Sasha Dovzhyk (ed.)

Ukraine Lab

Global Security, Environment, and Disinformation Through the Prism of Ukraine

With a foreword by Rory Finnin

Саша Довжик (ред.)

Українська лабораторія

Глобальна безпека, захист довкілля та дезінформація через призму України

Передмова Рорі Фінніна

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Ukraine Lab:

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Contributors

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Sasha Dovzhyk completed her PhD in Comparative Literature at Birkbeck, University of London. Since 2021, she is the Special Projects Curator at the Ukrainian Institute London. In 2022–2023, she has also been appointed an Associate Lecturer in Ukrainian Literature at the School of Slavonic and East-European Studies, UCL. Her previous books include *Decadent Writings of Aubrey Beardsley* (edited with Simon Wilson, MHRA, 2022) and *Ukrainian Cassandra: New Translations of Works by Lesia Ukrainka* (Live Canon, 2023). Her articles and

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Rory Finnin is University Associate Professor of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Cambridge. He launched Cambridge Ukrainian Studies in 2008. His primary research interest is the interplay of literature and national identity in Ukraine. He also studies Turkish nationalist literature and Crimean Tatar literature. His broader interests include solidarity studies, nationalism theory, human rights discourse, and problems of cultural memory in the region of the Black Sea. He is author of *Blood of Others: Stalin's Crimean Atrocity and the Poetics of Solidarity* (University of Toronto Press, 2022) and co-author, with Alexander Etkind, Uillieam Blacker, Julie Fedor, Simon Lewis, Maria Mälksoo and Matilda Mroz, of *Remembering Katyn* (Polity Press, 2012).

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Nina Murray is a translator, poet, and writer. She holds advanced degrees in Linguistics and Creative Writing. She is the author of the poetry collection *Alcestis in the Underworld* (Circling Rivers Press, 2019) and several chapbooks. Her award-winning translations include Oksana Zabuzhko's *Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, Oksana Lutsyshyna's *Ivan and Phoebe*, and Lesia Ukrainka's *Cassandra.*

Phoebe Page studied Ukrainian literature and culture at the University of Cambridge as part of her BA in Modern Languages. She recently participated in the Ukrainian Institute London's writing residency Ukraine Lab, which tackled global themes through the prism of Ukraine. Phoebe is currently a Master's student in Political Sociology at UCL's School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies, focusing on Ukraine. She is interested in security and the role of culture and soft power in the context not only of malign influence but also as counter offensive and resistance to hybrid aggression.

Jonathon Turnbull completed his BA and MSc degrees in Geography at the University of Oxford. Since 2018, he has been a PhD candidate in Geography at the University of Cambridge funded by the ESRC. Previously, he held visiting research positions at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Kyiv and Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Turnbull is a founding member of the Digital Ecologies research group and the Ukrainian Environmental Humanities Network. He is co-editor of *Digital Ecologies: Mediating More-Than-Human Worlds* which is forthcoming with Manchester University Press. His articles have been published in scholarly journals and other outlets including *Progress in Human Geography*, *Progress in Environmental Geography*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Dialogues in Human Geography*, *The Geographical Journal*, *cultural geographies*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Anthropology Today*, *ACME*, *The Ecologist*, and more.

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Foreword

Rory Finnin

In early May 2022, a russian missile tore into an eighteenth-century estate nestled among groves and birdsong in a village in eastern Ukraine. The premises housed a small library and museum dedicated to Ukraine's legendary philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda (1722–1794). It was a deliberate, targeted strike. The walls collapsed; fire quickly consumed the premises. Miraculously no one was killed.

Photographs of the destruction circulated online the next morning, just more evidence of russia's genocidal war against the people of Ukraine[1] and their identity and culture. But there was also something standing astride the tragedy in these images, something moving and inspirational. Amid the dense smoke and charred concrete, one thing was clearly visible: the large statue of the philosopher Skovoroda himself, singed but unbowed.

The symbolism is simple and striking, and its message is at the heart of this book. Out of the horror of a brutal, unprovoked invasion can come defiant knowledge. From the fog of war, philosophy can still emerge. For Skovoroda, who never stood still, forces of ignorance and aggression would ultimately surrender to those who pursued a radical commitment to dialogue and solidarity. 'Untruth may attack and oppress', he wrote, 'but the will to fight it is stronger'.

Ukraine Lab practises this dialogue and solidarity; it undertakes this fight. The essays collected here and edited by Sasha Dovzhyk are the product of ground-breaking workshops and conversations between six emerging writers in Ukraine and the United Kingdom about loss, trauma, and the possibility of truth in a world out of joint. The photographs of Mstyslav Chernov talk back to each

1 Since Russia's full-scale invasion, many Ukrainians and Ukrainian allies have refused to capitalise the name of the aggressor state and its institutions. Ukraine Lab pieces use lower or upper case for 'Russia' in accordance with each author's preference.

essay, gesturing to the limits of documentation and representation in wartime.

In the wake of the Chornobyl catastrophe, the poet Ivan Drach (1936–2018) wrote, 'I envy those who have words. I have none… Silence weighs heavily on the soul, but language is dull and arbitrary'. Each essay overcomes Drach's paradox by putting to work a precious, hard-won skill: listening. Nina Murray's translations into both English and Ukrainian are paragons of the practice. From the voices of indefatigable volunteers to the stirrings of verdant thickets, the writers and translators of *Ukraine Lab* listen closely and call on us to do the same.

What we hear is an urgent invitation: not only to learn about Ukraine but to learn *from* Ukraine. As Dovzhyk explains, these essays position Ukraine as a 'prism' through which to understand global problems anew: disinformation, the persistence of empire, the rampant abuse of our environment. In offering us access to a vibrant civil society committed to dialogue, solidarity, and truth, they also position Ukraine as a prism through which to envision solutions.

One weapon of russia's war against Ukraine has been our ignorance. One of the targets is still our knowledge. The volume you hold in your hands is a barricade. Let it also be a vector of our counter-offensive.