ACTO DE DEFENSA DE LA TESIS DOCTORAL DE LA INVESTIGADORA DOÑA JENNIFER ESTÉVEZ YANES

9 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2022 A LAS 12:30 DE LA MAÑANA EN EL AULA DE AUDIOVISUALES DE LA FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA.

DEPARTAMENTO DE INGLESA Y ALEMANA DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE LA LAGUNA.

LA DOCTORANDA PROCEDERÁ AL ACTO DE DEFENSA de su tesis doctoral titulada (40-45 m., no exceder los 60m):

***Resisting Vulnerabilities: Hospitality and Postmemory in North American Migrant Narratives***

***SPACE-GAZE-LANGUAGE-PARENTING THE PARENT-HAUNTING***

1.- In the 21C. all over the world postcolonial writers have reconsidered the terminology for their migrant status rejecting the term exile/embracing rootlessness, admitting that they have become writers because of migrancy. Writing has given them the agency to become political.

The concept of SPACE and its evolution after Homi Bhabha’s Third Space is crucial in your work. This unbelonging to the homeland that we see in the characters of Gogol, Niloo also appear in many other Asian or South Asian protagonists. They go beyond heteropathic identification, they need a sort of affiliation and overcome what Aritha Van Herk calls narratives of ‘traumatage’ (the sense of loss and anxiety that we see in the 20th C diasporic novels).

It is important that you have chosen narratives that reimagine the sense of space and a new chronotope (Spivak). A new perimeter, a new movable *homeSpace*. A model to resist and dissent, and which is resignified after 9/11, a turning point to reconfigure identity in North American narratives.

You mention the concept of planetarity once ot twice, but the result of your research is clear: Planetary affiliation to be able to represent, project, create, and have the agency to change lives (p. 43). Not only Spivak but also Achille Mbembe and Braidotti’s Posthuman Feminism are very helpful to develop this idea.

The gaze has also changed in spatial terms, it has become political and movable. As hospitality has failed we need to recreate a new *homeSpace* and reconciliate with the concept of unbelonging. In the 21st Century, it is not enough to recognize, to admit responsibilities. The gaze has changed from mere recognition to a demand for validation.

But we cannot ignore other perspectives and disciplines that are not present in the Humanities and Social Sciences which recognise vulnerability as part of identity and culture. The new gaze should be interdisciplinary with other sciences regarding mental health, psychology and so on.

Susan Sontag’s *On Photography* in the 1970s also changed our gaze, creating a new philosophical space to be able to respond. I also consider the resurgence of graphic novels and artistic installations the best sources to leave traces and reenact our response-ability and resistance, not only as an object of identification or even recognition. It is necessary to move beyond mourning and grief towards anger, defiance and complaint.

2.- All thoughout the text there is a conscious demand to analyse what Sianne Ngai terms Ugly feelings. The interpellation which is made on Hate, Shame, Blame, Animatedness is important while these narrators are ‘Knocking at the Door’ in need for answers. Yes, we have to open the door. To be able to respond, not only to be responsive and receptive, but to admit interdependency. These ugly feelings seem to be necessary to move forward instead of moving sideways, to assume shame and blame, which contributes to the mobilisation of trauma, that is, of affects as we have learnt from Sara Ahmed.

3.- I have missed a development of the concepts of resilience and insurgency as opposing strategies. I would say that the neoliberal assumption of adaptation that you introduce on page 25 needs a more convincing and radical feminist approach when you analyse the characters of Niloo, Gogol, Gail or Adele’s younger son and their progressive resilience. Also one of the most important questions to be analysed in the novels is the second generations’s role of “parenting the parent”, so, *do you think they have failed to address this issue of ethical responsibility and resilience towards Ashoke, Bahman, Adele or Mathew?*

4.- I would also like to pay tribute to the critic you mention in your work, Y-Dang Troeung, who died 2 weeks ago, and who kept reimagining vulnerabilities as sites of resistance and agency, resignifying what the novels you analyse aim at--an act of migrant worldbuilding even if the wounds will never disappear.

I recommend you her book *Refugee Lifeworlds* where she approaches issues of trauma, disability and and aphasia reframing questions of international complicity and responsibility in ways that implicate us all. His family memoir of Cambodian refugeeness titled *Landbridg*e will be published in 2023 in Knopf Canada.

5.- Jhumpa Lahiri’s title in 2003 inaugurates the 21st century’s move towards dissent and insurgency through LANGUAGE: the change to the Americanized Nikhil, which reminds me of nihil(ist) and liminal, responds to the ugly feeling shame and hatred generate, recalling Ahmed again, a naming rejection as a defence against injury (p. 63), and as Troeung says, as a prevention mechanism to protect us from injurability.

Names are key in Gogol double displacement, Nikhil is nihilism, nobody, invisible, an unbelonging self, product of a second generation identity after the turning point of 9/11. As in the unnaming of the victims of 9/11only the names on the gravestones will make Gogol find affiliative and planetary worldbuilding and a sense of having a *homeSpace.*

*My question is, do you believe Nikhil’s involvement with the Ratliff’s homespace is genuine to provide definite happiness?*

6.- The recurrent motiv of PARENTING THE PARENT also appears in Dina Nayeri’s Refuge (2017) on decade later. Niloo, is always going to her “father’s house” (despite going to Oklahoma, London, Madrid, Istambul and Amsterdam) trying to fullfil all the promises of happiness. The objective is to find her perimeter- to be ungrateful enough, to have a purpose of happiness other than acculturation. Shame and Fear have made her move sideways instead of forward. Her perimeter is a place of contestation, dissent and even an insurgent utopia (in Larissa Lai’s terms), an imaginary place of safety and resistance. The final social resilience makes you open the door. There is a clear relation to other refugee novels such as Sharon Bala’s *The Boat People*, published a year later, Karim being similar to Mahindan (p. 148)

*Can you explain the concept of melancholic migrant that Niloo represents for you even if she rediscovers modes of resistance? (p. 116).*

7.- In Madeleine Thien’s Certainty (2006) and David Chariandy’s Soucouyant, the concept of haunting of Mathew’s and Adele’s ghosts are inherited by their children. Gail is again made responsible for the memory traces, parenting the parent to make sense of the story. Gail’s inheritance and death is the evidence of these atrocities. As in Sarah Polley’s movies, the photograph is the right medium to translate the affects and reformulate resistance.

8.- Chariandy, as other Canadians as Selvadurai and Mootoo, put into practice what is called the narrative of the unusual (Alemany 2016, 2019). This is no magic realism as it makes a critique of how contemporary societies are populated by troubled creatures whose experiences of embodiment and corporeality are depicted in terms of lack, trauma, and fear. Aphasia and dementia are recurrent tropes in this “relentless unbecoming” that we see in many narratives of the Americas and the Caribbean. This new Gothic investigates a new chronotope which involves a revision of the notions of cultural identity in the last thirty years. This uncanniness is powerful expression of cultural dissent, it is real, not magical, and it encourages social change” (Sugars & Turcotte, 2009: xv). This way the diasporic subject creates space for alternative ghosts and historical memories to make their presence felt (Sugars, 2011: 70),

The soucouyant represents the historical trauma which haunts subsequent generations” (Coleman 2012, 55). These haunting figures, like the “hungry ghost” or peréthaya (in Selvadurai) or the fukú (Díaz), is the curse that has afflicted the Americas. Adele (as other figures like Beli, Mala or Kumi) are scarred for life.

*Do you think blame and shame are finally transformed and taken to a different space?*

"**The Premise of Happiness: The Function of Feelings in North American Narratives,"**

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**Bioblurb.**

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