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Introduction

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Ireland is amid the "Decade of Centenaries". While the Island has experienced a turbulent history since the landing of the Normans in the twelfth century, arguably no decade changed the fate of Ireland as much as the ten years between 1913 and 1923. These ten years are usually referred to as the Irish Revolution, which was indeed a political revolution, following the social revolution of the late nineteenth century, as some scholars would argue. The Irish Revolution saw a rise of militant trade union and suffragette struggles, the formation of paramilitary organisations on nationalist and unionist sides, and the Proclamation of the Republic. This proclamation was followed by a failed military uprising in 1916, proceeded by a landslide victory of Sinn Féin in the Westminster elections, and the War of Independence, also known as the Anglo-Irish War. This war resulted in the partition of Ireland and the formation of the Freestate, sectarian clashes in Belfast, and a bloody Civil War. Between 1913 and 1923, modern Ireland was founded.

Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies (*SiJIS*) devotes one or two monographic sections to selected topics in the field of Irish studies to each annual issue. Over the past decade, the Irish Revolution has been intensively researched. A vast number of publications, ranging from monographs, edited volumes, collections, and journal special editions, were produced to commemorate the Decade of Centenaries. This is the second *SiJIS* monographic section commemorating these events. In addition, some of the research articles in the miscellanea section as well as book reviews reflected the growing interest in the events of the first two decades of the twentieth century in Ireland. This eleventh issue of *SiJIS* adds to his growing academic and popular interest and includes a section devoted to the centenary of one of the most significant events of the decade – the 1921 truce.

Several other important anniversaries are occurring this year – at the time of writing, Northern Ireland and the partition of the Island turned 100 years, and the 1981 hunger strikes were commemorated. These two events, the partition of Ireland and the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands only weeks after his victory

in the Westminster by-elections, are arguably the two events that shaped modern Ireland like none else. The partition planted the seeds of an ongoing, deadly bloodshed, while the popular movement supporting the hunger strikers laid the foundations of the conflict transformation in the 1990s and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. We decided to devote a special section, particularly to the 1921 truce, because this centenary occurs almost on the same day this issue of *SiJIS* is published electronically.

As one of the first colonies of the British Empire, Ireland fought a War of Independence against its colonial power from January 1919 to July 1921. A direct consequence of this war was that the 26 Counties, the later Republic of Ireland, became independent, and the Island was partitioned. The six north-eastern Counties remained under British control, laying the seed for further unresolved conflict which became a cornerstone of the current Brexit negotiations.

While most of the Island became officially independent from the British centre one hundred years later, there are still vastly divergent interpretations of these ten years and the War of Independence. The height of the Northern Ireland conflict, also called "The Troubles", was, among other factors, characterised by a fierce historical debate over the interpretation of Irish history. This debate between revisionists on the one side, and anti-revisionists on the other side, was only one of many ongoing discussions.

These opposing perspectives on events that shaped the decade of centenaries became recently evident in the commemorations of the War of Independence. On the one hand, the New IRA detonated a car bomb outside Derry Courthouse to commemorate the Soloheadbeg ambush, Co Tipperary, starting the War of Independence on 21 January 1919. On the other hand, the Irish government initially intended to commemorate the colonial police force RIC before tracking back due to public backlash.

We took the conscious decision to issue a broad call for proposals in Spring 2020. We wanted to see how scholars reacted to the 1921 truce. Which topics are currently researched? Which scholarly interest have emerged? Unsurprisingly, we received a wide range of proposals. The editorial board chose to select a smaller number of the proposals, based on their thematical link to the call and their scholarly qualities, and invited the authors to submit articles. A number of these submissions are presented in the following section for our readers. Other submissions that reflected the qualitative standards of *SiJIS* could not be included in this issue for various reasons; yet, they will find entry to the twelfth issue of *SiJIS*.

The thematic range of the papers collected in the following section reflects the open call for research articles linked to the 1921 truce. This eleventh issue of *SiJIS* explores the interpretations of the end of the War of Independence from an interdisciplinary perspective. As a special edition, it provides a smaller overview of various academic approaches and interpretations concerning multiple forms of the War of Independence and its aftermaths from various cultural, national, social, political, religious, pacifist, anti-colonial, and anti-imperialist perspectives.

This special issue starts with an article by Shahriyar Mansouri, Assistant Professor of Modern Irish Literature at the Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, Iran. His multidisciplinary research examines Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry* (1999). The article turns to historical revisionism as reactionary readings channelled through traumatised voices. To this end, concepts such as traumatised memory, especially the shift from episodic to semantic memory and its function in retaining historical memories of national events such as wars and revolutions, are explored. He argues that postmodern revisionist texts are artefacts of a timeless cultural-historic memory scape. In these memory escapes, autistic verbosity and traumatic self-referential memory reciprocate, thereby producing a polyvalent locus that is not only textually attentive to describing details but also contextually multifaceted in crafting a history that simultaneously flirts with fact and fiction.

Cónal Creedon, a celebrated writer and an Adjunct Professor of Creative Writing at the University College Cork, is the author of the second article. His work builds on his experience as part of the centenary celebrations for Frank O'Connor's birth. In 2003, he was commissioned by the Irish National Broadcaster RTÉ to adapt O'Connor's short story "Guests of the Nation" for radio. Creedon explains that his research led him to several real-life incidents that echoed O'Connor's emotionally charged exploration of the tragic consequences of friendships formed between sworn enemies in a time of war. Creedon was later invited by descendants of the IRA unit who had kidnapped and executed Major Compton Smith during the War of Independence to visit the isolated farmhouse in which he had been held hostage. He shares these intriguing experiences with us in his article.

Author of the critically acclaimed book *Inventing the Myth* (2017), Connal Parr, a Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University, has arguably provided one of the most interesting and original contributions to the historiography of Northern Ireland in recent years. In this article, he turns to the emergence of the Northern Irish state. He investigates the "Rotten Prods" through an archival and historiographical survey of the shipyard expulsions of the summer of 1920. The historical background to the "insult" is discussed, as is racial violence in British cities and industrial unrest in 1919. It charts the development of the original Home Rule-supporting Protestants to the more radical, working-class "Rotten Prods" of a later era. It assesses three exemplars of the tradition: Belfast Labour counsellor James Baird (who was expelled from the shipyards in 1920), the Communist Party of Ireland's Betty Sinclair, and trade unionist Joe Law.

The fourth article is contributed by emerging scholar Armin Langer from Humboldt University in Berlin. In light of increasing antisemitism and assimilationism at the turn of the twentieth century, as he explains, a growing number of American Jews discovered Zionism as a tool of resistance. One of these was Boston lawyer and later Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, a prominent supporter of Zionism in the US. In his original approach to Brandeis, Langer retells the inspiration from non-Jewish independence movements on early Zionism. Brandeis repeatedly referred to the Irish nationalist movement and offered the Irish experience as a model for Jews to realise their dream of an independent Jewish nation in Palestine. Langer's contribution is a particularly timely article. 75 years ago, on 22 July 1945, the Zionist Stern group bombed the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing almost 100 people, including most of the members of the British colonial administration in Mandate Palestine. As the late US academic J. Bowyer Bell demonstrated, the Zionist terror campaign that led to the formation of the modern state of Israel was heavily influenced by the anti-colonial struggle of the Irish Republican Army against the British Empire. Langer shows that the Zionist interest stretched back several decades. As such, his article is an essential contribution to our understanding of transnational radicalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.