

Resistance by Simon Armitage

Illustration and calligraphy by David Esslemont

Solmentes Press, May 2022

Writing shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Britain's poet laureate Simon Armitage responded to 'what is coming at us in obscene images through the news' with a poem titled 'Resistance', published in *The Guardian* newspaper.

David Esslemont is an artist who makes books. Upon reading Armitage's poem, he felt an immediate empathy, in particular with the poet's repetition of the words "it's war again".

By way of showing solidarity with the people of Ukraine, Esslemont created this illustrated edition of the poem in book form to highlight the awful recurrent and ubiquitous nature of war. It is his hope that the visceral calligraphy and choice of images reflect the unimaginable consequences and folly of war.

The illustrations combine montages of manipulated contemporary and archive photographs with Esslemont's own drawings and images (some taken from his previous books). The calligraphic words are drawn from not only the poem but also a number of other sources – e.g., transcripts of Pathé newsreels, a list of wars spanning two thousand years, Putin's menacing declaration of his mission (written in Russian), the Ukrainian national anthem, news headlines, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speech to the British parliament.

The verse lines echo the closed captions of news reports and follow Simon Armitage's layout of the poem: three-line verses with the second line indented 3 spaces and the third line indented 6 spaces.

Background images and overlaid texts

Front cover, montage: "Digital Sunflower" based on the "Rudbeckia" from *Florilegium Solmentes*, Solmentes Press, 2010 and Russian President Vladimir Putin

- 1 Mathew B. Brady & Alexander Gardner, *Original Photographs Taken on the Battlefields during the Civil War of the United States*, gutenberg.org.
- 2 Jennifer Liao, Arlington Cemetery, familytripguides.com | List of wars, britannica.com.
- 3 Jennifer Liao, Arlington Cemetery, familytripguides.com | "It's war again: a family".
- 4 Montage: Maciek Nabrdalik, "Olena Zhuk with her daughter, Anna, and Ira Slyvkanych with her daughter, Milena, all from Lviv, Ukraine, after crossing the border into Poland, February 28", nytimes.com and Carlos Barria/Reuters, "Residents flee from the town of Irpin, Ukraine, after heavy shelling by Russia destroyed the only escape route used by locals, March 6, 2022", planetcustodian.com | "carries its family out of a pranged house".

- 5 David Esslemont, "Burning weeds", *Pizza from Scratch*, Solmentes Press 2017 | "under a burning thatch".
- 6 "War!", video clip, British Pathé News, 1939, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) | Transcript from British Pathé newsreel, "War!", 1939, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com); "the next scene smacks".
- 7 @syvokon, "Kharkiv-Pasazhyrskyi railway station on Sunday March 6, 2022", [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com) | Transcript from British Pathé newsreel, 1939, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).
- 8 Montage: "Kids screaming, mothers screaming . . .", video clip, 1.18 mins, [nbcnews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com) and Bernat Armangué/AP, "Nigerian students in Ukraine wait at the platform in Lviv railway station, Feb. 27, 2022" [globalcitizen.org](https://www.globalcitizen.org) | "לעולם לא עוד, le'olam lo od, (never again)".
- 9 Ditto | –
- 10 Mykola Tys, passengers on train, [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com) | Transcript from British Pathé newsreel, "War!", 1939, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).
- 11 "It's war again", calligraphy.
- 12 Aris Messinis/afp, "Black smoke rises from a military airport in Chuguyev near Kharkiv on February 24, 2022.", [nypost.com](https://www.nypost.com) | List of wars, [brittanica.com](https://www.brittanica.com).
- 13 Ditto.
- 14 David Esslemont, "Cultivating", *Pizza from Scratch*, Solmentes Press, 2017 | List of wars, [brittanica.com](https://www.brittanica.com).
- 15 Montage: David Esslemont, "Cultivating", *Pizza from Scratch*, Solmentes Press, 2017 and "Tank", Getty images, | List of wars, [brittanica.com](https://www.brittanica.com)
- 16 David Esslemont, "Grasmere 1/3/05 (pen & ink)" | "No man's land"
- 17 David Esslemont, "Grasmere 1/3/05 (pen & ink)" | "No man's land".
- 18 Markus Schreiber/Associated Press, "Refugees wait in a crowd for transportation after fleeing from Ukraine and arriving at the border crossing in Medyka, Poland, on Monday", [pressherald.com](https://www.pressherald.com) | "It's the ceasefire hour: godspeed the columns"
- 19 Ditto | "of winter coats and fur-lined hoods,"
- 20 Chris McGrath/Getty Images Europe, "Residents of Irpin cross a wooden board teetering above rushing waters as two men in military fatigues help", [npr.org](https://www.npr.org) | "the high-wire walk".
- 21 Ditto | "over buckled bridges managing cases and bags, balancing west and east - godspeed."
- 22 "Take these seeds and put them in your pockets so at least sunflowers will grow when you all lie down", video clip, 22 secs, [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com) | List of wars, [brittanica.com](https://www.brittanica.com); "It's war again".
- 23 Montage: David Esslemont, "Soldiers" from *The Folly and wickedness of war*, Solmentes Press, 2004; "digital sunflowers" based on the "Rudbeckia" from *Florilegium Solmentes*, Solmentes Press, 2010 | Vladimir Putin, speech, February 24, 2022 "Теперь несколько важных, очень важных слов для тех, у кого может возникнуть соблазн со стороны вмешаться в происходящие события. Кто бы ни пытался помешать нам, а тем более создавать угрозы для нашей страны, для нашего народа, должны знать, что ответ России будет незамедлительным и приведёт вас к таким последствиям, с которыми вы в своей истории ещё никогда не сталкивались. Мы готовы к любому

развитию событий. Все необходимые в этой связи решения приняты. Надеюсь, что я буду услышан. . . .

Уважаемые соотечественники!

Уверен, что преданные своей стране солдаты и офицеры Вооружённых Сил России профессионально и мужественно исполняют свой долг. Не сомневаюсь, что слаженно и эффективно будут действовать все уровни власти, специалисты, отвечающие за устойчивость нашей экономики, финансовой системы, социальной сферы, руководители наших компаний . . .”, [Kremlin website](#).

(“I would now like to say something very important for those who may be tempted to interfere in these developments from the outside. No matter who tries to stand in our way or all the more so create threats for our country and our people, they must know that Russia will respond immediately, and the consequences will be such as you have never seen in your entire history. No matter how the events unfold, we are ready. All the necessary decisions in this regard have been taken. I hope that my words will be heard.

Dear compatriots,

I am certain that devoted soldiers and officers of Russia’s Armed Forces will perform their duty with professionalism and courage. I have no doubt that the government institutions at all levels and specialists will work effectively to guarantee the stability of our economy, financial system and social wellbeing, and the same applies to corporate executives . . .”), [Kremlin website](#) and “Ukraine’s glory hasn’t perished . . .”, Ukrainian National Anthem.

- 24 Montage: “Doves”, [dove png](#) and Native American mandala based on design by [Frankie Cat](#).
- 25 Ditto.
- 26 Mikoyan Mig 35 (Ukrainian air force decal added), [wallpapersafari.com](#); Esslemont painting [the ghost of Kyiv] | Newspaper and online international news headlines.
- 27 Montage: Esslemont painting and “Soldiers” from *The Folly and wickedness of war*, Solmentes Press, 2004 | “It’s war again”; Newspaper and online international news headlines.
- 28 Montage: David Esslemont drawing and “logo” for Ukrainian air-raid siren app, [Ajax sytems](#) | Extracts from: “Address by the President of Ukraine to the Parliament of the United Kingdom”, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, March 8, 2022, [President of Ukraine](#)
- 29 Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, [official portrait](#) photograph.
- 30 “Digital Sunflower” based on the “Rudbeckia” from *Florilegium Solmentes*, Solmentes Press, 2010.
- 31 Kicking Bear, “The battle of greasy grass” [Little Bighorn], [warhistoryonline.com](#).
- 32 Montage: “Adolf Hitler” photograph, [commons.wikimedia](#) and John Warwick Brook, “British artillery in action” (photograph), [commons.wikimedia](#).

The typefaces used were all created by designers with a connection to Ukraine:

Front cover, title: Bifur – Adolphe Mouron Cassandre (born in Kharkiv), digitized by Richard Kegler

Front cover, author: Arsenal – Andrij Shevchenko, Berdyansk

Poem and colophon: Genau – Aleksey Popovtsev, Kyiv

Production note: Seaside – Andrij Shevchenko, Berdyansk

Edition details

32pp, 13.5 x 8 inches, 32 illustrations, printed inkjet on Canson

This Solmentes Press edition is limited of thirty copies. A percentage of sales will go to Ukraine TrustChain, a 'Chicago-based not-for-profit that delivers humanitarian aid and rides to safety for Ukrainians most in need within the warzone'.

We gratefully acknowledge Simon Armitage for permission to publish "Resistance".

About David Esslemont and Solmentes Press

Solmentes Press is an imprint of artist David Esslemont, from Newcastle upon Tyne in the northeast of England. He currently lives on a farm in northeast Iowa and established his reputation for designing distinctive books at Gwasg Gregynog, the University of Wales' private press. Esslemont has also illustrated Keats, Wordsworth and Lewis Carroll. www.solmentes.com

Resistance

It's war again: a family
carries its family out of a pranged house
under a burning thatch.

The next scene smacks
of archive newsreel: platforms and trains
(never again, never again),

toddlers passed
over heads and shoulders, lifetimes stowed
in luggage racks.

It's war again: unmistakable smoke
the near horizon mistaken
for thick fog. Fingers crossed.

An old blue tractor
tows an armoured tank
into no-man's land.

It's the ceasefire hour: godspeed the columns
of winter coats and fur-lined hoods,
the high-wire walk

over buckled bridges
managing cases and bags,
balancing west and east - godspeed.

It's war again: the woman in black
gives sunflower seeds to the soldier, insists
his marrow will nourish

the national flower. In dreams
let bullets be birds, let cluster bombs
burst into flocks.

False news is news
with the pity
edited out. It's war again:

an air-raid siren can't fully mute
the cathedral bells –
let's call that hope.

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