

FOLKLORICA

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FOLKLORICA: Journal of the Slavic and East European Folklore Association
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Cover: Baba Eva [surname unknown] breaks an egg into a glass of water over the patient's head, after performing the "rolling" of the egg. (Sloboda, Ovruts'kyi raion, Zhytomyr oblast', 10/15/98)
(photo by Sarah D. Phillips)

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In general, submissions should adhere to the presentational practice of this issue of the journal. More specifically:

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Translations must not be literal; the translator should strive to produce a text that will be comprehensible to an English reader unfamiliar with the original language.

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- * Foreign words should be italicized
- * Plurals of foreign words should not be anglicized, as for example: one *bylina*, two *byliny* not *bylinas*.
- * It is essential to include the overall editor(s) name when referring to one contribution in an edited volume of collected papers. This should follow the title of the article/chapter as follows: In J. R. Bloggs (ed.), Death Customs for the Uninitiated.
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ARTICLES

The Singers of Northern Russian Religious Verses (1)

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Before discussing the singers of North Russian folk religious verses (*dukhovnye stikhi*), it may be sensible to begin by characterizing not the singers but their songs. Russian folk religious verses are usually based on a Christian literary source: the Bible, a hagiographic tale, the life of a saint or an apocryphal text. The formal characteristics of the verses, composed at different periods, vary so widely that many Russian folklorists consider it impossible to try and group all popular religious verse together into a single folk genre [Nikitina 1993: 45-46]; some scholars suggest dividing *dukhovnye stikhi* into a separate system of genres parallel to the one used for traditional secular folklore [Selivanov 1995: 8–10, 57–59]. The older type of religious verse, known as “*starshie*,” are predominantly narrative in form, and in their poetic style close to the Russian *byliny* and folk ballads; the junior (“*mladshie*”) *dukhovnye stikhi*, sung mainly by the Old Believers,⁽²⁾ are lyrical in nature and frequently imitate literary verse. In the nineteenth century collectors recorded religious poetry in many provinces in the European part of the Russian Empire [Kireevskii 1848, Varentsov 1860, Bessonov 1861 - 1864]. In the twentieth century, especially the first half, hearing and recording *dukhovnye stikhi* was still possible in some remote rural areas of the country, but nowadays, although the tradition of performing religious verses lives on, it does so only in Old Believer communities.

In this article the focus falls on one particular area, the Russian North, and more specifically on those who sang the *dukhovnye stikhi*. Apart from references in works by nineteenth and twentieth-century ethnographers and folklorists the article draws primarily on archival material from the folklore collections of the Archive of the Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Petrozavodsk. This material relates to the period 1911-98.

The main bearers of folk religious poetry are usually said to be the *kaliki perekhozhie*, semi-professional, often blind or disabled itinerant singers, who sang *dukhovnye stikhi* in crowded places and asked for alms in return [Fedotov 1935/1991: 14-25]. However, this statement requires amplification when we refer to the situation in the North of Russia, the area in which *stikhi* were especially popular. In Olonets, Archangel and Vologda provinces, apart from the *kaliki*, religious verses were sung by the rural population, both Orthodox and Old Believers. Information about the singing of religious verse by North Russian peasants can be gleaned from the writings of various nineteenth-century folklorists and ethnographers [Barsov 1867; Maslov 1905: 13; Miller 1895: 27-28]. In addition, *dukhovnye stikhi* have been recorded from ordinary villagers by nineteenth and twentieth-century collectors on numerous occasions, with the overwhelming majority of twentieth-century variants being recorded from women. What were the relations between the *kaliki* and the peasantry in the North of Russia, how did villagers treat the itinerant singers and under what conditions did they take over their repertoire? These questions were almost entirely ignored by nineteenth-century ethnographers [Maksimov

1987: 450-473; Vereshchagin 1855: 362; Khrushchev 1901: 192-94]. What scanty data does exist can be supplemented by notes made by collectors and the reminiscences of peasants both found in the folklore collections of the Archive of the Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences (henceforth called the “KarRC Archive”).

The collection of religious verse, one of the fruits of the folklore expeditions organized by the Institute of Language, Literature and History of the KarRC, includes more than 260 texts covering almost the whole of the twentieth century, from 1911 till 1998. Some of these recordings come complete with comments on the manner of performance, the person from whom the singer had learnt the song and the particular conditions under which it was usually performed. Apart from this, notes about the *dukhovnye stikhi* and their bearers can be found in fieldwork reports and collectors’ journals. For instance, numerous comments on religious verses are to be found in collections 8 and 79, containing material from the expeditions to Zaonezh’e (the area to the north and east of Lake Onega) in 1940 and 1956.

Both types of verse, the general Russian (“*starshie*”) and the Old Believer (“*mladshie*”), were recorded by folklorists in the villages located along the eastern frontier of Karelia, in an area inhabited mainly by Russians, descendants of settlers who came from the Novgorod area.⁽³⁾ “*Starshie*” *stikhi* constitute the majority of the texts; the variants of this type (more than 180 recordings) constitute three quarters of the regional collection, whereas the Old Believer tradition of religious poetry is inadequately represented in the folklore collections of the KarRC Archive. There is not one mention of the manuscript codices of religious verse used by Old Believers in the folklorists’ diaries kept in the KarRC, though we know that in the Russian North such codices were not only carefully preserved in the twentieth century, but new ones were even being compiled.⁽⁴⁾ Most of the individual Old Believer songs are only found in the KarRC Archive in a single variant. Nor can we be sure that all the examples of “*mladshie*” *stikhi* were recorded from adherents of the Old Belief or those sympathetic to their views, since some (e.g. “The testament of a dying mother” [*Zaveshchanie umiraiushchei materi*]) were disseminated throughout the Russian North by the *kaliki perekhozhie* [KarRC Archive, coll. 27 № 184; coll. 79 № 726, 728], and may well have been adopted by the official Orthodox population from them along with other *stikhi*. What is more, Soviet collectors avoided asking performers point-blank about their religious affiliation, for fear of attracting their mistrust. And for their part, informants were usually far from willing to disclose the information. Several villagers refused categorically to sing religious verses in the presence of outsiders, or even their own neighbors [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 36; coll. 26 № 10]. Describing her expedition to Karelia in 1980, the scholar, S. E. Nikitina, who has studied folk religious verse, has remarked that “the ‘*stikhi*’ did not exist on the surface but were deeply concealed within the bearers’ consciousness, as though they were something that ought not to be made public (a characteristic comment would be: ‘I will sing and then I’ll be jailed, and taken away’)” [Nikitina 1993: 57].

It goes without saying that in the Soviet period ideology placed constraints on the collecting of *dukhovnye stikhi*. Organizing a special expedition was out of the question, though there were several expeditions that recorded *byliny* and ballads. *Dukhovnye stikhi* were only written down incidentally, if time permitted, and usually did not constitute the main aim of fieldwork. Quite often folklorists had no time to record the religious

verses and could do no more than note their existence; sometimes they would record one or two variants out of the five or six available [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 2, 21, 35; coll. 44 № 1].

Not all the religious verses in the KarRC Archive have attributions. For instance, the names of performers have not been recorded by I. M. and V. P. Durov, the amateur folklorists who gave the KarRC Archive thirty six texts of religious verses they had recorded between 1911 and 1935 in the Pomor'e area (along the White Sea coast) [KarRC Archive, coll. 27 № 176 – 82, 184 – 98; coll. 28 № 50 – 64, 124 – 25]. Some of these texts may have been transcribed directly from the *kaliki perekhozhie*, since one of the sections in I. M. Durov's manuscript is entitled "The beggars verses" ("*Stikhi nishchei bratii*"). Commenting upon the texts, Durov indicated that religious verses were "sung by the old inhabitants of Pomor'e during 'meetings,' that is, during the gatherings of old folk (men or women); by the *bespopovtsy* (priestless Old Believers) on feast days; or by beggars seeking alms in homes in the villages of Pomor'e" [KarRC Archive, coll. 27 № 184].(5)

I. M. Durov is probably the only twentieth-century collector in the KarRC Archive who had the opportunity to observe *kaliki perekhozhie* with his own eyes. When folklorists from Petrozavodsk arrived in Zaonezh'e the itinerant singers had already vanished. However memories of them were still fresh at that time, while the religious verses acquired from them were preserved in the memory of the local population for several decades.

It was women who were the primary singers of *dukhovnye stikhi* in the North of Russia in the twentieth century women. Songs recorded from middle-aged and elderly women constitute four fifths of all the texts in the local collection (about 200 variants). In all a mere twenty texts, including fragments and retellings, have been recorded from men.(6) Before their disappearance religious verses had become part of the sphere of female folklore genres for many reasons. Women's folklore is generally considered more conservative, and in the Soviet era women were much more pious than men. It may be that in the 1930s men were wary of performing *dukhovnye stikhi* about the saints, Christ and the Mother of God in the presence of folklorists, especially if the latter were under an obligation to promote atheism on the collective farm.

It is quite possible that in the nineteenth century men too sang religious verses, since in the Russian North there was a widespread prohibition on singing anything except *stikhi* during fasts (particularly in Lent). Religious verses were performed by many of the famous Northern Russian singers: T. G. and I. T. Riabinin, V. P. Shchegolenok, N. A. Remezov, F. A. Konashkov *inter alia*. The KarRC Archive contains evidence of verses performed by the whole family or by older relatives for the younger folk as they worked together at home [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 92]. Two songs were recorded from a married couple who used to sing together [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 1076, 1077]. But it was only women who had the kind of work that was traditionally specifically linked to the singing of verses. Before the Revolution and during the first decade thereafter, unmarried girls and in some cases married women would gather together in Lent to spin, and their meetings, spinning "bees," were usually accompanied by the choral singing of *dukhovnye stikhi* [Barsov 1867].(7) Many of the performers recorded by folklorists from the KarRC remembered the custom of singing religious verses during Lent [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 4, 98, 99; coll. 44 № 3; coll. 51 № 276; coll. 79 № 326, 433; coll. 80 № 33]. As a rule the art of performing *stikhi* was transmitted from older women to their younger

relatives along with the skills of spinning and weaving. Many performers told the KarRC collectors that they had learnt *dukhovnye stikhi* from their grandmother, mother, nurse or neighbor. For instance, when P. E. Popova from Niukhcha had finished singing the verse about the Ascension she remarked: “I got this song from my mother... In our family my mother sang this song on the eve of Palm Sunday” [KarRC Archive, coll. 126 № 27]. A. M. Isakova from Shueretskoe recalled: “The old women would all meet: ‘Children, let us teach you to sing *stikhi*’” [KarRC Archive, coll. 36/1 № 42].

Statements that the *dukhovnye stikhi* had been learnt from the *kaliki perekhozhie* are equally common. A. T. Shelonikova from Vygozero told collectors: “The beggars would arrive from Kargopol’. They’d ask for alms. They visited the houses (*po fateram khodiat*),(8) sat and sang. They stayed near the entrance, sat down on the bench and sang. The old women learnt their *stikhi* from them. The beggars would go around in groups of a dozen or so ...” [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 433].

A few performers of both kinds of *dukhovnye stikhi* (that is, both the “*starshie*” and the “*mladshie*”) recounted that either they or their relatives had learnt a particular song from beggars who had lodged in their house for a few days [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 726]. When T. A. Lepetukhina from the village of Lapino had finished singing the verse about Saint Paraskeva and the anchorite, she recalled that “the blind beggar Oprosim, who had sung this *stikh*, usually stayed in her grandmother’s house ... Other beggars also often came to spend the night at their house and sing *stikhi*” [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 751]. We should mention that, apart from religious verses, the repertoire of the *kaliki perekhozhie* also included ballads; it was normal for singers to lump them together and to call them both “*stikhi*” (with the stress on the first syllable). Both were often sung to the same melody or to one very similar. We can find comments following the texts of several ballads recorded in the Pudozh district by members of the 1940 expedition to the effect that the texts had been learnt by the singers from the *kaliki perekhozhie* [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 4a, 139, 235].

Sometimes after they had finished singing, performers would start recalling the *kaliki* who had also sung a particular spiritual verse, but without saying directly that the *stikh* had actually been learnt from them. When F. A. Konashkov finished the song about Saint Paraskeva and the anchorite, he suddenly began demonstrating how the *kaliki* would beg for alms after they had stopped singing: “And we glorify you, Christ the Lord! (And then the *kaliki* would ask for a few scraps).” (*I slavim Tebia, Khriste Bozhe! (I kusochkov i poprosiat kaliki)*). [KarRC Archive, coll. 15 № 35a]. The verse about the Ascension is also followed by a comment about the *kaliki* who sang it, which contains a typical begging formula, “for the sake of Christ the Lord, give us alms” (*Gospodi Khrista radi podajte milostinku*) [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 644], and one of the many variants of the verse about the two Lazarus brothers even incorporates this request into the text itself:

“Brother, please go to the blue sea
 Brother, bring me a ladle of water.”
 “The will is not mine but God’s.”
 Lord Jesus, give us now some charity.

“*Skhodil by ty, bratets, ko siniu moriu,*
Prines by da bratets, kovshechek vody.”
 “*Volia ne moia, volia Bogovaia.*”
Gospodi Isuse, nun’-ko milostyniu dai.

The text is followed by the comment: “with these final words they concluded the *stikh*, crossed themselves and asked for alms” [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 24].

Most of the evidence about the itinerant performers of religious verses refers to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These recollections, combined with the observations of pre-Revolutionary ethnographers, permit us to form an overview of the relations between the *kaliki perekhozhie* and the peasantry. Itinerant singers came to Northern Russian villages in twos and threes or in larger groups (known as an *artel'*) of about ten to twelve men. The resident population greeted them with sympathy and compassion. One of the earliest pieces of evidence about the way Northern Russian peasants treated the *kaliki* dates from the mid nineteenth century. According to the ethnographer Vereshchagin “villagers have respect for them, listen eagerly to their songs, try to please them and provide them with abundant supplies of food and all sorts of other stuff” [Vereshchagin 1855: 362]. A. I. Levina was the only performer recorded by the KarRC folklorists who expressed an overt dislike of *stikhi*; she used to “run away” so as not to have to listen to them, but she remembered this as a deviation from the ethical norms of behaviour, viewing it as a sin on her part: “May God forgive me, I didn't like the *kaliki*” (*Kaliki eti, prosti Gospodu, ne nraivilis' mne*) [KarRC Archive, coll. 36/1 № 38].

In the itinerant singers' audience there would be children [KarRC Archive, coll. 145 № 41; coll. 79 № 648] as well as adults and old folk [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 433]. In warm weather the *kaliki* usually sang their *stikhi* beneath the windows of the peasant *izba* (wooden house), or else sitting on the front steps or just on a stone [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 139]. It was more common for them to come, however, by foot or by cart in winter and early spring, in Advent and Lent, and to sing in people's houses. They would stay with their peasant hosts overnight or even for several days. The housewife who invited her married neighbors in for a spinning “bee” might well choose to ask an itinerant singer in to sing religious verses for them. As a rule the singers visited every house in a village. They were not supposed to go right into the interior of the house, but rather to stay very near the entrance and sit on the bench there that was sometimes known as “the beggars' bench” (*nishchenskaia lavka*).

Typically the *kaliki perekhozhie* could also be heard singing on the main church festivals as well as other religious holidays, fairs and times of merrymaking [A. S. 1910; Rybnikov 1989: 48-49; Troitsyn den' 1857]. According to data collected from the peasants' of Zaonozh'e, the majority of itinerant singers came from Kargopol'. One of the participants in the 1956 expedition to Zaonezh'e remarked that “almost every old woman who heard ‘*stikhi*’ from the Kargopol' beggars as a child knows them now. In the North in the early twentieth century the *métier* was very widespread and gave a good living” [KarRC Archive, coll. 79, expedition report 4]. This piece of information corroborates the view of pre-Revolutionary scholars who considered the Kargopol' area one of the few places in the vast territory of the Russian Empire where the old traditions of *kaliki* singing still survived [Maslov 1905: 13; Miller 1895: 27-28]. Itinerant singers from the Kargopol' area traveled not only around Zaonezh'e and along the White Sea coast, but also along the Onega river in the neighboring districts that were part of Archangel province [Vereshchagin 1855: 362].

Thanks to I. P. Khrushchev, we can gain some understanding of the way *stikhi* spread among the itinerant singers. In 1866 he traveled along the River Oiat', where he came across a lame beggar, Nikita Bogdanov, who was earning a crust singing religious verses on church festivals in the parishes along the river banks. He was from the area and had started begging in his old age; in order to do this he had learnt about ten religious verses with the assistance of some blind old men he had met in the Alexander Svirskii monastery (in the Lodeinoe Pole district of Olonets province, now Leningrad oblast'). Evidently the *kaliki* would spend a number of days in the monastery. Khrushchev pointed out that the singer "has grasped the essence of *stikh* singing so well that he has complete mastery of it and makes his own variations when he sings" [Khrushchev 1901: 191].

Instances of impoverished peasants performing *stikhi* and *byliny* for alms in their district or even in their own villages are not exceptionally rare for the Russian North. We should note that for those who sang out of necessity there were no restrictions on genres. M. A. Prokhorova from Burakovo recollected that "her grandfather Mikh[ail] Fedorovich Deshagulin lived in poverty and sang various *stikhi* and *byliny* very well ... Mikh[ail] Fed[orovich] sang *byliny* while people worked, at spinning 'bees' and church festivals. People paid him between two and five kopecks for singing a *bylina*, "gave him alms", as M. A. says. He had little to live on, went begging and even so died in poverty" [KarRC Archive, coll. 79 № 366a].

Rybnikov noted the existence of a "transitional" kind of performer, somewhere between the semi-professional itinerant singers and peasant *skaziteli* (narrators).⁽⁹⁾ He presumed that they were mostly itinerant tailors who "have their own place to live and are not really short of money" [Rybnikov 1989: 82]. It seems probable that in case of need both tailors and impoverished peasants could use their performance skills to earn a living.

T. A. Feshov, a peasant from Izhgora, was one such "semi-itinerant" singer. He maintained a household and was not the poorest person in his village, but nevertheless sang *dukhovnye stikhi* and *byliny* and told wondertales all over the district where he lived. He was known as a good narrator and, according to informants from Podberez'e, "made his living by singing" (*kormilsia pesniami*) [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 38]. Judging from what the peasants recollect [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 8, 21, 35], Tikhon Feshov possessed an artistic streak; he seldom sang at home but enjoyed performing in public. During festivals, surrounded by a crowd of listeners he would perform for pleasure rather than wages; when he wanted to earn money he would go and sing for those in charge of the posting station. T. A. Feshov died in 1930.

Several performers from Kolezhma described the singers whom they often heard when children: "Cross-eyed Van'ka and Oksiukha, they'd be wandering around these parts, together, they were husband and wife... God alone knows where he lived, singing *stikhi* throughout the whole wide world! For his singing people gave him bread or flour, some gave sugar, others tea, various things. When they arrived, they'd ask to spend the night and people would let them in. They came from some place, somewhere far off... Ivan was close on fifty; they were dressed ordinary like: he wore a hat on his head, and she had a headscarf. They didn't have any children... They sang a lot, but I don't remember what now" [KarRC Archive, coll. 145 № 41]. It is probable that this couple lived not too far from Kolezhma, since they visited the village fairly regularly, during every fast [KarRC

Archive, coll. 145 № 36]. They also seem to have been impoverished peasants who went to remote villages, asking for charity but did not fully adopt a vagrant way of life. This supposition receives confirmation from the fact that several informants recalled their names. By contrast the names of genuine *kaliki perekhozhie* who were of no fixed abode or who lived outside Zaonezh'e and Pomor'e have almost never been retained in the memories of their listeners.

This particular reminiscence is notable for one further detail: one of the wanderers mentioned in it is a woman. Most of the evidence about the *kaliki* talks about older men; only two informants have any recollection of vagrant women [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 100; coll. 79 № 726]. There may, however, have been more women among the “semi-itinerant” performers. T. M. Bashkirova from Vodlozero told the KarRC collectors that in her childhood she had gone from village to village with her mother, singing songs, and presumably asking for charity [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 241]. The famous storyteller M. D. Krivopolenova was another person who wandered around the villages of Northern Russia after she had lost all means of support in her old age, but was reluctant to become a burden on her daughter. Her extensive repertoire certainly included both *dukhovnye stikhi* and *byliny* [Ozarovskaia 1916: 9].

The *kaliki perekhozhie* and the semi-itinerant singers must have continued their wanderings through the Russian North in the 1920s, at least until collectivization. This emerges from an observation about the village of Nigizhma made in a collector's journal during the expedition of 1940 to the Pudozh district: “both the *kaliki* and other singers were invited into wealthy houses. They would perform *byliny* for a crust of bread, and rich peasants were only too eager to listen to them. What the peasants have to tell gives the impression that the itinerant singers had always been there, and local singers like Feshov were also going from village to village [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 21]. In response to a question about those who performed *byliny* peasant informants “always mention the *kaliki* and say they knew them” [KarRC Archive, coll. 8 № 21]. Villagers talked about the itinerant singers as a phenomenon that had only recently disappeared. When the kolkhozes were formed, semi-itinerant singers like T. A. Feshov also had to vanish.

Undoubtedly it was the *kaliki perekhozhie* who were chiefly instrumental in the dissemination of religious verses throughout the Russian North. Thanks to their peripatetic existence *dukhovnye stikhi* became an essential part of the settled rural population's repertoire. The influence of the phenomenon of *kaliki* upon the emergence of a semi-itinerant type of singer is also undeniable. Thus in the Russian North of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries we can distinguish three kinds of performers of religious poetry, each interacting closely with the others: the *kaliki perekhozhie*, the semi-itinerant singers and ordinary villagers (predominantly women).

NOTES

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2. The Old Believers split from the main Orthodox Church in the latter part of the seventeenth century, refusing to accept the reforms instituted by the then Patriarch, Nikon.
3. According to the modern administrative division of the Karelian republic these villages are part of the districts of Loukhi (Chernaia rechka), Kem' (Kalgalaksha, Gridino), Belomorsk (Sumskii Posad, Kolezhma, Niukhcha, Lapino, Shueretskoe), Medvezh'egorsk (Kosmozero, Kizhi, Seredka, Shun'ga), Pudozh (Avdevo, Zaozer'e, Burakovo, Izhgora).
4. Several codices can be found in the Karelian collection in the archives of the Academy Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House) in St Petersburg [Malyshev 1965: 38-52].
5. The *bespopovsty* (priestless Old Believers) are one of the branches of the Old Believer movement, formed after the priests who had been consecrated before Patriarch Nikon's church reform died. Since no bishop had joined the Old Believers, they had no way of consecrating their own priests, hence the name "priestless." The *bespopovsty*, who rejected priests from the official Orthodox Church, instead selected lay preceptors who would administer the sacraments of christening and confession. As early as the eighteenth century the *bespopovsty* had themselves split into dozens of so-called persuasions and unions, one of which was the Pomor'e union (*Pomorskoe soglasie*) with its center on the bank of the Vyg river. The Old Believer community, settled along the Vyg and Leksa rivers, had a considerable impact on the religious life of the Russian North in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries.
6. Approximately forty texts in the KarRC Archive are unattributed.
7. A similar tradition existed in Vologda province [Lobkova 2003: 81].
8. "Fatera" is a distortion of the word "kvartira" (apartment), here meaning the part of a peasant house in which the family lived.
9. P. N. Rybnikov was the first person to record the folklore (mainly *byliny*) and ethnography of Olonets province on a systematic basis. The publication of four issues of The Songs Collected by P. N. Rybnikov [Pesni sobrannye P. N. Rybnikovym], 1861–67, began a new phase in the study of Russian folklore and stimulated folklore collecting in the Russian North.

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Waxing Like the Moon: Women Folk Healers in Rural Western Ukraine (1)

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Once a woman came to see me...she says to me, "I can't sleep, and I'm so weak." I asked her, "Did something frighten you?" "No," she said—she didn't want to tell me. I began to pour the wax, I said, "Something has frightened you—either a man, or a dead person." She remained silent. I began to pour the wax a second time, and it splattered all over the house! She says, "I'm feeling better." I said, "Why didn't you tell me? You really were frightened by the dead. Now you'll feel better." Splattered all over the house.

Stepania, 68, village Horykhliady, Ternopil' region

INTRODUCTION

Stepania is a Ukrainian folk healer, known to her fellow villagers as a *babka*, or *babka-sheptukha* ("granny," or "granny-whisperer").(2) *Babky* are elderly women who perform magico-religious rituals such as "the pouring forth of wax" (*vylyvaty visk* sometimes called *strakh vylyvaty*, "to pour fear") to treat a variety of maladies.(3) They are usually respected figures in their communities, and are seen by many to possess a valuable form of wisdom that cannot be learned in books. Though some *babky* are rumored to be witches who practice both "white" and "black" magic, and their practices are derided by some as "superstitions," their fellow villagers usually respect them, seeing them as God's chosen healers.(4) The *babky* see themselves (and are seen by most villagers) in terms of what Faith Wigzell has described as the role of the Russian *znakharki* (knowing ones). Historically, she writes, *znakharki* were folk healers who (in contrast to witches and sorcerers), "did not embody supernatural powers, but acted as mediators with the unclean force" [1998:49].(5)

This article will detail ethnographic data gathered among *babky* in Ternopil' and Ivano-Frankivs'k regions of Ukraine in 1998 and 1999.(6) To carry out this research I participated twice in an annual summer fieldwork expedition undertaken by researchers and students.(7) The annual Dnister expedition was initiated in 1988 by the Lion Society in L'viv to facilitate ecological research on various aspects of the Dnister River and the villages dotting its banks.(8) During the summers of 1998 and 1999, the expedition included hiking and canoeing phases, and lasted from one to two months. Researchers (including ethnographers, linguists, botanists, chemists, and others) camped near villages along the riverbank, spending from one to three days at each campsite.

From mid-July until mid-August 1998, I gathered data on health and healing practices in fourteen villages. During July 1999 I visited seven villages. Additional research for this article was carried out in Zhytomyr region in November 1999. For this project, I interviewed eleven folk practitioners, ten women and one man (see Appendix 1 for a list of *babky* interviewed). The eldest healer interviewed was born in 1914, and the youngest in 1939. All *babky* save one, Eva from Sloboda, Zhytomyr region, were interviewed during the Dnister expeditions. All interviews were audiotaped, and seven were videotaped.

The villages in which the research and interviews took place (included in Appendix 1) were small, ranging in size from fifty to 200 households. The only formalized industries in the villages were small-scale agricultural and livestock-based endeavors, basically vestiges of Soviet-era collective farms. The inhabitants comprised primarily elderly people who grew their own vegetables and raised farm animals (cows, pigs, chicken, ducks, geese and rabbits) for subsistence. As many consultants told me, the villages “grew younger” on weekends, when urban-based children and grandchildren arrived to help their parents with this labor-intensive work. Most households were impoverished, and some villagers reported that they had not seen paper money in several years.

Common institutions in the villages included general stores, schools, “houses of culture,” and libraries. Most villages had an ambulatory, called a *medpunkt*, rather than a full-fledged polyclinic, where basic health services were provided. Some villages had a pharmacy or a kiosk that sold pharmaceuticals. The crisis in post-Soviet health care was evident in all of the villages, where medical personnel did the best they could to provide care despite a dire lack of financing. When I asked the local midwife in the village of Shypivtsi whether the *medpunkt* had a pharmacy, she pulled a shoebox out of her desk drawer. “This is our pharmacy,” she sighed, “People donate their leftover medicine for me to give to other patients.” In this context, it is not surprising that villagers sought strategies for healing outside the sphere of official medicine, turning to local “wise women” such as *babky* for treatment of a variety of maladies.

In the villages I visited, people frequently utilized the services of *babky*. Most *babky* indicated that they had patients every day, and people came from distant villages and cities to seek the services of several of the better-known *babky*. In addition to performing the wax ritual, many *babky* were also skilled in administering herbal remedies, conducting rituals to remove the evil eye, “throwing” (reading) cards, and performing healing massage. While *babky* treated people of any age, they indicated that frequently their patients were young children suffering from “fear sickness,” stuttering, irritability, difficulty sleeping, and similar ailments. For their services the *babky* usually received a small amount of money (2-5 *hryvni*) the Ukrainian currency (singular *hryvnia*, (UAH)) (9) or barter in the form of eggs, sugar, flour, butter, *hrechka* (buckwheat groats) or moonshine.

In cultures all over the world, there are physical and mental illnesses whose etiology and treatment falls outside the official categories of disease recognized by standard allopathic medicine. Many Ukrainians also recognize maladies that are usually considered untreatable by standard Western medical practice. These illnesses are the special domain of the folk healers known as *babky*. The afflictions most commonly treated by the *babky* I interviewed were “fear” (*liak*, or *prystrit*), and the evil eye, sometimes glossed as “curses” or “spoiling” (*uroky, porcha*).⁽¹⁰⁾

A belief in the potential ill effects of being the recipient of a certain kind of glance is widespread across cultures [Dundes 1992; Migliore 1983]. In Ukraine as in many other cultures, it is believed that the evil eye (*uroky, porcha*) can be cast either intentionally or unintentionally. Fear sickness is common to many folk medical systems, the best-known example probably being *susto* in many Latin American cultures. Fear sickness (*liak*) in Ukrainian villages is usually caused by a scare, such as an accident or the death of a loved one. Children are said to get *liak*, which seems to manifest itself sometimes as panic attacks, when scared by a dog,

when an elder yells at them, when other children taunt them, and so on. *Liak* also referred to phobias about water, dogs, the dark et cetera. The physical symptoms of *uroky* and *liak* are similar, and include “nerves,” depression, weakness, headaches, incessant crying, insomnia, loss of appetite, depression, bed-wetting, speech impediments, mental illness and infertility.

THE WAX RITUAL

The wax ritual usually took place in the *babka*'s kitchen. In summer, it was frequently performed in the summer kitchen, a room for cooking and food preparation separate from the main house. Paraskovia II, from the village Khmeleva, however, indicated that she always conducted the ritual outside, implying that treating a patient indoors could be dangerous.⁽¹¹⁾ Before beginning the ritual, the *babka* discussed the patient's health complaints with him or her (the patient was usually female). Then she stood either behind or in front of the patient, who was seated in a chair. Frequently the *babka* said comforting words to the patient, such as “Don't be scared,” or, “Don't worry, it won't hurt.” The *babka* then held an enamel bowl of *cold* water over the patient's head, and began an incantation. She usually made the sign of the cross on the bowl with a knife. Melted wax was poured into the bowl. The wax quickly hardened, forming a sort of pancake. Some *babky* then loosened the hardened wax from the bowl with the knife, turned it over, and interpreted the shapes they saw in the wax.

The wax was usually re-melted and the ritual performed twice more. Some *babky* held the bowl over the patient's head for all three pourings; others held it over the shoulders for the second pouring, and over the knees and hands for the third. Then the *babky* usually had the patient sip water from the bowl, or wash her face with the water. The water was then discarded in a specific place.

The most important elements of the ritual included water, wax, incantations, and a knife. Most *babky* got the water for the ritual from their well, oftentimes adding a few drops of “holy water.” A priest had blessed this holy water, usually on the eve of the Epiphany. Paraskovia Moroz had asked a priest to bless her well. As a consequence she considered the well water holy, and used it in her healing rituals. Stepania Kuryliak took water from her well, but said that she could only use it if no one had touched the water. Orysia Popovs'ka reported that she took water from a well located beside a local *kaplychka* (small chapel or shrine for prayer), and was careful to do so before sunrise. She crossed herself and said a prayer before collecting the water. If anyone witnessed her taking the water or walking back home, she would discard because it would have lost its “power.” Paraskovia II said that water for the wax ritual should be taken from three different sources early in the morning before sunrise. Most *babky* emphasized that the water should be “fresh,” meaning it should be the first water collected from a source (i.e. a stream, a well) on a given morning.

After the wax had been poured for the last time, the patient was usually told to take three sips of water from three different spots on the bowl. Then the patient was “washed” with the water, for which the *babka* usually used the backs of her hands. Stepania Kuryliak washed her patients' forehead, chest, hands, and back of the neck while reciting “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” She then sprinkled the patient with the water, repeating this phrase. Anna Novakivs'ka washed her patient's forehead, cheeks, front of neck, chest, waist, hands, and legs.

The water used in the wax ritual was often discarded by the *babka* in a very specific place, often a location where no human would ever tread. Some indicated that the water should be poured out around a tree. Anna Novakivs'ka said that the water must be poured down the doorframe (“a safe place”) after the ritual. The symbolic significance of thresholds such as doors in ritual practice has been noted by Van Gennep [1960:20], Turner [1967] and others. Anna Novakivs'ka said that the water could also be poured out away beneath a tree, something with which most of the *babky* concurred. She told us that women/girls should pour the water out around apple, pear, and cherry trees (all “female” trees), and men/boys should pour it out around oak or ash trees (“male” trees). Paraskovia II said that one should not look at the water while pouring it out, and that the words “Let it return from whence it came” (*nekhai ide tudy, zvidky pryshlo*) should be uttered as the water was discarded. Several *babky* had a special place, such as an obscure ditch, where they frequently discarded the water. Some *babky*, it was reported, gave patients a small jar of water from the bowl to take home and drink by the spoonful from time to time.

The wax was usually originally in the form of church candles that had been blessed by a priest. Paraskovia Moroz emphasized the importance of candles for healing, particularly church candles. She pointed out connections between candles and rituals used to mark the stages of the life cycle (birth, marriage, and death). She also lauded the curative power of smoke from church candles, saying that this smoke “over one’s head” and “over one’s shoulders” had the power to “disperse all evil.” Paraskovia Moroz indicated that a local priest brought her the blessed candles, but other *babky* said they took candles from the church secretly, since the priests forbade them to use blessed church candles in the wax ritual. Some healers indicated that they frequently got their “blessed” wax by collecting the melted wax from used candles from the local church. Mykola Fedorts'o acquired candles from a female acquaintance that worked in the local church. Pavlina Zolota's brother acquired church candles from the village priest and gave them to her. Some *babky* reported that their patients brought them the wax for the ritual, either in the form of church candles or beeswax from a domestic beehive. Tetiana Havron made her own wax candles for the ritual. In general, the *babky* seemed to agree that blessed candle wax was preferable, but that any type of natural beeswax would suffice.

Pavlina Oleksyna reported that she sometimes, though rarely, poured molten lead for patients, a practice more popular in the past. Traditionally, molten lead was considered a more “powerful” medium for the pouring ritual than wax. Earlier, I was told, many villagers would initially ask a *babka* to pour wax, and if they felt no relief from their maladies, they would request that molten lead be poured. Villagers used to acquire lead, a substance in short supply, from various sources such as bullets.

Most, but not all of the *babky* interpreted the shapes formed in the wax (see Appendix 2 for the text of a session with Orysia). A big bump was usually interpreted as “fear,” and a wad of squiggly shapes was interpreted as “nerves.” A “hole” (*iama*) warned of death, and the shapes of “many people” in the wax foretold an imminent wedding. During one pouring, Maria Orobchuk pointed out that the wax pancake had taken the shape of a bird, with a head, beak and feet. She thus believed that a bird had scared the patient. Typical interpretations had to do with traumas the patient had experienced in the past (a fistfight, death of a loved one, being bitten by a dog, scolded or falling into water), and struggles the patient was currently facing (problems

with documents, health problems, marital troubles). Some *babky* predicted the patient's future. Pavlina Zolota purported to see the patient's "planets" in the wax, and therefore could predict whether or not the patient would live a long life. By the third pouring, the wax pancake was usually nearly smooth, which the *babky* cited as an indication that the patient's maladies had been cured.

Incantations and prayers were central to the wax ritual. The *babky* began the wax ritual by making the sign of the cross over the water-filled bowl and saying "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen," usually three times. Most of the *babky* recited the Lord's Prayer (*Otche Nash*) and the Hail Mary (*Bohoroditse Diva*) or variants of them in the ritual. Paraskovia II used the Lord's Prayer and the fiftieth Psalm. As is common in Slav tradition some of the incantations were not official church prayers, and combined Christian motifs with non-Christian and quasi-Christian elements [Hanchuk 1999: 78] (see Appendix 3 for texts and translations of several incantations). Incantations, also called charms or spells, and in Ukrainian *zahovory*, were not so termed by the *babky* themselves, as they eschewed the negative connotations associated with "casting spells" and "bewitching."¹² Common quasi- or non-Christian elements in the incantations included references to water, certain elements of nature (the moon, water, winds, clouds, rocks, cliffs), particular colors (red, black, white, yellow), and personae such as a "black" simple-haired woman, a woman with three daughters, and a wolf.

In contrast to Hanchuk's Ukrainian informants who performed the wax ritual in Alberta, Canada, most of the *babky* I interviewed did not use "secret" incantations, and they did not purposely mutter them inaudibly during the interviews [Hanchuk 1999:13]. Only one practitioner, Mykola Fedorts'o, declined to recite the secret incantation he used in the wax ritual, which had been passed to him by his mother. Mykola also declined to perform the ritual for us. Paraskovia II also had a secret incantation, given to her by her mother on her deathbed, that she used to cure poisonous snake (*hadiuka*) bites. Paraskovia II feared that the incantation would lose its power if she told it to anyone.

The *babky* all used a kitchen knife in the ritual, crossing the enamel bowl with the knife, sometimes laying the knife over the bowl as they prayed, and using the knife to handle the wax pancake. Though none of them articulated the specific significance of the knife, I suspect it was thought to "sever the fear from the patient," as described by Hanchuk's consultants in Alberta [Hanchuk 1999: 25]. This cutting or severing motif was also manifest in one practice that was unique to Paraskovia II; she required her patients to sit on the handle of an axe during the ritual.

VARIATIONS ON THE WAX RITUAL, AND OTHER HEALING METHODS

While there were recognizable patterns in the performance of the wax ritual, we also found several variations. Paraskovia Moroz, for example, used methods of diagnosis and treatment that differed significantly from those of the other *babky*. Paraskovia, who had been told by priests that it was wrong to melt church candles in the wax ceremony, instead lit a candle while reciting a prayer (see Appendix 3, No. 2), and let the wax drip into the bowl of cold "blessed" water. She then asked the patient to "think something" to himself or herself while she (Paraskovia) snuffed out the candle with her fingers. She watched the resulting smoke, and

said that if the smoke went straight up, the patient would “be helped by God.” If the smoke went in the direction of the doorway, however, Paraskovia said, “*tse ko vrachu*” (you must go to the doctor). Paraskovia then had the patient kiss the cross she wore around her neck, and used the water from the bowl to lightly wash the patient’s hands and feet. She then asked the patient to go pour the water away in a place where no human would tread (for example, in a ditch) while saying, “Let all the evil go to the forest and to the water.” This, said Paraskovia, was so that “the evil would not go to anyone else.”

Anna Novakivs’ka’s methods of wax pouring also diverged from those of most other *babky* in the study. She used only a small amount of heated wax, pouring the wax from a spoon into a little enamel cup filled with cold water. After the wax had hardened, she tore off three small pieces from three different areas on the edge of the flattened wax “pancake.” Then she took one of the patient’s hairs and wrapped it in one of the pieces. She placed the wax with the hair under the enamel cup. Anna then took the wax with the hair, wrapped it in a paper, and set it on fire. She had the patient “smoke” (inhale) it, and made sure the smoke enveloped the patient’s body.

Across cultures and medical systems, it is common that some folk healers boast a wide expertise, while others possess a more narrow specialization. This was certainly true amongst the *babky* I encountered. Paraskovia Moroz, for example, was skilled in a range of practices, including the wax ritual, herbal remedies, massage, therapeutic touch and even controlling the rains. Her expertise was so impressive that friends of mine from L’viv who accompanied me to her home and participated in the interviews began to refer to her afterwards as the “Super-Babka.” Many of the other *babky* specialized in one or two areas, usually the wax ritual and herbal remedies. Paraskovia II indicated that her skills centered primarily on curing snakebites. Because the *babky* often treated with herbs and words, they blurred the boundaries between the roles traditionally assigned to different categories of folk specialists, in this case the *znakhar/znakharka*, whose domain in Western Ukraine has historically been associated with herbal remedies, and the *prymivnyk*, traditionally a specialist in incantations [Hoshko 1987: 273].

Paraskovia Moroz was the most skilled in administering herbal and other natural remedies to patients. We were very surprised to find that she had learned many of her herbal remedies from an 1823 book entitled Green Pharmacy (*Zelena Apteka*), not from her elders in the village. This book, which her grandmother had given to her, had been lost (Paraskovia loaned it to a client who never returned it), but Paraskovia said she knew all the recipes she needed, and stored them in her head. Paraskovia always used herbs that she had braided into wreaths to be blessed by the local Greek Catholic priest on the festival of the “Ninth Thursday,” the ninth Thursday after Easter (Corpus Christi among Roman Catholics).

While I heard stories from villagers about *babky* who were skilled in various types of massage, “manual therapy,” (*manual’na terapiia*, a form of deep muscle massage) and bone setting, only one of the *babky* I met, Paraskovia Moroz, practiced massage. She often used light massage to manipulate the spine to correct pinched nerves and other problems, but her primary specialty was ailments of the stomach. Paraskovia also practiced therapeutic touch, a procedure during which she used prayers and energy to treat the patient without touching him or her.

Almost all of the *babky* had methods for removing the evil eye. Like the pouring of wax, this ritual was usually simultaneously diagnostic and curative. Pavlina Zolota used the following method to diagnose and cure the evil eye. She placed two empty glasses on the table. She first poured some water (from her well) into the first glass. Then she took three spoonfuls of water from the first glass and transferred them to the second, empty glass, while saying “*Ne o dyn, ne dva, ne try*” (Not one, not two, not three). She poured out the water from the first glass. She took three spoonfuls of water from the second glass, transferring the water back to the first (now empty) glass, again saying “*Ne o dyn, ne dva, ne try.*” If after this procedure there was still water in the second glass, said Pavlina, this was an indication that someone had cast the evil eye on the patient.

Orysia Popovs’ka used another method to diagnose and cure the evil eye. She poured “holy water” into a cup, and made the sign of the cross over the cup with a knife while saying “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” She then said the Lord’s Prayer. Then Orysia broke off nine pieces of bread crust and threw them in the water, saying “*Ne dev’iat’, ne visim, ne sim...*” (not nine, not eight, not seven) and so on as she threw in each piece. Matches, she said, could also be used. If using matches, the practitioner should light each match, let it burn, and throw it in the cup when the match was almost burned out. If the crusts or matches sank to the bottom of the cup, Orysia said, the person’s problems had indeed been caused by the evil eye. If, alternatively, the bread or matches floated, some other cause was to blame. If the evil eye was indicated, Orysia used the backs of her hands to “cleanse” the patient with the water from the cup. She used both hands, making a large stroke on the front of the body, top to bottom, and repeating this on the patient’s back. She then discarded the water from the cup in a place where no human would ever tread. Eva used specific incantations to remove the evil eye, and she gave us two versions of this incantation (Nos 3, 4).

Other healing methods used by the *babky* included “fumigation” of the ears by means of an ear candle to release wax and infection. Eva also “rolled eggs” to diagnose and cure “fear” (*liak*), a practice common in Central Ukraine that is in many ways analogous to the wax ritual in the Western regions.⁽¹³⁾ She crossed herself and recited an incantation (No. 5), as she rolled the egg over various parts of the patient’s body — the forehead, chest and arms. She then broke the egg into a glass of water. If the egg exhibited *palochki* (hairs, or little branches/sticks) in an upward direction, and especially if the *palochki* had little “heads” on them, said Eva, the person had been suffering from “fear.” If there were many *palochki* (five or six), she said, this indicated that the person had been scared long ago. If there was only one, the frightening event had happened recently. Like many of the other rituals, the diagnosis was also the cure in the egg ritual. Eva also used incantations to treat maladies such as hernias (No. 6). In one incantation Eva called the hernia a “little gold one,” thus personalizing the malady. She also used kind words to encourage the hernia to “sit on a golden chair, sit down in your place.” The practice of assigning a kind name to a particularly painful or irritating malady is an ancient Slavic practice [Hoshko et al. 1987: 276].

THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RITUALS

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of the wax ritual and other rituals performed by Ukrainian *babky*, it is likely that many of the underlying beliefs and symbols upon which they are based have a

pre-Christian origin. While we cannot know the precise sources of the beliefs and values of the rural population of the East Slavs [Bushkovitch 1992: 212-13], it has been proposed that Ukrainian folk beliefs probably have Indo-European origins and include very little that is specifically Ukrainian [Vovk 1995: 131]. In particular, the idea that physical maladies may be caused by supernatural forces is a common Indo-European belief [Hoshko et al. 1987: 274].

It is widely accepted that “Christian” ideals, rituals, and holidays in Ukraine (as in many cultures) exhibit the influence of pre-Christian beliefs [Voropai 1993: 10]. Religious holidays, it is widely thought, are infused with meanings and motifs originating in pre-Christian beliefs. Indeed, it is possible that in some regards the introduction of Christianity merely resulted in the “Christianization” of Ukrainian folklore, or the substitution of Christian figures for pre-Christian ones [Ryan 1999: 11-12; Tovstukha 1994: 48]. As indicated by Hanchuk, the practice of pouring wax represents a syncretic healing ritual that often fuses Christian and pre-Christian imagery [Hanchuk 1999: 1]. The syncretism of Christian and pre-Christian motifs was evident in many aspects of the *babky*’s practices. In particular, beliefs about the *nechysta syla* (unclean force) and *uroky* (the evil eye) exhibit the influence of pre-Christian beliefs on Christian ideology [Naulko et al. 1993: 243].

References to wells, shores, roots, stones, and the moon in some of the incantations (e.g. No. 1) are likely to be pre-Christian elements in the wax ritual [Vovk 1995: 172-73].(14) Some *babky* mentioned forests, water, animals, ashes and so on in their incantations. One of Paraskovia Moroz’s incantations (No. 2) referred to a “black lady” to whom Paraskovia gave several “tasks,” presumably to keep her busy so she could not cause the patient harm. Paraskovia also called this “lady” *skusa*, a euphemism for *chort* (devil), an all-encompassing representation of the unclean force in many Slavic cultures [Hoshko et al. 1987:250-251].(15) Another incantation (No. 4) referred to a mother and her three daughters, one of whom “turned around” the evil eye. Such references in what otherwise approximated to standard religious prayers would seem to indicate the integration of pre-Christian beliefs into contemporary healing rituals.

The moon held special significance in the beliefs and practices of several *babky*, and some prayers involved invocations to the new moon. Eva told me, for example, that one must follow this procedure to cure a toothache: “When the *molodyk* appears, that is the new (literally, ‘young’) moon, when you can see just a tiny sliver of the moon, then you must stand on a rock and say, ‘*Molodyk, molodyk*, have you been to the other world?’ ‘I have.’ ‘Do people die there?’ ‘They do.’ ‘Do teeth hurt there?’ ‘They don’t.’ ‘Then don’t let ours hurt either.’” Similarly, Paraskovia Moroz told me the following prayer: “Clear moon, young prince, don’t let anyone have them [dry patches from eczema or psoriasis] not Oksana. Take it away, you are young, you see everything at night on the earth.” *Babky* often told patients to time their rituals and prayers to the appearance of the new moon. In some cases, the new moon was seen to have powers to renew a spell, if a particular incantation was repeated with each new moon.

It is common in many cultures, including among the Slavs, for the days of the week to be associated with symbolic significance. Most of the *babky* I interviewed in Western Ukraine designated certain days for treating males or females, and all preferred to pour wax before noon. The designation of days as “male” or “female” and the association of certain times of day with magical powers are probably pre-Christian elements of

the wax ritual. Almost no one performed the wax ceremony on Sundays or church holidays. Taboos against performing rituals and incantations on holidays are found in many cultures. Amongst the *babky*, a reluctance to perform the wax ritual on Sundays and church holidays reflects explicitly Christian influence [Hanchuk 1999: 77]. In some villages, *babky* did not practice on Friday, the day of Christ's death,(16) or on Sunday, the day of His resurrection.

Several *babky* wore amulets to enhance their healing powers, to protect them from the "unclean force" and to prevent transference of the patients' maladies. These amulets were Christian symbols, most often crosses. A Greek Catholic, Paraskovia Moroz wore a rosary around her neck on which were a cross and a small icon of the Virgin Mary. One of Paraskovia's icons included an image of the Ukrainian trident on the reverse side. She also wore a cross-shaped ring pinned to her undergarment, directly over her heart.

The number three and multiples of three, especially nine, were integral elements of the wax ritual. The ritual was usually performed three times. One *babka* performed the wax ritual for patients a total of nine times: three pourings on three different days. Patients were often instructed to take three sips of water from three different spots on the bowl. Many of the incantations, especially "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," were repeated three times, as was the sign of the cross. Several of the incantations (Nos. 2, 4) made references to three events, three people and so on. Three is an extremely important number in Christian ideology (the Trinity), and was traditionally considered holy, being called one of the "signs, given by God" [Boltarovich 1980: 112]. As noted by Ryan [1999: 314], "Three and threefold repetition are universal in folklore and are very common in Russian divination and magic spells." In the *babky's* rituals, the number three took on a magical significance.

The most important colors in the rituals were red, yellow, and white. Black also figured into some incantations (e.g. No. 2). Several of the incantations referred to "red blood," a "white body," and "yellow bones" (e.g. Nos. 2, 5). As described by Turner [1967: 59-92], red, white, and black form the core of symbolic color systems in many cultures, with red frequently symbolizing blood, white being a symbol of purity, and black having negative connotations. Additionally, in many cultures, red is considered the most powerful color, and is thought to be especially noxious to evil spirits [Hanchuk 1999: 75]. Red cloth was manipulated by several of the *babky* in their rituals. The color white holds both Christian and pre-Christian significance as a symbol of purity, and as an indication of strength. It is therefore fitting that the color white should be associated with the body in a healing ritual. Hanchuk has indicated that, while yellow does not appear to be a significant color in healing rituals in other cultures, it is referred to frequently in Ukrainian healing incantations, being associated with bones in particular [Hanchuk 1999: 75].

Motifs of reversal, using the backs of the hands instead of the palms, counting backwards, and negating numbers,(17) are examples of the use of "sympathetic magic." In these rituals, reversing numbers and body parts is expected to cause a similar reversal of the patient's maladies. The severing of the patient from her fear or illness through the symbolism of the knife (and more rarely, the axe) operates in a similar fashion.

There was a pervasive belief among the *babky* that *uroky* and "fear" could be "caught" (by the healer, especially), and they were thus very careful to manipulate the elements of the rituals in a "safe" manner. The

practice of designating that water be poured out “where no human would tread” is an example. The use of protective amulets also indicates the belief that spoiling is “contagious.” The exorcism of “all fear, nerves, illnesses, unhappiness and insomnia” to the “mountains and cliffs” in one wax ritual incantation (No. 1) is also indicative of this belief. Other *babky* told the evil to go “back from whence it came” (Paraskovia II) or to the “forests and the water” (Paraskovia Moroz).(18)

THE *BABKA*'S ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF HEALING KNOWLEDGE

Across Ukraine and Russia, it has historically been believed by many that folk healers and other “non-simple” or “special” (*neprosti*) persons are born with exceptional spiritual and physical powers [Ivanits 1989: 116]. Traditionally, those deemed “special” have also believed in their own powers. Regional variations also exist; the Hutsuls have traditionally believed that these powers manifest themselves by the time the *znakhar* or other “specialist” is seven years old [Hoshko et al. 1987: 250]. Amongst the *babky* I interviewed, there was little consensus about the origins of their own knowledge and power, or the requisite “qualifications” for becoming a *babka*.(19)

Some consultants believed that *babky* had to be “gifted” in healing, thus affirming the view that one must be born with special powers. Orysia Popovs’ka, for example, characterized the ability to heal using the wax ritual as a “gift from God.” Orysia believed that none of her daughters or granddaughters possessed this gift, and planned to pass on her knowledge to her great-granddaughter, whom she believed would “be capable.” Stepania Kuryliak, in contrast, emphasized that fear was “taken off” by the wax, not by her. This would imply that she did not believe she possessed special healing powers.

In a related vein, several of the *babky* declared that anyone could learn to pour wax. Anna Novakivs’ka said that the ritual would be effective when performed by anyone who believed in God. Indeed, we learned that villagers who were not considered *babky* sometimes performed the wax ritual for their children, relatives and neighbors. While they did not believe that healers were “born” as such, some *babky* did point to specific characteristics that a *babka* must possess. Maria Orobchuk and Tetiana Havron, for example, stated that a potential *babka* must be a “calm” person who is very religious.

Most *babky* indicated that they had learned the wax ritual from an elderly female relative, most often a mother or grandmother. The idea that healing knowledge and power is passed down in families through the generations (often from father to son or from mother to daughter) is a common one across cultures. Amongst the *babky* I interviewed, this transference of knowledge was oftentimes not entirely intentional; Stepania Kuryliak reported that she simply learned by watching her mother and grandmother perform the ritual, thereby “inheriting” both the knowledge and the power to heal. Her deceased mother came to her in a dream in 1996, said Stepania, and chastised her for not pouring wax for her fellow villagers. She then took up the practice, so that she could “help people” (initially, for her own granddaughter, who had fear sickness) as suggested by her mother. Tetiana Havron learned the ritual from her elderly female neighbor, and Maria Orobchuk learned it from a fellow villager who had poured wax for Maria when she was ill. Similarly, Pavlina Oleksyna learned the wax ritual from a woman who had poured molten lead for her daughter. While Paraskovia Moroz believed that

she had been born with the power to heal, she also said that, when she was young, she had performed a procedure recommended by her grandmother to give her healing powers. This included biting several balls of hail in two. This stopped the hail, said Paraskovia, and gave her the power to “heal man and beast.”

The *babky* reported that they obtained their incantations from different sources. Most had been taught incantations by other practitioners. Pavlina Zolota said that incantations came to her in her dreams, and Paraskovia Moroz claimed to hear prayers in the rain. Paraskovia Moroz used prayers from the Bible and other religious texts, and when I asked her to recite a prayer, she sometimes read straight from a book, in order to “make sure she got it right.”

In general, the *babky* said they felt freer to practice their craft since the fall of Soviet rule in Ukraine. Paraskovia Moroz, who was born in 1930, had wanted to study to become a doctor or veterinarian. Her parents, who warned her that all students were forced into the Komsomol (Communist Youth League), dissuaded her. Komsomol members during the turbulent war years in Western Ukraine were oftentimes “tossed into the river,” she reported. Paraskovia said that when she began to heal people in 1964 (she was then thirty four years old) she had to practice in secret. Folk healing was actively repressed by the Soviet regime, and anyone practicing it could have been arrested, she said. When I asked Paraskovia about her experiences under the Soviets, she responded with the following narrative:

I’ve known it since 1964. I was a janitoress in a school. The school director’s wife fell ill with her stomach. It was forbidden then, they’d put you in jail. “Moroza,” he said, “Come, my wife’s ill.” I went and massaged her gently, made a compress, over and over, behind curtains. The director kept it secret; we were hidden behind the curtains. Now he’s retired, he lives in town now, not here in the village. But he comes here to see me, the janitoress! He remembers that I knew all this—and back then it was forbidden to do it openly. Thank God our current school director wasn’t the director then—he [the current director] used to be a doctor [and would not have approved]. But my director said, “Go ahead and do it...” My old granny, she lived to be ninety four. She taught our mother how to treat the stomach. There were four of us sisters. I was born in 1930, the others in ‘32, ‘38, and ‘40. They didn’t care about healing, but I wanted to know everything. They said, “You should study to be a doctor; your hands will help everyone, people and animals. You were born to do it.” I said, “Wasn’t I born like everyone else?” Granny said, “I’m going to die, but you will be useful.”

Earlier Paraskovia had always pleaded with patients to keep her healing a secret, but now she felt free to heal and everyone knew of her abilities. The fact that women like Paraskovia Moroz had protected knowledge of these prayers, rituals, and folk remedies is evidence both of their strong character, and the tenacity of these beliefs and practices.

There was general agreement among the *babky* that the knowledge of the wax ritual should be passed on when the practitioner is dying or no longer intends to practice, and that a *babka* should never go to her grave

without have passed on this knowledge. Several also believed that a *babka* who has passed on her knowledge either no longer has the power to heal, or her powers are weakened [Hanchuk 1999: 9-10]. The perceived necessity of guarding one's secret knowledge, lest the power to heal and help others is lost, is common to many cultures. Though it is reportedly believed by many that a Ukrainian *babka* who reveals her secrets may die soon afterwards [Olena Boriak, personal communication; Hanchuk 1999: 10], none of the *babky* in my study expressed such a belief. Paraskovia Moroz believed that she could "hand over" (*peredaty*) the prayers at any time, but that they would not be effective in another practitioner's hands until after her death. Most *babky* indicated a willingness to teach the wax ritual and other healing practices openly, and used their participation in this study as proof.

I asked each of the *babky* whether or not they intended to teach the wax ritual, prayers and other healing practices to younger people, and most indicated that they did. Most of the *babky* said that they hoped to pass on their knowledge to a female relative, usually a daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter or niece. Tetiana Havron was the only *babka* who indicated that it would be acceptable to teach a boy or man (in this case, her grandson) to perform the wax ritual. Some *babky* had a hierarchical list of possible apprentices, which indicates that they had thought about how and to whom to disseminate these practices. If her daughter declined to learn the wax ritual, Stepania Kuryliak told us, she would, for example, teach her neighbor. During the interviews, curious grandchildren and children of neighbors often observed the *babky*'s rituals and participated in them, usually by fetching instruments and materials.

Some *babky* expressed concern that the younger generation did not seem interested in learning folk medical practices, and that perhaps the tradition of wax pouring would soon die out. This contrasts with reports from Ukrainian scholars who point to a revival of interest in Ukrainian folk traditions amongst the younger generation (Ol'ha Filippova, personal communication). Fearful lest their knowledge die with them, many of the *babky* were happy to be interviewed and most were very willing to be videotaped performing various rituals. This was in marked contrast to Hanchuk's informants in Alberta, who were reticent about being audiotaped or videotaped, very reluctantly shared their incantations, requested that their names not be disclosed, and feared ridicule by educated people who might read about their practices [Hanchuk 1999: 4, 9-10].

ATTITUDES TOWARDS *BABKY*

My investigations showed that villagers often held a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards *babky* and their practices. Many villagers distinguished between folk practitioners who performed "white" (or good) magic and those who performed "black" (or evil) magic. White magic, they told me, was performed with the use of church prayers. Black magic was characterized by its lack of prayer use, and men were often accused of performing black magic and having made a pact with the devil.(20) As noted by Wigzell [1998], Hoshko et al. [1987: 248-249] and Ivanits [1989], the distinction between practitioners of beneficial and harmful magic is historically a fragile one that often breaks down in practice. An aura of awe, and, frequently, suspicion, thus surrounded the *babky*, as has been reported for Hutsul communities in Western Ukraine by Hoshko et al. [1987:250]. Like the Hutsuls described by these ethnographers, in some cases the villagers I met "respected the

znakhary...approached them and other ‘non-simple’ persons with trepidation, tried not to offend them, not to turn them against oneself, and remembered that one must live with them ‘in peace’” [Hoshko et al. 1987:250].

Similarly, many of the *babky* said they were frightened of associating with other *babky*, whom they feared might use black magic. There was accordingly very little communication among *babky* within and between villages. All the *babky* in my study firmly denied using black magic. Almost all were very religious women, and their homes were decorated with pictures of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and other religious symbols. They stressed that they received help from God in their healing practices, and that therefore there was “nothing wrong” with what they were doing. They pointed out that, by reciting “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” and using a variety of prayers, they were evoking God’s help in their rituals.

Despite the *babky*’s recognized devotion to God and the church, the village clergy (specifically, the priests) had mixed reactions to the *babky* and their practices.(21) Many *babky* reported that they kept their healing practices secret from priests, but it is unlikely that they were successful, considering the rapidity with which news traveled around the village. Some priests had suggested to the *babky* that they modify their practices; Paraskovia Moroz, for example, was advised by several local priests not to melt church candles, and she complied by lighting church candles in the ritual instead. Tetiana Havron had been taught by a neighbor to read the cards, but did not practice it after a priest told her that the church forbade card reading. Interestingly, Paraskovia Moroz indicated that she often treated priests (both Greek Catholic and Orthodox) and their families, which would indicate Church acceptance of her practice, at least at the local level. Priests, she said, sought all of her services, including massage, herbal remedies and prayers. I recently learned that Paraskovia has been given the blessing of church officials in Ivano-Frankiv’sk region to conduct her healing practices.

THE BABKA’S ROLE

The contradictory and ambivalent reactions towards *babky* and their healing practices manifested by their fellow villagers, Ukrainian urban dwellers and representatives of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches indicate that there is no uniform role that the *babky* play in contemporary Ukrainian village society. As noted above, the range of special (sometimes secret) knowledge possessed by the *babky*, and their perceived level of expertise, varied widely. Nevertheless, some conclusions may be drawn as to the multiple roles *babky* may fill, and the myriad functions their healing practices serve.

Anthropologists who have studied ritual and shamanism note that, across cultures, ritual practice becomes more prevalent in times of social upheaval [Turner 1967, 1969, 1974]. In the context of a significant decline in living standards, widespread impoverishment, and uncertainty about the future in Ukraine, it is not surprising that villagers (and frequently, urban dwellers) would seek the services of a diviner-healer. As Wigzell [1998: 191] notes for contemporary Russia, fortune-telling (in our case, represented by divinatory practices associated with the wax ritual) “has an important role to play in helping individuals cope with their lives.” This insight, I think, can be extended to the entire range of healing practices espoused by *babky* in Ukrainian villages. Coping mechanisms, and, especially, attempts to restore and maintain harmony, are encoded in all the roles fulfilled by the *babky*. In today’s trying times, I would argue, Ukrainian *babky* carry out

gendered performances that accord them a measure of prestige and power; complement and replace the system of state medicine; act as psychotherapists; and specialize in psychosocial ailments to simultaneously heal persons and communities. I will consider each of these roles in turn, though it should be noted that, in practice, they are usually simultaneous and inseparable.

This study confirms the observation that in the cultures of the East Slavs, women have tended to dominate in the various domains of “special” people such as healers and fortune-tellers. This is a trend that continues today in these regions [Fishman 1994, cited in Wigzell 1998]. Wigzell [1998: 111] notes the historical association between women and the domestic sphere (where, it should be noted, the healing practices of the *babky* take place), and reminds us that women in East Slavic cultures have traditionally been responsible for kin and community work. Additionally, historically it is also women who have been associated with “intuitive knowledge” [Wigzell 1998: 126]. These are all domains that correlate with folk healing practices in Ukraine, Russia, and elsewhere. In many countries, including Ukraine, knowledge of the uses of various herbs and the techniques of gathering, preserving, preparing and administering herbal remedies has also historically been the special field of women [Hoshko 1987: 273].

It is significant that *babky* are always elderly women, those past the menopause who can no longer bear children. They are revered as “wise women” in their communities, and it is widely thought that “you must wait until you acquire enough wisdom in order to become a *babka*” (Ol’ha Filippova, personal communication). In this they mirror the elderly women curers (“conjurers”) in Serbia studied by Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern [1989]. She notes how “females past reproductive age are seen as asexual,” which gives them an elevation in status and more freedom of movement in a patriarchal society [1989: 115-16]. Kerewsky-Halpern [1989: 132] argues that, in the “person of the kerchiefed village *bajalica* [curer],” we find a “nourishing mothering model.” Her findings correlate with those of other researchers who note that women’s participation in healing, spirit possession and “cults of affliction” provides compensation for their structural subordination to men in patriarchal societies [Lewis 1986, Kendall 1989]. Though the argument should not be overdone, I believe that the important roles filled by the Ukrainian *babka* reflect a source of women’s hidden power in a historically patriarchal society. *Babky*, especially those whose practices are well-known and widely sought out, benefit from their healing roles in multiple ways.

As previously stated, *babky* are generally held in high esteem as “wise women.” They are believed to have special knowledge of prayers and ritual practices, and to possess a unique connection to God, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints. The concomitant suspicion that *babky* may also dabble in “black magic” may diminish the esteem with which some villagers regard these women, but also garners them additional respect (out of fear). In general, however, most villagers associate *babky* very positively with pious religious belief and practice. For many, they embody the “nurturing mother figure” described by Kerewsky-Halpern [1989].

In the village of Sloboda, in Zhytomyr region, one young man, Serhii, narrated his experiences with the local *babka*, Eva, in a way that indexed the high esteem in which he held her: “Sometimes it’s so bad for me that my legs just give out, and when *babushka* whispers and prays, I feel better. Maybe that is God helping me?” Clearly, Serhii believed that Eva healed people with God’s approval and help. As Hanchuk [1999: 88] writes of

the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, “there is no doubt that healers who practice the wax ceremony enjoy a very privileged status within the Ukrainian community.” This symbolic capital that *babky* possess becomes a source for economic capital as well [Bourdieu 1986].

As mentioned above, though none of the *babky* I interviewed had an official “charge” for their services, it was customary for patients to give them a few *hryvni* or to pay in barter. This transaction took place without either party acknowledging the “payment:” the patient left behind the money or goods discreetly, usually placing them on a table where the *babka* would be sure to find them. The most well-known healers (especially Paraskovia Moroz) had clients every day, and likely received larger payments. While none of the healers were getting rich from their practice, they did appreciate the extra eggs, flour and small bills. Some of the *babky* indicated that they put all the money they received from their healing into the donation box in the church. This reflects a belief found in many cultures that healing powers are a gift from which one should not make a profit.

While there were clear economic incentives for *babky* to practice their craft, these considerations were not primary. The *babky* I interviewed felt they had a calling to assist their relatives, neighbors, fellow villagers and travelers. In most folk medical systems, health is defined in terms of harmony or balance [O’Connor and Hufford 2001: 19]. In Ukrainian villages, a wise person, and a person uniquely able to restore health in others, is one who can live in harmony with oneself, with nature and the community. The *babka*’s ability to do so, and her willingness to assist others achieve this harmony as well, positions them as important mediators in village communities. As Hanchuk [1999: 88] notes, “They are needed by the community as healers, psychologists and confidants,” and they “propagate a sense of community and social interdependence.” In an historically patriarchal society the role of the *babka* is one that affords women considerable power and prestige. Through techniques designed to restore balance to bruised selves, ailing bodies and troubled socialities, they strive to give their neighbors healing, comfort and hope in the face of a difficult present and an uncertain future.

Indeed, the real and complex healing work that *babky* do should not be discounted. In the context of a collapsed system of Soviet socialized medicine and more than a decade of widespread and often desperate poverty, self-treatment and traditional medicine have become particularly important in Ukraine, especially for rural residents [Phillips n.d.]. *Babky*, whose expertise includes an array of rituals and various herbal treatments, massage, bone-setting and more, are taking up the slack of a failing system of state health care. While many *babky* specialize in treating ailments not recognized by biomedicine (fear, curses and spoiling, for example), many are also skilled in treating problems of the spine, stomach, headaches and others. These are chronic ailments that biomedicine, especially in its current impoverished state in Ukraine, has historically been unable to treat very successfully.

Many of the *babky* I interviewed insisted that they did not wish to compete with the village doctors, *feldshery* (22) and midwives. They usually deferred to local doctors, saying that the doctors “knew much more” about illnesses and healing. Correspondingly, many villagers indicated that they sought the services of the *babky* only after conventional medical treatment had proved unsuccessful. At the same time, some *babky* were proud to report that they had healed individuals whom medical doctors had treated unsuccessfully. Paraskovia Moroz mentioned several doctors who had asked her to teach them her craft of light healing massage, but they

“didn’t have the gift.” Doctors had written down her recipes for herbal medicines, she said, and prescribed them for their patients. In Ukraine, I would argue, *babky* fill a medical niche alternative to, but not necessarily in competition with, official, allopathic, “Western” medicine. Much of the *babky*’s success is likely due to the fact that these folk medical practitioners employ an holistic healing approach that addresses both physical and emotional symptoms of illness.

As noted above, the wax ritual was used primarily to treat maladies that had no analogy in “official,” biomedical (allopathic) understandings of health and illness, and those that were unresponsive to conventional medical treatment. The physical manifestations of fear or *uroky*, nervousness, depression, weakness and others, it was believed, would be alleviated only when rituals were performed to “remove” the fear or curse. The *babky* spent a significant amount of time with their patients, and engaged them in a dialogue about their health complaints. They tried to elicit the patient’s explanations and offered their own suggestions as well. Along with the magico-religious components of the ritual, therefore, *babky* conducted a sort of informal session of psychotherapy. Patients were given the opportunity to discuss their mental and physical state, to talk about family and community relations and problems, and to express their emotions [Hanchuk 1999: 87].

Ievhen Tovstukha, a well-known Ukrainian herbalist, has proposed that the incantations (he calls them “meditative magic words”) uttered by *babky* have the effect of “repairing the central nervous system” [1994: 18]. Indeed, several patients told me that the wax ritual soothed them, and after the ritual they felt sensations of warmth and calm (I experienced this feeling of calmness myself.) The wax ritual included a multitude of cleansing metaphors. Often holy water was used, and the *babky* cleansed the faces (and often other body parts, such as hands, arms and neck) of their patients with this water. Some of the incantations referred to cleansing, as when Pavlina Zolota told the “well of water” (*krynytsia*) to wash and cleanse her patient, or when Parasoviia Moroz asked the saints to make her patient as “pure as the day her mother bore her” (*zdoroven’ku, chysten’ku lyshy, iak ii maty na svit porodyla*).

Many *babky* used the first wax pouring to look into the patient’s past, the second to inquire about the present, and the third to predict the future. Others incorporated all three aspects into one pouring [see Appendix 2]. The wax ritual thus allowed the patient to confront his or her past, reflect on the present and obtain some (usually positive) predictions for the future. Such reflections and revelations involve a type of psychotherapy that may allow the patient to re-connect with disturbing or traumatic events from the past, and to reflect on the possible causes for his or her physical or emotional ailments. Patients were often sent away with a positive message for the future, or with clear directions on procedures to be carried out for further treatment (“Take this jar of water and drink three spoonful a day”).

Additionally, because the etiology of the patient’s misfortunes and ailments were always attributed to forces outside the ill person, jealous neighbors, curses, unclean forces, the patient was absolved of guilt for his or her own suffering. The social origins of the ailments treated by *babky* point to another important function of the wax ritual and the *babky* in general: like shamans in many cultures, *babky* conduct healing rituals that ultimately serve to repair social rifts and maintain harmony in the community [Hanchuk 1999, Myerhoff 1976].

As Galina Lindquist [2001: 21] has noted, “‘folk medicine’ so defined has been called to treat not primarily biomedically defined diseases but a much broader range of social, psychological, and existential afflictions, of which physical ailments [are] only a small part.” As previously discussed, many of the ailments treated by *babky* (nerves, fear sickness, depression) index a troubled sociality. These problems were often linked by patients, *babky*, and their co-villagers to troubled relations; they were caused by intentional and unintentional “curses,” envy, and so on. Fights within families or the community could also produce fear sickness and other maladies.

During our interview, for example, Stepania Kuryliak poured wax for a teenager from Kyiv. When interpreting the shapes in the wax after the second pouring she asked him, “Do you have a mother and father? Either your mother has scolded you, or your father; there’s some fear here.” She remarked after the third pouring, “It is showing a dog, and some people. Maybe he was in a fight with some kids. His mother yelled at him.” Similarly, after Paraskovia Moroz treated Khrystyna, a university student from L’viv, with therapeutic touch, she (Paraskovia) told us what she had felt:

I take this hand, and on this side [your front] I feel that you are gentle, towards people, God, your colleagues. But on this side [your back], people envy you, there’s a cold thread all the way down. Maybe they have good intentions, maybe your relatives say, “Our little daughter, how good she is.” Maybe that’s what they think. I can feel who you are from this side, and...from the other side [what people think about you].

Clearly, the *babky* address not only personal ailments (in their various emotional and physical manifestations), but also strive to restore bruised socialities. By encouraging patients to ponder possible spoiled relations (with parents, friends, relatives, and others), the *babky*, like shamans all over the world, do important psychosocial work in their communities. Because these are small communities where news travels very quickly, villagers often know which persons have visited a *babka* recently, and for what purpose. Through this form of folk healing (as in forms practiced in other cultures), private problems are submitted to public scrutiny [Farmer 1988]. While, on the one hand, this type of public scrutiny can serve as a mechanism of social control [Foucault 1980], it can also facilitate healing at the level of the individual body and the social body [Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987]. This is especially true in societies such as Ukraine, where conceptions of personhood are very sociocentric [Taylor 1985]. In a very real sense, Ukrainian *babky* fill a role as healers, not only of bodies and psyches, but of troubled communities in a time of social upheaval.

NOTES

1 A previous version of this article appeared as “Voskovi formy: *Babky*-sheptukhy, ikhne remeslo ta rol’ v ukrains’kii sil’s’kii hromadi” (Shapes in the wax: *Babky*-sheptukhy, their craft and role in Ukrainian village society), in Valentyn Stetsiuk (ed.), Kulturni hrona Dnistra (Cultural Chronicles of the Dnister). Ivano-

Frankivsk: Lileia, 2001, pp. 55-69. An ethnographic video based on this research, Shapes in the Wax: Tradition and Faith among Folk Medicine Practitioners in Rural Ukraine (producers Sarah D. Phillips and Timothy D. Miller) is in production and is scheduled for release in April 2004. I am grateful to Faith Wigzell and anonymous readers at Folklorica whose insightful comments helped me reorganize this paper and strengthen many of the arguments. I am indebted to Michael Naydan for his generous assistance in transliterating and translating the Ukrainian.

2 *Babky* are also frequently referred to as *vorozhky* (fortunetellers), or *znakharky* (knowing ones), terms used widely throughout Russia and Ukraine.

3 Men also practice this type of folk medicine, though rarely. My study included only one male healer.

4 See Kononenko [1998] for a detailed treatment of witchcraft beliefs and stories in early nineteenth-century and modern Ukraine. Vovk discusses beliefs connected with witches in earlier times, and postulates that these beliefs may have come to Ukraine and Poland from Germany [1995: 179-80].

5 Wigzell [1998: 49] notes the parallels between this role of the *znakharka* and that of the “cunning folk” of England or the counter-sorcerers of France. Ivanits [1989: 122] has suggested that in Russia (and, presumably, amongst the East Slavs in general) “magic healing and sorcery represent two lines going back to the ancient *volkhv*, whose function, evidently, was both to cure and to make contact with the supernatural for purposes of ensuring a good harvest and predicting the future...By the nineteenth [century], folk notions tended to separate the two categories into good *versus* evil practitioners, though at times these distinctions broke down. The basis of separation was largely the role of the devil: peasants often claimed that sorcerers and witches received their special powers from the devil and functioned with the assistance of the unclean force, whereas magic healers supposedly functioned with the aid of God and the saints.”

6 Research for this article was supported in part by a grant from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the US Department of State and the US Information Agency. None of these organizations is responsible for the views expressed. Research in Ukraine was also supported by a US Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship.

7 My research on folk healing was one of three major research projects I undertook in Ukraine over two years, 1998 and 1999. The other projects focused on post-Chernobyl health and alternative healing therapies in Ukraine [Phillips 2002b] and women’s roles in post-Soviet civil society building [Phillips 2000, 2002a].

8 I am grateful to the Ukrainian colleagues and friends who assisted me in my Dnister research, especially Ol’ha Alekseeva, Volodymyr Bakus, Khrystyna Hnatyshak, Ihor Kokotyn’, Marianna Podoliak, Sviatoslav Poteenko, Oleksandr Savytskyi and Valentyn Stetsiuk. During 1998 and 1999, I was the only foreigner participating in the Dnister expedition. In previous years, researchers from Poland and Germany had also taken part. Several publications have resulted from the annual Dnister expeditions, including volumes edited by Valentyn Stetsiuk [1996, 2001] and Mykola Zharkykh [1998].

9 At the time of the research, five hryvni was roughly equivalent to \$1.

- 10 Ryan notes that, while *porcha* is often the effect of the evil eye, it “can also be the result of any kind of malefic magic” [1999: 33].
- 11 As discussed by Kononenko [1998: 76-77], in Ukrainian folk cosmology, Paraskovia, “a patron saint of women and women’s work, particularly spinning and weaving... is likely an evolution from a pagan goddess.” Moreover, Paraskovia was a saint considered by Ukrainians as “unclean” and connected to supernatural powers. I heard of no such discussions in connection to the two Paraskovias in my study, and I only learned of these historic folk beliefs after I had completed the research.
- 12 See Ryan 1999, especially Chapter 7, for a detailed consideration of incantations.
- 13 See Ivanits [1989: 115-16] for a detailed description of an egg ritual performed in 1926 in the Nizhnii Novgorod district of Russia for the Soviet ethnographer N. A. Nikitina.
- 14 The historical significance of the moon and other celestial bodies in Ukrainian folklore is explored in Vovk [1995: 172-73].
- 15 Hoshko et al. [1987: 251] note that words such as *skusa*, *pekun* and others, have historically been used by Hutsuls (and presumably, other Ukrainian and Slavic peoples) to avoid pronouncing the taboo word *chort*. Vovk [1995: 182] notes that in Ukrainian folklore devils (*chorta*) are frequently described as being “black” and “hairy,” like Paraskovia’s “black lady with long hair.”
- 16 Wigzell [1998: 56-57] notes that Friday appears to have been considered an inauspicious day in pre-Christian times as well.
- 17 See Ryan [1999] for a detailed analysis of the significance of particular numbers in Russian magic and divination beliefs.
- 18 Hoshko et al. [1987: 248-49] describe the *hradivnyky*, people who, among Hutsuls, “possessed the power to turn back hail, stop the storm clouds, or to direct them to a safe place—the water, or the forests.” *Hradivnyky* were categorized as “exceptional” people whose expertise was used for good.
- 19 See Tovstukha [1994: 47] for descriptions of the ideal *babky*’ *vorozhbytky-sheptukhi*.
- 20 I was unable to locate any of these so-called “grandfathers” (*dedushki*) in the villages. It is possible that these “warlocks” are a kind of mythological foil against which the *babky* are contrasted as good healers who work “with God.”
- 21 Unfortunately, I was unable to interview any members of the clergy. The information concerning priests’ attitudes towards *babky* comes from the *babky* themselves.
- 22 A *feldsher* is a medical worker with a mid-level education, whose expertise falls roughly between that of a nurse and a physician.

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Appendix 1: List of *Babky* Interviewed

Eva [surname unknown] (b. 1928); Sloboda, Ovruts'kyi raion, Zhytomyr oblast'
(interviewed 10/15/98)

Mykola Fedorts'o (b. 1914); Dolyna, Tlumats'kyi raion, Ivano-Frankivs'k oblast' (7/20/99)

Tetiana Havron (b. 1922); Berem'iany, Buchats'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/27/99)

Stepania Kuryliak (b. 1931); Horyhliady, Monastyr'skyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/20/99)

Paraskovia Moroz (b. 1930); Rakovets', Horodenkivs'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (8/8/98)

Anna Novakivs'ka (b. 1924); Isakiv, Tlumats'kyi raion, Ivano-Frankivs'k oblast' (7/23/99)

Pavlina Oleksyna (b. 1920); Odaiv, Tlumats'kyi raion, Ivano-Frankivs'k oblast' (7/19/99)

Maria Orobchuk (b. 1939); Berem'iany, Buchats'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/28/99)

Paraskovia [surname unknown; referred to here as Paraskovia II] (b. 1919); Khmeleva,
Zalishchyts'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (8/11/98)

Orysia Popovs'ka (b. 1936); Uhryn, Chortkivs'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/20/98)

Pavlina Zolota (b. 1926); Shypivtsi, Chortkivs'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/27/98)

Appendix 2: A Healing Session with Orysia Popovs'ka

Personae

Orysia Popovs'ka: folk healer, born 1936.

Sarah Phillips: Ethnographer and patient.

Ol'ha Alekseeva: Expedition participant, chemist from Kyiv.

Setting:

July 29, 1998, Orysia's summer kitchen in the village of Uhryn, Chortkivs'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast'.

Sarah: What are you going to do?

Orysia: I'm heating the wax, so I can pour it [into the bowl] over your head. Your nervous system has been upset. You've been upset very recently.

Ol'ha: Her mother died.

Orysia: Was that long ago?

Sarah: Seven years ago.

Orysia: And no one poured wax for you?

Sarah: No, never.

Orysia: Don't you worry. [Prepares to pour wax.] It won't hurt, everything will be fine. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen (repeats three times).

[Recites the entire Lord's Prayer]: Our Father, which art in Heaven...deliver us from evil, Amen. [Recites the first half of the Hail Mary]: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. For you bore the Savior of our souls. Guardian Angel! Help! In the early morning, in the evening, in the day, and at night. Keep [her] from evil and fear and from all misfortune.

Mother, holy Virgin Mary! Hear my request; grant her health and many, many years of life. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen (repeats three times).

That's it, I didn't do anything [painful].

Sarah: Yes, I heard everything, but I couldn't see it. Was that a prayer?

Orysia: Yes, it is the Lord's Prayer (*Otche Nash*) and the Hail Mary (*Bohoroditse Diva*). I saw it in the wax, that you were "nervous" (*perenervuvalasia*) recently.

Sarah: And what will you do now?

Orysia: ...I want to let it [the wax pancake] cool a bit. Now we'll see what's on the other side.

Sarah: Can you tell the future?

Orysia: Yes, if it is in the wax. I'll tell you everything—I'll read your fate. Now, look at what you've been carrying around. You've got fear (*liak*). And you were frightened by water. Where were you frightened by water so? Try to remember. Where were you frightened by water?

Sarah: Maybe in my childhood?

Orysia: Did a dog frighten you? Did a dog bite you?

Sarah: Yes, once it did.

Orysia: Your partner, your [marriage] fate will not come soon. You won't marry soon.

Sarah: Too bad!

Orysia: You want to marry soon? No, it won't happen soon. Your fate will be good. You'll have a family of three persons. And what are you thinking about a road? Where are you planning to travel?

Sarah: Home, I suppose.

Orysia: The road will be fine. And someone is waiting for you. Who is waiting for you? Sam, John? And you are worried about some papers. Are you waiting for documents, or a letter? What is with those documents?

Some problems?

Sarah: Yes, yes.

Orysia: There were some losses, big losses. What did you have? Mama? But there was something else. What did you lose? Was anything stolen? Something like that. You don't recall?

Sarah: No.

Ol'ha: Maybe something unimportant?

Orysia: No, something valuable, or it [the wax] wouldn't show me. There was something, you try to remember. It might have been long ago, but it happened—you lost something. I see some kind of road, there and back.

Ol'ha: Maybe from Kyiv, and back to Kyiv?

Orysia: Your fate? Your fate is good (*faina*). Your heart is a bit damaged.

Sarah: My heart?

Orysia: Does it jab you? Does something jab you near your heart?

Sarah: No.

Orysia: Well, that's good. You can get it checked. Your liver is a bit enlarged on the right side. Just a little, not much. It's like that with everyone, don't worry.

Sarah: What should I do?

Orysia: What can you do? Weren't you ill with something? Hepatitis? Did you have any rash?

Sarah: A rash?

Orysia: Like the chicken pox. There are many illnesses that can cause a rash.

Sarah: No.

Orysia: Maybe radiation caused it to enlarge a bit. Or you ate something that damaged it a little. But you don't feel it yet, because it doesn't reveal itself quickly. Your heart could have suffered when your mother died, from grief. But it doesn't hurt, and thank God it doesn't. But it has a little bit of a problem. That is a weak spot, you must remember that...

Appendix 3: Incantations: Transliterated Texts and Translations*

Incantation 1: Wax ritual incantation (Pavlina Zolota)

1 *Vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin'.*

2 *Isuse, Synu nebesnyi, Maten'ko Nebesna, Sviatyi Otche Mykolaiu,*¹

¹ 1 In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

2 Jesus, Heavenly Son, Heavenly Mother, Saint Nicholas,

*The babky I consulted spoke in local dialects that varied from region to region, and village to village (e.g. the usual *prystrit* becomes *prestret* in Eva's usage). I have transliterated the Ukrainian following their actual speech. Michael Naydan generously assisted me with the transliterations and translations.

- 3 *Sviatyi Mykhaile, Sviatyi Antoniiu, Sviatyi Ivane, Velykyi Khrestyteliu, voda tvoia pomohaie.*
- 4 *Zroby tak, shchob [Slavyk] buv zdorovy i chystyi, iak voda tvoia...*
- 5 *[Vsia molytva "Otche nash".]*
- 6 *Bohorodytse-Divo, raduisia,*
- 7 *obradovanna ty, Mariie,*
- 8 *Hospod' z toboiu,*
- 9 *Blahoslovenna ty, plot' i chrevo tvoie,*
- 10 *iak Isusa rodyla izbavytelia,*
- 11 *vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin'.*
- 12 *Krynytsia, berehy, korinnia, kaminnia,*
- 13 *omyi [Slavyka] od vsiakoho shchastia, i neshchastia, i terpinnia.*
- 14 *Misiatsiu novyi,*
- 15 *sriblo-zlotyi, dorohyi,*
- 16 *pomahai, ochyshchui vse,*
- 17 *zmyvai, obchyst', obmyi, osviaty,*
- 18 *shchob buv zdorovy, iasnyi, chystyi, iak ty,*
- 19 *z holovy vykhody, z mozky, z cherepa, z chola, z broviv,*
- 20 *z klipok, z ochei, z nosa, z pysku, z ushiv,*
- 21 *z iazyka, z leheniv, z horla, z pechinky, z lezhynky,*
- 22 *z nyrok, z sertsia, z-pid sertsia, z zheludka, z podzheludka,*
- 23 *z rebriv, z-pid rebriv,²*

² 3 Saint Michael, Saint Anton, Saint John the Great Baptist, your water helps.

4 Make it so that [Slavyk] will be healthy and pure as your water.

5 [Recites the entire Lord's Prayer]: Our Father, who art in Heaven... Amen.

6 Hail Mary,

7 full of grace,

8 the Lord is with thee,

9 Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

10 For you bore the Savior.

11 In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

12 Well [of water], shore, roots, and rocks,

13 cleanse [Slavyk] of all manner of happiness and unhappiness, and suffering.

14 New moon,

15 silver-gold moon, dear,

16 help, cleanse all,

17 wash, cleanse, wash, bless,

18 so he will be as healthy, as bright, and pure as you,

19 go out from the head, from the brain, the skull, the forehead, the brows,

20 the eyelids, the eyes, the nose, the face, the ears,

21 the tongue, the lungs, the throat, the liver, illness,

22 the kidneys, the heart, from under the heart, from the stomach, from under the stomach,

23 the ribs, from under the ribs,

- 24 *z pal'tsiv, z sustaviv, z liktiv, z kolin, z pazuriv vykhody*
 25 *na hory, na skeli idy,*
 26 *vsi strakhy, vsi nervy, vsiu khvorobu, vsi neshchastia, vse bezsonnia posylaiu,*
 27 *Maten'ko Nebesna, Ty vsim pomahaesh,*
 28 *mozhe, i [Slavyku] pomozhesh, shchob vin buv zdorovy i chystyi,*
 29 *iak voda tvoia zdorova,*
 30 *Vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin'.³*

Incantation 2: Incantation used by Paraskovia Moroz to treat any illness or problem

- 1 *Vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin' (3 razy).*
 2 *Dozvol'te, Prechysta Divo Mariie,*
 3 *moiemu sertsiu s Vamy hovoryty*
 4 *i [Sari] zdorov'iachka uprosty,*
 5 *shchob ii bile tilo, zhovti kosti,*
 6 *chervona krov, syni zhyly*
 7 *tsila ii budova*
 8 *buly zdorovymy vid vsiakoi boli,*
 9 *vsiakoi nemochi,*
 10 *vsiakykh strakhiv, vsiakykh klopotiv,*
 11 *vid vs'oho zloho sokhranyty,*
 12 *na mnoha lita poblahoslovyty.⁴*

³ 24 from the fingers, the joints, the elbows, the knees, go out from the nails
 25 go to the mountains, the cliffs,
 26 all the fears, all the nerves, all the illnesses, all the unhappiness, I send all the sleeplessness,
 27 Heavenly Mother, You help everyone,
 28 maybe you will help [Slavyk], so he will be healthy and clean
 29 like your healthy water,
 30 in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

⁴ 1 In the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen (repeats three times).
 2 Allow, Immaculate Virgin Mary
 3 My heart to speak with You
 4 and to beseech [Sarah's] health,
 5 that her white body, yellow bones,
 6 red blood, blue veins,
 7 her entire body
 8 would be healthy from all pain,
 9 all infirmity,
 10 all fear, all troubles,
 11 from all evil protect her,
 12 bless her for many years.

- 13 *Isuse, Synu Bozhyi,*
 14 *dozvol'te moiemu sertsiu z Vamy hovoryty*
 15 *i [Sari] zdorov'iachka uprosyty,*
 16 *shchob ii bile tilo, zhovti kosti,*
 17 *chervona krov, syni zhyly,*
 18 *tsila ii budova*
 19 *buly zdorovymy vid vsiakoi boli,*
 20 *vsiakoi nemochi,*
 21 *vsiakykh strakhiv, vsiakykh klopotiv,*
 22 *vid vs'oho zloho sokhranyty,*
 23 *na mnoha lita poblahoslovyty.*
 24 *Nad khmaramy sydila chorna pani prostovolosa.*
 25 *De ty, skusa, vzialasia,*
 26 *chy ty z vitru,*
 27 *chy ty z pohanoho snu,*
 28 *chy ty z navchannia,⁵*
-

- ⁵ 13 Jesus, Son of God,
 14 allow my heart to speak with You
 15 and to beseech [Sarah's] health,
 16 that her white body, yellow bones,
 17 red blood and blue veins,
 18 her entire being
 19 would be healthy from all pain,
 20 all infirmity,
 21 all fear, all troubles,
 22 from all evil protect her,
 23 bless her for many years.*
 24 On the clouds sat a black lady, bareheaded.**
 25 Where have you, good-for-nothing, come from?
 26 From the wind,
 27 or from bad dreams,***
 28 or from learning,

* In another version of this prayer, Paraskovia repeated this section a third time, evoking aid from Saint John the Baptist, all twelve apostles, Saints Nicholas and Elijah, and the martyrs Dmytro, Ol'ha, Elizaveta and Barbara.

** In Ukrainian villages, it is customary for a woman to have her hair under a scarf or in a braid, wrapped around her head. Here, the fact that the "black lady" is bareheaded probably indicates that she is a witch. Later Paraskovia calls her "skusa," a term used to avoid pronouncing the word "chort" (devil).

*** In another version of this incantation, Paraskovia added here, "Or from a bad man, or a bad woman, or from bad creatures?" She also added, "Or from work, or colds?"

- 29 *chy ty z zavisty,*
 30 *chy ty z strakhy?*
 31 *Tut tobi ne buvaty,*
 32 *tut tobi ne prezentuvaty,*
 33 *tut tobi ne v'ialyty,*
 34 *tut tobi ne sushyty.*
 35 *Ia tobi, skusa, dam try roboty:*
 36 *odnu robotu—vodu perelyvai,*
 37 *druhu robotu—kaminniam hudy,*
 38 *tretiu robotu—vitramy shumy,*
 39 *ia tobi, skuso, dam vodytsiu—vmyisia,*
 40 *rushnychok—vtrysia,*
 41 *trostovu palochku—pidoprysia—zvidsy vyberysia.*
 42 *Idy sobi, de psy ne havkaiut',*
 43 *de kury ne spivaiut',*
 44 *de vrazhi vitry huliaiut',*
 45 *[Sarochku] zdoroven'ku, chysten'ku lyshy,*
 46 *iak ii maty na svit porodyla.*
 47 *Popid nebesa ikhav svoim konem Illia,*
 48 *ishla Bozhaia Maty,*
 49 *kuda ty, choloviche, idesh?*⁶

- ⁶ 29 or from envy,
 30 or from fear?
 31 Here you mustn't show yourself,
 32 here you mustn't dwell,
 33 here you mustn't dry it,
 34 here you musn't dry it out.
 35 You good-for-nothing, I'll give you three tasks:
 36 One task—pour water,
 37 the second task—make the rocks hum,
 38 the third task—rustle the wind,
 39 you good-for-nothing, I'll give you water—wash with it,
 40 a towel—dry off with it,
 41 a cane walking stick—lean on it—get out of here.
 42 Go where dogs don't bark,
 43 where chickens don't sing,
 44 where enemy winds dance,
 45 let [Sarah] be healthy, pure
 46 as when her mother bore her.
 47 Beneath the heavens Ilia rode his horse,
 48 the Virgin Mary was walking,
 49 where are you , young man, going?

50 *id' na im'ia [Sarochku] ozdorovliaty*
 51 *vid nei vs'o zlo vidibraty,*
 52 *na ii ne pustyty,*
 53 *a ii ozdorovyty,*
 54 *na mnohii lita poblahoslovyty,*
 55 *roztrykhnyisia ielei na vsi 3 chasti,*
 56 *roztrykhnyisia strakh i vs'o zlo na vsi 3 chasti,*
 57 *a [Sarochka] ozdorovlena na mnohi i mnohi lita*
 58 *proslavyty ii i zhyty, i zhyty.*
 59 *[Vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin'.*
 60 *Boh-Otets', Boh-Syn, Boh-Dukh Sviatyi (3 razy),*
 61 *neporochne sertse Marii,*
 62 *otche Nykolaiu,*
 63 *dopomozhy [Sarochtsi] v sim'i ii,*
 64 *v navchanniu, v dorozh, v domi,*
 65 *khai shchaslyva bude mnohiie lita] (3 razy).⁷*

Incantation 3: To remove fear (Eva)

1 *Hospodu Bohu pomoliusia,*
 2 *Prechystoi Bozhoi Materi pokloniusia.*
 3 *Prishla Prechysta Bozha Maty do [Parasky]⁸*

⁷ 50 Go to make [Sarah's] name healthy,
 51 take all evil away from her,
 52 don't release it upon her,
 53 and make her healthy,
 54 for many years bless her,
 55 shake/shatter fir trees (?) into all three parts,
 56 shake/shatter fear and all evil into all three parts,
 57 and healthy [Sarah] for many, many years
 58 bless her to live, and live.
 59 [In the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.
 60 God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit (3 times),
 61 sacred heart of Mary,
 62 father Nicholas,
 63 help [Sarah] in her family,
 64 in study, in travel, at home,
 65 may she be happy for many years] (3 times).

⁸ 1 To the Lord God I pray,
 2 to the Heavenly Mother of God I bow.
 3 The Heavenly Mother of God came to [Paraska]

- 4 *prestret sheptat'.*
- 5 *Prestret-prestrashchyshche,*
- 6 *uroky vrochyshche,*
- 7 *behlo vovchyshche cherez pans'ke olenyshche,*
- 8 *selo na popelyshche.*
- 9 *Kudy vy idete, pannochky,*
- 10 *kudy vy idete?*
- 11 *Idem do [Parasky] rozhd'onoj, khreshchonoj*
- 12 *prestret uroky vyhovoriat'.*
- 13 *A vy, pannochky, vernit'sia,*
- 14 *prestret uroky mynet'sia.*⁹

Incantation 4: To remove fear (Eva)

- 1 *Hospodu Bohu pomoliusia,*
- 2 *Prechystoi Bozhoi Materi pokloniusia.*
- 3 *Prishla Prechysta Bozha Maty*
- 4 *do [Nadi] khreshchenoi, rozhd'onoj*
- 5 *prestret sheptat'.*
- 6 *Prestret-prestrashchyshche,*
- 7 *uroky vrochyshche,*
- 8 *behlo vovchyshche cherez pans'ke olenyshche,*¹⁰

⁹ 4 to whisper away the fear.
 5 Fear, great fear,
 6 evil eye, great evil eye,
 7 a little wolf ran across the master's deer-filled land,
 8 and sat on the ashes.
 9 Where are you going, girls,
 10 where are you going?
 11 We're going to [Paraska] the born, the christened,
 12 to speak away the evil eye.
 13 And you, girls, return,
 14 the fear and the evil eye will pass.

¹⁰ 1 To the Lord God I pray,
 2 to the Heavenly Mother of God I bow.
 3 The Heavenly Mother of God came
 4 to [Nadia] the christened, the born
 5 to whisper [away] the fear.
 6 Fear, big fear,
 7 evil eye, big evil eye,
 8 a little wolf ran across the master's deer-filled land,

- 9 *silo na popelyshche.*
 10 *A vy, pannochky, vernit'sia,*
 11 *prestret uroky mynit'sia.*
 12 *Ie v materi try dochky—*
 13 *odna lozhku myie,*
 14 *druha plattia kachaie,*
 15 *tretia prestret odvertaie.*¹¹

Incantation 5: Said while “spinning” an egg to remove “fear” (*liak*) (Eva)

- 1 *Hospodu Bohu pomoliusia,*
 2 *Prechystoi Bozhoi Materi pokloniusia.*
 3 *Prishla Prechysta Bozha Maty*
 4 *do [Nadi] liaku sheptaty.*
 5 *Sobachyi, kotiachyi,*
 6 *tovariachyi, khlobochyi, perebochyi,*
 7 *koly ia tebe ne znala*
 8 *i ne vyhovarala,*
 9 *teper ia tebe znaiu*
 10 *i vyhovoraiu,*
 11 *z chervonoi krovy, z zhovtoho tyla,*
 12 *z zhovtoi kosti, z rumianoho lytsia.*¹²

- ¹¹9 and sat on the ashes.
 10 And you, girls, return,
 11 the fear and the evil eye will pass.
 12 The mother has three daughters—
 13 one is washing a spoon
 14 the second is washing a dress,
 15 the third is turning away the evil eye.

- ¹² 1 To the Lord God I pray,
 2 to the Heavenly Mother of God I bow.
 3 The Heavenly Mother of God came
 4 to [Nadia] to whisper [away] fear.
 5 Canine, feline,
 6 bovine, ???, ???,
 7 When I did not know you
 8 I did not speak you away,
 9 Now I know you
 10 And speak you away,
 11 from the red blood, from the yellow body,
 12 from the yellow bones, from the rosy face.

Incantation 6: To treat a hernia (Eva)

1 *Zolotnychku, zolotnychku,*
2 *dobryi cholovechku,*
3 *koly ia tebe ne znala*
4 *i ne vyhovorala,*
5 *teper ia tebe znaiu*
6 *i vyhovoraiu,*
7 *na zolotyi stol'chuk siad',*
8 *na svoe mestechko siad'.¹³*

¹³ 1 Hernia [little gold one], hernia [little gold one],
2 dear man,
3 when I did not know you
4 I did not speak you away,
5 now I know you
6 and speak you away,
7 sit on a golden chair,
8 sit down in your place.



Paraskovia Moroz in her home, with folk icons and her herbal and other natural remedies



Wreaths of dried herbs, blessed by a priest, and used for herbal teas and medicines



Orysia Popovs'ka preparing to interpret the shapes in the wax

OBITUARIES

Joseph L. Conrad, 1933-2003

Joseph L. Conrad, Professor of Slavic Languages at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, was born on June 26, 1933 in Kansas City, Missouri, and passed away in Lawrence on December 21, 2003, surrounded by his family. He is survived by his wife, Galina, one son and two daughters. He worked almost to the very end. In August 2003 he gave a paper at the Congress of Slavists in Ljubljana, but health problems arose during the trip, and a diagnosis of fourth-stage pancreatic cancer was made after his return home.

Joseph did his undergraduate work at the University of Kansas, and upon graduation received a Fulbright award for study at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universitaet in Frankfurt during the academic year 1955-56. After the year in Germany he entered graduate school at the University of Texas, where he studied Slavic and Indo-European linguistics with Winfred Lehmann, among others. His dissertation was on Nikolai Marr, whose linguistic theories and the battle to make them dogma had a strong negative impact on the work, careers and even lives of many Soviet scholars. He received the Ph.D. in 1961.

Joseph was an Assistant Instructor at the University of Texas from 1956-59, and then an Instructor and Assistant Professor at Florida State University from 1959-62. The University of Texas recognized his abilities and invited him back as an Assistant Professor in 1962. He remained at Austin until 1966, when Kansas, his alma mater, called him as Associate Professor and Chair to build a strong Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. His success at this task was recognized in many ways, including promotion to the rank of Professor in 1971.

During the 1960s his research interests turned from linguistics to literature. His first article, an outgrowth of his dissertation, is on Marr's theories, but the remainder of his more than forty articles are on literature or folklore (except for three on language teaching and programs). Chekhov was the subject of nineteen of his articles, starting with his third article and continuing through his paper at the August 2003 Ljubljana Congress. Like most scholars of his generation, Joseph was originally primarily a Russianist, but a trip to Yugoslavia in the summer of 1970, followed by three summers (1971, 1972, 1975) as Resident Director of a cooperative summer Serbo-Croatian language program in Zagreb kindled a lasting passion for Yugoslavia and folklore. His first article on a folklore topic appeared in 1980, and it was followed by fourteen more in the ensuing twenty years, with incantations and charms the most frequent topic. Folklore was the subject of his most popular course at Kansas, and the classes filled up to the last seat. His house became an extension of the classroom, with many folkloric objects and displays.

Several of Joseph's students now occupy senior positions at American universities, and the Slavic program at Kansas remains one of the most important. He received numerous grants and awards, including six IREX awards and Fulbright awards to Croatia and Slovenia. He served ten years as Chair of the Department at Kansas and ran eight summer programs in the USA, Russia, and Yugoslavia. He was frequently invited as an

outside evaluator of programs or applications for grants (twenty-five times) and candidates for promotion and/or tenure (nineteen times).

He was also a good friend and good company to spend time with. We shall miss him greatly.

Charles E. Gribble

The Ohio State University, Columbus

Mikaela Iakovlevna Mel'ts, 1924-2003

With the passing of Mikaela Iakovlevna Mel'ts on October 25, 2003 the study of Russian folklore has suffered a great loss. Her name is known to everyone involved in the study of the oral literature of the Russian people, no matter whether they live in Russia, Western Europe or in America. Mel'ts' bibliographies on Russian folklore have become reliable guides for both novice folklorists and mature specialists on Russian folk culture.

Mikaela Iakovlevna Mel'ts, née Druskina, was born April 21, 1924 in St. Petersburg, or Leningrad as it was then. Her career began in June 1942 during the Second World War. At the time she was in the Urals, in the city of Perm' which had become a refuge for many of those evacuated from Leningrad. There Mel'ts started work in a factory, but she soon became a student in the history and philological faculty at the local university. After her return to her native city she continued her studies at Leningrad State University, graduating in 1947.

Already during her study at LGU Mel'ts started working in her future specialty, at first in the Library of the Academy of Sciences and later by contracts in the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House) AN SSSR. In August 1947 she became a regular member of Pushkin House. She was invited to join Pushkin House by M. K. Azadovskii who then headed the Oral Folklore Sector. Azadovskii determined the specialty that Mel'ts eventually came to have, that is, the bibliography of Russian folklore.

Mel'ts' first publication on folklore bibliography appeared in 1956. This is an exhaustive selection entitled "Bibliografiia avtoreferatov dissertatsii po problemam narodnogo poeticheskogo tvorchestva 1949-1955 gody" [Bibliography of dissertation abstracts on poetic folklore 1949-1955]. It was published in the first volume of the recently established Pushkin House series, Russkii fol'klor [Russian Folklore], Moscow, Leningrad, 1956, 1: 313-46.

In 1961 Mel'ts prepared the first volume of her fundamental bibliography Russkii fol'klor. 1945-1959 [Russian Folklore], Leningrad, 1961. In this publication Mel'ts set new standards for the bibliography of Russian folklore by creating a model for a differentiated bibliography. Through bibliographic methods she was able to enhance the syncretic essence of folklore as a cultural phenomenon. Materials and studies reflecting the philological, ethnographic, musicological and historical aspects of folklore were included in the bibliography. Already in the first volume Mel'ts offered readers a balanced and well thought out generic and thematic grouping of the material. A chronological principle for the disposition of the material in each rubric permitted an exposition of the history of the study of folklore in the post-war period. Reference annotations and auxiliary indexes of names and geographic places furnished additional means for retrospective searches.

Mel'ts subsequently turned Russkii Fol'klor into a series. The following volumes reflected the history of the study of folklore over seventy five years: Russkii fol'klor. 1917-1944 (Leningrad, 1966); Russkii fol'klor. 1960-1965 (Leningrad, 1967); Russkii fol'klor. 1901-1916 (Leningrad, 1981); Russkii fol'klor. 1966-1975. Pts 1-2 (Leningrad, 1984-85). These volumes, which quickly became authoritative throughout the world, not only included massive documentation for the field, but also through bibliographic methods defined the most important future trends for scholarship about the "living past." During her long and productive life Mel'ts published more than thirty bibliographic selections on various topics in the study of folklore. All these

selections turned out to be in great demand among scholars. For many years she collaborated with the international publication Internationale Volkskundliche Bibliographie = International Folklore Bibliography = Bibliographie Internationale d'Ethnologie and provided it with information about current works on the study of Russian folklore.

Mel'ts retired in 1979 but remained apprised of all the new writing on folklore and continued to work intensively. One after another her surveys and reviews of works by other people came out. In 2000 she published a fundamental bibliography entitled Poeziia A. S. Pushkina v pesennikakh 1825-1917 gg. i russkom fol'klore (po materialam Pushkinskogo doma) [The Poetry of A. S. Pushkin in Song Books from 1825 to 1917 and in Russian folklore (based on materials in Pushkin House)]. This reference book, which immediately became valuable both in the field of Pushkin studies and for the study of folklore, both sums up the topic of "Pushkin in song books" and at the same time offers a reliable guide to further study of the subject.

Mel'ts made a significant contribution not only to the bibliography of folklore, but also to the history of Russian bibliography on the study of folklore. She wrote a series of articles such as: "M. K. Azadovskii kak fol'klorist-bibliograf" [M. K. Azadovskii as folklorist and bibliographer], Russkii fol'klor, Moscow, Leningrad, 1964, 9: 307-21; "Ukazatel' russkoi etnograficheskoi literatury A. N. Pypina" [Index to the Russian ethnographic literature of A. N. Pypin], Sovetskaia etnografiia, 1966, 5: 149-55; "Neosushchestvlennyi fol'klorno-bibliograficheskii zamysel P. K. Simoni" [P. K. Simoni's unrealized folklore-bibliographic plan], Sovetskaia etnografiia, 1967, 2: 97-102; "Russkie fol'kloristy-bibliografy kontsa XIX - nachala XX v." [Russian folklorist-bibliographers from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century], Ocherki istorii russkoi etnografii, fol'kloristiki i antropologii [Excerpts from the History of Russian Ethnography, Folklore Study and Anthropology], Moscow, 1971, 5: 76-101].

In 1970 Mel'ts defended her dissertation for the degree of Candidate of Sciences on the subject Russkaia fol'kloristika i problemy bibliografii fol'klora [The Study of Russian folklore and problems in the bibliography of folklore].

The bibliography of Russian folklore did not form Mel'ts's sole scholarly interest. During the many years she was in Pushkin House she took an active part in everything in which the Sector of Oral Folklore was involved. For example, together with N. P. Kolpakova and G. G. Shapovalova in 1957 she prepared the collection Izbrannye poslovitsy i pogovorki russkogo naroda [Selected Proverbs and Sayings of the Russian People], Moscow, 1957, and slightly later a basic edition entitled Poslovitsy, pogovorki, zagadki v russkikh sbornikakh XVIII-XX vekov [Proverbs, Sayings, and Riddles in Russian Collections of the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries], Moscow, Leningrad, 1961. Mel'ts also wrote numerous articles about the history of the study of Russian folklore.

The name of Mikaela Iakovlevna Mel'ts will be preserved in the history of Russian scholarship. In the memory of those who knew her personally she also will remain as an exceptionally benevolent, forgiving and cultured person.

Tat'iana Ivanova

Manuscript Department

Institute of Russian Literature

(Translated by James Bailey)

REVIEWS

W. F. Ryan. The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999. 504 pages. ISBN 0271019662. \$71.50 (Hardback). 0271019670 (Paper). \$24.95.

Why does Pushkin's Tat'iana turn pale on seeing the horned moon to her left? Why did the Dostoevskii family consider their father's sudden return from a trip to the village of Darovoe a bad omen? Why do Chekhov's peasants make the sign of the cross when they yawn? One can find the answers to these and hundreds of similar questions in The Bathhouse at Midnight. Will Ryan's superb study of Russian magic takes its title from the most propitious time and place for magic in the Russian village. It represents the culmination of a career of scholarship devoted in good part to magic and rituals in Russia, beginning with his doctoral dissertation on Old Russian astrological and astronomical terminology and continuing through a series of studies on the history of science and magic texts in Russia.⁽¹⁾ His Bathhouse will remain the standard work in English on Russian magic for some time to come. The breadth of its grasp, the depth of its treatment of specific subjects, and the good judgment and erudition Ryan displays throughout make it an essential reference book for Slavists and folklorists.

Ryan opts for a descriptive and, to a large extent, comparative approach and wisely avoids squeezing his material into a neat interpretative system. For, while it is possible to represent specific beliefs, rites, places, objects, and texts associated with magic with a good degree of concreteness, one treads on shaky ground in attempting to superimpose a particular anthropological, social, or psychological grid on this material. Ryan's familiarity with the classical and patristic traditions as well as with the texts concerning magic in Europe since the Middle Ages enables him to situate the Russian tradition within a broad context. In addition to Russia's Byzantine inheritance, he discusses the Oriental and, especially, European texts that seem to have made an impact on Russian practice, and he rather quickly dispels preconceptions about the uniquely Slavic quality of Russian magic. He notes that at the outset of his endeavor he was forced to confront the "banal truth" that "there are few magical texts, practices, beliefs or objects which are exclusive to Russia or even to the Slavs, or for that matter anywhere else: after allowing for elements of natural selection as a result of local climate, flora, fauna, language and historical circumstance, most things can be seen either to derive from, or have analogues or cognates in other cultures."⁽¹⁾ Ryan thus concedes that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to sift out indigenous traditions from those which are "borrowed," and, since the oral and written traditions readily swap material, attempts to determine what "originated" in popular practice and what belongs to the legacy of the written word tend to be just as frustrating.

For Ryan magic seems integral to the whole human experience. Ancient civilizations left records of occult practices, and magic continues to flourish in post-Soviet Russia. The multiple attempts of the Eastern and Western Churches to put the breaks on magic as a remnant of pre-Christianity were futile, and, ironically, the lower clergy often figured among its more avid practitioners. In fact, particular uses of religious objects and gestures sometimes blurred the line between magic and religion, as in the employment of wonder-working icons

for protection and victory in battle or the sign of the cross as a defense against devils [238, 229]. Another indistinct boundary Ryan elaborates on is that between magic and politics, since, it was believed, witchcraft could be used to the detriment of the tsar and his family. Ivan the Terrible both practiced magic and persecuted those he believed guilty of practicing magic [244]; Boris Godunov instituted an oath against the practice of sorcery for those in his service [413]. During the reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich one of the tsaritsa's servants was tortured on suspicion of practicing harmful magic when she stole a mushroom and some salt from her mistress and then spilled the salt [415]. Ryan includes many other instances of this sort.

The organization of The Bathhouse at Midnight is practical and facilitates its usefulness as a handy reference work. It is divided into sixteen chapters that cover, among other things, popular magic and the evil eye; the functions of wizards and witches and Russian's extensive terminology for them; divinations, omens, and signs; dreams and predictions from the human body (itches, twitches, sneezing and the like); spells and curses (including a discussion of the structure of the *zagovor* and abundant translated texts); talismans and amulets; *materia magica* (with a very lengthy and useful roster of real and fantastic plants prescribed for magic rites); texts as magic (including "The Letters of Christ to Abgar," "The Letter to St. Peter/St. Nicholas," "The Dream of the Virgin," "and "The Twelve Fridays"), numerology, geomancy, alchemy, and astrology; and a final chapter on the church, the law and the state (including a roster of witchcraft cases that the Synodal court dealt with in the 18th century). To account for the overlapping nature of sub-divisions within magic, the individual chapters contain a good deal of cross-referencing and there is an extensive index at the back of the book. The book includes a general bibliography in addition to the informative footnotes that accompany each chapter. Eighteen illustrations complement the discussion by helping us visualize New Year's divinations, *zmeevik* amulets, *triasavitsy* (supposed daughters of Herod responsible for illnesses), the circle of Solomon, and other things. All in all, Ryan's book is a marvelous contribution to Slavic studies. It is great fun to read as well.

Linda Ivanits

The Pennsylvania State University

Jack V. Haney, The Complete Russian Folktale. Vol. 5: Russian Legends (2003)

Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe. xxviii + 211 pp. \$65.00 (cloth). ISBN 1-56324-493-4.

Volumes 1–4 of Professor Jack V. Haney’s series, The Complete Russian Folktale, were reviewed in the Fall 2003 issue of Folklorica [37-41]. Volume Five, Russian Legends, continues the series. The folktales in this volume represent tale types 750–849 in the Aarne-Thompson (AT) classification system. Compared to the wondertales (or fairy tales) in volumes 3–4, these narratives may be less familiar to many readers, and are more difficult to define. The Aarne-Thompson index refers to them as “religious tales,” while the East Slavic tale-type index calls them “*legendarnye skazki*” (legendary tales). Professor Haney chooses to refer to them as legends, but points out in his introduction to this volume that they fall between folktale and legend. While this is a problem for folklore scholars, who are still debating the differences between folktale and legend, the traditional performers of these narratives freely moved between and combined the two.

In both Russian and Western folklore studies, the term “legend” is used to designate a prose narrative which the teller and audience accept as true. Unlike the folktale, the legend does not have a special compositional or stylistic form, and the performance of legendary narratives may not require the same artistic skill that the folktale does. Russian folklorists distinguish historical legends, Christian or religious legends, and “superstitious tales,” among others. The last group includes narratives referred to in Western folklore scholarship as memorates or fabulates (equivalent Russian terms are *bylichka* and *byval’shchina*), first- or third-person narrative accounts of encounters with supernatural beings (nature and place spirits such as the *leshii*, *vodianoi*, *rusalka*, and others, as well as witches, revenants, devils, and shapeshifters). Russian legends also include narratives about buried or other treasure, and local legends that explain the origin or disappearance of specific rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, or villages.

The narratives in Russian Legends are close to Christian and religious legends, but like most folktales, and unlike some legends, they are not set in a specific time or place. They often feature Jesus Christ, the apostles, Saints Nicholas, Peter, and Paul, the Archangel Michael and other angels, Il’ia the Prophet, as well as Satan and devils. As Professor Haney discusses in his introduction, many of these narratives reflect the influence of the medieval and later apocryphal tradition (such as the popular apocryphal text about the Mother of God’s visit to hell). There may be traces of the Slavic pre-Christian pagan religion in tales about Il’ia (nos. 410 and 503). In some of these tales, a human protagonist visits hell, or observes the punishments inflicted on sinners there. Another frequent theme is the reward given to a poor but generous man or woman by a holy figure, while a stingy wealthy character is punished. Penance and redemption are also important, and some narratives concern a protagonist who saves himself or his soul from the devil.

The texts in this collection are probably most interesting for the light they shed on popular religious and moral conceptions that often differ from those of official religion. A very ambiguous Christ appears in one narrative (no. 404); after a poor widow has fed him and the apostles, he allows a wolf to eat her only cow. Only

at the end of the tale does Christ explain to the apostles that the widow will be rewarded in the next world. King David appears as an adulterer (no. 418), while King Solomon is crafty rather than wise in getting out of hell and into heaven (no. 457). St. Nicholas the Wonderworker convinces a thief to stop stealing in one tale (no. 504), in very tangible terms. The thief, forced to hide in the skin of a dead cow, is told that it is just as sickening for the saint when the thief lights a candle for him in church. In another narrative, a peasant “blinds” an icon of St. Nicholas Ugodnik and outwits a priest who had reproached him for drinking milk during a fast period (no. 505). Some narratives express the anticlerical feelings of the peasantry: a devil helps a peasant become wealthy, and outwits the priest who is carrying on an affair with the peasant’s wife (no. 473). A reading of these tales reveals a complex attitude toward the Christian religion; while there is reverence and awe before the divine, concern with the problems of good and evil, sin and redemption, these narratives bring the holy figures “down to earth,” make them more concrete, and sometimes present them as adversaries.

Other tales in this collection also display typically Russian or East Slavic folk conceptions. The earth does not accept the body of a dead man who has been cursed by his mother (no. 419). In a humorous narrative, a young man sent to hell is given the task of guarding hundreds of souls. He agrees to release the souls to an angel in exchange for half a bottle of vodka, and then the devils release him from hell, thinking he has eaten the souls (no. 453). A number of the tales are close to fairy tales or wondertales. No. 465, the tale of the Sea Tsar and Vasilisa the Wisest, is essentially a version of AT 313, but with an unusual ending: the man who has unwittingly promised his son to the devil manages to outsmart the devil by hiding his son in dog and goat skins. Readers more familiar with the fairy tales will find that certain common motifs are sometimes used differently in these “religious tales.” In text no. 403, the hero is told he may go into all but three rooms of a stranger’s house. But in this case, looking into the “forbidden room” does not lead to a real catastrophe for the hero; instead, he sees his parents and wife boiling in pitch, punished for their cruelty and stinginess.

Most of these tale-types are found in Europe, with varying geographic distribution. Some are found throughout Europe, such as AT 791: In this popular and humorous narrative, Peter and Christ sleep in the same bed. Their drunken or stingy host beats Peter, and Peter changes places with Christ. The host wants to beat his other lodger, and beats Peter again. This tale type is represented in this volume by no. 446, and contains an interesting twist. When Peter and Christ walk the earth, women are in charge. It is the mistress of the house who beats Peter, and afterwards Peter begs Christ to take away women’s rights. Other texts in this volume, while they may, in their general outlines, clearly be related to European parallel versions, nevertheless contain details or developments unique to Russia or the East Slavic countries (such as text no. 402, a previously unpublished archival recording). In some instances, there are divergences between the AT and East Slavic indices, an indication of a sometimes distinct folktale tradition in Eastern Europe.

It is precisely the uniqueness of these Russian folk religious narratives, which are rarely translated and unfortunately not well known, that will be of great interest to students and scholars of folklore, especially those who do not read Russian. As in the preceding volumes in this series, Professor Haney’s annotations and the arrangement by AT tale-type number place these narratives in an international context and facilitate comparative

study, and the excellent translation and judicious choice of sources (many obscure or difficult of access) combine to provide special insight into Russian traditional oral literature and folk religion.

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