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In search of Ukrainian Studies within Slavonic philology and other courses offered by Irish universities in the context of the Russian invasion of 24 February 2022

Abstract. The aim of this article is to examine the status of Ukrainian studies (predominantly literary studies, linguistic studies, cultural studies) within the teaching and research practices as regards Slavonic Studies and other academic fields in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The questions posed concern what study programmes and academic activities that Irish universities can offer to develop Ukrainian Studies, within Slavonic Studies and other disciplines, following the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. As the initial research on selected aspects of Slavonic Studies, with the focus on literary studies, was conducted in 2019, comparisons can be drawn as to the possible changes in the curricula, concerning the period before (2019) and after the Russian invasion (2023).

Keywords: Slavonic studies in Ireland; literature and literary studies; war in Ukraine; Russian invasion.

Originally, the research conducted and developed in this article was supposed to describe the status of Slavonic Studies in Ireland with a special empha-

sis placed on the tertiary educational context. The aim was to examine the place of literary research. However, bearing in mind the Russian aggression on Ukraine begun on 24 February 2022, the present authors decided to develop the initial discussion towards the possible changes observed in Slavonic Studies in Ireland following this invasion. Such alterations will predominantly be sought in terms of cultural, linguistic (applied) and literary research; yet, as will be demonstrated, changes in other fields are equally important.

The aim of the essay is thus to show the results of the analysis of the educational status of literary studies primarily conducted within the BA and MA programmes in Slavonic Studies offered by Irish and Northern Irish universities and other tertiary-education institutions, and bearing in mind the expected changes concerning the inclusion of Ukrainian issues following the Russian invasion. The overriding problem to be addressed concerns the presence of Ukrainian study programmes, modules or academic activities related to the nation and society whose members, as war victims, have experienced a significant migratory movement and constitute the growing community of non-Irish inhabitants living in Ireland. The predominant problem is whether such institutions incorporate Ukrainian Studies into their curricula and course syllabi and whether the programmes available include more focus on Ukraine within teaching other Slavonic cultures, for example Polish or Russian literature or history.

The questions posed in this article will concern the possible alterations within programme modules and the courses offered as well as new aspects addressed by scholarly organisations for the promotion of Slavonic Studies in Ireland in the war period. The article will be a comparative discursive analysis of these issues (for a different discursive analysis related to the Ukraine-Russia conflicts prior to the war, see, for example, Lokot, 2017). The methodology applied here includes the descriptive background of the history of Slavonic Studies in Ireland, the confrontative element with a special emphasis placed on the focus of Slavonic Studies from the perspective of inclusion of literary and cultural Ukrainian elements. It will include a comparison of the situation prior to the war in Ukraine in 2019 and in the inter-war period in 2023, and the revisioning aspect of examining Slavonic Studies in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The major methodology comprised the analysis of selected findings via use of search tools available on the websites of particular universities to find entries on “Slavonic Studies” and “Ukraine.”

1. Slavonic Studies in teaching: in search of Ukrainian focus

Already in 2013, M. Wheeler and C. Opitz sadly commented that out of many educational initiatives set up to promote Slavonic cultures, languages and literatures, Trinity College stood as the only remaining academic unit offering Slavistics. And both in 2021 and in 2023 the same can be said as true as the centre organised at Trinity College Dublin stands as the only unit specialising in Slavonic Studies in Ireland (cf. Wheeler & Opitz, 2013). The University thus boasts about its offer on the website:

Trinity College is the only centre of Russian and Slavonic Studies in Ireland. Staff in the Department have areas of expertise in the languages and cultures of Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russian) (Russian & Slavonic Studies, 2019; 2023).

The information quoted is of overriding importance because it contains an explicit statement that no other academic institution in Ireland offers programmes in Slavonic Studies, which seems to serve as a confirmation of the observation made earlier (in 2013) by Marcus Wheeler and Conny Opitz and concerning the demise of Slavonic-studies institutions with the only survival of the centre at Trinity College at the beginning of the twentieth-first century (see Wheeler & Opitz, 2013). Still, the two scholars mention researchers specialising in Slavonic Studies and representing other academic units – and the Trinity website itself utilises the word “centre,” which might imply that, maybe, there are some smaller units giving lectures or tutorials in selected aspects of Slavonic Studies, perhaps within the curricula of other programmes (for example European history, politics or culture) (Russian & Slavonic Studies, 2019; 2023). Yet, as the Trinity offer is the crucial one, it will be subject to an examination, specifically from the perspective of the presence (or absence) of Ukrainian Studies there. The title of the programme bears some hierarchical significance. The division into “Russian” and “Slavonic” implies that the former is not explicitly treated as belonging to the latter and that the predominant perspective would be that of “Russian,” too, eclipsing somehow other Slavonic languages, cultures and literatures, particularly Ukrainian. Still, in the brackets, examples of Slavonic states are enumerated, and Russia is situated at the very end of the list, which now appears to show some incoherence in relation to the title of the programme, but, as a matter

of fact, this can be explained with the procedure to present the countries in alphabetic order.

Furthermore, when comparing the content of the website between 2019 and 2023, one can find out that the significance of Russian language and culture in the programme stems from the historical dimension of this field taught at Trinity College: “The Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies has been teaching Russian to undergraduates since the early 1950s. During the 1980s we started offering Evening and Short Courses to provide for the growing interest among Dubliners in learning Russian. We have since added a number of other languages to our offerings: we provide classes in Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech and Polish” (<https://www.tcd.ie/Russian/courses/evening-courses/>). This information is no longer available in 2023: there are interactive buttons with links to individual languages, and with Ukrainian included. Still, the passage quoted above, if no longer available, is worth taking a closer look at: it suggests that in 2019 the target group of the programme comprised Dubliners and although the Dublin community is represented by multiple ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, including Slavs, the common association with the word Dubliner is still an Irish person born there and living there all his or her life. Thus, the programme targeted Irish people interested in Slavonic Studies and in the Russian language in particular.

In one of the sections of the website, describing the undergraduate programme, one can read that students will not only learn a Slavonic language, which proves that the course has been created for candidates of non-Slavic backgrounds, but they will also have the opportunity to become acquainted with Slavonic literature and culture: “the Department teaches degree programmes on Russian and Polish language, literature, history, cultural history and contemporary society” (Russian and Slavonic Programmes, 2019; 2023). This description was present in 2019 and is still available in 2023. It may be the evidence for the unchanged focus of the study core, Russian or Polish, and the extracurricular inclusion of Ukrainian, on offer among “extra-mural and cultural activities” (Russian and Slavonic programmes, 2023). Thus, the Polish-Russian focus, in terms of the first component at least, illustrates the importance of Russian Studies, along with Polish Studies, with new curricular possibilities within Ukrainian Studies to be yet developed.

Russian and Polish directions of Slavonic Studies are enumerated only in the case of BA programmes. In terms of MA courses, such distinction is

blurred: “The department contributes to the range of MPhils offered in the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies” (Russian and Slavonic programmes, 2019; 2023). Such a general description was available in 2019 and can still be found in its original form in 2023. However, alterations can be noticed when comparing the offer within extramural modules. The description of the extramural programmes, when consulted in 2019, made the status of states and their cultural traditions within Slavonic Studies equal: “The Department offers Evening and Short Courses on the languages and cultures of Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Russia)”; still, this was followed by the information that “The Department also provides the opportunity for learners of Russian to present for a Test of Russian as a Foreign Language (TORFL) [...] validated by the Russian Ministry of Education” (Russian and Slavonic Programmes, 2019). The courses thus presented covered different cultural and literary Slavic traditions; yet, in terms of the language aspect, priority was given to Russian, which might have stemmed from interest shared by non-Slavic students and potential labour market demands then. As to the content available in 2023, the list of languages in the first part was supplied with Ukrainian, and the information regarding the TORFL test has been deleted (Russian and Slavonic programmes, 2023), which implies that taking this specific proficiency test in Russian might not be available now.

In 2023, modules in the Ukrainian language are offered on a regular basis alongside short-term courses in Polish, Russian, Bulgarian, Croatian. The course is thus described: “Ukraine is second largest country in Europe with a rich cultural and historic heritage, it has captured attention of the world in recent history and current times. Ukrainian language is native tongue to over 50 mln people worldwide, and has a strong and growing identity” (Ukrainian evening and short course, 2023) and three level-based groups are available. Bearing in mind the current political situation and the war in Ukraine, it may be obvious what is meant by mentioning that Ukraine “has captured attention of the world in recent history and current times.” The authors might mean the events leading to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2023 along with the ensuing war itself. On the other hand, the description conveys these senses in a rather indirect way. Still, it is the only descriptive passage available on the website and no information at all concerning the language and the culture of the speakers is given in the case of the remaining languages (see, e.g., Polish evening and short courses), which

gives the status of the Ukrainian language some extra focus. The date of the update is 28 June 2023 and thus, as this description might have appeared after the outbreak of the war, the text can be treated as an indication of the increasing awareness of the necessity to give Slavonic Studies a more Ukraine-oriented profile.

When comparing the educational contexts of Slavonic Studies of Trinity College between 2019 and 2023, one can discern a gradual shift in focus from Russian Studies to more linguistic variety and the inclusion of Ukrainian, which still does not stand as the curricular core. One should also take note of other Ukrainian-based initiatives hosted by Trinity College among other departments and different units. Already in 2018 there was an exhibition shown in Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute. The curator, Orysia Kulick, displayed the exhibition titled “War and revolution: framing 100 years of cultural opposition in Ukraine.” Part of the description of the event thus reads:

The last century of Ukrainian history has been shaped by war, revolution and the struggle for statehood. The Russian Revolution of 1917 swept away the Romanov dynasty, unleashing five years of social upheaval in the south-western borderlands. The Euromaidan Revolution of 2014 precipitated Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in the Donbass. The decades in between saw civil war, famine, the Stalinist purges, mass repression and surveillance, as well as attempts by Soviet Ukrainians to reform and humanise socialism from within. (War and revolution: framing 100 years of cultural opposition in Ukraine, 2018)

The exhibition features major landmarks of recent Ukrainian history and helps develop the awareness, among members of the university community, of the problems it has undergone. Trinity College also reacted towards the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Its statement, “Trinity condemns the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and stands in solidarity with the Ukrainian people at this most difficult time,” has been issued in both English and Ukrainian (with elements in the Irish language, too) (Trinity response to the invasion of Ukraine, 2022).

Dublin also hosts other world-known universities, namely University College Dublin and Dublin City University. Even though neither of them has introduced Slavonic and, specifically, Ukrainian studies within the scope of the programmes offered, they both support Ukrainians through academic

and scientific initiatives. DCU posted the statement made by its president, Daire Keogh, on X (Twitter): “DCU colleagues and students from Ukraine and the broader region are suffering unimaginable anxiety due to the Russian government’s invasion of Ukraine and DCU condemns this unjustifiable aggression” (DCU statement on invasion of Ukraine, 2022). This statement is explicitly critical of the aggression and points to the responsibility of the Russian government (not people); yet, what is worth noting is that it realises its impact on both Ukrainian and Russian students and lecturers: “We would also like to reach out to all of our staff and students from Ukraine and Russia at this very difficult time recognising that their families and friends may be directly impacted by the conflict” and DCU ensures its assistance to them (DCU statement on invasion of Ukraine, 2022).

In addition, in March 2022 its Brexit Institution organised “a virtual event to discuss the war in Ukraine and the future of the EU” to address “the implications of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on the future of EU integration and security” (The War in Ukraine and the future of the EU, 2022). The participants included European specialists as well as national governmental and EU officials (The War in Ukraine and the future of the EU, 2022). More significantly, in November 2022, Dublin City University welcomed the online address of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at its Helix centre. The President expressed its gratitude for “the incredible warmth you have given our people,” 63,000, and commented on the Irish positive neutrality: “The Irish Government and society have helped Ukraine in many ways and while Ireland has a neutral status you are absolutely not neutral in your attitude and assistance to the Ukrainian people” (President Zelenskyy addresses Irish students at The Helix in DCU, 2022). The development of such supportive and collaborative events might be an early step to foster interest in Ukraine and Ukraine Studies and to consider the inclusion of some aspects of Ukrainian culture, literature, within university curricula.

University College Dublin is involved in cultural activities promoting Ukrainian culture, at the same time providing direct help; for example, via fundraising. In April 2023 the university choir, accompanied by members of other activists, organised a concert to collect money: “This is our opportunity as a UCD community to support this great initiative. The UCD Community Choir and guests are performing a concert to raise funds to send much needed medical support so more lives can be saved” (Concert in support of Saving Lives in Ukraine, 2023). The help offered by UCD extends

greatly beyond academic activities: “The UCD Centre for Emergency Medical Science has already trained 30 paramedics in Ukraine to deliver life-saving treatment using TXA (tranexamic acid)” (Concert in support of Saving Lives in Ukraine, 2023). Again, developing some elements of Ukrainian Studies within course modules might be welcome, if not necessary in the near future.

Cork and Galway have their universities, too, and we would deem it essential to check whether there are any elements of Slavonic Studies, particularly Ukrainian aspects, at tertiary level as part of other study programmes, bearing in mind the international awareness of the injustices befalling the Ukrainians and their country. Cork has been one of the common destinations of Slavic immigrants in the Irish Republic. Still, University College Cork does not offer any studies in Slavonic languages (2023) although it boasts a programme in foreign languages: “The BA World Languages is a four-year specialist language programme, including a year of study abroad and, in most of the languages offered, Computer-Assisted Language Learning to complement traditional teaching” (World languages, 2019; 2023). The description, available both in 2019 and 2023, mentions Latin and focuses on languages spoken in both Europe and other parts of the world. Yet Polish, Russian or Ukrainian are not mentioned, and teaching those languages might be necessary bearing in mind the Slavonic immigrant communities living in Cork. Particularly, the Ukrainian language has not entered the list of languages offered, by 2023. However, similar to other universities across Ireland, University College Cork has introduced a special policy aimed at Ukrainian candidates and concerning financial support (for details, see 2023–24 fees information for Ukrainian students, 2023). The authorities of University College Cork issued their statement following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and has adopted “a focus on supporting these new members of our communities, working together with local government, public sector agencies, and NGO’s for joined up approaches locally, regionally and nationally” (UCC Ukraine response, 2022). This statement is accompanied by UCC President’s words of support, not only for Ukrainians but also for other displaced individuals (see Message from the President, 2022).

A similar situation apparently occurs at University of Galway (National University of Ireland in Galway). Its BA programmes include “Global languages,” thus defined:

This innovative and highly flexible Languages degree allows you to study two languages, with the possibility of taking another language at Beginner's Level in the First year. Linguistics, Translation Studies and Media are embedded at all levels of the programme. Literature and culture modules will be available for those students who wish to pursue a teaching career so that they will fulfil the requirements of the Teaching Council. (Bachelor of Art (Global languages), 2019)

Yet the profile only mentions Chinese and Latin. Still, the university offers an MA module called "Advanced Language Skills" in which specific languages are mentioned, and this programme has the same description when comparing its versions from 2019 and 2023:

This master's programme provides advanced linguistic and technical training to prepare you for work as a linguist. There is a growing demand for such specialised services. You will develop your language skills to a high level and gain experience in the area of translation technology. You will acquire a high level of communication skills in your chosen language speciality of French, German, Italian or Spanish. (MA (advanced language skills [French, German, Italian or Spanish]), 2019; 2023)

This passage implies that the interest in Slavonic, particularly Ukrainian, Studies is yet to develop and the necessity to include those course might only become necessary in the near future. This necessity might be a consequence of the already taken initiatives aimed at helping Ukrainian students and showing support in the period of the Russian invasion and afterwards (see, for example, University statements, 2022).

In this essay, we have decided to include the situation of Northern Ireland, too. Wheeler and Opitz mention Queen's University in Belfast as regards there being a Slavonic Studies unit in the past (see 2013) and the situation in Northern Ireland is worth commenting upon as to the status of Ukrainian Studies within Slavonic Studies and other fields. However, primarily, the background of Slavonic Studies at Queen's University Belfast can be examined with reference to the very figure of Wheeler, the already-mentioned predominant scholar associated with the ISA, the major organisation in Ireland set up to foster Slavonic Studies (see www.iarcees.org; details of this association will be presented in the next section). One can find the following description published after his recent death:

In 1967 he moved to Belfast and became the first Professor of Slavonic studies at Queen's University.

He was also co-founder of a cross-community group – the Irish Association for Russian, Central and East European Studies – which is now based at Trinity College Dublin.

In 1972 he wrote the first *Oxford Russian-English Dictionary* – the first to be published outside Russia – and over the years he continued to update the work.

Prof. Wheeler officially retired from Queen's University in 1993 after 25 years but was frequently consulted by academics and delivered papers at conferences around the world. (McConville, 2020)

It transpires that the university boasted a unit specialising in Slavonic Studies and the contribution of its staff member, the creation of the first *Oxford Russian-English* dictionary, is definitely a most impressive outcome of the research work conducted there. However, the department has apparently been recently restructured and incorporated into School of Arts, English and Languages, as the Slavonic Studies unit seems not to exist. Still, the very history of how the department functioned in the past is worth noting – as can be argued on the basis of “An Attempt to Create a Chair of Russian Language, Literature and History at Queen's University of Belfast” by Pavel Tribunskii. As can be read in the English abstract of the article in Russian, the endeavours “to create a chair of Russian language, literature and history at Queen's University of Belfast is examined in the context of Russian-British relations during the First World War and the revolutionary events in Russia, and also as an episode in the development of the teaching of modern languages in universities in the United Kingdom” (Tribunskii, 2016). At least, in the name of that unit, literature and literary research were deservedly granted the titular status along with linguistics and history (and not necessarily culture); thus, the original focus was not only on Russian language and linguistics.

How does the Slavonic Studies function now at Queen's University Belfast? The possible aspects of this study direction were not included in the 2019 research; yet, as for 2023 it follows universities in the Republic and offers courses in the Russian language, two-level 10-week modules. These are not extensively advertised and only matter-of-fact information is given (Russian courses, 2023). The university also pursues the policy of welcoming po-

tential students from Ukraine; yet, it does not yet offer any Ukrainian Studies courses or nodules (Ukraine, 2023).

2. Slavonic Studies: in search of Ukrainian focus in research initiatives

In Ireland, there is an organisation whose task is to promote the field of Slavonic Studies, and the content from its website, <https://www.iarcees.org/>, contributed by Wheeler and Opitz (2013), has been used to report on some of the issues presented in the previous section and is going to be used in this section, too. The description of the origins of this organisation points to the fact that it has been present in Ireland for nearly five decades, which transpires at the beginning of the account of its earliest functioning:

The decision to set up an Irish Slavists' Association (renamed in 1995 Irish Association for Russian & East European Studies, and in 2007 to Irish Association for Russian, Central & East European Studies) was taken in 1975 by a meeting of a small group of teachers of Russian held at Ballymascanlon Hotel, Co. Louth. A Constitution was adopted which provided for the holding of annual conferences [...].

It was also agreed to produce an annual journal (*Irish Slavonic Studies*) which should publish, in addition to articles and book reviews within the general Russian and Slavonic field, items relating specifically to Irish-Russian historical and cultural links. (Wheeler & Opitz, 2013)

The description of the endeavour, partly quoted above, points to various fields of Slavonic Studies developed, and to have been developed, in Ireland. The description of the history of the association suggests the popularity of Russian in the past and points to the units offering Slavonic programmes:

At the time of the setting up ISA, the auguries appeared good. Departments (or units) of Russian Language & Literature and/or Slavonic Studies were operating at Trinity College Dublin, Queen's University Belfast, the New University of Ulster at Coleraine and – a bold new initiative – at the National Institute for Higher Education (now The University) at Limerick. In addition, there were individual scholars and teachers in the field of Russian History, Soviet Politics and Society and Slavonic linguistics working in these institu-

tions and also in University College Dublin, while, in Northern Ireland, five or six grammar schools offered Russian. (Wheeler & Opitz, 2013)

This quotation points to the discipline of Slavonic Studies being highly developed in Ireland. However, in the consecutive parts, it becomes clear that the description refers to the past, and the present seems more dismal: “Regrettably, during the period 1982–2002, three of the Association’s institutional bastions – at Belfast, Coleraine and Limerick – ceased functioning, leaving Trinity College Dublin as the only third-level institution in Ireland with an autonomous Department of Russian (also offering Polish). Happily, this centre has grown and prospered” (Wheeler & Opitz, 2013). Thus, the information given on the website of the Trinity College Slavonic Studies programme confirms its status already established in 2013 by Wheeler and Opitz. However, as regards its “prosperity,” it can be referred to its contribution to the study of Russian and Polish and the development of knowledge about Russian and Polish cultures, with literature being rather overshadowed by this cultural and (applied) linguistic focus.

There is some potential within Slavonic Studies in Ireland transpiring from the updated information on the history of the organisation: “although the supply of students of Russian from schools has largely dried up, the number of committed members of the Association - including a number from outside Ireland - has remained stable [...]. Dedicated individual members have appeared not only in the traditional centres but also in Derry, Cork and Galway where the 2002, 2003 and 2004 IAREES Annual Conferences were held” (Wheeler & Opitz, 2013). Wheeler and Opitz also express their necessity and “hope” to “adapt” and develop interest in Slavonic Studies following the entry of new Slavonic states into the European Union and massive migration of people from there to Ireland.

As far as the inclusion of Ukrainian research directions are concerned, if the teaching situation of Slavonic Studies within tertiary education in Ireland does not display the focal treatment of Ukrainian Studies, in the realm of academic activity this situation is different, as manifested through the dedication of IARCEES, the inheritor of the original ISA. This organisation has issued an official statement condemning the war in Ukraine and the statement thus reads:

We, the committee of the Irish Association for Russian, Central, and East European Studies, scholars of diverse backgrounds and disciplinary in-

terests, condemn with one voice this morning's military assault against Ukraine. And we unequivocally offer our support and solidarity to all those in Ukraine and elsewhere suffering as a result of this aggression. We are deeply concerned about the human consequences of this military action, consequences which, we fear, will be grave and long-lasting. We can find no explanation – much less justification – for the invasion in the reasons given by the Russian government. It is an assault on the safety and well-being of the Ukrainian people and a basic denial of the Ukrainian state's sovereignty and democratic existence. (Statement on the war in Ukraine, 2023)

Issuing such a statement is also a common policy of Irish universities. However, the IARCEES has also promoted a number of scholarly activities aiming at presenting, criticising and explaining the possible reasons behind the military conflicts, with the war in Ukraine being at the frontline, as listed on its website along with the declaration quoted above (www.iarcees.org).

In October 2022 National University of Galway hosted a symposium called “Ukraine: empire, war and migration” (IARCEES, Recent events, 2022). When one follows the link included on the IARCEES website, they can find the detailed programme. This event featured presentations by researchers representing such academic institutions as National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy (Taras Kuzio), National Pedagogical Academy of Ukraine (Halyna Klimchuk), Irish scholars affiliated with National University of Ireland in Galway (for example Róisín Healy) and Dublin City University (e.g. Donnacha Ó Beacháin), who sought to give concerted explanations and contexts of the current conflict, including such themes as factual and discursive circumstances of the war, the conflict-related migrations and various forms of implicit and explicit opposition, as well as conclusions as to how avoid such massive conflicts experienced by civilians, as exemplified with Donnacha Ó Beacháin's “What have we learned from Russia's war in Ukraine?” (Ukraine: empire, war and migration symposium at University of Galway, 2022). Participants also represented Queen's University Belfast (Liam Kennedy), University College Cork (Andy Bielenberg) and others. It also included a comparative aspect found in the imperial and anti-imperial histories of Ireland and Ukraine – and this thread of discussions was accompanied by the launch of a new book on a comparative dimension of Ukrainian and Irish Postcolonial Studies: *Ireland and Ukraine: Studies in Comparative Imperial and National History*, the volume edited by Stephen Velychenko, Joseph Ruane, and Ludmilla Hrynevych and published in Stutt-

gart in 2022 (Ukraine: empire, war and migration symposium at University of Galway, 2022).

Presentations by key theoreticians of Irish colonial and postcolonial complexity are included in the programme. For instance, Stephen Howe's "Putin's Vision and the Idea of Empire" (the author being affiliated with Bristol University) and Róisín Healy's "Nationalism in Ireland and Western Ukraine before World War I" can be found there, and the latter is one more contribution to the Irish-Ukrainian comparative studies developed within postcolonial thought (Ukraine: empire, war and migration symposium at University of Galway, 2022).

A similar distance between teaching programmes and research activities, possibly subject to become smaller in the future, can also be observed in the case of Queen's University in Belfast. By way of illustration, in June 2023 the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics hosted the collaborative workshop dedicated to the staff from Ukraine and the United Kingdom and entitled "Migration, forced displacement and the politics of loss in Ukraine and beyond." The theme is noteworthy in terms of its inclusive character – the situation in Ukraine is the focal point but the issues covered are not limited to the Ukrainian-Russian conflict only. The workshop is thus described:

The war in Ukraine has had momentous political, social and economic impact at local, national and international levels and is popularly discussed through its connection to issues of loss - human, material, economic, cultural and social – both for the refugees and other affected communities. However, a systematic analysis of 'loss' in this particular context has yet to take place. In this workshop, we understand 'loss' both in its psychosocial readings as a form of mourning and trauma and within a social scientific frame as contested sets of relations and structures of feeling in historical, economic and socio-political processes. (UK-Ukraine twinning initiative workshop, 2023)

As surfaces in this description, the concept of loss is elevated to its metaphorical meanings within individuals and communities and it is associated with experiences of trauma, dislocation and lack. What is also highlighted here is the scientific aspect to accompany more humanistic fields of research.

Queen's University Belfast has also contributed to spreading the knowledge concerning the war through the activities undertaken by Alister Miskimmon, who directs the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and

Politics. In one of the texts published on the university's website, Miskimmon shares his detailed analysis of the circumstances responsible for this conflict and the stance taken is uncompromising in terms of the culprit/victim dichotomy, as he blames Putin's regime and not the Russian people in general: "We are witnessing an immense tragedy unfold since the Russian Federation commenced its war on Ukraine. An unprovoked slaughter of Ukrainians, the mass displacement of Ukrainian citizens and the destabilisation of the Ukrainian state are all resulting from Putin's aggression" (Miskimmon, 2023). He outlines the reasons behind the Russian aggression, comprised within the threat against NATO expanding or Putin's unjustified territorial claims following his belief in the inheritance left after the Soviet Union. Notwithstanding the reasons behind the invasion, Miskimmon shows that other European countries will have to make challenging decisions following both Ukraine's and Russia's futures (Miskimmon, 2023).

To conclude, as for the situation in 2023, the Slavonic Studies programmes offered by Trinity College, still the only university offering such full programmes in the Republic of Ireland, have not significantly changed, or even updated in some cases. However, the descriptions with the focus on promoting Russian culture are yet to be found there. Ukrainian Studies has not entered the teaching plane with its potential within tertiary education; however, Irish universities have been offering support to Ukrainian students and offering studies devoted to their culture, literature and language might be a further step. They have unanimously expressed their condemnation of the invasion of Ukraine in explicit statements.

There appear to be no significant changes in the frameworks and organisation of tertiary education in Ireland when comparing the situation of 2019 and 2023. However, taking into account the appearance of language courses in Ukrainian and the developing interest in Ukraine, its history, culture and society, this situation is bound to change. The teaching staff, often representing other fields of knowledge, have been actively involved in raising the awareness of the impacts of the warfare staged in Ukraine, frequently taking stances and showing support for the Ukrainian people. This is most evidenced by the activities undertaken at University of Ireland in Galway, which was a forum for voicing the Ukrainian war crisis in 2022, and which boasts a group of Ukrainian nationals devoted to their country and supporting it (see *Ukraine: empire, war and migration symposium at University of Galway*, 2022). The scholarly contributions focus predominantly on histori-

cal backgrounds of Russian-Ukrainian relations as compared to Anglo-Irish relations, the Russian imperial quests as impacting the current situation, the sociological issues linked to the war. The theoretical framework which surfaces in these scholarly attempts is that of postcolonial thought. Literary aspects are yet to be developed within this perspective in bringing up the awareness of the Ukrainian situation.

As Wheeler and Opitz (2013) noticed and as confirmed by this research, notwithstanding the major war conflict involving Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, impacting on the world affairs in terms of economy, society, and culture, new major modules in Slavonic Studies are not offered across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and in 2023 Trinity College still remains the only unit offering BA and MA studies. Yet other Irish universities display Slavonic interest in their curricula within other programmes, such as politics, sociology or history, as exemplified by Queen's University Belfast. Finally, Irish universities take part in educational projects wherein study places are offered to Ukrainian students in various fields of knowledge. And even more development can be found in the research outcomes shown during conferences and other scientific and academic events.

We realise that there are other important initiatives and we have not been able to comment upon all significant academic activities (and their outcomes) within Slavonic Studies, particularly Ukrainian Studies, organised across Ireland. The scope of universities included in this research has also been limited and, definitely, noteworthy examples could be added in the case of Maynooth University. However, we believe that the account presented in this article on the basis of the examples selected can facilitate the creation of an image of subtle changes in and beyond such studies there, taking note of the context of the war in Ukraine and the impact it has had.

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