



Academic Event Report

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Event: Memories Beneath the Skin: A Decolonial Feminist Workshop

Venue: University College Cork

Date: 12th May 2025

Over twenty MA students, PhD students and staff from across University College Cork (UCC) and beyond participated in a decolonial feminist workshop, “Memories Beneath the Skin”, held on 12th May 2025. This event was generously funded by the Society for Italian Studies (SIS) and the Centre for Advanced Studies in Languages and Cultures (CASiLaC). The workshop was conceived by researchers, activists and translators Dr Marie Moïse (John Cabot University, Rome) and Dr Mackda Ghebremariam Tesfau (University of Padua) as part of the project *Decolonising Knowledge: Practices of Anti-Racist Feminism*. It was facilitated by Dr Moïse and organised by Noreen Kane (UCC).

In the first section of the ninety-minute workshop, Dr Moïse led the group through several walking exercises in which participants introduced themselves to different people in ways that disrupted typical power dynamics. For example, in one instance, attendees were tasked with presenting themselves without using any form of the verb ‘to be’. The high percentage of linguists in the room found this task extremely perplexing! In another activity, participants introduced themselves by narrating a story connected to a part of their body. The activities encouraged a sense of vulnerability and mindfulness, and within a short time the atmosphere of the room was transformed.

Participants were then divided into small groups and given literary works by women of colour to read together. The objective of this exercise was to discuss how the texts resonated with and affected attendees. The preceding “embodied” section of the workshop allowed people to shift from an academic, analytical mindset to a more intuitive and experiential one, which resulted in participants being able to engage more deeply with the texts. Emotions such as guilt, shame, sadness, anger, relief, recognition, hope and compassion surfaced. The workshop closed with a circle, in which attendees

were given the opportunity to share their experiences with the group. The breadth of responses and the honesty with which they were expressed was impressive. Over the course of the workshop, participants were taken on quite a profound emotional and relational journey, albeit led with lightness and ease by Dr Moïse.

Feedback following the workshop was excellent and included comments such as: “It was among the best workshops I have ever attended”; “spaces like this are what convince me that I want to stay in academia”; and “this was an incredible event”. This shows the necessity for further collaborative workshops in which one can openly and honestly discuss the challenges of conducting research and teaching on race, gender and coloniality. Hopefully it is a journey that will be continued.

NOREEN KANE has just completed a PhD in the Department of Italian at UCC. Her thesis, entitled “Transgenerational Trauma and the Gendered Body: Postcolonial Women’s Writing in Italy” was funded by Research Ireland and a National University of Ireland Travelling Doctoral Scholarship. She has published articles in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (2024), *Quaderni d’italianistica* (2025), and *Atlantic Studies* (forthcoming). She currently teaches Italian language at UCD and lectures on contemporary Italian women’s writing in UCC.