

Rural Stories about Parental Malediction
(based on field materials from Novgorod and Vologda regions)

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The narrative repertoire of many folk traditions features stories of children cursed by their parents. These stories can be divided into several groups with adjacent but independent plots: 1) “the substituted child:” here an unclean spirit steals a human child, replacing it with a log, a broom, or a changeling; 2) “the careless promise:” parents make a thoughtless pledge in time of crisis to give their child to the devil, who claims it when the time comes; 3) “redemption through marriage:” a child who has been cursed lives under the floorboards, in the bath house and so on until the time comes to marry. This article will concentrate on the fourth type of story, the child, who as a result of a parental curse disappears into the forest. I will be analyzing its constituent motifs and discussing the popular ideas that inspire them. The discussion is based primarily on field recordings of about seventy texts, as well as printed and archival sources.

This group of stories may be defined in two different ways. According to a literal reading, these are narratives where a curse prompts the ensuing narrative, even if the maledictory formula actually appears at the end of the story, causally connecting the motifs in the tale. The second, broader interpretation encompasses all stories about children who wander or are led into the forest, even though an actual malediction may not be mentioned. These expanded subject parameters are possible because informants often tell stories about those who have been cursed in reply to questions about children lost in the forest [e.g. Beloz.-01:14. LMP],(1) or confirm that such children were described as “cursed” [Khvoin.-99:2].

I will examine the theme of children who have been cursed as a collection of related motifs, the quantity and hierarchy of which can vary from one tradition to another and be conditioned by the peculiarities of the performer’s individual narrative repertoire. Let us examine motifs of primary importance before those of secondary significance.

The Inciting Incident: The Formula of the Curse

The first important motif is the presence of the actual malediction addressed by one communicative partner to another. Interestingly,

maledictory utterances such as “Damn [you]!” or “May you be damned!” have never been attested. Instead, the equivalent of a direct curse occurs:

a) Sending the communicative partner to the devil or naming him/her “a devil,” as for example, “Да схвати тебя черти!” (May the devils take you!) [Khvoin.-99:24], “Убирайся к чёрту!” (Go to the devil!) [Khvoin.-97:35. TDA], “Да тебе покоя-то, чёрту, нет!” (Can’t you be still, you devil?!) [Khvoin.-99:8]. In every case, the addressee of the utterance is clear and specific.

b) Sending the communicative partner to the “master of the forest” or *leshii* (the forest spirit), such as “Пошел ты к лешему!” (Go to the *leshii*!) [Belozер.-01:7], or “Хватил бы тебя леший!” (May the *leshii* take you away!) [Belozер.-01:4]. This type of malediction can be regarded as a variant of the preceding one, although, as I will show later, it is more directly connected with the rural mythology of the forest.

c) “(Bad) swearing” (Russ. *худая*) *брань*), implying the presence of the most obscene swearwords in the formula of the curse - what is known in Russian as *mat*, that is, coital invective mentioning the human genitals, both male and female. While *mat* is used in a number of ritual situations (mostly for apotropaic reasons, such as to ward off a revenant, chase off thunder clouds, and so on (for more examples, see Sannikova [1995: 250-53]), the use of *mat* expressions in everyday speech is socially prohibited, especially for women, for it is believed that the very act of enunciating them causes the realities they refer to be “exposed.”(2)

However, references to the devil and the master of the forest in the formula of the curse may not just be equated to “bad swearing,” but may even go further as far as the level of taboo is concerned, although structurally expressions using the word “devil” are counted as “non-obscene equivalents of expressions with *mat* proper” [Levin 1996: 111]: “Вот я... говорю, что... лучше ты... ну... матом пусти! Но таким[и] словам[и] [чёртом, бранёным] – никогда не ругай!” (I always say... it’s better if you... swear using a *mat* word! But never swear using a word like that!” [i.e. “devil” – A.K.] [Khvoin.-99:28; also Khvoin.-99:40], or: “лучше выматюгать сто раз человека, даже своего, чем вот это слово сказать” (it is better to swear at someone a hundred times than say that word [*leshii* – A.K.] to him!” [Belozер.-01:7]. As can be seen from these two examples, people often try not to utter the words “devil” and “*leshii*” even when answering ethnographers’ questions, and/or ask for the house door to be closed before they do so [e.g., Belozер.-01:4].

d) In the final category, the story begins when a certain verbal phrase is not uttered and/or a certain action is not performed. This case can be termed “the lack of a blessing,” in which upon leaving the house, a person forgets to say a prayer, make the sign of the cross, or utter a blessing [e.g., Batets.-99:34]. While swearing, and particularly *mat*, may be “functionally equivalent to prayer” [Uspenskii 1996: 19] in its impact, the lack of the latter seems to lead to the same consequences as the utterance of the invective (one informant saw these two cases as virtually synonymous: “...я немножко в это верю. В это проклятье, неблагословенье” (...I tend to believe in this; in this curse, this non-blessing) [Batets.-99:36].(3)

Thus there is no clear dividing line between the principal types of incitement in malediction stories as described above. However, there is one common feature that unites all curse formulas, whether sending a person to the devil, or the master of the forest, or swearing at him/her using *mat*, or omitting the blessing in whatever form: it always happens accidentally, and the consequences turn out to be undesirable for the one who brought them about. Herein lies the essential paradox of the malediction story: it occurs without the intention of the speaker, and is beyond his or her volition.(4)

Occasionally the malediction occurs in the context of a family quarrel [e.g., Khvoin.-99:24], yet even in such cases the consequences are not commensurate with the causes that provoked them.(5)

Malediction as Performative Action: Conditions of Felicity

What happens to a person who happens to become the target of a curse? “The semantic nucleus” of such phrases being the “alienation (of the addressee from the sender)” [Levin 1996: 111], their utterance brings about the corresponding “reality”: a person who has been cursed “goes straight to the devil” (К чёрту и пойдёшь...) [Khvoin.-99:8]; “the master of the forest carried them away” (Их и понесло леший) [Belozet.-01:7]; “demons will carry [them] away to the forest – and that’s it” (Вот черти унесут в лес – и всё) [Khvoin.-99:28]. Here the causal-consecutive logic is based on a belief in the performative power of the malediction. Even pronounced “accidentally” it is non-reversible: the maledicted person vanishes.(6)

Usually this happens immediately. When occasionally, there is a short delay, this may somewhat paradoxically be termed “postponed performativity.”

Any performative action requires certain “conditions of felicity.” In order for the malediction to succeed, the initial power relationships between the communicative partners must be unequal, that is to say, one exercises control over the other. A pair of mutually defined statuses that best meets this requirement is that of parent and child.(7) The mechanism of execration may be described as the alienation of power and control from the real parent to the false one,(8) usually an unclean spirit [Russ. *nechistaia sila*], whom folk imagination sees *in loci parentis*, and is most often the supernatural being mentioned in the malediction.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, it is the mother who curses her child, whether a son or a daughter. A mother’s power over her children has always been seen as exceptional in the folk tradition: “People recognize her greater power over children as compared to that of the father’s... People strongly believe in the power of a mother’s malediction and blessing. As for the father, they think that he cannot utter a curse at all; and that his blessing is not nearly as important as the mother’s” [Vesin 1891: 52; also Dobroliubov 1915: 800 ff.].

There is, of course, a parallel type of story about a father’s curse, based on conflict between generations, involving grown-up children, mostly sons, and their fathers, to whom they are close in terms of status. The son usually expresses his desire to live separately and/or wants to get married against his father’s will, which ends in an open quarrel followed by the father uttering a curse and disinheriting the son [see Kushkova 2004]. It is not my intention to compare these two types of stories, although occasionally some parallels may be relevant.

These two types of malediction stories both feature similar ideas about fate or one’s lot in life (Russ. *dolia*), with its principal distributor being in the position to utter a malediction.(9) This explains why the child cursed by his/her mother in our stories is not normally assigned a specific age, often merely being described as small. It is likely that the smaller the child the greater the chance that his/her fate can be subject to revision, his/her “lot” changed.(10) As long as the child is small, he or she belongs to the world of the mother.

The biological connection between the subject and the object of the curse is very important; usually it is thought impossible to place a curse on someone else’s child, for, as one informant said, “this is not your own blood” and the curse “won’t stick” (не пристанет) [Belozher.-01:7].(11) Not only is this one of the conditions necessary for success in popular healing magic [“same blood” vs. “alien blood”, Russ. *po krovi* vs. *ne po krovi*], but also the concept of “blood” contains a veiled indication as to

who is performing the act: “power is the attribute precisely of professional, and typically male, healing practice. In female practice the same role was performed ... by the notion of ‘blood’” [Shchepanskaia 2001: 72].

There is a second condition of performative felicity tied to power relationships, one not, however, as strict as the first: the temporal. It is believed that a maledicted person will disappear into the forest only if the malediction was untimely (Russ. *ne v chas*), for example: “Мать может проклянуть, только смотря в какой час ... Это есть такой час недобрый” (A mother can utter a curse, though it depends on the time of day ... there is such a thing as a bad hour) [Batets.-99:36], or: “Это проклинали их. Мать на дочь или на сына. Чтобы тебе черты взяли отсюда. Понесет... Но в какой час! Есть часы вообще-то в природе” (This put a curse on them. A mother [can do this] to her son or a daughter: “May the devils take you away from here!” And [they] will be whisked away... But it depends on the time of day! There are such times in the natural world) [Khvoin.-98:29], and so on.(12)

In some texts the “bad hour” motif can appear together with the malediction. In others it can be sufficient by itself to incite subsequent events in the story. It may be determined that a person left home “at a bad hour” only retrospectively, judging by what has happened. Hence, this motif becomes a conventional formula used to explain anything that has gone wrong, or is against one’s plans and desires. This is why the motif of “a bad hour” is sometimes equivalent to a malediction as the central moment of the plot: “Он чого-нибудь ругнулся там, матюгнулся аль поматился, что – вот и не в час называется” (He uttered some curse, like *mat* – it is what is called “at a bad hour”) [Khvoin.-98:31; also: Khvoin.-98:29].(13)

Wanderings in the Forest

A maledicted child’s journey from home into the forest is the essential motif of all stories about execrated children. Put more succinctly, the maledicted are those who “have run away from home” (убегали из дома) [Khvoin.-98:1].

A symbolically important motif of the narrative at this point is overcoming a watery boundary. The maledicted child either crosses a river him/herself, or is “carried over” it. In both cases, it is clear that this crossing is beyond the power of humans: “ведут меня... и так – только начну тонуть... и только, гыт, – ох! и сразу оказываюсь на этом самом – на другом берегу, понимаешь...” (they were leading me, and...

as soon as I began to drown – hop! I straightaway found myself on the other bank) [Khvoин.-97:14]; “реки там – переносил меня дядька” (a man was carrying me over rivers) [Belozер.-01:14. FFP; also Khvoин.-97:37. VPV; Khvoин.-97:35. TDA and others]. A river is the crucial topological boundary beyond which lies a qualitatively different space, one ruled by non-human agents.(14)

Movement in the forest is usually described as non-human movement; the child who has been cursed “wanders” (скитается) [Khvoин.-99:8] or “roams around”(путается) [Mosh.-99:32], cannot stop moving [Levkievskaja 103: 104]. Alternatively, he or she is “carried over tree stumps” (носят по пням) [Khvoин.-99: 28], or “over the tree tops” (по лесу, по верхушкам) [Zinov’ev 1987: 37].(15) From the linguistic point of view, it is very telling that this movement is often expressed through multiple verbs of motion, as in: “...and he went, and he went, and he went...” (и пошёл, и пошёл, и пошёл...) [Khvoин.-97:37. AIK; also Khvoин.-97:37. VPV]. This creates an image of mechanical movement with no particular purpose, as if the person is being transported by some external and irresistible force. Frequently an impersonal verb *vodit* (from *vodit’*, “to lead,” with no subject implied) is used, or else personal verbal forms with no indication as to the performer of the action: “Иду, гыт, думаю: вот, гыт, канава. Как мне перейти? Ей грят: не горюй. Перейдешь... Перенесут ” (So I’m walking along and thinking: here is a ditch. How can I cross it? Then she’s told: “Cheer up. You’ll do it... You’ll be carried across”) [Khvoин.-99:12], or “...в лес пойдешь, как-[то] не в час, куда-то тебя могут затащить, что и не вытеть...” (if you walk in the forest... at a bad hour, they may drag you away, so that you’ll never get out) [Khvoин.-98:16]. Most probably, what we have here is an expression of the idea that a maledicted person is deprived of his/her will or subjugated to the will of whoever controls him/her at the moment.

Visual perception is another very important aspect of crossing the borderline between worlds; “two of the most important semantic knots of the borderline zone are connected with it: mythological blindness and invisibility” [Nekliudov 1979: 136]. The motif of blindness, frequent in stories about children who have been cursed, stresses the ontological dissimilarity between the world of the humans and the world of the forest. This motif may be realized in two principal ways. First, maledicted children do not see and/or recognize a road in a forest they know well, or they fail to find a path which, as it turns out later, was nearby, within sight, for example: “...и у самой тропинки была, да не

видала...” (she was right by the path, but didn’t see it) [Khvoin.-99:24]. Inability to see the road, one of the principal realities signifying civilized, “humanized” space, may be described as a kind of blindness. Second, the people who are looking for the child lost in the forest do not see him/her, although he/she may be standing a mere couple of yards away and trying to establish contact: “И она их видала, она к ним выходила, а они её не видели!” (And she saw them, she came out to them, but they didn’t see her!) [Khvoin.-97:37. АИК; also: Belozер.-01:6; Belozер.-01:14. LMP].(16) Interestingly, in some traditions both those who have been cursed and the spirits of the forest are called “invisible ones” (невидимые) [e.g. Nekrylova 2001: 319, 322].

In a broader sense, this “blindness” can be understood as the impossibility of contact between the two worlds, that of ordinary folk and those who have been cursed, so long as the latter inhabit that particular, non-human world. Correspondingly, the restoration of sight is possible only once the maledicted person leaves the forest world and returns to the human realm. In this case, the first thing that he/she discovers is “the human trace... the road” (человеческий след... дорогу) [Khvoin.-97:35. ААР].(17)

“The Other Parent”

Many informants tell stories of maledicted children in response to questions about evil spirits in general [e.g., Belozер.-01:7; Belozер.-01:14. FFP; Khvoin.-99:2; Khvoin.-98:16]. In other words, malediction as such may be directly associated with the notion of “being taken around the forest by unclean powers.” To whom is the maledicted child given and who fully controls him or her on the territory of the forest? Who acts as the child’s “new parent”?

Most often, informants mention “devils,” or “scrawny ones” (*khuden’kie*, in Novgorod tradition the term for creatures equivalent to devils), or, more generally, “the unclean force” (*nechistaia sila*). The malediction is understood literally: “иди к чертям – черти и захватывают” (go to the devils – and devils will grab you) [Khvoin.-98:29]. Yet cases where “evil powers” take on various anthropomorphic forms are much more interesting, for an encounter with such “would-be human beings” introduces the motif of recognition into the story: “The belief that spirits may assume the guise of normal people creates conditions whereby... a human being has to divine whether he is dealing with the same being as himself... or he is seeing a creature of a different nature” [Vinogradova 1995: 18]. In our material, with the exception of

one case when a “stranger” was recognized by his extreme height (“высокий-высокий какой-то мужик”, a very, very tall man, Khvoin.-97:14), non-human nature is expressed through clothing codes. Evil spirits may appear as “people in green suits” (люди в зеленых костюмах) or, more generally, in non-village clothes – for instance, the master of the forest comes as a man in white shoes with red laces [Khvoin.-99:1].(18)

Moreover, the difference between the human world and the world of the forest may be expressed through the opposition “living vs dead,” which is very important for the typology of the plot. It turns out, for instance, that not only “evil spirits,” but deceased relatives, including parents, may gain control over the maledicted child in the forest. In one story, a dead father comes to take his daughter away: “Пойдем, дочка”, – говорит. И увел в лес” (“Let’s go, daughter”, says he. And took her to the forest) [Zinov’ev 1987: 32]. In another case a boy cursed by his mother-in-law walks around the forest with his real mother who had already passed away [Zinov’ev 1987: 37]. In yet another story a boy is taken away by his dead grandparents [Cherepanova 1996: 33]. Deceased relatives may possess either deathlike or demonic features, for example: “в квартире все простынями белыми затянуто” (in his house everything was covered with white sheets – white is the color of death in Russia); “Когда молебен отслужили, я увидел, что у нее [у умершей матери] конские ноги” (When the prayer service was over, I saw that she [the deceased mother] had horse’s hooves) [Zinov’ev 1987: 32, 37].

Demonism and death also converge in stories of revenants (who in particular may have hooves instead of feet), although, compared to stories about malediction, the vector of movement here is different. Whereas the ghost of a dead relative enters the human space, a child who has been cursed is sent into the realm of non-humans. Yet this convergence may support the assumption that malediction stories feature “an overlap of two mythological strata – the cult of ancestors, the motif of traveling to the world beyond, and beliefs about the master of the forest” [Cherepanova 1996: 126]. This idea, among other things, supports the interpretation that being maledicted is equivalent to being “condemned to death.”(19)

Forest Life

In most cases, descriptions of forest life are minimal. Primarily this is because forest spirits prohibit their “visitors” from talking about what has happened in the forest (see below). Yet there are occasional

references to what the maledicted child did there and how he/she was treated. For instance, he/she had to work for his new masters [Belozер.-03:1.2. ЕАР; Viatka Folklore 1996: 44]; he/she was almost thrown into fire and water [Viatka Folklore 1996: 31]; he/she was forbidden to sleep under any tree other than an aspen: “А под осиной... меня под ёлку не пускают” ([I slept] under the aspen... I was not allowed to choose a fir) [Khvoин.-97:35. НЕМ], “Ложусь под это самое... под ёлку, под сосну всё время. А просыпаюсь, горит, всё время под осиной лежу!” (I would go to sleep beneath a fir or a pine, but every time wake up under an aspen) [Khvoин.-97:14]. This motif is connected with the belief that the aspen is an “impure” and “accursed” tree itself [see Usacheva 1998: 149, 150].

The forest figures not only as a “dreadful place,” but also as a mythological world of pleasure and luxury: “хорошо, хорошо я жила. Холода не видела. Голода тоже” (I lived well. Felt neither cold nor hunger) [Belozер.-01:4]; “плясала, и гуляла, и всё там делала...” (I danced and enjoyed myself, and did all kinds of things there) [Khvoин.-99: 8]; “постельные принадлежности всё, грыт, как в шелках!” (the bed clothes and everything... were all like silk!) [Belozер.-01:6]. In such descriptions, the features of paradise are perceptible, and this further supports the idea of a conceptual proximity between malediction and death. One story describes a visit to a certain “city,” but without giving any particular details [Afanas’ev 1995: 157]. Arguably, the idea of the city is also connected with the notion of paradise as well, because in rural culture the city usually enjoys a much higher status than the village.

A very important motif related to forest life is forest food. On the one hand, its description may support the notion of the forest as a place of abundance, for example: “дедушка всего нанесет, лучше домашнего я там питался” (the old man would bring me all kinds of food, I ate better there than at home) [Viatka Folklore 1996: 30]; “Меня всё время пряником кормили” (I was constantly being given honey-cakes) [Khvoин.-98:18], and so on. On the other hand, later on this mostly proves a delusion, when the forest food turns out to be excrement [Mosh.-99:31; also Khvoин.-98:18; Zinov’ev 1987: 37; Viatka Folklore 1996: 30-31]. While wandering in the forest, a human being loses the ability to tell food from non-food, from its complete opposite according to human norms. Inclination towards “anti-food,” particularly towards excrement, is indicative of the demonic nature of the forest world [Nekliudov 1979: 134], as well as of the maledicted child’s deformed perception.(20)

In some stories, the motif of forest food is particularly stressed: a maledicted person can come back only if he/she never partakes of what was on offer there: “хоть ягодку съешь, дак не вернешься домой” (if you eat even a small berry, you won’t get back home) [Cherepanova 1996: 38; also Krinichnaia 1993: 40; Afanas’ev 1995: 156]. Food determines the nature of whoever consumes it; by rejecting forest food a human being may escape being assimilated to the spirits who rule there and escape from their control.

Those who have been cursed, together with their new “masters,” may visit the human world and eat any food they find there that has not been blessed (*neblagoslovennaia*) [Belozher.-01:4]. Or they can steal food from those who failed to say a prayer before eating [Nilus 1992: 291]. Any food may, consequently, turn into non-food, become “inedible,” if certain acts, including those of a symbolic nature, are not performed before its consumption. The utmost expression of the inedibility of forest food is again associated with digestion: spirits may defecate on the dinner table of those who do not say a special prayer before eating: “А где, – говорить, – пьянии, так за стол сядятца, не бывает ни службы, ни молитвы, вот мы там прибяжим, все съядим (...) А туды насерим, нассым в чашки” (Where... people sit down to table drunk, and no service is performed, no prayer is said – that’s when we come quickly, eat everything... and defecate there, pissing in their cups) [Nekrylova 2001: 323].

Returning Home

In the majority of our texts, the time spent in the forest is temporary and varies from seven days to nine years. As soon as the child who has been cursed disappears into the forest, the village community initiates a search. People go into the forest trying to make as much noise as possible, for example by playing the concertina [Khvoin.-97:37. AIK]). Alternatively, they resort to magical means of retrieval, for instance, casting *zherebeiki*, small sticks cut lengthwise, received from a ritual specialist, or offer up prayers, and so on. This process may be described as an intensive dialogue, enacted both in magical and everyday languages, between the two worlds, in order to re-establish their balance disturbed by the act of malediction.

When this dialogue is successful, maledicted children return home. As a rule, he/she is discovered in some marginal locus like a bathhouse [Belozher.-03.1.2. AKE], or on the edge of the forest [Khvoin.-97:37. AIK]. Their appearance at this moment features residual traits of

demonism: their clothes are often torn [Khvoïn.-99:2; Khvoïn.-97:37. AIK], or they are wearing a type of quasi-clothes (for example, such a person may be covered with moss and sacking, Cherepanova 1996: 33; 34).(21) Other small details about their appearance may also indicate that they have become “of the forest” (*obleseli* [Belozer.-01:14. LMP]); for instance, in one story, such a person had a small basket overgrown with moss [Khvoïn-99: 2c]. Their behavior is described as “uncultivated/untamed” (*dikii*) [Zinov’ev 1987: 36], something particularly apparent in their bestial manner of eating: “.. мальчик там ходит по это... по траве и не руками, а ртом... собирает и ест” (a boy... is walking in the grass.. he doesn’t pick [it] with his hands, but uses his mouth... He gathers it and eats) [Khvoïn.-97:14; also: Khvoïn.-97:35. TDA]. Often such people seem unwilling to return to the human world; they will not allow anyone to “put a hand on them” (она в руки никому не давалася) [Khvoïn.-97:37. AIK]. They try to escape [Belozer.-01:14. LMP; Khvoïn.-97:14; Khvoïn.-97:35. TDA], or behave aggressively even towards their relatives; for example, on return from the forest, a girl tries to bite her mother [Cherepanova 1996: 34].

Those who return from the forest are “balancing on the border between the human and the non-human” [Nekliudov 1998: 131]. In connection with this, it is no accident that stories about curses have been included in a “large corpus of popular legends about metamorphosis” [P.I. 1889: 50].(22)

Because the human world is defined by its Christian nature, the reintegration or taming of someone who has returned from the forest usually requires either hanging a cross around the person’s neck, and/or placing such a person beneath the icons: “...с крестом обошли ... успели на ее крест накинуть. Дак токо ее и взяли”(they succeeded in hanging a cross on her. Only in this way they could get hold of her) [Belozer.-01:4; also Khvoïn.-97:35. TDA; Khvoïn.-97:36], or “Значит, привезли в деревню, положили под образа... вот под иконы. И там около неё всё время сторожили” (They took her to the village, put her beneath the icons, and watched her constantly) [Khvoïn.-97:37].(23)

Back in the Human World

The effects of wandering in the forest are not eliminated immediately the person who was cursed returns home; resistance offered by him or her when found is another manifestation of the general unwillingness of the forest world to let him or her go. This unwillingness is sometimes expressed instantaneously in the form of an unanticipated

gale that may begin blowing at this point [for example, Khvoin.-97:14]. This is an “unmistakable sign of the arrival of a non-human creature” [Vinogradova 1995: 22].(24) Some stories mention open warnings from forest spirits not to return to the human world [see Morozov 2001: 69].

The forest’s control over those who once were in its power continues for a long time after as well. Often the forest sends its emissaries to get these people back: “Мужчины... в зелёных костюмах стоят около окошка ... “За мной, - говорит, - пришли” (“Men,” she says, “in green suits are standing at the window. They have come for me”) [Khvoin.-97:35. NEM]. Again, the motif of blindness may appear at this point; other people may not see these creatures: “А мать посмотрит – никого нет” (And the mother looked, but no one was there) [Khvoin.-97:35. NEM]. This residual ability to see what is invisible to others is another sign of the intermediary status of those who had been cursed. Interestingly enough, sometimes this may be seen particularly by their eyes: “Глаза у девок острые, как не наши глаза, нелюдские, как невидимки” (The girls’ eyes are sharp, not like ours, not like human eyes, as if they were invisible) [AKSC. Coll. 149, № 78, L. 97].

Yet the most telling aspect related to the motif of forest control is the prohibition on talking about what has happened in the forest: “...не велел, говорит, хозяин сказал, что ‘никому не рассказывай – где был, кого видел. ... А если, – говорит, – расскажешь, тебе, – говорит, – будет плохо ... ежели расскажешь, недолго сам наживешь” (the master.. didn’t let [me] ... “Don’t tell anybody – where you’ve been, who you saw... And if you do talk about it, just blame yourself... you won’t live long”) [Belozer.-01:6; also: Khvoin.-99:8; Khvoin.-97:35. AAR; Khvoin.-97:37. AIK, etc]. Failure to abide by this prohibition may be presented as an explanation of the person’s death: upon return “...а пожил он всего денька три, все рассказал, как черти его мучили ... А, может, нельзя было ему рассказывать, оттого и помер” (...he only lived for three days, talked about everything, how he was tortured by devils ... Maybe he wasn’t allowed to tell, and that’s why he died) [Cherepanova 1996: 34]. Sometimes speech of any kind is prohibited [Cherepanova 1996: 34], or the punishment fits the crime: for divulging forest secrets, one individual is struck dumb [Morozov 2001: 68].

The ban on talking about what happened in the forest belongs in the same category as the above mentioned peculiarities of appearance, behavior, and eating habits of those who return from the forest, because food, clothes and speech play “a very crucial role in the opposition

between human and non-human” [Nekliudov 1998: 131]. A total or partial ban on talking about what happened in the forest is very important for the logic of the malediction story. Its essence is the interaction between two worlds differing in nature, structure and typography. Their immediate contact is short; and once the person who had been cursed returns, the border between them closes. The ban on revealing information about the forest is necessary to sustain the original balance between the two worlds – an important condition for the ordering of their interaction in the future. It would seem that by relating details of his/her wanderings in the forest, a person is apt to put both of these worlds in danger.(25)

In a few texts, we come across the motif of unusual abilities acquired after wandering in the forest, in particular the ability to distinguish “blessed” from “non-blessed” food [e.g., Morozov 2001: 69], and other kinds of magical capabilities [see Viatka Folklore 1996: 31].(26) Their obvious non-human origin confirms that the maledicted person maintains some kind of communication with the forest world that helps him/her in everyday life.

To sum up, the return to civilization of someone who has been cursed, including his/her re-adaptation to human life, takes much longer than the “departure” into the forest. What happens when a human being disappears in the forest may be seen as a momentary rupture of the borderline between the human world and the world of the forest, an example of “mythology bursting into everyday life ... a precipitous change, transition into a different state, the transfiguration of reality” [Tsyv’ian 1995: 135]. Bridging this gap is a much lengthier as well as a much more gradual process. Elaborating ways of establishing a proper borderline between “us” and “them” [see Baiburin 1993: 185-86] proves much more difficult.

Unnatural Death

Children who have cursed, even if they do not die shortly after returning, may not live long. In such cases, their death happens accidentally or is due to some mysterious circumstance. In one story, for instance, a child who had been cursed died young in a tractor accident, and another hanged himself [Belozer.-01:14. LMP]. In another story, a girl died young and for no obvious physical reason [Khvoyn.-97:35. AAP]. Another character in a malediction story lived for seven years after his return from the forest, but finally died “without having taken communion” (умер-то без причестя) [AREM Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 266.

L. 3; cf: Cherepanova 1996: 33; Zinov'ev 1987: 36, Nekrylova 2001: 321 ff.].

In a number of older sources one comes across several additional motifs related to unnatural death as a consequence of a parental curse:

1) The Earth does not accept those who have been cursed after their deaths [Russ. *zemlia ne prinimaet*], something usually discovered accidentally; while digging for construction, people come across an uncorrupted corpse [e.g. AREM. Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 1374. L. 75; AREM. Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 1379. L. 34, etc.]. Such people usually die young, not having “consummated” their life (Russ. *ne izbyvajut svoi vek*); the normal distribution of one's lot in life has been violated, so that the further life course, including death, is bound to be wrong. Until a parent removes the curse (Russ. *poka ne snimut prokliatie*), the conflict remains unresolved; as soon as it is lifted, the corpse immediately turns to ashes [Nilus 1991: 131; P.I. 1889: 45-46].(27)

Before this happens, though, the maledicted are believed to be very restless; they shout loudly and scare people, and even rise from the grave and wander around [Zelenin 1994: 86, 266-67]. This behavior is highly reminiscent of revenants, who, as we saw above, may appear in a story about a curse in the context of wandering in the forest. Both maledicted children while lost in the forest and revenants are positioned somewhere in between, or, as one author put it, in the “semi-underworld” [Zavoiko 1914: 86].

2) A number of texts mention the reciprocal consequences of malediction, or its “reverse power.” By cursing their children, parents damn themselves: “В бане с бабы, которая бранила и посылала своих детей к чорту, байнушко сорвал кожу с ног до головы” (A woman who used to curse her children and send them to the devil was flayed from head to toe by the master of the bath-house) [Efimenko 1887: 194], or after uttering a curse parents “начинают тосковать..., чахнуть и вскоре умирают” (parents get sick at heart..., decline and soon die) [Sumtsov 1897: 201; cf. P. I. 1889: 42-43]. Sometimes sources mention mutual execrations whereby maledicted children put a curse on their parents [Maksimov 1995: 259-60].

The most interesting case of mutual deprivation, however, is found in the story where the person who has been cursed is not accepted by the earth, while at the same time death does not come to his/her mother, although her time has long passed and she has reached an unnaturally great age. In one story, for instance, the mother is “almost 150 years old” (почти полтораста лет), but only after she lifts the curse does her

daughter's corpse disintegrate, and she can expire [AREM Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 1374. L. 74-75; cf. Nilus 1991: 131]. This is a case of reverse parallelism: the person who has been cursed dies without having fulfilled his/her proper life span, while the mother "usurps somebody else's life time" (Russ. *zaedaet chuzhoi vek*). Both cases are examples of the abnormal development of the life course.(28)

Conclusion

The nucleus of stories about children who have been cursed discussed in this article is the interaction between the human and non-human worlds (the forest, the world of the dead, etc.).(29) Failure to abide by the rules of magic etiquette in the social space disturbs the normal balance and exchange between these two realms. The moment when a curse is uttered marks a rupture in the border between these two worlds, while the restoration of the original balance occurs only gradually and takes much longer. The complete restoration of the pre-malediction *status quo* appears impossible.

Malediction stories should also be seen as a variant of stories about an individual's "lot in life," whereby their logic may be described as a (partial) deprivation of the proper human "lot" with its possible substitution by the lot of an animal (in cases of metamorphosis into some kind of an animal or bird).

Focusing on the communicative situations where such stories are narrated suggests that their principal function is "to explicate the rules codifying everyday life" [Tsyv'ian 1995: 133], in particular, speech taboos and proper ways of dealing with food (the need to bless it before consumption and when putting it away for the night time).

NOTES

1 In citations within the main text the following information is given: the district where the interview was recorded, the year of the recording (the last two digits), and the number. In cases where the same recording number refers to several informants, their initials are also given in the main text. More detailed information, including the date and place of the recording, the informant's initials and year of birth as well as interviewers' names are given at the end of the article.

2 In the popular religious culture of the Russian North, a woman's use of *mat* is associated with the eschatological belief of "the

Most Holy Theotokos falling down from Her throne” [Levkievskaiia 2000: 106].

3 The “lack of a blessing” on the non-verbal level may take particularly curious forms; in one story, a boy fails to return from the forest because he is wearing boots rather than the usual bast-shoes. The bark fibers of the bast-shoes provided protection, it was thought, thanks to the crosses formed in their making. Their absence spelt doom for the boy [AKSC. Fund. 1, Inv. 6. File 493]. Sometimes the idea of a “blessing” is broadly associated with Christian baptism as such – hence the association between the maledicted and the non-baptized, that is, those who did not receive the chief form of human “blessing” [Nekrylova 2001: 319].

4 See the work of E. Kagarov, who pointed out the distinction between two types of malediction: “intentional (German: *Berufen*) and accidental (German: *Verrufen*), something like a black eye, inappropriate praise, untimely pronounced name, etc.” [Kagarov 1918: 9].

5 By reverse association, informants also sometimes call naughty children “accursed” [e.g., Khvoin.-99: 19].

6 The only exception may be found in the story of a child who had been cursed and started to sink into the earth after his mother’s phrase “Get off me, you cursed boy” (да отвяжись ты от меня, проклятый). However, his mother and the priest succeeded in getting him back through sustained prayer [see AREM Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 1379. L. 21].

7 Another such pair would be cattle and their owners. Indeed, stories of cattle who have been cursed are almost as frequent as those of children with a curse upon them (note that historically, a child’s status was as low as that of domestic animals) [see Morozov 2001: 60].

8 In some texts this belief is fully explicated: the master of the forest says to the boy with a curse upon him: “Твоя родная мать прокляла тебя, и это материнское проклятие дало мне полную власть над тобой...” (Your own mother cursed you, and this maternal malediction gave me complete power over you) [Nilus 1992: 290, also: AREM Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 856. L. 20b, Morozov 2001: 68; Chubinskii 1872: 89, etc.].

9 Food being one of the most tangible expressions of one’s “lot,” it is entirely natural as well as significant that malediction may take place at meal times. For instance, in one story, a mother who did not have enough food for all three of her children wished that “the master of the forest would take one of them away” (хоть-бы одного... леший унес), a

wish that was immediately granted [AREM. Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 266. L. 3].

10 Compared to the ancient understanding of malediction as a sacrificial offering of the maledicted to the gods of the nether world [see, for example, Pomialovskii 1883: 8, 9, 11]. The semantics of “innocence” and “defenselessness” are equally characteristic of the archetypal sacrificial victim and the image of a small child.

11 Words can be virtually endowed with a material nature. Compare also a developed example of this in Ordin [1895: 61-62], where a “foul word” (Russ. *poganoie slovo*), here also the name of the master of the forest, was accidentally uttered. One of the characters immediately recited a counter-spell, wishing that this word might “turn ito ashes” and “be dispersed by the wind.” (Ты прахом распадись... Ты ветром разнесись!).

12 The motif of a “bad hour,” that is a specific time then various troubles may beset someone, occurs frequently in ethnographic material. This “hour” may be either indefinite (“в часу... есть одна минута... как сбраненая, некрестовая” (there is... one minute in an hour... an accursed minute, a non-Christian minute)) [Khvoin.-97:43, also Cherepanova 1996: 34], or associated with particular points in astronomical time, such as seven and nine am [Khvoin.-99: 40], noon and midnight [Kamyshev 1928: 16-17], “especially noon” (особенно часы в 12 дня) [Belozet.-01:6], and one informant believed that prayers as well as curses would come true at this particular time [Khvoin.-98:29]. A detailed list of “good” and “bad” hours, with explanations of what not do in the latter case, may be found in Rybnikov [1910: 207-08].

One should note as well the expression *ne roven chas*, meaning the time is not right (lit. the hour is not even) but is also often equivalent to “watch out!” associated with the belief that the nature of time is not homogenous. It is used in warnings and prohibitions, including those against cursing someone, lest something should happen to him/her. To turn off the bad luck and to draw down success it is customary to pronounce the formula “at a good hour,” for example, “May you go at a good hour” (Иди в добрый час!).

13 The “bad hour” is similar to the motif of the “bad trace/footprint” (Russ. *khudoi sled*) – a virtual path or trace usually left by the master of the forest. If you tread on it, you may never return home [e.g. Belozet.-01:6; Batets.-99: 34]. These two motifs, which express notions about the non-isomorphic quality of time and space, perform an auxiliary role in presenting certain events in a mythological light.

14 Lost people and cattle can be described as “beyond the forest” (Russ. *za lesom*), that is, not just “very far away,” but “beyond reach” [Belozер.-03; 1.4; Belozер.-01:14. LPM; Cherepanova 1996: 32].

15 Some stories demonstrate a combination of two opposite modes of movement: hyperactivity vs. immobility. For example, on returning home the child who was cursed says: “вот от пришел и говорит, что в риге сидел, а вы песни пели, а меня, говорит, всё гоняли: туда иди, туда иди – я, говорит, устал, ходивши” (I was sitting in the barn, and you were... chasing me around: go over here, go over there – I got tired walking around) [Khvoин.-97:29]. In closely related malediction stories, particularly those concerning “substituted children,” this opposition may be expressed to an even greater degree: it usually turns out that while a changeling [Russ. *podmenennyi, obmen*] was lying still in the cradle, his/her “forest double,” the real human child, was running around non-stop [Mosh.-99:22].

It is noteworthy that apart from movement, maledicted children in substitution stories may embody other extremes as well. This is especially true of growing up and aging: such a child usually overeats, yet never grows; he/she remains a small child, though his/her voice may sound “like that of an old man” (голос его звучит как у старика) [Afanas’ev 1995: 153].

16 In the substitution story we also encounter the “failure of normal sight,” a loss of the ability to see things as they are: for a long time parents believe that it is their baby lying in the cradle, whereas it later turns out to be a broom or log.

17 In rare cases, malediction stories describe how invisible children visit people’s houses [e.g. Belozер.-01:4; Zinov’ev 1987: 40; Nilus 1992: 291]. Sometimes they can be seen by neighbors [Cherepanova 1996: 32], but never by their parents. In one instance, a mother who had cursed her daughter came to a village tavern, but instead of drinking her vodka she “angrily splashes it over her shoulder, right into the eyes of her daughter, who was present unseen in the tavern along with the master of the forest. Her daughter immediately became visible” (с сердца выплескивает водку через плечо – прямо в глаза своей дочери, которая невидимо была в кабаке и терлась вместе с лешим подле своих родителей. Тотчас-же дочь перестала быть невидимкой) [Dobrovол’skii 1908: 6]. Most probably, by unwittingly splashing the drink into her child’s eyes (note, not her “face” in general!), the mother, as it were, repeated the act of malediction. Both acts were accidental occurring when the mother felt annoyed. Possibly this is a case of so-

called “repeated action,” where consequences of the first action are neutralized/eliminated by the second (on the semantics of repeated actions, see Baiburin [2001: 4-5]).

18 Other sources offer further clues about ways of distinguishing “forest people” from normal folk. These include communicative prohibitions (such as not to mention the name of the divinity: “...when Mishka uttered the word God, the man knocked him against the pine tree” (когда Мишка вспомнил Бога – дядька ударил Мишку о сосну) Nilus 1992: 290], or some symbolic details revealing the wrong nature of the action: the old man took him “by the left hand – as is done [there]” (за левую руку, так положено) [Cherepanova 1996: 35].

19 Compare also the following semantic similarities: on the one hand, “dead children... may be associated with *zalozhnye pokoiniki*” (those who have died the “wrong” death and/or have been wrongly buried) and, at the same time, be designated with various words meaning the “lost one” (*potercha, poterchatko, poterchuk*) [Morozov 2001: 60. On the connection between those cursed by their parents and *zalozhnye pokoiniki* see also Zelenin 1994: 251 and Levkievskaia 1998: 103]. On the other hand, children cursed by their parents are often also called the “lost ones”. What happens to them while they are in the forest, may therefore be described as a temporary death, “non-existing” in the world of living as living beings. This sense seems to be particularly strong when the child is taken away by deceased relatives.

20 By way of further comparison between representatives of the “forest world” and the dead, it is noteworthy that animal excrement may serve as food for revenants as well, as in the story where at night a dead husband brings his wife candies, which by morning have turned into ram’s droppings [Zinov’ev 1987: 276]).

21 This may parallel the “weird” clothes worn by anthropomorphic forest beings, or alternatively suggest “animal nakedness.”

22 The motif of metamorphosis may become dominant in other types of malediction stories. It is here that a large number of etiological plots about the origin of various animals and birds occur; maledicted children may variously turn into a frog [Balov 1901: 110], a nightingale and a cuckoo [Dobrovol’skii 1894: 89], dogs [Viatka Folklore 1996: 44], or *rusalki* [Iushin 1901: 165]. In one story a son who had cursed his own parents turned into a dog and disappeared into the forest. After his parents had prayed for seven years, he returned home, “obedient and a teetotaler” (покорен и не пьющ) [Balov 1897: 5]. It is noteworthy that

here barking occurs as a “translation” into animal language of the son’s swearing (frequently the word “barking” [*lai, laia*] denotes swearing, especially *mat*).

23 The proper human world is the one blessed by God. This notion becomes especially important when malediction occurs through the lack of a blessing. The story where a maledicted child is returned to his god-mother rather than to his biological parents is particularly telling in this respect [Cherepanova 1996: 36].

24 For example, the motif of a strong wind is closely associated with the coming of devils: “...the birch trees, fifteen meters high, they bent down to the earth, such was the strength of the wind” (березы метров по пятнадцать высотой были – они к земле пригибались, сила ветра такая) [Khvojn.-99:7].

25 Compare this to the belief that one should not retell one’s dreams: “Некоторые сны, говорят, не расскажешь – так это лучше будет, а расскажешь, дак хуже будет...” (They say it’s better not to talk about some dreams, if you do – things will be worse) [Beloz.-01:4], or prohibitions against relating what happened during visits to the other world (*obmiraniia*) [see Tolstaia 1999: 22-23].

26 This motif occurs in typologically similar stories about *obmiraniia*, especially “South Slavic, in particular, Bulgarian, [where] the emphasis is put on acquiring, over the course of the dream, superior knowledge and unusual abilities” [Tolstaia 1999: 22]. Belief in the unnatural capacities of people possessed by the devil also occurs in popular church literature, where it is the “loss of will” that is emphasized (for example, the story of the boy while possessed could play any musical instrument, jump from one bank of the river to another (sic!) and speak all kinds of unknown languages [Nilus 1992: 288].

27 An interesting detail occurs in a number of these stories: the hands of this kind of corpse are discovered bound with a plait of women’s hair, usually belonging either to the maledicting mother [P.I. 1889: 45-46; Nilus 1991: 129-30] or the daughter who was cursed [AREM. Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 1374. L. 75]. As is well known, a cut-off plait is one of the most common indicators of shame in traditional peasant culture. In this context, it relates to the wrongness of the whole situation of the malediction, as well as to the improper, un-Christian behavior of its participants. Moreover, removing the curse implies, in this case, “untying the hands” (*razviazat’ ruki*), which in Russian means “to allow someone freedom to act.” Hence, the dead person finally

escapes from the controlling power of the curse and dies a second, “natural” death.

In connection with the binding of hands, note Kagarov’s work on ancient maledictions where he argues that semantics of binding express the essence of malediction as such [Kagarov 1918: 24, 26]. Binding as the deprivation of mobility might also be related to the inability of the person who has been cursed to get into either hell or paradise.

28 Swearing at children is considered one of the worst sins in popular religious culture: “...не надо ребенка своего ни чертом не называть, ни как... это грех неотмоленный” (...you should not call your child a devil or anything like that... this is a non-expiable sin”) [Batets.-99:32, also P.I. 1998: 42]. In popular eschatological legends, cursing a child condemns one’s soul to perdition: “Родители, проклинаящие своих детей, идут и сами в ад и ведут туда же проклятых детей...” (Parents who curse their children go to hell and draw the cursed children there as well) [Miloradovich 1897: 172, also AREM. Fund 7. Inv. 1. File 856. L. 20b, etc.]. In a verse about Judgment Day, a person repents her sins to Christ: “Малехонького дитя своёго проклинала...” (I used to curse my little child...). The soul has prepared a place for itself in hell and that is where it goes [Markov, Maslov, Bogoslovskii 1905: 26-27].

In official Orthodoxy, malediction is also seen as incompatible with a true Christian life, death and salvation. Among the sins mentioned in the absolution prayer is the following: “...if you brought upon yourself your father’s or mother’s curse...” [аще клятву отца своего или матере своея наведе на ся...].

29 This list may be expanded through typologically similar examples; for instance, one of our informants saw the story of maledicted children in terms of contacts with extraterrestrial civilizations: “...космоно... детей... в космос-то увозят. НЛО-то. Вот. Увозят. ... А это леший у нас” (astronauts... they take children to space... A UFO, you know. They take them away ... And with us, it is the master of the forest) [Belozer.-01:14. FFP].

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Field materials

Belozerskii district, Vologda region

Beloz.-01:4. 2.07.01. Zubovo. Inf.: EAP, b.1926. Coll.: S. Zhavoronok, A. Kushkova

Beloz.-01:6. 3.07.01. Verkhov'e. Inf.: HAK, b.1924. Coll.: A. Kushkova

Beloz.-01:7. 6.07.01. Zubovo. Inf.: LPB, b.1927. Coll.: S. Zhavoronok, A. Kushkova

Beloz.-01:14. 6.07.01. Zubovo. Inf.: FFP, b.1925.. Coll.: A. Kushkova

Beloz.-01:14. 6.07.01. Zubovo. Inf.: LMP, b.1926. Coll.: A. Kushkova

Beloz.-03:1.2. 8.07.03. Zubovo. Inf.: EAP, b.1926. Coll. A. Kushkova.

Beloz.-03:1.2. 8.07.03. Zubovo. Inf.: AKE, b.1921. Coll. A. Kushkova.

Beloz.-03: 1.4. 9.07.03. Zubovo. Inf.: EFP, b.1919. Coll. A. Kushkova.

Khvoininskii district, Novgorod region

Khvoin.-97:14. 27.06.97. Antsiferovo. Inf.: VMG, b.1932. Coll.: A. Selin, S. Shtyrkov.

Khvoin.-97:29. 2.07.97. Zubovo. Inf.: PNP, b.1929. Coll.: M. Iushkova, E. Mel'nikova.

Khvoin.-97:35. 3.07.97. Antsiferovo. Inf.: AAP, b.1929. Coll.: A. Panchenko, A. Selin, S. Shtyrkov.

Khvoin.-97:35. 3.07.97. Antsiferovo. Inf.: NEM, b.1938. Coll.: A. Panchenko, A. Selin, S. Shtyrkov.

Khvoin.-97:35. 3.07.97. Antsiferovo. Inf.: TDA, b.1913. Coll.: A. Panchenko, A. Selin, S. Shtyrkov.

Khvoin.-97:36. 3.07.97. Antsiferovo. Inf.: VVS, b.1931. Coll.: A. Panchenko, A. Selin, S. Shtyrkov.

Khvoin.-97:37. 4.07.97. Nazar'ino. Inf.: VPV, b.1922. Coll.: S. Shtyrkov, M. Iushkova.

Khvoin.-97:37. 4.07.97. Antsiferovo. Inf.: AIK, b.1933. Coll.: S. Shtyrkov, M. Iushkova.

Khvoin.-97:43. 7.07.97. Spasovo. Inf.: NEE, b.1925. Coll.: A. Panchenko, S. Shtyrkov.

Khvoin.-98:1. 27.06.98. Borovskoe. Inf.: VPT, b.1928. Coll.: A. Panchenko, S. Shtyrkov, V. Iashkina.

Khvoin.-98:16. 5.07.98. Zadel'e. Inf.: NML, b.1939. Coll.: A. Panchenko, S. Shtyrkov

Khvoin.-98:18. 5.07.98. Zadel'e. Inf.: EII, b.1933. Coll.: Zh. Kormina, V. Iashkina.

Khvoin.-98:29. 10.07.98. Zadel'e. Inf.: VNS, b.1927. Coll.: A. Panchenko, S. Shtyrkov, A. Svirnovskaia.

Khvoin.-98:31. 11.07.98. Zadel'e. Inf.: MSA, b.1917. Coll.: Zh. Kormina, A. Svirnovskaia.

Khvoin.-99:1. 3.07.99. Maklakovo. Inf.: ENL, b.1914. Coll.: Zh. Kormina, A. Kushkova

Khvoin.-99:2. 4.07.99. Shilovo. Inf.: AAK, b.1914. Coll.: A. Panchenko, S. Shtyrkov

Khvoin.-99:7. 4.07.99. Zadel'e. Inf.: VNS, b.1927. Coll.: A. Kushkova, A. L'vov

Khvoin.-99:8. 5.07.99. Maklakovo. Inf.: PFV, b.1933. Coll.: Zh. Kormina, A. Kushkova

Khvoin.-99: 12. 7.07.99. Zadel'e. Inf.: AGR, b.1940. Coll.: Zh. Kormina, V. Panchenko.

Khvoin.-99: 19. 10.07.99. Mikhevo. Inf.: NSE, b.1931. Coll.: Zh. Kormina, A. Panchenko, S. Shtyrkov

Khvoin.-99:24. 14.07.99. Zadel'e. Inf.: EII, b.1930. Coll.: A. Kushkova, A. L'vov

Khvoin.-99:28. 14.07.99. Lezgin. Inf.: AEM, b.1924. Coll.: A. Kushkova, A. L'vov

Khvoin.-99:40. 12.07.99. Zadel'e. Inf.: NML, b.1939. Coll.: A. Kushkova, M. Hakkarainen.

Batetskii district, Novgorod region

Batets.-99:32. 4.08.99. Melkovishi. Inf.: VIS, b.1928., Coll.: M. Vadeisha, A. L'vov

Batets.-99:34. 15.06.99. Ustreka. Inf.: NVM, b.1908. Coll.: A. Panchenko, V. Panchenko.

Batets.-99:36. 4.08.99. Voinovo. Inf.: AISH, b.1910. Coll.: E. Migunova, M. Hakkarainen.

Moshenskoi district, Novgorod region

Mosh.-99:22. 11.07.99. Mikheevo. Inf.: LMG, b.1926. Coll.: E. Migunova, S. Shtyrkov

Mosh.-99:31. 14.07.99. Ustreka. Inf.: AAT, b.1926. Coll.: A. Panchenko, V. Panchenko, S. Shtyrkov

Mosh.-99:32. 15.07.99. L'vovo. Inf.: VVE, b.1917. Coll.: Zh. Kormina, S. Shtyrkov

Abbreviations:

Inf. – Informant

Inv. – Inventory

Coll. – Collector

Belozher. – Belozerskii district

Batets. – Batetskii district

Khvoin. – Khvoininskii district

Mosh. – Moshenskoi district