



## Decade of Centenaries grant report

Recipient name:	Síobhra Aiken
Amount and year awarded:	€10,000 in 2022
Title of project:	Languages of Forgetting: Multilingual Responses to the Irish Civil War (1922-1923)

### Summary of project:

The history of the Irish revolution is generally studied and approached in terms of the English language. This, of course, does not reflect the multilingual landscape of early twentieth century Ireland: large sections of the country were still Irish speaking, areas in the north of the country spoke Ulster Scots, the travelling Mincéir community spoke their own language, while Ireland was home to various immigrant groups including eastern European Jews. Revolutionaries too were often well-versed in languages such as French, German, Spanish and Latin, while writers and translators across Europe, and indeed across the world, were drawn to the contentious events of Ireland's revolutionary period. This project aimed to generate public and academic debate around these events through three separate research activities:

1. A one-day hybrid seminar held in Queen's University Belfast on 24 March 2023. An open call for papers was circulated in November 2022 with a deadline of 10 December 2022. There was a fantastic response and 15 papers were accepted. These included considerations of the Irish revolution in Italy, Argentina, France, Cataluña, Latin America, Germany, Algeria and Russia. The event was publicised widely (including through the Decade of Centenaries newsletter) and generated a strong attendance. A selection of the papers has been chosen for publication as part of a special edition of the Journal of War and Culture Studies (<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/ywac20/current>).
2. A one-day conference on the Irish language and decolonial language practices over the past hundred years. This conference was organised in collaboration with community organisation Glór an Móna and the event was held in a public venue (St. Comgall's on the Fall's Road). This event attracted unprecedented local and national interest. There were nearly 40 responses to the CFP and papers were presented by a range of established academics, early career researchers and community activists. There were almost 100 attendees and the feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. The event was bilingual thanks to simultaneous translation services. Since the event in May, we have launched a research network on the theme of decolonisation and the Irish language. We also hope to publish the proceedings of this conference (and have contacted Foras na Gaeilge for further support with this).
3. A podcast on multilingual legacies of the Irish revolution and civil war. This podcast is currently at the edit stage. The contributors are from a range of academic and linguistic backgrounds.

Episode 1: The problem of Monolingual Histories (Dr John Gallagher, University of Leeds)

Episode 2: Linguistic absences (in the study of Modern Ireland) (Prof. Alan Titley, UCC & Máire McCafferty, UCD)



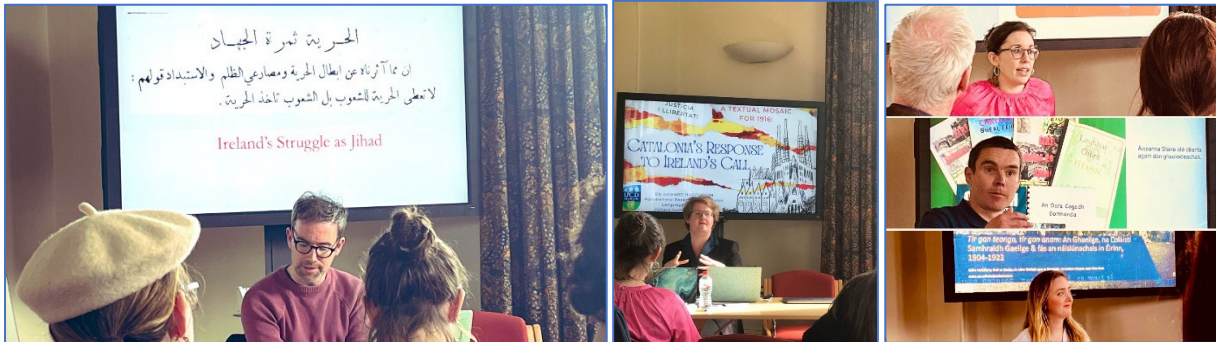
## Decade of Centenaries grant report

Episode 3: Multilingual revolutionaries (Dr Claire Dubois, University of Lille)

Episode 4: Multilingual re-imaginings of Ireland's revolution (Dr Richard Huddleson, UCD and Dr Fergal Lenehan, Jena University)

Episode 5: Radical Histories and Radical Futures (Dr Pádraig Fhia Ó Mathúna, Harvard/UCD)

The podcast will be facilitated through Colm Heatley at QUB. It will be published on various online platforms, including Spotify and SoundCloud. It will also be advertised through a range of platforms (including through a blog post on the RIA website).



### Objectives of the project:

The project's objectives were to explore the connections between language and forgetting. This included addressing questions such as:

- How are the experiences and recollections of non-English speakers occluded from scholarly consideration of the Irish revolution?
- How were these events conceived and reconceived in various languages at home and abroad?
- In an increasingly diverse Ireland, what is the role of local and public historical endeavours in remembering and recuperating this multilingual heritage?

### Methodology used in conducting the research:

I was particularly suited for designing this project as I am a proficient speaker of Irish, French and Spanish (with some knowledge of Russian) and work in the Modern Languages department in Queen's University. The research project thus involved compiling databases of sources and writings (including through research in the National Library of Ireland) in various languages in order to consider the following:

1. How did veterans of the Irish Civil War harness languages other than English in order to address, process and even exorcise their experiences during the conflict?
2. How did the contentious events of the Irish Civil War capture the imagination of writers in other languages internationally? How do these responses to the Civil War differ from representations produced in Ireland?
3. How extensively have writings (to include fiction, autobiography and poetry) regarding the Irish Civil War been translated? What is the appeal of these writings?

In particular, I carried out considerable research on the writings of French novelist Étiennette Beuque who was a disabled female writer from Brittany who corresponded with Irish revolutionaries (mostly in French)



## Decade of Centenaries grant report

and, based on this correspondence, wrote a range of books and novels on Ireland's revolution. I presented this research at the conference in March 2023. However, a solo approach was not enough to engage with these research questions and ultimately this project requires a collaborative approach. Thus, key to the methodology was bringing scholars together from various linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds. It is only through this sort of approach that we can begin to tackle these huge questions and I look forward to presenting some of this research to the public through the academic article and podcast.

### Findings of research and milestones achieved:

The project generated numerous intriguing findings that will form the basis of the number of future publications in both scholarly and public forums. The main milestones were:

1. The one-day international seminar held in Queen's University Belfast in March.
2. The one-day conference on Irish-languages legacies from the revolution held in May 2023.
3. The podcast which is in preparation at present.

There are also future milestones that have not yet been completed:

4. The publication of the special edition journal based on the Multilingual Legacies seminar.
5. The proceedings of the Irish-language legacies conference.
6. A blog post and other public articles (i.e., RTÉ brainstorm) to advertise the podcast.

There were some developments on the initial application:

- I had initially intended to curate an exhibition on the topic. However, I decided instead to host the public conference on Irish-languages legacies from the revolution/decolonisation.
- I initially intended to publish 'a collection of short essays by participants in the seminar'. This has developed into two publications:
  - the special edition of the Journal of War and Culture Studies
  - the edited volume on Irish-language legacies of revolution and decolonisation.

### Dissemination of the project outcomes:

This project was widely publicised online:

#### March seminar:

Information of this seminar was widely circulated online. The CFP was circulated via Twitter and also via Facebook. It was circulated widely among Irish Studies associations (i.e., American Association for Irish Studies, European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies, International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures etc.). It was also circulated through the Decade of Centenaries mailing list and had its own page on the QUB website.

Registrations were open to the public through Eventbrite.

The event also garnered media attention, including an interview about the seminar with Máirín Ní Ghadhra on Raidió na Gaeltachta.



## Decade of Centenaries grant report

### May conference:

The Irish-language conference galvanised a huge interest. It was advertised widely online (Twitter, Facebook), through the Decade of Centenaries newsletter, on the QUB website and through Eventbrite.

The event was also covered by the following media outlets:

- Raidió Fáilte
- Raidió na Life
- BBC Gaeilge (interview with community partner, Órla Nig Oirc)
- Meon Eile
- Northern Visions TV
- Anderstown News
- Irish News

### Published work/plans:

The project has yet to produce published papers. However, some 50 papers were presented on the multilingual legacies of the revolution and ongoing decolonisation. Some of these will be published in the special edition volume of the Journal of War and Culture Studies and the Irish language conference proceedings. These publications will include my own research project on the French writer/novelist Étienne Beuque.

The three main publications emerging from this are:

1. special edition of Journal of War and Culture Studies
2. publication of proceedings of Irish-language conference
3. the podcast (5 episodes)

These are all underway and I look forward to sharing this work with the broader public.

### Lectures given/outreach activities:

Two main research activities (seminar in March 2023, conference in May 2023).

### Media coverage:

Raidió na Gaeltachta, BBC, Anderstown News, Irish News, MeonEile, NorthernVisions TV, Queen's University website, Decade of Centenaries website/newsletter

### Plans for continued communication of the project's results:

This research project is very much still ongoing. I appreciate now just how ambitious this project is and how much further work will be involved to both initiate further research collaborations, bring in local communities and generate further outputs. The podcast has not yet been launched and I think this will offer a fantastic opportunity to engage the essence of the project with the wider public. The launch of the



## Decade of Centenaries grant report

podcast will also coincide with a number of public outputs such as blog posts and public articles such as RTÉ Brainstorm.

### **Plans for furthering the project:**

I was delighted to get an opportunity to undertake this work and I am excited to see it develop in the future. This grant not only enabled me to initiate this exciting project and bring scholars into conversation. It will also be of huge benefit for me going forward as my next step will be to seek further funding with the IRC, AHRC or ERC. I am now fully aware of the scale of this project and of the supports I will require to further develop these conversations and these international and local research collaborations.

### **How the bursary enhanced professional development:**

The bursary offered me a number of key areas to enhance professional development. Firstly, I gained experience organising a hybrid research seminar through the Multilingual Legacies seminar. I also gained experience working with a community collaborator to host the Language and Decolonialism conference.

The newest skill for me was the recording of the podcast. This was not something I ever imagined doing before. Since doing the recordings, I have learnt a huge amount about podcasting (and more importantly, what not to do as a podcast host!) and I look forward to further developing these skills in the future.