



LAIDLAW UNDERGRADUATE LEADERSHIP AND RESEARCH PROGRAMME
APPLICATION – 2022 COHORT

Name	<i>Mairéad Butler</i>
Programme	<i>European Studies</i>
Year of Study	<i>2nd year</i>
Research Project Title	<i>Women as Survivors of Civil War Violence: A Comparative Study of Ireland and Spain</i>
Proposed Supervisor(s)	<i>Dr Francisco Leira-Castiñeira – Research Group Histagra in Universidade de Santiago de Compostela; UCD Centre for War Studies Dr Catherine Barbour – Trinity Department of Hispanic Studies</i>

Before completing this submission, you should review the [Laidlaw Programme Application Guide](#) and ensure you have included every component requested

Research Project Proposal (1000 words max.)
<p>Introduction</p> <p>The central question of my research project is: what is the personal memory of gendered violence in the Irish and Spanish civil wars, as understood by the women who experienced it? The research will focus on women’s experience and memories of this violence in the Irish civil war (1921-23) and the Spanish civil war (1936-39) and examine how women conceptualised and processed the violence they faced.</p> <p>In the context of both civil wars, and indeed in the history of war at large, women’s voices have to a large extent been silenced, even though they were and continue to be disproportionately affected by wartime violence, as Linda Connolly has studied for Ireland and Adrianna Cases for Spain. This project utilises a transnational historiographical approach, specifically through the novel lens of gender, to gain a greater understanding of the memory of this gendered violence and, crucially, the key themes that link these experiences in Ireland and Spain. Contemporary understandings locate both Ireland and Spain on the periphery of Western Europe, as studied by Kevin O’Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson. The normative gender roles which underpinned this violence against women were informed by the prevailing Catholicism and primarily agrarian economies of both countries at the time. By examining women’s accounts of their experiences, we can gain a broader and more balanced understanding of the societal effects of these civil wars on oppressed communities.</p> <p>This research responds to the current poignant time in Irish and Spanish collective memory, resonating with the ongoing Decade of Centenaries in Ireland, the cultural reckoning with Francoism through the Spanish ‘memory boom’ of the 2000s and recent debates in the</p>



Spanish public sphere concerning memorialisation of the civil war. While the act of remembrance and critical reflection on the past is in the cultural zeitgeist, such a study has not been done before with this comparative, gender-focused approach to memories of violence in these cultural contexts, building on Eunan O’Halpin and my co-supervisor Dr Leira-Castiñeira’s work.

Methodology

The project has three main phases of research enquiry: understanding the context and determining factors of gender-based violence in the Irish and Spanish civil wars during Week 1, empirically studying memories of gender-based violence from Week 2 to 4 and analysing the socio-political and individual consequences of this violence, applying Joan Wallach Scott’s gender and Marianne Hirsch’s memory theory, from Week 5 to 6.

To empirically study this violence and trauma, I will use two case studies which record women’s first-hand personal testimonies of their experience of gender-based violence from both sides of the Irish and Spanish civil wars: two each from the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty sides in the Irish case, and two each from the Republican and Nationalist sides in the Spanish case. To do so, I will use oral and written testimonies, and psychiatric records, utilising the Irish Bureau of Military History archives, psychiatric hospital records from the Irish National Archives, Dr Leira-Castiñeira’s pre-existing oral interviews with Galician survivors of gendered violence, and personal accounts and psychiatric records from the Spanish National Archives.

Many of the archives and sources that I will use are digitised in case online research is necessitated by COVID-19 concerns. Nevertheless, my research will involve a blended approach of working with in-person archives in Ireland, online Spanish archives, and with other digital resources.

The project is related to Dr Leira-Castiñeira’s ongoing research on the Spanish civil war; however, it is distinct in its transnational, specifically gendered approach.

Interdisciplinary and international focus of research

This project is by its very nature interdisciplinary, as it stands at the juncture of history, gender studies, memory and trauma studies, and cultural studies. Therefore, it utilises expertise from different fields to explore memories of gendered violence in an intersectional manner. This is evident by the inherent collaboration between the fields of history and cultural/memory studies within this project’s supervision. Also, the innovative comparative approach to these distinct historical contexts is transnational, analysing historical events outside of the traditional confines of national borders and instead appreciating the inter-connected nature of women’s experience across history.

Research supervisors

I have two co-supervisors: Dr Francisco Leira Castiñeira, a Visiting Fellow in UCD’s Centre for War Studies and a member of the Research Group Histagra at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (USC), and Dr Catherine Barbour, an Assistant Professor in Trinity’s Department of Hispanic Studies. Dr Leira-Castiñeira’s role will be to provide guidance on the historiographical research, facilitate links with relevant researchers and research



groups, and provide access to his primary records from Spain. Dr Barbour’s role will be to provide expertise in gender in twentieth-century Spanish culture, as well as feminist memory and trauma studies.

Collaboration

This project is essentially inter-departmental, inter-institutional, and transnational, as it consists of a trilateral collaboration between Trinity, UCD, and USC. I will work with my supervisors’ own departments, Dr Leira-Castiñeira’s research groups in UCD and Santiago, historians specialising in Ireland and Europe in Trinity’s History Department, and the Trinity Centre for Gender and Women’s Studies.

Outcomes

- This research will contribute to important debates in European historiography about the role of gender-based violence in European civil wars.
- It will facilitate a deeper understanding of the violence against women in these contexts and the psychological, social, and societal impact of this violence through memory and trauma.
- It will add to the existing scholarship, commemorations, and collective remembrance and scrutinising of Irish and Spanish national histories in a global context.

This research will give me invaluable archival, project-management, and research leadership experience as I will co-ordinate the project by selecting relevant case studies through my archival work. It will also enhance my communication and written skills in English and Spanish, and link with my gender equality advocacy and human rights work.

This research will also lay the foundations for my own personal future research, as I plan to expand upon my work during this project in my undergraduate dissertation, with a view to Master’s and potentially PhD study.

Pre-clearance requirements

Not applicable as I will be using historical sources.

Leadership-in-Action experience proposal (500 words max.)

LiA Category	Category C: In-field application of research
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Introduction

My proposed Leadership-in-action experience is to work with the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH) in Spain. The AMRH is a vanguard human rights NGO that has worked since 2000 to bring human rights abuses and repression during the Spanish civil war and under the Francoist dictatorship to light. There are three key elements to the ARMH’s work: exhuming corpses from unmarked graves of victims of repression and violence, archival work with survivors and family members, and bringing these abuses to the forefront of public discourse by promoting greater understanding of these human rights abuses. I have been a great admirer of their work since studying them in my Spanish history module last year. By working with them, I will help to give voice to



those lost to history and the violence of Francoist repression, applying my previous research experience in a practical and worthwhile sense.

Provisional plans for the Leadership-in-action experience

I have contacted the ARMH, and I have provisional support from them for a collaborative project in Summer 2023. For my LiA I want to work with their team to lead and organise a project centred around the experience of women's repression. I will use their archives, my own work during the research project in Summer 1 and conduct oral interviews with survivors and survivors' families to create a research-based awareness campaign to promote greater popular discourse around human rights for women under Franco. This will be a public history campaign which will interact with local and national communities in Spain through podcasts, traditional and new media, and potentially an exhibition. I will also be involved with their exhumation work in the context of this project to gain first-hand experience of such archaeological work.

Why this is important at a personal and wider level

This LiA will follow on from my research in Summer 1, but in a more applied sense, using the knowledge and skills that I have learned to promote human rights and restorative justice. As a Spanish student, working with the ARMH will allow me to utilise the interdisciplinary language and cultural skills that I have learned during my degree, enabling me to develop as a leader and communicator.

History is a living entity and the greater depth of individual experiences that we can add to it, adds not only to our understanding of historical events and their place in modern society, but to our understanding of ourselves. This work will help families and communities to grieve and meaningfully reckon with their past. This idea of ethical, empathetic, and interpersonal leadership is very important to me, as I am interested in pursuing a career in academia and want to explore the intersection of community work with research, particularly in the field of history. I want to expand my conception of what it means to be an academic in the public sphere and to use the project-management and team-working skills that I will gain over the Laidlaw scholarship to inspire positive change.