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Women's Memory-Work: Gendered Dilemmas of Social Transformation

University of Limerick, Ireland, August 24-26, 2010

The three-day international conference, "Women's Memory-Work: Gendered Dilemmas of Social Transformation," seeks to explore women-centered expressions of historical experience as fertile ground for cultural agency and social transformation in national and transnational socioeconomic and political arenas. Inspired by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, which call for a gender-sensitive implementation of national stability in peacekeeping operations, this conference invites the participation of scholars, activists and artists whose work addresses women's engagement with the public memory of nations emerging from conflict and belonging to the class of "transitioning democracies." At the same time, the conference intends to generate a larger dialogue that includes insights associated with women's production of and participation in public and commemoration rituals in polities that are beyond the "transitioning" phase of democratic development, but which remain entangled in dilemmas of uneven historical and political representation and economic or territorial disparities.

The central questions the conference will be exploring are: What are the politics and ethics of producing and reproducing gendered memory-work? Who can participate? Who is excluded? What are the critical variables of potential alliances? Where do obstacles and limitations lie? In what ways might we be able to re-read traditional performances of womanhood, associated with upholding conservative social values of kinship and nationhood (among others), so as to reassess their potential participation in a radical politics and ethics of remembering, but also of envisioning future paradigms and material practices? How do women's memories of traumatic repression or dogged dissidence participate in the historical imaginary and political vision of cultural identities and transitioning democracies? What are the challenges we face in building bridges across local gendered activism and international discourses of human rights and law? And how may we insist on the importance of gendered memory-work without re-inscribing the conceptual boundaries we seek to undermine?

This project is funded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Irish Government. As a transnational and multidisciplinary project, the conference aims to cover a
wide range of disciplines -- anthropology, geography, political philosophy, law, history, religion, sociology, psychology, literature, fine arts and cultural studies at large. We welcome proposals for papers in topics that include, but are not limited to: Gendered memory and political and cultural subjectivity; Female consciousness and larger social subalternities (racial, ethnic, sexual, etc.); Women's cultural and political participation in peace processes; Gendered politics and ethics of witnessing and testimony ("traumatic" or otherwise); Women's rights and human rights; Women's self-referential narratives (autobiography, memoir) and memory performance; Women's agency beyond alterity; Gendered labor and ecocriticism; Women and the "war-story" (official or sectarian); Gendered models of reconciliation, forgiveness, healing; Gendered dilemmas of redressing the past, seeking justice/peace; Gender and strategic essentialism.

Confirmed Keynote Speakers: Marjorie Agosín, Professor of Spanish, Wellesley College, USA; Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Professor of Psychology, University of Cape Town, South Africa; Mary L. Keller, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, University of Wyoming, USA; Mary Nash, Professor of Contemporary History, University of Barcelona, Spain. Please submit a 300 word abstract for a 20-minute presentation by April 16, 2010 to womensmemory@ul.ie. All proposals will receive acknowledgement of receipt within a week from the closing date, and a final reply as to the acceptance of the proposal by May 14, 2010. If an abstract is accepted for the conference we request that a full draft paper is made available to the conference committee by July 31, 2010. A selection of papers from the conference will be published. We also welcome thematic panel proposals (maximum 4 speakers). Please submit the abstract or panel proposal with abstracts in Word or RTF formats along with the following information: Name of author; Affiliation; Position; Contact information; 1-page CV; If you have questions about the conference or about submitting a proposal please direct them to Emma Leahy, emma.leahy@ul.ie. Joint organizing chairs: Cinta Ramblado, Lecturer in Spanish, and Yianna Liatsos, Lecturer in English, University of Limerick.