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Article abstract

Ukrainian witchcraft beliefs, as attested in materials collected by the author and in stories recorded in the early part of this century by Volodymyr Hnatiuk, serve many functions. They alleviate tensions between neighbors over property, especially foodstuffs such as milk, explaining why one villager has more milk than another or why someone suffers a sudden drop in milk production. By providing a vehicle for victim-blaming, especially in failed love relationships, they excuse misbehavior and assuage feelings of guilt. Most strikingly, they provide an excuse for community inaction. There were no witchcraft trials in Ukraine and accusations of witchcraft, instead of preceding persecution of a presumed witch, usually come after an attack and serve to justify the violent behavior of the attacker. When someone commits a violent act, be it a man who feels guilty over jilting his lover and strikes her to punish her for the anger he fears she harbors towards him, or a man, often drunk, who attacks at random, the community chooses to explain the attack rather than to punish it. The explanation is that the victim must have been guilty of witchcraft.

STRIKE NOW AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER

Witchcraft Stories in Ukraine

Natalie Kononenko

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Ukrainians believed and believe in witches. Working in the early twentieth century, Volodymyr Hnatiuk collected a body of some four hundred texts dealing with witchcraft, witches and sorcerers.¹ While collecting material about the rituals of marriage, birth, and death in the summer of 1998, I heard numerous descriptions of magical methods for treating pain and illness. I was also cautioned about magic that might cause harm, even death.² Ukrainian

1. Volodymyr Hnatiuk, *Znadoby do ukrainskoi demonologii*. Although Hnatiuk is listed as the collector, he functioned more as an editor, taking texts submitted to him by various people and publishing them with minimal editing. The Ukrainian demonology series is a two volume work which appeared as volumes XXXIII and XXXIV of *Ethnografichyi zbirnyk naukovoho tovarystva imeni Shevchenka*, Lviv, 1912. The witch, sorcerer and vampire texts used are in vol. XXXIV, p. 64-218. Included are one hundred and fifty-one texts about witches, one hundred and forty-nine texts about sorcerers, both female and male, and fifty-four texts about what was sometimes seen as the male version of the witch, the vampire. Henceforth, citation of the material from Hnatiuk will be in the body, not in the notes, and will be by text number only. Most citations are not exhaustive. There are other relevant texts and the texts cited should be considered a representative sample. Explanatory material and summaries of narrative content will appear in notes, where appropriate.
2. I worked in the Cherkasy region (Cherkas'ka oblast) during the month of August, 1998. The villages I visited were: Bohodukhivka, Krasenivka, Mokhnach, Velyka Burimka, Krut'ky, Chekhivka, and Melnyky in the Chornobai district (Chornobais'kyi raison), Kropivne, Den'hy, and Domanovo in the Zolotonosha district (Zolotonis'kyi raison), Velykii Khutir in the Drabiv district (Drabivs'kyi raison), Svidyvok, Lozivok, Moshny, and Tubil'tsi in the Cherkasy district (Cherkas'kyi raison), Iabluniv in the Kaniv district (Kanis'kyi raison), Subotiv in the Chyhyryn district (Chyhyryns'kyi raison), Topyl'na in the Shpolia district (Shpolians'kyi raison), Hrechivka and Velyka Iablunivka in the Smila district (Smilians'kyi raison), and Mliiv in the Horodyshe district (Horodyschens'kyi raison). I travelled and collected with Halyna Ivanivna Kornienko of the ethnographic museum in Cherkasy.

witchcraft beliefs serve many of the functions described in witchcraft studies that pertain to other cultures. As elsewhere, they can be used at points of tension to resolve the otherwise unresolvable: to justify a choice when one social principle is directly in conflict with another or with physical reality. Ukrainian witchcraft beliefs also served and serve a function I have not seen described elsewhere: to enforce homogeneity and mediocrity, to discourage individuals from distinguishing themselves from the group. Finally, belief in witches was used to justify antisocial acts, the beatings of the title of this article. A person who struck another, or an animal, in fear, anger, or in a drunken haze, was reintegrated into society by balancing his exceptional behavior against the assumption that his victim was exceptional: not an ordinary person or animal, but a witch.

It is important to mention at the outset that witchcraft trials were not part of the Ukrainian past.³ Thus, we are dealing with a phenomenon that differs from Western witchcraft, be it continental European, English, or American, and we are using different types of data. These two facts are related. Lack of organized persecution of witches means that there are few records of accusations against persons believed to be witches, virtually no transcripts of witness testimony or records of punishments administered. There is no corroborating testimony; there are no ordeals, no suggestions of actions to which the suspect might confess to stop interrogation and torture. The data used here, Hnatiuk's publications and my own field work, are fabulates, memorates, a few incantations, and plentiful advice on methods for harnessing supernatural power.⁴ These are qualitatively different from the materials on which most discussions of witchcraft rely, and we must be aware that folklore texts have their own specific features which differ greatly from the features of court records. Few names are given, unlike in the court documents. Most accounts make general statements or tell of things that supposedly happened to another individual; they do not recount personal experience. When I was told that the water used to wash the deceased could be thrown in a place where a person

3. Russel Zguta shows that, throughout the East Slavic area (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus), witch trials were a rarity (Zguta 1977:1087-1207). Russian and other East Slavic witchcraft has not been studied and Zguta's article is one of the few works on the subject, though, to my knowledge, Christine Worobec, a historian like Zguta, hopes to publish a study shortly.
4. A few of the texts, especially those published by Hnatiuk, resemble folk tales of the magic tale category, but are presented as fabulates, the narrators claiming that the events actually happened.

was likely to walk, causing this person to sicken and possibly to die, my informants were careful to point out that neither they nor anyone they knew had ever done such a thing. When they told me that the strings with which the limbs of the deceased had been tied could be used to relieve joint pain, they again pointed out that they would never practice even this positive magic.⁵ This phenomenon of distancing one's self from the supernatural is radically different from court cases where people claim to be the actual victims of malefice. But much as we need to be aware of the differences in types of data, it is not the data alone which distinguish Ukrainian witchcraft beliefs. Rather, the beliefs themselves, and the social and cultural milieu in which they function, produce the difference.

Ukrainian witch beliefs both differ from beliefs elsewhere and overlap with them, and I will begin with the more familiar before proceeding to the more culture-specific. Whether because Orthodox Christianity tolerated manifestations of pre-Christian worship to the point that villages were said to practice dual belief, or because secular authorities were not interested in the organized pursuit of persons suspected of malefice, or because witch beliefs helped contain the extraordinary, Ukrainian witchcraft dramas were played out on the local level. Here, witchcraft suspicions performed culturally specific functions, but also worked in ways similar to those described for areas where trials did occur. As in other countries, in Ukraine, witch beliefs helped express and ease social tension. A person who had wronged another, for example, might suspect his victim of anger. If some misfortune followed, it was attributed to the ill will of the original victim. According to Macfarlane, Briggs, and others, a typical pattern would be that a poor person refused charity might mutter a few angry words. The person who had denied the gift or donation requested would simultaneously feel guilty because there was great social and religious pressure to share with neighbors in their time of need. Feelings of guilt might suggest punishment and any problem, such as one's own aches and pains, the ill health of a family member or a farm animal, crop or other loss, would be blamed on the woman or man who had been denied in the first place. The problem would be considered a concrete manifestation of anger expressed, what the original victim did using magic because no other form of revenge was available (Macfarlane 1970; Briggs 1996). Interestingly, although Ukraine had beggars, including professional beggars organized into guilds,

5. Corpse related magic came up in several interviews. One example is the interview with Halyna Prokopivna Iarmosh, August 18, 1998 in the village of Iabluniv.

and pressure to perform charitable acts was great, most witchcraft stories of the blame-the-victim type deal with failed love relationships rather than with failure to share.⁶

Some of the longest and artistically most complex stories in the Hnatiuk collection tell of men who jilt their lovers, then suspect them of witchcraft and beat them, often to death. For example, a soldier is seeing a woman and everything is fine. After a while, his army buddies start nagging him and telling him to leave her, saying she is a witch. The man decides to listen to his friends and breaks off the relationship. According to the narrative, a great rage seizes the woman, “because he did not go to see her, did not pleasure her, and forswore her.” The soldier is apparently a cavalryman because his duties include sleeping in the stable with his horse. That night, a beautiful white mare approaches and attacks, first the soldier’s horse, and then the man himself. She apparently does no real damage, except to frighten the man, whose soul “hides in his arse”, and to keep him up all night. But eventually sleeplessness and fear take their toll and the man begins to lose his good looks. The other soldiers notice and question him, but he continues to try and hide the cause of his trouble until he can tolerate the situation no longer. Another soldier, a sorcerer, gives him magical means for extricating himself. These are special reins which he is to throw over the mare’s head and use to ride her three times around the village. The soldier takes the reins and, when the mare arrives, he harnesses her. Only, instead of riding her three times around the village, he rides her three times around the world and, instead of letting her go, he puts new horseshoes on her. The cock crows and the mare turns back into a woman. Bloodied from the nails that have been driven into her arms and legs with the horseshoes, she crawls about the soldiers’ barracks for a while, then crawls home. In the meantime, the soldier boasts to his sorcerer friend about his nocturnal accomplishments. The older man is horrified, saying that the soldier exceeded the permitted use of magic. As a result, he adds, the woman will now die, and if the soldier does not keep vigil at her grave for three nights, he will surely die also. The sorcerer also provides the young soldier with instructions for the three-nights vigil and gives him magic objects to conceal and protect himself when the woman rises from the dead and tries to attack. These are a special candle, a tablecloth used at Easter, and an unwashed trough used for mixing Easter bread. There are tense moments during the three-nights vigil,

6. My book *Ukrainian Minstrels: And the Blind Shall Sing* discusses various categories of beggars, beggar guilds, begging songs, and the pressure to perform charitable acts.

and the supposed witch and her helpers almost discover the soldier. In the end, however, he is successful, and when he returns from the cemetery, his buddies go to the woman's grave, dig it up, confirm from the condition of the body and its position in the coffin that the woman was a witch, and rebury the coffin, taking care to drive a stake through the body before doing so (919).

Here we have a man caught between the demands of his friends and the attraction of a beautiful woman. The beginning of the story can be interpreted to mean either that the man rejects the woman as his friends wish, only she will not accept the rejection and torments him at night, or that the man continues to see the woman in the stable, without his buddies' knowledge. When the situation becomes intolerable, an older man comes up with a way for the soldier to extricate himself from his predicament. The foolish young man does not heed the advice of his elder, and physically abuses his lover. When the woman dies, the soldier, his mentor, and all of his buddies find it easier to believe that she is a witch, even desecrating her grave for confirmation, than to accept that the soldier is a murderer. Presenting the man as the aggrieved, rather than the guilty, party and accusing his victim of witchcraft solves many problems. This interpretation of the situation both expresses the danger inherent in the extramarital liaisons to which soldiers were especially prone and absolves them of any responsibility for the emotional and other damage that such liaisons might cause.

Two-timing one's lovers receives similar treatment: the man who is seeing two women is not guilty of deceit; the women are at fault because they are witches. A deacon, a person who should be the keeper of moral order, has two girlfriends, one living in his village and the other outside, and he sees them on alternate nights.⁷ These women apparently do not know why he appears on alternate nights and on alternate nights only, but eventually at least one, and probably both, figure things out. One night, as the young deacon is about to leave the home of his distant girlfriend, she hands him a cudgel and tells him that he will need it on the way home. He questions her, but she assures him that if he does not take it, he will never reach his house. Sure enough, as he is crossing a field, he is confronted by a horse which keeps blocking his path. He finally hits it and manages to get by, but the animal then begins to pursue him, again blocking his path until he strikes it. The horse and the deacon

7. Orthodox priests were allowed to marry, as long as they did so before they were ordained. Thus a young deacon, hoping to become a priest one day, would be expected to date women, just not two at the same time.

proceed in this fashion until the man is inside his own yard. The man then administers a good thrashing to the horse, stopping only when the cudgel breaks. Exhausted, he goes into the house, disrobes, and goes to sleep. The next day, when he awakes, he decides to dispose of what he assumes will be an animal carcass. To his surprise, there is nothing in the yard. That evening, when he goes to see his village girlfriend, he is surprised again when he finds her on her deathbed. The deacon goes home and the next day, on his distant girlfriend's night, he starts inquiring how she knew that he would have problems getting home. The woman explains that the woman was his village girlfriend, that she is a witch, and that, as a deacon, he will have to read the Psalter over her body when she dies. When the young man returns from this visit, he meets the father of the village girl waiting at his doorstep and the father informs him that the daughter is requesting his presence. The dying woman asks him to read the Psalter over her for three nights after her death and suggests that he request an ox and a cart from her father in payment, adding that she plans to pay him back herself also. She then passes away. At this point the deacon panics and rushes to the distant girl for advice. She makes him promise that he will marry her, then, being a witch herself, the distant girlfriend gives the deacon magical objects similar to the ones used by the soldier and tells him how to use them to protect himself when the village girlfriend rises from the dead and tries to seduce and punish her killer/lover. The three-nights vigil is successful, although the man's hiding place is almost discovered by a newborn witch, and the deacon and the distant girlfriend marry and live happily ever after (920).

Here we have a duplicitous man who becomes so angry when his infidelity is discovered, that he beats a woman to the point that she dies shortly thereafter. Yet he is not held accountable for his deceit. He is even doubly absolved of murder. Not only is he justified in striking a woman because she was a witch, but a woman, another witch of course, is responsible for putting a cudgel in his hand and probably the idea of violence in his head. The story about the deacon and his two girlfriends articulates a real dilemma of village life. A deacon was indeed particularly desirable as a potential husband because, when he became ordained, he would be wealthier than the average farmer. Thus women might be especially eager to please him, even to the point of tolerating some duplicity. But such situations are breeding grounds for jealousy and anger, as this text shows. The story thus presents the problems inherent in dating a man who is particularly desirable and who exploits this situation to be less than forthright. Because the narrator is male, he resolves the dilemma by absolving

the deacon of wrongdoing and his technique for doing so is through belief in witchcraft.⁸

There were a number of ambiguous or potentially ambiguous sexual situations in a Ukrainian village. Having servants or laborers in the household was one of these, and if infidelity occurred, accusing someone, usually the woman, of witchcraft was a way to acknowledge and label temptation. In a rather confused story told from the point of view of a young female servant, the man who seems to be the servant's lover strikes his wife repeatedly with a rake because she looks askance at him. When the mortally wounded wife, incredulous, questions her attacker and asks why he beat her, he answers: "I did not see you; I saw only a cat." Throughout the narrative, the servant claims that the woman did indeed assume the shape of a cat, that she did look at her husband in an evil way, that she was indeed a witch, and thus deserving of her fate (895). In a text collected from a male narrator, a man working as a laborer at the home of a widow discovers that the neighbor's daughter is a witch. Because the witch's identity has been revealed, she must die and the laborer must read the Psalter over her for three nights. Again, this is a very dangerous situation because the witch will rise from the dead and seek revenge. Here, the man is saved by his mistress, who, by saving him, is revealed to be a witch also. Instead of being grateful, the laborer follows the widow on her next trip to a witches' meeting, and beats her to the point where she, too, dies (913). One can speculate on the relationship the laborer might have had with the neighbor's daughter and the widow, but the resolution of the dilemma is again violence, justified by accusations of witchcraft. The ambiguous position of a servant or a lodger who feels pressured to initiate a sexual relationship and is tempted to do so, while at the same time frightened of the consequences, is best articulated in the stories which tell how men discover women to be witches (898, 902, 908). In these, a servant or a lodger is, for some reason, unable to sleep at night. As he lies there, he notices that the mistress of the house does not go to sleep with the rest of the family; she is nervously staying awake in apparent anticipation. It is this observation which prompts him to spy on the woman and eventually discover her true, witch nature, usually by following her on a nocturnal ride.

8. Documentation in the Hnatiuk materials differs from text to text and the name of the narrator is often omitted. For the story here, full collecting information is given. We know that it was recorded in July, 1911 from Ivan Lutsyk in the village of Daleshev, Horodenkyi region, by Ivan Volosyns'kyi.

Premarital sex is also ambiguous and was so in the past. During my collecting, I found that there was pressure for sexual experimentation and pressure for chastity at the same time. Villagers said that sexual contact prior to marriage was tolerated, even in the past, and that the spinning bees which served as occasions for young women and men to get to know each other, frequently provided them opportunities to spend the night together. Others claimed that premarital sex was taboo and that a test of virginity existed in the past, surviving into the present in the form of a kerchief which the groom hands to the best man if the bride is chaste and the latter hangs on top of the house. I was also told that, in the past, women who bore children out of wedlock were shamed by being forced to wear the headdress of a married women and were called *pokrytky*, after the headdress, but were still considered good marriage material because they had proven their ability to bear children.⁹ Similarly, in the Hnatiuk material, there are stories in which young women or men partying late at night are punished, and stories in which the elderly women who reprimand them suffer because they are labeled witches. A striking first person narrative tells of a peculiar wheel which attacks a group of young men and women out on the village streets in the wee hours of the morning. It so happens that several members of the group have aspen sticks, just in case they should run into a witch.¹⁰ One young man attacks the wheel back, subdues it with his magic stick, and has the narrator bring reins to tie it up.

Vasyl' took those reins, and he strung them through the middle of the wheel, through the part where they put the shaft. He tied the reins together, and then he also tied the reins to a post. Vasyl' was his mother's firstborn son and so witches were afraid of him and he was also not a coward. After that we did not stay out on the streets long; we soon all went home. Somehow we all felt frightened and the girls especially were afraid to stay out any longer. The next day we looked — next to the post there was an old women lying there tied up with reins. The reins went right through her; one end was coming out of her mouth and the other end out of her arse. They untied her and let her go. Well, she didn't live long after that; she soon

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9. Premarital sex was discussed in almost every interview. The information on *pokrytky* is from Odarka Iakivna Panchenko, born 1905, interviewed in her home in Donamovo, August 13, 1998.
 10. There are many items that are supposed to be effective against witches. One of these is the wood of the aspen tree. A cudgel made of this wood can be used to strike a witch, as in this story. Aspen wood is typically used for the stake that is driven through the corpse of a witch or a vampire to keep him from rising from the dead.

kicked the bucket. And this was the honest truth, everyone will tell you that. Her name was Kulyinka, and she lived in Zaholiivsti (843).¹¹

In several tales, the witch who attacks the youthful revelers takes the form of a ball. It is very late and a young women called Oksana is walking home from a party. A strange furry object, like a dog or a cat rolled up into a ball, keeps hurtling at her and knocking her off her feet. Try as she might to hit it with a stick, she is unsuccessful and the ball pursues her to the door of her home (839). Similar things happen to young men, out alone or in pairs, with the difference that the men are successful in attacking their pursuer. A man and his father strike the ball with an ax, at which point it turns into a woman and they chop off her fingers (838). Two men capture a witch/ball in a bag and proceed to chop at it with an ax, producing blood.

It (the bag) was soft and you couldn't see anything in it, but when they would chop at it — blood would flow. Then they took that ball and threw it out, and the next day they went and asked after a certain woman: "Is she sick or not?" And (the people) answered back: "She's been cut up." (840)

The stories about witchcraft and extramarital sex show that Ukraine had its share of situations where a person who was feeling guilty about his or her misdeeds would accuse the victim of being a witch. Usually these victims were female: wives whose husbands were fooling around with servants, women jilted by their lovers, married women who may or may not have done anything, but whose behavior made lodgers or servants think that they might. Sometimes women out at the same time as young revelers, old women who might have reprimanded the youth, were labeled witches and attacked. Often the attacks were brutal. These were not just verbal accusations; they were beatings, mutilations, murder. And the violence, committed by the party guilty of sexual misconduct, did not compound the misdeed, but excused it. The fact that the victim did not just make a person feel conscience-stricken, but provoked him to something as extreme as assault, even if she did so simply by being there and presenting the possibility of a reprimand, proved that she was a witch.

Witch stories related to sexual misbehavior are important and distressing, but sexual tension is not the main issue expressed through witchcraft beliefs.

11. Text 844 also has the witch attacking as a wheel. This text is much shorter and only one person is attacked, though what he does to the witch is similar to what happens in text 843. Birth order is very important in witchcraft beliefs. Firstborn and newborn witches are especially powerful. Conversely, firstborn sons are especially resistant to witchcraft.

The main issue is the tension between individuality and conformity, between prosperity and just getting by. In a Ukrainian village, there was the incentive to succeed and, at the same time, great pressure to not do too well. Any person who prospered, who had a bit more, was suspected of having achieved success by resorting to witchcraft. Some of this can be seen in the stories already discussed, in that any woman who inspires stronger than usual feelings, be they positive feelings of love and desire, or negative ones of fear, can be suspected of being a witch. Most stories about the pressure to be like everyone else deal not with feelings, however, but with property, the issue around which most western witchcraft accusations revolved.

Even in stories where witchcraft supposedly resulted because one person owned more than another, Ukrainian material shows both some similarity to Western accusations and significant differences. Ukrainian property-based witchcraft fears are sometimes directed from the top down, as in the west, but more often, they are directed from the bottom up. In Western suspicions, as Macfarlane and Briggs present them, a wealthier person will attribute malefice to a poorer neighbor, especially one whom he or she had slighted in some way. Ukrainians, too, thought that someone refused charity might be a witch. However, the supplicant posed a threat, not because he might seek revenge, but because, sensing vulnerability, he or she might involve the person who had spurned him in witchcraft. In several Hnatiuk texts, the action begins when a person asks a woman for milk and she complains she does not have enough for her children. The person who had requested the milk then either tempts the woman into learning how to get milk by magical means, actually teaches her how to do so, or does it for her (819, 1050). Ukrainians felt and feel that if someone were jealous of possessions, even the health or beauty of children or other family members, she or he might spoil them with an evil eye. But this suspicion channeled from the haves to the have-nots does not seem as prevalent as the suspicion that went in the other direction, and Ukrainians suspected that anyone who had something worth being jealous of: better goods, more food, nicer looks, had acquired them through witchcraft.

To understand these suspicions, it is necessary to examine Ukrainian folk cosmology. Villagers believed in supernatural power that was very near the surface and easily accessible from the natural, human realm. This power was neither good nor evil. It was called the unclean force (*nechysta syla*) when it was not specifically linked to Christianity, but there was little to distinguish the unclean force from the power of the cross. Thus, certain saints, such as Paraskovia, were called unclean, and other saints, like Cassian, were believed

to be demonic, causing illness and misfortune with their gaze.¹² At the same time, various “unclean” beings, such as household and forest spirits, could punish people for not attending church, and witches and sorcerers could be pious church-goers who went on religious pilgrimages (918). A great deal of the magic described in Hnatiuk is positive and helpful: remedies for snake bites (929), cures for styes and other eye problems (943, 944, 945, 957), ways of relieving aches and pains (970).¹³ There are plentiful magical solutions to unrequited love (960, 961, 1000, 1001, 1003) and cures for the sick (952, 955, 956, 970, 976, 980). The texts describe ways to identify and control other practitioners of magic.¹⁴ They even discuss punishing the unjust or the impious (1068). Much of what I was told was “good” magic: how to quiet a crying child, cure a toothache, stop hemorrhaging, protect the groom from the evil eye. I was also cautioned against carelessness and told that any lapse, such as failure to dispose of the child’s bath water in the right place and at the right time, leaving laundered diapers out drying on the line after dark, might bring disastrous consequences, either by providing an opening through which magical power wielded by a person could gain access, or because an unspecified supernatural agent would punish the careless act.¹⁵

12. Paraskovia, also called Praskeva, is sometimes pictured as literally unclean, meaning unwashed and with smudges of dirt on her face and clothing. While some peasants interpreted Paraskovia’s uncleanness literally, this saint was probably unclean in the same sense that mermaids and various spirits of nature came to be labeled unclean — they were remnants of a pre-Christian religion. Paraskovia was a patron saint of women and women’s work, particularly spinning and weaving, and she is likely an evolution from a pagan goddess. See also Ivanits (1989:33-35). Cassian was also sometimes interpreted as literally dirty. He was said to live inside the earth, and when he emerged on his saint’s day, February 29, he was supposed to be covered with soil. Cassian’s gaze was destructive and anyone or any animal on whom this gaze fell would sicken and might die. For this reason, some peasants stayed indoors on leap year and kept their cattle locked in the barn. See also Ivanits (1989:35-36).
13. This list barely scratches the surface of magic described in the Hnatiuk texts. Some of the other topics covered are ways of predicting the weather and insuring a good harvest, magic to avoid being drafted, potions and ointments that thieves use to make sure that their victims remain asleep, charms to undo locks, charms to insure successful hunting and charms to protect one’s self from being hit by a bullet, and magical carpentry.
14. Since this is probably the major concern of Ukrainian villagers, the texts that deal with this topic are too numerous to list. A good sampling of texts not discussed elsewhere consists of the following: 715, 716, 717, 718, 721, 722, 723, 728, 730, 731, 732, 936, 937, 947, 982, 986, 993, 1007, 1008, 1009 and 1010.
15. I collected material on children’s illnesses wherever I could. A particularly full account

The ease with which luck, fate, or a witch might intrude into the life of a human being is an important element of the Ukrainian world view. Here, supernatural power can be accessed by anyone, either intentionally or unintentionally, and carelessness can release it inadvertently. A person could acquire the ability to evil-eye someone through no fault of his or her own. In fact, what gave someone an evil eye, a gaze capable of afflicting those upon whom it fell, was the tender-heartedness of his or her mother. As I was told repeatedly, if a woman weaned a child and then, taking pity on it, let it suckle once more, that child would forever possess an evil eye.¹⁶ A person could become a witch quite inadvertently, too. A child could be born a witch if the parent was one (799, 820), and if a family had seven girls in a row or seven boys, the seventh such infant would be a witch (798). At least in the past, there was a belief that two kinds of witches existed, born witches whose powers were innate, and learned witches who acquired their knowledge in later life and by choice (793, 794, 835). Born witches were supposed to be without sin (793). As far as witchcraft was concerned, however, it mattered little whether access to magic came as a birthright or through learning; magic was potentially anyone's domain and anyone who resorted to it was potentially guilty.

One of Hnatiuk longest texts shows that supernatural power, here presented as luck, is both a concrete thing and an abstract quality. The story begins when a man, who objects to his father's being a sorcerer, is kicked out of the house along with his wife. As they walk across fields scattered with piles of compost and manure, the man thinks he hears a noise coming from one of the piles. He digs in it and finds a puppy, which he adopts over the objections of his wife. The man and his wife come to a city, find work, and slowly but surely prosper. They go from being the lowliest of servants, to working as a cook and a clerk, to running their master's household and his business. The master has no children

came from the village of Velika Iablunivka, collected August 22, 1998, from Afanasiia Platonivna Zavhorodnia, born 1915, her daughter Valentyna Ivanivna Zavhorodnia, born 1949, her cousin, Ol'ha Pylypivna Prysiashna, born 1928, Paraskovia Leontiiivna Dyshchyn's'ka, born 1921, and Iryna Vasylivna Shyrshyk, born 1927. The method for protecting the groom from the evil eye is to stick two straight pins in the shape of a cross into the back of his jacket. I saw this on the groom at a wedding I attended August 15, 1998 in Krut'ky. The name of the groom was Oleksii Oleksiiovych Artemenko, age 24, and he was marrying Liubov Ivanivna Shchpak, age 21.

16. This belief was also widespread and almost everyone we asked told us that this was the case. One example is the interview with Maria Mykytivna Shakun, born 1940; interviewed August 11, 1998 in Kropivne.

and, when he dies, he leaves all his money to the hero and his wife. Meanwhile, the puppy from the dung heap grows into an enormous dog. The prosperity of the family is so great that the man's father hears of his success and decides to go for a visit. He arrives at his son's house, immediately determines that the dog is the source of the younger man's good fortune and decides to destroy it. The dog, sensing the man's intention, barks at him and he uses this as an excuse to demand that his son kill the dog. The younger man is reluctant to kill his pet but, not wishing to displease his father, he has the dog shot. The sorcerer watches and sees that a calf licks at the blood seeping from the dog's mortal wound. He realizes that the luck has been transferred to the calf along with the blood and decides to acquire it for himself. He now demands that the son slaughter the calf and prepare it for his supper. Again the son is reluctant, but eventually agrees. As the calf is slaughtered, the sorcerer goes for a bath to maximize his pleasure. In the meantime the hero's children see the slaughtered calf and ask the cook if they can have its kidneys. The cook fries them up and the children eat them "like candy". When the sorcerer sits down for his meal, he asks for the kidneys. Told that the children have already eaten them, he says:

"Well, then the luck is yours. I missed my chance to get the calf's kidneys. It is your fate to stay a wealthy man. All of your luck was in the dog, and when you killed the dog and the calf licked its blood, well then, that blood went into the calf's kidneys and all of your luck went into the calf, and now all of your luck has gone into your children, because they ate the kidneys." The son gave him money and he went home. He was very sad and angry, because he had not been able to ruin his son, to send him out with just a sack (as he had done at the beginning of the story). And as for Vasyly Ivanovych, he remained wealthy and lucky (1069).

Supernatural power, then, is both concrete and abstract. It can be gained, owned and lost, like an object. Behavior determines who possesses luck, and the object which transmits good fortune goes to a man who is compassionate, humble, kind. At the same time, fate determines who possesses luck as much as good deeds do and the story tells us that the luck stayed with the man because it was so ordained, not because he behaved well and his father badly.

Magic power is within human reach, but not subject to human control. It is easily accessible and difficult to manipulate at the same time. This perspective on the relationship between the human and the supernatural worlds makes witchcraft and witches something quite mundane and terrifying at the same time. Because magic was so easy to wield, a witch could be one's neighbor. She

could be a regular church-goer. Because the supernatural was ever-present and loomed over every act, anyone suspected of any link to it posed a great threat and needed to be attacked with dispatch and vigor — no pausing for trials and inquiries.

Ukrainian witches were not fearsome creatures. They were not in league with the devil. Although they did hold sabbaths, these were rather tame affairs, quite unlike the sexual and blood orgies which Western witches were accused of attending. Rather, they were regional meetings, usually held on some sort of border, such as that between farm fields (815, 816), where witches allotted territory, deciding who would be allowed to steal where (896). Witches flew to these meetings on brooms (897), pokers (898, 900, 902, 903, 904, 908), plows (899), and in mixing bowls (905, 909), usually leaving the house through the chimney. Sometimes they propelled themselves with charms (897, 900, 902, 904, 912) or with ointments (900, 904, 905, 906, 908), some of which seem to be like mud packs (900). Sometimes they licked a magic substance (901). In several narratives the women go out for an all-girl party: they meet to share a meal (901, 903, 911); they go to a tavern late at night to drink (900); they stage athletic contests (906).

There was a widower and he was seeing a woman, and that woman was a witch. People told him that she was a witch, but he did not believe the people and married her. Once in the middle of the night, at midnight, she got up and started to dig in the dirt under the doorstep. She dug up some cream, she smeared it on her bottom, mounted a poker, and said: "Hip-hop, let me be in the proprietor's tavern." Well, she had dug up two kinds of cream because she had to go there and come back. The man got up, dug up one kind of cream, smeared it on his bottom, mounted a mortar, and said: "Hip-hop, let me be in the proprietor's tavern." And he flew to this bar, and there was his wife, among other witches, eating bread and drinking wine. When it was time to go, she smeared herself on the bottom and flew back, but he did not have the other cream and had to stay there until daybreak, until it grew light. The proprietor came to the tavern and there he was sitting in the tavern. He began to question him: "Why are you here?" An he began to tell what had happened and the proprietor let him out of the tavern. He came home, and she (the wife) was asleep. So he began to question her: "Why didn't you get me out of there too?" And then he went and killed her and turned himself into the criminal justice system and spent three years (in jail). (900)

Since magic is universally accessible, men could easily follow witches to these meetings, as in the text above. There are a number of stories where a

man observes a witch preparing for her travels, then imitates what she does, smearing himself with the same ointment, reciting the charm he had heard spoken, sitting on the poker used by the witch the night before. The ointments, charms, and pokers work for the man just as they do for the woman. However, the consequences of the men's travels vary from story to story. In about half the narratives, the men get the better of the witches, twisting the charms that they recite during their meeting so they can be attacked and injured or killed. A favorite witch pastime seems to be an athletic contest where the meeting participants stage a mock battle with wooden, or even metal, swords, safeguarding each other by reciting a protective charm which insures that no one will be injured. The man who intrudes on the witches' meeting changes the words of the charm to say that his blows will cut and maim and, indeed, they do (906, 907, 909, 912). In about half the narratives, the man does something wrong, not intentionally, but by accident, and the magic fails him (904, 905, 908). He forgets the words of the charm that makes a poker fly (913) or he takes only enough ointment for the journey to the witches' meeting place, but does not realize he needs an equal amount for his return (900). The consequences of his ineptitude range from the harmless to the deadly. In most stories, the man merely has a hard time getting home, sometimes taking as long as three weeks to find his way back (901). There are, however, some stories where the witch suffers, one of the most extreme being the text translated above. Here the man does turn himself in to the authorities and does spend time in jail; nonetheless, murder seems rather an excessive reaction to a mistake that was, after all, his. Especially noteworthy is the light punishment that the man receives. As in the stories of failed love relationships, the male narrator justifies murder by witchcraft.

If witches' meetings were tame and easily invaded by others, their daily activity was utterly mundane. The primary enterprise of witches was stealing milk from other people's cows. According to the fabulates and memorates published by Hnatiuk, a witch could transfer milk from someone else's cow to her own cow or, more often, to an object such as a knife (872), reins or a harness (813, 869, 870, 871), or a plow (873) which would then seep milk.

My neighbor once told me the following. He said: I was standing at this person's house. I don't see a cow anywhere, and there is so much milk, that you could fill up a whole trough. Then it started to get to me, (I wanted) to find out what kind of cows give so much milk. She went to the cows. And I followed, he said, to see how she would milk them. Well, she set down a trough, hung two pairs of oxen reins over a railing, and milk just poured

from the reins, he said. She milked those four reins into the trough. And he said that, as she milked them, she kept saying, "Hold still, little one, hold still." — They weren't just reins, those. After that, he said, I wouldn't drink that milk. (869)

To misappropriate milk, the witch could use a verbal charm (813, 869). She could "steal" a cow's hoof prints by following it and learning which path it routinely used (862). A witch might approach another person's cow in the form of an animal, a dog, a cat, or a frog, and drink the milk, or she could send the animal to fetch the milk and deliver it to her.¹⁷ There were supposedly witches who specialized in foodstuffs other than milk, and some narratives tell of witches who charmed chickens and stole eggs (836, 861) or magically extracted seedlings or mature crops from the field (863, 866, 878). Sometimes witches were believed to merely ruin the milk supply of others without appropriating it for themselves (935, 1049, 1051, 1063), but mostly witches stole milk.

A peasant became suspicious of witchcraft when a cow's milk decreased in volume, or when it became foul-smelling or bad-tasting, or when it was mixed with blood (842, 869, 935, 1049, 1051, 1063). The best way to counteract the problem was to find the witch who was its cause and this was easy to do. A number of methods could be used. One could take the contaminated milk and drip it onto a hot skillet (788, 789, 790, 867).

If you notice that a witch has been milking (your) cow, you need to go and milk that cow, then heat up a skillet, and pour the milk in it: well, she will sense the odor and she will come and ask for something. But you can't give her anything, because if you do, you will spoil the spell. (790)

Heating milk was supposed to have any one of a number of effects. It summoned the witch, as in the text above, and the next person who arrived at one's house, asking to borrow something, was surely the one who had bewitched the cow. In other texts, the effect was to cause the witch great burning pain and to make her come running, begging the person doing the scalding to stop. Sometimes, as an extra incentive, the witch promised to steal no more milk or to make the milk produced by the injured person's cow especially plentiful or especially rich. The victim of witchcraft could heat a horseshoe and place it on

17. The animal guises of the witches are too numerous to list in the body of this article. They are as follows: snake - 941; frog - 814, 845, 846, 847, 848, 864, 865; cat - 803, 811, 849, 850, 887; dog - 851, 852, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 887.

the doorstep (723, 787, 936). This would have an effect almost identical to the scalded milk drops: it would summon the witch or cause her burning pain. A few texts suggest heating a live frog, much like heating the milk or the horse shoe (845, 846, 864, 865).

A witch or the animal she had sent to do her stealing could be caught in the act, but this was dangerous and frightening. Among the texts where men become frightened and react violently to the first thing they see are those which tell of someone hiding in the barn, waiting for a witch or her familiar to milk the cow, or of someone keeping watch in the field for a seedling or crop thief. Ready for the worst, these men lash out, beating animals or people, hanging them, severing their ears, noses, fingers, hands, feet (851, 882, 893).

Well, supposedly it went like this. My father knew that a witch was going to come and he hid behind a harrow. Nothing happened, then the door made a sound, and he looked, a filly had come into the shed. Well, he didn't do anything to it, just watched to see where it would go — and it went to the cow and started to do something like milk it. When he caught her she changed into a cat.

He brought that cat in the house and, in the house, started to beat it, until it turned back into a filly once again. And then she started to beg him. She said: "It is not my fault that my soul is out wandering, and my body is lying at home." And further she said: "Let me go and you will have milk for a whole year." (But what use was that milk; it was like water and we never had sour cream.) (850)

Although people might suspect witchcraft when a problem arose, such as when their cow started to give less milk, or when they lost crops or foodstuffs, they could just as easily become suspicious for no apparent reason, as in the following text.

This is what happened in ours (our village). The late Nikolai had his eye on a certain sorceress. And everybody else was always very watchful. Some sort of pig was walking down the street. He grabbed her. Then she turned into a dog. They were following him, and they helped him, and they started to hit that dog and they beat it until it couldn't get up anymore.

The next day we had to go to Ivan's house to find out how his wife was doing. Aha, she was lying on the stove! — What's the matter with you? — I feel weak! — But she wouldn't tell us why she felt weak. She was so blue all over that she couldn't do a thing. Aha, and then we figured it out: it was you! It was you who were stealing people's oats?! (853)

Villagers were especially wary when one of their neighbors was particularly prosperous. Whenever someone seemed to have more than others, that person was likely to be a witch, much like the woman in text 790 who had more milk than the narrator thought she should. Even women who took good care of their animals so that their cows gave lots of milk and would miss them when they died were witches:

... and when she would milk her cow, the milk would pour out (so fast) it sounded like thunder, like clouds turning over. Well, when she died, the cow bellowed for her so much that it just about knocked the door down. And so they had to sell it to somebody. (881)

Witchcraft was so prevalent and magical power so easy to wield that in the stories where people set out to discover witches by scalding milk or heating horseshoes, identifying the witch was a primary goal. Some narratives do mention that the heat applied to the horseshoe, or the milk, or the frog causes the witch discomfort and forces her to desist from theft. As often as not, however, merely establishing that a particular woman is a witch is the main motive. This is different from the Western material, where, as Briggs points out, the purpose behind summoning the witch was to get her to undo her spell.

The emphasis on identifying the witch appears in many texts. Since witches were regular church-goers, like the rest of the community, and the Sunday service was one time when the entire village assembled in one place, this was an excellent opportunity for spotting witches. Texts suggest taking cheese blessed in church on the Saturday before Easter, keeping it in one's mouth for twenty-four hours, then, with the cheese still in one's mouth, going to church. The cheese would make all witches apparent (773, 774). Some texts do not specify how the witches would become apparent; others say that milk pails would appear above their heads (773). While cheese, because of its association with milk, was the most common method, other recommended foodstuffs were garlic (782, 783) and egg shells, especially the shells from Easter eggs (775, 894). These, too, were held in the mouth exactly like the cheese. One method was to take a *varenyk*, a dumpling stuffed with cheese, mushrooms, meat, peas, or other vegetables, keep it for about six months, then wear it to church on a string about the neck (777, 780, 781).

Similar means of spotting witches could be used inside the church or elsewhere and some were especially useful during the special meetings that

witches were said to hold in the church when regular church-goers were absent. Thus texts suggest looking through knot-holes in certain trees to make witches apparent (778). Others say that a person could make himself invisible by hiding under a harrow (805, 842, 884), in an unwashed dough trough in which Easter bread had been mixed (824, 919, 920), or by fashioning a stool out of a special wood (776). Invisibility allowed one to attend those witches' meetings which were held in church either on the first of the month or on the feasts of Saint Andrew and Saint George (818). This, like trying to catch witches in the act, was a very risky proposition and the person who chose to do this had to stay absolutely still until cockcrow, or risk being discovered and dismembered by the witches.

Certain methods of detecting witches were available only to the men who were intimate with them. Born witches have a tail, naked when they are children and covered with hair when they are adults, which they withdraw and hide during the daytime, but which comes out when they are asleep (791, 796, 797). Born witches supposedly also have no pubic hair.¹⁸ All witches cannot wake up if they are rotated in their sleep. Thus, in several texts, men who suspect that their wives are witches, turn their bodies while they sleep, placing the head where the feet had been (823, 912). If the woman cannot awake until she is put back into her normal position, then she is a witch.

Well, this is how it was here. There was a man who had a witch for a wife; someone had found out somehow that she was a witch. And people told him: Your wife is a witch. And he said, that it was not true. He was talking to a neighbor (and complained) saying: They are spreading rumors that my wife is a witch. Well, that neighbor knew something and advised him. He said: On the first Thursday (of the month), at midnight — because that is witches' Thursday — go and turn her around so that where her head sleeps, turn her so that her feet are there, and then you will be able to see if she is a witch or not. And that's what the man did. There where her head had been sleeping, that's where he put her feet. And his wife did not wake up in the morning, and at midday she still hadn't (woken up). He tried to wake her up, and it was as if she were dead; she doesn't get up and she doesn't respond, but her body is warm. In the middle of the day, at midday, he turned her back, the way she had been, and she woke up and she said to her husband that she had overslept. The man started to scold her and she

18. Hnatiuk's introduction, p. XIV. Hnatiuk gives no folk source for this assertion, although he gives folk sources for almost all the other remarks he makes in the introduction.

confessed that she was a witch... she said that there were lots of witches...
(823)

Men who discovered their wives to be witches sometimes beat them (884, 895); sometimes they sought to disenchant them with the help of the local clergyman (799, 823, 911). In some cases, these men did nothing (817, 879, 912).

The emphasis on knowing who was a witch was extremely important. With the supernatural so pervasive and so ready to intrude into the human realm, knowing who had actual or potential access to magic was a way of establishing at least some control. It was a way of imposing order in the presence of an anomaly. It was a means for controlling amorphous and omnipresent supernatural power. Labeling in and of itself was an anti-witch measure. The texts articulate this in a fashion because witches are very afraid of being found out and go to great lengths to conceal their identity, offering bribes of money, milk, or dairy products to those who have discovered who they are (834, 842, 852, 856, 865, 883, 888, 890). Knowledge alone can defeat a witch. In some of the longer and more complex Hnatiuk narratives, as soon as a woman is discovered to be a witch, she dies. She is not struck or wounded, just revealed, and this kills her (913).

To be labeled was to be distinguished from the group, much as the women above whose heads milk pails appeared were different from the rest of the congregation. Thus, people made every effort to disappear into the collective. At the same time, people wanted to distinguish themselves. A woman wished to be the most attractive so that a deacon would select her as his bride. There was a drive toward financial success, even wealth, as in the case of the man who found the dog in a dung heap. This produced a terrible tension which I experienced working in the villages. People wanted me to recognize them for having a superior knowledge of village customs, while going to great length to assure me that they knew nothing. Every time I arrived in a new village, we went through a long song and dance where people apologized for the conditions of their houses, the quality of their food, their forgetting the old ways, and I assured them that everything was wonderful. I both resented wasting my time on these reassurances and found myself succumbing to local fears of being different. Apprehension that, as an outsider and thus distinctive, I might be blamed for some future misfortune grew.

As there was a drive to distinguish one's self and an inverse drive to disappear into the group, so the desire to learn the identity of witches was balanced by a

recognition, albeit an unconscious one, that such knowledge was futile. In most of the Hnatiuk stories, revealing a witch's identity had no consequences. A person was labeled as a witch and that was that. The horrible beatings, which we will return to shortly, did not follow going to church with old cheese in one's mouth and learning which of the congregation were witches; they occurred pretty much at random. And figuring out who was and who was not a witch was pointless, anyway. Basically, anyone could do what a witch could do, as in the stories where men observe witches and then themselves fly to sabbaths, just as well as the witches can.

Perhaps the most important point is that the stories of physical attacks on witches are largely independent of the narratives which suggest ways of revealing witch identity. In fact, the stories of beatings are identity discovery stories in their own right. The beating itself reveals that a woman is a witch. A woman may be suspected in advance, as in text 853, but this is the exception rather than the rule. In most cases, the identity of a witch is not known. The beating occurs first, and only when some woman is found beaten, or mutilated, or dead, is she assumed to be a witch. The fact that a woman is the victim of an attack draws suspicion on her rather than suspicion provoking a beating. If a man strikes a dog and a woman dies afterwards, especially if a period of three days elapses between the beating and the death, then the woman must have practiced witchcraft:

In our village a witch had turned herself into a dog and she went to (milk) the cows. A man took a yoke and hit it — she was from the third house down the street — and she died three days after. (851)

A man or a group of men could strike a dog (859), a cow (860), almost any farm animal or any person, and if someone fell ill afterwards, that person was revealed to be a witch. The beatings were largely random. Although there was some predictability as to who might be attacked, for example women in failed love relationships, there was no comprehensive pattern. The person attacked could be old, but she also could be young and beautiful, like the girlfriend of the cavalryman. She could be poor, but she could also be wealthy enough to hire a servant. She could be a woman living alone, or she could be a wife and mother. Ability to predict an attack was minimal.

The beating stories are a special subcategory of witchcraft narratives and, like other such stories, revolve around pressure for homogeneity, blending in with the group. In stories where the focus is on the witch, she is the special person, distinct from the group, whom the listener should fear and avoid

emulating. In the beating stories, the narrative focus is on the person who perpetrates the attack, but there is no sense that this is a distinctive, dangerous person who should be feared. Beatings, mutilations, murders are extraordinary acts. If someone chops off a woman's fingers, this is not part of normal village life. Acts so extraordinary had to be dealt with in some way. One possibility would have been to take the attacker and try him, punish him, make him pay for what he had done. Ukrainian village society, as least as reflected in the witchcraft stories, did not choose this path. Rather, it chose to neutralize the act rather than the actor. Instead of punishing the attacker, it chose to excuse his horrible behavior by assuming that the victim was an exceptional person — not an ordinary villager, but a witch.

By being different from other villagers, witches represented disorder in Mary Douglas's sense of the term (Douglas 1966). Though they were themselves outside order, they could be used to reestablish it. If something went wrong and a cow started giving less milk, then surely a witch was at fault. If someone committed a horrible antisocial act and beat a person or an animal, then the act was neutralized by assuming that the victim was a witch. The victim was not accused of provoking violence. Rather, a violent person who should have been considered a threat to society was made to seem normal by labeling his victim a witch. Hnatiuk's narratives acknowledge the role of witchcraft beliefs in the maintenance of order. A very interesting method of getting witches to reveal themselves was by offending their sense of what is right and proper. A man could put his hat on backwards and walk to church (772). This would arouse uncontrollable anger in all witches, and any witch he encountered on the way would be forced to make some sort of comment, thus revealing her identity. A man could make an obscene gesture with a hand hidden in his pocket which would be invisible to all ordinary people, but would annoy witches, leading them to react in a manner similar to the backwards hat (772). A man could fake stomach cramps in church and, again, all witches would react (772, 794).

The stories where witches react to disorderly men and thus reveal their witch identity beautifully articulates the functioning of witchcraft beliefs in Ukrainian society. Apparently, social uniformity was so important the even the smallest step out of line — a backwards hat, an obscene gesture — was misbehavior. Misconduct needed to be neutralized, and this was done, not by punishing the misbehaving man, but by justifying his action. The justification was that the bad action served to identify a witch, a woman who might

misbehave. And identifying witches, as we have seen, was an end in itself. No further action was required. Identifying witches, establishing some categories in the amorphousness of village society, was so important that it could neutralize even the most extreme male misbehavior — beatings, mutilations, murder. Interestingly, this took something that was truly distinctive — the violent man — and brought him back into the enveloping shapelessness of the village.

The use of witches and beliefs in witchcraft to reestablish order is a phenomenon that occurred outside Ukraine as well as in the stories examined here. What is culturally specific to Ukrainian material is that the order which witchcraft beliefs helped maintain had very little structure. Even the line separating the human realm from the supernatural was fuzzy. This meant that anyone could wield magic, intentionally or inadvertently, and anyone could be a witch, also quite inadvertently, as in the case of born witches. And everyone feared to distinguish herself or himself in any way lest this invite suspicion of witchcraft. This remains so today. The horrible corollary, at least in the past, was that anyone could be attacked as a witch, or, as in the majority of the stories here, any antisocial behavior could be excused by bringing in witchcraft. You struck first and whoever you happened to hit... well, that person must have been a witch.

I was fortunate not to witness any beatings. This does not mean that the beatings no longer occur. On April 15, 1997, the *New York Times* ran a story about an attack which sounds like something out of Hnatiuk. In Terehovo, Russia, not far from Kharkiv, Ukraine, a man dated a woman, then decided to stop seeing her, much as in the narratives discussed at the beginning of this article. Feeling ill afterwards, he concluded that he had been bewitched and set out with his father to kill the entire family of his former girlfriend. The pair injured the girl and three of her siblings and killed her mother. As in the stories collected by Hnatiuk, the fact that the family had been attacked led their fellow villagers to suspect them of witchcraft.

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