

EDITED BY **ADRIAN IVAKHIV**

TERRA INVICTA

UKRAINIAN WARTIME
REIMAGININGS FOR
A HABITABLE EARTH

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Dedicated to those who have given everything
to defend their homeland from the Russian war machine

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PREFACE

This book was conceived, written, and completed in the midst of what may be the most unsettling war (thus far) of the twenty-first century, the Russo-Ukrainian war. While this war began in early 2014 with the incursion of Russia's "little green men" into Crimea, followed by Russian-backed militias in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (provinces), the full-scale invasion launched on 24 February 2022 was shocking in its scope, its intensity – including the intensity of Russian aggression – and, to many observers, its length. The invasion became the largest attack on a European country since the Second World War.

The Ukrainian response to the full-scale invasion has surprised many. For a large public around the world, Ukraine was suddenly on the global map in ways that it had not been up to that point. For Ukrainians, of course, the war has been awful. As this book goes to print, just under one-fifth of Ukrainian territory remains either under Russian control or tightly contested. An estimated 8 million Ukrainians have been internally displaced since February 2022. Another 8 million or so had fled the country, though many have since returned. This in a country whose total population in 2020 neared 42 million, down from a peak of over 52 million in 1993. While many Ukrainians have relocated either within their own territory or around the world, the spirit that fuels Ukrainians' defence against the Russian invasion has remained strong. It reflects a sense of unity few outsiders had predicted, a unity that has come to embody an exemplary spirit of resistance.

Are there lessons to be learned from this resistance? What have Ukrainians been fighting for? Why have Ukrainian soldiers, politicians, artists, intellectuals, farmers, and common citizens been so adamant in protecting Ukrainian territory from the takeover by a neighbouring country, whose leadership proclaims that Ukrainians are "brothers" to Russians and are in reality nothing but Russian themselves – that Ukraine itself does not exist, except as an artificial construct? (This despite the fact that the very same argument could be turned back at that more powerful "brother" nation, since no nation on Earth exists

without artifice, without being “constructed” and shaped through historical events and circumstances.)

In the convergence of its disparate voices, this book argues that there *are* lessons of value to others near and far from Ukraine, and that these are not limited to the resistance and social solidarity that have characterized so much of the Ukrainian response. These lessons have something to do, crucially, with the relationship between the Ukrainian people – a multi-ethnic and multi-religious people, with a complicated history – to the Ukrainian land, the Ukrainian earth, the *zemlia* to which they belong. The book’s title, *Terra Invicta* or “Unconquered Earth,” reflects this relationship between Ukrainians’ resistance to the Russian invasion and the earth itself that they are defending.

This sense of belonging and responsibility to and for one’s place positions Ukrainians very differently from the Russian soldiers sent to fight on behalf of the territorially largest nation on Earth, a nation that happens to get its strength primarily from two sources: the military arsenal it inherited from its historical predecessor, and the fossil fuel reserves it contains and controls. It is these differences that make this an energy war and an environmental war – in other words, a war that very closely fits the worst prognoses of those who study geopolitics in a world increasingly shaped by the pressures of a changing global climate. As argued in the book’s opening chapter, the Russo-Ukrainian war is a war between a fossil-fuel superpower hellbent on retaining its status, and even regaining the status it imagines for its imperial past, and a nation of people prepared to defend their land for a very different future. The specifics of that future may be unclear and contested, but the fact that Ukrainians did not greet their occupiers as liberators, as those armies were apparently led to expect – that they have in fact done the very opposite – demonstrates that liberation, for Ukrainians, will only come from within and, figuratively if not literally, from below, from the grassroots of Ukrainian conviction and the earth from which those roots grow.

This book features the voices of Ukrainian scholars and artists positioned in various ways in relationship to this war. Most were born in Ukraine, and many still reside there. Some have left, either temporarily (as academics and artists do) or for an indefinite period (as those who have lost their homes do). A handful, including its editor, were born outside Ukraine, but have longstanding links to the country that are both familial and professional. This makes for a multitude of perspectives, which is reflected also in a range of styles and of disciplinary resonances. The authors include scholars – historians, philosophers, social

scientists, and cultural theorists, many of them active in the rapidly growing transdisciplinary field of environmental humanities – alongside practitioners, including artists, art curators, and ecologists and conservationists. Nearly all, however, incorporate a personal, reflective, even emotional dimension that is not always the norm within scholarly writing. With the war hitting so close to home for the contributors, this can hardly be avoided, and toning down the palpable anger and rage at Russia's actions has been no small part of the authorial task. Expressing at least some of this emotion should be recognized as healthy, necessary, and productive given the circumstances from which the writing and art emerge.

The book's four sections follow a looping or spiralling trajectory. The volume begins, in the introduction and the book's first section, "Обставини/Conditions: Anthropocenes and Colonialisms" (the sections are given Ukrainian titles in a nod to the conceptual underpinnings the language provides), with an exploration of the contours and conditions shaping Ukrainian responses to the war. These include the Anthropocene as an overarching set of socio-ecological conditions; histories of colonialism, imperialism (Russian as well as Soviet), and capitalist industrialization; and concepts of decolonization, especially as these are found among contemporary Ukrainian artists addressing the present situation.

Section Two, "ґрунт/Ground: Earthy, Vegetal, and Arboreal (Be)longings," focuses in on the key thematic of Ukrainians' relationships with earth, land, soil, and terrain – all subsumed within the single Ukrainian word *zemlia* (земля). These relationships provide the sense of "belonging" that constitutes the ground from which Ukrainians resist Russian incursions, but also shapes the "longings" by which exiled Ukrainians relate to the land they have left, temporarily or otherwise. The next section, "Рух/Movement: Mappings and Passages," shifts its emphasis to the displacements brought about by ecopolitical disasters, including the wartime explosion of the Kakhovka Dam, the 1986 Chornobyl disaster and its echo in the brief Russian occupation of the Chornobyl Zone in 2022, and the much earlier forced relocation of Crimean Tatars from their homeland in Ukraine's now occupied southern peninsula. Instead of focusing on loss, however, the section emphasizes the role of a kind of counter-mapping, including through music, the arts, and ecological action, toward resilient and future-oriented outcomes. The final section, "Припущення/Conjectures: Conversations and Speculations," concludes with an eclectic set of speculations on the present and future of the human as well as the nonhuman life of Ukraine in its regional and global contexts.

Terra Invicta is dedicated to all those who have taken up arms, pens, laptops, aid in various forms, or other means of defending Ukraine in this time of crisis and to helping those who suffer as a result of the Russian invasion. Some of these people are among the contributors to this book – all individuals who have found time to work on their contributions while their homes, their loved ones, and their country were under assault by a nuclear-armed superpower. The fact that this book has even come together, beginning with a call sent out electronically in the spring of 2023, is proof enough that its contributors found it to be a valuable project. We hope that readers find that as well.

EDITOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Terra Invicta emerged from a Fulbright Scholar award I received, which was to be held in Ukraine in 2022–23. Due to the war, an alternative location was required. Freie Universität Berlin's Cinepoetics Center for Advanced Film Studies agreed to host me as a six-month extension of another fellowship granted in fall 2022 to participate in a research project on visuality and the Anthropocene. An earlier semester sabbatical from the University of Vermont in the spring of 2022, held at the University of California Santa Barbara, was partially used for research on Ukrainian cultural and environmental politics. A research semester in 2024, at the beginning of my tenure as the J.S. Woodsworth Chair at Simon Fraser University, enabled the book to be successfully completed. I am grateful to all of these institutions for supporting and facilitating the work that led to this publication.

I would specifically like to thank the Fulbright US Scholar Program, especially the Europe/Eurasia Team and the national Fulbright offices in Germany and Ukraine, for their sponsorship and assistance, and the staff and leadership of Cinepoetics, especially directors Hermann Kappelhoff and Michael Wedel, acting co-director Matthias Grotkopp, and doctoral student Michael Ufer for their support during my nearly year-long stay in Berlin. Zoriana Rybchynska at Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv was instrumental at an earlier point of the project, and the support and encouragement of Vitaly Chernetsky and Mark Usher is also warmly acknowledged. Financial support for the book was also obtained from the Shevchenko Scientific Society, the Olga M. Ciupka Memorial Fund, and grants from the University of Vermont and Simon Fraser University. A special thanks goes to Gregory and Larissa Ciupka for supporting the book's open-access availability.

My deepest gratitude is reserved for the authors and contributors to this book, whose enthusiasm and dedication to the project in the midst of the ongoing tragedy and brutality of the war has been commendable and heartwarming. Many of the authors here responded to a call I sent out in social media for proposals. Some were invited directly, and not all of those I

hoped could participate were able to, due to the continuation of the war. I am especially grateful to Olesia Ostrovska-Liuta, Andrii Myroshnychenko, and others at Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex for their eagerness to collaborate on this project to the extent feasible, and to Tanya Richardson for her efforts in reaching out to ecologists in Ukraine. The book's final form reflects a collaboration between me, all of the authors, and circumstances.

The publication team at McGill-Queen's University Press has also been wonderful to work with, and I am especially grateful to executive director Lisa Quinn, whose initial enthusiasm for the idea was a tremendous spur to a successful relationship, to Michaela Jacques for ferrying the project forward, and to Joanne Pisano, Filomena Falocco, Kathleen Fraser, Lisa Aitken, Gillian Scobie, and the others at the press who have been instrumental in crafting the final product.

Finally, I express thanks and love to my partner Auriel and son Zoryan, who accompanied me, willingly and with gracious understanding and remarkable patience, through the twists and turns of our life together these past few years as we moved between Vermont, California, Berlin, Vermont again, and finally Vancouver.

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

This book uses a modified version of the Library of Congress system for transliterating Ukrainian into English: ж becomes *zh*, х = *kh*, ю = *iu* (or *yu*- when at the beginning of a word), я = *ia* (*ya*-), є = *ie* (*ye*-), і = *i* (*yi*-), г = *h*, ґ = *g*, и = *y*, ь = ' (but used only sparingly), and so on.

Place names and other commonly used terms are spelled according to established Ukrainian-to-English transliteration (e.g., Chornobyl, Lviv, Odesa, Donbas), not Russian (Chernobyl, Lvov, Odessa, Donbass), and without additional diacritics (e.g., Chornobyl', L'viv). A less common variation this book uses is the *ï* in Kyïv (Київ) or Lesia Ukraïnka (Леся Українка), where the double-dotted diaeresis over “i” is available in English (e.g., *naïve*) and enables a closer approximation to the polysyllabic Ukrainian pronunciation (Ki-yeev, Uk-ra-yeen-ka).

Quoted materials preserve original spellings. Names of living people reflect their most common spellings (e.g., Zelensky, not Zelenskiy, Zelenskiy, Zelenskyj, Zelenskiyy, Zelens'kiy, et al.). In some cases unusual spellings have been retained in accordance with author preferences: this is the case especially in Olya Zikrata's “Sonic Fictions in the Ruins of Catastrophe,” with its sonic-linguistic play, and in a few authors' insistence on writing “russia” and “russians” in lower-case, a deviation from norms that is understandable, if hardly commensurate with the deviation from political norms exercised by that state in its aggression against Ukraine.

TERRA INVICTA

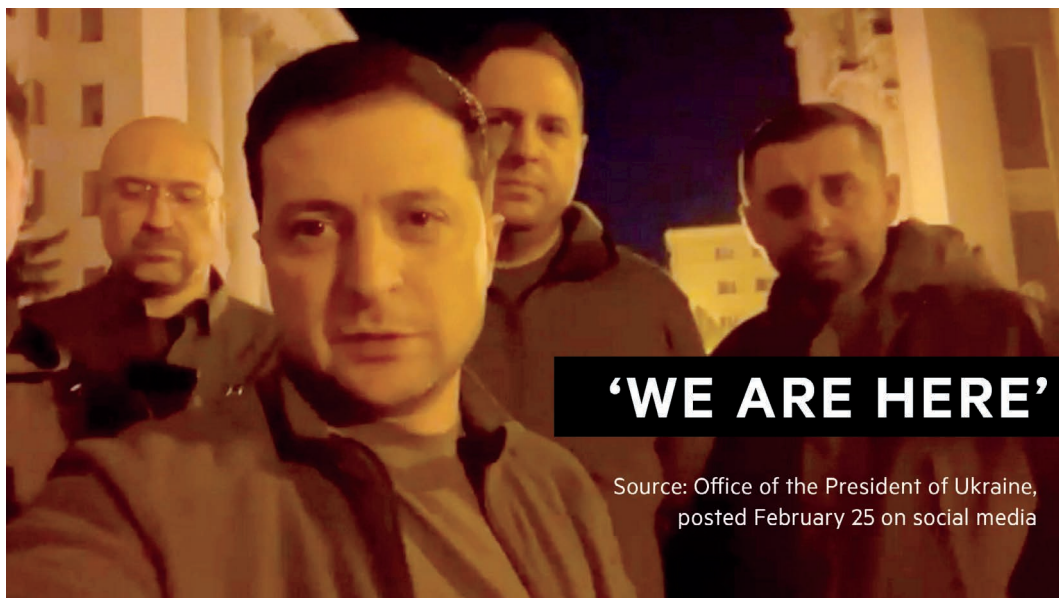


Figure 0.1

INTRODUCTION

Earthbound@climatecrisis.war

What Does It Mean to Be *Here*, *Tut*?

Adrian Ivakhiv

On 25 February 2022, the day after the full-scale Russian invasion began, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky shared a nighttime video in which he and key staffers announced themselves as “here,” “*Tut!*” (“Tyt!”), “defending our independence.” The video went viral. In the context of a war for survival, the image of Zelensky and his associates indicating that they remained in place, “here” in central Kyiv, rather than fleeing, raised the question of where Ukrainians stand in relation to the invasion.

This volume takes that question literally, rather than metaphorically, as a question about place: where is the place in which Ukrainians stand, the place where they/we can *take* a stand, in the face of the disaster of Russia’s war? What does it mean to remain in place, *tut*, rather than flee? But this volume extends the question’s relevance to issues that face not only Ukrainians, but the entire world. What does it mean to commit to a place, a land, a territory, a *klaptyk zemli* (piece of earth), in a world set in constant motion by multiple processes and pressures – from colonial-imperial histories to extractive industrialization, from the pushes and pulls of an unstable and highly uneven global economy to the invasive forces of military incursion, ecological breakdown, and disasters both natural and unnatural? And if one does remove oneself from the scene of invasion, what does it mean to remain committed to one’s “home place” and to return to it once some semblance of safety has been re-established?

This introductory essay situates the war in Ukraine within the geopolitics of the twenty-first century: a world of the “full-scale Anthropocene,” within which fossil-fuel industrialism has led to a climate precipice, with looming ecological disruptions, economic hardships, migration crises, and wars over land, resources, and borders. I argue, in consonance with much of the work presented in this volume, that Ukraine’s recent experience is hardly peripheral to these global processes. It is in fact central to the geopolitical, economic, and sociocultural pressures that are very much at large in the world, and that are becoming more and more pressing each year.¹

In Ukrainians’ case, identity-defining disasters have been multiple: from the Holodomor (famine-genocide) of 1932–33 and the Chornobyl nuclear accident of 1986 to recent wartime events such as the 2023 Kakhovka Dam explosion and the regional ecological catastrophe that ensued. Just as the 1986 Chornobyl nuclear disaster placed Ukraine on the map of the world’s socio-ecological “sacrifice zones,” so the Russo-Ukrainian war has made it central to the global crises expected to arise on a climate-destabilizing planet.² Ukraine’s invasion by Russia is an invasion by an authoritarian petro-state poised to lose power as its fossil-fuel-based economy diminishes in value. Its loss of control, these past few decades, over Ukraine’s industrial and agro-industrial heartland is arguably as much of a threat to the Russian state as the prospect of a successful, Western-aligned democracy at its doorsteps but beyond its control.³

Following the launch of the full-scale invasion, philosopher Slavoj Žižek wrote that the Putin regime’s “strategic plan” has been “to profit from global warming: control the world’s main transport route, plus develop Siberia and control Ukraine. In this way, Russia will dominate so much food production that it will be able to blackmail the whole world. This is the ultimate economic reality beneath Putin’s imperial dream.”⁴ Ukrainians have resisted this plan with their bodies, their (and others’) weapons, and their hearts and minds. In the midst of this resistance, artists and activists have sought to articulate what a “decolonized” Ukraine, freed from the centuries-old avarice of neighbouring empires, might look like.

This volume presents scholarly and creative writing and artistic practice embodying visions of what Ukrainians are fighting for, within an expanded horizon of what is possible. Beyond merely defending nationhood and self-determination, the volume articulates, in a range of creative and theoretical styles, “futurisms” rooted in the value of reviving multispecies relations with land, positively transforming multicultural relations with history, and

reinvigorating democratic engagements with the state and society. Like the late Bruno Latour's calls for "becoming earthbound," these Ukrainian voices ask us to imagine what a new "earthbound identity" might look like in a climate-altered world.⁵

In this introductory chapter, I provide a "climate-decolonial" lens for understanding the Russian war on Ukraine as reflecting this more global set of circumstances, and I introduce the localizing strategies of the artists and writers who are featured in or described by the contributors to this volume. There is a "politics of place" within Ukrainian cultural practice today that resonates, if in unusual ways, with decolonial theories that have emerged in other parts of the world. Thinking through the implications of these decolonizing crosscurrents is part of what this volume aims to do.

A few of the contributors connect the themes of decolonization and ecopolitics to the *Heart of Earth* (*Sertse zemli*) exhibition, which took place at Kyiv's massive Art Arsenal (Mystetskyi Arsenal) museum and gallery complex in the midst of the full-scale war of late 2022 and early 2023. Other contributions draw on existing traditions of art and thought that relate Ukrainian contemporaneity to deeper histories of ecological relationality and cultural practice. Themes include the cultural and environmental history of the steppes, forests, and black-earth soils of Ukraine; the politics of reconstruction, restoration, and post-traumatic recovery; the images and sounds of war and of resistance; and artistic responsibility and ecocultural identity, in the midst of a war for national survival. All of these connect, in one way or another, with the thesis I present in this chapter, which traces the linkages between Russia's war on Ukraine and the global and historical forces facing the world at large in the climate-changing reality of the Anthropocene.

The climate-colonial Anthropocene

Let me present this framework as a three-pronged hypothesis about ecology and global geopolitics. This hypothesis begins from an assessment of the crisis facing the world at large, the so-called Anthropocene crisis, by which I mean emergent global climate change and its accompanying ecological challenges, resource conflicts, and population displacements.⁶ It theorizes this crisis in its historical connections to colonial and capitalist systems of production; identifies the "costs" of these relations as including a broadly shared layer of

“ecocultural trauma”; and proposes that mediated communication is central to the ways in which antagonisms between those benefiting and those bearing the costs may or may not get resolved over time.

Supported by a range of scholarship in the environmental humanities and social sciences, the postcolonial/decolonial humanities, and global cultural and media theory, this climate-decolonial framework asserts that the Anthropocene crisis marks a culmination of the spread of colonial and extractive-capitalist systems of production, systems by which controlling and extracting resources for economic accumulation has enabled colonial and neocolonial powers to assume political and military superiority over others.⁷ While the causality behind global climate change and associated challenges is complex, with other causes (such as human population growth rates and natural climate variability) contributing, describing the key systemic forces and patterns is essential for understanding and addressing these phenomena. The framework I present identifies these with the historical spread of colonial and extractive-capitalist relations of production. In particular, the explosive growth in production enabled by extracting and combusting fossil fuels has changed the composition of the earth’s atmosphere so that the conditions that enabled human civilization to thrive – conditions geologists associate with the last 12,000 years or so, known as the Holocene – have become destabilized, with potentially destructive impacts becoming more evident year by year, and with no obvious end, or at least no reassuring end, in sight. On the contrary, climate scientists assert that if the climate does restabilize, it may be in “hothouse” conditions much less conducive to human flourishing than those we have gotten used to.⁸

There is no doubt that the “growth” and “progress” facilitated by modern industrial civilization has enabled a host of benefits to be extended to many people. These include modern healthcare and sanitation systems, transportation and communication systems that enable a much wider ambit of relations and life conditions, and other developments that have extended the average human life span well beyond that of preceding centuries. But these benefits have been unevenly distributed, and they have not come “for free.” The second part of the hypothesis posits that modernity has carried costs that have been disproportionately borne by those whose cultures and lifeways have been “in its way.” These are the kinds of costs economists call “externalities”: costs not factored into the calculus of benefits, which have been externalized onto people, landscapes, ecosystems and their component biotic communities, and future generations.

Among these costs has been the destabilization of relations between these human cultural communities and the multispecies terrestrial and aquatic environments with which they have been interdependent. Those communities have experienced what I will call *ecocultural trauma*, or *eco-trauma* for short: it has entailed the loss of existential groundedness in kinship networks and territorial filiations – that is, with the sense of “home” or “homeland” that is well captured by the prefix “eco,” from the Greek *oikos* meaning “home” and “household.”⁹ This premise about the costs of colonial-capitalist modernity neither romanticizes the relations that Indigenous, autochthonous, traditional, or land-based peoples had with their ecological environments, nor does it ignore the fact that territorial conflicts have always characterized human life and that population movements are hardly novel in the world. It merely posits that successive waves of European colonization and capitalist exploitation have produced cultural disruption, dispossession and dislocation, enslavement, forced assimilation, and in some cases outright genocide, in Indigenous and traditional, land-based communities across the Americas, Australasia, and large parts of Africa and Asia. Some scholars refer to this combination of impacts as the “genocide-ecocide nexus,” that is, systematic environmental destruction that underlies and contributes to the destruction of cultures.¹⁰ As several authors in this volume assert, similar costs have been borne in Europe by colonized and subjugated peoples and lands: the severance of Ukrainians from their *ridnyi krai* (native land) has been as complex and convoluted a process as any, with today’s war seeming to push this to a point of no return – a point this volume’s authors refuse even as they describe it. All of these costs, wherever they have been borne, constitute a kind of “underside,” as Caribbean social theorist Sylvia Wynter has called it, to the modern/colonial world-system.¹¹

The final part of the climate-decolonial framework asserts that the beneficiaries and the cost-bearers of these processes stand in antagonistic relations with each other, and that these relations have the potential to destabilize the human world even further. Whether they do that or not is dependent on political relations among these groups, and on the discursive and communicative processes that shape them. We could identify a historical series of “class antagonisms” here: between colonizers and colonized groups, between landowners and serfs, between owners of capital and proletarianized workers, and between metropolitan elites and diverse subaltern populations. All of these have been made complex by internal divisions and cross-cutting filiations, including the emergence of “middle classes” as well as diverse international coalitions and alliances.

Democracy has, in its different forms, largely (if not always) worked to mediate and mitigate these antagonisms, though also in uneven ways.

As authors like Bruno Latour and Nikolaj Schultz, Matthew Huber, Razmig Keucheyan, and Andreas Malm have recently argued, the current globalization of climate change impacts comes marked by an emerging “new class antagonism.”¹² To propose identifiable names to this antagonism, I will suggest that it pits a *climate precariat*, whose vulnerability to climate change renders it hardly able to protect itself from climate-related eco-trauma, against a *fossil-fuel protectorate*, which, while divided in other respects, works together to protect its interests at others’ expense. The role of an emergent third force, a “green capitalist” alliance, or *energy transitionate*, threatens to displace or fracture the former antagonism in ways that capture or strengthen the interests of one or another party: for instance, moving toward an expanded green-capitalist hegemony, or a green–social-democratic hegemony, or something else. This tripartite division between the climate precariat, the fossil-fuel protectorate, and the energy transitionate, is of course heuristic and theoretical; it hardly captures what is occurring in real-world relations between, say, the United States, Europe, China, Russia, and other nations or blocs. It is a cross-cutting analysis, however, which looks to how these competing forces play into politics *within* national as well as regional and international contexts. The three “classes” are hardly self-aware as such, yet sociopolitical and ecological conflicts around the world can be read as marked by their antagonism in interests and in perceptions.

In the emergent antagonism between the prime beneficiaries of fossil-fuel colonial-capitalism and those who are suffering most from its impacts, media play a central role in shaping the dynamics by which this antagonism is played out. To support its interests, the fossil-fuel protectorate uses both traditional methods – of denial (as in climate denial, or the denial that there is any crisis whatsoever), or avoidance, or the closing of borders and the hoarding of resources – and novel, highly mediated methods of media obfuscation, disinformation, and algorithmic manipulation enabled by digital and “surveillance capitalism.”¹³ That there is competition among national or other fractions of the fossil-fuel protectorate hardly negates their *shared* class interests. Media or “digital warfare” has in any case become central to competitive rivalry and conflict of every kind, including actual war. Russia’s case is most instructive here: its development of informational warfare has given it a global advantage it otherwise would not have. Yet this can hardly be reduced to the old stereotype of “good” versus “bad” information, or “professional journalism” versus “state

propaganda.” Digital tools are increasingly used by nations, corporations, and various non-state actors to shape perceptions and produce outcomes in ways that are obscure and barely legible for most observers. In the context of our tripartite class analysis, the survival of the climate precariat depends on the existence of democratic institutions and on the accessibility and accountability of new media tools, including social media, for building global solidarity networks to articulate and advance their (our) collective interests. Media, in this sense, remain a key front for social change of any kind.¹⁴

At any rate, the possibility of avoiding, or at least softening, global climate trauma is shaped by the possibilities of either *sharing the burdens* of what has been set in motion – effectively internalizing and democratizing the costs – or *strengthening divisions and borders* by which the “protectorate” can insulate itself from the eco-trauma increasingly experienced by the “precariat.” The tension between these two options frames most global conflicts today, and it can be seen in the war between Russian neo-imperialism and Ukrainian territorial defence. The next section elucidates some of the contours of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in terms of this climate-decolonial perspective.

Understanding the Russo-Ukrainian war

“Realist” and “culturalist” perspectives

Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, analysts have struggled to explain why the Russian state embarked on this dramatic intensification of its war with Ukraine, and how it is that Ukrainians have defended themselves as successfully as they have. Factors accounting for both issues could loosely be divided into those that follow “realist” explanations rooted in an understanding of global political economy, geopolitics, and international relations, and those that pay more attention to the cultural factors at play. While this dichotomy is oversimplified, it has shaped a certain divergence in popular understandings of the conflict.

Under the realist rubric, we can include the focus on states as rational actors pursuing their economic and security interests in a world of competing states (loosely, classical realism); historically evolving global economic structures, especially capitalism (economic structuralism, Marxist political economy); and political-economic relations amid rule- and norm-based international institutions (liberal institutionalism). Among better-known realists, over the

years, we might point to those like Henry Kissinger on the centre-right, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt in the centre, and Stephen Cohen and Noam Chomsky on the left.¹⁵ “Culturalism” would include everything else: subjective perceptions, images, and narratives (interpretivism, social constructivism), emotional and psychological factors (psychoanalysis, theories of identity and affect), cultural traditions and countercultural movements (cultural studies), normative argumentation and social-movement activism (critical theory), discursive and rhetorical studies (literary analysis), gender relations and identities (feminism and queer theory), perceptions of colonial subjugation and liberation (postcolonialism), environmental attitudes and activism (environmental politics), and the multiplicity and indeterminacy connecting perception and behaviour (postmodernism).¹⁶

In practice, many of the factors mentioned blur the boundaries between the realist and the culturalist: nation-states are social and historical constructs, gender relations are hardly merely subjective, colonialism is historically and economically structured, and so on. While the dichotomy should be taken with a grain of salt, then, it is also somewhat ingrained within international political discourse and, for that reason, has a heuristic usefulness in accounting for the prevalence or predominance of different interpretive lenses. To oversimplify, “realist” explanatory perspectives are structural and institutional in nature, with national actors perceived to act rationally within a set of understandable parameters defining their interests. “Culturalist” perspectives, by contrast, are particularist, with differences accountable only through attention to specific historical, national, and local-regional circumstances and perceptions. Continuing with this oversimplification, the second group pays much more attention than the first to “identity politics,” including the new social movements that are thought to have given rise to them. Outside of the more specialized field of Ukrainian studies, realist explanations, understood this way, have tended to dominate much of the discussion about the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, with cultural factors being limited to cursory analyses, for instance, about the ostensible divide between Ukraine’s “east” and its “west”; the latter construct has meanwhile shown itself to be inadequate and requiring revision.

Among the realist factors frequently noted as accounting for Russia’s decision to invade, geopolitics is paramount. The breakup of the USSR, precipitated by a deep economic crisis, led to a brief period in which economic assets were redistributed among a small minority of actors. This resulted in the emergence of an oligarchic class, one ultimately consolidated by Vladimir Putin into a

vertically organized state apparatus, whose power was largely vested in its control of Russia's oil and gas reserves. As many Russians became noticeably poorer, the Putinist state provided sufficient support, gleaned especially from fossil fuel revenues, to keep them from rebelling, and its control of the political field ensured that no alternatives emerged to rival its authority. Eager to strengthen his own position and the role of Russia in world affairs, Putin worked to cement Russia's position as a fossil fuel provider for much of Europe and beyond.¹⁷

But uncertainties surrounding the future of Russia's fossil fuel economy, including an economic slackening following the economic crisis of 2008–09, contributed to the perception of an increasing crisis requiring some kind of consolidation, whether ideological, economic, or geopolitical. Meanwhile, a sense of rivalry with the US-led West increased as Russia's former superpower status was repeatedly rebuffed by US presidents and by other Western leaders. Many analysts have pointed to the role of the West, or some kind of "power politics" or "Western adventurism," as being behind the expansion of NATO, which Putin has perceived as a deadly threat to his rule, if not to the existence of Russia itself. Building on the USSR's experience with informational warfare, Russia managed to develop its capacities as an informational superpower within the new media environment as a less expensive way to invest in its own global competitiveness, to the degree that Russian informational agents became a threat even to the United States, as seen in their perceived role in the 2016 election of Donald Trump (a role that continues today).

When the full-scale invasion began in 2022, most observers assumed that some kind of Russian victory was imminent, because the Russian military was thought to be much larger, better equipped, and more combat-ready than Ukraine's. When this did not happen, analysts proposed a variety of "realist" explanatory factors: that Russia was an aging autocracy, with an overly hierarchic and top-heavy command chain and excessive secrecy, whose weaknesses were exacerbated by opaqueness over the goals of the "special military operation," and by consistent interference from the Kremlin; that similar internal secrecy within the armed forces, accompanied by years of ingrained corruption, resulted in poor coordination and battle readiness; that obsequiousness toward Putin resulted in flawed intelligence and faulty assumptions about Ukrainian preparedness, both military and emotional, to defend itself, and about Western allies' preparedness to support it; and that Russian troops themselves were poorly prepared because the goals of the operation remained unclear to them. All of these factors no doubt played a role.

Ukraine's successful resistance, meanwhile, could hardly be explained using "realist" assumptions about that country. Ukrainian politics in the post-Soviet period have been dominated by oligarchic groups, with rivalries exacerbated by politicians who have played up East–West cultural divisions to consolidate their own positions. Popular resistance has arisen, as during the 2004 Orange Revolution and the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, but these have often been assessed as "incomplete revolutions," engaging only a part of the country and resulting in poorly consolidated "deficient democracies."¹⁸ While Russia has promoted Ukraine's dependence on its larger neighbour, the US-led West has promoted both the democratic institution-building and "rule of law" transparency that renders institutions more accountable, and arguably new forms of economic dependency. Ukrainian attitudes toward the West, and especially toward NATO, remained mixed well into the 2010s, and East–West divisions were largely undiminished, until Russia's incursions, first into Crimea, in the spring of 2014, and Eastern Ukraine soon after. If Ukraine's pro-Western turn appeared somewhat natural at that point, it was not considered to be unambiguous or countrywide.

All these factors taken together may explain a great deal. But they failed to account both for the intensity of the fighting and for the role of identity and cultural politics in the conflict since it began in 2014. Cultural factors have been evident in the ways in which Russian soldiers have targeted Ukrainian cultural monuments, educational facilities, and textbooks, and have stolen (or "retrieved") artifacts perceived to be Russian. They are also easily found throughout the intra-Russian discourse about the reasons for the conflict.¹⁹ Russian state media has regularly and incessantly portrayed the liberal West as deeply threatening to Russian culture and to traditional institutions such as religion, the family, community, and gender norms. Putinist Russia has taken an evident "cultural turn" toward a radical form of conservative traditionalism, visible in Putin's own public statements and those of his surrogates in state media – such as former prime minister Dmitry Medvedev and media personalities like Vladimir Solovyov and RT director Margarita Simonyan – as well as other government figures, ideologists like Aleksandr Dugin, and leaders of the Russian Orthodox church.²⁰ (This is true even as the reality of Russian life hardly mirrors conservative ideals: divorce rates and alcoholism, for instance, remain excessively high when compared with other European countries.) These efforts support Putin's increasing glorification of the *Russkii mir*, or the historical "Greater Russian world." Within this longstanding set of tropes, Ukraine and Ukrainians are taken to play a particular role: as simultaneously historically

central and necessary, with their relationship to the imagined cultural “cradle” of Kyïvan Rus, and as second-class, so-called Little Russians. Ukraine’s turn to the West is thus seen as a form of disloyalty amounting to treason, though Ukrainian agency is typically minimized while the West’s culpability for the turn is exaggerated.²¹

Perceptions among Ukrainians are a world apart from this Russian imaginary. Ukrainians have long been divided between the country’s less “sovietized” west, with its forty-five-year history of Soviet rule, and its centre, east, and south, with their much longer Soviet and Russian imperial histories. Ukrainian history is multi-faceted, with Polish, Lithuanian, and Austro-Hungarian influences contributing to shape it over many centuries, and with repeated internal efforts emerging to craft national identities and institutions. If Russia, as some argue, remains the most unreformed of Europe’s historical colonial empires – it is different from Western maritime powers because of its land-based nature, “deficient” and “Janus-faced” in its imperialism, which has looked to the West both for its model and for its absolute rival, but has acted on its eastern and southern expanses in markedly imperial, settler-colonial ways²² – Ukraine’s role within this history has itself been ambiguous.²³ It has been closer to the imperial core than to the periphery, especially when compared with Russia’s vast colonial expanses stretching across Asia to the Pacific. But it has also been subjected to a history of subordination whose episodes make for an exhaustive narrative: the spreading of serfdom across Russian-ruled land from the 1700s on; the banning of the Ukrainian language and of Ukrainian autonomist organizations from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s; the Stalinist onslaught against Ukraine’s peasant resistance to collectivization through the artificial famine-hunger of the Holodomor of 1932–33, which killed at least 4 million Ukrainians; and the systematic purges of the 1930s, which ended a period of flourishing for Ukrainian artistic and intellectual culture, the so-called Executed Renaissance. As historian Yaroslav Hrytsak notes, “Out of 260 Ukrainian writers publishing in 1930, 230 died during the purges.” And by 1938, “only two former leaders of the Communist Party of Ukraine were still alive.”²⁴ Then came the Second World War, with its multi-sided devastation of Ukraine, which featured at the centre of the territory that historian Timothy Snyder calls Europe’s “bloodlands.”²⁵ All of this was followed by the routine demotion and denigration of the Ukrainian language through Russification policies carried out throughout the post-war period.²⁶

Meanwhile, massive industrialization during the first half of the twentieth century transformed the Ukrainian countryside, with villages largely

depopulated and transformed into agro-industrial machines, woods and mountains deforested, river valleys flooded and converted into electrical power, and a class of villagers remade into urban serfs, service workers, and a mobile reserve labour pool. Ukraine's rural heartland came to be sentimentalized by poets and artists at the same time as it was technologized, instrumentalized, and "resourcified" for economic productivity. Ukrainian language and culture were at the same time discursively relegated to the ethnographic past and utterly marginalized in urban life. Finally, the Chornobyl accident, adding yet another layer of ecological trauma, triggered protest movements that blamed Soviet rule for neglecting its secondary republican (Ukrainian and Belarusian) populations, and ultimately led to Ukrainians' overwhelming 1991 vote (92.3 per cent in favour) to secede from the Soviet Union.

Post-Soviet Ukraine has been shaped by an alternation between pro-Western reformism and Russia-friendly conservatism (the latter term understood politically-economically). Popular mobilizations supporting the pro-Western orientation, especially in the 1991 Granite Revolution, the 2004 Orange Revolution, and the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, have traded on decolonial themes, which support national self-determination alongside some measure of cultural revitalization (in pro-Ukrainian language laws, for instance), though the importance of the latter remained contested. Neocolonialism could be seen in movements back to the Russian sphere of influence, as for instance during the Yanukovych administration that triggered the 2013 Maidan protests, but also, for critics on the left, in a too-eager embrace of the West with its neoliberal economic agendas.²⁷ With the coming of age of the so-called "Independence generation," expectations have grown around Ukrainians' willingness to abide by Western standards of democratic and liberal rights, and their capacity to build the country's future free of the weight of its past. The growth of civic nationalism has been particularly pronounced in the post-2014 period.²⁸

Despite some caution by scholars, Ukrainian intellectuals' embrace of decolonial discourse in the wake of perceived Russian neo-imperialism has become undeniable; many of the contributions to this volume reflect this shift. In part, this Ukrainian decolonialism is seen as an unwillingness to submit to Russian authoritarian political culture. As historian Yaroslav Hrytsak has put it, "What happened in Ukraine in 2014 confirmed what liberal Ukrainian historians have been saying for a long time: The chief distinction between Ukrainians and Russians lies not in language, religion or culture – here they are relatively close – but in political traditions. Simply put, a victorious democratic revolution is

almost impossible in Russia, whereas a viable authoritarian government is almost impossible in Ukraine.”²⁹ Or in Joshua Yaffa’s words, where the Russian state is a “vertical machine,” “Ukraine is home to a messy, vibrant society, with years of experience in horizontal organization.”³⁰ While the war has been terrible, the war *effort* has elicited a sense of national solidarity, grassroots agency, and self-organization among Ukrainians that contributes to a sense that this is both an anti-imperial and anti-colonial struggle.³¹

In the Russian position, on the other hand, one sees a reversion not only to the “imperial nationalism” still at large at the heart of the Russian imaginary, in which Ukraine has functioned as a “lesser brother” liable to forget his allegiance to the imperial centre and needing to be reined in, by force if necessary.³² There is also a growing *ressentiment* against the West, which, with its perceived wealth, progress, and freedoms, has become an absolute civilizational foil for the Putinist regime. Challenging the liberal West has become Russia’s modus operandi on the world stage, allowing it to find supporters (tacit or otherwise) in nearly every country in the world, and to repurpose its Soviet-era security apparatus toward global informational warfare. At the same time, Russia’s oil and gas reserves – its only source of economic strength – have made it an attractive partner to other states with reason to distrust the US-led West, from Iran, Syria, and North Korea to China, India, and numerous African states. Russia remains, in this sense, the world’s pre-eminent fossil-fuel superpower: a superpower because its nuclear arsenal is among the two largest in the world (by many measures the largest), and a fossil-fuel power because over half of its national revenues come from the sale of oil and gas. Before the full-scale invasion of 2022, the majority of those revenues came from Europe. Today, as a result of the invasion and its fallout, Russia has transitioned into a much closer relationship with India, China, Iran, and other states of the Global South.

All of this tells us two things: that “fossil capital,” whatever state forms it takes, will not eagerly fade away; and that the world has become murkier and more multipolar in its alliances. For all those who see multipolarity as a balm to a world in which political-economic power had once seemed too concentrated, the victims, subjugated and threatened peoples of each of the polar rivals – Uyghurs and Tibetans in China, Ukrainians and other Eastern Europeans and Central Asians in Russia’s sphere of influence, women and secularists in Iran, Kurds in northern Syria and southern Turkey, and so on – make clear how messy the resultant complexity is likely to be.

Becoming earthbound

If, for Ukrainians, the war was about nothing more than the promise of European Union accession or NATO membership, then they could simply take advantage of their European neighbours' wartime willingness to accept them as refugees and, ultimately (one hopes), as citizens. As it is, however, Ukrainians have demonstrated a powerful willingness to defend their territory and its integrity – which could be seen as a clear sign of their desire to identify *being* Ukrainian with a responsibility for the Ukrainian *land*, a land of blue and yellow, sunflowers and grain fields, farms and cities, all worthy of protection as part of what constitutes the essence of Ukraine. In this sense, Ukrainians' territorial defence resonates with a host of other movements of ecocultural resistance, food and land sovereignty, and place-based activism, from the Zapatistas of southern Mexico and North America's Indigenous “water protectors” to Indian forest defenders, Kurdish and Palestinian land rights activists, and urban ecology movements around the world.³³

It is this that puts Ukrainians into dialogue with those that Bruno Latour has called the “earthbound,” who are both *bound* to their places – unable or unwilling to detach themselves from them – and who willingly enter into deepened relations of ecological dependence and entanglement with those places. For Latour and his associates, the world is entering a “new climatic regime,” in which climate “has ceased to be a given to which people had to adjust as best as they could, and that was varying inside certain limits, and has become the most urgent and most disputed subject of their politics.”³⁴ In this condition, climate change and its direct and indirect impacts – migration pressures, rising inequalities, and efforts to “reborderize” through authoritarian-populist nationalisms – are best contested not through an aloof “globalism” but through a “reterrestrialization” whereby the “earthbound” would “reattach” themselves to territories that encompass “the entire set of animate beings ... whose presence has been determined – by investigation, by experience, by habit, by culture – to be indispensable” for survival.³⁵ This “coming to Earth” would not involve strengthening or redrawing boundaries, since ecology does not admit of boundaries. On the contrary, ecology consists entirely of permeabilities, entanglements, interactions, and flows, whose management requires a nuanced attention to what works here, *tut* (тут), in this very place. Where “globalists” aimed to incorporate land into chains of production to maximize growth,

Latour's "terrestrials" prefer to focus on "systems of engendering"³⁶ or "forces of reproduction,"³⁷ which take the cultivation of attachments and dependencies as their goal, not what they seek to flee.

Before we find ourselves in the modern construct of a nation-state or even in the social construct of an ethnic group, we find ourselves here, *tut*. And we find ourselves amid struggles to define what this means.³⁸ If the "new climatic regime" calls for a new attentiveness to the politics of place, that politics will require attention to the liveliness of the land: who owns and manages it, for whom, and to what ends? Such questions of land management, property rights, and economic development suggest that any kind of post-war "European future" for Ukraine may need to choose *which* Europe to join: a Europe of global supply chains, investor-based landholding conglomerates, carbon-intensive industries, and/or green-capitalist ventures intent on turning Ukrainian fields into biofuel reserves? Or, alternatively, a Europe of livable and greening cities, renewable energy cooperatives, reinvigorated local food networks, rewilded steppes, forests, and wetlands, and commitments to global climate cooperation? The latter option might be renamed a "becoming-terrestrial," with the proviso that Ukrainians are committing to it through their territorial defence, but that the details will have to be negotiated on the ground afterwards.

In an increasingly unstable, multipolar world order, imperialisms or neo-imperialisms are multiple. Each has its military networks (the West still has NATO; Russia has its alliances with Belarus, Iran, North Korea, China, and some Central African countries, et al.), its extractive-capitalist geopolitical formations (most still largely based on oil and gas, but with some transitioning into new forms), its entertainment-propaganda industries (some more pluralistic and open than others), and its cultural specificities (from Great Russian to Han chauvinism, from Hindu nationalism to Anglophone hegemony, and so on). Some are more responsive to bottom-up democratic pressures than others. And all play into the contours of what ecopolitical theorist Pierre Charbonnier has called a "war ecology": in Europe's case, this is the wartime turn toward energy sufficiency as a "weapon of resilience and autonomy," but more broadly the term can be used for the turn toward energy politics as a way of continuing, or avoiding, war. And all do so in different ways.³⁹

To bring things back to the climate-decolonial analysis that opened this chapter, one could identify many colonialities, and many decolonialisms, in the world today. A truly planetary decoloniality, however, is by definition not just an anti-imperialism, but an anti-*all*-imperialisms. The Ukrainian resistance

is seen by some, including many authors in this collection, as an instance of a particular anti-imperial struggle, but it is of course neither the only one nor the most obvious one. And Russian fossil-fuel imperialism is neither the only imperialism nor the only one rooted in fossil-fuel extractivism. It is, however, the clearest example (next to the US of Donald Trump?) of a powerful state whose power rests on continuing fossil-fuel extraction and climate change denial; whose *modus operandi* in global geopolitics has become neo-imperialist; and whose capacity for change from within, via democratic or civil means, has been almost fully extinguished. By contrast, the geopolitical strength of the United States remains more polyvalent and flexible, and at the same time more open to change from within due to its existing democratic institutions. There is of course no doubt that the US, NATO countries, and other powerful players of the “liberal West” are far from innocent in the current global moment. In any case, with the second Trump administration’s shift in policies, including its warming toward Russia, that moment may be changing toward a more nakedly imperialist one. Extractive capitalism is a multi-headed global hydra, and its rival networks can hardly be trusted to forego their own interests. But there are ways to curb their power, and democratic organization and activism is among the best of those ways. This makes the existence of democratic and civil society institutions an essential measure by which to gauge the viability of any political formation. By that measure, late-Putinist Russia has few redeeming features, whereas Ukraine shows much greater promise.

Once the war is over, Ukrainians will face not only the expected challenges of reviving a nation traumatized by war – which means the direct, visceral, and bodily trauma of warfare, torture, and war criminality; a massive loss of land, of homes, and of people through migration and depopulation; and the loss of trust in land itself, which will have been so thoroughly mined by explosives as to create the conditions of ongoing eco-trauma for years to come. It will also face new kinds of pressures, including those of capitalist institutions and the neocolonial economic relations they have long favoured in “emerging economies” around the world. Wealthy Western actors will likely see opportunities to access funds (from international lenders and development institutions) and to position themselves as key players within new markets. The aftermath will be neither easy nor just, and we can hardly expect Ukraine to become a model of post-war transformation.

This volume proposes, however, that what matters is *now*: that wartime presents an opportunity for re-envisioning how Ukraine can not only rebuild, but

how the world can be reimagined. It is vitally important that these utopian impulses, conceived amid harshly dystopian realities, be *registered*, and that they be allowed to resonate within a world that will need much more utopian thinking if it is to survive dystopias to come. “Utopia,” with its suggestion of unreality – it literally means “no-place” – is perhaps not the best term here. Better is *eutopia* (good place) or *ecotopia* (home place).⁴⁰ Some of the visions explored in this volume seek out the kernels of eco-eutopia within the chaos of wartime catastrophe. They can be considered an olive branch of hope offered to a world that we recognize is heading toward even more catastrophe in the years to come.

Introducing *Terra Invicta* Decolonial place-making and the earthbound

“Cut away the future,” philosopher Alfred North Whitehead wrote, “and the present collapses, emptied of its proper content. Immediate existence requires the insertion of the future in the crannies of the present.”⁴¹

This volume presents a series of critical and creative articulations of pasts, presents, and possible futures involving humans and the more-than-human world. They articulate themselves from within one of the most acute conflicts of recent years: the war waged by Russia on Ukraine. They do this in different, but connected, ways, and the futures they may point to are far from identical. They are, however, open, in the sense that they open up onto worlds that are unconstrained by imperial force, military conquest, or pre-definition by outsiders, or for that matter by insiders, of what it might mean to be Ukrainian in a future released from its wartime constrictions.

The book’s first section, “Обставини/Conditions,” continues this introductory chapter’s exploration of the broader contours and currents shaping Ukraine today. Cultural theorist Asia Bazdyrieva’s “Ukraine in the Anthropocene” identifies three main conditions by which Ukraine remains mired within the modernist, colonialist, and extractivist practices of the Anthropocene: as a “granary” and “breadbasket of the world,” in image and only partly and intermittently in substance; as an object of the process of “resourcification”; and as a subject of multiple colonialisms, Russian as well as Western. The 2014 Revolution of Dignity may have announced a certain “application for the inclusion of Ukraine in the circle of equal agents in the European era,” but that application

remains on hold through the current wartime, with Ukraine's future remaining as nebulous as the world's, and any thoughts of a "post-Anthropocene" remaining "elsewhere."

In "Decolonial Thinking and Artistic Practice in Ukraine After February 2022," curator and cultural theorist Kateryna Botanova further situates Ukraine within global understandings of coloniality, postcoloniality, and decolonization as these have been developed by writers such as Franco-Algerian philosopher Seloua Luste Boulbina, Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano, and Argentinian-American literary theorist Walter D. Mignolo. Finding resonance with Mignolo's "cosmopolitan localism," as expressed in the post-Cartesian slogan "I am *where* I do and think," Botanova finds a strategy of "radical locality" in the work of a number of contemporary Ukrainian artists. These works show a resistant articulation of attachment to land in the face of an invasion that aims to sever both Ukraine's distinctiveness from Russia and Ukrainians' place within environments being subjected to bombardment by military as well as cultural and media weaponry. As with decolonial movements elsewhere, Ukrainian artists have taken on multiple tasks: to witness and document Russian aggression; to assert a localized and embodied knowledge in the face of an onslaught from above; and to defy the epistemic hierarchies that subject Ukrainians not only to Russian imperial designs, but to Western cognitive paradigms within which Ukrainians fare little better than as voiceless and inevitable "victims."

Several of the artists noted by Botanova participated in the *Heart of Earth* exhibition, which took place in late 2022 at Kyiv's massive Mystetskyi Arsenal National Art and Culture Museum Complex. This section continues with that exhibition's curatorial notes from Olesia Ostrovska-Liuta, director of the Mystetskyi Arsenal. Ostrovska-Liuta describes the "imaginary triangle" drawn by the exhibition's curators between the earth, or *zemlia*, the multilayered Ukrainian concept that will be carried throughout this volume; the humans who work, depend on, and cherish it; and the food that's born from the interaction between the two. In Ukraine's case, that food – the grain that has famously made it a "breadbasket" – has long been inherently political, and the black soil that provides it has been central to the identity of Ukrainians at least as much as it has been coveted by others. The commodification of Ukrainian land into grain and into precious metal has been written into Ukrainian history for centuries, and with the full-scale Russian invasion has taken on a new global relevance. Ostrovska-Liuta argues, however, that just as Ukraine's democratization in the 1980s began with environmental activism, so today again

it is environmental determinants – “[f]ood, the fragility of the human body, and the condition of the earth” – that have once again come to be “tied in a tight knot.”

Ostrowska-Liuta’s contribution, which in its title invoked chaos theorist Edward Lorenz’s famous image of a butterfly flapping its wings, is followed immediately by an infographic that illustrates this very knottedness. In “Does the Flap of a Butterfly’s Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?,” *Heart of Earth* contributors Larion Lozovyi and Natasha Chychasova detail the tangled nature of ecology, agriculture, economics, and war, according to which this particular war has played out in the complex global arena of nonlinear yet tightly interconnected dependencies.

The next chapter, Svitlana Biedarieva’s “Unfolding Coloniality: Ecocide as the Erasure of Memory,” deepens the book’s engagement with the traumatic history of extractive, infrastructural, as well as cultural colonialism in Southern Ukraine, a history reawakened by the Russian invasion and, most forcefully, in the explosion of the Kakhovka Dam and the subsequent flooding of several thousand square kilometres of land. To make sense of it, Biedarieva looks to Gilles Deleuze’s notion of “the fold” and the “unfold,” as a kind of reverberation of histories that reveal Ukraine’s own “epistemologies of the South,” to use Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s phrase. Among the relatively unknown voices of the Ukrainian South, Biedarieva points to that of “naïve” artist Polina Raiko, whose home in Oleshky village, covered in wall-to-ceiling murals of angels, saints, and magical animals, was flooded alongside those of many others. Russian ecocide, for Biedarieva, is not just an attack on ecosystems, but also on memory, which has its own ecology and whose fragments “remain to be reassembled and reconstructed.” Ukrainian defiance of the Russian invasion is producing new narratives from these fragments, narratives that are “the only way toward decolonial reconstruction and regeneration.”

The book’s first section is rounded off by art curator Lesia Kulchynska’s “Impossible, Potential, Unavoidable, Invisible.” Kulchynska considers her own experience of war in light of Susan Sontag’s meditations on images of war, with their distancing effect and their creation of an “other” who is seen but does not see. Confronting the “death images” from Bucha and Mariupol, Kulchynska is haunted by Lebanese artist Alaa Mansour’s withdrawal, following the shelling of a hospital in nearby Gaza, from a curated conversation “between those who are living through all the ongoing emergencies around the globe.” For Mansour, no speech is possible “after Palestine.” Kulchynska realizes that Russian war

crimes will go unpunished in Ukraine because they have gone “unpunished elsewhere, in places deprived of the ‘protective fabric’ of power.” “What does it mean to be a spectator of a catastrophe from a place of another catastrophe?” she asks, as if in premonition of a world of catastrophes to come – or the world envisioned by Walter Benjamin in his 1939 meditation on the “angel of history,” who “sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage” in front of his feet.⁴² Kulchynska goes on to compare the “potential” for *not* reducing Ukrainians to subjects of war to the potential held in hydroelectric reservoirs such as those that make up the Dnipro hydroelectric cascade, which itself remade the potential of its river from one set of ontological meanings (cultural and ecological) to a very different one (hydroelectricity). The Russian bombing of the Kakhovka Dam in June 2023 revealed yet another potential: the military potential for destruction against an enemy, in this case Ukraine and its people. The catastrophe, she writes, had already been “inscribed into the landscape.” At the same time, this catastrophe, like that of Chornobyl in 1986, has the potential to create “a strange crack in reality,” an “invisible dimension” accessed by artists such as Arsen Savadov and Dasha Chechushkova. Citing the latter’s poem “Seeing Water in a Room Foretells Change,” Kulchynska notes that the water, for Chechushkova, maintains its own potential: to heal.

Part II, “Ірґуґт/Ground: Earthy, Vegetal, and Arboreal (Be)longings,” focuses in on the already introduced central thematic of *zemlia*, a word that translates to “earth,” “land,” “soil,” “ground,” “country,” and when capitalized, “planet Earth.” Iryna Kovalenko’s “*Zemlia*: Soil and Seed as Weapons of Resistance in Wartime Ukrainian Popular Culture” examines the role of this notion of earth, soil, and ground in popular tropes making sense of the Russian invasion and Ukrainians’ resistance to it. Perhaps the best-known example of this is a video recording of an anonymous woman, later identified as Svitlana Pankova, in occupied Henichesk, approaching Russian soldiers and offering them sunflower seeds, saying, “Take these seeds and put them in your pockets, so at least sunflowers will grow when you all lie down here.” Seeds, sunflowers, and blue and yellow fields of Russian bodies became part of a language of “memetic resistance,” which Kovalenko perceptively traces through popular music and videos for Ukrainian domestic as well as international audiences.

In “I Dream of Seeing the Steppe Again,” Darya Tsymbalyuk reflects on her own relationship to the steppe regions of southeast Ukraine. Tsymbalyuk describes a visit to Kreidova Flora Nature Reserve in Eastern Ukraine, a place that became a battlefield soon after the Russian incursions into Donbas. She later

repurposed photographs of the reserve's flora (taken by Kreidova Flora's Serhii Lymanskyi), specifically those that blossom at the summer solstice during the feast day of Ivana Kupala (St John's/Kupala Day, which combines the Christian and pre-Christian names of the festival), for storytelling events at art festivals in London, Edinburgh, and Tbilisi. Her readings and drawings of these plants become insightful excursions into Ukrainian plant names and meanings, while the festivals occasion opportunities for sharing stories, memories, songs, and dreams with visitors. Plants and mushrooms thus become entry points for re-imagining connections to land lost and land still to be found.

One specific plant is the focus of Iryna Zamuruieva's "Into Kin-Regions with *Horytsvit Vesnianyi*." *Adonis vernalis*, known in English as "pheasant's eye" or "false hellebore" and in Ukrainian as *horytsvit vesnianyi*, which can mean both "spring fire-bloom" and "spring mountain-bloom," becomes the keynote for Zamuruieva's "looping and spiralling" meditation on home-place as kin-place, or *ridnyi kraj*. Drawing on the relational and kinship turns in anthropology and geography, Zamuruieva seeks transnational solidarities through an expanded definition of place. It is a definition in which kinship is extended to plants, fields, and landscapes, and in which specific agents, such as *horytsvit vesnianyi*, exercise an affective compulsion on those, like the author, separated from those landscapes: a *zakhoplennia*, a capturing and fascination, a lingering vibration whose attraction comes to be mingled with memory, with sadness, with a longing to return, and with an ambivalence, all evident in the drawings that accompany this chapter. Zamuruieva proposes that the kinship turn may require learning "to tell good and bad kinship apart," with "de-kinning" becoming necessary when historically "kin peoples" resort to genocidal violence. For her, "feeling-thinking" in solidarity with the other beings under attack by war leads to asking "what is needed for life to defend itself from death? It's as banal and simple as that."

In the next chapter, Yuliia Kishchuk applies a similar interpretive perspective to mushrooms, both real and symbolic ones. In "Split Gills as Companion Species: On Mushrooms, Nuclear Colonialism, and War," she explores traditions of mushrooming in the Carpathian mountains of her childhood and in the Polissia region around Chornobyl, placing the latter into the context of the 1986 nuclear accident and the warnings to avoid mushrooms due to their radioactivity. She ponders the relationships between mushrooms and war, expressed in folk sayings; between mushrooms and nuclear bombs; and between the rhizomatic nature of mushrooms, especially split gills, and the "mycelial" political activism

advocated by decolonial artists like Yasmine Ostendorf-Rodríguez, an activism she endorses and finds hope in within the present Ukrainian situation.

In “Goethe’s Oak and Mohyla’s Linden: History from an Arboreal Perspective,” Kateryna Filyuk takes similar bearings from the “Plant Turn” in recent humanities writing, connecting it to her visit to the Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald. There she finds Goethe’s famous oak tree, a now lifeless bole that during its lifespan, as a witness of atrocity, became a “sort of bonding agent” between “German classicism, Goethe, Nazi crimes against humanity, and the local self-positioning of Weimar as a city of culture.” Filyuk finds parallels with an old linden tree in Kyïv, reportedly planted by seventeenth-century Metropolitan Petro Mohyla, but then mulls over what it might mean to draw such historical comparisons in the first place. In light of the “vegetal politics” of authors like Michael Marder, Natasha Myers, Owain Jones, and Paul Cloke, Filyuk seeks out a *Mit-Leid*, a “suffering-with” that “crosses species boundaries in its inclusiveness.” Citing artist Alevtina Kakhidze’s insistence on staying in place, “like a plant,” when her region of Ukraine was under bombardment, Filyuk concludes with a call for “vegetalization” as an “emotional possibility, a ‘lure’ for humans whose world vibrates with memories of traumatic events, even as it sustains itself in living networks” with humans and nonhumans that survive, heal, and work to renew the world together.

The section ends with a second image-text vignette, this one by artist Sofia Holubeva. In $40 \times 30 \times 20$, the dimensions (in centimetres) allowed for carry-on baggage on airplanes out of Ukraine, Holubeva shows in stark yet poetic terms what war means to so many, for whom a piece of earth – in this case it is soil from her beloved beach outside Odesa – is what they would wish to carry with them to their places of exile. Holubeva’s piece serves as a transition into the book’s next section, as it literally carries the theme of soil across the earth to Holubeva’s own exile in Berlin, Germany. Part III then takes up this theme of “Pyx/Movement: Mappings and Passages” – in this case, passages triggered by war, though not just the full-scale invasion of 2022, but the ten years of war leading up to it, alongside the “quasi-war” of the Chornobyl nuclear accident and the post-Second World War deportation of Crimean Tatars from their homeland in the Crimean peninsula.

A chapter written collectively by anthropologist Tanya Richardson, historian Vasyl Fedorenko, and biologist co-authors Vladyslav Balynskyy, Ihor Beliakov, Nataliia Brusentsova, and Ivan Rusev, takes us on a passage south, as the authors trace the movements of a previously unheralded species, the amphibious

Danube crested newt, in the wake of the 2023 destruction of the Kakhovka Dam. The magnitude of ecological displacements that followed the intentional bombing and rupture of the reservoir was colossal and systemic, affecting towns and villages as well as terrestrial and aquatic animals across thousands of square kilometres of Southern Ukraine. In “Amphibious Landings: Interspecies Relations After the Destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Station,” the authors use the crested newt as a focusing agent for a story of multispecies entanglements in the Black Sea basin, a porous region of lagoons, salt marshes, estuaries, and riparian reedbeds enmeshed within a landscape of floodplains and deltas, farmland and cities – an amphibious region of water and land that today straddles and blurs the boundaries of protection and destruction, love (of nature) and rage (at the occupiers), loss and renewal. That the protagonists of this story – both the newts and the ecologists who worked to protect them – succeeded, in noticeable measure, in their transplantation to the Black Sea Coast gives hope for the multispecies “returns” that may be possible elsewhere.

In “Indigenous Futurity in Exile: Mapping Jamala’s *QIRIM*,” ethnomusicologist Maria Sonevsky takes us even further south, to the contested Crimean peninsula. Sonevsky examines the most recent recording by Crimean Tatar pop star Jamala as a “musical mapping” of the peninsula that also works as a form of political and cultural resistance to the Russian invasion. *QIRIM* is the Tatar word for Crimea, and the Tatars, recognized by the Ukrainian state as one of its Indigenous peoples, have been largely resistant to Russian rule and, in the case of cultural figures like Jamala, vilified for it. In her careful reading of and listening to the album, Sonevsky compares Jamala’s renditions of Tatar songs with their source materials. Far from nostalgic, however, she finds the album to be future-oriented, drawing on the past to shape an “aspirational terrain of Indigenous resurgence in a contested territory that lies at the centre of the ongoing Russian war of aggression” against a Ukrainian state with post-colonial possibilities. Where, on the one hand, traditional songs “unmake the ahistorical Putinist claim that Crimea has always been Russian,” reviving them in a modern cinematic musical vein builds toward resurgence with its defiance of the “imperial politics of silencing.”

Media artist Olya Zikrata, in “Sonic Fictions in the Ruins of Catastrophe,” finds a similar spirit of defiance in the work of contemporary Ukrainian electronic music artists. Where Lesia Kulchynska had earlier focused on the capacity as well as the *incapacity* of visual images to convey wartime and colonial truths, Zikrata shifts our attention to the visceral power of sound as it shapes

“acoustic territories” both of war and of resistance. Drawing upon the sound theories of J. Martin Daughtry, Steve Goodman, Holger Schulze, and Kodwo Eshun, Zikrata delineates the capacity of sound to enact violence and, in the case of the artists she writes about, to repel violence. If the “warwork” of sound can perform “a geography of conquest,” Ukrainian musicians create “sonic fictions” or “possibility spaces” through their justice-seeking and future-centring imaginations. The second half of the chapter engages a poetics drawn upon the musicians she examines: Yurii Samson and Andrii Kozhukhar, both from Nova Kakhovka; Gamardah Fungus, from Dnipro; Whaler, Zavoloka, Ptakh, Heinali, and others. As Zikrata writes (in an italicized passage), “*Every catastrophe ... opens onto many fronts.*” Among the fronts found in these sonic fictions are those of “pain and prophecy, empowerment and escape, dream, and drive.”

If earlier histories of atrocity find their echoes in the current Russo-Ukrainian war, so do histories of catastrophe, which, in the case of Chornobyl, come to be interlinked through the colonial relation of the Soviet Union, and now Russia, to Ukraine. Valentyna Kharkhun’s “Revisiting and Reimagining Chornobyl: The Multiple Aftermaths of Catastrophe” examines the ways in which the last decade, since the war’s beginning in 2014, have reshaped the ways in which the 1986 nuclear disaster is framed and understood within Ukrainian arts and culture. The efforts to reframe and, in some cases, “rebrand” Chornobyl include those by the creative agency Banda, Valery Korshunov’s ARTEFACT project, Roman Hryhoriv and Ilya Razumeiko’s “archaeological opera” *Chornobyldorf*, and Markii Kamysch’s novelistic *Oformliandiia*. The projects mark a generational shift from funeral pathos and national victimhood to a questioning and opening of more universal possibility spaces, rather like Zikrata had mapped out in her examination of electronica musicians’ responses to the war. In Chornobyl’s case, the full-scale invasion reignited the fear of “nuclear blackmail” as another element of Russian “warwork.” The perception of Chornobyl, in Kharkhun’s analysis, has come full circle, from an emblem of real catastrophe to a trope of popular culture, and back again to a deeply troubling element of the real catastrophe of the present war.

The book’s third section ends with another image-text vignette, this one by artists Taras Polataiko and Violetta Oliinyk. “Castle-New-Castle” documents the artistically enhanced story of the moving of a village, named “Castle” (*Zamok*), to a new site in the aftermath of the Chornobyl accident. Like every geographic passage occasioned by war, by natural or technological disaster, or by the simple pressure of time in a changing world, this movement

downriver presages the movements many Ukrainians and others will be making in a world in which politics, economics, and ecology conspire to reshape lives and livelihoods.

The final section of the book, “Припущення/Conjectures: Conversations and Speculations,” features contributions of diverse formats. It begins with a conversation that took place in early 2024 between filmmaker and documentarian Oleksiy Radynski, cultural theorist Asia Bazdyrieva, media scholar Svitlana Matviyenko, and the present book’s editor. Broaching such topics as hope and hopelessness, war crimes documentation, international solidarity (including with Palestinians in Gaza), and decolonization of Russia, the conversation in “A Wartime Conversation on Ukraine, Coloniality, and Futurity” offers additional insights on some of the themes already explored in this volume. A second conversation features *Heart of Earth* co-curator Olesia Ostrovska-Liuta speaking with cultural historian Olena Stiazhkina in “The Public Life of Food.” Ostensibly about food, a topic initially discussed in Ostrovska-Liuta’s earlier chapter, the conversation ranges across history, from late-Soviet food cultures, social control through the presence and absence of food, and the legacy of the Holodomor, to the cultural-historical reverberations of a famously long list of dishes provided by novelist Yevhen Hutsalo in his 1982 novel *The Private Life of a Phenomenon*: Baturyn cakes, Poltava cutlets, Zaporizhzhia beer, and much more. Projecting into the scenario of “what will happen when we win” (the war), Stiazhkina sees not grief, but a banquet list.

This is followed by ecologist Oleksii Vasyliuk’s assessment of the current situation and possible future of “wild nature” in Ukrainian parks and protected areas, over 900 of which have been directly impacted by the war. Vasyliuk co-founded the Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group and, more recently, the Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Work Group. In “War and Wild Nature: Speculations on the Future of Ukrainian Wildlife,” he describes the “war-wilding” occurring in places where the depopulation of human communities has resulted in a kind of rewilding comparable to what occurred in the Chornobyl Zone after it was evacuated. The situation is highly variable, however, with few remaining intact steppes, a preponderance of invasive plants and animals, and many land mines and other hazardous military products. Vasyliuk concludes with an optimistic scenario of a Ukraine whose contribution to the European Union will be to use its depopulated lands to contribute to the EU’s recently declared environmental goals. As set out in the recent “Biodiversity Strategy for 2030” and the Nature Restoration Law, the EU is aiming, if at least on paper, to make half

of its territory protected or ecologically restored by 2030. If Ukraine succeeds in joining the European Union, Vasyliuk contends that it will be best positioned to become the “land oasis” that makes these goals attainable.

The book’s penultimate contribution is another image-text vignette, excerpted from a speculative video project by Yuri Yefanov. In “We Will Definitely Talk About This After the Last Air Raid Alert Stops,” Yefanov encourages us to imagine alongside him what cities, forests, and human–nonhuman entanglements might emerge once the last air raid alert, and the last war, has allowed earth to reconstitute itself with a more promising population of humans.

Finally, a closing postscript, “Decolonization (of the Unnamed Other) Is Not a Metaphor” by Adrian Ivakhiv, returns to the topic of decolonization, this time considering a subject that has heretofore been largely unnamed: the future of what many Ukrainians would consider to be the last unreconstructed colonial power, Russia. If to decolonize from one end (Ukraine’s) requires decolonizing from the other, then the future of Russia cannot go unremarked. Ivakhiv contextualizes the Russia-Ukraine dynamic in the global context within which the Anthropocene condition is to play itself out: a context marked by democratic possibilities, fitfully expressed in recent Ukrainian history (as elsewhere) yet pressured everywhere by authoritarian populisms and by capitalist economic imperatives. What is the role of democracy in colonial struggles like that of Ukraine today, and how can its promise be nourished in situations of war, conflict, and complex global interdependence?

Earth that is always at risk

Art, loss, and the work of having “something to lose”

Together, all of these contributions make for a tangled and polystylistic fabric, one that ranges from highly theoretical and analytical chapters to empirical, conversational, and poetic-artistic contributions, with the visual works serving not as mere accompaniments but as contributions in their own right. This diversity reflects the range of responses among Ukrainian scholars and artists to the wartime situation. It also resonates with the diversity of styles found in the environmental arts and humanities, which the volume is an expression of, and to the notion presented by decolonial theorists that decolonization can never be only intellectual – it must be cultural, expressive, and psychological or spiritual as well.

In this sense, the volume grapples with the role of artistic expression in the face of war and collective loss. The arts, for instance, can empower a people, enabling them to turn their own experience of trauma into a source of resistant and potent political agency; this is no doubt the intent of some of the memes and music discussed in a few of the chapters here, such as Kovalenko's and Zikrata's. But art can have many functions. It can empower on a personal level (that of self-expression) or on a collective one. It can also exploit or perpetuate trauma (one's own or someone else's). The contributors to *Terra Invicta* do not dwell on these contending roles or functions of art, but several of the chapters and reproductions suggest that art's function is more nuanced and ambiguous, yet deeply resonant and vital. Visual works reproduced here by Nikita Kadan (*A Shadow on the Earth*, figure 2.2), Kateryna Aliinyk (*Ukrainian Garden*, figure 2.4), Zhanna Kadyrova (*Palianytsia*, figure 16.1), and Kateryna Lysovenko (*Dinner in Ukraine*, figure 16.2) suggest art's ability to capture complexity as well as depth of meaning. The importance of bread, of the dinner table, and of the ground beneath one's feet, the artists seem to say, is not just something to celebrate, to promote, or to mourn (when it is lost). It is polysemantic, in the case of Kadyrova's bread, and can be troubling and potentially treacherous, as with Kadan's, Aliinyk's, and Lysovenko's works. Yet it is also ultimately compelling in a mysterious, yet foundational and collectively grounding, way. It is part of the relationship to the earth that is always there and always at risk.

In a recent video entitled "This World Is Recording," Ukrainian artist Katya Buchatska (whose *Landscape* is reproduced in figure 2.1) notes, over drone images of bomb-cratered fields, that "our fields are like a sieve now." If a tree could be planted in each shell hole, she muses, the war's injuries could be healed and Ukrainian fields would become a "living memorial." Memory acts as protection from repeating the past, but in 2022 this memory failed. "The year 2022," Buchatska writes in text captions, "and russia's [*sic*] full-scale invasion brought about a special sensitivity in us that hadn't existed before, and we began to feel the pain of the entire space in which we live."

The video proceeds to pan slowly across a forested grassland of trees, akin to the wood-pasture mosaic that paleoecologists have suggested characterized the predominant landscape of post-glacial Europe.⁴³ Buchatska continues: "This memorial seems to include the memory of people, ecosystems, landscape, harvest, soil (*zemlia*), plans, territory. Loss will remain loss, but creation can resist destruction. Perhaps we build a memorial not to prevent this from happening again. But, having fully experienced its possible repetition, we plant a garden so

that we have something to lose.”⁴⁴ The camera continues panning across partially shaded soil, tree roots, and fallen and decaying apples reminiscent of the closing images of Oleksandr Dovzhenko’s classic 1930 film *Earth* (which several of this volume’s authors refer to). Interestingly, Buchatska’s video was made in consultation with a historian and two conservation project officers working to introduce “nature-based climate solutions into Ukraine’s reform agenda.”

In this work by an artist contemplating war, history, memory, ecology, and the future, we see the outline of what the contributors to this volume push us toward contemplating: a world in which, in the face of history’s repetitions, and in the face of future uncertainty, we nevertheless persist in planting a garden “so that we have something to lose.”

Notes

- 1 This chapter has benefited from comments received on work I have presented in multiple venues, including as invited talks and conference presentations at the University of Vermont (sponsored by the UVM Honors College), the University of California Santa Barbara (sponsored by the Germanic and Slavic Studies Program and the Graduate Center for Literature Research, and by the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center), the Evangelische Akademie in Tutzing, Germany (sponsored by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, 2023), the Free Cultural Spaces “Towards the Symbiocene?” conference in Amsterdam (2023), Simon Fraser University’s Institute for Humanities conference on “Fascist Neo-liberalism and the Fate of Radical Democracy” (2024), and talks sponsored by Vermont Humanities in 2021 and 2024. I am also grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their most helpful comments.
- 2 See Ivakhiv, “Chernobyl.”
- 3 For a version of this argument, see Etkind, *Russia Against Modernity*. On Russia’s petro-imperialism, see Timofeeva, “Oil Curse,” and Cohen, “Russia’s Oily.”
- 4 Žižek, “Pacifism Is the Wrong Response.”
- 5 Latour, *Facing Gaia*.
- 6 The Anthropocene is well established as a proposed geological designation for the time in which Earth’s surface has become dominated by human activities. In speaking of the Anthropocene *crisis*, I draw especially on the growing literature in the environmental humanities, for which the geological designation is not necessarily to an *era*, but to a *condition* or *predicament* that requires urgent response lest it become a brief transition from a human-dominated world to one without humans. See Bonneuil, Hamilton, and Gemenne, *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis*; Merchant, *The Anthropocene and the Humanities*; Thomas, et al., *The Anthropocene*; Tsing, et al., *Field Guide to the Patchy Anthropocene*; and my discussion in chapter 5 (“Anthropocene”) of Ivakhiv, *New Lives of Images*.
- 7 On the environmental humanities, see Hubbell and Ryan, *An Introduction*; Emmett and Nye, *The Environmental Humanities*; Heise, Christensen, and Niemann, *The*

Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities. On colonialism and decoloniality, see Mignolo, *Darker Side of Western Modernity*; Manjapra, *Colonialism in Global Perspective*. For examples of the integration of post/decolonial thinking with the environmental humanities, see Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*; Franke, et al., *Ceremony*; Mbembe, *Brutalism*; Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*; Sultana, “The Unbearable Heaviness of Climate Coloniality.” On the historical underpinnings of the global climate crisis, see James W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*; Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*; Sultana, *Confronting Climate Coloniality*; Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. On the role of media in addressing the global climate crisis, see López et al., *The Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies*. On the Ukrainian environmental humanities, see Richardson and Tsybalyuk, “Beyond Anthropocentrism in Ukrainian Studies”; and Tsybalyuk, *Ecocide in Ukraine*.

- 8 Steffen, et al., “Trajectories of the Earth System.”
- 9 On ecoculture, see Parks, “Explicating Ecoculture”; Milstein and Castro-Sotomayor, *Routledge Handbook of Ecocultural Identity*; Ivakhiv, “Ecocultural Critical Theory.”
- 10 Eichler, “Ecocide is Genocide”; Crook, Short, and South, “Ecocide, Genocide, Capitalism and Colonialism”; Short and Crook, *The Genocide-Ecocide Nexus*.
- 11 This general premise is by now well established within a wide swath of critical scholarship on colonization, political economy, and development, with only the “eco-trauma” not having been precisely named as such. See, e.g., Wynter, “Human Being as Noun”; Franke, et al., *Ceremony*. To generalize in this fashion should not be to imply that colonization, capitalism, and modernity/modernization worked as monoliths or that everything connected to them is pernicious. Their expressions and their interactions were extremely diverse, multicausal, and in some ways multidirectional, and no program of “decolonization” that is also “de-westernization,” “demodernization,” and “anti-capitalism” could possibly cohere. The task of working toward a sustainable postcolonial world is messy, complex, and open to diverse interpretations.
- 12 Huber, *Climate Change as Class War*; Latour and Schultze, *On the Emergence of an Ecological Class*; Keucheyan, *Nature is a Battlefield*; Malm, *Fossil Capital*.
- 13 Mulvey and Shulman, *Climate Deception Dossiers*; Lewandowsky, “Climate Change Disinformation”; Lockwood and Lockwood, “How Do Right-Wing Populist Parties”; Gomes and Böhm, “Right-Wing Populism”; Zuboff, *Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.
- 14 On digital media within a global ecopolitical framework, see López et al., *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies*.
- 15 For example, Mearsheimer, “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault”; Motyl, “The Surrealism of Realism”; Becker, et al., “Reviving the Russian Empire.”
- 16 See Motyl, “The Surrealism”; Beer and Hariman, *Post-Realism*; D’Anieri, “Magical Realism”; Forsberg and Pursiainen, “The Psychological Dimension”; Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*; Sheeran, *Cultural Politics in International Relations*.
- 17 Astute analyses of the rise and growth of Putinism include Van Herpen, *Putinism*; Sakwa, *Putin Redux*; Laqueur, *Putinism*; and Suslov, *Putinism*. On the centrality of energy to Russian power, see Balmaceda, *Russian Energy Chains*.

- 18 Ishchenko and Zhuravlev, "How Maidan Revolutions Reproduce."
- 19 See Farago, et al., "A Culture in the Cross-Hairs"; Pynnöniemi, *Nexus of Patriotism and Militarism*.
- 20 See, for instance, Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow*; Morson, "Russian Exceptionalism."
- 21 Zygar's *War and Punishment* examines this idea of Ukrainian "treason" against Russia, alongside several other myths about the Russia-Ukraine relationship.
- 22 On Russian colonization of the Siberian Far East, see Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia*; Stephan, *The Russian Far East*; Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier*. On Russian imperial coloniality more generally, including self-exculpatory discourses of "self-colonization," see Morrison, "Russian Settler Colonialism"; Morrison, "Metropole, Colony, and Imperial Citizenship"; Sunderland, "The 'Colonization Question'"; Chari and Verdery, "Thinking Between the Posts"; Tlostanova, "Postsocialist ≠ post-colonial?"; Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?"; Etkind, *Internal Colonization*; Etkind, "How Russia 'Colonized Itself.'" On Russia as a Janus-faced empire, see Tlostanova, "The Janus-faced Empire." On decolonizing Russia, see the final chapter in the present book.
- 23 Debates over Ukraine's colonial status with respect to Russia have circled inconclusively around the nature of coloniality, and of Ukraine's in particular: for instance, is it a form of "settler," "dynastic," "internal," or "federal" colonialism, or merely a "surrogate," "metaphoric," or "cognitive" colonialism, a "colonialism of the mind." See Korek, *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality*; Yekelchuk, "The Location of Nation"; Riabchuk, "Culture and Cultural Politics"; Chernetsky, "Postcolonialism, Russia and Ukraine"; Velychenko, "Post-Colonialism and Ukrainian History"; Gerasimov and Mogilner, "Deconstructing Integration"; Gerasimov, "Ukraine 2014"; Sakwa, "Ukraine and the Postcolonial Condition"; Ivakhiv, "Decolonialism and the Invasion of Ukraine"; Ivakhiv, "Russia, Decolonization, and the Capitalism-Democracy Muddle"; Durand, "'New Russia' and the Legacies."
- 24 Hrytsak, *Ukraine: The Forging of a Nation*, chapter 5, "Ukraine, 1914–1945."
- 25 Snyder, *Bloodlands*. See also Bertov and Weitz, *Shatterzone of Empires*.
- 26 Dziuba's *Internationalism or Russification?* remains the standard text on this topic. Hrytsak examines the deep history of Ukrainian-Russian language politics in "Interlude: A Brief History of the Ukrainian Language," *Ukraine: The Forging of a Nation*.
- 27 For left-wing critiques of Ukraine's succumbing to neoliberal economic pressures, see Plank, "Land Grabs in the Black Earth"; Baysha, *Democracy, Populism, and Neoliberalism*; Yurchenko, *Ukraine and the Empire of Capital*.
- 28 Onuch and Hale, *The Zelensky Effect*.
- 29 Hrytsak, "Putin Made a Profound Miscalculation."
- 30 Yaffa, "What the Russian Invasion Has Done."
- 31 Channell-Justice, *Without the State*.
- 32 Kuzio, "Imperial Nationalism."
- 33 Ivakhiv, "Toward a Multicultural Ecology"; Kockel, "Being From and Coming To"; Sukhenko, "Ekolohichna Identychnist"; Mamonova, "Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Initiatives"; Mamonova, "Patriotism and Food Sovereignty"; Milstein and

- Castro-Sotomayor, *Routledge Handbook of Ecocultural Identity*; Grasso and Giugni, *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Movements*.
- 34 Latour, “New Climatic Regime”; Latour and Schultz, *On the Emergence*.
- 35 Latour, *Down to Earth*, 95–6.
- 36 Latour, *Down to Earth*, 82.
- 37 Barca, *Forces of Reproduction*.
- 38 For a different version of this argument, see Ivakhiv, “Becoming *Tuteishyi*.”
- 39 Charbonnier, “War Ecology,” 76.
- 40 I take the former term, *eutopia*, from Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht, whose term “Symbiocene,” the era of symbiotic interrelations between humans and nonhumans, has become resonant within certain circles of “green futurist” artists, designers, and thinkers. His use of the term *eutopia* comes from a talk given at *Towards the Symbiocene? The 10th Futurological Symposium on Free Cultural Spaces* at Ruigoord, Netherlands, July, 2023.
- 41 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 191.
- 42 Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257–8.
- 43 See, e.g., Vera, *Grazing Ecology and Forest History*.
- 44 Buchatska, *The World Is Recording*, translation by YouTube with slight amendments by Adrian Ivakhiv.

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