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HOLODOMOR GENERATION: LITERARY RESPONSES TO COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

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This article examines Ukrainian works of literature of the Holodomor generation during the period when the Great Famine of 1932–1933 was still unmentionable in the Soviet press and largely unknown or forgotten elsewhere. Totalitarianism created the phenomenon of mass martyrdom with a drive to suppress the memory of the witness, to prevent the act of witnessing. While this half-century, from the mid-1930s to the mid-1980s, was characterized by social and cultural amnesia, there were Ukrainian writers who attempted to bring about some dissident bonds of mnemonic solidarity. They addressed those in the know – their own generation, who witnessed, struggled through and still remember the famine and collectivization of suffering, though escaped own recollection in fear and silence. Writing under censorship (including self-censorship) and under impact of trauma these writers posed painful and sensitive questions attempting to speak up for the dead in the form of generational autobiography.

Keywords: Holodomor, generation, memory work, literary responses to trauma

Karl Mannheim, the author of a theory of generations, suggested a century ago in his essay «The Problem of Generations» (1923) that temporary and historical affinity may not be enough for the next generation to emerge. Not every social and cultural cohort similarly located would come to see itself as separate and distinct. He managed to discern the potentiality of a generation from its fulfillment, pointing out to the factors of social transformation as well as the generation's entelechy [19, p. 312], sometimes blended with utterly damaging «*personally acquired memories*» [19, p. 301], like war or another atrocity. He borrowed from early Heidegger the idea of inevitability «of living in and with one's generation», which only completes «the full drama of individual human existence» [19, p. 283]. Lived experiences which may dialectically graft themselves upon each other and semantic links which shape the generational membership could come about at the edge of survival and later become a 'login' reference point for *literati* survivors groping for words.

The Holodomor (the Great Famine of 1932–1933) was a non-story for more than fifty years. However, during these years it remained a nexus of trauma and conspiracy. The suffering of the famine victims was to some degree masked by the prevailing focus on the atrocities the Second World War, partisan warfare, and the post-war Soviet/anti-Soviet reign of terror. Party activists – bystanders and enablers, and those somewhere in between, many thousands

of Ukrainians among them – became accustomed to a form of doublethink about their own involvement in the famine, in part because, in order to deflect criticism of the regime, Stalin had circulated among top Party officials a contrary explanation for what was happening: the responsibility for the famine lay with enemy sabotage, opposition and peasants themselves [17, p. 246–247]. The public space for a discussion about the Great Famine was missing until the era of *Glasnost*, which was in a sense a moment of retrospective news. This article aims at the period when the Holodomor was not mentioned in the Soviet press, when it was not known by this name, when it was impossible to imagine any official commemoration of the event in Ukraine. The half a century from the mid-1930s to the mid-1980s represented, instead, a type of cultural and social forgetting. My focus is on Ukrainian works of literature of a particular generation that preserved the memory of the famine trauma and tried to find the ways to voice that trauma. On the one hand, these authors were confronting censorship and denial (in the attempts to remember the Famine in the Soviet Union), while others were struggling with the stigma of the Famine survivor generation who was later exposed to Second World War's ravages (in attempts to mourn at distance, in emigration). I will try to reconstruct how this transfer of knowledge and survival experience happened and how the mnemonic anti-narrative was gradually articulated, saved from incineration and coded in culture.

The Holodomor forces one to consider the issue of *mass* martyrdom and *collectivization of suffering*. Totalitarian martyrs could not recant and be saved. A devastating experiment in biopolitics, the famine allowed the Soviet government to eliminate those it considered undesirable and hostile to its rule, the kind of «other» that Agamben has called «not only political adversaries but an entire category of citizens who for some reasons cannot be integrated into the political system» [12, p. 2]. Survivors and their heirs sensed that what has come to be known as the Holodomor represented an act of politically motivated mass killing, and in this sense their martyrdom took an unusual form. They became dangerous *witnesses*, but not to any divine deeds or miracles; rather, they were *victim witnesses*, dangerous because they were able to testify to the death and destruction wrought in the name of Bolshevik modernization. As the bare fact of the Famine was insistently denied and suppressed by the Soviet regime, the inhuman suffering of the Holodomor victims was transformed into pseudo-suffering. We now know that a major effort was made to block the martyr narratives arising out of the Famine, indeed to erase all traces of their existence. The state leadership denied that there had been a famine and continued to destroy the evidence. It was claimed that any talk of famine was part of an international conspiracy by the 'imperialist West' to besmirch the Soviet Union. Any revelations about it were classified as attacks on the Fatherland [17, p. 46–70]. Thus, the victims of the famine not only lost their lives, but lost all dignity in death, as any trace of their personal existence was obliterated. Their descendants were forbidden to mourn them. Generation of survivors was ashamed or incapable of mentioning the victims, even in a whisper.

How, then, were these catastrophic events remembered and reflected in Ukrainian literature? In the earlier Soviet period, perpetrators who reduced people to objects and free thinking to a set of clichés had been portrayed in Mykola Khvylovy's story *Ia (Romantyka)* (I (A Romance)) in 1923. Khvylovy (real name Mykola Fytiliov) had had a peripatetic upbringing, courted many

risks as a war veteran, artist and polemicist, became a leader of the new Ukrainian literature in Soviet Kharkiv, and dared to oppose Joseph Stalin and his ideology. Yevhen Pluzhnyk, one of the finest poets of this generation, who has been compared to Rainer Maria Rilke, and also a novelist based in Kyiv, was similarly vocal about revolutionary atrocities and the victimizing impersonal force of Soviet power. His poem *Galilei* (Galileo, 1926) and novel *Neduha* (Illness, 1928), which gave him notoriety in the eyes of the Kremlin, were both banned from circulation shortly after publication. Mykola Kulish, the most famous Ukrainian playwright of the twentieth century, wrote two plays – the first one *97* (1924) and the final one *Proshchai, selo* (Farewell, Village, 1933) – reflecting on the post-revolutionary struggle, humiliation and then destruction of the traditional Ukrainian village through collectivization and famine. The Soviet censors forced him to revise *97* and to rewrite and rename *Proshchai, selo*. All of these authors were subsequently persecuted: Khvylovyi committed political suicide in 1933, Pluzhnyk died of tuberculosis in the Solovetski Islands camp in 1936, and Kulish was labeled a ‘counterrevolutionary’, expelled from the Communist party, sentenced to an isolation cell and murdered during the mass executions of political prisoners marking the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution. After the purges of the 1930s no Soviet writer attempted to address the themes of famine, repression and resistance openly until after Stalin’s death, while the theme was ignored by Western writers.

There were, however, some writers who began to approach the topic, such as Yurii Klen, a Ukrainian writer who, because of his German origins (his real name was Oswald Burghardt) escaped the repressions in Kyiv and Kharkiv by re-emigration to Germany in the early thirties. Being outside and relatively safe, Klen expressed the intuition that unless the atrocity was attested, the memory of traumatic events could be aborted and life would go on as if *nothing* had happened. His poem *Okayanni roky* (The Accursed Years, 1937) was written at the peak of the Soviet purges; it is saturated with the idea of witnessing, and uses an epigraph from Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov* (All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated – IS):

It’s not in vain that the Lord
Made me the witness of so many years.
Недаром многих лет
Свидетелем Господь меня поставил.

The writing here came out of deathly silence:
Who knew that, who was keeping track of the deaths and executions?
Where is the movie to show you the famine
of that accursed 33rd year?

Хто знав, хто вів смертям і страгам лік?
Де фільм, який вам показав би голод
Отой проклятий 33-й рік? [5].

Klen favors *enargeia* – the visual over the verbal, memory-image over memory-narrative – although he knew well that visual documentation of the famine of 1932–1933 was forbidden

and that any occasional surviving pictures were later destroyed. «If enargeia was the purpose of the ekphrasis, truth was the result of enargeia. We can imagine the sequence of this type: historical narration – description – vividness – truth» [16, p. 12]. Writing a poem supplied a substitute for writing a testimony – literature in history's stead, literature for the sake of future inquiry. The poet seems to be turning around the desecrated memory, struggling for some penetrating image and not attaining it. In an effort to achieve some perspective on this contemporary martyrdom, *The Accursed Years* alludes to ancient texts like the Old Testament or episodes in classic Roman history and medieval martyrologies. One stanza imitates the diction of a chronicle from the time of Kyivan Rus':

In days of yore, as the Chronicle would say,
there being plague (*mor*) and famine (*hlad*).
Во врем'я оно – Літопис би сказав, –
бисть мор і глад [5].

This line came closest to the term later adopted by Ukrainians for the famine: the Holodomor. In *The Accursed Years*, Klen attacked his former Kyivan friend and fellow neo-classicist Maksym Rylskyi, who figures in the work as *poeta Maximus*, now a timid proletarian poet and anthem-writer, servile to Stalin. (Interestingly, the poet who glorifies the rotten leadership of pigs and writes the anthem for *Animal Farm* in Orwell's story is called Minimus). Klen reminded Rylskyi of who he had once been and how he had changed after imprisonment. Rylskyi debuted in 1910 and reached acclaim in 1920s as one of the Ukrainian Neoclassicists. His poetry provoked fierce attacks during Stalin's purges. He was arrested for five months in 1931 [4, p. 60–121], and then declared himself reformed and published conformist collection *Znak tereziv* (The Sign of Libra, 1932). He was one of the few Ukrainian writers who managed to live through the Stalinist terror and become one of the main poets in the ranks of the official Soviet versifiers.

Rylskyi responded to the blow in a roundabout way, five years later, from evacuation in Ufa, with an important poem called *Spraha* (Thirst, 1942), in which he also ventured to address the Great Famine. He did this through portraying specters («silhouettes») marked by the Holodomor, without, however, breaking the code of silence, and using a stream-of-consciousness technique. His poem emphasizes the scale of the events and the nature of their suffering. His protagonist is also tormented by a torrent of shocking memories:

There are many, many, many of them.
Dark lines on skeletal faces.
Some were disfigured, others only scratched.
Many were killed and all were tortured.

Їх багато, багато, багато.
Темні зморшки на лицах худих.
Тих скалічено, тих лиш підтято.
Тих убито, а мучено – всіх [8, с. 42–43].

The ubiquitous *Thirst* was perhaps exactly the image that Yuri Klen had tried and failed to create some years before: a (carefully crafted) euphemism for the Great Famine. This writing could be framed as a phobic regime of remembrance: the author is speaking about total evil and still feels a direct threat.

Amongst the prolific writings of the Ukrainian diaspora, the texts on the Famine were seen as important but far from central in the shared Ukrainian twentieth century memory. The image of a collective victim dominated, and the formula chosen was to present every human fate as a piece in a vast mosaic of pain. It is worth mentioning that unlike most Eastern Ukrainians displaced from their home villages and rural towns, none of the major émigré writers who tried to bear witness to the suffering of Holodomor victims was a survivor himself, and only Todos Osmachka, another World War I veteran, an expressionist writer and educator, who had spent the early 1930s in the Kuban, then a largely Ukrainian region, had witnessed some part of it, before being taken to a mental institution. But all these writers had lost relatives and friends to the terror-famine. They saw their duty as secondary witnesses in helping to give voice to primary ones and in making the unspeakable more available for contemplation and mourning. By the end of World War II, before the Iron Curtain was put in place, a vast wave of political emigration brought to the West about 400,000 expatriates from Ukraine, a few thousand Holodomor survivors and, as we know now, some perpetrators among them. (One example of such a late admission is the posthumously published memoir of a Holodomor perpetrator, Dmitrii Goychenko (1903–1993), who made his way into emigration after World War II: Goichenko, D. (2010) *Krasnyi apokalipsis: skvoz' raskulachivanie i holodomor* (Kyiv: A-ba-ba-ha-la-ma-ha). For most of them, «all that they knew about the famine was that it once happened. And that Stalin provoked it» [7].

In the World War II Displaced Person camps memories were shared and several stories finished and published in subsequent years – most notably Osmachka's *Plan do dvoru* (Plan to the Courtyard, 1951) and Vasyl Barka's *Zhovtyi kniaz'* (The Yellow Prince, 1963). All these titles had no prospect of being made available to Soviet readers, and thus the authors could be more outspoken, as there was no longer a question of censorship for them. Barka confessed he felt bereft of the resources of speech. His novel is written in a modern realistic manner, and he warned that his stories were capable only of speaking on *behalf* of victims, of repeating, rather than testifying. In the early 1960s one might attribute this to the lack of direct experience; a similar feeling persists, however, in the 1990s, and would appear to be linked to a more profound crisis of witnessing, that surfaces around this time [14, p. 81–84].

The Tormented Body of Memory. Who is a survivor? How can somebody, if he or she is a writer, break through the survivors' muteness and give expression to the horror of survival, to something one can hardly bear to contemplate? Ihor Kostetskyi (Eaghor G. Kostezky) – one of the few Ukrainian writers in the diaspora to take the wounds of Soviet collective memory to their sadomasochistic limits—describes the following:

They take a piece of a soaked white bread. When the soaked bread is kneaded in such a way that you get a four-cornered lump, then beat it against the stone floor. Almost no-one will think to knead it that well. Maybe it's a fortunate thing that one will knead and then leave

it, and then another will take over. And then they put the little lump into a jacket and ironed pants, attach a tie and roughly rub his brain with books from all four sides. An old-world mother rests on a small bench, groans now and again, and then asks them at night: «Are you happy, my children?» And the son answers her: «How, mum, can a Slavic person be happy?» He says this once, twice. And then forgets it.

Беруть кавалок намоченого пшеничного хліба. Коли намочений хліб вим'яти так, щоб вийшла з нього чотирирога штучка, то бий нею хоч об кам'яну долівку. Та рідко хто здогадається так вим'яти. Може в тому й щастя, що один вимне та й покине, а тоді другий. А тоді вже вбирають кавалок у піджак і в прасовані штани, ще й краватку чіпляють, і грубо-грубо з чотирьох вітрів книгами їй мозок натирають. Лежить старосвітська матінка боком на короткій лаві, лежить і крекче зрідка, а тоді вночі та й питається: чи щасливі ж ви, діточки. А син і одвічає: – як же може, матусю, слов'янська людина та щасливою бути. Так скаже враз і вдруге. А тоді забуде [6, с. 39].

The split personality, the Gogolian double and the loss of one's identity were recurring images in Kostetskyi's reflective prose. The above, rather mysterious, quote about a man, kneaded as a lump of dough, comes from a short story «Tsina liudskoi nazvyu» (The Price of a Human Name, 1945) in which Kostetskyi's protagonist Pavlo Palii, a well-established Ukrainian painter and a refugee of World War II, while in a fever, has a nightmare which meanders over the loss of his name and identity: a younger fellow with the same name, also a painter, but with an entirely different style, joins the small community of displaced (Soviet) Ukrainians in a postwar German town. Palii is irritated by this mismatch, which threatens to ruin his artistic reputation. He then approaches the younger Palii and tries to persuade and bribe him into taking on a pseudonym. The younger man refuses to abandon his real name and discerns that for the old Palii the same name they share is false, a pseudonym, and that Palii the senior is now at risk to return to the real one as his name in the art, built over twenty years, will be annulled. One loss redirects the protagonist's memory to another loss that is related to the psychosomatic trauma of famine; as he speaks of himself:

A man without a name is a man that eats grass. Whether he survives or not.

Людина без імені це людина, що їсти траву. Виживе чи не виживе [6, с. 41].

Pavlo Palii is stricken by anxiety and recurrent attacks of panic. His syntax is broken, deliberately hard to understand, as he ponders over the topic of hatred of and revenge on the inhuman system, telling himself that the force of the revenge will destroy the avengers. And then he encounters the haunting image of a man who walks through the war with a sack of potatoes. Ironically, the potato-bearer's small strategy is far more effective than many others, and his method of survival is shown to be a mark of genius:

He harnessed his oxen and took off from Poltava to Cologne and then to Buenos Aires, his woman at the back of the farm cart. Who are you? A guy with no name. What are you carrying? A bit of wit and my inhuman ingenuity and my inhuman humanity.

Запріг воли, і від Полтави до Кельну і до Буенос-Айресу, і баба позаду на возі. Хто такий. Чолов'яга без імені. Що везеш. Шматок дотепу і нелюдську свою винахідливість і ще нелюдську свою людяність [6, с. 42].

The survivor is a human living through the inhuman and bearing that stigma, the wound inflicted on his «own being capable of everything» [11, p. 77]. The nature of memorial space on the Soviet side of the Iron Curtain resembled a self-erasing palimpsest, offering itself ever anew as a semi-blank sheet. The future-oriented Soviet state was reluctant to allow any retrospective rituals of mourning except the yearly commemoration of official and unknown victims of the Revolution and Great Patriotic War. Against the backdrop of millions of invisible martyrs with no graves it developed a detailed topography of memorials called ‘graves of the unknown soldier’ (again, ‘a person with no name’), often featuring an empty tomb. In the Soviet Union both the Holodomor and the Holocaust remained unspoken in the postwar «coalition of silence» [15, p. 120], which functioned as an imperative to forget. This practice was known in ancient times as *damnatio memoriae* whereby memory was destroyed and dishonored in the spirit of blaming the victim. Celebratory remembrance rituals of the Soviet ‘Great’ Victory in the ‘Great Patriotic War’ – an archetypal restoration of justice – were employed to deny or screen the horrors of the interwar and wartime periods.

A shared memory requires communication. It is best secured within communities of memory [20]. When repression and censorship were reversed after Stalin’s death and millions of political prisoners were released due to the policies of de-Stalinization, the memory of the 1932–1933 famine was nevertheless still not articulable in public. There was, however, an attempt made by a few of Soviet writers and film-makers related to Ukraine to point to it in some extra-communicative way, through the interstices of a «double inscription» [13, p. 108]. Inspired by Bakhtin, Homi Bhabha contemplates the historical surmounting of the «ghostly» or the «double» in cultural texts but also associated this figure with the uncanny process of the warping of identity, of, as Bhabha puts it, citing Freud, «the doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self» under the systemic pressure, say, of ideological censorship. The Holodomor was underrepresented, true, but the link to its memory was very real and for the generation of survivors and perpetrators, even the smallest hint was enough to evoke it.

One of the most important attempts to address this theme was made by Vasily Grossman known for his early depictions, both fictional and non-fictional, of Stalinist and Nazi atrocities. He was correspondent for the Soviet army’s newspaper during World War II and famous for his courage on dangerous front-line missions. After the war, three decades before Gorbachev’s *Glasnost*, he finished his second novel *Zhizn’ i sud’ba* (Life and Fate, 1959) set against the backdrop of the Battle of Stalingrad. In the novel, Grossman indicted the abhorrent conditions of Stalinism, which the war and its human cost only enlarged. The KGB censors seized the manuscript and the typewriter used to write it. Grossman was not daunted by this, and started his last novella, *Vse techet* (Everything Flows, 1963), an even more bitter assault on Stalin and Stalinism, which in his view had turned the whole country into one big labor camp. Both novels stand for the kind of double inscription that Bhabha describes, which in this case we might call *Soviet anti-Soviet* literature, and both grasp this lack of an open discussion in a society not to be taken for the lack of remembrance. The relationship in *Everything Flows* between Ivan, the Gulag returnee, and Anna, the former grain-requisitions activist, leads to her ambiguous testimony of the famine: the testimony of a victim among other victims and of a perpetrator among other perpetrators. Here, Grossman tackled the moral consequences

and echoes of terror, proclaiming that there were «No innocents among the living» («Нету среди живых невиновных») [2].

Grossman did, however, feel that some change in the memorial space had taken place due to the fact that under Khrushchev the state had admitted its guilt, at least in part. He included in his novel a sequence of confessions of Stalinist horrors (with no easy attribution of blame). One of these was a first-person account by a Holodomor collaborator named Anna, now in her forties and dying of cancer. In the face of her imminent death she is haunted by the question of non-memory and non-repentance:

And there is nothing left. And where is that life, where is that horrible suffering? Is there really nothing left? Is it possible that no one will answer for all that? And that it will all be forgotten without a trace?

И ничего не осталось. А где же эта жизнь, где страшная мука? Неужели ничего не осталось? Неужели никто не ответит за это все? Вот так и забудется без следа? [2].

Everything Flows was translated into English as *Forever Flowing*, and published in the US in 1972. It was published in its original form in the Soviet Union in 1989, twenty five years after the author's death (though not 200 years later, as Khrushchev's ideologist Suslov had foretold). In his opus magnum *Life and Fate*, along with the unfinished *Everything Flows*, night whispers of mourning-memory during the Khrushchev Thaw were accompanied by a warning that, as the generation of survivors was now dying out, testimony was in danger of being lost forever.

When We See the Pain of Others. From despair comes an understanding that if any mediation of the aftermath is to remain it will remain in culture, through the transmission of narratives and images, no matter how warped or fragmented. Even during the Khrushchev Thaw, the public non-memory of terror functioned as a dominating practice. The «state of emergency» shielded off access to non-official recollections that might influence feelings and bring about some dissident bonds of mnemonic solidarity. For sure, there were grass-roots attempts to outwit this top-down expurgation. But Yuri Illienko's film *Krynytsia dlia sprahlykh* (*A Well for the Thirsty*, 1965), based on Ivan Drach's screenplay, was more than just that. While his generation was generally focused on the theme of the war and victory, Illienko was concerned with the victory over forgetting. Except for one or two episodes, his film contained nothing for Soviet censors to cut—not only because he was hiding from censorship, but because he had consciously set out to make a film that would be universal in its appeal. The whole piece triggered a memory of collective suffering that had long been blocked. *A Well for the Thirsty* was produced by and for the «1.5 generation» – the generation of child victims and survivors. In the film's titles its genre is defined as «film-parable» [3].

The parable is centered on an old man living in seclusion and on his fixation on some sensual, bodily recall. The man is chased by his painful memories and is dissociated from real time. He is still taking care of his well, which is now rarely used. In the opening scene he comes back to an empty home, sits at the bench, and struggles to cope with the auditory hallucinations of funeral weeping and lamenting mixed with the giggles and screams of a child, drifting in from the past. His nerves betray him and he turns all his photos to face the wall, then doing the same with a mirror. But the giggling goes on. Then we see him laying

alive in the coffin which he has hewed for himself, and we watch his children arriving late for his (faked) funeral, at a complete loss, not even able to spot his fresh grave, never mind mourn for him. Viewers of the film would have been all too aware that there was only one major tragedy in this village – as in the many other neighboring villages – and the unflinching trauma in the film hovers on the border of the taboo against recalling that during the famine it was not possible to comfort the dying, to bury the dead, and to mourn them as humans do.

None of the film critics in the Soviet Ukraine dared to point to Holodomor memory. But many of them, I believe, knew fairly well what the film-makers knew: to point to this memory was to ascribe an origin to the protagonist's numbness. Through the lens of the script-writer and film director, *A Well for the Thirsty* conveyed the omnipresence of an extreme suffering at every moment. Stark black-and-white and half-silent, the film was addressed to those who witnessed, struggled through and still remembered the famine, escaping recollection in fear and silence. The silence is active here, recalling Elaine Scarry's observation that:

To witness the moment when pain causes a reversion to the pre-language of cries and groans is to witness the destruction of language; but conversely, to be present when a person moves up out of that pre-language and project the facts of sentience into speech is almost to have been permitted to be present at the birth of language itself [21, p. 6].

The film's central metaphor – the well and those dying of thirst – makes a direct link to Rylskiy's earlier poem *Spraha* (Thirst) and takes his trope to a place of dangerous significance as the censors approach it. Closest metonymic likeness between fresh water for the thirsty and bread for the hungry is readable. But what if the well has dried up and there's just sand left around? A dried well sits in the place once rich in water and crafts a substitute image for Ukrainian village of 1933: the place once rich in fertile soil, where one can plow, sow, till the land and harvest in abundance; but what was formerly a village transforms into a necro-village, empty and abandoned.

A Well for the Thirsty engaged in an uneasy dialogue with Dovzhenko's *Zemlia* (Earth, 1930) and its prominent promotion of collectivization. In *A Well for the Thirsty* the aftereffects of collectivization are presented as a violent and traumatogenic change. What Dovzhenko was promoting by his film and what was actually done never overlapped. For those in the know, casting Dmytro Miliutenko as a protagonist for *A Well* was a happy choice. An outstanding actor and one of the few survivors of the legendary Les Kurbas theater company, he was able to pass along the long-lasting effects of the catastrophe without words and with minimal gestures, reduced to his basest self.

In *A Well for the Thirsty*, the Ukrainian village is depicted as a ghostly wasteland. It comes into view almost empty, with long streets of abandoned farmhouses and bricked-up windows. Its silence is heavy and resounding. The film shows the way that famine and the destruction of traditional family-based farming entered the collective unconscious, making people emotionally deprived and uprooted, and affecting their attitudes and relationships. The village community is gone. There is hardly any normal life to which people could now return. The imperative to survive has dominated the values of care. In this moral vacuum elderly people are unable to speak while younger ones are equally unable to listen to them. Re-examined by official censorship, *A Well for the Thirsty* was removed from screens shortly after the premiere, and remained banned until 1987 [1, c. 191].

Hryhir Tiutiunyk, another Holodomor survivor who debuted as a writer in the 1960s, was mesmerized by *A Well for the Thirsty*, by its combination of softness and brutal honesty and by its high resolution depiction of human suffering. The film led him to begin to wonder whether Holodomor amnesia perhaps mirrored something in today's reality. After the film's premier screening at Dovzhenko Film Studio, «the breakthrough-spring», as he called it, he wrote his *Autobiography* – never published during his life – leaving a direct testimony:

In 1933 our family became swollen with hunger and my grandfather, the father of my father, Vasyl Feodulovych Tiutiunyk, died – he was still not gray and all his teeth were strong (and I still don't know where his grave is), and I at this time – when I was one and a half – stopped walking (though I already knew how to) – stopped laughing and talking.

У тридцять третьому році сімейство наше опухло з голоду, а дід, батько мого батька, Василь Феодулович Тютюнник, помер – ще й не сивий був і зуби мав до одного міцні (я й досі не знаю, де його могила), а я в цей час – тоді мені було півтора року – перестав ходити (вже вміючи це робить), сміяться і балакать перестав [9, с. 20].

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Tiutiunyk gradually developed into a Soviet writer of anti-Soviet memory retrieval. Against the backdrop of Brezhnev censorship, which strove to control the scope of public discourse, he told a story about the world with no neutral history and was aiming at a niche where telling a story on an anxiety-provoking topic still had some chance to come out in print. That slot opened in Soviet teenage literature. In 1972 he wrote in his diary: «I can write only with memories». Linking a narrative from what is essentially anti-narrative Tiutiunyk came up to the idea of generational autobiography: «No, not my own childhood anguish, not my hunger, and not my own father – guilty with no guilt – I wanted to recall but the grief of my entire generation and of many wrongly accused fathers» («Ні, не свої жалі дитинства, не свій голод, не свого без вини винного батька хотів я згадати, а жалі всього мого покоління і багатьох без вини винуватих батьків») [9, с. 116].

Writing is inadequate but necessary, in Tiutiunyk's view. According to Susan Sontag, essentially, «no 'we' should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain» [23, p. 7]. Tiutiunyk finds some advantages in writing under censorship since it makes him more acute and inventive in his craft of the «double inscription» on catastrophe. Most often he tries to look into a situation when adolescence first confronts the family memory taboo. A teenager becomes an interrogative witness far too young to comprehend the story but nonetheless a perfect listener, embodying one's «hope of being heard» and recognized [14, p. 82]. His short stories evolved around a common generational shock-memory which in the given time and space was «by no means a *shared* one» [20, p. 51].

Tiutiunyk's prose was first tagged as «war prose» but it soon became less and less compatible with the dominant Soviet historical narrative on the Great Patriotic War. Top Soviet critics singled out his cathartic stories for praise. His new books came out in print as immediate bestsellers. By the mid-1970s his works became translated for the first time both

inside and outside of the Soviet Union, in twenty different languages, but he was stopped from publishing in Ukrainian.

Tiutiunnyk was frustrated by his image as a writer for teenagers. His major concern is in fact what Kostetskyi called «inhuman humanity». As his protagonist is often a 12-year boy, the stories are seen through the eyes of a child but, if read thoroughly, they are far too much even for adults. The boys' understanding is often bound up with compassion and self-imposed guilt. To survive into adulthood they go through situations where nobody is innocent and even those who seem to be right are right in the wrong way.

Tiutiunnyk writes for those for whom terrible events happened one after another, or for those who experienced one and the same terror three times over – we are reminded that the local population of the places depicted in his stories endured three wars (World War I, the Civil War of 1919–1921 and World War II) and three grain procurements followed by famines (under the 'war communism' of 1921–1922; under Stalin in 1932–1933 and in the year following the 'Great victory' over Nazi Germany in 1946), thus emptying the slogans on the forthcoming happy future of «meaning and credibility» [23, p. 12].

«Well, how could you compare!, cries out the protagonist of *Dyvak*» (*The Oddball*, 1963). «Symin is as healthy as a church bell, and young. And soon I'll be lying under the earth with the chickens scratching the dirt over me. 'Cause you tell me, what health can I have when I've been through three hungers and three wars in one life! And now divide it up for yourself: every ten years either one or the other».

«Прирівняв!– Симін здоровий, як беззвін, і молодий. А мене вже скоро й курка лапою загребе. Бо де ж те здоров'я візьметься, скажіть, коли на мій вік три голодовки випало і три війни! От і поділіть: на кожні десять років або те, або те» [9, с. 50].

Tiutiunnyk's hidden work of mourning developed a new quality that allowed for the (re)direction of the readers' attention. Peripheral moments float to the center. Some part of a hard conversation remains unspoken. As an author he often operates through what is known in experimental psychology as the Stroop effect [24]. The propaganda setting (from formal agenda-setting guidelines to informal codes of silence) challenged one's selective attention. Readers have to train their ability to choose and to focus on the things that propaganda half-truth might prefer them to ignore. In the condition which Tiutiunnyk calls «castrated truth» the brain and emotions of the reader adopt marginal focalizers rather than central ones. So the author under censure finds his readers (also under censure) less prone to errors in decoding his message and breaking through traumatic silence.

In this article I have told the story of Holodomor survivors' memory prior to any official Holodomor iconography. This generational memory was troubled in two aspects: by paralysis when approaching the theme and by resistance to the demand to forget it. As many other ideas the idea of generation has been preempted from popular to scientific vocabulary. This notion was codified in many cultures around the globe – both oral and written – and sustained its intuitive meaning related to the social and cultural order in Western world reflected already in the Bible. It has been taken into prominence when the traditional social order started to downfall: in the view of K. Mannheim and his followers each distinctive generation lasts long enough to become the product of change and struggle as well as to bring about opportunity

for another transformation.

My findings show that generational trauma, stemming from the Holodomor atrocity – anti-narrative in its essence – is one of the most radical examples of a cohort which «receives a distinctive imprint from the social and political events» [22, p. 359] and collective identity of which is assembled throughout the years of terror over the ruins of normality. Gradually it has given tellable shape to some of what had been shattered by the Soviet terror and developed a range of literary responses to trauma. That was rather a stoic generation. From an increasing distance, in this particular configuration of ideologically motivated, unrestrained torture and collectivization of suffering, with next amnesia and coalition of silence around the topic, it has managed to carry on what was traumatically overwhelming and to tell the story in its own language.

Stalinism produced not so much people who were eager to give their lives for their political faith, as people who were prepared to sacrifice others' lives. It perpetrated society's habituation to horror and the erasure of guiltless sufferers who must be executed and then forgotten. The recognition of that past was seen as a major threat to the regime and many efforts were invested to make sure that the victim would never turn into *μάρτυς*, the witness.

Moving from the West to the East of Europe one stumbles upon strategies of forgetting which undo the life of signs and change the scene of mediation to the point when more memorials would not help. Alienation and displacement of terror-loaded memory has been transmitted across three generations. For almost fifty years, official commemoration was dissonant and hostile to idioms of living memory and tried to eradicate the crossing point between the official and the private.

The unmasking of the profound historical deceit about the Holodomor in the late 1980s in Soviet Ukraine seemed to generate a sort of delayed (vicarious) shock. Though the dramatic comeback of Holodomor memory became possible, as in Oles Yanchuk's film *Famine-33* (1991) – aired first on the state TV channel the night before Ukrainians voted to leave the Soviet Union – it was partially blocked and addressed rather in a pattern of deterritorialization in collective (or, rather, collected) memories: since the 1930s, the public sphere as agora ceased to exist for Soviet citizens possessed by a regime that ensured the complete absence of open discussion. Again, along with the Chernobyl 4th reactor's sarcophagus and its 30 kilometer exclusion zone, the Holodomor became a black hole of the recent past, a frightening socioscape of man's inhumanity, a place of pandemonium and convulsion.

It is worth considering further why recognition of the Holodomor should be so troubling to Soviet identity, and why none of the revelations about Soviet mass martyrdom had such a great potential to debunk the Soviet ideology and its moral vacuum. Holodomor stories slowly found their way to Soviet Ukrainians (both Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking) reconnected with family histories and lineages, and were transformed into post-Soviet, and then anti-Soviet memories.

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ПОКОЛІННЯ ГОЛОДОМОРУ: ВІДПОВІДІ ЛІТЕРАТУРИ НА КОЛЕКТИВНУ ТРАВМУ

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Розглянуто українську літературу, писану поколінням Голодомору в часи, коли про Великий Голод 1932–1933 не можна було згадувати в радянських публікаціях і коли про нього не знали чи забули в інших частинах світу. Тоталітаризм витворив феномен масового мучеництва, сполученого з утисками пам'яті свідків, з нівелюванням самої можливості свідчити про ці муки. І хоча півстоліття зі середини 1930-х до середини 1980-х позначені в радянській Україні суспільною та культурною амнезією, все ж таки знайшлися українські письменники, які спробували встановити зі своїми читачами дисидентські зв'язки солідарної пам'яті. Вони зверталися до тих, хто знає і впізнає, а саме – до свого покоління, яке було свідками, постраждало і все ще пам'ятало голод та колективізацію страждань, хоч і втікало від власних спогадів у страху й мовчанні. Пишучи під тиском цензури (включно з самоцензурою) та під впливом колективної травми, ці письменники порушили болючі питання, намагаючись заговорити від імені мертвих у формі автобіографії свого покоління.

Ключові слова: Голодомор, покоління, робота пам'яті, відповіді літератури на травму.