



Canadian Slavonic Papers

Revue Canadienne des Slavistes

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcsp20>

Against academic “resourcification”: collaboration as delinking from extractivist “area studies” paradigms

Victoria Donovan

To cite this article: Victoria Donovan (2023) Against academic “resourcification”: collaboration as delinking from extractivist “area studies” paradigms, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 65:2, 163-173, DOI: [10.1080/00085006.2023.2200669](https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2023.2200669)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2023.2200669>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 08 Jun 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Against academic “resourcification”: collaboration as delinking from extractivist “area studies” paradigms

Victoria Donovan

School of Modern Languages, University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, UK

ABSTRACT

This article engages Asia Bazdyrieva’s idea of the “resourcification” of Ukraine – that is, the reduction of Ukraine in Soviet and Western geopolitical imaginations to a mere extraction resource – to develop and criticize the idea of “academic resourcification.” The author argues that Western researchers have often treated Ukrainian (and other non-Western) subjects as extraction resources, mining their expertise and knowledge, without acknowledging their agency or contributions in their work. The article argues for the decolonization of Western academic practice in the form of “delinking” from such exploitative and extractivist paradigms of knowledge production and instead aspiring, in the words of the decolonial scholar Walter D. Mignolo, to “thinking and doing otherwise.” Asking what it means to decolonize academia, the article turns for inspiration to Ukrainian decolonial researcher-artist-activists, considering the ways in which these individuals are modelling more equitable and ethical forms of knowledge production. The article ends by advocating collaborative methods – that is, the co-production of knowledge *with* local thinkers, rather than *about* them – as a productive model for Western scholars in their efforts to decolonize their research.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article s’appuie sur l’idée avancée par Asia Bazdyrieva d’une « resourcification » de l’Ukraine, soit la réduction de l’Ukraine dans l’imaginaire géopolitique soviétique et occidental à une simple ressource d’extraction. L’article développe l’idée de la « resourcification académique » et en propose une critique. L’auteure affirme que les chercheurs occidentaux ont souvent traité les sujets ukrainiens (et autres non-occidentaux) comme des ressources destinées à l’extraction, en exploitant leur expertise et leurs connaissances, sans reconnaître leur rôle ou leurs contributions dans leur propre travail. L’article plaide en faveur de la décolonisation des pratiques universitaires occidentales, sous la forme d’une « déconnexion » avec ces paradigmes d’exploitation et d’extraction de la production de connaissances, et d’une aspiration à « penser et faire autrement », pour reprendre les termes du spécialiste de la décolonisation Walter D. Mignolo. L’article se termine par un plaidoyer en faveur de méthodes

KEYWORDS

Ukraine; resourcification; decolonization; extractivism; collaborative methods

CONTACT Victoria Donovan  vsd2@st-andrews.ac.uk

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

collaboratives qui impliquent la coproduction de connaissances avec les penseurs locaux, plutôt qu'à leur sujet, comme modèle productif pour les chercheurs occidentaux dans leurs efforts de décolonisation de leur recherche.

In her essay “No Milk, No Love,” Asia Bazdyrieva develops the idea of Ukraine’s “resourcification.”¹ Ukraine has been persistently reduced to a resource in the Western and Soviet geopolitical imaginations, she explains: from the image of the breadbasket of Europe, which fetishizes the country’s black soils and mineral riches, to the idea of an industrial heart, as the Ukrainian East has often been portrayed, beating lifeblood in the form of coal and iron ore through the arteries of the multinational Soviet state. This process of reducing Ukraine to its extractivist potential, Bazdyrieva argues, only intensified with the advent of capitalism.

With Ukraine’s independence in 1991, which aside from ideological rearrangements meant the reorganization of the economy and the reinvention of private property and market relations, the idea of default natural richness became a component of the naturalization of capitalist relations – through which Ukraine’s land, its geological composition, its agrarian capacities, and its population have become commodities.²

The upshot of the country’s “resourcification” is that Ukrainian lives have been valued often in accordance with their ability to facilitate, or at least not hinder, the extraction of goods demanded by external colonizers of the territory. As Bazdyrieva compellingly argues,

the notion of [Ukraine] as a resource justifies a spatial organization that enables slow violence and environmental damage through the category of the inhuman. This process equates the human population and life at large to geological, agricultural, and other forms of matter with usable material capacities.³

Reading this passage in January 2023, I was reminded of a fact that I learned during a trip to the southern port city of Mariupol in 2021: namely, that Newcastle in the United Kingdom was one of the major importers of sheet steel produced in the city’s highly polluting coke ovens and blast furnaces, which it fashioned into profitable consumer goods for export. The way the United Kingdom had outsourced this toxic stage of industrial production (formerly the task of internal peripheries, such as northeast England and South Wales) to Europe’s “edgelands,” where the cost to human life could be easily ignored, is one such case of slow violence enacted through the category of the inhuman that Bazdyrieva describes.

In an article published with CNN in July 2022, the Ukrainian researcher and curator Sasha Dovzhyk describes a different, but intersecting, kind of “resourcification.”⁴ Detailing her personal experience as a “fixer” for foreign journalists who travelled to report on Ukraine following the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022, she outlines the way in which Western media professionals extract knowledge from local subjects without acknowledging their agency or authority. While Dovzhyk insists on the strategies of “resistance and self-organization” that she and her colleagues employed to resist exploitative tendencies of Western media providers, I want to

dwell here on the devaluing of Ukrainian (and many non-Western “Other”) lives in the production of mainstream media content. And it is not just journalists who engage in such practices. Reading Dovzhyk’s article made me think of the many brilliant “fixers” who had driven me across Ukraine, brought local landscapes to life with their personal insights, and enriched my understanding of contemporary events by sharing everyday detail and lived experience. How many of these Ukrainian “fixers” ever make it onto the pages of academic monographs about the history, culture, and politics of the country? How much local knowledge is resourcified and unattributed in academic work, appearing at best as a note in a list of acknowledgements or as a perfunctory footnote?

In thinking about these questions, it is useful to turn to writing on the coloniality of knowledge and how it informs the ways in which we perceive and interact with the world. Writing in the co-authored volume *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Walter Mignolo, building on the thinking of the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano, makes a helpful distinction between the concepts of “colonialism” and “coloniality.” Colonialism, he writes, is a “system of colonial rule [...] a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people by another.”⁵ Coloniality, meanwhile, is a decolonial concept and refers to the widely accepted fiction of Eurocentric modernity – “the storytelling of good things to come” – which asserts the impossibility of “thinking and doing otherwise.”⁶ To paraphrase Mignolo’s writing in terms that are relevant to this article, coloniality is an ongoing state of colonized knowledge resulting from colonialism, a complex of inherited and internalized hierarchies of value that assert the primacy of certain forms of societal organization and practices of knowledge production over others. Coloniality is the state of mind that underpins the practices of resourcification described by Bazdyrieva and Dovzhyk above. Its fictions of “development” and “modernization” seek to justify the extraction and exploitation of non-Western lands and peoples; the priority that it assigns to Western voices – as the most “modern” and “rational” – informs the erasure of local knowledge holders from the record.⁷

In this same publication Mignolo asks: What does it mean to decolonize academia? How can we “think and do otherwise,” delinking from practices that we might describe as academic “resourcification,” to use Bazdyrieva’s term? As the decolonial feminist scholar Madina Tlostanova has pointed out, the stakes are high when it comes to the “decolonial option.” More than tinkering at the edges of academic practice, this is a matter of “deautomatizing and delinking from the Western epistemic premises, naturalized cognitive operations, methodological clichés and disciplinary divisions, and consequently, attempts to build a different conceptual apparatus to launch or set free an alternative world perception.”⁸ Putting this definition into terms that are relevant to ongoing discussions around decolonizing the field known as “Slavic Studies,” the “decolonial option” thus means more than simply de-centring Russia in curricula and research. Rather, it demands a complete break with those “area studies” paradigms that rely on ideas of enlightened (Western) knowledge and expertise and its application to “developing” and “dysfunctional” modernities (elsewhere). Yet functioning, as many of us do, within research institutes and centres that still endorse and invest in these paradigms, this project can seem unrealistic and even professionally self-sabotaging. What does decolonization mean, then, for “Slavic Studies,” and how can we do this work from within?

The decolonial option: who, where, when, why, and how?

As Mignolo notes, the answer to the question “What does it mean to decolonize?” cannot be an “abstract universal.” It has to be answered by looking at other “W questions”: who is doing it, where, when, why, and how?⁹ Looking to the work of decolonial Ukrainian researchers and artists both within Ukraine and working out of institutions in western Europe, a range of decolonial approaches can be identified. In this section, I discuss the work of the film director Sashko Protiah (Protyah), the researcher and artist Darya Tymbalyuk, and the video-artist and curator Vitalii (Vitaliy) Matukhno.¹⁰ For these researcher-artist-activists, decoloniality is, to use Tlostanova’s words, “consciously chosen as a political, ethical and epistemic positionality and an entry point into agency.”¹¹ Knowledge and understanding of the thinking behind this work is fundamental to the project of decolonizing Western knowledge of Ukraine more broadly, even if it is not possible for everyone everywhere to replicate the approaches discussed here.

Sashko Protiah is a founding contributor to the Freefilers cinemovement and NGO, which, before the full-scale invasion of February 2022, was a collaborative project to make independent cinema that “was as alert and sensitive to reality as possible, and whose main focus was human life and the struggle for equality and freedom.”¹² Sashko was based in Mariupol until its siege and destruction by the Russian army, when he was displaced to Zaporizhzhia, from where he and his colleagues now carry out humanitarian work. I first met Sashko when I visited Mariupol in November 2021, when he took me on a guided tour of his home district, the Left Bank, which has since been annihilated by Russian bombs. In July 2022, I began collaborating with Sashko and his team on the Mariupol Memory Park project, a digital collection of articles, essays, artwork, film, and audio-stories documenting the city’s cultural diversity.¹³ Through this project, I got to know Sashko and his team better, and I learned more about the decolonial practice of the Freefilers collective.

How do Protiah and the Freefilers collective “think and do otherwise,” delinking from the extractivist and exploitative filmmaking practices often directed at the Ukrainian East? The collective does this by troubling traditional subject/object cinematographic dichotomies and refusing to objectify and exoticize the individuals and landscapes that it depicts on screen. Rather than the “distanced view from nowhere” evoked by Donna Haraway or the fictional privilege of impartial sight (to which the likes of Dzhiga Vertov and Sergei Loznitsa have aspired in their cineportraits of the “Donbas” region), Sashko places himself in the frame of his films, asking questions, listening to the responses of his interlocutors, and asking follow-up questions.¹⁴ As he explained when we met in 2021, he also produces his films collaboratively with local subjects, inviting them to contribute their own creative practice and intermingling it with his cinematographic narratives. In *Zhyttia poza reziume* (*Life outside CV*, 2019), three vignettes about working-class life in Mariupol – for example, documentary footage of a loving relationship between a father and daughter – are intercut with shots of the girl’s hand drawings, accompanied by her voiceover narrating the story of the pictures.¹⁵ These subject-driven interventions work as metatexts in the film, giving the documentary narrative additional emotional resonance and meaning.

While we were working together on the Mariupol Memory Park, Sashko explained that it was part of the Freefilers’ collaborative philosophy to embrace each other’s “roughness” or even “looseness,” as he humorously put it, not seeking to over-correct

or impose a subjectively defined notion of perfection onto each other's work.¹⁶ This sentiment aligns precisely with Mignolo's and Tlostanova's understandings of the "decolonial choice" as a radical departure from hierarchical thinking that attributes to one vision of the world more value or worth than another. While strong advocates of radical egalitarianism and anti-patriarchal politics, the Freefilers collective thus also practises radical inclusivity, embracing heterogeneity, diversity, and even dissent in the Mariupol Memory Park project. As Sashko explained in one of our Telegram chats, "I guess we should exclude all types of hate speech, blatant stereotypical blabla about the city and historical inaccuracies or distortions, but apart from that we don't need any other rules, do we?"¹⁷ Deceptively simple in its articulation, this inclusive sentiment is something that academics often struggle to embrace in our hierarchical practice, deeply invested as it is in categories of expertise and authority.

Darya Tsybalyuk is a Ukrainian researcher, writer, and artist currently based at the University of Oxford. A decolonial, feminist researcher, Darya's PhD work intentionally troubled established (often Western) hierarchies of knowledge production, asserting in particular the value of artistic and embodied research as a means of interacting with and producing knowledge about the world and an alternative to analytical (academic) practice. Darya's PhD research, which explored plant-human relations in stories of people displaced from the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts after 2014, was thus a portfolio of different kinds of practices – a written thesis, a collaborative art project, a set of paleobotanical drawings, a summer school, and a series of community engagement events – meditating on the same set of themes. The knowledge produced through these approaches cross-pollinated and created an ecosystem of understanding, not only about the subject of the PhD but also about methods we use to know the world.

Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Darya wrote a powerful decolonial critique in *Nature Human Behaviour* about the structural violence inherent to Western institutions of knowledge, such as universities, and the ways that these institutions often dismiss embodied knowledge of war as irrational or overly emotional, asserting instead the importance of "academic objectivity" – "the view from nowhere" that can be achieved only with analytical (disembodied, read Western) distance.¹⁸ This rationale, Darya explained, is the root of toxic "Westspaining" tendencies that reinforce the academic "resourcification" model: emotional, war-impacted Ukrainians are research subjects to be studied, not authoritative purveyors of knowledge whose voices and demands for institutional and paradigmatic change deserve to be heard.¹⁹

Darya demands radical change in her article – a decolonial delinking from existing practices that goes much further than small revisions to teaching curricula and constitutives, rather, a fundamental shift in epistemic thinking and practice. As Tlostanova has noted, the stakes are high in this enactment of the "decolonial choice." Darya agrees with this view, writing:

Following decolonial, feminist and other critical scholars, we need to recentre embodied and uncomfortable knowledge, knowledge as a burden, knowledge as an injury and knowledge as emancipation. We need to stop erasing the fleshy weight of our bodies from our teaching and research. We need to think of knowledge as part of our diverse lived realities and our struggles. And we need to stand in solidarity with those who are excluded, those living through wars and oppression, those who fall between the cracks, by fighting for policy change within our institutions and by making these institutions more welcoming and inclusive.²⁰

Here, Darya's argument intersects with those of other decolonial scholars and artists, such as the visual arts researcher and journalist Kateryna Iakovlenko. In an article in *e-flux*, published in May 2022, Iakovlenko wrote about "Ukrainian rage" as a manifestation of the embodied experience of multiple oppressions and how it troubles privileged, Western requirements for knowledge to be produced in neutral, dispassionate ways if it is to be taken seriously.²¹

A final example of decolonial thinking that I wish to discuss here is the work of the Lysychansk video-artist and curator Vitalii Matukhno. Vitalii is the founder of *gareleia neotodresh'* (usually transliterated as *gareleia neotodryosh*), a curatorial initiative that, before the full-scale invasion in February 2022, was working with artists from the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts to realize exhibitions of local creative work in derelict buildings across the region.²² When I interviewed Vitalii about his work following his displacement to Lviv in summer 2022, he told me that his original intention had been to showcase work by local artists as a means of resisting the objectification of the eastern region by outsiders, who often depicted it only as a place of post-industrial exotica, aestheticized "ruin porn," or a charred warscape.²³ As he explained, he wanted to curate exhibitions of work by people who knew intimately the reality of life in the Ukrainian East. While not using the term, Vitalii was certainly talking about the same embodied knowledge (often dismissed as too subjective or unreflective to be taken seriously) that Darya and Iakovlenko refer to in their writings about decolonizing knowledge of Ukraine.

Like Sashko and the Freefilers collective, Vitalii worked collaboratively and in a spirit of radical egalitarianism on the *gareleia neotodresh'* project. Exhibitions were co-curated with exhibiting artists, such that individuals could find a space in the designated derelict building and install their work in whatever fashion they preferred; the only rules were that there were to be no expressions of hate and no interference with other artists' work. An important part of Vitalii's curatorial philosophy was the inclusion of artists from the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk, which at that time were controlled by the unrecognized and illegal "DNR" and "LNR" fighting groups. "People think that [these territories] are lost and they won't ever be returned," he explained in interview, "but we need to de-occupy all of Ukraine, including Crimea and the occupied territories of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts." Expressing a sentiment that many Ukrainian researchers and artists shared, he added: "Because when they are finally returned, we will need to work with them again. And how are we going to work with people who think that Ukraine forgot about them for the last eight years?"²⁴

Vitalii's work corresponds in important ways with Tlostanova's definition of the "decolonial choice," which, as noted above, is understood as a process of "deautomatizing and delinking from the Western epistemic premises [...] methodological clichés and disciplinary divisions, and [building] a different conceptual apparatus."²⁵ In its resistance to outsider looking – the objectification and subsequent dehumanization of Ukraine's eastern region – and in the way it takes seriously embodied knowledge, residing in those for whom this place is not a "field" for academic or artistic research, but home, Vitalii's work is, I would argue, inherently decolonial. Likewise, the rejection of established institutional forms – the exhibition or the gallery space – as viable receptors for this kind of collaborative practice speaks of a radical reimagining of the ways and forms through which knowledge is produced. Like Sashko and Darya, Vitalii is not aspiring to achieve external (Western) affirmation that his practice is "good enough" or "adequately professional"; it

determines for itself its ethical foundations, rules of practice, and acceptable forms of expression, in this way opening up “alternative world perceptions.”²⁶

The decolonial option II: collaboration as delinking

Returning to Mignolo’s question “What does it mean to decolonize?,” we (and here I refer to Western researchers like myself, who are not from the places that we study) might very well ask what role (if any) we have to play in decolonizing our subject areas. In discussions about resisting “Westspaining,” about making space for embodied, situated knowledge, what role do those of us from the West who do not possess emplaced, embodied knowledge play? Here it is productive to look to parallel conversations that have already been taking place for years around the role of white “allies” in the context of institutionalized racism. Writing in the international bestseller *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People about Race*, for example, Reni Eddo-Lodge points out the way that white privilege often distorts conversations about structural racism, leading to dead-end debates about relative/intersectional positionalities:

[White people have] never had to think about what it means, in power terms, to be white, so any time they’re vaguely reminded of this fact, they interpret it as an affront. Their eyes glaze over in boredom or widen in indignation. Their mouths start twitching as they get defensive. Their throats open up as they try to interrupt, itching to talk over you but not to really listen, because they need to let you know that you’ve got it wrong.

The journey towards understanding structural racism still requires people of colour to prioritise white feelings. Even if they can hear you, they’re not really listening. It’s like something happens to the words as they leave our mouths and reach their ears. The words hit a barrier of denial and they don’t get any further.²⁷

Like white people in discussions about race, Western researchers of eastern Europe can often feel uncomfortable and defensive in conversations about decolonization. It is difficult for many of us to stay quiet in these conversations, not to talk over Ukrainian or other colleagues from the places that we study, in our efforts to justify ourselves and assert our “already-achieved” efforts to diversify and decolonize our teaching and research. It can be frustrating for Ukrainian colleagues to be part of these conversations, which brand themselves as decolonial but in fact reproduce the same hierarchies of authority and power, allowing voices (often of Western Russianists) that have long been at the centre of the conversation to re-occupy this space, this time speaking on behalf of (or, worse, claiming to “give voice” to) systematically marginalized others.²⁸ If “Westspaining” is now a well-established concept in the discipline of modern languages and cultural studies, perhaps we should also consider introducing the idea of “Westspreading,” the act of taking up (intentionally or not) the virtual space of institutionally peripheralized others.

What, then, can it mean for Western scholars to decolonize? What is our role in the process of delinking from the structures and practices that have preserved our privilege for so long? There are no doubt many answers to this question, and it would be helpful for space to be created for an exchange of views and experiences. In the final section of this article, however, I wish to offer some thoughts from my own experience of collaborative project work in recent years and how I see it as an option available to Western scholars to delink from extractivist “area studies” approaches and paradigms. Anticipating the

obvious criticism of my own positionality, I wish to reference Tlostanova's figure of the "trickster," who is able to navigate repressive systems in order to enact change from within.²⁹ It is a fact of life that many of us work in hierarchical institutions whose politics do not align exactly or at all with our own. For this reason, we must all learn to operate as "tricksters," using the power (and, crucially, the funding) that we are assigned to manifest the changes that we want to see.

Collaborative methods are well established in social anthropology but may be relatively little known to those of us who operate, for example, in modern languages or cultural studies. A good example from social anthropology is *Writing Friendship: A Reciprocal Ethnography*, a co-authored narrative of intimacy between Liria Hernández, a Roma woman from Madrid, and Paloma Gay y Blasco, a non-Roma anthropologist, which the authors describe as "an experiment in ethnographic being and knowing."³⁰ Hernández and Gay y Blasco's work evidences most strikingly the transformative potential of collaboration for our research practice: writing critically about each other across a series of thematic chapters, the authors confront the uncertainty, ambiguity, and doubt that are normally subsumed into single-authored academic work, turning this confrontation into the "unstable foundations" for their entangled stories.³¹ This work perhaps most successfully incorporates the dissensus inherent to collaboration, both in terms of project work and co-writing. To borrow the terminology of Eric Lassiter, one of the key theorists of collaborative methods, the authors work with the "force of difference" rather than seeking the "homogenization of divergent systems of knowledge" and "interpretive accord."³²

What does working with the "force of difference" mean for what has traditionally been understood as "area studies" research? Speaking from my own experience, it has meant taking embodied knowledge of place seriously and understanding the Ukrainian practitioners about whose work I write as co-thinkers rather than research subjects. This process of co-producing knowledge *with* local thinkers, rather than *about* them, is far from always harmonious: it often involves conflict, dissent, and emotional labour. In our co-authored book, *Limits of Collaboration: Art, Ethics, and Donbas*, Darya Tsymbalyuk and I wrote about the metaphorical "stretchmarks" that collaborative methods left on our work, the results of the fierce tugs-of-war involved in collaborative meaning-making.³³ This work is resource-demanding, involving the invisible labour of managing expectations and searching for resolutions. Working with the "force of difference" also involves acknowledging the needs of different contributors to a project, producing knowledge not only in the form of the English-language journal articles and monographs desired by universities, but also in ways that benefit partners working in other language contexts and sectors, such as teaching resources, databases, exhibitions, film screenings, creative practice, community workshops, and other kinds of engagement work that may seem worlds away from traditional academic practice.

As I wrote recently for *ASEEES NewsNet*, the main challenge to this kind of work is chronic self-depletion.³⁴ Working against academic resourcification within institutions that still endorse extractivist "area studies" paradigms means being a "trickster" in the Tlostanova sense, smuggling emancipatory content into exploitative systems. But being a "trickster," performing institutional compliance while simultaneously delinking from exploitative institutional practice, can be exhausting. While we may like to think, as academics, that we are capable of expanding limitlessly to fulfill institutional requirements while also engaging in the invisible labour that makes collaborative practice

possible, this is simply not true, and, indeed, it is a damaging work model to advocate (one need only look at sector-specific statistics on academic burnout and mental health to confirm this).³⁵ What we need, then, for this kind of ethically informed, collaborative work to thrive is a shift in academic culture so that this kind of knowledge production, which is sometimes diminished inside universities that prioritize traditional kinds of outputs, is recognized as significant and valuable. Rather than paying lip-service to the notion of socially engaged research, which is often thought of as “social work” lacking institutional value, we should envisage better models for research, developing these in conversation with local partners and conceiving outputs that benefit not only ourselves and our careers, but also the places we study.

Notes

1. Bazdyrieva, “No Milk, No Love.”
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Dovzhyk, “Opinion: Secret Diary.”
5. Mignolo, “What Does It Mean?” 114.
6. Ibid., 113.
7. It should be noted, however, that in addition to non-Western lands and peoples, the violence of coloniality can also be directed at marginalized Western subjects, devaluing the voices and ignoring the agency of racialized, classed, gendered, and other negatively politicized subjects within the borders of western European states.
8. Tlostanova, “Postcolonial Condition,” 168.
9. Mignolo, “What Does It Mean?” 108.
10. The transliterations in parentheses are those the artists prefer, but Library of Congress transliteration is otherwise used in this article in accordance with *CSP* style.
11. Tolstanova, “Postcolonial Condition,” 165.
12. See the Freefilers website: <http://freefilers-mariupol.tilda.ws/eng>.
13. Mariupol Memory Park (2022), <https://www.mariupolmemorypark.space/en/>.
14. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 581; Vertov, *Entuziazm*; Loznitsa, *Donbass*.
15. Freefilers, *Zhittia posa reziume*.
16. Sashko Protiah, Telegram chat with author, 7 September 2022.
17. Ibid., 22 May 2022.
18. Tsybalyuk, “Academia Must Recentre”; Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 581.
19. Garcevic, “Westsplaining the Balkans.”
20. Tsybalyuk, “Academia Must Recentre.”
21. Iakovlenko, “Ukrainian Rage.”
22. Gareleia neotodresh’ is a difficult-to-translate phrase that puns on a mispronunciation of the word “gallery,” highlighting the project’s extra-institutional profile, and boasts that “you can’t rip it down” – a reference to the do-it-yourself nature of the curation. The initiative’s website is <https://linktr.ee/gareleya.neotodyosh>.
23. Vitalii Matukhno, interview by author, 20 July 2022.
24. Ibid.
25. See note 8 above.
26. Ibid.
27. Eddo-Lodge, *Why I’m No Longer*, x.
28. Lina Srivastava critiques the notion of “giving voice” in “Telling Stories.”
29. Tlostanova explains her own experience operating within a Western academic system: “As a minority trickster who has spent many years inside a highly repressive academic system, I claim that it is almost always possible to infiltrate, undermine, and destabilize

such systems from within.[...] In the present conditions, the best strategy for critical imperial-colonial discourses is a negotiation, a cunning sneaking of the radical emancipating ideas into the institutionalized structures. Such a skillful balancing is possible only when we have access to more opportunities." Tlostanova, "Postcolonial Condition," 175.

30. Hernández and Gay y Blasco, *Writing Friendship*, 165.

31. *Ibid.*, 165.

32. Lassiter, "When We Disagree."

33. Donovan and Tsymbalyuk, *Limits of Collaboration*.

34. Donovan, "(Sorry) State."

35. See, for example, the 2021 report by Education Support that revealed that half of UK university staff were exhibiting signs of depression. Wray and Kinman, "Supporting Staff Wellbeing."

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, grant number AH/V001051/1.

Notes on contributor

Victoria Donovan is a senior lecturer in Modern Languages and the director of the Centre for Russian, Soviet, Central and East European Studies at the University of St. Andrews. She is the co-author with Darya Tsymbalyuk of *Limits of Collaboration: Art, Ethics, and Donbas* (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2022) and the author of *Chronicles in Stone: Preservation, Patriotism, and Identity in the Russian Northwest* (NIUP imprint at Cornell, 2019). Her research and knowledge-transfer work has been recognized with prestigious prizes and grants, including an Arts and Humanities Leadership Fellowship, a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award, and an AHRC/BBC New Generation Thinker award. Her next book, *Monotown: Tales of Resistance from the Ukrainian East*, is forthcoming with Daunt Books in 2024.

Bibliography

- Bazdyrieva, Asia. "No Milk, No Love." *e-flux Journal*, no. 127 (May 2022). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/127/465214/no-milk-no-love/>.
- Donovan, Victoria. "The (Sorry) State of the Field or Why Western Humanists Need to Listen in Silence and Solidarity." *ASEEES NewsNet* 63, no. 1 (January 2023): 11–13. <https://t.co/Kd1RnFNwCS>.
- Donovan, Victoria, and Darya Tsymbalyuk. *Limits of Collaboration: Art, Ethics, and Donbas / Mezhi kolaboratsii: Mistetstvo, etika ta Donbas*. Kyiv: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2022.
- Dovzhyk, Sasha. "Opinion: Secret Diary of a Ukrainian 'Fixer.'" CNN, 20 July 2022. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/07/20/opinions/ukraine-fixer-war-foreign-journalists-dovzhyk/index.html>.
- Eddo-Lodge, Reni. *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.
- Freefilmers. *Zhyttia poza reziume*. Mariupol, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS_RTLlq50k.
- Garcevic, Srdjan. "Westsplaining the Balkans." *Balkan Insight*, 15 September 2017. <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/09/15/westsplaining-the-balkans-09-11-2017/>.
- Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–599. doi:10.2307/3178066.
- Hernández, Liria, and Paloma Gay y Blasco. *Writing Friendship: A Reciprocal Ethnography*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

- Iakovlenko, Kateryna. "Ukrainian Rage." *e-flux Notes*, 11 May 2022. <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/468104/ukrainian-rage>.
- Lassiter, Luke Eric. "When We Disagree: On Engaging the Force of Difference in Collaborative, Reciprocal, and Participatory Researches." Paper presented at the 107th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco, CA, November, 2008.
- Loznitsa, Sergei. *Donbass*. Leipzig: Deckert, 2018.
- Mignolo, Walter D. "What Does It Mean to Decolonize?" In *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, 105–134. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.
- Srivastava, Lina. "Telling Stories: Lina Srivastava Talks about Transmedia Activism (Part Two)." Interview by Henry Jenkins. "Pop Junctions: Reflections on Entertainment, Pop Culture, Activism, Media Literacy, Fandom and More" (blog), 21 January 2016. <http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2016/01/telling-stories-lina-srivastava-talks-about-transmedia-activism-part-two.html>.
- Tlostanova, Madina. "The Postcolonial Condition, the Decolonial Option, and the Post-Socialist Intervention." In *Postcolonialism Cross-Examined: Multidirectional Perspectives on Imperial and Colonial Pasts and the Neocolonial Present*, edited by Monika Albrecht, 165–178. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Tsymbalyuk, Darya. "Academia Must Recentre Embodied and Uncomfortable Knowledge." *Nature Human Behaviour* 6, no. 6 (June 2022): 758–759. doi:10.1038/s41562-022-01369-9.
- Vertov, Dzigha. *Entuziazm: Symfoniia Donbasu*. Kyiv: Ukrainfilm, 1931.
- Wray, Siobhan, and Gail Kinman. "Supporting Staff Wellbeing in Higher Education." London: Education Support, 2021. https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11913/ES_Supporting_Staff_Wellbeing_in_HE_Report/pdf/ES_Supporting_Staff_Wellbeing_in_HE_Report.pdf.