

Holodomor

Zamoryty

murder by hunger

My belly a chapel where the hymnals are inched in dust and the stained glass is cracked on the crown of christ

No one masses anymore

I have cut off and eaten all my hair

Stalin is the biggest *kerisa*¹ on earth. Stalin, with his seedy eyes and trim whiskers, Stalin has stolen all of our grain

Valentin hid a few sacred kernels in the cuff of his trousers to sneak some grain away

We hunch in our hutches, so hungry we eat faith

Moya *podruga*² Oxana, she lined the loft of her house with wheat, lifting the asbestos for every little kernel

My neighbor Ludmilla fed the flesh of her husband to little Nikolai, to keep him going for just another day

Starve is word verbi-fied: stomach's obsession with itself. Every variety of burn: scorch, sear, smolder

The mother-gone-starver went over the wheat field collecting shafts of grain and the Collectivists shot him dead

We weep for meat, for *hleba*³

The ravens watch our every vernal urge, we cannot grow without them seeing, oh crow away

All I had to eat today was three mouthfulls of *pochva*⁴ for the minerals

The skin on the face of my boy Vanya is stretched so thin it tears in spots and I can see his skeleton prying its way out

Ukraine, a crag before it crumbles

We work this land that once was ours with hands that once were ours we are only now shells of old cocoons

Proximity persuades our stomachs we are full, so close to grain we cannot eat

I found today a bird's nest and I robbed the eggs, my rusty innards forget to gurgle, forget to churn

A heart worn, not watched on the sleeve is a heart that seizes to beat while we work I am so dizzy how can I take another step

We are all skeletons seeding. We call our caskets now, before things get worse

The Collectivists have cut the pleasure centers of our tongues; we can taste only scars now

We will sketch here out under the fire's low light a metaphysics of emptiness

I dreamed last night a holstein was my mother; I sucked and sucked but could only suck dust

Even in prisons the jailers offer pleasure of a moldy heel of bread

My *koshka*⁵ Natasha, I loved, I took her life for my hunger and cried while I dined

I am still a human am I?

1. Rat 2. My friend 3. Bread 4. Dirt 5. Cat