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The Mythological Ideas of the Russian People at Present and in the Past

(Russian Folktales and the Stories About UFOs)

Russian mythological ideas are most vividly expressed in the genre of folklore known as *bylichki*. One of the first persons to take notice of the importance of stories [*rasskazy*] about the characters of “lower mythology” was M. V. Lomonosov. In the rough notes for his *Drevniaia rossiiskaia istoriia* [Ancient Russian History], Lomonosov expressed his regret that the Russian people had not created a complete mythological system comparable to the Ancient Greek one. The scholar attempted to systematize Russian mythological images, comparing them with images of the Ancient Greeks and Romans.¹ Lomonosov’s research was used by M. D. Chulkov and M. Popov;² their works, in turn, served as the starting point for subsequent research in the field of Russian folk beliefs.³

In contrast to other genres of folklore, *bylichki* [tales] and *pobyval’shchiny* [narrations, true stories] remain an existing genre to this day. In the past few decades, the number of their recordings has increased significantly. Researchers associate this fact with the disappearance of prohibitions on various forms of beliefs, including belief in the existence of the unclean power [*nechistaia sila*].^a For many years,

Russian text © 1994 by the Russian Academy of Sciences, N. N. Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, and S. I. Dmitrieva. “Mifologicheskie predstavleniia russkogo naroda v proshlom i nastoiashchem (bylichki i rasskazy ob NLO),” *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 1994, no. 6 (November–December), pp. 97–110.

this material was ignored; now serious attention is devoted to gathering it by the experts of departments of folklore at Moscow State University, the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and others. As a result, several thousand different *bylichki* and *byval'shchiny* have been recorded over a relatively brief period of time, in the Russian villages of the Baltic Sea region [*Pribaltika*] and in Arkhangel'sk, Vologda, and Vladimir oblasts, as well as in Siberia. Among them are stories about demonic creatures—forest spirits [*leshii*], the Devil [*d'iavol*], water spirits [*vodiany*], and water nymphs [*rusalki*]. There are many stories about sorcerers [*kolduny*] and werewolves or changelings [*oborotnia*], and *bylichki* about wasting disease [*porcha*] from curses are relatively common.

The liberation of society from the pressure of official atheism promoted—if one can use such an expression—the present boom in the gathering of *bylichki*. The collection of just one person, the Siberian folklorist V. P. Zinov'ev, contributed approximately 1,800 texts. Moreover, many of the mythological characters presented in his recordings do not appear in the guide to *bylichki* in E. V. Pomerantseva's book.⁴ So as to record all the material, Zinov'ev compiled his own guide to plots and *byval'shchiny*.⁵ There are new sections that were absent in E. V. Pomerantseva's and S. Aivazian's guide: "Kikimora" [a female spirit], "Messengers," "Omens," and "Heavenly Powers."⁶

A circumstance that Pomerantseva rightly pointed out in her book must be remembered: the recounting of *bylichki* and *byval'shchiny* is often stimulated by collectors, and the number of recorded mythological stories does not always reflect the true picture of their existence. One should also take into account the increased interest in them by contemporary specialists—ethnographers, folklorists, and religious scholars.⁷ However, no matter how one assesses the available material, the fact remains: the increase in the number of recordings of *bylichki* testifies to the fact that this genre of folk creativity continues to exist. And more than that: stories about supernatural beings can be heard not only in the village but in the city. In recent years, this type of report has begun to appear more frequently in our country's press and in shows on television. Of course, this is not happening without some influence from the West, where they became commonplace a long time ago. From the West has also come the name of a widespread phenomenon—the "poltergeist."

We will attempt to examine how much published stories about pol-

tergeists and other appearances of supernatural powers correspond with traditional Russian *bylichki* and *byval'shchiny* known to us from the multitude of past and present recordings. Several years ago, a report about a "home-grown" poltergeist in the newspaper *Trud* (5 October 1988) spread like wildfire throughout our country. Apparently, an invisible spirit called "*barabashka*" ["the banger," or "little drum"] had made its presence known in one of the Muscovite dormitories. It would reveal itself by knocking. The young women in the dormitory established contact with it, having agreed that one knock meant "yes" and two knocks "no." *Barabashka* would guess how many letters there were in the names of journalists, what time it was at the moment, and so forth. On 19 October 1989, the same newspaper alleged that the young women who had proclaimed *barabashka* had disappeared from the dormitory. Later, they resurfaced together with *barabashka* in one of the settlements in Kazakhstan. An interview with them was shown on the New Year's (1 January 1989) broadcast of the [television] show *Ochevidnoe—neveroiatnoe* ["Seeing Is Not Believing," or, literally, "Obvious But Improbable"]. Alongside the journalists conducting the interview were researchers from the Department of Theoretical Problems, USSR Academy of Sciences. The invisible *barabashka* took part in the interview as well. This time, millions of television viewers could hear *barabashka's* knocking. *Barabashka* subsequently disappeared from journalists' field of vision. True, a report appeared that the young women had been forced to leave the settlement because the local residents had "decided that they were sorceresses [*koldun'i*]." However, the name "*barabashka*" remained as the name of the phenomenon signifying our very own home-grown poltergeist.

Spirits like *barabashka* often manifest aggressiveness toward humans: they hit us on the head, they pinch, and they throw our things around and rip them apart. There have also been even more serious events: rocks and streams of water of unknown origin, electric shocks, and so forth, may appear in the house.

In 1987, the newspapers and magazines published reports of a poltergeist that was terrorizing a Muscovite family, the Savins: "Nevidimka v Izmailovo (Poltergeist Savinykh)" [Invisible in Izmailovo (The Savins' Poltergeist)].⁸ Tables, chairs, wall carpets, and mirrors would fall to the floor in the house, while the refrigerator, the washing machine, and the beds would shake. Attempts at protection by making the sign of the Cross and by using holy water were unsuccessful. As a rule,

the spirit reacted aggressively to words. The family was obliged to move in with relatives living on a state farm not far from Moscow, but the same phenomena began to occur there as well, unexpectedly stopping after a month. The appearances of the poltergeist were recorded by a multitude of witnesses, including the divisional inspectors of two sections of the police stations.

A comparable story occurred with the Roshchin family living not far from Moscow. Kitchen utensils, dishes, and so forth flew around their house. Cases of a poltergeist have been recorded in other localities as well in recent years. The settlement of Enakievo in Donetsk Oblast is particularly famous in this respect since the publication of the article "Enakievskoe divo" [The Enakievan Wonder] (in the newspaper *Izvestiia*, 26 May 1967), in which was described the latest instance of a poltergeist's appearance, characterized, among other things, by the point that objects in the house would spontaneously ignite in the presence of one of the members of the family, the schoolgirl K. The family was forced to leave the ill-fated house.⁹

Reports associated with the history of poltergeists appeared in the press. One of the correspondents noted that the publication about *barabashka* in *Trud* (19 October 1988) coincided with the one-hundredth anniversary of one of the first reportings of a case of a poltergeist, which had appeared on 21 October 1888 in the newspaper *The New York World*. In the item, it was stated that on an American farm in the state of New York, the Fox sisters had heard an insistent knocking. The mother had taken the sisters to the nearest town, where their appearances before the public began. The sisters became famous all over the world. During their tour of cities in the United States and Europe, they appeared before spectators who would ask questions of the invisible beings and would receive answers with the help of the knocks. These appearances, as is well known, served as an impetus for the infatuation with spirit séances that seized the upper social strata of many European countries, including Russia.

The name "poltergeist" also appeared at this time, signifying a "noisy" or "happy" spirit, in literal translation from the German. However, not everybody knows that ideas about such spirits exist in Russian mythology as well. One of the most widespread ideas among Russians—and among other Slavic peoples as well—was the *kikimora*, although her name varies: *shishimora*, *mara*, *morok*, *morovitsa*, *shishiga*, and so forth.¹⁰ This name was used to signify an invisible house spirit

[*domovoi dukh*] sitting behind the stove. At night, when the housewife is sleeping, the *kikimora* will play mischievous pranks with the spindles, the spinning-wheel, and the yarn if the mistress of the house forgot to make the sign of the Cross over these objects. The *kikimora* is often seen spinning yarn. However, as the proverb says: “Even though the *kikimora* spins, you can wait all you want, but you still won’t get a shirt out of her” [*Khot’ kikimora i priadët, a rubakhi ot neë ne dozhdësh’sia*]. From here also comes the mocking phrase directed at the lazy: “Sleep, girl—*kikimora* will spin for you, while mother will weave” [*Spi, devushka, kikimora za tebia spriadët, a mat’ vytket*].¹¹ If a *kikimora* decides that she doesn’t like the owners of the house, she will start to clatter with the bobbins until she has driven the residents out of the house.

The image of the *kikimora* often merged with the image of the house spirit [*domovoi*]. In the dictionary of V. I. Dal’ [Dahl], we read: “*Kikimora*—a kind of *domovoi*, who spins at night and sits behind the stove in the daytime.”¹² In certain Russian raions, the *kikimora* was considered to be the *domovoi*’s wife.¹³ The *domovoi*, on the whole a kindly disposed spirit for the owners of the house, when angered begins to play mischievous pranks like the *kikimora*: he will pinch, plant bruises, hide something, or raise a racket in the house. “*Domovoi* pranks become the explanation for abnormal functions on the part of the organism, when things seem or are attributed to be abnormal, [when] something normally imperceptible appears before one’s eyes, when “miracles” seem to occur, or when ill-intended rumors are transmitted in exaggerated form and a restrained whisper transforms into easily intelligible speech and even noisy conversations.”¹⁴

The dual nature of the *domovoi* is noted by Dal’: “*Domovoi*—a spirit guardian and [sometime] offender of a house; knocks and bustles about at night, plays mischievous pranks, chokes a sleepy person for the sake of a joke. To see a *domovoi* can lead to trouble, to death . . . [*Uvidet’ domovogo—k bede, k smerti*]. On the Feast of St. John Climacus [*Listvichnik*] (30 March), the *domovoi* goes crazy; on the Feast of St. Ephraem the Syrian, the *domovoi* is overfed by throwing him porridge to weigh him down [*pokidal emu kashu na zagnëtok*].”¹⁵ In the ideas of the peasants of certain localities, the image of the *kikimora* merges with that of the spirits of the surrounding nature—forest nymphs [*leshachikhi*], water nymphs [*rusalki*], field spirits [*polevikî*], and so forth.

Among peasants of Arkhangel'sk, Vologda, Perm', and Kirov oblasts, a belief about *shulikony* (*shalikony*, *shilykhany*)—dirty-trick-playing, mischievous urchins, living in abandoned constructions and empty barns, always in artels [cooperatives]—is retained to this day. Their escapades do not cause humans substantial harm.¹⁶ According to a report from the last century, Viatka Guberniia peasants believed that *shalikony* live in the water, from which they emerge before the Feast of the Baptism of Christ and settle in safe places.¹⁷ If *shalikony* settle in a house, only a *znakhar'* [magician, curer] can evict them from there by force. In certain northern Russian raions, especially those bordering Komi, stories about *shulikony* intertwine with accounts of the *chud'*. The *chud'* appears in legends as little people coming out from under the earth half a year after the blossoming of the rye. To destroy this unclean power, the Komi performed a ceremony of “*chud'* trampling” [*toptanie chudei*] that consisted of men on horseback prancing through the village with whooping and noise, trampling the invisible little people with the horses' hooves.¹⁸ Among the Russians of Ust'-Tsil'ma Raion of Arkhangel'sk Oblast, a comparable custom is called “*shishki* trampling.”¹⁹ Other names also exist for little spirits: *vasil'ki*, *artamonki*, and so forth. Such characters of Slavic demonology belong to the category of “seasonal demons” [*sezonnym demonam*], who come out of the water to reveal themselves only two times per year and go back into the water at Yuletide [*na Sviatki*] (from Christmas Eve to Epiphany/the Baptism, from 24 December to 6 January) and the period preceding the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul [*v Petrovki*] (from 24 to 29 June), that is, in the days of the winter and summer solstices.²⁰

“Seasonal demons” such as the “noisy,” “happy” spirits of German mythology are relatively harmless; this cannot be said of the hostage dead [*zalozhnye pokoiniki*] (in D. K. Zelenin's terminology), among whom the people include those who have died an unnatural and premature death, drowning victims, and [literally] dead drunks. These dead, according to folk ideas, continue to live out their lifetimes in the vicinity of the place of their demise. It was not permitted to bury them in a cemetery; they were buried at the intersections of roads. A characteristic feature of the hostage dead, in Zelenin's view, is their hostility toward living people, to whom they strive to cause harm, especially those who are incautious or unfortunate enough to run into them in the evening or at night.²¹ Comparable ideas are reflected in stories that the author heard recently in Arkhangel'sk Oblast villages, about frighten-

ing apparitions that appear at crossroads and by the roadside. The means of salvation from them are considered to be crosses placed at the dangerous places. Those forbidding places at which a cross had not been placed for any reason remained dangerous. At one place not far from Malye Nisogory village, Mezen' Raion, a huge apparition all in white was seen.

In materials gathered in Chita and Irkutsk oblasts are even more frightful stories about corpses that appear at their places of burial, frightening people. Noise, howling, crying, laughter, singing, footsteps, knocking, the ringing of little bells, and so on are heard; a huge hand or foot appears, or horse *troikas* [teams of three] appear. The dead pursue people and can yank off their fur coats, tearing them into little pieces. After an encounter with such a dead person, people and animals lose their minds or die.²²

Judging by the modern press, such stories exist in Moscow as well. One newspaper reported that enthusiasts had created a small amateur group for the study of unusual phenomena taking place on the streets of Moscow, primarily at night. The group includes two college students, a physicist, a worker, and a policeman. It analyzes unexplained sound, auditory and visual phenomena recorded from witnesses. In an interview with a correspondent, the group leader, Evgenii K., said: "We are only interested in the streets. What is happening in houses, in basements, or in attics is not our turf. Much, of course, turns out to be total rubbish. Somebody thinks they saw something, and the next thing you know, all the alarm bells are going off at once. We make it a rule to enter into our card file only those abnormal phenomena that have been recorded not less than twice at one spot."²³

The group created a distinctive cartography of unusual phenomena, marking on a Moscow map the connections with a given place and the frequency of recorded phenomena. They are distributed unevenly. The phenomena are marked most frequently in the areas of Taganka, the Yauza Gate, and the alleyways around Piatnitskaia Street, as well as on the streets and alleyways near Hertzen and Bronnaia Streets. They are less frequently encountered on the Arbat, Polianka, and Pliushchikha. The phenomena marked on the map are extremely diverse. For example, in the area of Sukharevskaiia Square, in Bol'shoi Sergievskii Alley, a huge silhouette of a man two stories tall appears. The figure stands all night until sunrise, not causing anybody any harm. In Zamoskvo-rech'e, residents describe tabby cats who run across the street from one

house to another, going through the walls. People in their path may lose their minds. Evgenii K. has drawn up a typology of the unusual phenomena, dividing them into four groups: the first—simply sounds; the second and third—moving and nonmoving phantoms, but without sound; in the fourth group, he included phantoms with sound, bringing living people the most danger, often mortal.²⁴

The majority of the phenomena classified correspond to traditional *bylichki* and *byval'shchiny*. Black cats crossing the street may appear to be unusual, but even they have a place in the traditional stories about sorcerers and witches [*ved'my*]. For example, one of the traditional *bylichki* tells of how a dying witch passes on her spirits (devils [*cherti*]) to another woman. After the death of the sorceress, her fellow villagers saw black cats crossing at night from the sorceress's house to the house of her successor.²⁵

Of course, old and new *bylichki* do not and could not coincide completely; changing conditions of life could not but have had their effect on the transformation of a range of motifs. For example, in traditional *bylichki*, apparitions often appear in tarantasses [springless carriages] or on troikas with bells.²⁶ Now, an apparition makes use of the automobile. Here is how an eyewitness describes one of the sound phantoms on the streets of Moscow: "We're standing at the intersection of two small alleys in the area of the Patriarchal Ponds. It's quiet. Only from the Garden Ring, which is a stone's throw away, the sound of automobiles whizzing by reaches us from time to time. . . . I start to observe closely and intently. At first—nothing. Then, from far away, I begin to hear the sound of a running motor. At the beginning, it seems to me that the sound is coming from the direction of the Garden [Ring], but its source is getting closer and closer, and I realize that the automobile is coming down the alley right at us. Instinctively, I search with my eyes for the approaching car. But the streets are deserted, the same as they were a minute ago. . . . A wave of insurmountable fear overwhelms me. The sound is moving along the narrow alley practically on top of us—we're standing at the edge of the sidewalk; there is no other way to describe this. . . . Now the automobile is coming closer, now it's practically alongside us, now it's passed us and is going further. . . . The invisible automobile—this can't be anything else—came to a halt at the door of a small house. We can hear how the powerful engine is idling. Then, things start happening that simply make me break out in a cold sweat. The sound of an opening door can

be heard. Calm footsteps, a voice saying something (I'm unable to make out the words). The lock in the door of the automobile clicks; after a couple of seconds, the door is slammed shut. The motor starts to rev up. The car moves off, and after half a minute, the last sounds melt away into the night. . . . So that you can understand my shock all the better, I ought to add that the house not far from our watch and across from where the invisible car had stopped is known to long-time residents of this area as "Beria's House." This is where this bloody person used to live. However, it's difficult to say for sure whether there is a direct connection between this circumstance and the strange sound phantom."²⁷ Mysterious people dressed in black and unregistered by the police driving around in black Cadillacs are reported in the American press.^{28, b}

One of the most widespread characters in Russian mythological stories is the forest spirit [*leshii*]. According to Pomerantseva's guide, we can conclude that the greatest number of plots involve this image.²⁹ More or less the same pattern can be observed in the guide to *bylichki* of Zinov'ev as well.³⁰ Stories about *leshii* are most frequently encountered in *bylichki* about spirits of the surrounding environment in our recordings made in Arkhangel'sk Oblast in 1970–76.

The *leshii*, according to folk ideas, is the master in the forest. Sometimes he can wander into a tavern, sit down next to an inebriated person who carelessly mentions him in conversation, and even visit a peasant [*krest'ianskii*] house if he has been mentioned there. Peasants therefore tried not to pronounce the word "*leshii*" any more than necessary. Dusk was considered to be particularly dangerous for communication with a *leshii*. One needed to be cautious with respect to small children. A mother would be cruelly punished if, when irritated, she would say to a child: "Off to the *leshii* with you!" [*Nu tebia, k leshemu!*]; the *leshii* could instantly carry off the child for himself. Then, even if the mother was able to get the child back with the help of lengthy fasting and prayer in church, the child would remain sickly for life. Even for adults, an encounter with a *leshii* could not fail to leave its trace: having been a guest at a *leshii*'s, one would either die or contract an incurable sickness.

Most often, a *leshii* plays jokes on a traveler riding along a forest road. The *leshii* pretends to be either an acquaintance or a relative of this person, and, in conversation, leads him or her into the forest depths. The only salvation from a *leshii* was to make the sign of the

cross or to utter the words of a prayer. It was enough to pronounce one word: "Lord!" In response, there would be heard a loud laugh and the words of the *leshii*: "So, you've guessed! . . ." Often, a person who had a bit to drink became a victim if he drank a small glass of wine offered by the *leshii* to clear his head. However, it was enough to say "But Lord, this isn't my last one for today . . ." [*Gospodi, ved' ia zhe segodnia ne posledniuiu . . .*] for the *leshii* to disappear with a loud laugh.

Stories about how *leshii* would "lead around" in the forest those who went out to pick berries and mushrooms concern women more than men. People tried to walk into the forest in pairs or in threes, but even in such cases the *leshii* sometimes achieved success, taking on the appearance of a comrade, a relative, or an acquaintance of his victim. Salvation from him, as in all cases, could be achieved by pronouncing a prayer or making the sign of the cross.³¹

Siberian *bylichki* relate that a *leshii* can appear as a woman, usually as a relative of one or another person.³² It ought to be noted that plots associated with the *leshii* in northern Russian and Siberian regions turn out to have much in common. In addition to those plots mentioned above, similarities can be observed in plots about the weddings of *leshii*, when people hear whistling, songs, and the sounds of little bells; in stories about how the *leshii* frightens people with tramping and noise and asks for a smoke, gives gifts that, at home, turn out to be moss or dried manure, and so forth. Such a similarity between the mythological stories of northern and Siberian Russians can be explained by the commonality of their origin: it is known that Siberia was first settled by migrants from the northern Russian guberniias.

The mythological ideas lying at the foundation of *bylichki* and *byval'shchiny* have deep roots. Stories about the *leshii* reflecting ideas about a forest master, a patron of animals, can be attributed to the most ancient forms of folk prose. The emergence of the image of the forest master is attributed to the era when the hunting economy was prevalent.³³

Although the stock of plots about the *leshii* is quite constant, in recent times changes have begun to emerge concerning the internal content of *bylichki*. Among mythological stories recorded in our days, the ratio of third-person narrations has increased, and the proportion of stories recounted in the first person has correspondingly dropped. This circumstance apparently has promoted the transformation of the motifs and images of the *bylichki*. In particular, from the modern stories it is

more difficult to compile a portrait of the *leshii*, who appears more vividly in the recordings of *bylichki* made in the last century and recounted, as a rule, in the first person. However, even in the past, it was easier to hear the *leshii* than to see him, judging by the stories about him. Despite the point that the *leshii* appears most frequently in the likeness of a person, his extraterrestrial origin was given away by unusual features: the absence of eyebrows, only one ear, and a pointy head. He was often depicted without a belt and without a hat; or, if he was wearing a hat, then it was unusually broad and large. Sometimes, the *leshii* appeared as a gray-haired old man in a white broad coverall garment [*balakhon*] or without clothing, hirsute, and with a large beard. A characteristic feature of a *leshii*, as that of other representations of unclean power, is spiky uncombed hair. Often, a great height (level with the forest) is ascribed to the *leshii*; true, he possesses the ability to metamorphose instantly from a huge person into a small person, level with the grass. Another feature of the *leshii* is his excessively long arms—all the way to the ground. At times, the *leshii* has a zoomorphic or anthropozoomorphic appearance. He can appear in the likeness of a hare, wolf, piglet, goat, rooster, and so forth. Sometimes, despite a human appearance, a *leshii* is given away by his goat's legs or horns.³⁴

Our detailed examination of the image of the *leshii* is explained by the point that certain features of the *leshii* of Russian *bylichki* can be seen in modern-day stories about the abominable snowman [*snezhnyi chelovek*] or, as he is still called, the wild forest man. Certain scholars consider him to be a vestigial hominoid. No small number of books and articles have been devoted to him; he has become the object of discussion at conferences and symposia.³⁵ A great number of eyewitness accounts about the abominable snowman have been gathered, in part by the members of the Darwin Museum seminar, working since 1960. D. Iu. Baianov, heading the seminar, gathers traces of vestigial homonoids contained in historical documents, the ancient and medieval mythology of various peoples. For example, one of the Roman chronicles tells of a live satyr who had been brought to the Emperor Sulla. The satyr's description permits modern researchers to see in him the abominable snowman.³⁶ Similar comparisons were carried out with respect to marvels mentioned in *Slovo o polku Igoreve* [The Lay of Igor's Campaign] and in Nizami's poem "Iskander Nami," as well as with respect to a series of mythological characters: the "fauns" and

“satyrs” of Greek mythology, the “*almasty*” of Caucasian legends, the *leshii* of Russian *bylichki* and *byval'shchiny*, and the “yeti” of Himalayan legends.^c

Indeed, the portrait of the abominable snowman resembles the *leshii* in many of its features. As follows from the majority of the stories, the abominable snowman appears as a man of great height (from 2 to 3 meters), entirely covered with thick fur, with a developed musculature, fiery eyes, and disproportionately long arms. Particularly important in the characterization of the abominable snowman is his pointy-headedness, which is indicated by the majority of the sources concerning him.³⁷ It is specifically this feature in demonological ideas that is considered to be a principal one in the characterizations of many representatives of unclean power, including the *leshii*.³⁸ Like the *leshii*, the abominable snowman suddenly appears before a traveler, eliciting horror and immobility, and likewise disappears unexpectedly and quickly, astonishing the observer with his light, nearly floating-on-air gait. Justification for comparing these two characters is the point that despite the multitude of searches for the remains and breeding grounds of the abominable snowman, researchers' efforts have not been successful. To this day, there is no clear photograph of an abominable snowman.³⁹

A justification for comparing the images of the *leshii* and of the abominable snowman is the fantastic nature of certain stories about the latter. For example, in 1988, newspapers and magazines published a report on an encounter with the abominable snowman by a group of schoolchildren on one of the lakes of the Kola Peninsula (Murmansk Oblast). During the first encounter, the children reported seeing a creature similar in all respects to the abominable snowman (as he is characterized in the majority of stories about him). Encountering him the next summer at the same place, the character under consideration appears in their description in another, more fantastic form: “Two days after the kids arrived on the shores of the stream, Sasha Prikhodchenko did not enter the little cabin in the evening, but lay down under the little house at the entrance. At the other shore, there suddenly appeared two human legs, thickly covered with light-gray hair. They jumped over the stream and began to walk around the little cabin. Trying to figure out who the legs belonged to, Sasha pressed himself to the ground and was surprised that the legs seemed to go on and on without ending.” And after this, he flew through the door with a single bound: “Here lives the hairy giant.”⁴⁰

From B. F. Porshnev's point of view, the abominable snowman is a Neanderthal, who has been preserved in almost inaccessible places of habitation.⁴¹ This is also the view of zoologists from the Darwin Museum seminar mentioned above. One cannot ignore the point that many stories about the abominable snowman have the character of eyewitness testimonies; at first glance, there is nothing fantastic and supernatural about them, with the exception of certain details that are insignificant from the point of view of the unsophisticated person. As has already been said, comparable features are inherent in many folkloric stories about the *leshii* as well. Thus, among the mythological stories of the Finno-Ugric peoples (the Khanty and the Mansi), stories about a forest-person stand out; he is characterized in them as a humanlike creature, covered with fur and of great height.^d

It is specifically these stories that are often used as proof of the abominable snowman's existence. However, Iu. G. Rochev, collector and researcher of Komi legends [*predaniia*], even though he sets apart the legends about the forest-person, still considers that the forest creature of the Komi legends "in many ways resembles a mythological character of Komi legends [*legendy*]*—the leshii*. For example, he likewise steals women to be his wife, and possesses the ability to stop boats floating on a river from a distance. However, he differs from a *leshii* in principle, and even contrasts with it. An encounter with him is always by chance and is not the result of his intrigues; clear tracks of bare feet remain behind him in the forest, while a *leshii* does not leave behind any material traces of having spent time next to a person. The *leshii* is the product of a mythological—in the final analysis, religious—consciousness; the hairy person is the fruit of fantasy, of imagination."⁴² A further analysis of comparable Komi legends with analogous legends of eastern Ugrians (the Khanty) has permitted Rochev to conclude that "perhaps the image of the forest-person is a very strongly transformed image of the Komi *leshii*, which has lost the features of its former definition."⁴³

When correlating the images of the *leshii* and of the abominable snowman, it is also important to remember that the *leshii* often appears in *bylichki* not only as a supernatural being, but as a completely real earthling. Particularly frequently, as has been noted, he likes to take on the likeness of a simple Russian peasant *muzhik*: he asks for a smoke, offers a drink to clear the head, and so forth. One should likewise not forget about the great ability of the *leshii*, as of other representatives of

the powers of the other side, to metamorphose depending on changing conditions. In such a case, the image of the abominable snowman is one of the guises of the *leshii*.

In the resolution of the abominable snowman's origin, those researchers who insist on finding his remains, or at least traces of his breeding grounds, are correct.

Also deserving attention is the point that certain researchers place the abominable snowman in the same rank as UFO phenomena and other "wonders of the twentieth century." In certain UFO-nauts, as they are depicted by "eyewitnesses," it is easy to recognize a very tall, pointy-headed, hairy creature with excessively long arms familiar to us from the stories both about the abominable snowman and about the *leshii*.

In mentioning UFO-nauts, we touch upon what is probably the broadest field associated with the "wonders of the twentieth century." At present, enthusiasts and special scientific centers have accumulated hundreds of thousands of reports and witnesses' testimonies and tens of thousands of photographs of unidentified flying objects—UFOs. Dozens of formal and informal groups in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, Khar'kov, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Petrozavodsk, Nizhnii Novgorod, L'vov, Tula, Vladivostok, Baku, Tbilisi, Tallinn, Vilnius, and other cities are engaged in researching UFOs.⁴⁴ A permanent exposition of UFOs has been set up (in the Space Pavilion) at the former Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy (now the All-Russian Exhibition Center). Among its visitors are no small number of UFO eyewitnesses leaving their testimonies in the book of comments. Equally numerous are the interviews, articles, and books devoted to UFOs.

Researchers associate a variety of different phenomena with UFOs. First and foremost, these are flying objects having the appearance of formations of geometric form, immobile or traveling along various trajectories (triangles, cubes, hexagons, cigarlike, and finally, the form of the famous saucers). The greatest specialist in the realm of UFOlogy, J. Keele, in addition to objects that he has called "hard," identifies "soft" objects that do not have a clear single physical form and change their configuration right in front of viewers. For example, several shining objects combine into one large one and vice versa; each of the small objects thus formed flies off in its own direction.⁴⁵

They also associate phenomena of another variety with UFOs: the

stories of “contacters”—people who were, as they assert, in contact with the pilots of UFOs or other aliens from another planet; cases of poltergeists—apparitions, phantoms, monsters. Certain researchers, including Keele, associate the many pieces of evidence of mythological, religious, and theosophical literature, which speak of angels, gnomes, elves, and comparable elementals,* with UFOs. We are interested specifically in that part of the phenomena that is associated with UFOs. Acquaintance with the latter shows that many “miraculous” stories about UFOs have a direct relationship to traditional mythology. A report appeared in the press that on the shores of a body of water after the landing of a UFO, the residents of the nearby villages saw an unusual creature with a large head.⁴⁶ Its features resembled a water-spirit [*vodianoï*], which in *bylichki* is depicted most frequently in an anthropomorphic likeness. It is often represented as a shaggy creature coated with slime and having short legs, or in the likeness of a person with paws instead of hands, with a tail, and so forth.⁴⁷

Often, images of UFO-nauts, according to the reports of “eyewitnesses,” closely resemble devils [*cherti*] and other representatives of the unclean power.^e These are creatures with horns, with six-digit extremities, little people with a large spheroid head and without a face or without a head at all, little chimera-people with faces resembling rats’ snouts. The most frequently encountered feature in the characterization of the visitors is their unusually long legs and arms down to the knees. Certain visitors are seen with wings behind the shoulders. I will remind the reader that a devil is often represented as winged.

The image of the devil is the most complicated of all the Russian mythological characters; in it, in addition to the folk peasant foundation, are traced later strata associated with literary influences, including Christian literature. The concept of the devil [*chërt*] is kin to the visible concepts of the *leshii*, the *vodianoï*, the *domovoi*, and other such representatives of the world of the other side. Among the people, concepts existed of a “water devil” [*vodianoï chërt*], a “forest devil” [*lesnoi chërt*], and so forth. On the strength of these circumstances, the image of the devil is particularly many-sided; it has absorbed into itself the features of many mythological characters.⁴⁸

However, the portrait has characteristic features inherent only to it. One such image is that of the “black person,” or of the “person in

* Elementals (in theosophical literature): lower spirits, nature spirits.

black.” True, this image can be encountered more frequently in the artistic literature; it is enough to recall the “*Chërnyi chelovek*” [Black Person] of S[ergei] Esenin. However, it has a place in peasant creativity as well, perhaps not without the influence of literature. The image of the “person in black” is present in modern-day stories associated with poltergeists and UFOs. Thus, in the already-mentioned article “*Nevidimka v Izmailovo (Poltergeist Savinykh)*,” the description began with the Savins’ children, having been left at home alone, hearing the doorbell ring. Looking through the peephole, they saw a man with a black moustache, in a black overcoat, with a black suitcase in his hands. And even though they did not open the door for him, wonders characteristic of the poltergeist phenomenon began in the apartment.⁴⁹

The “person in black” is a frequent cause of poltergeists in the Western world. The Strategic Services Administration, as well as other intelligence and counterintelligence services, both in the United States and in other countries, became interested in the possible participation of mysterious “people in black” in various operations and homicides.⁵⁰ It is curious that one of the northern Russian *bylichki* about a devil who had taken on the likeness of a “person in black,” related in S. V. Maksimov’s book, is associated with arson. It tells about a village lad who had a reputation as a good and kind, respectable person. But suddenly, out of the blue, he began to drink, and ended up setting fire to his own village. When he was caught at the scene of the crime, he explained his deed by saying that some “person in black” had first asked him for a smoke, and then put him under someone’s roof with the fire. Having heard the offender, all the people decided that the lad had been the victim of “a devil’s work” [*poputan chërtom*] and exculpated him.⁵¹

Among the stories about UFOs, there stands out a series describing relations between aliens from other planets (in the broad sense—UFO-nauts) and earthling women, or the opposite—UFO-naut women and earthling men. The majority of the narratives talk about how the UFO-nauts invite the chosen ones onto their spaceship; moreover, the appearance of the visitors is often accompanied by a bright radiance emanating from the flying objects or from the visitors themselves. In November–December 1989, the film *NLO: neob ’ıavlennyi vizit* [UFO: The Unannounced Visit] was shown several times on television. One of the stories told of a series of events that had taken place at the beginning of the autumn of 1990 [sic] with a woman from the settlement of Shchelkovo, not far from Moscow.^f In the interview with the

correspondent, the 35-year-old woman told of how on a sleepless night, she had seen a bright flash of light on the balcony. Unexpectedly, the blanket fell off her and she saw a man before her. In response to the request of the correspondent to describe the visitor, the woman replied that she had not seen him clearly, but that she had remembered unusual features: very large, round eyes and four-digit extremities of the arms and legs.⁵² Comparable features are characteristic of many portraits of the Devil.

I will emphasize the circumstance that the woman at first saw a bright light, and after that the unexpected visitor. It is specifically this circumstance that has analogues in *bylichki* about fiery snakes that are widespread in certain Russian oblasts. The *bylichki* tell of how a “fiery snake” flies to women or men who greatly miss and mourn a deceased spouse, breaking up in sparks above the house. According to the folk ideas, the fiery snake is the Devil, transforming into the likeness of the absent wife or husband. Maksimov wrote about the wide prevalence of such *bylichki* in Vologda Gubernia in the last century.⁵³ In the central Russian raions, the fiery snakes are often called *letuny*. The author often had occasion to hear stories about *letuny* during expeditions in many Vladimir Oblast villages.⁵⁴ The appearance of the snake in *bylichki* very much resembles the appearance of aliens from other planets in the stories about UFO-nauts.

Comparable *bylichki* can be associated with the multitude of legends about incubi and succubi—various demons [*besy*] that, according to legends, visit lonely women and men. A particularly large number of such stories are contained in the Lives of Saints and other works of Christian literature reflecting the history of the struggle of Christianity with paganism. In their turn, the multitude of indications of the Devil’s penchant for leading people astray are rooted in the most ancient of religious ideas of peoples concerning the possibility of intimate relations between gods and earthling women and men. The myths of antiquity speak of this. Not only the Greek and Roman epic heroes traced their lineage to the gods, but also famous people, for example Pythagoras and Caesar. Of course, the gods did not favor many with their attentions; much more frequently, lesser demons [*demony i besy*] would appear in the role of tempters. Children can likewise be born of a union with them—hideous creatures filling up the ranks of the army of the unclean power. Here is how such a union is described in one of the northern Russian *bylichki*:

And the neighbors begin to notice that the old widow-woman sometimes appears to be pregnant, while at other times nothing is noticeable again—there are no changes. And they marvel at the same time how she is able to manage to perform all kinds of work: in the summer, she goes out into the field alone, yet she does the work of three. And they become convinced of an illicit union when the old woman begins to grow thin, and becomes so emaciated that only skin and bones remain. The neighbor-women, who notice everything, even see how the unclean one flies into the hut in the form of a fiery snake, and swear that the demon [*bes*] had flown into the chimney pipe and had broken up into fiery sparks above the roof right before their very eyes.⁵⁵

Those stories about UFO-nauts that tell about cases of pregnancy and the birth of children sired by aliens from other planets can be compared with such *bylichki*. There are over 4,000 witnesses' accounts in the archive of the American writer Bud Hopkins, who became interested in comparable stories. Women in contact with UFO-nauts were not ashamed to admit their relations to the researcher. Hopkins had the opportunity to hear convincing details. For example, one of the women told him that during the course of several years, she was visited by a certain humanlike being with a disproportionately large head and huge eyes. As a result, the woman became pregnant several times. She even gave birth to a daughter—not here, but on another planet. During one of the journeys to this planet, she had been able to see her daughter.⁵⁶

Among the stories, narratives stand out that also speak of unions with aliens from other planets, but having different consequences. For example, in our press a report appeared about unusual apparitions in the village of Dibich not far from the town of Shumen in Bulgaria. Knocking, a din, footsteps, and noise were heard in the house of the Chaprazov family—these were so loud that even the neighbors were bothered by them. Then they noticed that these apparitions were in some way associated with the daughter of the Chaprazovs, Fatima. The doctors to whom Fatima was shown did not uncover any obvious deviations in her psyche. But teachers and girlfriends noticed unusual behavior in her: at times, the girl became extremely pallid, although she appeared to remain alert and cognizant throughout all this. She would try to pull something over her head, as if attempting to hide herself from someone. Then her body would start to move as though under the influence of powerful jolts; two senior-year students were

not able to hold her down. When the seizure passed, the girl would lie unconscious for several minutes. Once, she glimpsed the source of the power that was taking possession of her: this was a creature with a height of over 2 meters, covered with white fur, with huge eyes. It spoke telepathically. From that time onward, the girl would communicate not only with him but also with other “aliens from other planets.” Then the souls of the dead were added to them.⁵⁷

In many of its features, this narrative has points of contact with folkloric stories about witches and their relations with supernatural beings. According to folk beliefs, witches and sorcerers owe their powers to demons (devils) who are in their service: the more of them there are, the more powerful is one or another sorcerer or sorceress. The idea that sorcerers had a brace or more of young devils at their disposal existed in many Russian regions. Such views showed themselves particularly vividly in stories about the death of sorcerers, who, it was considered, could not go on to the other world without having passed on their “assistants” to another person.

Also numerous are *bylichki* about the wasting disease [*porcha*], in which the principal leading characters are sorcerers. Judging by the ample material contained in the Archives of the Russian Ethnographic Museum (AREM), the Russian Geographical Society (ARGO), and others, belief in the possibility of disease through sorcery was widespread, having survived in one or another form to our day. The author can judge its vitality based on her own expeditions in various regions of our country: in the Kuban', in the Upper Volga Region [*Povolzh'e*], and in Vologda and Arkhangel'sk oblasts.

Of the stories recorded by us, the most original are *bylichki* about the wasting disease (Arkhangel'sk Oblast). These are *bylichki* about *ikota* and *ikotniki*, as the sorcerers who sent a particular type of wasting disease—the *ikota*—were called.⁸

In stories about the *ikota*, the latter is often represented as a creature capable of taking on the appearance of an animal, and sometimes of a small person. Settling in a person, it forces him or her to perform deeds that had not been natural before, for example, to curse obscenely at the most inappropriate moments. Even more frequently, the *ikota* can cause the appearance in a person of extreme desires for food in general or for some specific kind of food. Often, the *ikota* forces a person to drink wine. An *ikota* might not allow a person to work. There are quite a few stories about a talking *ikota*, about how someone who has fallen

sick will begin to speak in the voice of the *ikota* during the illness. Most often, this comes out as obscene swearing, for which the sick person apologizes after the bout of illness, or incoherent phrases. But sometimes an *ikota* appears in stories as being capable of saying fully rational phrases, indicating, for example, the sorcerer who had sent the wasting disease.⁵⁸

In the Russian raions of Mezen' and Pechora, the idea existed of *znatlivy* [the all-knowing], who were accused of sending a "wasting disease" and who could cure these sicknesses as well; they would do all this with the help of spirits. The *znatlivye* of the Russians have much in common with the *znatkie* of the Komi: both were skillful in fortune-telling; only they could find a stolen object; it was proper to invite them to weddings in the capacity of guards. Researchers associate the *znatkie* of the Komi with the wizards [*volkhvy*] with whom St. Stephen of Perm had fought. Scholars saw shamanistic features in wizards, as in magicians [*kudesniki*].⁵⁹ The art of the sorcerer who sends sicknesses likewise finds its roots in the practice of shamanism. Shamanism, as is well known, is based on the idea that during a *séance* [*kamlanie*], a spirit or spirits settle into the shaman, while his soul leaves the body.^h All the shaman's predictions are ascribed not to him, but to the spirits that entered him.⁶⁰

Aiding the vitality of folk ideas about spirits was the undoubted similarity between sick persons subjected to wasting disease and persons possessed by demons [*besnovatyie*] described in the Bible. Being possessed was an epidemic phenomenon during the period of early Christianity, while the exorcism of demons was a special gift of Christians, to whom Christ said: "By My Name, you shall exorcize demons." The Lives of the Saints likewise contain stories about the healing of people possessed by demons. This phenomenon was even reflected in Ancient Russian literature, for example, in the seventeenth-century *Povest' o besnovatoi zhene Solomonii* [The Lay of the Wife Solomoniia, Possessed by Demons], a priest's daughter from the Sukhony River who had been cured from a "demon in her womb" at the tomb of St. Prokopii.⁶¹ It should be noted that priests, considering the struggle with manifestations of paganism to be their duty, had a tolerant attitude toward people possessed by demons and even undertook to cure them with prayers and incense.

In stories about the wasting disease, folk ideas about the tragic consequences of encounters with the powers of the other side have

been relayed with the utmost vividness. In the majority of *bylichki*, an encounter with a *leshii*, a *vodianoï*, or an apparition ends with a serious illness and an untimely death. No less dangerous, judging by the stories, are encounters with UFO-nauts. For example, one of the people who claims to have flown in space, Pavel Mukhortov, being interested in UFOlogy, drew the attention of correspondents to the hardly innocent consequences of encounters with UFOs. Cases when “contacters” (including pilots) died of serious illnesses are well known. In the United States, [professional] pilots who have seen UFOs are dismissed from their jobs. It has been noticed that many UFOlogists suffer from a blood disease as well.⁶² A special laboratory was founded at the Institute of Physical Culture in Moscow to render medical aid to people who had suffered from UFO phenomena.

Deserving of attention are the views of Orthodox clergy on this question. In the pilots of UFOs and in the apparitions of poltergeists, clergymen see spiritual beings known to humanity since time immemorial. In one of the brochures published in the series “Don’t Participate in the Affairs of Darkness,” we read:

Not being tied to a specific physical shell, spiritual beings can adopt the greatest variety of forms, but always the one that people, to the extent of their development, are prepared to accept. Thus, in the 1940s, when humanity had already been prepared psychologically for interstellar flights and encounters with “Martians,” the first UFOs appeared. No matter how captivating the story about their appearance or how mind-boggling the prospects of “contacts,” the point remains that the UFOs themselves and their “pilots” are all those same ancient ill-intentioned [*lukavye*] beings that played mind games with our ancestors in the form of monstrosities with little horns and hooves, and are now appearing to their enlightened descendants armed to the teeth with the “latest achievements of interplanetary space technology.” Many Western researchers have already set aside the hypotheses about the extraterrestrial origin of UFOs. They have decided to involve themselves not with the elusive objects themselves, but with the consequences of contacts with them to a human being. Gradually, from studying works on space technology, they have come to the works of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church on the spiritual world, on psychophysical phenomena, on the mutual penetration of these two worlds.⁶³

Among the stories about UFOs, we can identify a group in which the “encounters with aliens from other planets” do not result in nega-

tive consequences, but, on the contrary, in the words of the tellers of the story, bring health and happiness. Let us relate the story of a Muscovite woman artist, Valentina Vasil'eva, an exhibition of whose paintings had been held in February 1990 in the Znamenskii Cathedral on Varvarka [Street]. At the exhibition, the artist met with visitors and initiated them into the history of her relations with aliens from another planet. She has appeared on television and radio numerous times. According to her, she came into contact with an extraterrestrial civilization situated on Saturn. She herself was trying to establish contact, and once, at night, against the background of a window, she saw at first a tall female figure, and then a luminous flying saucer, from which the woman had appeared. In consequence, Vasil'eva agreed on meetings with the "contacters" in one of the forests outside of Moscow. The visitors let her know of the time of the contact with the aid of a special sign in the form of two intersecting squares. A conversation took place telepathically. Vasil'eva, a radio engineer, began to paint, even though she had never held a brush in her hand before. However, she paints unusually, not by herself as it were, but rather as if someone is guiding her hand. On the pictures are depicted aliens from other planets who resemble earthlings, but with unusually long, narrow faces, and with extremely large, sad eyes. Sometimes the face occupies the space from the earth to the sky, while emanating from the chin are rays falling to the earth, on which are depicted trees, a field, or a forest.

To the question of why aliens from another planet chose her, Vasil'eva answered that she herself had wanted to make contact, but that her predisposition for spirit healing [*znakharstvo*] and clairvoyance can be looked upon as a prerequisite for the implementation of her desire. She has manifested these types of abilities; she has been able to heal the sick and to find missing persons. However, the alien visitors forbade her to heal, saying that she has been destined to preach with the aid of pictures. In Vasil'eva's words, the visitors have revealed many mysteries of the universe and of previous civilizations to her; they reported, in part, that even now there are many "contacters" with aliens from another planet on earth, and that soon there will be even more of them. During the time of the contact, when Vasil'eva sees the previously mentioned sign, she feels as though something is tightening around her head and often loses consciousness. With the visitors' appearance, she feels her body immobilizing. Afterward, she experiences a surge of energy, a tenfold increase in strength.

Vasil'eva's story is associated in many features with the traditional mythological stories about manifestations of supernatural powers "with a plus sign," that is, accompanied by healing, a feeling of radiant joy, and so forth. In folkloristics, these stories are separated out into the group of legends or narratives [*legendy ili predanii*], distinguishing them from tales [*bylichki*], in which the powers of the other side are represented "with a minus sign."

The examination of modern stories about encounters with supernatural beings testifies to the point that alongside traditional forms of the existence of *bylichki* plots, at the present time, stories about UFO phenomena have become widespread. A comparison reveals their unquestionable similarity, which permits us to assume a certain common source of their formation.

The Orthodox Church considers this source to be the Devil [*diavol*] (Satan) and his host of servants—the demons [*besy*]. Their principal characteristic is the ability to change their appearance depending on circumstances. From here derives the multitude of the forms they take on. However, their purpose remains unchanged—to lead humans astray from the true path, to make them servants of the Devil. From the point of view of scholars engaged in the problems of UFOs, the source of the stories about these phenomena is in extraterrestrial civilizations.¹

Without claiming to have done exhaustive research on the problem, we hope that we have been able to point out the significance of the theme and the need to include materials on ethnography and folkloristics in the study of questions associated with UFOlogy.

Editor's notes

a. For sources on unclean or impure power [*nechistaia sila*], see G. Alexinsky, "Slavonic Mythology," *Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (New York: Prometheus, 1960), pp. 293–310; Linda Ivanits, *Russian Folk Belief* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1989); Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovy slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*, vols. 1–4 [1880–82] (Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1978); D. K. Zelenin, *Izbrannye trudy. Ocherki russkoi mifologii: Umershie neestesvennoiu smert'iu i rusalki* (Moscow: Indrik, 1995 [1916]).

b. Something may have been lost from the original English here, since people usually are not registered in North America (although cars are). Lavrentii Pavlovich Beria (1899–1953) was Stalin's most hated and terrifying head of the secret police. See Amy Knight, *Beria, Stalin's First Lieutenant* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

c. For sample *almasty* stories, see E. V. Baranov, "Legendy, predaniia i skazki

terskoi oblasti,” *Sbornik materialov dlia opisaniia mestnosti i plemen Kavkaza*, 1904, issue 34. For “The Lay of Igor’s Campaign,” see Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles and Tales* (New York: Dutton, 1974).

d. This figure is called *menk* in Ob-Ugrian folklore and ritual. See especially V. N. Chernetsov, “Periodicheskie obriady i tseremonny s medvedem,” *Congressus Secundus Internationalis Fenno-Ugristarum: Pars II, Acta Ethnologica* (Helsinki: Societas Fenno-Ugrica, 1968), pp. 102–11; V. M. Kulemzin, *Chelovek i priroda v verovaniakh Khantov* (Tomsk: Nauka, 1984).

e. Meticulous translator Stephan Lang points out that the author put quotes around “eyewitnesses” here, but not in the passage on the haunted street outside Beria’s house, thus possibly signaling belief in one story but not the other.

f. The discrepancy between the dates of the TV film (1989) and the event described (1990) is in the Russian text, which probably should have read autumn 1989, unless some other-worldly point is being made here.

g. The word for this kind of sorcerer, *ikota*, is a synonym of the word for “hiccups.” The two may have originally been correlated, if hiccups were considered a symptom of the *porcha* that resulted from sorcery. Other European folk beliefs point to this explanation, since hiccups were sometimes considered a possible sign of soul loss.

h. On Saint Stephen’s fight with “Zyrian [Komi] heathens,” see George P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960 [1946]), p. 373. The description of shamanism here is simplistic, since different kinds of soul and spirit actions are associated with shamanic séances, depending on their context and the cultural tradition discussed. The author’s male gender designation has been kept, although women were and are just as often shamans in most northern traditions. See Dmitri Funk’s article in this issue; Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, ed., *Shamanism: Soviet Studies of Traditional Religion in Siberia and Central Asia* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990); Anna-Leena Siikala and Mihály Hoppál, *Studies on Shamanism* (Helsinki: Finnish Anthropological Society; Budapest: Akadémiai Kiado, 1992); and Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1964).

i. This paragraph was originally in a final note. However, its relevance to the conclusions makes it important enough to place in the text, where it may have been originally, before editorial changes made by *Etnicheskoe obozrenie*. The implication of the article, never fully spelled out, is the psychological commonality of all of the folk-generated stories discussed. This is similar to some of the approaches taken in Richard F. Haines, ed., *UFO Phenomena and the Behavioral Scientist* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1979). Harvard psychology researcher John Mack, who began with a psychoanalytic approach, has come to take UFO abduction tales as more than figments of imagination, much to his colleagues’ dismay. See his *Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* (New York: Scribners’ Press, 1994). For more on Russian UFO stories, see Jacques Vallee with Martine Castello, *UFO Chronicles of the Soviet Union: A Cosmic Samizdat* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992); and Ion Hobana and Louis Julien Weverbergh, *UFOs from Behind the Iron Curtain* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974).

Notes

1. A. Budilovich, *M. V. Lomonosov kak naturalist i filolog* (St. Petersburg, 1869), p. 7. For more detail on this subject, see: M. K. Azadovskii, *Istoriia russkoi fol'kloristiki* (Moscow, 1958), p. 88.
2. M. D. Chulkov, *Slovar' russkikh sueverii* (in the second edition—*Abevega russkikh sueverii*) (Moscow, 1780); M. V. Popov, *Kratkoe opisanie slavianskogo basnosloviia* (Moscow, 1768).
3. S. A. Tokarev, *Religioznye verovaniia vostochnoslavianskikh narodov XIX–nachala XX v.* (Moscow, 1957), p. 5.
4. E. V. Pomerantseva, *Mifologicheskie personazhi v russkom fol'klоре* (Moscow, 1975), p. 155.
5. V. P. Zinov'ev, ed., *Mifologicheskie rasskazy russkogo naseleniia Vostochnoi Sibiri* (Novosibirsk, 1987), p. 305.
6. Ibid.
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