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Plenary Lecture

Literature's Hostipitable Marginality

I am not only drawn to stories but also to silences. My first instinct as a storyteller is to dig into 'the periphery' rather than 'the center' and focus my attention on the marginalized, underserved, disenfranchised and censored voices. Taboos too, including political, cultural, gender taboos. There is a part of me that wants to understand, at any moment in time, where in a society the silent letters are hidden.

—Elif Shafak¹

Literature allows us access to imaginary exclusively exclusionary geographies of thoughts that are most of the time plastic, hospitable, fluid, and even hostile. The crafted stories we read might go far beyond the margins, trespass the borders of our imagination, enchant us as readers, take us into outer bubbles by transforming realities, compelling us to dream, see sight, and envision possibilities. Literature speaks for the marginalized, as it is itself a marginalized discipline. It represents indeed a hostile hospitable third space that denounces, deranges, destabilizes, as it acts as a receptacle and depository that preserves history and instigates change.

This paper will examine the plastic/fluid role of literature in shaping/changing minds, impacting lives, and transfiguring history. It will rely on Derrida's concept of hostipitality to highlight the (non) innocent motives of writing and the danger of penetrating geographies of exclusion through poetics of denunciation. It will also resort to Malabou's plasticity theory to underline the double-entendre of language in any work of fiction, and the possibilities generated by the elasticity of stories and meanings. The article will also discuss how marginalized literature speaks for the margin, empowers marginals, but also might sometimes lead to marginalizing the author (by means of censorship) and even the reader (by means of exclusion).

¹ Shafak, Elif. *How to Stay Sane in an Age of Division*. Wellcome Collection, 2020, pp. 14-15.