p.48
* p.50-cliché depiction of a beautiful woman
* p.51- addresses rape quite casually
* p.52- went to extreme measures to spy on woman.
* P52. Women aren’t objects to quench male desire
* P.53- male gaze
* P.54- western influence
* P.55- permanent scarring??
* P55. – Salma very much the dominant one, leading the dynamic of the relationship
* p.55- perspective on age difference? Male vs. female
* p.56- **demonstration of typical sister/ brother relationship NOT EXOTIC**
* p56- **mothers have higher status throughout collection**
* p.56- **can tell his mother about his relationship- healthy relationship? Hits him on the head- typical motherly response.** Reinforcing patriarchy-
* mother is enabler? – quite subversive,
* p.56- wanting to go public with their relationship
* p57- bits written in present tense
* p.58- pressure on women to secure a future/ security
* p58- **again, mother son relationship** -
* p.61- brutal reality of women oppression
* p.63- she can’t be ‘saved’ by him, parallel to fairy-tale
* leaves at the end- women still empowered
* mother is not passive- intervenes within family, overt- patriarchy-
* education not going to help her in anyway
* Females defined to domestic space
* Suggest Syrian society- suggests its not so stable- liberation, counter current