**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.
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”. 

“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”.

@syvokon, “Kharkiv-Pasazhyrskyi railway station on Sunday March 6, 2022”, [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com) | Transcript from British Pathé newsreel, “War”, 1939, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

Montage: “Kids screaming, mothers screaming . . .”, video clip, 1.18 mins, [nbcnews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com) and Bernat Armangue/AP, “Nigerian students in Ukraine wait at the platform in Lviv railway station, Feb. 27, 2022” [globalcitizen.org](https://www.globalcitizen.org) | “דוע אל םלועל, le’olam lo od, (never again)”.

Ditto | –

Mykola Tys, passengers on train, [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com) | Transcript from British Pathé newsreel, “War”, 1939, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

“It’s war again”, calligraphy.


Ditto.


David Esslemont, “Grasmere 1/3/05 (pen & ink)” | “No man’s land”

David Esslemont, “Grasmere 1/3/05 (pen & ink)” | “No man’s land”.

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://pressherald.com) | “It’s the ceasefire hour: godspeed the columns”

Ditto | “of winter coats and fur-lined hoods;”

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”.

Ditto | “over buckled bridges managing cases and bags, balancing west and east - godspeed.”

“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://theguardian.com) | List of wars, [brittanica.com](https://www.brittanica.com); “It’s war again”.

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 исполнят 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), wallpapertexts.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 systems | 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.
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
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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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