Week 7 – Die tochter des Schmieds – The family and gender

The storyline itself is not the book’s dynamo. It’s a growing-up tale of Timur the blacksmith and his daughter Gül, who is later to leave Anatolia for Germany. But what we read about is her childhood in the 1940s and 50s, playing with her sisters and helping around the house, almost a Turkish equivalent to Laura Ingalls Wilder – with a pinch of Cinderella thrown in. Because Gül’s adoring and adored mother Fatma dies, and Timur takes a new wife. The family’s fortunes take a turn for the worse, and Gül decides to leave school fairly young so that her younger sisters can go on with their education. She shoulders a good part of the housework, is apprenticed to a dressmaker and then agrees to an arranged marriage with Fuat, her stepmother’s brother. The couple have two daughters and get jobs as migrant workers in Germany, and the book closes as Gül boards a train for foreign lands in Istanbul.

Looking more closely at *Die Tochter des Schmieds*, it turns out to be the backstory of an under-represented section of German society – the young women who came here in the 1960s and 70s as migrant workers. While a number of male authors were involved in the “Gastarbeiterliteratur” movement, few of these women have told their stories. Feridun Zaimoglu champions these women as equivalents to the *Trümmerfrauen* who built up Germany brick by brick after World War II – while in *Leyla* (published after *Die Tochter des Schmieds*) painting a more sensationalist picture of a young Turkish woman’s life – marred by a violent father and emphasizing certain aspects such as religion.

Özdogan, on the other hand, opts for a less dramatic course of events. **Gül is almost a prototype of a modest, self-sacrificing young woman. She is obedient and unassuming, never asking for anything outright and forgoing a teenage romance because it would not be acceptable**. **Yet her sisters break with traditional gender expectations to some extent, smoking, playing volleyball, becoming teachers and choosing their own husbands**. The author, however, does not condemn the old institution of arranged marriages – he is interested in telling a story, not judging it

* Inherent need for another woman to ‘replace’ the mother within the family structure- due to grandmother not wanting the children to grow up without a mother.
* Emphasis on importance of the role of the mother- replacing her **AND** Gul adopting motherly role as the eldest **AND** as a six-year-old in order for her siblings to carry on their education. Quickly followed by marriage to another man as a teenager and producing children of her own. Literally a mother, comment on tradition and tradition of marriage and maintaining the family structure.
* Follows more ‘traditional’ narrative where parents move to another country in order to work and provide money for their children who remain back home.
* ‘The time span between the journey to Germany and the time in which now old Gül lies in the deathbed is omitted. Suddenly the reader is confronted with an old and fragile Gül, who believes to have fulfilled her mission in the world and only looks forward to death’.
* **Societal frames are in the backdrop** eg. Women typically oppressed in a patriarchal society.
* The father Timur obviously does not want to burden such a young girl with such a great responsibility. Therefore, he wants to marry as soon as possible, mainly because the children will have a mother.
* However, the fact that the same restrictions are perceived or observed differently by the three female figures also plays a decisive role, which is mainly due to the different character traits of the figures concerned. Gül is so predisposed that She is not only a responsible person, which was underlined above, but is also relatively submissive. **She lets everything pass over her**. Therefore, she suffers the most.
* So she also throws the lot, as she had once thrown the letter, into the stream. It turns out that the lot that Gül threw away won the third prize in the big New Year's draw. It is obvious to interpret this event in the sense that she also threw her future, her own lot, her own destiny into the water with the letter or the lot, because she constantly judged her life according to what society expected of her. So the others determine Gül's path of life. She has hardly any influence on her own fate, which underlines her marriage to Fuat, which is carried out against her will**. From the very beginning she has seen her mission in feeling responsible for others, and her own life has always been neglected**. In Germany, where she spent her whole life, the reader sees her as a lonely old woman who still thinks about her mission shortly before her death
* The fact that she can now walk in peace is explained by the fact that she has fulfilled her task towards the others. As soon as she feels put in a situation where she is no longer needed, she feels superfluous. She can "walk in peace". As the big sister among the three half-orphans, Gül, who has internalized social norms, seems to have seen her mission in standing up for others.
* This willingness to feel responsible for others is not limited to her younger sister, but also refers to her children, who she raised and guaranteed a place in society. In this mission there is no big place left for Gül herself. She, who has orientated her life permanently towards the social restrictions, seems to demand nothing for herself.
* So it seems natural that she can hardly talk about happiness in her life: "Sometimes, when I'm unhappy, I wake up in the morning and think: Damn, I've already woken up again. If I could not have slept forever.
* Note both sisters marry men they both found, also choose not to have children.
* In addition to the impossibility for Gül to free himself from the shackles of social restrictions, the author thus shows two further quasi possibilities to assert himself in spite of the aforementioned restrictions in a society that seems to pose numerous obstacles to women's careers. One possibility is the career that goes through education, which, however, is coupled with an extraordinary talent. This path is represented here by Sibel, who was an artistically gifted person from childhood on and who was able to become an art teacher in the end because of this talent. **Thus this example underlines the extraordinary qualities a woman must have in order to secure a place in society. The other way is embodied by Melike, who shows that one has to be stubborn and have a lot of courage in order to overcome the social restrictions in order to realize oneself**. **This path also leads to a career in the end. From childhood on Melike was a stubborn personality, an exception in the family as well as in society, which could also accomplish extraordinary things**. However, here the emancipation of the woman is essentially made dependent on the individual characteristics of the woman. The social framework is not treated as a determining factor, but appears here in contrast to the work of Özakın as a backdrop.

Seminar: Week 7- Postcolonialism

* ‘umbrella’ term- based in lit from societies from point at which they were colonized up to the present day- Independence. Difficulties faced as a result of colonialism.
* Time lag, reluctance in engagement of colonizing countries of what they’ve created and in what state they left them in.
* Embedded structures by colonizers, removal of administrative class at end of colonialism, what is left is a vacuum, chaos, disintegration.
* Colonized countries were unable to develop own system of government, administration.
* Post col lit- reoccurring features in the works. Dominant center- ‘fatherland’- takes over and declares a country as a vessel state and therefore power emanates from imperial capital.
* Ability to progress in society restricted to more powerful classes within society. Denied to others outside- distribution of wealth skewed to imperial center.
* Cultural bigeminy- complete yielding of power, most legit culture overtrumps culture of colonized. Colonized culture becomes inherently less valuable.
* Superior position of imperial at the center justified by suggesting what was there before was inferior anyway.
* Linguistic power- overwrite other languages, needed in official terms.
* **Themes of place and displacemen**t at the center of works- metaphorically and physically- ethnic cleansing eg.
* **Identities**- some deemed more superior than others. Attempt to adopt certain cultural trades to modify identity to become accepted in society. Greater hybridity and confusion. Mimicry.
* General themes can occupy in a similar way to diasporic writing. – cultural differences, exotic and other. Language and power- having to adapt to a new language and then to challenge those things around you. Identity- unstable, hyphenated, hybridity is a central preoccupation.
* Really that different- migrant also faces a center being on the edge of society in non-literal and literal sense, due to linguistic inability. Must adapt to the center.
* Exploitation, expropriation- common experiences in colonialism AND migrants.
* Parallels in their experience of being colonized and being a migrant.
* Germany as a colonial power- not hesitant to impose with military force, attempted genocide.
* G colonial involvement were part of a continuity and tag along to national socialism. Colonial project displaced to Europe. Invite people to your country to colonize them internally. Exploit labor by inviting them to your country.

Group A

* Latin alphabet introduced
* Cars in the town
* Listening to the radio
* Cinema
* Women education- sisters wanting to be educated, certain expectation of woman to get married rather than continue education for economic reasons and to maintain family structure.
* Examples of her making attempts to continue education yet doesn’t carry it out. Fearful of society’s pressure.
* Divorce a sign of societal change, yet its not discussed
* Access to American culture in the city. Strong contrast to village. In terms of economic development.
* Attitude- town and village. Constant mention of dialect. Prejudice goes in both ways.
* Religion- people get ill
* Westernization- Fuat, picks and chooses things that suit his economic drive to get to Germany. Eg. Materialistic objects.
* Migrants don’t intend to stay in Germany, yet they stay. Permanence is almost accidental. Material disparity. Become more enmeshed in society. Children become comfortable. Memories of previous land become more forgotten as they adopt into their new society.

Group B

* Feminist representation- how the children end up.
* Melike- happy with life she made for-self. In contrast to Gul.
* Sibel doesn’t have kids
* Plurality of female trajectory.
* Self -suppression of Gul. Critique against feminism.
* Not condemned by author due to her being unhappy.
* Social conditioning, own personal choice, family expectations.
* Historical contextualization- in a period of change makes it hard to draw.
* Historically no expectation of female emancipation.
* Signs of enlightenment in Timur, quite open, gives choice to her marriage.
* Virginity increases ‘value’ in society.
* Marriage as a marketplace