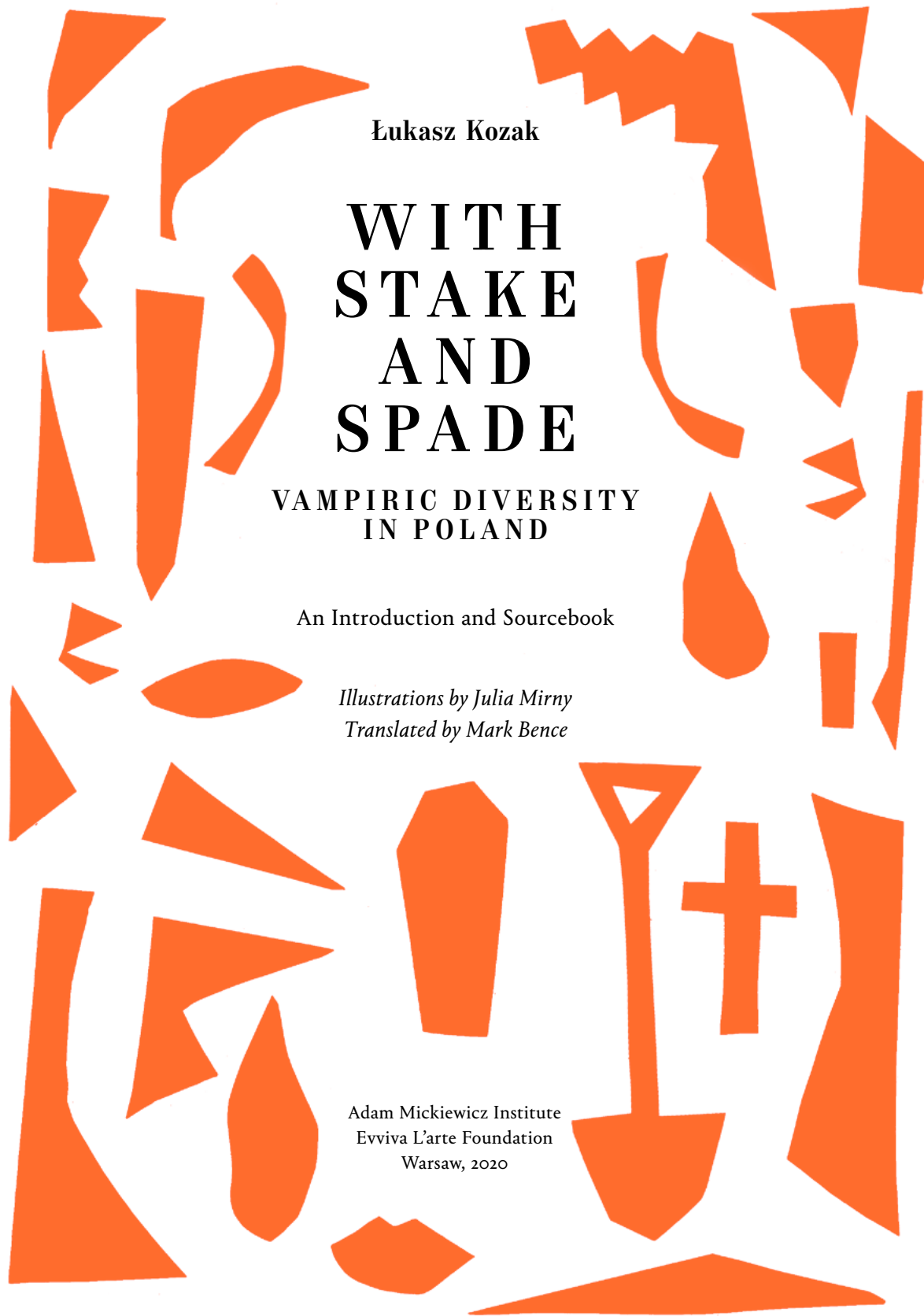


**WITH
STAKE
AND
SPADE**

The background of the cover is decorated with numerous abstract, irregular orange shapes. These shapes vary in form, including triangles, polygons, and organic, torn-paper-like edges. Some shapes are solid orange, while others are white with orange outlines. The shapes are scattered across the entire page, creating a dynamic and layered visual effect.

Łukasz Kozak

WITH STAKE AND SPADE

VAMPIRIC DIVERSITY
IN POLAND

An Introduction and Sourcebook

Illustrations by Julia Mirny
Translated by Mark Bence

Adam Mickiewicz Institute
Evviva L'arte Foundation
Warsaw, 2020

This publication is part of the Upiór Project, launched by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute in 2018. The project aims to popularise historical sources on Polish folk beliefs, demonstrating their research value and potential to inspire contemporary creators.

The project has resulted in numerous illustrations, a WikiProject, and two short animations directed by Kajetan Obarski: *The Strzygoń* and *How to Deal with Him* and *Dead Liver*.

The Adam Mickiewicz Institute's mission is to present and promote Polish culture and its values internationally through forging lasting relations, cooperation, and dialogue with the creative community and cultural institutions, organising various events, and publishing books about culture, including folk culture.

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Pronunciation Guide

All terms designating the living dead have been left in their original forms, as they appeared in the Polish sources, including historical or local variants. Although the word *upiór* is fairly straightforward for a non-Slavic reader, others, such as *strzyga*, *strzygoń*, and *wieszczy*, might pose problems due to their consonant clusters. Here are their phonetic transcriptions with a simplified pronunciation for each:

Upiór ('u.pjur) — pronunciation: OOO-pure

Strzyga ('stʃʃi.ga) — pronunciation: sss-CHEE-gah

Strzygoń ('stʃʃi.gon) — pronunciation: sss-CHEE-gone

Wieszczy ('vjeʃ.tʃi) — pronunciation: v-YESH-chee

FOREWORD

Everyone has heard of vampires, but few know about *upiórs*, *strzygas*, *strzygońs*, and *wieszczys*. Yet sources from Poland and the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth offer a wealth of fascinating material to discover Slavic beliefs in the living dead, which later became a universal myth known the world over. This book contains a small but representative selection of texts spanning almost 500 years, ranging from scholarly works and religious treatises to official documents, ethnographic essays, and press reports on true events. These texts were not restricted to Polish ethnic groups but also dealt with peoples currently residing in Ukraine and even Kashubian settlers in Canada. However, this is not some attempt at culturally appropriating Ruthenian or Kashubian folklore but a natural consequence of the multicultural heritage of the commonwealth and the overlapping beliefs of its constituent nations. These transcended the borderlines both of ethnicity and religion and of folk and elite cultures. In the Commonwealth, widespread belief in the dead rising from the grave became a subject for debate among scholars from Padua and Paris, as well as among Jesuit theologians and their detractors.

While this book is not strictly academic and is rather intended to popularise the topic, the material it contains may serve as a gateway for deeper anthropological and microhistorical research. The sources often include descriptions of actual incidents, unearthing the names of people excluded from “great history” and their fears, emotions, beliefs, and actions. They also illustrate the contrast between official and popular religious sentiment and beliefs in the fate of the body and soul after death, as well as the relationship between the living and the dead. At the same time, it is an inspiring read for anyone interested in a little-known but exceptionally enduring and significant facet of European folklore.

INTRODUCTION

Vampirism and Upiorism

If one were to weigh up the greatest Slavic contribution to global culture, vampires would certainly be a contender. Along with the ideas and myths that surround them, they have been used all over the world in every possible field from science to entertainment, including commercially. The modern-day vampire, however, is a construct uprooted from the original source material, which, incidentally, was rather sparse. If the literary trail were to be followed, it would prove that the entire stereotypical image of vampires from the nineteenth century right up until today was based on a few official reports and some accounts from travellers. It was gradually enriched by successive themes and underwent further metamorphoses, interpretations, and reinterpretations to swell from a local folk belief into a truly cosmopolitan figure. The fact that vampires are called “vampires” is to a large extent coincidental. Had it not been for the “Year Without a Summer” and the famed meeting of young English writers in the villa by Lake Geneva, where Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* and John William Polidori wrote *The Vampyre*, literature and the pop culture that followed would have been deprived of one of the most iconic figures in horror fiction. Thanks to Polidori’s story, published in 1819, vampires acquired a form inspired by Lord Byron — that of the demonic, mysterious, bloodsucking aristocrat. While this figure and its later incarnations were conquering refined and popular literature, as well as the theatre stage, the original, archaic belief in vampires persisted among the common folk for decades. However, the bulk of the ethnographic accounts, press reports, and even court records concerning them is not to be found somewhere in Transylvania (where pop culture

would place it because of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*), Greece (where Byron first heard of them), or Southern Slavdom (which gave us the word "vampire" in reports from Habsburg officials) but in sources from Poland. Yet it would be incorrect to call these beliefs "Polish" since they were held by all the ethnic groups inhabiting a state that vanished from the world map in the late eighteenth century.

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth — that grand project of early modern political thinking, a sweeping, multicultural state that encompassed parts of present-day Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania, where various ethnic groups coexisted and cultural influences intermingled — ceased to exist in 1795. Citizens and residents of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth reacted in radically different ways to being stripped of their sovereignty and partitioned three times in a row by the three neighbouring empires of Russia, Prussia, and Austria: from armed combat and hasty reforms to indifference, collaboration, and attempts to adjust to the new realities. The fall of the Commonwealth coincided with the heyday of its Enlightenment, several decades late. One of its achievements was the conviction that folk superstitions had been vanquished — and one in particular, regarded as the most dangerous and outrageous of all.

The enlightened were confident that they had overcome the belief in a creature more shocking to people from all walks of life than the Devil, hell, or even God. Laymen, clerics, closet atheists, deists, Cartesians, Voltaireans, bishops, and ex-Jesuits alike all fought against it. Armed with scientific, philosophical, and theological arguments, their dissertations, sermons, epigrams, and plays scoffed at this superstition, making a laughingstock of those who believed in it and portraying them as proverbial unenlightened lowbrow characters.

This creature that united the sharpest minds and pens during Poland's Age of Reason was the *upiór* — a corpse that rose from its grave to attack people and cattle, kill its relatives or drink their blood, spread plague, and upset the order of the world by dint of its very existence. Upiórs were the embodiment of chaos, and believing in them was considered scandalous by theologians and ridiculous by philosophers.

The eighteenth-century battle of enlightened Poles against the belief in upiórs coincided with the west European fascination with vampires. Arguably, upiórs may have failed to acquire worldwide notoriety because

they were treated as a local issue, a symptom of general ignorance that proved a need for progressive reforms and education. However, as it transpires, before the word "vampire" made its first appearance in west European writings, upiórs were already being discussed by erudite Parisians and described by medics in Padua, while Jesuit theologians pondered their nature.

All this material, from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries in chronological order, gives a glimpse of many primeval aspects of the belief in vampires, undistorted by academic debates and literary metamorphoses. The picture that emerges is so characteristic and distinct from the contemporary concept of vampirism that it could be more aptly termed "upiorism".

What Is an Upiór?

During the eighteenth-century battle against the belief in upiórs, its leading polemicist, the Catholic priest Jan Bohomolec, provided this pithy definition:

It is commonly believed that upiórs are bodies of the dead that have been in some way revived, so to speak. Without awaiting the general resurrection, they rise prematurely from their coffins and leave their graves to raid houses, strangling whomsoever they can, and, if unable to defeat someone, will wrestle with them, murder them, suck their blood, or climb onto altars, bleed on them, break candles, and commit numerous other indecencies and murders.

He added that people believed upiórs to be the work of Satan, giving rise to a stereotype that is found in academic studies to this day. Originally, upiórs were simply walking corpses, dead bodies animated by some demonic force. Indeed, we find statements by early ecclesiastical writers who affirmed that the Devil was responsible for upiórish activity. Numerous scholars of Old Polish culture and popular beliefs continue in the same vein, examining upiórs in demonological terms. When one is familiar with the ethnographic material, however, it turns out that the common folk saw things differently: an upiór was a person. This creature

that terrorised the awestricken folk was one of their own: “An upiór is a person endowed with a double life”, “a person born with their teeth”, “a dead person condemned to eternal damnation”, someone with two souls or two hearts. Even though many reports mentioned people dying and turning into upiórs, it was also possible to be one while alive, and many telltale signs were visible right from birth, to which we shall return below.

If one takes a taxonomical look at upiórs, there appear to have been local varieties in the lands of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, each named differently, with slight variations in nature and behaviour. To the east (currently the Polish–Ukrainian and Polish–Belarusian borderlands, and further on into the Ruthenian lands of Podilia, Volhynia, Pokuttya, and Polesie) lay the realm of the upiór (alternatively: *upir*, *upier*, *upyr*, *opyr*, *wupar*, *wpyr*, *wypiór*, or *łupior*). In Świętokrzyskie Province and Mazovia, it gradually gave way to the *strzyga*, also found in Little Poland Province and Silesia, although its relative the *strzygoń* was more common thereabouts. To the west and north, Greater Poland Province and Pomerania (inhabited by Kashubians) were the domain of the *wieszcz* and *wieszcz*. There were also many circuitous, euphemistic descriptions of people simply “walking” or even “running” after death, “causing mischief”, “frightening people”, or “rising from the grave”. Moreover, the terminology was often used loosely, for once the word “upiór” had entered the language of science and literature, it became dominant and superseded the regional terms. Interestingly, out of all these names, “wieszcz” is the only word of Slavic origin.

Wieszczys

In modern-day Polish, the word “wieszcz” most commonly conjures up the school definition of the leading Romantic poets. The word means an inspired bard, one who knows, a soothsayer, or even a sorcerer (the root “*wie-*” means “know” in Polish). In the late Middle Ages, the feminine form “wieszczycza” implied a witch, but at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it also meant a corpse that could come back from the grave. Ethnographic materials confirm a belief in wieszczys in Greater Poland Province, but the majority of sources, even some from the late twentieth century, concern Pomerania and the Kashubian

community. The Kashubians have managed to preserve their unique culture, language, and beliefs to this day. They were even strong enough to survive distant migration. In the late 1960s, Jan L. Perkowski, then a young Slavist and later one of the foremost researchers of vampirism, studied the folklore of Kashubian settlers who had lived in Ontario for a century and discovered that their beliefs were still alive and perfectly consistent with accounts recorded in Pomerania almost a hundred years previously. Dead wieszczys were believed to attack their nearest and dearest first, causing them to die one after another. To be rendered harmless, the corpse had to be dug up, its head chopped off, and a little of its blood then collected, which, when consumed, would protect the family from the restless dead. Wieszczys were usually recognisable as soon as they were born, one infallible sign being if a child was born with a caul on its head. In such cases, an apotropaic method was applied: the scrap of amniotic membrane was most often kept; when the child was seven years old, it would be given the ashes of the burnt caul to consume.

When the word “upiór” reached Kashubia, it transformed into “*łepi*”, “*łopi*”, “*òpi*”, and the derivative “*nielap*” and “*połap*”. These descriptions were mostly used synonymously with wieszcz but occasionally to differentiate between two types of people: one reputed to have been born with a caul, the other with their teeth. Cases of suspect corpses being decapitated were so frequent that the press often carried reports of people who ended up in court, accused of desecrating graves and mutilating bodies. The area inhabited by Kashubians had been under German rule for years, and some of those cases found their way into classic German literature on the subject of vampirism. So it was with the legendary Kashubian noble Wolszlegier (von Wollschläger) family and the posthumous tribulations of Franciszek Pobłocki (Franz von Poblitzki). It is worth including the Pobłocki family’s story, as in many respects it is a perfect illustration of the belief in and fear of wieszczys, their destructive activities toward close family members, and methods of staying out of harm’s way.

Pobłocki was a landowner from the village of Kętrzyno and came from a noble but not particularly wealthy family. He lived with his wife, Józefina, and they had two sons, Antoni and Józef, and a daughter, Antonina. He fell ill with consumption, wasted away from the disease on 5 May 1870, and was buried at the cemetery in nearby Rozłazino,

where he had been the sexton. His son Antoni soon developed galloping consumption and died thirteen days after his father. Then his wife and daughter also fell sick, and the remaining family members began to feel weak and strangely fearful. The Pobłockis conferred, became convinced that Franciszek had been a *wieszcz*, and then also began to suspect Antoni. Józef hired two workers from the neighbourhood, and Antonina persuaded one of them, Jan Dzięcielski, to behead her brother's corpse and collect some of his blood. Antoni was to be buried next to his father's grave, and the funeral was set for 22 February.

The day before the ceremony, Józef appeared in Rozłazino with the workers, carrying spades and hoes. Young Pobłocki bribed the gravedigger to dig a new grave right beside his father's, so he could easily reach the coffin containing Franciszek's body. The gravedigger agreed, for the sake of saving the family from *wieszczys*, but he soon changed his mind and confessed it all to the priest, Wojciech Block, who ordered him to dig a grave for Antoni as far away from Franciszek as possible. He found Józef, who had gone to drink at the tavern with the workers, told him off for his ungodly plans, and banned him from entering the cemetery until his brother's funeral. In addition, he asked the organist and the village watchman to keep a lookout in the cemetery that night, but these guards let him down: one dozed off, and the other saw nothing. However, the owner of the tavern near the cemetery was awoken by the hollow sound of frozen sods of earth dropping onto a coffin lid. He looked out of the window and, thinking someone was robbing a grave, shouted at the three men working frenziedly. Hearing this, the men quickly tidied up the grave and ran away.

The next day, Father Block found out about the night's events and immediately ordered that Franciszek's grave be dug up and the coffin opened. The corpse's head had been severed and lay at his feet, its ruddy face turned toward the bottom of the coffin. There was no trace of blood — clearly the men had painstakingly collected the drops that seeped out of the frozen body. A hoe lay beside the grave, abandoned in haste. The gravedigger recognised it as belonging to one of the workers who had accompanied Józef. The priest buried Antoni, giving an impassioned sermon against believing in *wieszczys*, then informed the authorities about the desecrated grave.

Meanwhile, the Pobłocki family shared out the collected blood and mixed it into beverages. All who drank it felt relieved and were restored to health, except for Józefina. She could not bring herself to drink blood squeezed from the corpses of her husband and son and died on 28 February after a brief illness. To the family, this was proof that their actions had been justified. But the prosecutors wasted no time, and Father Block gave abundant evidence, wishing to see the culprits punished as an example to his flock. In October, the district court in Lębork (Lauenburg) sentenced Józef Pobłocki and Jan Dzięcielski to four months' imprisonment and their assistant to six weeks. The accused could not accept this verdict — after all, they had mutilated dead bodies to save the living — hence they appealed to a higher court. Their plea was examined by the court in Koszalin (Köslin), which, finding no malicious intent in the men's actions, overturned the verdict. The prosecutors refused to admit defeat and requested a retrial. In Lębork, although the judge acknowledged the extenuating circumstances, the original sentence was upheld. The Pobłockis pursued their legal battle, and a second appeal saw them acquitted once again. Eventually, the case ended up before the Prussian Supreme Tribunal in Berlin, and the events that ought to have remained a family secret were written up in the European press.

Similar newspaper stories appeared throughout the following decades, and, thanks to the work of one of the leading researchers of Kashubian culture, Jan Perszon, we know that belief in *wieszczys* persisted until almost the end of the twentieth century.

Strzygas and Strzygoń

Particularly well known in the Kraków area, *strzygoń* were the most benign of the Polish living dead. These were peasant *upiór*s who sometimes even helped their families and friends after rising from the grave. Essential information on *strzygoń* and their habits can be found in works by the classic Polish ethnographers Oskar Kolberg, Jan Świątek, Stanisław Ciszewski, and Seweryn Udziela. The accounts they gathered are all consistent with one another. Above all, a *strzygoń* is a person with two souls. After death, one leaves the body, while the other remains to revive the corpse, which will rise from the grave to frighten and attack

people. Foretokens of this posthumous fate are discernible during their lives: if they are born with teeth or even two rows of teeth, birthmarks on the body, walk in their sleep, talk to themselves, or have ruddy or pale faces. After death, a strzygoń's body does not decompose, rigor mortis does not set in, and the side where its second soul is located stays warm.

The sacrament of confirmation was infallible protection against presumed strzygońs. Simple folk believed that it baptised the second soul, so that both could leave the body after death. Christening a child with two names was supposed to have a similar effect. Unlike other upiórs, a strzygoń leaving his grave would not begin to spread death and terror but would initially content himself with loitering around churches, where he would destroy paraphernalia, nibble candles, or sometimes appear as a young girl to tempt priests into breaking their vow of celibacy. They were mostly active around midnight and had to return to the grave at daybreak (otherwise, they were said to dissolve into a puddle of tar). Strzygońs were also fond of getting into fights with peasants and, if they managed to blow into their opponent's mouth, would instantly take their life. The way to beat a strzygoń in a fight was to slap him in the face with the left hand. This probably referred to a ritual face-slap formerly administered by bishops during confirmation. In the popular imagination, an open-handed slap served as a substitute for that sacrament and allowed the strzygoń's second soul to leave the body at last.

A strzygoń differed little from a living peasant: he liked to eat sausage, drink vodka, and above all visit his wife. Moreover, he would help her on the farmstead, doing various chores just as when he was alive, and would also sleep with her and could even sire offspring. However, such children were frail, skinny, sickly, and would die young. For the rural community, a dead neighbour rising from the grave was no real cause for surprise and posed no problem, unless he was bothersome. But peasants would deal ruthlessly with strzygońs if their behaviour went beyond the bounds of decency and they began terrorising the area. The provincial chronicler Andrzej Komonieczki mentioned such cases from the early eighteenth century and recounted the stories of two dead men who were disturbing villages near Żywiec in southern Poland. When neutralising a strzygoń, subtler methods were usually tried first: exhuming the body, placing a piece of paper bearing the word "Jesus" in its

mouth, then turning it face downward and striking it on the buttocks with a spade. If that proved ineffective, the most widespread means of dealing with upiórs had to be applied: chopping off the deceased's head and placing it at their feet.

Strzygas were somewhat different. In Polish, this is a feminine noun, so it was commonly thought to mean simply a female strzygoń, although this was not a hard-and-fast rule. In many places, strzyga was just a synonym for upiór, the best example being a humorous Baroque epigram that advised chopping off a strzyga's "balls", which leaves little doubt as to the sex of the deceased. Strzygas often appeared in folk tales, among which was a notable recurring theme of a dead princess who arose from her tomb and devoured the guards standing watch. Andrzej Sapkowski incorporated that tale into his debut story *Wiedźmin* (The Witcher), whose success introduced strzygas to world pop culture.

Importantly, the words "strzyga" and "strzygoń" originated in Romance languages. In ancient times, the Latin word *striga* (derived from the Greek) could mean a legendary sinister bird, a female demon, or a demonic woman. In the Middle Ages, the word tended to refer to witches. It may have entered Polish directly from the Latin and, like "wieszczycza", come to mean not only a witch but also a living corpse. On the other hand, "strzygoń" may have been brought by groups of Wallachian or South Slavic shepherds migrating to Subcarpathian areas. This is confirmed by similarities between accounts of strzygońs from Little Poland Province and the well-known story of Jure Grando, a seventeenth-century living corpse from Istria, who was also described as a "strigon". We find more similarities even further south, as many themes touched on by Polish ethnographers correspond to Greek beliefs concerning the *vrykolakes*, often mentioned in literature exploring vampirism. Nevertheless, irrespective of the name's actual origin, the local colour of beliefs and stories about strzygońs is undeniably typical of Polish folk culture.

Upiórs

The word "upiór" (just like the related "vampire") is an etymological conundrum. From the eighteenth century onward, numerous solutions

were proposed, the majority of which were highly unconvincing. The most likely hypothesis is that the word originated in Turkic languages that influenced Eastern Slavdom in mediaeval times. In the beliefs of the Volga Tatars, we find an *ubyr* character that resembles the upiór in many ways and might be its distant ancestor, or at least a fragment of the same primeval belief system. If this theory is correct, then, as the linguist Kamil Stachowski suggested, the name derives from a root related to sucking, so upiór would have originally meant “one who sucks”. This does not necessarily imply sucking blood, which immediately springs to mind from contemporary pop-culture vampire imagery. It is highly probable that upiórs initially sucked not blood but ... milk, so they may be regarded in the context of the “milk-stealing witchcraft” recorded across Europe and in parts of Asia. In many accounts, upiórs attacked not just people but also (and sometimes especially) cattle. For ancient societies that depended on cattle, their animals were the crux of their existence and prosperity. Therefore, witches and sorcerers capable of stealing milk from cows were seen as a threat more terrible than other supernatural forces. According to the Tatar beliefs, an *ubyr* was someone who, while alive, had a second soul that could steal milk in a supernatural way by sucking it from other people’s animals and who after death would rise from the grave to pester the living. So, this character was a fusion of sorcerers, witches, and the living dead. Moreover, most sources contain no mention whatsoever of upiórs drinking human blood.

Although the etymology of the word “upiór” remains dubious, we do know that it came into Polish usage from Ukraine. Both the French diplomat Pierre des Noyers, in a letter from 1659, and the Polish Jesuit Jerzy Gengell, in a work published in 1716, stressed that “upiór” was a Ruthenian word. It entered the Polish language in the seventeenth century but only became widespread a century later, which saw a veritable plague of upiorism. Notably, Gengell put forward a fantastic etymology that persisted for many years: in his opinion, the word “upiór” was derived from “*pióro*” (feather), a notion that misled numerous subsequent researchers.

Most material on upiórs came from parts of modern-day Ukraine and the Polish–Ukrainian borderlands. When Ukraine lay within the borders of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Old Polish authors

found it to be a place filled with miracles, magic, and curiosities, among which corpses rising from the grave occupied a key position. Between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, one discovers all manner of sources on the subject, from fairy tales, ethnographic interviews, mentions in chronicles, and travellers’ reports to court records and press articles on exhumations and mutilated corpses. Upiórs were believed to have the power to cause a variety of catastrophes: natural disasters such as droughts, floods, and, above all, human and cattle plagues. Consequently, suspected walking dead were hunted down either spontaneously and secretly or openly with the local authorities’ blessing.

The Ukrainian upiór was by far the most dangerous of the undead and fuelled a general fear that bordered on mass hysteria. These corpses did not even have to leave their graves in order to rain down death and disaster on the local community. They had the ability to transform into animals, chiefly white or red dogs, pigs, and horses. Many sources underlined that they would not only “*dusić*” (i.e., literally “strangle”, or infect with plague, or simply kill) people and cattle but would also drink their blood. Much like the strzygońs of Little Poland Province, Ukrainian upiórs occasionally got into fights with peasants, visited their own widows, and could sire children. The deceased’s sexual appetite was sometimes emphasised and compared to “the advances of a drunken farmhand”.

In eastern parts of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the belief in upiórs and a ubiquitous fear of them were so commonplace and well documented in the eighteenth century that they provoked strong reactions from enlightened critics of folk superstitions. As the Romantic writers drifted toward folklore, the upiór became one of the principal literary figures, as well as the most commonly used Polish word for a living corpse. The first Polish translations of Polidori’s *The Vampyre* were all titled *Upiór* for a reason.

Living Upiórs

Ukraine was also the homeland of another phenomenon that may largely explain the genesis of both upiorism and vampirism: the living upiór. To be an upiór, dying was not essential; it was enough to be born one. Several fascinating sources concerning living upiórs have survived, although

they are little known and are usually passed over by researchers of vampirism. After the eighteenth century, these were mostly court records of people suspected of upiorism who had been lynched and then burned on pyres, buried alive, or pierced by stakes. There was the case of a certain nobleman who convinced the peasants from his estate that he was a living upiór and thus able to cure them of the plague. There is also the testimony of a man who claimed to be an upiór, warned the authorities of an impending epidemic, and detailed his ability to identify witches and overpower living corpses.

Enlightened circles in Warsaw were also aware of living upiórs. One controversial text published in the journal *Monitor* quotes a report from plague-stricken Podolia that contains the enigmatic words “there were ‘upiórs’ who identified and denounced not just dead but also living upiórs”. This implied that living upiórs could recognise their own kind, living or dead, hence could be precious allies in helping society fight the menace. One such fellow was an upiór-slaying monk, whose colourful adventures were depicted somewhat satirically by Jan Bohomolec in his monumental treatise against superstitions. Further information was supplied by the medic Ludwik Perzyna, who described *vampirismus* or “pretending to be upiórs” as a symptom of mental illness, underlining that those afflicted were capable of consorting with the dead. Finally, in his diary of a journey to the Ukrainian lands, one of Poland’s leading figures of the Enlightenment, Stanisław Staszic, gave an enthralling account of rituals performed by a living upiór to track down a noxious dead upiór.

The most detailed report of a lynching of people accused of upiorism dates from the nineteenth century. In 1890, one of the foremost Ukrainian writers, Ivan Franko, himself an ethnographer, published the article *Upiór Burnings in the Village of Nahuievychi in 1831*, containing recollections of witnesses from the time of the cholera epidemic in his native village of Nahuievychi. A seven-year-old boy had laid the blame for the raging disease on upiórs and said he knew so because he was one himself. The villagers gathered, and the boy pointed out the “culprits”, who were subsequently burned alive. Another Ukrainian scholar, Ivan Vahylevych, had written about this incident earlier in his article from 1840, *Of Upiórs and Witches*, the first critical ethnographic text on the

subject. According to Vahylevych, upiórs and witches (*wid'ma* in Ukrainian) were essentially the same kind of people. Their distinguishing feature was having two souls, and one soul could leave the body while they were still alive and embark on an ecstatic journey. They could also assume the form of animals and plants and had mastery over nature, allowing them to induce natural disasters and plagues.

Seen through the prism of the source material, the general features of living upiórs bear strong hallmarks of classical shamanism. Upiórs were often associated with witches and sorcerers, belief in two souls, spiritual journeys, and posthumous activities — a far cry from stereotypical vampirism. Therefore, upiorism would fit better into the context of primeval Eurasian animist and ecstatic beliefs.

Patient Zero

Early modern sources contain a characteristic theme that could be considered make-believe were it not for the confirmed, detailed descriptions of cases from a range of places and eras. As a rule, they all concerned deceased women, several of whom were suspected of practising witchcraft. The scenario was always similar: soon after her burial, a dead woman’s family members and neighbours would begin to die. Therefore, suspicion would fall upon the corpse and her destructive postmortem activities. After exhumation, her body would be found not to have decomposed (one of the main signs of upiorism) but to have remained flexible and ruddy faced, and she would have also devoured her shroud, graveclothes, or even her own flesh. In a sense, the deceased woman became an upióric “patient zero”, whose demise triggered a succession of deaths. The rational explanation, which did in fact appear in critically inclined sources, is that these women died of plague that gradually spread among those with whom they had been in contact. Devouring shrouds would clearly seem to suggest the premature burial of people in lethargic states. Such cases had long been linked directly to witchcraft and upiorism. Slurping sounds emanating from graves were also frequently mentioned, which led to the “slurping dead” phenomenon, of which German Enlightenment literature was particularly enamoured as it delved into vampirism, often citing cases from the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Most mentions of upióric “patient zero” cases originated in cities and were penned by learned men: medics, clergymen, and officials. A good illustration was the beheading of a dead woman in Warsaw during the plague of 1625. The mayor, Łukasz Drewno, an apothecary appointed to the position thanks to his competent handling of the epidemic, clearly distanced himself from this event. The dead woman was said to have “chewed her shroud”, and the news even reached the city council and royal court — Drewno mentions the then-marshal Łukasz Opaliński among those who decided the fate of the deceased. From a contemporary standpoint, such an action may be seen as an attempt to relieve tension in cities gripped by epidemics and often sealed off behind a cordon sanitaire. “Executing” a corpse accused of spreading the deadly disease would have pacified residents, at least for a while. In later years, such cases were also recorded in villages, where the corpses of suicides or people accused of practising witchcraft when alive were mutilated, often preventively. It was claimed that they had the power to cause plague and, as mentioned above, natural disasters, which were devastating to the rural economy and village life.

Upiórs and the Devil

Although the common folk imagined upiórs to be people with two souls, such an explanation was unacceptable to those ecclesiastical writers who firmly believed in walking corpses, for one simple reason: the concept of two souls was considered heresy and an affront to one of the fundamental dogmas. Catholic scholars, mostly Jesuits, were thus forced to explain upiorism in an entirely different way. Even though debating this topic may seem absurd nowadays, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was a veritable intellectual challenge that required erudition, caution, and logical argumentation.

The resultant concept of upiórs tallied with Catholic theology, particularly demonology, and capitalised on pan-European beliefs in the pernicious activities of witches. Upiórs were reputed to spring into existence from pacts between witches and demons that required unbaptised children and, above all, divine accord — since God (as we know from the biblical story of Job) would sometimes allow the Devil to inflict

harm on people. Witches working as midwives would entrust newborns to the Devil after the delivery. Although his power over the child’s soul would be lost if it was christened, he would still be entitled to their body once they died. Regardless of whether the person led a devout or a sinful life, their body would be at the Devil’s disposal after death. He would enter the corpse in the same way as he would possess a living person (or with even less effort, since the soul had departed). Hence, upiórs were corpses animated by demonic forces in conjunction with witches and, naturally, with God’s permission.

According to the church’s teachings of the time, this explanation was consistent and logical and also served as a weapon in the fight against witches and troublesome corpses. An upiór’s very existence was based on a pact, a specific contract between a witch and the Devil, to define what the body could be used for and how he could be driven out of it. In a lengthy chapter on upiórs in his monumental encyclopaedia *Nowe Ateny* (New Athens), the priest Benedykt Chmielowski spoke of it in terms of an agreement with specific terms and conditions. The Devil controlling the dead body was free to infect children, the elderly, or certain farm animals with plague until such time as a method of upióricide listed in the pact was deployed: piercing with stakes, decapitation, or burning. Since those battling with upiórs could only guess at the terms of a pact, Chmielowski warily added, “then the best way is to burn it”.

The aforementioned Jesuit, Gengell, offered a more refined conclusion in keeping with the exorcistic tradition: the signs of a harmful demon’s presence had to be destroyed in order to cast it out. In the case of upiórs, it implied a corpse that looked fresh and intact, which therefore had to be put out of action in the appropriate, enduring fashion — naturally, by chopping its head off with a spade.

All the Catholic writers who perpetuated the belief in upiórs simultaneously emphasised that less drastic solutions also existed to deal with the problem, especially preventive measures: children had to be christened rapidly, and one had to be wary of midwives and suspicious women. Prior consultations with doctors and anatomists were also recommended, since a fresh-looking corpse was not always a sign of upiorism. Apotropaic methods could also be applied after death. Chmielowski recommended placing “holy objects” in the corpse’s mouth, as that was

the pathway through which demons were traditionally believed to enter and leave the possessed. A less subtle priest, Stefan Żuchowski from Sandomierz, even claimed to have seen a strzyga in his own church and wrote, “However, placing a stone in the body’s mouth can also break this pact should one prefer not to chop off the head”.

Body, Soul, and Blood

Popular beliefs regarding upiórs revolved around perceptions of the human body and soul (or, rather, one of two souls). However, the soul was not seen as a totally separate, incorporeal part of a person’s being. On the contrary, it could assume material or semimaterial form and, above all, would remain closely tied to the body even after death. In popular reports, upióric bodies are understood in totally irrational, paradoxical ways, as unaffected by physical limitations. For example, they could leave and return to their graves through small openings without disturbing the burial mound. And it was against the body of the deceased that key measures for defending oneself against upiórs needed to be applied. Frankly, one could simply say that an upiór was a body, albeit an unusual one.

The symptoms of innate upiorism described above (being born with a caul or teeth) concerned the body. Someone who would walk after death was identifiable by their appearance while alive — in particular, a ruddy complexion. For many years, there was a Polish saying “as red as an upiór”, which sounds like an oxymoron today, as we have grown accustomed to the pop-culture stereotype of pallid vampires (although being pale was also common among strzygońs while alive). The red colour of their bodies was said to remain after death (possibly due, of course, to a range of natural causes), which was seen as incontrovertible evidence that they posed a threat. In this context, the most interesting cases concerned real-life procedures performed on such corpses. It is worth citing a Warsaw Catholic newspaper report written in 1857 by Józef Szpaderski, the parish priest of the small town of Osiek near Sandomierz. Szpaderski was very well educated, became a professor at Warsaw Theological Academy a year later, wrote catechisms and sermons, and published a textbook on patristics and homiletics. He began by defining upiórs as “folk metaphysics” — which was an intellectual

clergyman’s view, of course, since the boundary between the physical and immaterial worlds was — to the extent that it existed at all — rather fluid to the common folk, as described above. He saw “many errors, some poetry, but also a grain of truth” in such beliefs. Therefore, preachers could use this to their benefit in sermons. He also mentioned priests who tolerated folk superstitions in spite of their education. To him, the upiór was a splendid tool for bringing peasants closer to Catholic eschatology and teachings regarding the soul. The particular corpse with which he was dealing belonged to a village woman. By law, funerals in the Russian partition had to take place no sooner than 48 hours after death to avoid burying anyone in a lethargic state. Szpaderski was aware of this regulation and adhered to it, so he ordered the coffin to be moved into the church only after the allotted time. While he was changing in the vestry before the service, one of the deceased woman’s female relatives came to ask if the body could be turned face downward in the coffin at the cemetery. When asked why, he was told that she was “very red since she died”. The priest felt this might be a sign of seeming death and quickly sent for the barber, and they examined the corpse together. Due to evident signs of decomposition, they were satisfied that the woman truly was deceased, and the barber explained that her flushed face was due to pneumonia. Szpaderski added, “Yet I was astonished to see the dead woman covered in poppy seeds, particularly in her eyes, in her mouth, and all over her face [...] I was told that someone who is red after death has two souls: one dies, while the other lives on, so they must be sprinkled with poppy seed and the body turned face downward in the coffin to stop it from rising after death and frightening people”. He had thus witnessed the popular belief in two souls, the ruddy-faced corpse phenomenon, and the precautionary measures that were practised (we shall return to poppy seeds later). The lesson he learned from this event and passed on to his fellow clergymen was that folk rituals involving dead bodies required the utmost caution, for, if someone was merely in a lethargic state, they would surely suffocate from having their mouths stuffed with poppy seed or being turned face down in their coffins.

Apart from a red countenance, various unusual or even trivial physical traits could also be seen as signs of upiorism. They were frequently said to lack hair in their armpits or on their groin, to have hairy chests,

or to have hair that stuck out in two whorls (supposedly proof of their having two souls or two hearts). Equally significant were marks on the skin, particularly scissor-like marks, due to an assumed connection with the Polish word “*strzyc*” (to cut) and *strzygas* or *strzygońs*. The circumstances of death were also important because, as a rule, suicides would later turn into *upiórs*. Similar beliefs applied to people suspected of practising witchcraft.

An unusual aspect of *upiórs* was the power of their blood. Whereas we have no certainty whether or not any *upiór* ever really existed and drank human blood, we can be absolutely certain that people drank the blood of suspected *upiórs*. This was already mentioned in relation to Kashubian *wieszczys*, whose blood was mixed into beverages and drunk to ward off their lethal activities. Such beliefs were widespread, however. “In Zaleszczyki, Stanisławów, and Tyśmienica, a greater, much worse type of plague has been spread by the insane superstitions of boors who pulled teeth from plague-infected corpses named *upiórs* and sucked their blood”, fumed the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski in a letter dating from the time of the 1770 plague. A year later, in nearby Białoboznica, the nobleman Krzywicki, posing as a living *upiór*, led peasants to the cemetery to drink blood from the severed heads of corpses. In a satire from the time of the plague in Podilia, Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński wrote that “*upiórs*’ blood was being peddled for more than caramelised vodka”. In an exaggerated way, this conveys the prevailing atmosphere of terror regarding death-dealing walking corpses. Records from the Uniate consistory in Przemyśl, dating from 1713, mention a trial of peasants accused of decapitating a woman’s corpse and making her blood into pancakes, which they ate and washed down with vodka. In the late nineteenth century, after beheading a restless corpse and collecting its blood, shepherds from Bieszczady drank it “with vodka to keep the *upiórs* away”. In 1873, as the cholera epidemic raged in Galicia, peasants from two villages organised living-dead hunts and shared out the blood amongst themselves, believing it would protect them from the disease. There were myriad similar incidents, but none provide an unambiguous explanation as to why such power was attributed to *upiórs*’ blood. A parallel from folk medicine may help to explain its effects: inoculation was well known in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. These primitive

vaccines originated in practices that were often steeped in religious or magical rituals. During early modern bubonic plague epidemics, pus from corpses’ buboes was sometimes drunk to guard against the disease. On the other hand, drinking blood may have had purely magical value based on classical sympathetic magic, which had a special power to break taboos.

Upióricide

Old Polish contained the word “*upiorobójstwo*” (*upióricide*) — the killing or extermination of *upiórs*. Certain people even specialised in procedures to eliminate threats from the living dead. Curiously, these included both rural sorcerers, especially shepherds, famed for their impressive repertoire of magical practices, and the clergy, among whom Uniate and Orthodox priests were thought to be particularly proficient. Two methods — which were, incidentally, incorporated into many vampire stories — were most commonly applied: piercing a corpse with stakes, and cutting off a corpse’s head and placing it at its feet.

Stakes were normally made of aspen wood, although other types of wood and metal nails were also used. Aspen trees were probably believed to have magical powers due to the legend that Judas hanged himself from one, although its apotropaic properties are certainly pre-Christian — aspen stakes were even used in Siberian rituals to prevent dead shamans from rising again. Cutting off the head and placing it by the feet was usually a precaution to keep it beyond the corpse’s reach. Originally, however, it was seemingly intended to break up the integrity of the body and impede the activities of the soul within it. The decapitation implement of choice was the spade — every gravedigger’s basic equipment. Procedures were sometimes combined: bodies were quartered, and their limbs pinned to the coffins with nails or stakes. A more radical method of destroying *upiórs* was to burn the body.

There was also an array of more lenient methods to prevent bodies suspected of *upiorism* from rising. Corpses were turned face downward in their coffins or tombs. Their hands were tied with maniples or fibres from blessed herb plants. Sickles were placed on their necks in the belief that, should the deceased rise, it would sever its own head. Apotropaic objects were often placed in the mouth: from religious images

and pieces of paper bearing the word “Jesus” to coins, stones, and even dung. Another set of methods took an opposite approach: keep the deceased occupied to stop them from bothering the living. For this reason, poppy seed or sand was sprinkled into their coffins, mouths, and eyes, as it was believed that a corpse would have to count every tiny seed or grain before it could exit the grave. Similarly, the Kashubians placed nets in with the corpses of presumed *wieszczys*, who would have to untie all the knots before leaving their graves. Others used a page from a prayer book with the word “Amen” removed, so the corpse would have to recite the prayer over and over until Judgement Day; a page from the church calendar had a similar effect. The people proved ingenious and creative in their preventive methods, often exploiting a corpse’s material limitations and managing the time of the dangerous deceased.

Upiórs in Literature

In contemporary Polish, the word “*upiór*” has largely lost its original meaning and is now reduced to a concept resembling that of ghosts or spectres. Through fantasy literature, the *strzyga* has pervaded pop culture as a separate female demon or monster figure unconnected with the source material. *Strzygońs* and *wieszczys* are generally mentioned only in academic and regional texts. But thanks to the Romantic writers, the *upiór* is still one of the key figures in Polish literary history, particularly in Adam Mickiewicz’s national poetic drama *Dziady* (Forefathers’ Eve).

When the Enlightenment began waging its pitched battle against superstition in the eighteenth century, belief in *upiórs* was considered the most dangerous and shocking of all, but its foremost critics committed a specific fundamental error. They took issue not with the common folk’s belief in people with two souls but with the church’s vision of “Christianised *upiórs*”, that is, dead bodies controlled by demons. Consequently, the entire discussion was confined to an elite intellectual bubble and never had its intended effect on the populace, who carried on believing in *upiórs* throughout the nineteenth century and even partway into the next.

In the early nineteenth century, Polish intellectuals devoted to Enlightenment ideals were confident that, thanks to the work of Jan

Bohomolec, the belief in *upiórs* had been effectively eradicated. They saw living corpses as nothing more than a superstition, a manifestation of blatant provincial ignorance that mostly cropped up in books and newspaper articles of a contemptuous or satirical nature. Taking an opposing view were the Romantics, who, due to their nation’s lost independence, sought out the “national element” of folk culture. As a result, *upiórs* found their way into poetry, novels, and plays. Initially, Mickiewicz’s *upiór* figure was the sentimental corpse of a suicide who would come back to life around All Saints’ Day, when people celebrate the primeval ceremony of summoning the dead (the titular “Forefathers”). Later in the play, the *upiór*, strongly influenced by the works of Lord Byron, had already acquired vampiric traits, not only drinking blood but also “infecting” his victims and turning them into *upiórs* after their death (which is utterly absent from beliefs in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth).

Transplanting vampiric themes onto *upiórs* was essential to both the literary and the political aspirations of the Romantics. They wanted ideas of independence and revolution to spread in the same way, and the captive country was a metaphorical “fatherland of *upiórs*”. Each successive borrowed idea, fantasy, and metamorphosis transformed the literary face of *upiórs* far beyond the folk archetype, allowing ideas, events, historical figures, and even Poland itself to become *upiórs*. When Stanisław Wyspiański published his play *Legion* in 1900, featuring Mickiewicz as its central character, he had the poet pronounce the words “O Poland, thou holy *upiór*!” As it entered the twentieth century, the symbolically deceased state either had to resurrect itself completely or remain a living corpse. When the empires collapsed in 1918 and Poland regained its independence, the literary *upiór* paled into insignificance, and a century later its symbolic impact seems increasingly obscure. But beyond the shadow of a doubt, Poland’s history was closely enmeshed with the history of *upiórs* for several hundred years.

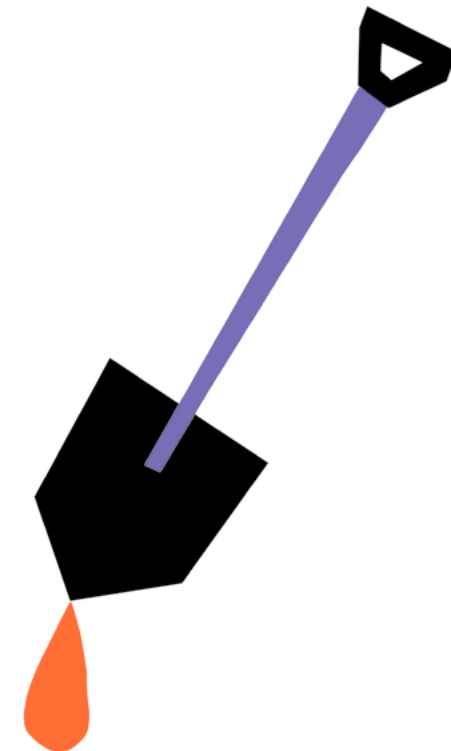
ANTHOLOGY

ABOUT THE ANTHOLOGY

This anthology is divided into five sections. The first contains chronological mentions of belief in the living dead found in various sources dating from before 1800. The second and third sections encompass various texts that prove and refute the existence of *upiórs*. Materials in the first three parts are preceded by a brief introduction to the author and historical context. Section four comprises excerpts from ethnographic works, and section five is made up of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Polish press reports.

All sources contain full bibliographical references to help anyone wishing to consult the originals. The majority have been digitised and uploaded to digital libraries online, particularly polona.pl. Most locations mentioned in the source materials are provided, depending on the original texts.

MENTIONS PRIOR TO 1800



1.
**PARSON MICHAŁ OF GRABOWNICA
AND A CORPSE FROM LALIN, 1529**
Lalin, Sanok County, Podkarpackie Province

Source: *Acta sive registrum actorum causarum publicarum Coram Reverendissimo...*, the Archdiocese Archives in Przemyśl, AEp. 12, fol. 104v, dated 2 IX 1529.

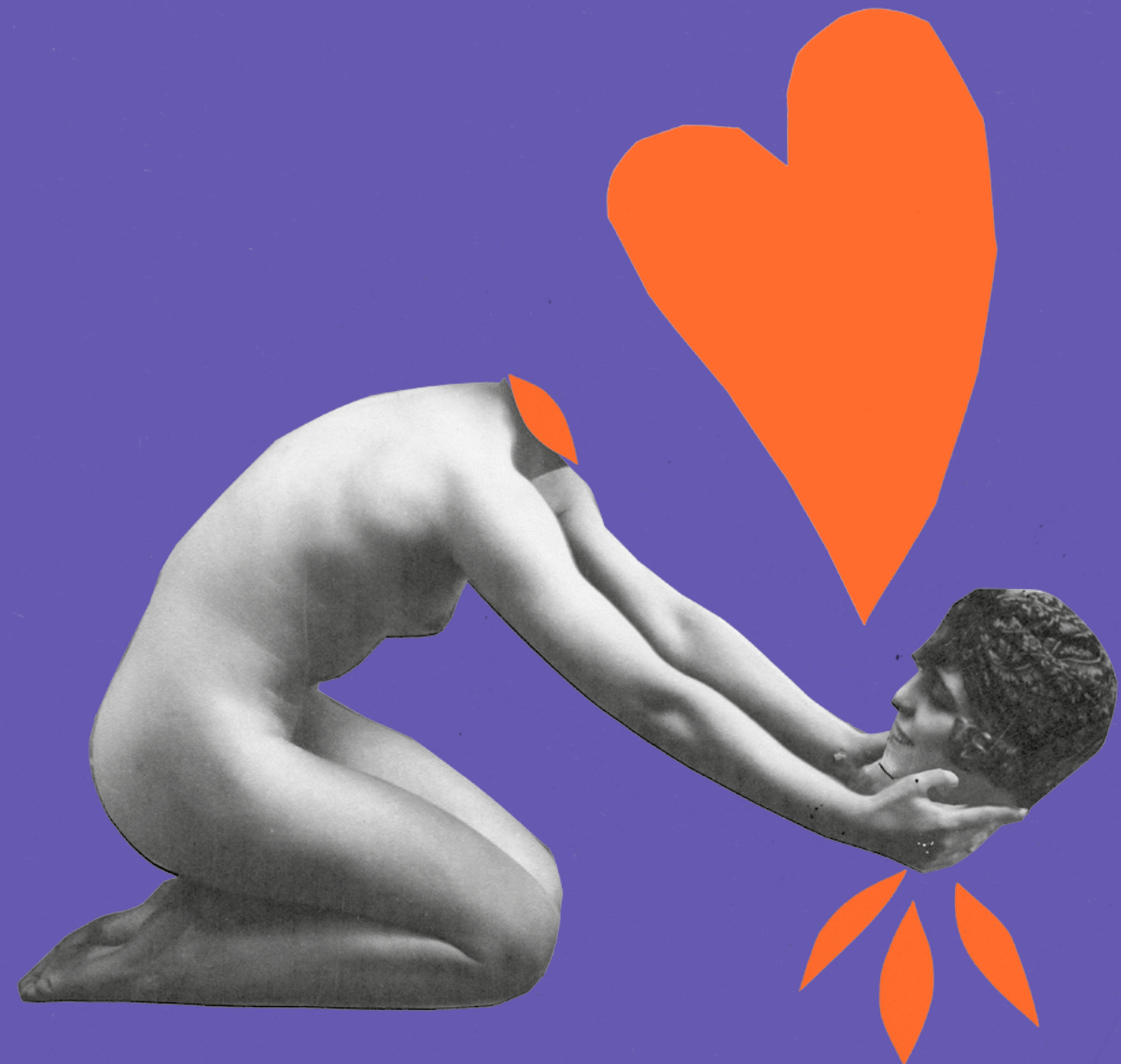
The first-known Polish historical record with an unambiguous reference to a procedure for incapacitating a presumed *upiór*. Moreover, it suggests that the local parson (who treated the rules of priestly life somewhat loosely) believed in *upiórs* or at least tolerated his parishioners' beliefs. His church superiors, meanwhile, considered this a serious offence associated with the practice of witchcraft (*maleficium* in Latin).

The reverend Michał, parson of Grabownica, was sentenced by the bishop to six months' penance in prison on bread and water for allowing certain parishioners from Lalin who practised witchcraft to exhume a corpse buried in the church cemetery, behead it, and, thus mutilated, drive a stake through it; and also for keeping an extremely suspicious lady cook, selling a silver cross from the church, visiting a tavern, etc., and for involvement in numerous other scandals (as elaborated in accusations levelled against him during visitations). That very day, after certain righteous folk had interceded on his behalf, the bishop commuted the prison sentence to a monetary fine of three silver coins, which Michał pledged to pay before the next Exaltation of the Holy Cross and was thus freed from incarceration.

2.
A WOMAN FROM RYASNE, 1572
Ryasne (currently a district in Lviv), Ukraine

Source: Ercole Sassonia, *De plica, quam Poloni gwoździec, Roxolani kołtunum vocant* (Padova, 1600), pp. 51–52.

In his treatise on Polish plait (*Plica polonica*), a widespread complaint among the population of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth that



was often associated with witchcraft and folklore, the Italian doctor Ercole Sassonia (1551–1607) referred to a story told by a Lviv medic, Jan Ursinus. It was one of the first mentions of the undead in early-modern scientific literature.

In the year of our Lord 1572, when the plague was rife all across Poland, a woman from Rzęsna (a village situated amid arable lands outside Lwów) died and was buried at the Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. From that day forth, the plague was rampant, particularly in the area surrounding the church. Therefore, those employed to bury the dead had reason to suspect the village woman who had died a few days earlier of being a witch. When her body was dug up, she was found to be naked, and her mouth contained scraps of her clothes, which she had devoured. She was decapitated with a sharpened iron spade, as was the custom, and dark-red blood flowed forth. She was subsequently reburied, and the plague subsided.

3. ITINERANT BEGGARS AND THE WIESZCZYCA, C. 1600

Jodłowa (scene of the events), Dębica County, Podkarpackie Province

Source: Januarius Sovizralius [pseud.], *Peregrynacja dziadowska...* (1614).
Edition: J. Lewański, ed., *Dramaty Staropolskie. Antologia*, vol. 3
(Warszawa: PIW, 1961), pp. 149–150, vv. 170–178.

Peregrynacja dziadowska is a satirical dialogue in the picaresque literary genre. It is an alleged report on a council of *dziady* (itinerant beggars) and old women who dabbled in quackery and witchcraft, as overheard at a marketplace in the town of Jodłowa. The assembled company presents a range of methods for extracting alms, many involving spells and folk beliefs (e.g., one would pretend to be a werewolf to obtain meat from terrified peasants). This excerpt concerning a *wieszczycza* was recounted by the eldest beggar, who presided over the council and initiated everyone into the beggar's trade. Although the word *wieszczycza* can also signify a witch, here it is used unambiguously to describe an undead corpse.

Mind you teach the people to believe that it is so.
Don't let women near a coffin if their belly's round;
Break the fingers of *wieszczycas* in village and town,
Lest they rise and rend their graveclothes 'fore the day of doom;
Best it is to chop the corpse's head off in the tomb.
Use your cunning to delude the people night and day;
Women's lore and old wives' tales will lead all men astray.
Remember to stay watchful, keep your wits about you,
And never let them catch you, lest they sorely clout you.

(Translation: Artur Zapałowski)

4. A GLAZIER FROM WARSAW, 1625

Warsaw

Source: Łukasz Drewno, *Regestr zmarlich anni preteriti czasu burmistrzostwa za okres listopad 1624–maj 1625*, National Museum in Kraków, Czartoryski Collection, MS 3138 III, p. 34.

The apothecary Łukasz Drewno (after 1565–1652) served as an excellent mayor of Warsaw during the epidemic of 1624–26, implementing all measures necessary to confine the plague. At the time, he also kept a manuscript register of the dead, which contains a report of an old woman who rose from her coffin.

27 February

An old glazier, whose neck I ordered to be severed with a spade. The reason being that, after her death, she had chewed her shroud as she lay in her coffin at the house. This was witnessed by a maid, who told the glazier's son, Jan, who testified to it himself. As ordered by the most illustrious Sir Łukasz Opaliński and following the advice of the councillors of Warsaw Old Town, I instructed that it be done according to the marshal's [Opaliński's] wishes.

5.
**PIERRE DES NOYERS TO ISMAËL
 BOUILLAU, 13 DECEMBER 1659**

Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Français 13020, fol. 290r–291r.

The French diplomat Pierre des Noyers (1606–1693) acted as secretary to two Polish queens of French extraction, Ludwika Maria Gonzaga and Maria Kazimiera d'Arquien. He had a broad education and corresponded with European scholars, penning regular letters to the astronomer Ismaël Bouillau, including reports concerning upiōrs and strzygas (*trigas*) from the Ukrainian lands of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Gdańsk, 13 December 1659

I was unable to write to you with the last post, since it had already left as we arrived in Tczew. Now we have reached this city [Gdańsk], where we arrived after nightfall yesterday, and the post departs at noon today. Therefore I have yet to see anyone, but by the next post I shall send you news from Mister [Johannes] Hevelius, to whom I will pass on the remarks addressed to him in your last two letters of 7 and 21 November, and I shall send a copy of them to Vienna. We witnessed none of those eclipses, as our skies are still highly changeable and almost always overcast.

I have heard such fantastic tales of steppe marmots that you are right to say the whole world ought to be populated with them. But since I am in Ukraine and recalling marmots, I must tell you of an illness in these lands, which I would have thought to be a fable had I not been assured by honourable individuals who had experienced it themselves. In this country, it is held as so indisputable that, were anyone to doubt it, they would be ridiculed. In their Ruthenian language, they call it *upir*, and in Polish, *triga*. When someone who was born into the world with teeth dies, they will first eat their clothing as they lie in the coffin, tearing it off piece by piece, then devour their own hands and arms. In the meantime, members of their family and residents of the house will die forthwith; just as one has died, another will fall gravely ill, and so it continues until three-times-nine people have died; hence the name *triga* or *upir*, which have the same meaning. But when it becomes clear that

this illness is the cause of death, they will dig up the first to be found, as I said, eating their clothes, arms, shoulders, and anything within reach, then chop off their head, and, regardless of how long ago they died, clear blood will flow forth, as if from a living person. Immediately thereafter, the deaths will cease in the family and the house, which will prevent three-times-nine people from dying as they would have otherwise. Sometimes, this is also said to occur among horses. I admit that it is hard for me not to regard this as pure superstition.

6.
**UPIÓRS IN DUBNO AND MURAVYTSIA,
 1667**

Dubno and Muravytsia (currently part of Mlyniv),
 Rivne Oblast, Ukraine

Edition: K. W. Wójcicki, ed., *Latopisiec albo Kroniczka Joachima Jerlicza*, vol. 2 (Warszawa, 1853), p. 115.

Joachim Jerlicz (1598–1673 or later) was a Polish nobleman from a Ruthenian family. His *Latopisiec albo kroniczka różnych spraw i dziejów dawnych i terażniejszych czasów, z wieku i życia mego na tym padole świata...*, written in Polish, known currently only from its nineteenth-century edition, is a diary-cum-chronicle describing events from 1620 to 1673. Jerlicz focused on political and military issues yet spared no details regarding everyday life, customs, and the defeats that befell the eastern lands of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

[1667] The month of February: Following the death of the crown hetman, his majesty the king granted the staff of office to Lord Jan Sobieski and appointed him hetman. In that same winter month, an extraordinary number of people died of the plague, old and young alike. It was a month pervaded by frosts, and people dug up dead bodies, examined them, and discovered signs of witchcraft, as was the common practice. Such corpses were found to have eaten their shrouds, there was blood in abundance, and when beheaded with a spade, their blood flowed as if they were alive. Such cases were discovered at over a dozen sites during exhumations in Dubno, Morawica, and elsewhere.

7.
CASUS DE STRYGIS, 1674
Lesser Poland Province (uncertain)

Source: A handwritten note from the late seventeenth century on a page from an incunabulum kept in Toruń University Library, Inc.III.129, *Summa Angelica de casibus conscientiae* (Nürnberg: Anton Koberger, 10 II 1492).

Texts from other sources cited by O. Kolberg, *Krakowskie*, pt. 3 (Kraków, 1874), pp. 217–218 (for the note in a text from the Jagiellonian Library), and J. Wiśniewski, *Historyczny opis kościołów, miast, zabytków i pamiątek w Olkuskiem* (Marjówka Opoczyńska, 1933), pp. 161–162 (for the church records from the village of Minoga).

This text is known thanks to several handwritten copies included in books from monastic and parish collections. The Polish text relates an incident involving a living corpse, followed by a commentary in Latin substantiating the possibility of “killing” a strzyga. The place mentioned (Trzeszawa) is difficult to pinpoint and may refer to the village of Szerzawa in Świętokrzyskie Province, but the known copies were from Lesser Poland, and the reply from scholars deliberating the case also supposedly came from Kraków.

Casus de Strygis

In the year 1674, a man died in Trzeszawa then began committing acts of great evil against his close relations, strangling them, beating them, and sucking their blood. He was said to be a *stryga*. When his grave was opened, he was found to resemble a sack of the freshest blood. The local parson ordered that he be placed face downward in the hole, but that very night he visited his son and gave him such a sound beating that yesterday it was announced that the son had died. The parishioners insisted that his neck be sliced through with a spade, but wondered whether such cruel behaviour would be acceptable to the church.

Question: May a corpse that torments people with witchcraft after its burial be decapitated in the grave to put an end to the witchcraft?

Answer: Yes, it may be decapitated.

The explanation is that such witchcraft may be kept at bay in two ways: the first being exorcism; the second the removal or destruction of signs,

QUESTION:

May a corpse that torments people with witchcraft after its burial be decapitated in the grave to put an end to the witchcraft?

ANSWER:

Yes, it may be decapitated.

which should be removed or destroyed either with a new or repeated invocation of a demon, or also without such invocation.

If an exorcism is to be performed, there is one obvious, permissible method for warding off witchcraft. However, if it is to be performed by removing or destroying signs whose placement has led to witchcraft, it cannot be done together with a new or repeated invocation, for that would summon the power of a demon, who is God's enemy. However, removal or destruction without invoking a demon is a permissible method for keeping witchcraft at bay.

Returning to the case, this is the only correct way to proceed. The only sign that must be destroyed is that through the invocation of which a demon uses the corpse to bring evil upon the family, yet without any new or repeated summoning of a demon. That sign being that the dead body is intact and, if the whole is destroyed, the witchcraft may usually be kept at bay, as we know from experience. One should have no fear of being cruel, since the reason for decapitating the corpse is to prevent it from causing harm. On the contrary, it is beneficial to do so for the sake of warding off evil. Moreover, a corpse is devoid of feeling, and thus killing a strzyga is allowed.

8.

A STRZYGA'S TESTICLES, C. 1690

Łużna, Gorlice County (the presumable scene of events),
Lesser Poland Province

Edition: W. Potocki, *Ogród fraszek*, vol. 1, ed. A. Brückner (Lwów, 1907), p. 509.

Wacław Potocki (1625–1696) was a colourful seventeenth-century figure and one of Poland's foremost Baroque poets, who wrote epic poems as well as bawdy, malicious epigrams. For a large part of his life, he was a member of the Polish Brethren, and the Catholics most certainly accused him of sympathising with Protestant sects. Perhaps Calvinist rationalism left him sceptical about popular beliefs, as is evident in *Strzyga*. This epigram sounds like a personal report from Potocki's estate, so we may cautiously assume it took place in Lesser Poland, in or around the village of Łużna.

A churl died so folk to church promptly hurried,
Lest in hallowed ground a strzyga be buried
Without having its head hacked off by a hoe.
“What reason is there for to punish him so?”
“His kin will all die in the space of a year.”
“So kin are involved? Then 'tis best to chop here...”
“Chop off what?” the churls ask, “Do tell us, Your Grace”.
“His balls,” I reply, “Leave the head in its place”.

(Translation: Artur Zapałowski)

9.

A MOST EXTRAORDINARY ARTICLE, MAY 1693

Source: [Claude Comiers or Pierre des Noyers?], untitled article (contents page lists: *Article fort extraordinaire*), *Mercure Galant*, May 1693, pp. 62–70.

In 1693, Polish and Ukrainian upiōrs were mentioned twice in the Parisian magazine *Mercure Galant*: first, in an article by Claude Comiers (“La baguette justifiée” [The Justified Wand]), published in March; second, in the following more extensive article by an unknown author, which introduced the upiōrs of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth into European scientific discourse on the eve of the eighteenth century.

You may have heard of a most extraordinary thing to be found in Poland, particularly in Ruthenia. I am referring to bodies of the dead, known as *striges* in Latin, or *upierz* in the local language, which secrete a certain humour that the common folk and many learned men claim to be blood. They say that the Demon sucks this blood from the body of a living person or certain animals and transfers it into a dead body, because the Demon is reputed to emerge from that corpse at a specific time between noon and midnight and return later to put in the blood it has gathered. In time, such an abundance collects that it streams from the dead body's mouth, nose, and particularly its ears until the corpse is floating in its coffin. Moreover, the corpse feels hunger, which drives it to eat the shroud in which it is wrapped; verily, it is to be found in its

mouth. At night, the Demon leaves the corpse to torment those with whom the deceased lived in the greatest familiarity, causing them much suffering as they slumber. He embraces and squeezes them, appearing to them as a relative or friend, and enfeebles them by sucking their blood to transfer it into the corpse. When they awake, they cannot understand what is happening and cry out for help. They grow thin and weak, but the Demon will not leave them until the family members have died off, one by one. There are two types of such spirits or demons. The first are drawn to people; the second to animals, which they kill in the same way, by sucking their blood. The devastation would be immense were it not for a remedy that has proved helpful. It consists of eating bread that is made, leavened, and baked with blood taken from these corpses. No matter how long ago they were buried, they are found to be soft, limp, bloated, and ruddy faced in their coffins, not dry and emaciated like normal corpses. When found in this state, resembling people as seen in these dreams, they are beheaded, and their hearts are opened up. Blood gushes forth in substantial quantity and is collected, mixed with flour, then kneaded and made into bread that is a reliable remedy to protect against such terrible torment. Once they have been beheaded, those whom the spirit was tormenting at night are no longer troubled and regain their health. One young woman experienced this not long ago. Feeling pains as she slept, she awoke and begged for help, saying that she had seen the face of her long-dead mother. The young woman began to waste away, growing thinner and weaker by the day, so her mother's body was exhumed and found to be soft, bloated, and ruddy faced. She was decapitated, her heart was opened, and blood flowed out copiously, after which the girl's languor abated and she made a complete recovery. Trustworthy priests who have witnessed similar executions attest to the veracity of everything I have recounted, and this is common in Ruthenia Province.



10. STRZYGAS AND STRZYGŃS, 1679–1722

Rajcza, Ujsoły and Rycerka, Żywiec County, Silesia Province

Edition: S. Grodziski and I. Dwornicka, eds., *Chronografia albo Dziejopis Żywiecki* (Żywiec: Towarzystwo miłośników ziemi żywieckiej, 1987), pp. 235, 521, 538.

The monumental *Chronografia* by the mayor of Żywiec, Andrzej Komoniecki (c. 1658–1729), is one of the most valuable sources for researching the everyday life, mentality, and folk culture of early-modern Poland, particularly that of simple residents from lordly estates in western Lesser Poland. In his chronicle, Komoniecki notes every detail, place, and name, gladly making room for all manner of oddities and unusual happenings. He also has no doubts as to the existence and genuine power of witchcraft, strzygas, and strzygŃs.

[1679] This year, the plague broke out in the homes of the Janota and Czyrpaczka families in Rajcza, a village in the Żywiec Estate. Fourteen people died in one house and five in the other. After he had visited them, Father Paweł Czernek, the curate of Milówka, needed to be fumigated in Rajcza. Mister Andrzej Irlant, the subprefect of Żywiec, ordered that both houses be burned. But a strzyga hag was also said to have strangled them, after rising from the dead and visiting their homes. After the hag was dug up, she was beheaded in her grave.

[1719] On Saturday, 23 December, on the eve of Christmas, in the parish of Milówka, Ignacy Janota, an old shepherd who tended the lord's sheep, died in the village of Ujsoły. He was the chief strzygŃ. After his death, he was buried at the Rajcza church, then both overtly and furtively, by day and by night, he began to terrify and attack people, inflicting damage, roaming around houses, pestering people, and trying to strangle them. He was seen openly and suspected of being the culprit. Then, after consultations, it was ordered that he be exhumed and beheaded in his grave, and so it was done, but he continued to roam around, carrying his severed head with him and causing people harm. Finally, the residents of three villages, Rajcza, Ujsoły, and Rycerka, who were terrified of him, believed the only way to deal with him was to dig him up from

his grave and take him to the outskirts, where his arms and legs were cut off, placed on a pyre of wood, and burned. The fire caused something hairy to shoot up from his innards and lash around intensively, and it almost failed to burn with the body. He was burned on the third day of January the following year, 1720, after he had terrified the people closest to him for a week and a half. A similar case occurred about forty years ago, in the year 1679, when, after her death, a woman from Rajcza made such mischief at the Janota and Czyrpaczka families' homes that some nineteen people died of what was understood to be the plague. Because of her, both houses were burned, and she was beheaded in her grave, for she walked after having been buried after her death, as was seen in the year 1679.

[1722] This year, Szymon Bułka from the village of Rycerka in the Żywiec Estate died after Candlemas and was buried at the Rajcza church. Directly after his death, he began to terrify his former household. As soon as it grew dark, he hurled stone cheese presses and struck several people, but nobody was seen. When they realised he was a strzygŃ, they dug him up and chopped off his head, his hands below the wrists, and his feet below the ankles, but to no avail, for he fought even harder, despite everyone staying up and keeping watch at night. This time, they cut off his forearms below the elbows and his legs below the knees, but still in vain. Eventually, after digging him up for the third time, he was taken to the outskirts of the village, placed on a pyre of wood and burned, but even that did not suffice, so a priest was sent for to perform exorcisms. That proved helpful, and at Candlemas he desisted, as his soul was longing for something. While he was alive, his sons and sons-in-law had not respected him as an old father and had treated him most wretchedly. The sons-in-law had tormented his corpse after his death, chopped him up, and burned him, which they should not have done but instead should have prayed to the Lord God for the salvation of his soul and repented their own sin.

11.
A STRZYGA, OR UPIÓR, 1735
 Skrzynno, Przysucha County, Mazovia Province

Edition: J. Wiśniewski, *Dekanat opoczyński* (Radom: Jan Kanty Trzebiński, 1913), p. 177.

A note in Latin from the town archives of Skrzynno (currently a village in Mazovia Province).

[31 October 1735] Tomasz Szejerwejer, of noble birth, was around twenty-five years of age and arrived here from Lublin after the fair. He was ill for the next few weeks and was thus properly informed and well prepared to die, and he also received the Holy Sacrament yet did not manage to receive Extreme Unction, as death took him much earlier. His life ended in keeping with Christian tradition, after which he was buried beneath the altar of St Joseph.

After the burial, an awful event occurred, for it transpired that he was a strzyga, known by the common people as an upiór. Following the persistent pleas of his own mother, who was present at the time, who admitted that her son had been the cause of the events, and who mediated in obtaining the permission of the church official, he was exhumed and burned that evening along with his coffin, in a place far from the town.

But he began to appear to many people at night and, moreover, even after his corpse had been dismembered. Three weeks after he had been decapitated, there were signs that his corpse was alive with blood coursing through it, for he was drinking his fill of fresh blood. Traces of still-fresh blood were discovered on the outside of the coffin.

12.
THE VENERABLE BENEDICTINE
SISTERS OF THE JAROSŁAW
CONVENT, 1748–1757
 Jarosław, Podkarpackie Province

Source: *Dekret z wizyty generalnej kościoła i konwentu jarosławskiego wielbnych panien reguły Św. Benedykta roku pańskiego 1757...*, Wrocław, National Ossoliński Library, 101/II, fol. 207v.

An excerpt from the inspection reports of the bishop of Przemyśl, Wacław Hieronim Sierakowski, an active proponent of religious reform. The bishop gently admonishes the nuns of the Benedictine convent in Jarosław for numerous baroque and superstitious oddities (e.g., forbidding the burial of dogs in cemeteries, or remarking on believers who nibble alabaster figurines in the hope that they possess healing powers). One passage concerns upiórs and suggests that the nuns may have occasionally performed procedures involving the bodies of the deceased.

Nuns should have no fear of nocturnal horrors due to rustling or rapping sounds at night, or if they dream of the dead rising and walking after death, or some imaginary terrors, for these are scarcely believable, and we know that just, God-fearing folk have nothing to fear. A bad conscience cannot always be in fear. That is why, in his epistle, Saint Peter boldly asks, *Quis est, qui vobis noceat, si boni æmulatores fueritis. ... Timorem eorum ne timueritis non conturbemini*, which means, “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good. ... Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled”. Hence, even if some person has been defamed for being an *upier* after death or for appearing to someone, knocking things over, moving them from their rightful place, or rearranging them, the nuns should not immediately suspect anyone, open up graves, examine bodies, turn them face down in their coffins, or decapitate them, and they should instead notify the clerical office in cases of a similar kind and await a resolution or prescribed methods, such as church exorcisms, holy water, relics, Agnus Dei, etc.

13. THE PLAGUE IN KUCHA VILLAGE, 1762

Kucha, Khmelnytskyi Oblast, Ukraine

Source: *Relacyja rewizyi die 12. Februarii 1762 anno, zesłanej z Kamieńca do wsi Kuczy Królewskiej, w kluczu sokoleckim leżącej, a tenucie JWJM pani Humieckiej miecznikowej koronnej, wdowy, National Museum in Kraków, Czartoryski Collection, 3849 III, p. 305.*

Edition: E. Kaźmierczyk, "Zaraza we wsi Kuczy w 1762 roku jako przykład postępowania wobec morowego powietrza na wsi w epoce nowożytnej", in *Prace Historyczne* 141, no. 3 (2014), p. 670.

An excerpt from a report most likely prepared by an officer sent from Kamianets-Podilskyi to the village of Kucha, located approximately 60 kilometres to the east, in connection with a suspected outbreak of the plague in February 1762. Despite its laconic, official style, the report also emphasises that the corpses were red in colour, which is consistent with the stereotype of the upiór.

Primo. The inspectors arrived at the village and began shouting for people to come out and answer questions about the disease that had broken out there. But from a distance we saw a group carrying wood and kindling to make pyres. We called out to them from afar, asking what the pyres were for. They replied that they were going to burn *upiers*. The villagers had brought three bodies, and they were severing their heads. Standing downwind and watching from a distance, we noticed the corpse of a man who had died at the Ruthenian New Year, and it was red from his feet to his hips and brown from his hips to his head. The other two corpses, a boy and a woman, bore the same signs as the first. The peasants were severing their heads, cutting out their hearts, chopping the corpses to pieces, and burning them.



14.
A LIVING UPIÓR, 1771
Bilobozhnytsia, Ternopil Oblast, Ukraine

Edition: E. Kaźmierczyk, "Zaraza we wsi Kuczy w 1762 roku jako przykład postępowania wobec morowego powietrza na wsi w epoce nowożytnej", *Prace Historyczne* 141, no. 3 (2014), p. 665.

A protestation from the Terebovlia municipal archive, stored at the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv.

After the plague had broken out and begun to rage, the nobleman Stefan Krzywicki of the aforementioned property in Białobożnica, who earned a good income (as emphasised above), mingled with the superstitious villagers at first, gathering them together in taverns. When his subjects wanted to leave the Białobożnica farmstead to save their hopes and their lives, he convinced them not to do so but, instead of appeasing God's wrath for their burning sins and reconciling with Him, urged them to seek other gods, as in "Is it because there is no God in Israel that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub, the God of Ekron?"

Moreover, he promised his infected subjects that the plague could be cured by witchcraft and even pretended to be a living corpse and thus a seer and sorcerer, or as it is termed in Polish, "a living upir".

A certain nobleman, Czajkowski from Wiśniowczyk, was sent directly to the property in Białobożnica. When the nobleman arrived at the aforementioned property in Białobożnica, they jointly persuaded the subjects to practise a variety of superstitions forbidden by the Christian faith.

Finally, following his orders, groups of them dragged dead bodies out of their graves in Uniate cemeteries, and, also in accordance with his superstitious assumption that they were dangerous *upirs*, he ordered that the corpses be beheaded in the cemetery at once. He also ordered that people drink plague-infected blood from the severed heads in order to restore their health. He ordered that the headless corpses be taken to the very boundaries of the village and burned in a fire.

IN
DEFENCE OF
UPIÓRS



15. A STRZYGA FROM SANDOMIERZ, 1693

Sandomierz, Świętokrzyskie Province

Source: Stefan Żuchowski, *Process Kryminalny o Niewinnej Dziecią [...] okrutnie od Żydów zamordowane...* (Sandomierz, 1713), fol. Q2v.

Stefan Żuchowski (1666–1716), a priest in Sandomierz, was an obsessive anti-Semite. Based on his false accusations, a group of Sandomierz Jews was found guilty of ritual murder. In this erudite work, he attempted to prove the legend was true. Interestingly, he also added the story of an upiór whose execution he claimed to have witnessed with his own eyes.

Para. 126: Due to the aforementioned vices, the following odd things befall the dead we call strzygas or upiórs: they eat the shirts they are wearing, and blood pours out of them after their death. They themselves cannot know it, for they are innocent, but they were delivered by accursed midwives who had struck pacts with the Devil concerning entire households and families, to make bizarre things happen to them after their death, and some of them would perish, as occurred on 6 March 1693 at my parish church in Sandomierz, where a dozen or so weeks later a woman was discovered in her grave, chewing her own shirt, which had to be pulled from her teeth by force, and when her neck was sliced through with a spade, blood flowed from the corpse as if she were alive. This I witnessed in horror. However, placing a stone in the body's mouth can also break this pact should one prefer not to chop off the head.

16. AN UPIÓR AND AN UPIERZYCA, 1716

Source: Jerzy Gengell, *Eversio Atheismi, Seu Pro Deo contra Atheos libri duo...* (Braniewo: Typis Collegij SJ, 1716), pp. 122–123.

Jerzy Gengell (1657–1727) was a Jesuit who fought with Cartesianism and atheism. Chmielowski (see 18, below) described him as his “benefactor at school” (and was probably his student). One passage in his *Destruction of Atheism* is devoted to upiórs and she-upiórs

(*upierzycas*). The following excerpt was later cited by both Rzączyński and Chmielowski (see 17 and 18, below).

This has occurred many times here in Poland as well as in Ruthenia, in Lithuania, or in Hungary, as confirmed by many genuine examples, and I myself have often heard from trustworthy eyewitnesses that a dead body has been found that not only failed to decompose after such a long time but also remained flexible, ruddy faced, and likewise moved its head, mouth, tongue, and sometimes even its eyes, swallowed the shroud it was wrapped in, and even devoured parts of its own body.

Occasionally, such a corpse has been seen to rise from the grave by itself, to wander around farmsteads and crossroads, and to appear to various people. Moreover, it will even attack some people and try to strangle them. If it is a man, such a corpse is called an *upier* (from the Ruthenian) or an *upierzycza* if it is a woman, which is to say: made of feathers, that is, with a feathered or downy body, because either it is light and agile in movement, or feathers of another type can be used in witchcraft, or because being light and lively makes it suited to movement, or else because feathers of this sort might have been taken from the dead person's pillows and, after being burned to ash, scattered over the corpse.

Furthermore, there can be no other satisfactory reason for a corpse to be lithe and agile than that a demon, with God's consent, as a result of a previous pact with a witch to perform sorcery, has taken possession of such a corpse (sometimes even that of a holy man). The demon will then proceed to do harm through the agency of the corpse until the witchcraft is stopped. Therefore, as is the custom in Poland, it is recommended that the witchcraft be brought to an end by beheading the corpse with a spade.

Some people defend this manner of dealing with a corpse by arguing that consideration for the living is more important than for the dead, and such a deceased person is thus rendered a kindness if prevented from being possessed by a demon. It is better that he remain headless with no demon than that he have both head and demon. After all, should such a corpse return to life as a person, it stands to reason that he would not disagree. Let us add that if such a corpse were to begin harassing the living, he should all the more so be dismembered. Others,

however, flatly deny that such actions could be lawful (and the Response from Our Inspectors in Rome from 5 May 1696 concurs).

It is permitted and even recommended to take action against witchcraft using medical remedies, as well as exorcism, ecclesiastical sacraments, invoking the Saints, etc., and destroying signs through which a demon inflicts harm, yet without resorting to any other witchcraft, empty observance, sin or godlessness.

17. A WOMAN FROM KLEPARZ, 1624/1721

Kleparz (currently a district in Kraków)

Source: Gabriel Rzączyński, *Historia naturalis curiosa Regni Poloniae, Magni Ducatus Lituaniae annexarumque provinciarum in tractatus XX divisa* (Sandomierz: Typis Collegii Soc. Jesu, 1721), pp. 366–367.

Gabriel Rzączyński (1664–1737), a Jesuit naturalist, authored a compilation on the natural history of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the chapter “On the haemorrhaging of corpses”, his work also touches upon the topic of upiórs, copying the text by Gengell (see 16, above) and adding the story of an upierzycza from Kleparz, outside Kraków.

I shall now recount an astonishing case of blood flowing from a corpse, taken from manuscripts, while omitting many similar cases. In February 1624, a woman died in Kleparz, outside Kraków, and was buried. Soon afterward, another woman from the same house followed in her footsteps, as did her child. The magistrate sent medics and surgeons to make sure no signs of plague were to be found in the house, but there were none. Several days later, another woman died in a different place, also with no traces to suggest the plague. It was thus concluded that a witch was behind it all and responsible for the deaths of these women. After conferring, the body of the first woman to have died was dug up. She was found face downward, her body all red from head to navel, and she was chewing her shroud. Her head was therefore cut from her body using a spade with a sharp iron blade. The woman had been buried some three weeks earlier, but after her beheading, a gallon of fresh blood gushed out of her body, and thus people who were in great danger regained their safety.



I have heard tell of people who are remarkably eager and always ready to decapitate a corpse with a spade, merely because it appears to have the colour of a living person, blushes, or spouts blood. Those who possess no notion of physics are astonished, the witless yell about impending witchcraft, and the fearful prefer to burn such bodies as quickly as possible. They ought to listen instead to the opinions of doctors and anatomists and (especially) weigh things up thoroughly before delivering any blows.

18. *NOWE ATENY, 1754*

Source: Benedykt Chmielowski, *Nowe Ateny albo Akademia wszelkiej sciencyi pełna, na różne tytuły, jak na classes podzielona. Mądrym dla memoriału, Idiotom dla nauki, Politykom dla praktyki, Melancholikom dla rozrywki erygowana. Część trzecia albo Supplement* (Lwów: Drukarnia Pawła Józefa Golczewskiego, 1754), pp. 247–257.

Nowe Ateny was the first Polish encyclopaedia. Written by Benedykt Chmielowski (1700–1763), the priest of Firliejów (currently Lipivka in Ukraine), it differed greatly from Diderot's *Encyclopaedia*. Chmielowski is regarded as the embodiment of mid-eighteenth-century Polish obscurantism, though he does make charming use of authoritative ancient writings. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the third part of *Nowe Ateny* contains the most comprehensive Old Polish text on upiørs.

Concerning Upiers

This matter also pertains to witches and their godless work; I have thus found a place to recount my own experience. I admit that I have yet to read any author on this matter concerning upiers, although I should like to find one. But all the (innumerable) authors who have written about witchcraft and witches have also mentioned upiers, without using the term. The Ruthenian lands are teeming with beliefs, stories, and affrays regarding upiers. They understand upiers to mean none other than sorcerers or witches who consort with demons, with whose assistance they take dead bodies from the grave, using the partially decomposed, malodorous corpses to infect people, horses, cattle, swine, geese,

chickens, etc. Particularly in the past dozen or so years, a great many cattle have perished, and few ploughs can be seen, but many debts have been incurred, and larders stand breadless, but their rafters are draped with animal hides; the village dogs are plump, crows and ravens sated on carcasses while the people starve and eat meagre fare, and a great many milking cows have been thrown out as dog food. Wherever the plague appears among people or cattle, the common folk constantly see (so they claim) people in white walking around at night, or horses, or white hounds. They hear rustling noises, footsteps, people riding; all of which simple folk ascribe to upiers alias corpses possessed by demons, believing that demons collaborate with witches who crave people's doom.

I write this not as if it were some article of faith or infallible fact, for I could be one against many. I am merely noting what I know of this matter for the interest of my noble reader, so that, having considered public opinion and certain people's views, he would not contradict or simply refute it but would say and agree with me that it is no implication, inconvenience, absurdity, or implausibility but something probable.

Many wise men claim of upiers that women employed as midwives, particularly careless commoners, who are in fact often witches, will entrust the infant's body to a demon as soon as it is born. And even though the demon may be driven away with certain words during holy christening, it will still, according to the pact made with the midwife, lay claim to the dead body of the person entrusted to it as a child. If this body is not protected by an exorcism or by holy objects placed in its mouth, the demon will possess the rotting, stinking, naturally infectious corpse, adding some devilry of its own. It will inhabit the body and raise it up from the grave (with God's permission) to infect those who least expect it, particularly those asleep who are not protected for the night by holy water, crosses, relics, or a godly life, or it will also infect horses, cattle, swine, chickens, geese, etc. Whatever pact the midwife struck with the demon to give it a child's body will be fulfilled. If she has allowed it to hurt children by infecting them alone — or as they say locally, felling them — it will only remove these children from the world of the living. If she has set a condition to bring doom upon old people, horses, or cattle, then it will fell old people, cattle, and horses. Sometimes, a witch will make a pact with a demon, to whit, you, demon, will continue to

cause harm, until your head is cut off with some instrument or another, or until your heart is pierced, until your right leg is cut off, or until you are burned. If whoever performs the funeral rites for the corpse fails to uncover the pact, nothing will help. Then the best way is to burn it, so all the conditions will end up as ash, which, once burnished by fire, has no power to infect. Without delving too deeply into such midwives' pacts with demons for acquiring children's bodies, a demon may — with God's permission — also possess a baptised person (or sometimes a saint, for greater effect) and torment him for many years whilst he is alive. Since there are innumerable possessed people, why should it not take control of a body, that is, a corpse (from which the innocent, just soul has often departed), after death, to roam around in it, infecting people? Is that so implausible? *Qui potest plus, potest et minus* [One who can (do) more, can also (do) less]. That is why many suspicious bodies are dug up in times of plague, disease, or death and are found to be as bloody as the living, even if they were as pale as a sheet when alive, often with their shirts between their teeth. If they are beheaded and their hearts pierced, blood pours forth profusely from them, which among the common people of Ruthenia is a sign that the body is a cruel, highly destructive upier. Both naturally and as decreed by God (*Pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris* [For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return]), a dead body should putrefy and rot, unless GOD Almighty has preserved that body as a receptacle for the Holy Spirit. There are many such bodies in Catholic churches, especially in Rome. *Non dabis Sanctum tuum videre corruptionem* [Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption]; or the embalming described by Herodotus and Diodorus conserves bodies, as with the Egyptian corpses known as mummies, which have been preserved for many millennia. Likewise the bodies of monarchs and lords given similar treatment or having the benefit of a place with earth rich in salt, potash alum, or saltpetre, which has the power to conserve; or due to dryness and heat, which are also favourable. Nevertheless, these bodies contain no blood. To this day in Naples, the blood of the martyred bishop Saint Januarius still seethes in an ampoule near his body, yet not inside it. Occasionally, blood will flow from a murdered person in the presence of their killer, either miraculously or out of odious antipathy for the murderer. According to Delrio, Kircher, and Schott, this

may sometimes occur in the presence of an innocent, but that is the work of a demon, wishing to cast aspersions on someone's innocence or to punish them. Sometimes, according to naturalists and anatomists, the body of a young person who was of kind temperament while alive and died suddenly from being shot, drowned, or hanged will have ruddy cheeks and flowing blood for several weeks, which renders them suspicious. Several authors maintain that a person who dies on certain days in March will also have blood flowing in them. Those who died long ago have not blood but a secretion or discharge. Blood also flows from cadavers dissected at academies, even if they have been dead for several days. And if none of these signs are present, and if the corpse has been dug up from the grave several weeks after death yet is still whole and ruddy cheeked, if it is decapitated with a spade or an axe and blood trickles out as if it were alive, if it is lying face down with its shirt in its teeth — as seen with many corpses — and if it is not the body of a holy man (for his life may have seemed rather inglorious and without penance to everyone), then it must be an upier or upierzyca, so named because of feathers, because they move as quickly as if they had feathers and wings. One may not generalise about all corpses, saying that their blood does not die, for this has also been observed in other corpses that are above suspicion of being upiers and that display none of the aforementioned signs and whose blood cools slowly, thickening, dying, and decomposing along with the body and its humours directly after the soul has separated from the body. But if blood remains in a dead person with none of the aforementioned justifications, then one must acknowledge that the body is an upier possessed by a demon that warms the blood so that it reanimates the body, maintaining its vigour in order to harm people, cattle, etc. Regarding blood, it is well known that, in a living person, it originates from digestive lymph, that is, from the best parts of food that has been eaten and well digested in the stomach. Then the digestive lymph moves from the stomach through the mesenteric vein to the liver, where it turns into blood, and only then travels from the liver through the greater and lesser veins to reach the entire person, animating and invigorating him. However, since corpses do not eat, how can this digestive lymph and blood originate within them and preserve them? All moisture and blood should rot together with the body, but since it does

not rot in upiers, as has been frequently found when beheading them, nor is it a miracle, or due to the properties of the location (since others do rot), or for some reason unknown to us, then it must be the work of a demon, for it is their heat that preserves the blood, their instrument for harming and infecting people, horses, or cattle. This body is not resurrected by the demon, which is the work of GOD himself, who resurrected the Prophet Samuel and prevented the effort of a witch, even though the witch took the credit. And he has resurrected so many dead and will resurrect everyone on Judgement Day, but a demon only enters a dead body through an accidental union and uses it to infect people, with God's permission.

Since demons often assume the appearance or indeed the material body of a horse or dog, then why not possess human corpses? A demon once brought a comely woman to a debauched person but, after the sexual act, the carcass of a beast lay in the bed, as mentioned by William of Auvergne.

Demons, particularly earthly, subterranean, and graveyard demons, like to frolic in and among graves. According to Saint [Mark] (5:2), "There met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit". Since it was able to bring a living man out of a tomb, how much easier it would be to take a corpse that is unable to resist. A demon can possess a beast, a hog, or a tree, so why not enter a corpse? Demons may perhaps be thwarted by relics placed with the body, or by exorcism and incantations, or if GOD should forbid it. Demons grew accustomed to corpses in pagan times, for if any great magnate, warrior, or sage died, they were hailed as gods, demigods, or heroes because demons would enter their bodies and perform ostensibly wondrous feats in them, thus confirming the superstitious errors of the pagans. So it is hardly surprising that demons continue to be drawn to corpses, with so many witch-women bound to them by pacts, and turn those corpses into prodigious pests, although without deifying them. Indeed, there is no doubt that necromancers exist and, according to Isidor and Sanchez, raise the dead by making use of blood and certain spells with the assistance of Satan, and there should also be no doubt that witches can use the power of a demon to draw upiers from their graves in order to harm people. Simon the Sorcerer made Saint Peter witness a corpse moving with the intervention of a demon,



and so may any witch cause a corpse to roam around at night through this same infernal minister.

The good angel was able to grab the prophet Habakkuk, who was bringing food to workers in the fields, by the head and bear him to the city of Babylon to feed the prophet Daniel, who had been thrown into the lions' den (Daniel 14). The devil was able to take the Holiest of Men, Christ, our Lord, up through the air onto a porch of the Jerusalem temple (Matthew 4). Therefore a bad angel, like the good one, could carry away the dead body not only of Habakkuk but of Peter or Paul to wherever a witch tells him; if he dared to carry Christ away, why not some sinful body? But none of this concerns the relics of holy bodies, for GOD himself guards those sacred deposits: *Custodit Dominus omnia ossa eorum (Justorum), unum ex his non conteretur* [The Lord keepeth all the bones (of the righteous); not one of them is broken]. And, just as GOD performs miracles through the bones of his holy servants, so have demons devised a means of marvellous evildoing using the dead. The great philosopher, naturalist, theologian, and saint Albertus Magnus wrote that, in an instant, a demon is able to transport oxen and calves to appear to someone, and it can possess them, walk around infecting others, and can do the same with dead human bodies.

For our sins, Lord GOD permits demons to spread sickness and plague by the putrefaction of grain, water, vegetables, and air, and so may he spread plague through corpses from graves and carcasses from the roads, fields, and streets, for such things are naturally prone to infection since they are already putrid. Wise men may reproach me that, according to theology, no body can pass through another body, which GOD alone can do, because, having been born to a chaste mother from a closed womb, he passed through her body and came into the world, then passed through the stone of his tomb. After his resurrection, he came to his apostles when the gates were closed and passed through. But if a corpse has not yet acquired the gift of material subtlety (for there has been no general resurrection) and might never acquire it for this corpse may be one of the damned, how could it get out from beneath a gravestone, buried as deep as a man, then once again enter someone's dwelling through a closed door? I shall reply to these objections that two bodies cannot fit in a single space through mutual penetration, and

that no upier or corpse may pass through stone or earth, even with the power of a demon, for that is the work of GOD alone. But since a demon is dreadfully powerful, it can move a gravestone aside without a lever, open up a marble or bronze coffin, shift earth without gravediggers by the power of locomotion, and move a corpse to wherever it has agreed with the witch according to their pact. It can also easily open the windows and doors of a residence while the occupants are fast asleep. If a thief can break in when he wishes to rob someone, then why should a demon in possession of a corpse not find a way to enter somebody's residence and carry out its intentions, with Divine permission?

To further prove the existence of upiers, I propose a noteworthy argument: the Euchologion (Trebnik) alias the Slavic Ritual contains a horrifying prayer adjuring demons not to touch dead bodies, nest in them, or inhabit them but to go to hell instead. This prayer is most terrifying and lists the great works of God in both creation and redemption, the very mention of which damns and adjures a demon to abandon a body. The prayer is read over corpses immediately before burial, especially those that are limp, red, flexible, loose, and suspicious. If the Greek Church denied that demons inhabiting corpses were such evildoers, then why would it adjure them? Certain sciolists and braggarts, clinging to their opinions like a burr on a sheepskin coat or misled by the flawed reasoning of others, maintain that neither witchcraft nor upiers exist abroad in countries such as Italy, France, Spain, England, and Germany. If this is recounted by a traveller, I can tell him politely that, having passed through so many towns, villages, and provinces, having met so many worthy people, admiring, examining, and observing their mores, manners, and appearance, he must have forgotten or was too ashamed to ask whether they had witchcraft or upiers. That would require time and familiarity and especially a general curiosity not only to observe individuals, walls, and towers with one's neck craned upward but also to peer at the ground to see what lies beneath and what evil or good can emerge from it, such as upiers. Second, I can retort that those sciolists are mistaken that witchcraft or witches do not exist in foreign countries; in fact, that is their abode. In the second volume of his *Dies caniculares*, Simone Majoli, the learned bishop of Volturara, who was not Polish but Italian, lists authentic, odd tales of witches taken from respectable authors and

others he had witnessed himself. Another, Martin Delrio, a Jesuit born to a Spanish father in Germany, also not of Polish nationality, has written copious, bizarre texts on sorcery and sorcerers that have not been criticised by anyone and are regarded as the infallible truth, and he gave his book the title *De Disquisitionibus Magicis*. I spoke to one respected theologian, freshly returned to Poland after living in Italy for many years, and the Italians had asked him all about this business with upiers in Poland. When he told them and gave a full account, not only did they not reject it but without doubt confirmed that demonic malice was possible with God's permission. If one assumes that witchcraft or upiers do not exist in foreign countries, it does not necessarily follow that there are none in Poland, particularly Ruthenia, since not every land will produce everything. India is brimming with gold and diamonds and Malabar with pepper, yet Poland is not, unless they are imported. According to Pliny, the Psylli tribe residing in Africa could kill snakes with their venomous breath alone, so why not other nations? No nations' or countries' temperaments, characters, and inborn qualities are alike. Some nations and countries have no herbs that could be used as a sign or a pact between witches and demons. Elsewhere, great severity reigns, and axes, swords, and bonfires await transgressors, so even those who are most willing to sin refrain from sinning for fear of punishment. In pagan times, when to worship and invoke demons was the religion, the nation of Mars in Italy practised witchcraft most of all and, taught by Circe the enchantress, infected the whole of Europe, so one could hardly say that witchcraft is unheard of in foreign countries. The Thessalians, a nation close to Greece, also indulged in soothsaying and witchcraft and infected the Greeks, then the Greeks infected the Ruthenians, who in turn infected the Poles; first their neighbours and then their lords. It could have been swiftly eradicated had the sword of justice not been rusting in its scabbard and the truth not been gagged with gold.

Standing with me to defend the existence of upiers are the Jesuit priest Jerzy Gengell, a wise and saintly *pater*, my benefactor at school, in his book *Eversio Atheismi*, and another Jesuit priest, the new Pliny the Naturalist, Gabriel Rzączyński, in his works on natural history. They refer to upiers as *cadavera incantata*, enchanted corpses, with stories and reports from trustworthy people to prove that upiers exist. You may

read both authors should you doubt my opinion. Some may ask why the Lord GOD Almighty would need to use witchcraft, witches, and upiers to punish the world if he could destroy the entire world in an instant merely with his most holy will, if he could speak and it would be done. No one could doubt this, but the Lord GOD wishes to punish us using his creations, for sinning by and with his creations. Second, in order to exterminate natural things, he seeks natural ways mediated by some creation to soften the blow rather than acting directly by himself, which would be mortal. The Lord GOD could have cured Naaman of leprosy with a word, but he did not, telling him instead to go to the River Jordan. He could have cured a blind man with his omnipotence, yet he mixed his spittle with mud, anointed his eyes with it, and only then was he cured. He could have cured every sick person, but he created herbs, apothecaries, and medics as of yore. He could have said to Sennacherib's troops, "drop dead at the gates of Jerusalem", but as of yore, he sent an angel to strike them down by night. He could have made the walls of Jericho crumble in the blink of an eye, but as of yore, the priests and Levites paraded around outside them for seven days carrying the Ark of the Covenant and blowing trumpets (Joshua 6). So in this circumstance as well, the Lord GOD could eliminate all of humanity with one edict, but as of yore, he prefers to use witches, witchcraft, upiers, disease, war, and various ways to make them conclude about the Creator that, if a feeble creature may flog a sinner in such a way, what might the almighty hand of the Lord God himself do?

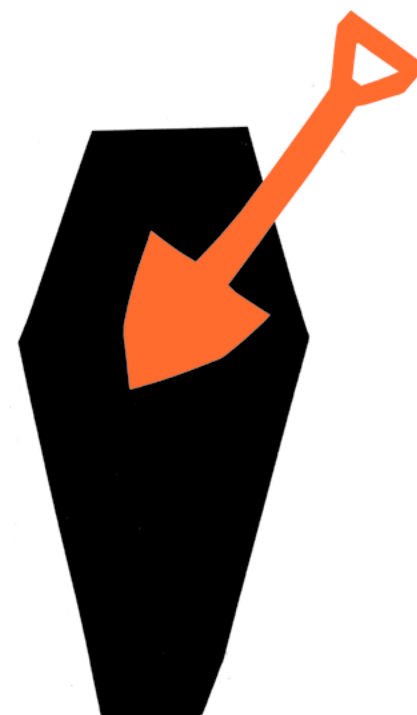
19. UPIÓRS AND *MALEFICIA*, 1753

Source: Marcin Józef Nowakowski, *Kolęda Duchowna Parafianom od Pasterzów dla wygody wszystkich od jednego sprawiona* (Kraków: Michał Józef Antoni Dyaszewski, 1753), pp. 147–148.

Little is known about Marcin Nowakowski (1704–1753), but he was probably born into a peasant family from the Sanok area of Podkarpackie Province. His *Kolęda Duchowna* was highly regarded even by enlightened clergymen. It contains a long list of superstitions that the author deemed worthy of particular condemnation, including an excerpt concerning witches and upiørs.

The sorcery known as *maleficia* is different and is the worst, for those who practise such sorcery first abandon our Lord God, then join the devil. Earnestly renouncing Christ, they make sacrifices to the devil. They even give their own children to the devil, or they kill them before christening and teach others to do the same, promising them luck in earthly matters. They persuade people not to confess, etc., or compel them to steal the Blessed Sacrament from their own mouths. If a witch acts as midwife for a woman, she will try to make her give the newborn infant's body to the devil before it is baptised, yet that will not keep its soul from being saved if it is christened and lives according to God's commandments. The devil will possess its body after death, however, to perform strange acts, and then it is called an upier. Therefore, it is a good idea to keep a watchful eye on children before christening (which should be arranged as swiftly as possible), to make it difficult for any woman to hold them, as one never knows if they are a witch.

ENLIGHTENED UPIÓR HUNTERS



20.

THE POLISH UPIERZ, 1722

Letychiv, Khmelnytskyi Oblast, Ukraine; Węgorzewo and Harsz,
Warmia–Mazuria Province; Wschowa, Lubusz Province

Source: Georg Andreas Helwing, "Von dem Polnischen Upiertz oder sich selbst fressenden Todten...", in *Breslauische Sammlungen*, Winter-Quartal (1722), pp. 82–88.

Georg Andreas Helwing (1666–1748) was descended from a German family of pastors in Węgorzewo. While pursuing his clerical career, he also studied botany, medicine, and ancient history. During the plague epidemic, he would look after patients personally. His observations regarding upiórs, with collected comparative materials, formed the basis for one of the first articles attempting to provide a rational explanation for believing in upiórs.

Regarding the Polish Upierz, or A Corpse That Devours Itself and
Related Fears of Human and Cattle Plague

§ 1

In connection with the incidents of cattle plague mentioned above in section 2, article 4, we hereby inform you of the following event and reports of what in Poland and hereabouts are called *upiers*, although the event occurred last autumn. The report on this matter was penned by a famous theologian from Węgorzewo, Master Jerzy Andrzej Hellwing, and reads as follows: "Letters from Kamianets report that cattle have once again started dropping dead in many localities of Podilia. The plague is also said to have broken out in Zlatyczew, and it might be thought to have been caused by an upierz. Therefore, the bodies of several recently deceased people were exhumed, and one such corpse among them was discovered and beheaded, after which the deaths immediately ceased and the sick cattle recovered. A type of human corpse that devours itself in its grave is known as an *upierz* or *uspierz*. If one begins to devour itself, then the plague will surely appear and will not abate until the corpse's head has been severed from its body. Nevertheless, in the majority of such cases, this should be regarded as a tradition founded mostly upon an extraordinary faith". The newspapers had nothing more to say.

That such a superstition may be found in Poland and Podilia is unsurprising, as people there have frequent contacts with Jews and infidels. The only astonishing fact is that among our local Protestants in Prussia, too, one can still encounter people engaged in similar foolery, who fail to realise that anything with no basis in the Holy Scriptures or with a natural cause should be deemed an old wives' tale, a superstition, and idolatry. For when we were suddenly ravaged by the plague in 1710, particularly in the large, densely populated village of Harsz, many human lives were lost. In this regard, several people proposed to exhume the corpse of a person who had died of the plague — namely, one who had shown signs of beginning to devour himself in the grave. The proposal was approved by the majority, including the most distinguished residents. They ordered the gravediggers to exhume several bodies, and, as none who had been devouring themselves were to be found, they insisted that more bodies be dug up to find the right ones. However, since these exhausting tasks were hard for the gravediggers to perform, they contrived to prepare one corpse by cutting and tearing it around the shoulders and arms to make it look as though it had been devouring itself. The execution was duly carried out: a few funeral dirges were sung, after which the body was solemnly beheaded with a spade, then thrown into the grave, together with a live dog. But what happened afterward? The deaths continued, and people began to die suddenly, until almost no one who had taken part in that procession was left alive. As a rule, then, such matters are based not merely on superstitions but also on gross falsehood. Very similar events took place many years ago, when I was still a schoolboy here in Węgorzewo, in the case of a buried brown-bread baker named *Wilun Daniel*. The then sexton, Balzer Schwarzbach, was walking past the grave one evening on his way to set the church clock. It was then that he heard something making slurping sounds, and the slurping grew louder and louder. The only explanation he could find was that it must be the buried baker, so he informed my late father, the local pastor, and some others. In the meantime, a crowd of people had gathered, and all who placed their ears to the grave said that the corpse was slurping. When those sounds and noises were still audible at dawn, however, it was discovered, following a more detailed investigation, that close by, in the church wall,

there was a nest of young owls that were emitting hissing and slurping sounds. Another time, a widow from the village of Harsz had her only daughter buried. She would visit the cemetery regularly to grieve, then claimed to hear her daughter making noises and was afraid that she was not actually dead but had been buried alive. She beseeched them to dig up her daughter, yet no one was willing to allow the woman — whose name was *Maria Kostropcka* — to do so. Due to her rash attempts, they had to threaten to notify the secular authorities to have her suitably punished unless she confessed the truth and declared whether she had indeed heard her daughter making noises. She then admitted to lying: she had not actually heard it but had in fact dreamt it. Such is therefore the case with other corpses that similarly slurp and devour themselves, about which Mister Christoph Nicolai, the former priest of Schweinitz, wrote more in his extensive coverage of the topic in chapter 28 of his *Historischen Zugabe*, where one may read about it. That is all concerning the aforementioned report.

§ 2

At this juncture, perhaps my kind readers would be amenable if I were to take this opportunity to quote an excerpt on this topic from my manuscript *The History of the Spread of the Great Plague among People in the Years 1701 to 1716*, chapter 5, § 2 (notes), which speaks of the Wschowa Epidemic of 1709 and reads as follows:

“Among other peculiarities of the Wschowa Epidemic, one should not forget that certain people are eager to attribute the spread of the plague above all to some strange force that originated in a woman who died there and was said to have been a witch. She was found to have an extremely hideous grimace at the moment of her death and was fiery red in her coffin, a large raven appeared at her funeral, and when she was re-exhumed (understandably outside the town), her face was found to be bloodied. Thus, people were not afraid to number her among those corpses (with alleged sorcerous powers and characteristics) who slurp and devour themselves in their graves. Even vagabonds began unashamedly singing songs about it in public marketplaces. Supposedly, corpses of this kind had also been dug up in neighbouring Roman Catholic localities and were found to be all bloody and gnawed. For that reason, as

per the customary relatively rapid procedure, their heads were finally ordered to be severed. See *Kleine Fraustädtische Pest-Chronika* by Fryderyk Lauterbach, part 1, § 5, pp. 23–28, where he also strongly condemns such reprehensible superstition and at the same time rejects the evil tradition from Wschowa with appropriately fervent zeal. This superstitious tradition is nothing new since, in his book *De plica*, chapter II, *Hercules Saxonia* long ago strove to acquaint Poles and Germans, in particular, with the great renown of these witches. Here I would like to append his words in full, especially regarding a Polish woman whose case exactly resembles that of the woman from Wschowa”.

[Helwing then cites *in extenso* an excerpt from *De plica* (see 2, above), and, in order to explain upiorism, he lists a number of cases where people were buried alive.]

21.
LETTER BY BISHOP CZARTORYSKI,
1739

Source: *Epistola Patoralis Celsissimi Principis ac Domini D. Theodori Ducis in Kiewan & Zukow Czartoryski Episcopi Posnaniensis: Ad universum Clerum & populum ejusdem Diocesis*, Varsaviæ, in Collegio Scholarum Piarum [1739], fol. H1v.

Prince Teodor Kazimierz Czartoryski (1704–1768), the bishop of Poznań, was related to the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski, and presided over an extensive diocese, which also contained the archdeaconry of Warsaw. He was an enlightened man who fought against superstition, although, as a clergyman, he did retain a certain conservatism. His pastoral letter of 1739, which most certainly was read out in churches from Poznań to Warsaw, was the first such high-level reaction to the issue of upiørs in Poland.

*XXIX De miraculis, obsessis a dæmone,
maleficiis et strigibus vulgo Upiowie*

[...] Fourth: one must understand that upirs, which in ancient times were unheard of by the Church of God and even nowadays exist nowhere else but Hungary, Silesia, and Poland, are merely illusions formed by the

human imagination, terrified by some horror. Therefore, it is strictly forbidden, on pain of excommunication, for anyone to attempt to decapitate the dead or employ any such superstitious methods, since natural instincts and laws in force in every nation require that the graves and bodies of the dead be left undefiled. Without our written consent, no one is even permitted to dig up a grave where a body lies buried, even if only out of interest or for observation. Hence, should any member of the clergy exceed his authority by allowing it, he will be punished accordingly.

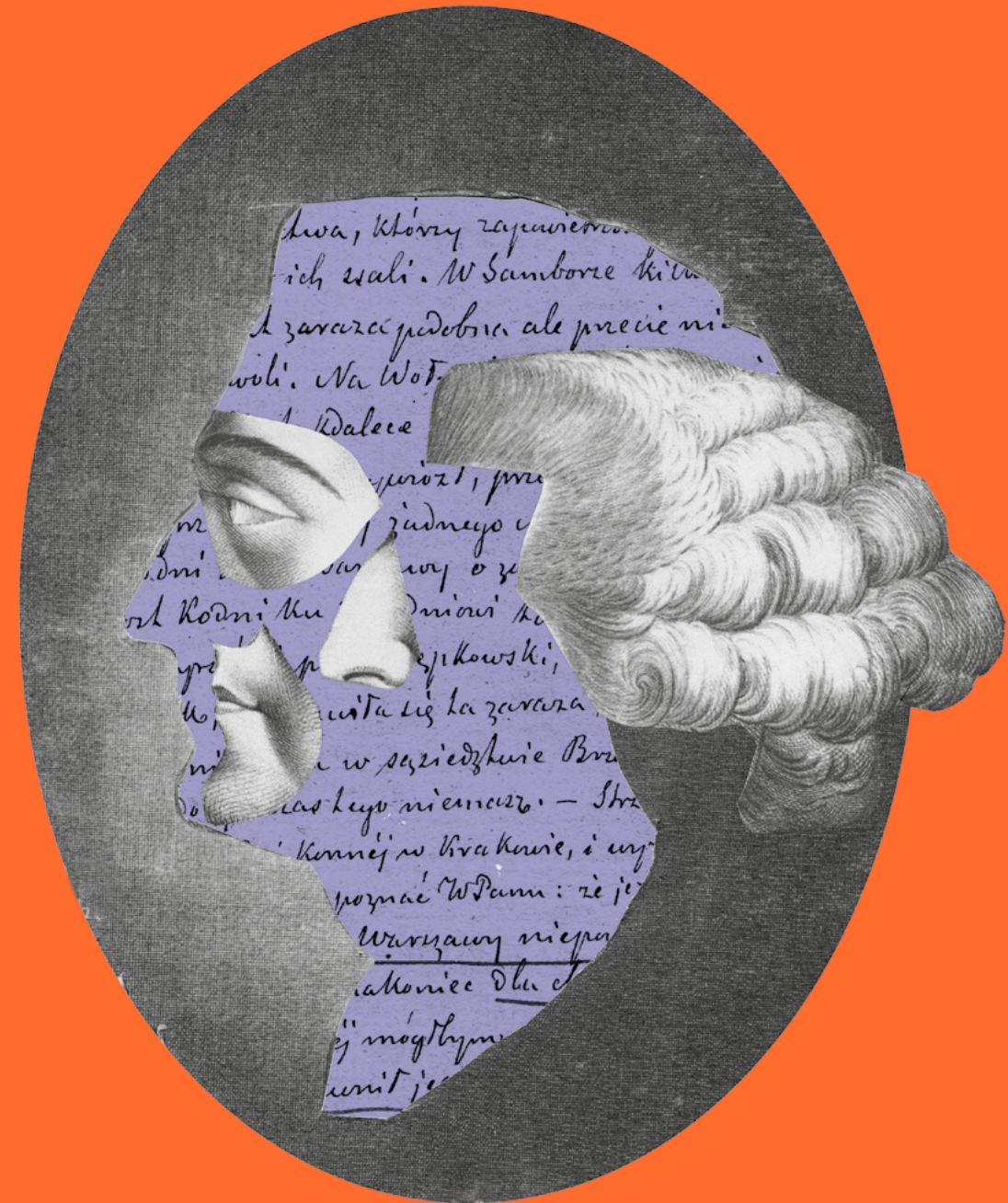
22.
NIEUPIOROWIARSKI, 1771
Podilia, Ukraine; Zhyrovichy, Hrodna Oblast, Belarus; Warsaw

Source: *Monitor*, no. 22 (16 March 1771), pp. 168–175.

This letter to a Warsaw journal, unambiguously signed with a pseudonym ("Nonbelieverinupiór's"), was probably written by Jan Bohomolec or his brother Franciszek, the editor of *Monitor*. The report from Podilia seems credible, however, and contains many details that concur with other sources.

Honourable Sir Monitor,

It is for the first time that I dare to address you, Sir. Since I have long respected Your Honourable Self and admired the great wisdom that I have gleaned from reading your inestimable and never sufficiently lauded writings, I was prompted to seek out the honour of epistolary correspondence with you. A particular zeal for the greater good, which each should possess according to his field, has currently filled me with such a need. A letter addressed to me from Podilia regarding the circumstances of the plague that rages there has so intensely affected me that I would be unable to bear it were I not to complain regretfully to you, Sir, as a public judge and rectifier of morals, about a certain depravity that is newly practised in our country. I confess that, from all of your writings that I have had the honour to read, Sir, I felt an unspoken delight, never so pronounced as in those where you rebuked the major superstitions that abound in our Poland. One of these is the ludicrous yet extremely



pernicious opinion regarding upirs that is commonly held by the populace as well as by more notable individuals whereby they are said to be some sort of people who rise from the dead, emerge from their graves, and roam around at night frightening people, killing, committing many other evil deeds, and engaging in all sorts of antics in the process. Others even perform this same function while still alive, and such people tend to be more numerous in times of prevailing plague. As I recall, Sir, you have written such fine criticism of this chimerical species and debunked this utter foolishness so thoroughly that one might have expected there would soon be no more upiōrs left in Poland. Yet so much evil can be wrought by prejudiced beliefs instilled from the cradle and by a dearth of sound education! During the recent plague that was rife in parts of Volhynia, Podilia, and Pokuttya, even though upiōrs had supposedly become extinct, innumerable erstwhile upiōrs came back to life, and new ones were born. In this regard, Sir, I shall communicate to you a passage from the letter sent to me from Podilia:

“The plague spread mostly through objects purchased, found, or stolen in infected areas, but since people were dying in droves, the fickle, superstitious populace blamed it on upiōrs. Therefore, rejecting all proper remedies, they attempted to ward off this misfortune with nothing but witchcraft. Less enlightened clergymen also had a part to play, and almost all of those involved concealed the fact. People held processions around towns and villages, sprinkled holy water on all the highways, erected blessed aspen crosses, and placed pans of holy water in the ground beneath those crosses, thus arming themselves against upiōrs from elsewhere and keeping them away. In order to prevent locals from rising from the grave, processions were also led to all cemeteries to bless them with holy water. It is difficult to describe what occurred in the villages. Some held such processions on Thursday night going into Friday, while others rang bells nightly from sundown to cockcrow, believing it would scare away upiōrs. False prophecies also multiplied. Some foretold that the plague would abate once the leaves fell from the aspen trees. Others said it would coincide with the start of carolling. Believing these deceivers, some people even celebrated Christmas before the calendar date. But this, like many other deeds of the gullible commoners, is simply laughable. The most heartbreaking and enraging fact is that there were ‘upiōrs’ who identified

and denounced not just dead but also living upiōrs, slandering many innocents with claims that they had caused people’s deaths. Believing this and blinded by superstition, a mob in the village of *** severed three people’s heads with unspeakable cruelty. In the town of ***, another three were similarly accused and burned alive. One hears of equally lawless atrocities in many other places as well. I omit the number of dead bodies that were suspected of being upiōrs and dug up from their graves, beheaded, had aspen stakes hammered into their chests, had splinters driven under their fingernails, were burned to ash, etc. There was nobody to dissuade the volatile peasants from such insanity, as their betters had gone away to escape the plague. The remaining landowners, leaseholders, and even certain clergymen condoned these notions”.

My dear Sir, here I must cry out in bewilderment! What inhumanity is this? People who were innocent in life, now deceased, are reputed to have committed crimes in that unfeeling, inert state and are dragged out of their graves, beheaded, quartered, burned, etc. Albeit savage, this treatment of the dead is less poignant, for at least they cannot feel the tortures inflicted upon them. But to kill the living so cruelly, merely because an ignoble mob of lowly individuals undeserving of credence has accused them of some chimerical homicide solely on the grounds that people are dying of the plague in droves — this is some kind of bizarre cruelty and insanity. Do these presumed upiōrs, or rather blackguards, truly hold the fabric of human life in their hands? Are they the origin of the plague? If they have the power to sow plague whenever they wish and blindly kill whomsoever they desire, then why, I ask, do they not always do so? Why are they so peaceful most of the time and only become malicious and cruel occasionally? Why do they not immediately kill those who decapitate them with spades and condemn them to the pyre? When are they born? When do they start to become upiōrs? This I can fathom not in the least.

But I am hardly surprised by the fatuous populace. My greatest cause for astonishment is that some eminent people, who are more enlightened than the common folk, still corroborate the opinions of this intolerable fanaticism, and those who could and should put a stop to the vile effects of this superstition simply take an indifferent view or endorse it by virtue of their own authority.

Sir Monitor, since you have adopted the position of universal healer of all depravities, evil opinions and conduct, have mercy and deign to cure this lassitude regarding the plague, while those who ought to be doing so remain lax. If a superstition is harmless to the greater good of humanity, it may even be somewhat tolerated. But when things reach a point where they transform into cruelty, when innocent people themselves are sacrificed due to the gullibility of the foolish populace, when even more of the country's citizens fall prey to it than to the plague itself, and when it is the cause of so much evil — then we must stand up and abolish it by any means.

This inhuman torment of innocents before and after death makes it difficult to lead many people away from fantastic beliefs concerning upiórs and also serves as the greatest proof that they truly exist for those who are even prepared to become martyrs for it, as for an article of faith. I have had occasion to speak to such people, and when I proved with sound arguments that the existence of upiórs should be counted as belonging to old wives' tales and childhood terrors, some of them disputed it and appeared convinced they had beaten me with the words "Upiórs do exist, because it is a certainty and confirmed by numerous examples that some people have indeed been removed from their graves after death and beheaded, or their bodies burned to ash. This is the obvious, incontrovertible truth! That is the powerful, fundamental evidence!" But what more can one say when during the current plague living people suspected of being upiórs are cruelly murdered without even waiting for them to die?

Yet how can it be that such grim cases are unheard of in other more-refined nations, which are more enlightened and cautious than we are and are concerned about their integrity and anything detrimental to it? After all, they have never heard of upiórs, with or without the plague. Here, however, it is remarkable that, although such rough justice is applied to upiórs, there is no shortage of people who become upiórs voluntarily during a plague, frightening people at night, making mischief, stealing, or taking peasants' oxen out of barns, as was noted in many parts of Volhynia during the current plague. However, the miserable fate that ought to befall such scoundrels and criminals falls instead upon those who dare not do anything of the kind, who do not become

upiórs, who refuse to let themselves be slandered, and who totally reject their allegedly well-known mastery over human life and death. Depravity and lawlessness are capable of arousing anger in anyone, and it is fit for every good and ardent person to devote himself as much as he is able to their abolition. And it seems to me that, even if the widely held view in our country regarding the reality of upiórs were indeed based on fact, it needs to be rejected and eradicated from people's minds if only because it entails such abominable consequences.

Even if you, Sir, deem these remarks of mine — which it has been my honour to expound to you in the present letter with the candour and simplicity of my heart — to be provincial and otiose, I hope that you will at least deign to accept them in the spirit in which I wrote them, as proof of my true zeal for the common sodality and of the fact that I seek the pleasure of counting myself as and being, with the most diffident respect,

Your most humble servant,

Nieupiorowiarski

This 3rd day of March, in the year of our Lord 1771, Zhyrovichy.

23.

THE DEVIL IN HIS TRUE FORM, 1772

Source: Jan Bohomolec, *Diabeł w swoiey postaci z okazji pytania: jeśli są upiory, ukazany*, 2nd ed. (Warszawa, 1775), pp. 1–9.

Jan Bohomolec (1724–1795) was an enlightened Jesuit who fought against superstition before the order was dissolved and later served as the parish priest of Skaryszew and Praga. Bohomolec is regarded as the antithesis of Chmielowski, and his *Diabeł w swoiey postaci...* is a two-part work that delves into the belief in upiórs using theological and scientific arguments. The author refers to the writings of philosophers, physicists, naturalists, and medics. At the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries, the Polish intellectual elite felt that Bohomolec's book had overcome belief in upiórs throughout the lands of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (although this turned out to be untrue).

Answer to the question: Do upiórs exist?

You ask me, Most Honourable Sir, whether upiórs exist. The answer to this question is both difficult and dangerous. If I say they do, the scholars will sharpen their pens; if I say they do not, the populace will be angry with me. Perhaps it would be best to refrain from answering and to seek a broader explanation if, indeed, hope remains of finding any reliable, honest witnesses. But for anyone seeking the truth of the matter amid the many diverse yet invariably dubious tales, it will be like peering through a kaleidoscope: instead of one truth he will see many, and if he wishes to distinguish truth from make-believe, he will ruin his eyesight in vain.

[...]

It is commonly believed that upiórs are bodies of the dead that have been in some way revived, so to speak. Without awaiting the general resurrection, they rise prematurely from their coffins and leave their graves to raid houses, strangling whomsoever they can, and, if unable to defeat someone, will wrestle with them, murder them, suck their blood, or climb onto altars, bleed on them, break candles, and commit numerous other indecencies and murders.

But who is to blame? Not the soul that formerly animated the body, for it has passed from the earth into the hereafter. Not the body, for it cannot move by itself. Not some good angel, for they are assigned to people by God to protect them, not torment them. Therefore, the common folk conclude that it is the work of evil spirits.

This opens up a twofold problem. First, can Satan move a body, that is, a material thing, and control it? Second, if he does have that power, is it with God's permission? The answer to the question hinges on these two problems. For if demons have no power to control material things, or they have that power without permission, then all tales of upiórs are either the result of brain damage or human, not satanic, anger. Thus, the response to these problems should satisfy your curiosity, Most Honourable Sir, as well as my own desire to live up to your expectations.



24. THE DEVIL IN HIS TRUE FORM, PART II, 1777

Source: Jan Bohomolec, *Diabeł w swojej postaci albo o upiorach, gusłach, wrózkach, losach, czarach; z Przydatkiem o ukazywaniu się duchow y odpowiedzią na zarzuty przeciwko pierwszej części czynione* (Warszawa, 1777), passim.

The second part of Jan Bohomolec's book directed against the belief in upiórs expands and completes his intellectual struggle against superstition.

Part Two — Is Satan Permitted to Take over Dead Bodies?

[...]

6. [Upiórs are] the most terrible of all terrifying terrors and are more hideous and pernicious than demons. [...] [Upiórs] are like *kołtuns* [Polish plaits], which exist only in Poland and are unknown in foreign lands. Someone must be very sick in the head or have *kołtuns* themselves if they cannot differentiate between an upiór and a *kołtun*. [...] The only similarity between *kołtuns* and upiórs is that Poles would have nothing like *kołtuns* if they did not partake of vodka, neither would they see upiórs if they abstained from that beverage.

7. Nevertheless, the comparison between upiórs and *kołtuns* would anger me less if upiórs only implied healthy looking, warm, ruddy cheeked corpses, since that can depend on the site of their burial. The fact that thoroughly innocent Satan is blamed for such signs — I can see no connection whatsoever in this proof. If a corpse is ruddy and looks healthy, it is believed to be inhabited by Satan, just as if one were to see a cloud turn black, then blue, then red, and conclude that it was the work of Satan, or if one saw a healthy person suddenly turn pale and immediately chopped off their head, since neither pallor in healthy people nor redness in the dead is natural, even though there may be countless causes of redness in corpses or pallor in the living.

[...]

19. [The simple folk] complain that Satan has been harassing them. When? At night. In what circumstances? While travelling on foot, occasionally when returning from taverns. Why not during the daytime? Why are people in carriages never attacked? Where are these houses that are raided? In villages and sometimes in small towns that differ from villages only by dint of their churches and taverns. But why not in Warsaw? Why not Kraków, Gdańsk, or Toruń? Whose houses are raided? The cottages of peasants. Why not their masters' manors and palaces? Sometimes, albeit infrequently, they have been said to wander into the house of a parson. But why not a canon or perhaps his reverence the bishop? Apparently, the devil, who they believe can make the world quake, fears the solitary flintlock that the snoozing guard is forced to lift to his shoulder in front of the palace. I can see no other reason for these satanic deeds than that they must be devils of the lowest order, uncouth peasants who know nothing of politics if they fail to visit those whom they ought to visit first. Why do they never enter fortresses, even though there would be room for hordes of them inside, and they would find suitable company for themselves? And if, as it is claimed, they also suck people's blood, would it not be better sucked from those who eat biscuits, sweets, and pheasants than from those fed on cabbage and brown bread?

20. I cannot suppress my anger when I hear tell of the remedies prescribed to combat upiórs. First, placing pig manure in a corpse's mouth. O mindless superstitiousness! What do you think you are doing? Putting dung into a mouth anointed with blessed oil and sanctified by contact with the body of Christ — is there any greater, more repulsive sacrilege? Why do you do it? To obstruct Satan? Is dung more effective against demons than crosses, prayers, the sacrament, or holy sites where bodies are deposited? I am afraid that, if the authority or zeal of wise, devout priests proves ineffective, such theologians may teach us to place greater trust in rubbish, filth, and dross than in Christ himself.

21. A second remedy is to disinter a body, sever its head with a spade, and place this head between the feet ... to tear out its heart ... or pierce it with a stake ... to impale the whole body ... or burn it up completely...

I imagine, Honourable Sir, that you are wincing at such savage butchery. I must confess that I am unable to hold back the tears as I write. I pity not the dead, for they are without feeling, but the living, for they should recognise this as depravity.

[...]

23. A third remedy is to drink the blood of a presumed upiór mixed in with a beverage. We condemn citizens of Canada for having eaten prisoners-of-war, but in fact they are less blameworthy. Even though they ate people, they did so to satisfy their hunger, whereas these are imbibing festering pus. And to what end? To protect themselves against Satan. Although the Canadians' acts were sickening, they did serve the intended purpose. These recent acts of eating decaying flesh are much more abominable than eating fresh bodies since they do not and cannot serve the purpose for which they are intended.

24. A fourth remedy is to place the body face downward and bind its hands with the ends of a maniple. Thus bound, so they say, it will not roam around, except perhaps at the new moon. Thank God, at least, that they seek the assistance of a sacred object. But what has the moon to do with this? Why is an upiór unable to roam at the full moon and the quarter moons? Could the prince of darkness be afraid of moonlight? Why does he not fear its light when lying face downward? How does the maniple acquire such great power? If the sanctity of graves, the house of God, altars, and church prayers are unable to restrain Satan, then how could a mere maniple constrain him?

25. A fifth remedy, taken from I know not what manner of book, is used to identify upiórs. It entails putting a virgin lad bareback on a black foal that has not yet mounted a mare and leading it across all the graves in a cemetery. Once the horse has been beaten, spurred, and flogged until it will walk no further, an upiór is said to lie buried there. I know not which is the more ludicrous: wishing to divine news of things to come from the flight of birds or the entrails of cattle, as was the pagan way, or attributing a prophetic spirit capable of identifying demons to a foal that has yet to see a herd — not to mention a black, unbroken foal carrying an innocent youth on its bare back.

[...]

39. Some would say that since upiórs strangle people, suck blood, and kill, how can they be mere imagination? I am not saying that these effects are delusions and deceptions of the mind. Those who believe genuinely do feel upiórs strangling them, they feel the blood dwindling in their bodies, and they truly die in the end. That is why I say that all this is caused by the imagination, not the wrath of Satan. This will not seem strange to those who are aware of the power of our imagination.

[Footnotes:]

[...] A certain nobleman, already advanced in years, was taking care of some children while the headmaster was away for a short while. He lay down on a table that evening, but the next day he was found dead in the middle of it. They asked the children, who had been asleep in their room, what had happened. They replied that they had heard a rustling sound in the night but had not seen what it was. This was enough to confirm suspicions that it was an upiór. The rustling they heard led them to suppose that an upiór had wrestled with the deceased, and his sudden death made people realise that it had strangled him. Thereupon, some of the townsfolk ran to the mayor, insisting that he forthwith attempt to rid the town of this unwelcome guest. Unwilling to act in haste, the mayor wrote to the superior of the monastery a few miles distant, where [another] body was being stored temporarily, asking the reason for the unusual positioning of the nobleman's body. Instead of a letter in reply, a friar was sent, a rather simple-minded one, but an expert in upióricide. Upon arrival, he immediately began lecturing the theologians themselves on upiórosophy. "When I opened up that coffin", he said, "I could instantly tell it was an upiór by the way it looked. So, wishing to deceive the devil and spare people from his attacks, I turned the corpse face downward after tying its hands with a maniple. In that position, it couldn't walk, except at the new moon. However, because it had been moved earlier, it also started to roam around, but that will soon cease". He then drew out an axe from beneath his cloak, saying, "This iron has oft been stained with satanic blood, and it would lunge at Lucifer himself. Today it will drive the devil out of the corpse and

banish fear from the living. It will cause turmoil in hell and bring joy and peace hereabouts". Once he had delivered this speech, they offered him some cordial from the cellar, to give him courage, but, wishing to face Satan right away, he said he would not have a drink until he had drained the upiór's blood. With those words, he climbed down into the grave and sliced off its head. After dealing with Satan so courageously, he emerged triumphant from the grave, carrying a bloodied, or, rather, pus-soaked shroud, which he wrung out into the refreshing drink he had been handed and quaffed it without a frown. When asked why he had done so, he replied that it was the most effective remedy against upiórs, and whoever drank it was invulnerable to harm or attack. Some people regarded the bloodstained shroud as holy, while others murmured that it was a vile superstition. But, based on his own experience and proud of his latest revered, salutary exploit, he said, "In this matter, it's better to believe me than some superfluous scruples. If my actions displease the theologians, let them go out and face upiórs with their quill pens. But I assure you, without my weapons, they won't free the world of upiórs but fill it with them instead. What's more, I'm an upiór myself, and my head should also be chopped off when I'm dead" (not when he was alive, mercifully). Those present were struck with fear and astonishment and fell silent for a while. Then, glancing at one another and plucking up courage, they asked what the signs were. He replied that upiórs have hair growing only down their medial line and not under their armpits. Fine proof indeed! But they had to believe him, for he was still gripping the bloodstained axe in his hand.

[...]

While enumerating his heroic deeds in skirmishes with upiórs, the aforementioned friar also said, "When I was a sexton in Red Ruthenia, an eighteen- or twenty-year-old lad was buried in the church. His soul may have been pure, but he had a malicious demon inside his body, for he immediately started climbing onto altars, bleeding on them, breaking candles, and committing other indecencies. Upon seeing this, I ordered that his tomb be opened up that day and decided I would chop his head off at eleven o'clock that night". Another noteworthy fact: Why not decapitate him in daylight? Why at night, and why at eleven o'clock sharp?

But it is futile to ask those who believe in upiórs, for they are not in the habit of substantiating their words and will spin suspicious yarns rather than offer proof or refer to the authority of a theologian. "After making these arrangements, I passed the time with my monastic brothers until that night, when I heard the clock strike eleven. Fearing that my tardiness would allow the upiór time to rise from his grave and upset all my careful preparations, I hurried to the tomb, a flaming torch in one hand and an axe in the other, but found his coffin open and empty. Thinking that the upiór couldn't have gone far from his tomb so quickly, I began searching every nook and cranny. And there I found him, hiding under coffins, lying on his back with only his legs visible. Putting down my torch and axe, I launched my attack. I dragged him by his legs while he pushed me away with his arms and bit hold of the coffins with his teeth. As soon as his head emerged from beneath the coffins, he rose up and seized me by the neck. That satanic stratagem would've been the death of an inexperienced knight. Releasing his legs, I first tried to get my neck free. As we struggled, the torch was knocked over and went out. What would inexperienced folk have done then?! The fear alone would've been enough to kill them. Yet I must admit that even my fearless heart succumbed to dread, albeit for the first time. Nevertheless, I defeated the upiór and beheaded him, then went back to my brothers with the same cheerful face as when I'd left".

All of this I heard from two trustworthy individuals.

25. VAMPIRISMUS, OR PRETENDING TO BE UPIÓRS, 1793

Source: Ludwik Perzyna, *Lekarz dla włościan, czyli rada dla pospólstwa w chorobach i dolegliwościach naszemu krajowi albo włościanych* (Kalisz, 1793), p. 205.

Ludwik Perzyna (1742–1812) of the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God was a practising physician and the first in Poland to suggest that possession might actually be a symptom of mental illness. His book *Lekarz dla włościan...* (The Village Doctor) was intended to be popular and available to every priest and literate village elder, to

make sure peasants applied appropriate medical cures instead of superstitions.

On Possession / De Dæmonomania

[...]

This type of possession amounts to four types of illness or skulduggery, namely: pretending to be upirs (*vampirismus*); pomposity (*coribantismus*); self-delusion or divination (*fanatismus*); and sorcery or wizardry, witchcraft, and magic.

Pretending to be upirs is still prevalent among schismatics in Wallachia, Greece, Moscow, Little Russia, and even among our Uniates in Ukraine and Polesie. I have known living people who were proud to be of the genus living upirs, who would meet and consort with dead upirs and pretend they had the power to spread or quell epidemics, plagues, and pestilence. However, even though Jan Bohomolec's respected work titled *Diabeł w swojej postaci* and clerical missions from those parts have eliminated this skulduggery, a few lairs of superstition and stupidity still remain in obscure nooks and crannies.

26.

LIVING UPIÓRS IN PODILIA, 1800

Near Hlyniany (currently in Lviv Oblast) and Podilia, Ukraine

Edition: *Dziennik podróży Stanisława Staszica: 1789–1805*, ed. Cz. Leśniewski (Kraków, 1931), p. 357.

Stanisław Staszic (1755–1826) was one of the foremost figures of the Polish Enlightenment. He was a priest, a mason, a naturalist, and a political and educational activist, as well an active politician in the Duchy of Warsaw and Congress Poland. His travel diary contains mostly natural and historical information but occasionally includes valuable observations of local customs.

Inhabited by people of little faith, Podilia has more superstitions than any other Polish region. Upiórs both living and dead still roam all around the area. The living ones are tricksters who pretend to commune with spirits that reveal the burial sites of upiórs responsible for prevailing



disasters, such as droughts, excess rainfall, crop failures, hail, fires, cattle and human plagues, etc. Such swindlers usually choose three Thursdays and on those nights go off into the forests or the far steppes. Once they have muttered words and drawn signs there, they will shout, after selecting a spot that echoes. Then, on the fourth Thursday, they will point out where the upiór lies. The corpse is disinterred, its head is cut off and placed between its feet, and a hornbeam-wood stake is driven through it, etc. Such are the teachings of Orthodox priests, and this stupidity still flourishes in the lands of the Russian partition. It is in decline in the imperial Austrian partition under Joseph II, where these superstitions are dying out due to the establishment of separate schools for seminarians. Young students from the seminaries founded under Joseph will not create superstitions; on the contrary, they will purge the old ones. But people have less faith in them and prefer to believe the old deceivers they drink with in the taverns. Once those have finally died out, people will become accustomed to it and shake off all this current stupidity.

27. UPIÓRS IN TEREBOVLIA, LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY Near Terebovlia, Ternopil Oblast, Ukraine

Source: Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, *Wieczory Badeńskie czyli Powieści o strachach i upiorach...* (Kraków, 1852), pp. 86–87.

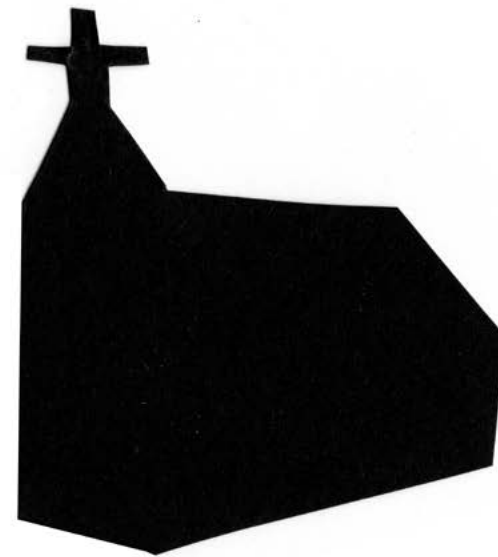
Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński (1748–1826), one of the most outstanding figures in Poland at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, amassed a vast library and facilitated work on a monumental dictionary of Polish. *Wieczory Badeńskie* was published posthumously, more than twenty-five years after the author's death. Ossoliński himself admitted that he wished to continue Bohomolec's work to fight against superstition yet settled on the form of short stories. This tale reflects the ubiquitous eighteenth-century fear of upiórs.

The Upiór

All throughout the Trembowla area, there was talk of nothing else but upiórs. In one village it was said that, two miles away, they had crept

into a cowshed at night, untied cattle from their mangers to make mischief, then tied the cows and oxen into a circle by their tails. In the place where this was reputed to have occurred, nobody had heard about it; but the locals said that in the village where the news had come from, an upiór had wandered into a peasant's abode at suppertime, knocked the spoons out of everyone's hands, and guzzled all the food on the table. Elsewhere, a hungrier one had sucked the blood of everyone living under the same roof, leaving just one infant alive in a cradle so it could breed, just as only one of the Fabii brothers remained following the defeat at the Battle of the Allia. In another place, an even more obnoxious visitor settled in and strangled half the village. There, an insane, filthy upiór ran into a tavern, yanked a Jew's beard, and flicked him so hard on the nose that he fell and died due to the fall. The crossroads, highways, paths, forest edges, mountains, and ravines were beset by evil. Whenever travellers would meet, they would first ask about any upiór sightings. Every last one of them thanked God that the evil had passed them by but claimed that the area was swarming with them. In a few dozen Ruthenian and several Latin [Catholic] parishes, priests ordered that bodies be dug up from their graves and summarily decapitated and that their hearts be pierced with stakes. Upiórs' blood was being peddled for more than caramelised vodka, and their powdered blood fetched even higher prices than *fleur de sel*. Yet one should know that, according to experiments recorded by Calmet, these two medicines are more effective against plague spread by upiórs than four-thieves vinegar is against the black plague.

ETHNOGRAPHIC WORKS



28.
UPIÓRS AND CATTLE
 Red Ruthenia (currently in the borderlands of Lviv and
 Ivano-Frankyvska Oblasts), Ukraine

Source: Ignacy Lubicz Czerwiński, *Okolica Za-Dniestrską między Stryjem i Łomnicą...* (Lwów, 1811), pp. 205–206.

In times of cattle plague, the common folk look for holes on graves in cemeteries, which, if found, are filled in thoroughly to prevent upiørs from clambering out and striking down their cattle.

Belief in upiørs, particularly among northern peoples, is so common that evidently the teachings of enlightened people have yet to fully eradicate it, and simple folk often dare to claim they have witnessed such things with their own eyes. Nevertheless, for them, the devil is capable of anything and is regarded as an inescapable adversary, hence all manner of bad luck is never attributed to normal causes but to the devil himself. Since a peasant's fortune depends almost entirely on the health of his cattle, if he is suddenly divested of them, he believes it is due to extraordinary powers and terrible evil, and only the devil himself would seem capable of possessing both. Filling in the holes relies on the paradoxical reasoning that, on the one hand, simple folk believe that satanic forces can move mountains and shift clouds, yet, on the other hand, they dare not open a little hole plugged with a handful of dirt.

29.
UPIÓR
 Chęciny, Świętokrzyskie Province

Source: "Baba Chęcińska", *Pamiętnik Sandomierski*, vol. 2 (1830), p. 94.

According to local tales, an upiór is a person endowed with a double life: after one life has been lost, it lives another by night. Such folk are born with their teeth and look ruddy throughout their lives, but their complexions often remain unchanged after death, which sorcerers consider a trait peculiar to upiørs. An upiór will cause disturbances and damage at night, either to household objects or religious paraphernalia.

The methods applied to strip them of their second life are barbaric yet were employed right up until recent times! Although Bohomolec's famous work *The Ukrainian Upiór* did curb superstition, it was unable to eliminate it completely.

30.
AS RED AS AN UPIÓR
 Świętokrzyskie and Lesser Poland Provinces

Source: Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki, *Przysłowia narodowe: z wyjaśnieniem źródła początku, oraz sposobu ich użycia: okazujące charakter, zwyczaje, i obyczaje, przesady, starożytności, i wspomnienia ojczyste*, vol. 1 (Warszawa, 1830), pp. 143–163.

(Folk Saying) "As Red as an Upiór"

Belief in upiørs is widespread not only among our people but also among our Slavic kin. Dead people are so named if they rise from their graves to torment the living. They suck people's blood, sometimes grabbing them by the neck as if to strangle them, and anyone killed by an upiór will also become one after their death. All attachments and family bonds seem meaningless to upiørs, as they will attack their friends and relations, regardless. Among those who believe in upiørs, some affirm that it is a punishment brought down upon man by God himself, while others see it as an accidental misfortune. Others still (who are in the majority) are of the opinion that it only befalls the excommunicated and schismatics who were buried on hallowed ground but could find no peace there, so they returned to torment the living. In our country, it is widely believed that anyone who commits suicide will become an upiór. A characteristic feature of upiørs is that, should a corpse's face remain healthy in colour, it is surely an upiór. In our language, this superstition was the origin of the saying "as red as an upiór".

In addition to the aforementioned traits, the body fails to decompose, its blood stays fluid, and its limbs remain supple. Upiørs' eyes are always open in their graves, and their nails and hair keep growing as if there were vital forces within them. Upiørs will cease their nocturnal perambulations once their bodies are exhumed, decapitated, and burned.

"I still recall", said Tadeusz Czacki, "how they would hunt for upiórs, sever their heads with a hoe, then drive aspen stakes through their hearts".

In 1826, I was in the town of Słupia, at the foot of the so-named Bald or Holy Cross Mountain in Sandomierz Province. A few days before my arrival, a young man had shot himself in the town. His remains lay unburied for a long while, as the townsfolk would not allow such bodies to be interred on municipal land for fear of upiórs. After much effort, his body was buried in a far-off, solitary hole. The young man soon became an upiór and terrorised the town and the surrounding area. Almost every night, he would leave his grave by the light of the moon to attack both grazing cattle and passers-by. Astonishingly, the upiór even struck a brawny farmhand and wrestled with him for a long while. Here, I will cite the report of this event, which I heard from the lips of the victor himself: "It was a clear night", he said, "and I was out on watch. I walked past a barn, looked at the door, saw it opening by itself, and through it came the one who had killed himself the week before. I recognised him immediately for he was still wearing the same round cap and robe he was dressed in after his death. Cold sweat broke out on my forehead, and my hair stood on end in fright as I saw him coming toward me, arms outstretched as if to embrace me cordially. I wanted to cry out, but my tongue lay heavy in my mouth. I wanted to cross myself but couldn't lift my hand. Then the upiór drew nearer and grabbed me around the waist. Terrified, I quickly found the strength to seize him by the neck, and, standing like two mad dogs on their hind legs, we wrestled for quite a while. The moon was obscured by clouds, and it was so pitch dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. Fortunately, the cock crowed, and I looked around for the upiór, but it had vanished".

Here I should mention a detail I learned from one of our scholars. While he was passing through a small town in Kraków Province, a village woman asked him to write some words on a piece of paper for her. "The organist would have asked for too much, and I have no money", said the woman, in tears. He agreed to her request and was surprised to see that it was a passage from the Gospel of Saint John. He asked her what the paper was for. "Oh", she replied, "my [husband] died a year ago and turned into an upiór. We wish to free him from it, so his soul may rest in peace! The neighbours have already dug him up, and one



who knows the method will now break the enchantment". After writing the desired words, he accompanied the woman to the cemetery. The exhumed corpse lay upon the ground with a few villagers standing around it. One of them placed an aspen-wood star and cross on the deceased's chest, then cried, "You rise from the grave, ignoring the sins of Adam and Eve! Instead of diminishing them, you exacerbate them, you accursed upiór!" He then seized the corpse by the ear, whispered some words at length, placed the piece of paper on his chest, and threw him back into the grave.

Upiórs rise from the grave at night while the moon is full and follow in the path of its beams. As they walk, they attack people, biting them and sucking their blood. The only traces of injury to be found on those they attack are small red or bluish marks, similar to those left by leeches.

[...]

Not only do upiórs suck the blood of people, thus taking their lives, but they can even cause cattle plague. Therefore, in such cases, peasants from villages in certain provinces such as Red Ruthenia search for holes and openings on graves in cemeteries and fill them in thoroughly, so as to prevent upiórs from rising and striking down their cattle!

Our Romantic poets certainly knew how to exploit this superstition.

[...]

We use the expression "as red as an upiór" when somebody blushes in embarrassment, fear, or due to sudden exhaustion.

31.

KUREJKO

Łosice, Mazovia Province

Source: Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki, "Ruś Podlaska", in *Zarysy Domowe*, vol. 3 (Warszawa, 1842), pp. 349–350.

There is much talk of fresh examples of upiórs. In a village near the town of Łosice, there lived a peasant, nicknamed Kurejko [Fowler] because he could perfectly imitate the crowing of a cock.



Since his ox had died and he was no longer able to plough his fields, he hanged himself in despair. Being a suicide, his body was taken out into a field and buried in a deserted spot beneath a pine. Soon after his death, Kurejko became an upiór and came back from the grave, causing mischief, frightening people, and blocking their path, on foot or on horseback. Every Tuesday and Thursday, he would visit his old house, where his wife and orphaned children still lived, to crow like a cock, whistle, and dance up in the attic. The villagers patiently put up with this for a whole year, but when he began to make trouble in the town of Łosice itself, they turned to their Orthodox priests for assistance. It was ordered that Kurejko's half-decayed body be dug up, decapitated, and the head placed between his feet. The upiór was thus pacified and never rose from the grave or scared the living again. This occurred between 1825 and 1826.

32. UPIÓR

Area around Zamość and Hrubieszów, Lublin Province

Source: Józef Gluziński, "Włóscianie polscy uważani pod względem charakteru, zwyczajów, obyczajów i przesądów...", in *Archiwum domowe do dziejów i literatury krajowej z rękopisów i dzieł najrzadszych* (Warszawa, 1856), pp. 521–526.

Upiórs are dead people condemned to eternal damnation after death, and only at midnight are they free to seemingly come back to life and roam the earth, harassing passers-by and causing untold mischief. Among the villagers are wise folk who already know which of their living neighbours will become an upiór after they die. Such people, they say, have wild eyes, their faces are always red, with a snide, malicious smile, and they are huge in size. After they die, their limbs remain supple, without growing cold or stiffening as the dead usually do, and even when their eyes are closed and coins are placed on them to weigh them down, the eyes pop open and their gaze does not fade; their eyes continue to stare as if they were alive, and the dead person's face is almost as red as when they were alive.

Peasants tell of how, not so very long ago, they used to deal with dead bodies that showed signs of being an upiór, and how they went about burying such bodies in order to prevent them from rising and frightening

people after death. When the neighbours had all agreed that, according to the aforementioned signs, the deceased was definitely an upiór, both hands or both middle fingers were bound behind the body's back using fibres taken from blessed herb plants, and it was placed face down in a coffin, ideally one made of aspen wood, or at least its lid. However, they say that these precautions and methods were often of no use whatsoever, and the buried upiór would rise when the time came, causing trouble all around the village. Then the neighbours would gather and make the next of kin accompany them to the upiór's grave to exhume the body. The relative had to sever its head with a spade and place it away from the body, that is, turn its head facing backward and bind its feet and hands with fibres from blessed herb plants. Thus incapacitated, the upiór would never rise and cause trouble again. Occasionally, an aspen stake would be driven through the upiór's heart, from which blood would flow at once, even though its body had been long buried. When an upiór rises from the ground, it is much larger than when alive and possesses superhuman strength. Once it has emerged, it turns its eyes to the east, huffing and puffing furiously, and sometimes flames of hellfire belch forth from its open maw. It will run off toward places for which it had a special affinity or attachment in life to torment and terrify a chosen person, causing their death and taking them with it. Sometimes it will terrorise an entire area, attacking anyone at random. Its strength is unmatched, and a very burly man is required to oppose it, should it begin to grapple with somebody. However, there have been cases where a strong man wrestled with an upiór for a good while, then beat it when the cock crowed, after which the upiór either dropped down dead or dissolved into tar, having first emitted the most dreadful groans. An upiór will normally only show itself at the new moon on a dark night, especially a windy night, or in moonlight on a cloudy night. In spring, when the bark peels away from twigs to make room for new growth, those who are curious to see such corpses go in search of willow wood to fashion whistles, in a place so far away that the willow tree has never heard the crowing of a cock. There, they cut twigs with a new knife that has never been used and craft whistles; these have the ability (if played near a cemetery on the stroke of half past eleven at night) to summon a whole army of huge upiórs to rise from their graves, not only on foot but even on horseback and clad in armour

if they were warriors during their lives. Upiórs often rise without being enticed by a whistle, simply at the behest of a relative or friend, in which case they behave in a kindlier fashion but still cause damage and lead those who wished to see them into damnation. Another type of upiór is the strzyga, whom nobody suspects of being an upiór while alive. But it is still harmful and more harmful than others for it is silent and hard to spot so cannot be decapitated. In Catholic or Orthodox churches, they rise at midnight, loiter around altars, biting, breaking, and spoiling waxen candles, or gnawing and damaging altars and the images of saints that stand on them or hang on the walls. Sometimes, they attack houses, and, with their weird bodies and incredible strength, they envelop sleeping people in their grasp, sucking the blood from them, and whoever they choose will inevitably die shortly afterward. Most fairy tales of this ilk are spread by cemetery gravediggers and beggars who bury corpses, claiming to have heard faint moans coming out of the ground after burials.

33. UPIÓR AND WIESZCZY

Source: Tworzymir [Józef Chociszewski], "Wyjaśnienie początku niektórych przysłów używanych w Wielkopolsce", in *Biblioteka Warszawska*, vol. 1 (1864), p. 271.

As Red as an Upiór

According to popular belief, anyone born with their teeth will become an upiór after death. They will then rise from the grave and cause various harm to people. For instance, they will look around, and, for as far as their eye can see, everyone of the same age as the upiór will die. If, for example, the upiór was twenty years old, then all the twenty-year-olds will die within the radius of the upiór's gaze. Others claim that anyone born with teeth is all-knowing while alive and is thus called a *wieszcz* (our chroniclers, e.g., Jan Herburt of Fulsztyn, have written that some children born with teeth were able to foretell disasters). When such a *wieszcz* dies, his blood remains alive, so he will rise from the grave and ring bells. Wherever people hear the tolling of the bells, they will all die (presumably those of the same age as the *wieszcz*). To prevent one

from rising, a coin must be slipped under his tongue or a sickle placed on his neck. I was unable to ascertain whether *wieszcz* and upiór have the same meaning. In Markowice near Strzelno, something resembling an upiór lies in the church crypt, face downward in a coffin with a sickle on his neck to stop him from rising and immense shoes on his feet. He is visible since the coffin is open. That *wieszcz* also rose from the dead and rang bells, but the sexton caught him as he was ringing, seized him, put him face downward in his coffin, and placed a sickle on his neck. Anyone who becomes an upiór remains red after death, and since redness is unusual in corpses, unnaturally red-faced people are also said to be "as red as an upiór". Belief in upiórs dates back to the dawn of time.

34. ASPEN AND POPPY SEED Volhynia, Ukraine

Source: Tadeusz Jerzy Stecki, *Wołyń pod względem statystycznym, historycznym i archeologicznym*, vol. 1 (Lwów, 1864), pp. 90–91.

Upiór has the same meaning in Volhynia as everywhere else: it is a corpse that rises from the grave at night and sucks people's blood as they slumber. According to popular belief, they can be identified while still alive, for they normally have red faces and look as if they are blushing. After their death and burial, they arise at midnight and walk around outside the windows of houses. Such upiórs are afraid of iron, which is why broken needles (*protyr*) are usually stuck into the window frames. Another method to stop an upiór from rising is to hammer a cross fashioned from aspen wood into its grave and sprinkle poppy seed on it, with the words "You may arise once you have picked up all the poppy seed". Like viburnum wood, aspen must have had mythological significance, and the tree was presumably dedicated to some deity or other, yet people know nothing of this nowadays and merely affirm that Judas hanged himself from an aspen tree, which is why its leaves always shake, even when there is no wind. This tale has clearly been distorted and was concocted much later, because Judas is a figure of the Christian era. Aspen has another function among the populace — for example, it is said that

if a *wid'ma* (witch) is stealing milk from cows, you must hammer aspen stakes into your threshold. The *wid'ma* will then appear and implore you to stop because it hurts her. It is also said that an aspen stake must be hammered into a hanged man's grave to prevent him from rising.

35.

STRZYGA

Near Czersk, Mazovia Province

Source: Kornel Kozłowski, *Lud: pieśni, podania, baśnie zwyczaje i przesady ludu z Mazowsza Czerskiego...* (Warszawa, 1869), pp. 350, 375–376.

Variations of this story are also known from other regions.

A certain nobleman was a strzyga, although absolutely no one knew of it. One day, the nobleman fell ill and died, so he was carried away to be buried like a priest, near the door of the church. But thereafter, something began to frighten people in the church, shattering windows at night, breaking candles, and knocking over candlesticks, but no one knew the cause of these terrors. Then the wife of the nobleman who was buried there announced that she would give thirty coins and one hundred ells of bleached linen to whoever discovered what had caused the damage in the church. For a long while, no one was daring enough to volunteer, but then a girl came forward who resolved to spend a whole night in the church to find out. She took some blessed chalk and a distaff [of flax] with her, but since she was afraid to sit in the nave, she climbed up to the choir loft, drew a circle around herself with the blessed chalk, sat down, lit a candle, said a prayer, and began to spin. At twelve o'clock that night, the nobleman buried near the door came out of his coffin and started to walk around the church. When he spotted her up in the choir loft, he began to scream: "You so-and-so! You've come here to spy on me for thirty coins and one hundred ells of linen?! So, that's how you are! Just you wait; I'll show you!"

With those words, he went to the church door, which opened by itself, then walked out into the graveyard and started to dig up coffins. He had already dug up several and, as soon as he pulled them out of the ground, he would carry them into the church and pile them up under

the choir loft. He was just one coffin short of being able to climb up to the girl, but then the cock crowed, and it was time for the nobleman who was a strzyga to return to his coffin. Then he began carrying the coffins back to the graveyard to bury them as fast as he could, hurrying because his time was running out. Once he had buried all the coffins, each in its place, he walked up to the church door and vanished. The girl, who knew how to read and write, and had a piece of paper, pen, and ink with her, wrote all this down as she sat in the choir loft, but she was so terrified by it that she died up there.

The priest came to the church in the morning, as did people, who were curious what had happened to the girl, wishing to hear her story, but they saw she was dead. Then the priest found what the girl had written and read it out to everyone. The girl was carried away and given a decent burial in the graveyard, then they dug up the nobleman from his grave, chopped off his head, and placed it between his feet. Thenceforth, he no longer frightened anyone or caused damage in the church.

[...]

Upiór and strzyga mean the same thing. There are various ways to deter upiórs from causing damage. If one suspects that a corpse will become an upiór, it can be placed face down in its coffin with its back upward, or one can also cut off its head and place it between its feet. If someone rises from the grave after burial and makes mischief, they must be dug up and the coffin turned around so that the feet are where the head was and the head is where the feet were, otherwise the corpse must be pierced with an aspen stake. After death, a strzyga is invisible by day and will mostly hide high up inside the church, above the choir loft, calling down from there in a range of voices. If a member of the strzyga's family should enter the church and be seen by the strzyga, they will die shortly thereafter. People who are strzygas were born so, and they can be identified if a child is born into the world with its teeth.

36. STRZYGA

Świętokrzyskie Province

Source: Władysław Siarkowski, "Lud z okolic kieleckich. Wiadomość etnograficzna", *Gazeta Kielecka*, no. 25 (26 July 1874), p. 2, and no. 27 (2 August 1874), p. 3.

If a corpse is terrorising people after death and its spirit appears in a house, then the deceased's closest relative must go to the cemetery with a gravedigger to find the grave where the deceased's remains were laid to eternal rest. The grave must be examined carefully for signs of any openings or holes, which must be filled with poppy seed, thus putting an end to all the horrors because, before it can get out of a hole, the spirit must first pick up every poppy seed, a task that will keep it occupied until midnight, i.e., the time when cocks crow and spirits lose their freedom, or so the common folk believe.

If one wishes to ward off a strzyga (i.e., the spirit of a corpse that roams around after death, terrifying people), one must go to the cemetery, dig up its grave, cut off the corpse's head, place a silver fiver and a piece of flint beneath its tongue, then place the head between its feet.

37. STRZYGON

Kraków and surrounding area

Source: Oskar Kolberg, *Lud... Krakowskie*, pt. 3 (Kraków, 1874), pp. 63–68.

A large part of the materials published by Kolberg were gathered by Antonina Konopczanka, based on the accounts of villagers Szkotaczka, Katarzyna Pstrusiowa, and Elżbieta Kostasiowa.

130. A strzygon (sometimes known as an upiór, especially in higher society) resembles a pale-faced person, much like any other, but usually reveals itself by sleepwalking on moonlit nights, although it hides the fact from people. That is why no one can truly tell if someone is a strzygon when they are alive. If somebody is one, they try to keep it secret and



will only display all their habitual sinister behaviour after death (unless they have already given themselves away by sleepwalking while alive).

131. Every strzygoń has two souls — one for good, and one for evil. A confirmed person (someone who already has a second, baptised soul) cannot become a strzygoń. The church has ordained holy confirmation to prevent strzygońs from appearing by driving out a person's evil second soul if they have one hidden inside. Not everyone goes to confirmation, however, and certain people are out of the devil's reach. If an unconfirmed person with two souls dies, their good soul goes into the ground with the body and waits until the evil, unquiet soul that does nothing but frighten people is finally driven out by some means.

132. When a strzygoń dies, its body with the good (baptised) soul is buried in the ground in the usual manner, but its other soul, the evil, unbaptised (i.e., unconfirmed) one, is unable to die. Unwilling to bid the world farewell, it roams around as a frightening figure, dragging its body about like a burden (although it is capable of adopting other forms, as it has a talent for evil). Dead strzygońs, walking with their evil spirits, are particularly keen on frightening people and loitering around churches, where they most like to damage altars and paraphernalia and are very partial to breaking and gnawing waxen candles. Their hour is midnight, after which they hurry back to hide in their graves. Besides scaring people and breaking church candles, they are also fond of leading priests into temptation in their parsonages (by pretending to be young girls, for instance). They are especially averse to bees since their toil produces the wax for church candles.

133. A strzygoń peasant who has risen from the grave at night will go back to his former house, put up fences, thresh in the barn, and cut straw — in short, everything he did while he was alive. He can even live with his wife and have children with her, but as soon as the cock crows, he must promptly leave and return to the grave. The children of dead strzygońs can be miserably skinny and pale faced. They hide themselves away for a certain time and normally never survive beyond childhood. Such cases used to be quite common (so people say), as widows who had had intercourse with their late husbands were obliged to divulge their relations with the deceased to the priest at confession. Only when the priest, after receiving a few golden coins to say Mass, had driven the

strzygoń out and sprinkled the house with holy water did the intrusive fiend stay away and cease his nocturnal perambulations, for he no longer had access to the widow.

134. If a wise person should meet a fearsome strzygoń after its death, they must immediately slap it in the face from the left (with their left hand). It will then vanish, never to reappear, but the daring fellow must not let the strzygoń blow into their mouth, or it might be the death of them.

135. When dead, a strzygoń can easily be recognised by its limp, floppy body, bloody fingernails, and hairless armpits. One side of a dead strzygoń is warm, as its second soul (for evil) keeps it alive to frighten people, allowing it to rise from its coffin and go out into the world.

136. If the deceased's remaining relatives notice the aforementioned signs, they will not want the body to be seen during the funeral at the cemetery. Guessing what has happened, the mourners will not insist upon seeing it either. If a family member realises that their relative was a strzygoń, for their own peace of mind they must place a piece of flint in its mouth, saying, "Walk through the earth and frighten no one", so that the strzygoń will become an earth spirit and walk beneath the soil, causing no harm to anyone. Next, the name of Jesus must be written on its forehead, it must be blindfolded with a scarf, its body turned face downward in the coffin, and it must be struck hard on the behind with a spade. From then on, it will surely stop frightening people.

137. In the village of Tonie, a peasant named Hadramacha encountered a strzygoń in a local ravine. The strzygoń tried to blow into Hadramacha's mouth, but he would not allow it, so the strzygoń lunged straight at him, and they fought. Brawling and tussling across the road, they drew closer to his cottage. The peasant had a piece of raw sausage with him and offered it to the strzygoń in order to escape, but the strzygoń said, "If you want me to eat it, then you must eat it with me". Fearing that the strzygoń would blow into his mouth, Hadramacha shared the sausage with it, and they ate until both their mouths were full of food and the strzygoń was unable to blow into his mouth. In front of his cottage, Hadramacha suddenly swung at the strzygoń, punching it in the face with such a left hook that, beaten, it was forced to return whence it came, and the peasant calmly went into his cottage. But when he ate the other half of the

raw sausage the next day, he fell so ill that he had to go to bed and only recovered after drinking two gallons of whey as a curative.

138. Such fearful figures are in the habit of biting or fighting even their loved ones. If ever a living person is beaten by one in a fight, they will die, although this is not always the case. On the contrary, in about 1840, one was beaten by a gardener who used to store apples in the cellar of the Carmelite Church in Kraków. When he noticed that someone had been stealing and nibbling them at night and realised that the thief was a strzygoń, he lay in wait for it. When the strzygoń appeared, he grabbed it and, turning his face aside, began to strangle it. The pair of them fought and wrestled for quite a while, until the upiór was finally beaten. Thereafter, it never meddled with the apples again, and the gardener remained as healthy as ever.

139. It is claimed in some places that, while a person is still alive, one can tell whether or not they will become a strzygoń when they die. Hence, if someone has a small bluish mark on their back when alive, or if they have two rows of teeth, they will invariably become a strzygoń after death. Here an incident should be mentioned that occurred in the village of Tomice between Zator and Wadowice in about 1830. A relative of the village landowner had been invited to a ball being held by the wife of Colonel N., but, just as he was leaving, he suddenly keeled over and died of an apoplectic fit. Obviously, his ball attire was immediately exchanged for burial garments. The old women from the church who took care of this noticed that the deceased had a sinister bluish scissors mark on his back, two rows of teeth, blood had appeared under his overgrown fingernails after death, and his soundless mouth hung slightly agape, as if to speak. Moreover, when they placed a crucifix in his hand, it opened, dropping the symbol of our Lord's earthly suffering. The women unanimously decided that he was an upiór or a strzygoń and were unwilling to spend the night by the body, after which others also lacked the courage to do so. Just one gardener, of a sceptical disposition, agreed to spend the night by him, and even asked to be locked in alone with the corpse. He then filled his pipe, lit it, and waited. However, at midnight, he was filled with dread when, on the stroke of twelve, the deceased's crossed arms uncrossed themselves, and the gardener froze. The corpse sat up, and the gardener fell into a faint between the candlesticks. They barely managed to bring him round the next day, and six weeks later he died.

140. Nowadays, people allege that the majority of upiórs have migrated to and now reside in Russia, whence they attack people everywhere during nocturnal excursions and suck their blood. Their own blood is as cold as ice or congealed and clotted, especially under the fingernails. Sometimes, they even roam around in daytime, lying in wait for people who are lost in thought or absent-minded, and in particular for angry, quarrelsome folk arguing drunkenly with one another while leaving the tavern, and these they strangle.

141. The following story of a dead man was told in the village of Liszki: a peasant woman had a husband who was an inveterate drunkard. Whenever he got drunk, he was fond of eating liver. If he came home drunk and his wife had not fried any liver for him, he would fly into a rage because there was none to eat. Even though it was a very long way to the butcher's to get liver, she was forced to go. Once, it was already midnight, but she went all the same. She had not gone very far when she came across a small house with three coffins inside. One of the coffins contained wood shavings, another had straw, and the deceased lay in the middle one. So, she went behind the stove to sharpen her knife, opened the coffin lid, and started to slice out the corpse's liver. She then returned home, pleased that she had not needed to go far to find some liver. After she arrived at her house, she quickly fried the liver for her husband, who enjoyed it immensely. Then they went to bed, but during the night the dead man came to them and stood over their bed, groaning terribly for them to return his liver. Then, one last time, he screamed, "Give me back my liver!" in such a terrifying way that they were both scared stiff, fell ill, and eventually died.

[...]

A child who has been weaned and later put back on the breast will become a strzyga one day.

[Footnotes:]

In Kraków, upiórs are said to have two or sometimes three souls, and those souls force them to roam around at night. In this respect, stories of upiórs are often confused with ideas regarding the possessed.

[...]

In Kraków, they claim that upiór is increasingly rare in our day and age because people now have several names. There was a higher concentration of upiór in the past, when people were christened with only one name. Since the reasons for this misfortune were unfathomable, a letter was sent to the pope, requesting advice. The pope ordained that two names be given at christening and a third at confirmation. Indeed, this method has proven highly effective, although (since it was not practised everywhere) upiór could not be eradicated entirely.

[...]

In some parts of Kraków Province, it is said that, while alive, they may be pallid with bluish bruises, and after death they are cold, walk at night, and gnaw candles; their bodies are flexible, their eyes are usually shut (rarely open), and they are silent. When gnawing candles, an upiór must remove its burial shroud and put it back on at first cockcrow or it will dissolve into tar. We should also mention the tale of a traveller who spent a night in the choir loft of a church. To get to him, an upiór chased him up some steps it had made by stacking coffins on top of each other, but it dissolved into tar at the top the instant a cock crowed.

[...]

In 1847, a village woman working in Kraków reported an even more radical method: "If a dead body becomes an upiór, there is a means to liberate it from this misfortune and free its soul. One must hammer a nail into the strzygoń's head, place a piece of paper scribbled on (by a professor) beneath its tongue, or finally demand clerical assistance. After a priest has cut off an upiór's head, he must place it toward the other side of the neck, i.e., facing the pillow. Then all the upiór's powers are defeated, and nevermore shall it rise from the grave".

38.

THE GREEDY LANDOWNER

Around Lida, Hrodna Oblast, Belarus

Source: Jan Karłowicz, *Podania i bajki ludowe zebrane na Litwie* (Kraków, 1887), pp. 31–32.

Variations of this story are also known from other regions.

About a Greedy Landowner Who Transformed into an Upiór, and How He Was Redeemed

Once there was an extremely greedy landowner who buried his money in the ground, unwilling to leave it to anyone after his death. He died two years later, and, since he was wealthy, he was not buried in the ground but placed in a crypt. As a penance for his greed, every night he had to go and count his buried treasure. As he walked around the church, he would knock things over, make a mess, and break everything on the main altar. No one could understand who was behind all this mischief, and four people who had agreed to keep watch disappeared without a trace.

Then, one daredevil promised to keep watch for evildoers. He went to the church in the evening, picked up a prayer book, and sat down on a pew with a candle to read. At that moment, the crypt opened and out came the landowner, who walked straight up to him and asked, "Why did you come here?" The daredevil was silent and continued praying. The landowner kept asking and asking, but he remained silent and prayed. When the landowner saw that his time was running out, he undressed and, naked as the day he was born, climbed onto the altar and started to break things. Then the daredevil crept over and gathered up the landowner's clothes, put them on a pew, and sat on them.

It was already time for the landowner to go and count his buried money, but his clothes were gone, so he asked the daredevil, "Why did you take my clothes?"

"Why are you roaming the earth?" came the reply.

"I'm roaming because I need to count my money".

"Then why are you damaging the altar?"

"For such is my penance".

He shouted and demanded his clothes back, but the daredevil refused and carried on praying. Finally he said, "Bring me your money, and I'll return them".

The upiór brought him the money, but, in the meantime, a cock crowed, and the landowner dropped to the ground next to the daredevil, who said a prayer and fell asleep. He dreamed he saw the landowner, who thanked him for delivering him from everlasting torment and penance.

The next day, the daredevil was found asleep with the landowner's body and treasure next to him. They buried the landowner, and from then on he did not stir again.

39. THE NUN AND THE STRZYGOŃ Around Czorsztyn, Lesser Poland

Source: Bronisław Gustawicz, *Wycieczka w Czorsztyńskie* (Warszawa, 1881), pp. 208–209.

Variations of the story about the nun are also known from other regions.

In order to become a strzygoń after death, the deceased must have had two souls when alive. If they had two souls, they cannot have been confirmed because, according to popular belief, confirmation casts out one of a person's souls.

Night had fallen while a certain nun was travelling, but, trusting in God's assistance, she hurried on through an unfamiliar area. Suddenly she saw a little light flickering in the distance. At first, she was reluctant to go toward it, thinking it might be a will-o'-the-wisp. But after crossing herself, she followed the light and arrived at a village house, which was empty except for a dead man in his coffin. She knelt by the table to pray, then sat down wearily on a bench by the stove. Around midnight, she heard a knocking on the window and the words, "Dead man, let another dead man in, and we'll find a living soul in there, too!" Seeing the body in the coffin sit upright, the nun immediately broke her rosary and hurled a bead at the dead man's head. When the rosary bead struck him, he lay back down in his coffin. This was repeated several times. As she



pelted him with her final bead, a cock crowed. The strzygoń standing outside the window went away, and then she fainted. In the morning, people found her lying on the ground and brought her to her senses.

In Stara Wieś, in a village in the Spisz region, a strzygoń got up to all manner of mischief in one house, rocking the baby when it was asleep, sharpening a scythe at night, peeling potatoes, beating an eider-down with a stick, and once it even threw a kneading trough. The whole household was terrified, so the farmer leapt up and rushed after the strzygoń but tripped over the trough. Eventually, the farmer complained to a priest, who banished the strzygoń with prayers and consecrations.

One alleged remedy against a strzygoń is to exhume the deceased, and it is normally found to be grinning, with bulging eyes. A piece of paper with the words “And the word was made flesh” must be placed beneath its tongue before turning it face downward in its coffin.

40. WIESZCZY AND UPIÓR Greater Poland Province

Source: Oskar Kolberg, *Wielkie Księstwo Poznańskie*, pt. 7 (1882), pp. 33–35.

Wieszcz

1. This is a person born with their teeth. After their death and burial, they rise from the grave in the church cemetery and climb the church tower, screaming out people’s names, and it is said that people will die as far away as those cries can be heard. In order to render them harmless, such corpses’ heads are severed and placed between their feet. (From Targoszyce, Dobrzyca)

2. When one of two boys who are friends dies and they were peers (i.e., of the same age), the dead boy will climb the nearest church tower at night as a wieszcz and scream out in a terrible voice all over the area. He uses the voice to lure people to him, i.e., causing the deaths of every young person of the same age, starting with his friend. (From Krotoszyn, Ostrzeszów)

Upiór

1. In Greater Poland, upiørs are mentioned less frequently than other demonic beings. In Miłosław, upiørs are alleged to have red faces. They rise from their graves at night and strangle their entire family until they are dead. Therefore, they must be dug out of their graves at night, and their heads must be sliced off with a scythe and placed at their feet.

2. A dead person will also become an upiór or wieszcz if buried in an old shirt that had previously been worn by somebody else, then they will lure that person into the grave. (Odolany)

41. THE UPIÓR AND HIS WIFE Bychawa and Turobin, Lublin Province

Source: Oskar Kolberg, *Lud... Lubelskie*, pt. 2 (Kraków, 1884), p. 97.

Kolberg uses notes received from a certain Ciesielski in 1866. Additionally, he includes a full report by Gluziński (see 32, above).

The people also call upiørs *łupiors*. On his way to Radecznica parish fair on 20 May 1866, a certain old beggar reported (much to the outrage of peasants who heard it, since he was spreading rumours and stupidity instead of saying his prayers) that an upiór had visited a woman and even fathered a child with her, which (as everyone knows) would become an “imbecile” in seven years. The łupior had ordered the woman not to reveal her surprise visitor, but she once admitted it at confession. The priest immediately sent the organist to visit her with a ball of blessed string, and when the łupior appeared, they furtively tied the string to his leg and followed it all the way to his grave. The next day, a sharp stake was driven through his heart.

42. THE PRINCESS

Świętokrzyskie Province

Source: Oskar Kolberg, *Kieleckie* pt. 2 (Kraków, 1886), p. 228.

Variations of this story are also known from other regions. This one comes from a manuscript by Władysław Siarkowski.

Saving a Princess from Her Evil Soul after Her Death

The king had a very beautiful daughter and wished to marry her off, but she was in no mind to wed anybody and had chosen to preserve her maidenhood. One day, she fell gravely ill; her end was nigh, and the princess was at death's door. She summoned her father, saying, "Beloved father, I am dying. You shall bury me in the church and send me a hundred soldiers every night".

Whenever a hundred soldiers would come to guard her, she would rise from her tomb and devour them, leaving their bones in tombs, but she would always quieten down before midnight.

Her father wondered what to do about it all. He had a prisoner, whom he decided to send into the church at night, and so it was done as the king ordered. Being a seasoned old soldier, the prisoner considered what he should do. He had some Three Kings' Day chalk with him, went up into the choir loft, drew a chalk circle around himself, and sat watching. The princess rose from the tomb, her face black, then went up to an altar and broke the lamps. Then she broke the lamps on another altar, followed by everything else she could find in the church. Finally, she glanced around the church and, noticing the soldier, rushed toward him but was unable to grab him or even move, for he had drawn around her with the blessed chalk, and she stood rooted to the spot. He sat well away from her until the cocks began to crow, when her face gradually grew paler and paler until it was all white.

Seeing that she was all white again, the soldier approached her, made the sign of the holy cross, and, taking her by the hand, led her to the main altar. He fell to his knees, and, with her beside him, they knelt there until dawn. In the morning, the king came into the church

with his courtiers and was astonished to see his daughter alive with a fresh complexion. Overjoyed, he took her and the prisoner away, and rewarded the latter handsomely. The princess had not died but was elated because she had had two souls, from which he saved her.

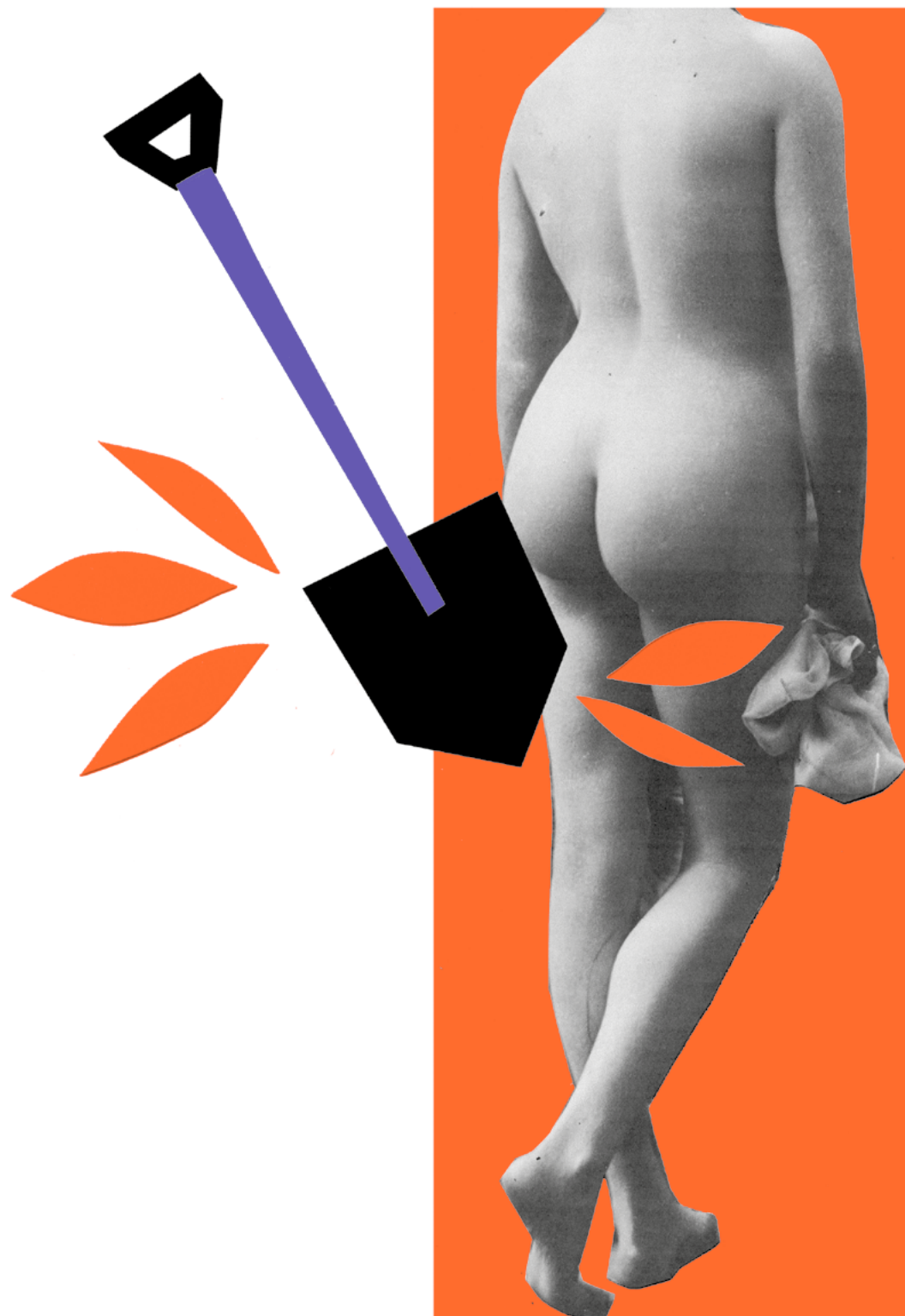
43. STRZYGOŃ

Around Sławków, Silesia Province, and Bukowno, Lesser Poland Province

Source: Stanisław Ciszewski, "Lud rolniczo-górnicy z okolic Sławkowa w powiecie olkuskim", *Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Krajowej*, vol. 11 (Kraków, 1887), pp. 161–165.

1. A strzygoń or strzyga is a person with two souls. After death, one leaves the body, while the other remains to revive the strzygoń's corpse, which will walk after death. Both men and women alike can be strzygońs.
2. A child will become a strzygoń if born with all its teeth or two rows of teeth.
3. One can recognise strzygońs later in life since they talk to themselves.
4. To ensure that a child does not become a strzygoń after death, it should be christened with two names. Others claim that the sacrament of confirmation is equally effective.
5. A strzygoń has the same (physical) strength after death as it did before it died. Therefore, anyone who could "handle" it during its life may still do so once it has died, as long as it is dealt with in the correct manner.
6. Strzygońs usually roam by night, up until midnight. At cockcrow, some say that they dissolve into a puddle of tar, while others claim that they return to the grave.
7. A married strzygoń will visit his wife after his death, help her with chores, cut straw, chop wood, and may even have children with her.
8. When a strzygoń meets someone, it will try to blow into their mouth to steal the life away from them.
9. To defend oneself against them, one must strike them in the face "from the left", i.e., with the left hand.

10. One may also flee into a field and run along the furrows, as strzygońs may only walk on the unploughed headland. In this way, they can be delayed for up to twelve hours.
11. If a dead person is suspected of being a strzygoń, their thumbs must be tied together to prevent them from walking after death.
12. If the ground splits open over somebody's grave, the corpse buried there must be a strzygoń. To prevent it from rising, a piece of paper bearing the name of Jesus or the dead person's name must be placed beneath its tongue. Then you must turn the body face downward and strike it on the behind with a spade so it will cease to walk upon the ground and will "walk through the earth" instead.
13. Others claim that, to stop a strzygoń from walking after death, one must sever its head and place a piece of paper bearing its name beneath its tongue, then put the head at the feet of the inverted torso.
14. Strzygońs will sometimes break candles in church.
15. A married peasant died, and he was a strzygoń. After his death, he returned to his wife, cut straw for the cattle, chopped wood, and tidied up the farmyard, but threatened to wrench her head off if she told anyone. But his wife did not listen and went to see the priest to tell him all about it. The priest ordered her to exhume the strzygoń from his grave, as the ground had split open — further proof that the deceased truly was a strzygoń. When they had dug him up, they placed a piece of paper bearing his name beneath his tongue, turned him face downward, struck him on the behind with a spade, and put him back into the grave. After that, he never came out again.
16. Once, there was a peasant who had "two souls", hence he was a strzygoń (this was said to have happened in Bukowno). After he died, he visited his wife at night and said, "Never tell anyone that I was here, because if you betray me, you will die". His wife was afraid and never told anybody, and the deceased came to visit every day. Each time he would cut straw for her cattle, "provide for" them, and sleep with her, but when it was time, he had to go back whence he came. One day, as he was returning from seeing his wife, he met an old friend, who recognised him. The man knew that his friend had died and realised he must be a strzygoń if he was still walking around. Without further ado, he struck him in the face "from the left". Since he



had been stronger than the strzygoń when he was alive, he was able to handle him then and drove him away. When he returned home, he said to his wife, "I'm worn out from fighting! Terribly worn out!" and he told her the whole tale. Then the wife of the man who had met the strzygoń told the whole village about it, but no one believed her. Only when more people had seen the strzygoń roaming around the village did they tell the priest. The priest ordered them to exhume the strzygoń, place a piece of paper bearing his name beneath his tongue, turn him face downward, and strike him on the behind with a spade. After that, he never came back to the village.

17. Knowing that a recently deceased strzygoń was lying in church, one brave man crept in and hid behind the organ. When the time came, the strzygoń started to kick at its coffin, knocked the lid off, and climbed out. After looking around the church, it removed its socks and wandered off. In the meantime, the man hidden behind the organ took one of the socks. On returning from its walk, the strzygoń "sensed" there was someone alive in the church, shouted "Now you will die!" and pounced on him. But the man was carrying holy water and blessed chalk. Just as the strzygoń was about to seize him, he sprinkled it with holy water and threw some blessed chalk at it. He repeated this a couple of times, and each time the strzygoń, who had been pitch black, gradually began to turn white from the feet up. Finally, when it had gone completely white, it spoke to the man hiding behind the organ: "Now I thank you for saving me; I shall suffer no more". After that, it climbed back into the coffin, for midnight was approaching, but as it tried to put on its socks, it was astonished to find just one. Since the cocks were already crowing, it could dally no longer, put both its feet into one sock, and lay down in the coffin. In the morning, the eyewitness to these events went to tell the priest what had occurred in the church, showing him the sock as evidence.
18. Once, a forest ranger who was a strzygoń died in his remote house, far from the village. As his wife had not yet found a coffin, she laid him on the straw and covered him with a sheet. His dog, lying under a bench opposite the body, began to snarl. The ranger's wife looked and saw the sheet on the body start to rise, then suddenly the ranger

leapt up off the straw and rushed at the dog. Not wishing to bite its former master, the dog jumped out of the window and ran off. Seeing what was happening, the ranger's wife grabbed one of her children and ran into the shed, leaving the other child in its cradle. The strzygoń frantically tried to break into the shed but could find no way in, so he ran over to the cradle, snatched up the child, and tore it to pieces. He carried on running around the house for a long time until, finally, he heard his family and mourners coming for the funeral and lay back down on the straw. The people came in, saw the dead child, broken window, and overturned furniture, then heard moans coming from the shed. After breaking down the door, they discovered the ranger's wife, half dead. After a while, when she had recovered and recounted what had happened to her husband, a piece of paper bearing his name was placed beneath his tongue, and he was put into a coffin face downward and struck on the behind with a spade to ensure he would never rise again.

19. A certain soldier claimed he was afraid of nothing. While walking down a road one day, he met a strzygoń. As soon as the strzygoń saw him, it tried to blow into his mouth, but the soldier drew his sword and sliced off its head. Then the strzygoń picked up its head and started throwing it at the soldier repeatedly, trying to kill him. The soldier ran off as fast as he was able and finally went into a cottage, but on the third day after this adventure, he died.

44.

UPIÓR AND STRZYGOŃ

Near Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, Świętokrzyskie Province

Source: Oskar Kolberg, *Lud... Radomskie*, pt. 2 (Kraków, 1888), pp. 148–150.

Material gathered by Władysław Ciesielski from a village in the former Radom Governorate.

Around Denków near Ostrowiec, it is claimed that "Some people have two souls: one bad and one good. When after death such a person's body is buried along with those souls, one of them dies (i.e., goes calmly into the spirit world), while the evil soul remains on earth, roaming around

the village in that body at night, knocking on windows and bothering people, etc. *Strzygs*, meanwhile, are born with their teeth. After death, they visit churches at night, where they bite altar cloths with their teeth, nibble candles, and break banner-poles. In order to render one harmless, people go to its grave and turn the body face downward, making it difficult for it to rise again”.

We have received the following report from Tarłów and Ożarów: “An *upiór* is a deceased person who has two souls, whereas a *strzygoń* is someone who has not been confirmed. Both of them rise from their graves at night and are easily recognisable as their faces are always ruddy, even after death. If someone should encounter one of these graveyard gentlemen, they should either leap into a ploughed field (*upiórs* or *strzygońs* will not follow, for they may not tread on soil blessed by human labour) or run to a bell tower and strike the bell’s clapper, and then their assailant will dissolve into ooze”.

“To protect a village from them, one must first exhume the corpse and turn it face downward, and then it can only roam beneath the earth, not in our world. Second, if the previous attempt was only temporarily effective, the deceased’s head must be severed and placed under its arm or between its knees, or its body must be quartered and buried somewhere in the woods. Others also advise hammering an aspen stake into an *upiór*. During such operations, the forest usually rages and the devil breaks branches, attempting to injure or wound those who are quartering the corpse”.

45. STRZYGOŃ

Zawada, near Nowy Sącz

Source: Karol Mátyás, “Nasze sioło. Studium etnograficzne”,
Przegląd Powszechny (1889), t.21/1, pp. 91–92.

Upiórs are roaming around cemeteries and churches. Noteworthy among them is the *strzygoń*: the ghost of an unconfirmed person that appears in human form, yet it is more frightening, with a face as white as a sheet and two rows of enormous teeth. Sometimes, they have been seen holding their severed head under one arm.



Once, two peasants were preparing shingles in a forest. In the evening, one of them set off to buy bread at the village tavern, while the other remained to light the fire and make supper. It was already very dark; the moon had risen in the sky and the repast was almost ready, but the companion had still not returned. The man who had stayed in the forest grew impatient, went to the path, and called out, "Ho!" From deep in the woods, he heard a "Ho!" in reply and thought his companion was coming. But when he failed to appear, he returned to the path and called out, "Ho!" This time, the answering "Ho!" came from slightly nearer. So he went back and sat down to tend to the fire and wait... Enough time had passed for the man who had replied to have come long ago, so he got up from the fire for a third time and called out, "Ho!" to which the answer came from very close at hand, perhaps a dozen steps away. He stood and waited... Then, suddenly, the form of a man was standing before him, holding his head under his arm. The peasant realised that the headless man was a strzygoń and grew terribly afraid.

"What do you want from me? Why did you call me?" asked the strzygoń grimly.

"I don't want anything. I was calling to my friend who went down to the village".

"If it wasn't for those pendants around your neck, you'd never be calling me again!" said the strzygoń and vanished.

The "pendants" were scapulars that the peasant was wearing around his neck, which is why the strzygoń dared not approach him.

46.

SUICIDES

Modryniec, Lublin Province

Source: Oskar Kolberg, *Chełmskie. Obraz etnograficzny*, vol. 2 (Kraków, 1891), p. 141.

Based on information gathered in the village by Maria Hemplówna.

Suicides, especially those who have hanged themselves, should have aspen stakes driven into their throats before they are buried, to prevent their souls from walking the earth in their bodies as upiórs. And

walk they will, since, being the property of the devil, the souls of such people (who were acquainted with the devil while still alive, and who were buried at a crossroads with no religious ceremony or holy water) cannot enter heaven and must roam around the area near their graves at night. To prevent them from roaming around and frightening people, they must be confined within their bodies, for which aspen stakes are highly effective. Additionally, one should sprinkle poppy seed into a suicide's coffin (or under one of their armpits), so that, as they awaken to leave their grave, they have enough (seeds) to keep them counting one by one until daybreak. However, if there are fewer poppy seeds than it can count in a night, it will inevitably arise to frighten people once it has finished counting in the small hours (before cockcrow).

47.

STRZYGA

Międzyrzec Podlaski, Lublin Province

Source: Adolf Pleszczyński, *Bojarzy międzyrzeczcy: studjum etnograficzne* (Warszawa, 1892), pp. 99–100.

If a child is born with teeth, the teeth must be extracted or it might become a strzyga, i.e., someone who will roam around after death, bothering people.

Certain people have two hearts. Such a person will walk as a strzyga after death, and there is no other way to get rid of them than to remove them from their coffins, behead them, and drive an aspen stake through their [second] heart.

48.

WIESZCZY

Kashubia

Source: Józef Łęgowski, *Kaszuby i Kociewie: język, zwyczaje, przesady, podania, zagadki i pieśni ludowe w północnej części Prus Zachodnich* (Poznań, 1892), pp. 52–53, 60–69.

In the region of Szynwald in Wejherowo County, when babies are born, they are inspected to see if they have birthmarks. If they do, those

patches are rubbed with the mother's blood (placenta), but this must be done before christening, for nothing will help after christening. If a child is born with a caul or cap (a bonnet-like membrane) on its head, it is removed and hidden away, then seven years later it is burned to ash and given to the child to drink, otherwise it will find no peace after death and will arise to take its relatives off into the grave. A child born with a caul or *wieżba* is known as a *wieszcz* or an *upiór* if it has two teeth.

[...]

All over Kashubia, there is a clear distinction between *upiórs* and *wieszczys*. As evidence, I shall cite these beliefs and superstitions literally, without naming the villages I was told about, so as to avoid bringing trouble upon myself and others, although I am probably right to expect that every educated reader will regard this account purely as research material, as opposed to entertaining reading or even an account intended to show someone in a bad light. My book is not intended for people who are so backward. In Wejherowo County, they say that "Some children are born into the world with two rows of teeth. They are *upiórs*, and those born with a *wieżba* are *wieszczys*".

Not everyone is able to tell the difference between the posthumous behaviour of an *upiór* and a *wieszcz* (which is an adjective since Kashubian has no noun *wieszcz*). The same behaviour is often ascribed to both, and they seem to be confused with one another, particularly in northern Kashubia.

In Wejherowo County, it is said that *upiórs* or *wieszczys* do not really die but rise from the grave and drag off their whole family, then their friends, from as far around as their funeral bells could be heard. To prevent this, the corpse must be decapitated, so a family member must go to the cemetery at midnight, dig up the coffin, behead the corpse and, so they say, it will be found in a sitting position. They must then collect a few drops of its blood (for an *upiór's* blood never coagulates), mix it with water, and give it to the deceased's family to drink, then the *upiór* will cause no further harm. They also place bricks, stones, or old boots in the coffins of those born with teeth (who are therefore *upiórs*) and tie plenty of knots, claiming that the corpse must first untie them all and overcome the other obstacles before it can arise and take away its family. In Kartuzy

County, they also place a pfennig in the deceased's mouth, or carve three little crosses from aspen wood and place them on its chest, and additionally bring earth from the hole dug for the deceased to sprinkle on its chest and put some in its mouth. If its relatives and friends begin to die nevertheless, and it must be decapitated, they are careful to place the head at its feet, for it would grow back were it to remain in the usual place.

In Kartuzy County, there are many tales of *wieszczys*, of which I shall list a few. Approximately forty years ago in M., a man died who was presumed to be a *wieszcz*. One of his relatives died soon after, so it was decided to exhume the deceased and decapitate him. When the grave was dug up and the coffin lid removed, the deceased began to move and mumble, but they immediately beheaded him with a turf-cutter's spade and collected some of the blood that poured out. A similar case occurred when a *wieszcz* died in N., and they held a *pusta noc* (all-night vigil). During such vigils, relatives and friends are invited to the deceased's home before the funeral. The corpse is dressed as usual and placed in its coffin, which stands open in the middle of the room, and those gathered sit around it all night, singing pious songs and saying prayers during the breaks. The deceased's family treat the company to bread and coffee, or beer and vodka if they are wealthier. During the *pusta noc*, the company not only sings songs and prays. The most superstitious among them peer at the deceased out of the corner of their eye to check if the face has changed, particularly if it has become ruddy in colour, which supposedly proves it is a *wieszcz*. Then, if possible, it is recommended to decapitate it before burial, although this is not always feasible due to the police regulations penalising such desecration of corpses. This demonstrates the full horror of the *wieszcz* superstition: a mother, father, or close relative is lying in their coffin, and those arms that so recently embraced orphans to give them a final blessing have scarcely fallen and grown cold when, by reason of a pitiful superstition, in the eyes of the family the body becomes something monstrous lying in wait to doom its beloved children and relatives, who look on in horror and revulsion through tears of sorrow and grief. Is it not every rational person's duty to zealously wage war on this insidious insanity embedded in the thoughts and beliefs of so many of our people?! Returning to the dead body in N., as it lay in its coffin during the *pusta noc*, "it began to

blush as if it were alive, therefore it was beheaded, and its blood gushed straight out onto the floor”.

In the village of X., a man died and was taken to the parish church to be buried. The priest had been called away on urgent business [that evening], so they decided to put the deceased in the church porch. This occurred during Advent, and the organist, who also served as bell-ringer, went to the church with a lantern in the morning to ring the call to prayer. He saw the corpse sitting up in his coffin, and the lid lay on the ground. The organist ran away and went straight to see the priest. The priest awoke, donned his surplice and stole, went to the deceased, slapped him in the face with his stole, and the corpse fell back into the coffin.

This story shows that, in their superstitious madness, the common folk have no qualms about inflicting their superstitious fears on their enlightened priests. People find it so hard to believe in the strict natural law, which knows no exceptions, that if someone truly dies, they will never rise again. And if they do rise again, they were not dead but were probably in a deep, morbid sleep known as lethargy. In a lethargic state, people do not transform into some kind of other beings but remain as they were, so they ought not to inspire more fear than anyone slumbering normally!

In Wejherowo County, a nobleman died twenty-five years ago in the village of K., and several members of his family died soon afterward, so he was beheaded in the cemetery one night, and news of the event became quite well known. The clergy admonished their congregations for such superstitious beliefs, and even the police began searching for the culprits.

I will cite a dialogue from the Raduńskie Lakes area that sums up the local customs and superstitions:

“Hey, Matys! Aneczka was round today, inviting us to a *pusta noc*. You going?”

“Yeah, I have to”.

“Then we should, too. So, call for me, and we’ll go say a little prayer for his soul together”.

“Aye, sure!”

“It’s Advent, so we’ll sing Advent songs now, funeral songs in the daytime, and then do the rosaries and the Hours”.

“That we will! But have you heard, Antek? The dead man was always ruddy when he was alive, so bad things’ll happen now he’s gone. Better keep a good eye on him, or he might drag the lot of us down with him”.

“Aye. True, that”.

“But the best thing’s to put stuff in his coffin. When it comes to łopis and wieszczys, everyone says different. A łopi’s already got two teeth when it’s born, and a wieszcz has a caul on its head. If the midwife spots it, she knows that if she wants to do the right thing, she’s got to snap the teeth off there and then, or take the caul directly off its head and burn it, then give it to the kid to drink so it doesn’t turn into a łopi or a wieszcz. Otherwise, once it’s dead, a łopi will climb up and ring the bells and, as far away as the bells can be heard, everyone will die. And right after a wieszcz dies, it’ll drag its relatives off to the grave first, then its neighbours and friends — everyone it loved the most! But you can tell straight away as soon as they die. So, you need to put a bundle of fishing nets under the corpse’s chin in the coffin (then it has to untie one knot a year), or three aspen crosses, or a monthly page from the calendar (the one in the prayer book, I mean), or better yet, all twelve. And if that still doesn’t work, you’ll have to chop its head off, but do it so nobody sees, or there’ll be trouble. Some folks also put the corpse face down in the coffin, and that’s good, too”.

In recent years, several newspaper reports have stated that the police had learned of bodies being decapitated in Kashubia. In fact, everyone says that people still staunchly believe in this superstitious custom, but they always add that they have never witnessed a decapitation themselves, as they wished to avoid any trouble.

Around Kościerzyna, they also watch to see if a corpse turns red or cools too slowly, in which case they attempt to squeeze out a drop of blood, but, if they are unable, as a last resort they cut off its head and place it between its feet, if circumstances permit.

Superstitions about wieszczys in Kociewie, or at least the northern part that was once Kashubian, are no different from those in Kashubia.

I will repeat verbatim what I was told in the area that lies to the south of Kościerzyna:

According to local beliefs, some children are born wieszczys, and three waxen crosses are placed under the arms of children about to be christened so as to ward off harmful consequences, and such crosses are also placed in the coffins of wieszczys. Wieszczys are born wearing a caul, and that caul is kept, to be put on the wieszcz's head when they die. Wieszczys are placed face downward in the coffin to stop them rising, or a handful of earth from their freshly dug grave is brought from the cemetery and placed in the coffin to give them something to eat. Nowadays, people are still careful to cut off a wieszcz's head after death (two similar cases are said to have occurred here recently) and place it by the feet to keep it from growing back. Wieszczys can be recognised because they swiftly take their closest relatives. If more cases of illness or death ensue once a corpse has been carried away, then the deceased was a wieszcz. Some brave soul will soon appear, offering to help, and will go to the cemetery at night, decapitate it, and bring back some of its blood if he can.

There are also persistent stories of upiórs behaving even more threateningly. They may rise from their graves and ring the church bell, and however far the sound of the bell carries, every last person will die.

As one moves slightly further to the south of the Kociewie area, belief in wieszczys does not disappear, although the names are slightly different, as we learn in the following description originating from near Skarszewy:

Around here, such a person is known as a *wieszcz* and is said to be born with a caul. If that caul is dried and kept and the child grows up to be seven years old, the dried caul must be grated into powder and given to them to drink, then all will be well. But if this is not done, the person will not stiffen when they die and will remain as supple as when they were alive. If



buried in this condition, they will then sit up in their coffin and start to devour their clothes. At first, all their closest relatives will fall ill and die one after another, and when there are no close relatives left, distant relatives will be taken, and once all its relatives are dead, it will arise from its grave, go to the bells, and start ringing them, and whoever hears the ringing will die. Such a corpse is known as a *nielap*, or others call it a *połap*.

The above passage implies that they also differentiate between a *wieszcz* and an *upiór* near Skarszewy. As for the name “*nielap*”, it probably emerged because *upiórs* came to be known as “*łopis*” in Kartuzy County. Hence, it may be a sort of translation of the incomprehensible or perhaps foreign expression “*upiór*”, implying a connection with the word “*łapać*” (to catch), which corresponds to the *upiórish* activity of catching people and taking them to the grave. The people of Kociewie then adopted this translation, altering *łopi* to *połap* and *nielap*. Others may confirm or refute the validity of my supposition by gathering some new material.

[The description from Kociewie continues:]

In order to protect themselves, different people do different things: they make three little crosses out of wax and place them all beneath the deceased's tongue; or others place one under the tongue, another under one arm, and the third I forget where. Still others put a piece of netting in the coffin so that, if it is a *wieszcz*, it must first untie one knot in a given period (one per year, I believe), by which time all its relatives will have died a natural death, and then it cannot harm others. Some people cut off the deceased's head, wrap it in wadding, and place it at its feet. Others are somewhat more squeamish, placing a sickle on its neck so that, should it wish to rise, it would cut off its own head. I saw it myself while digging a deep ditch when the cemetery was being enlarged. There, I came across the bones of a man. He must have been a sturdy fellow, for the bones were all very thick and long, and

a sickle lay across his neck with its blade to his throat. Protestants were said to have been buried there in the past, but our organist told me that gravediggers sometimes find sickles buried in our Catholic cemetery, too.

On the subject of decapitations, I recall a story from my school years. In those days, a German by the name of Kroll used to live in one of the farmsteads. Here I should add that, by the word “German”, local people mean a Protestant, because even though the Krolls all spoke Polish, they were still Germans; and Germans imply the same by the word “Catholic”. Sometimes, when travelling to villages, I would ask people I met for directions, and they would reply, “Ich kann nicht katholisch” (I don't speak Catholic). When Kroll's wife died and was buried, their children all fell ill, and the eldest boy died. The eldest daughter was already married by then, so she went to X., where they had their cemetery, and asked the gravedigger to exhume her mother. When the coffin lid was opened, she sat up, so they chopped off her head and placed it at her feet. As the blood flowed out, the daughter collected it in a kerchief to take home. While she was returning with it, after crossing the boundary of the village, she heard a voice behind her: “Nu fress das Alles ab!” (Now eat it all up!). Hearing that, she said she nearly died of fright, but at that moment a shepherd in our village started to blow his horn, which gave her courage. She made it home safely, wrung out the blood, gave it to the sick ones to drink, and they all recovered. This was told to my mother by that very daughter who allowed her mother's head to be chopped off, and I have recounted it exactly as I heard it from my own late mother.

And here is what my sister-in-law told me about her own brother today. He had not been to see her for almost twenty years, and this is what he said: His wife's brother had died, and, after he was buried, his closest relatives also fell ill, so three of them agreed to go to the cemetery at night and dig

him up. They took along a turf-cutter's spade to slice off his head, which they placed at his feet. Taking a white cloth, they first wiped the blood off the spade and from his neck, filled the grave back in, then rinsed out the bloody cloth at home, and gave it to the sick ones to drink. That was what her brother told her but added that he would never dare to do it again because of the fright it had given him.

And now, here is what occurred recently, two or three years ago, in the parish of Y. A certain man died in S., and his family believed in *wieszczy*, so before he died, he was alleged to have declared himself a *wieszcz* and asked to be decapitated after his death; and so it was done. Apparently, his own son and a woman cut off his head, wrapped it in wadding, placed it at his feet, and buried him thus. But everyone fell ill nevertheless, so that same son went to the gravedigger and told him he had lost some money, which had probably fallen out while putting his father into the coffin, and asked that his father be exhumed so he could find what he had lost. But, unable to persuade the gravedigger, he admitted that it was because his whole family were ill and afraid that they were going to die, so he wanted to examine his father to check his condition. This time he persuaded the gravedigger, and a third man was brought along to help. The trio dug him up, and when they lifted the lid, he was said to have sat up in his coffin, with his head back on his neck, and was chewing and gnawing the wadding. So they cut off his head once more, took it away, and buried it elsewhere. The next day, the organist noticed some freshly dug earth and, curious as to what it might be, uncovered a human head. He reported the case to the court, and all three were sentenced, as described in the newspaper *Pielgrzym*, although I forget what their punishment was.

I also discovered that if poppy seed is sprinkled into the coffin of someone suspected of being a *wieszcz*, it must eat up all those seeds one by one, so they say, which occupies a great deal of time, and, by the time it has finished, its relatives will already have passed away.

49. UPIÓR Ukraine

Source: Julian Talko-Hryncewicz, *Zarysy Lecznictwa ludowego na Rusi południowej* (Kraków, 1893), pp. 411, 426–427, 459–460.

The funeral is held the day after the death. A pillow stuffed with wood shavings or straw is placed beneath the deceased's head in the coffin, and poppy seed is sprinkled all over the body. Sometimes, mugwort is placed in the coffin to prevent the corpse from walking after death. Suicides are buried differently than those who die in the usual way. Aspen-wood stakes are driven into their lower backs, and other methods are sometimes applied in order to stop suicides from becoming *upiórs*, then they are buried somewhere far away in a field or at a crossroads.

[...]

It is commonly believed that people can return to our world after death. [...] If someone sees a dead person, they should say, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord", to which the deceased will usually reply, "I praise Him, too". Then they should ask what his soul desires, to which the deceased will reply that he is hungry, if his family has failed to take bread to the church as an offering for his soul, or he may reply that somebody owes him something. If the apparition does not answer, then he should be struck in the face with the left hand. One can recognise if the deceased is an *upiór*, i.e., if he walks after death, by digging up his grave, for he will always be found lying face downward. If an unbaptised child dies, it will also become an *upiór*. To fight *upiórs*, the people turn to priests and request an exorcism. An *upiór* will then transform into a roe deer and flee far from people.

[...]

A night when the cocks do not crow is called "unclean", for during such a night the hanged, the drowned, and the dead all roam. A healer in *Drużkówka* told of how *upiórs* used to roam when she was still a child but stopped once people began sealing coffins before burial. They say that

a certain man was walking down a road through Družkówka as twilight was falling. He stopped to rest in a cemetery along the way and fell asleep on a grave. In the night, an upiór came out of the grave and said to him, "Follow me". He led him to a house in Družkówka where there was a punch-up going on inside. They got drunk and fought with each other, then the deceased collected blood into a mare's skull and handed it to the traveller to drink. Terrified, he was unsure of what to do and, looking at the deceased, pretended to drink it but let the blood trickle down the front of his shirt. "Let's carry on", said the upiór, and they went to the house next door but were unable to enter as its windows were nailed shut. They walked back to the grave, but the cocks crowed, and the upiór vanished. In the morning, the man went to report the events to the local council with his entire shirt soaked in blood. An investigation showed that there had indeed been a bloody brawl in the house, so the grave was dug up, and the deceased was found lying on his back. An aspen stake was then hammered into the back of his head, and blood spurted forth.

50.

WIESZCZY IN CANADA

Wilno and Barry's Bay, Ontario, Canada

Source: Jan Louis Perkowski, *Vampires, Dwarves, and Witches among the Ontario Kashubs* (Ottawa, 1972), pp. 23–29.

13b. One they called a vampire (*wùpij*) and another a vampire (*vjèšči*), but I don't know the difference. Some were born so that they had teeth right away and some were born so that they had that blotch in the mouth. But I don't know which were the vampire (*vjèšči*) and which were the vampire (*wùpij*), you know. They said that you had to take precautions with them at death. When they died, it seems to me, they poured sand from the grave into the coffin and they hid poplar pieces from the doctor, having placed it under the sheet. If he came to in the grave, he would carry off his relatives.

7n. Vampires (*vjèšči*) — it was those people who, when they were born, some had a tooth. I don't know if they were *vjèšči* or *ùpi*. Some said that when a person was very red all of a sudden, he was a vampire



(*wùpji*). They said that when he died he then took his relatives with him. They died suddenly when he rang the bell. This I remember: the crosses of poplar, poplar crosses which they put into the coffin. I saw how they made them.

8f. A vampire (*òpji*) is born. The sign of one type of vampire (*òpji*) is a tooth and of another (*vjěšči*) a membrane cap. It happened after I married him. There a vampire (*vjěšči*) was born to some people. The child was fine, baptized. Everything was good and he died. I was there. It was forty years ago. And my neighbor was there. They said that I was to sew a garment for the child and I took it and was sewing the garment, but I said to Mrs Martin Etmanski, "Come here. The child is alive. The child is coming to life, but the mother dying." And then Mrs Etmanski said, "Yes, but I will put it straight." She took a needle. From the ring finger, but I can't say whether it was two drops or three, she drew blood. The blood was alive and she administered it. When she gave it from the girl to the mother, the mother got better and began to sit up. The child grew cold and they buried it. If it had been layed out for burial, she would have been taken dying to the grave.

12c. Mother said that I had that cap on the head and that it was burned. Such a person is supposed to be lucky, but I don't know.

1a. Vampire (*wùpji*) — it was not able to speak the way we spoke. They did not have the kind of brains we have. They were just like a lower form of person. And some were born like wild animals. I remember that a local girl had in our town a child just like a wild animal.

14c. A person was a vampire (*vjěšči*). That he was living, sort of — didn't die. His flesh didn't become rigid.

3a. A child died and it did not have a tooth. They thought that it was perhaps a vampire (*vjěšči*) or something like that. They saw to it, people said. They split a five-cent piece in half and put it under the tongue.

8g. There was a lot of that at Wilno in the graves. They opened graves. They cut the heads off. When they die and were born vampires (*òpji*, *věšči*) and are not seen to, then they have to dig up the graves. First he carries off his relatives and then as far as the bell rings. It happened at Wilno. They have dug up many, but it was not told, revealed. They had to dig it up and cut off the head while he sat in the coffin.

(Translation: Jan L. Perkowski)

**PRESS
REPORTS
AFTER 1800**



51.
THE CASE OF MARYNA WARLIN, 1801
 Uchylsko and Gorzyce, Silesia Province

Supplement to Gazeta Warszawska, no. 4 (12 January 1802), p. 62.

A poor woman died in Uchylsko, Upper Silesia, and was to be buried in Gross Görzig. A rumour spread that she had a scissor mark on her back and was therefore an upiór. The local Catholic priest ordered that her nose be plugged up with earth, that she be turned over in her coffin to lie with her face toward the ground, and that she be buried without a funeral service. This also caused great suffering for the deceased's daughter. When the clerical authorities learned of it, they ordered the priest to exhume the corpse. This was duly performed in the presence of the village court, but no scissor mark was discovered, so they had to turn her body over again, remove the earth from her nose, and rebury her according to the Catholic rite.

52.
A CASE FROM STRZEP CZ, 1845
 Strzepcz, Pomerania Province

Gazeta Wielkiego Xięstwa Poznańskiego, no. 148 (28 June 1845), pp. 1202–1203.

Nowe-Miasto (Prussia), 16 June. [...] In the village of Strzepcz, the body of a recently deceased woman was dug up several nights after her burial and beheaded with a spade. The man who committed this deed allegedly lives in Kobylacz near Strzepcz, and his wife, a friend of the deceased, was very ill at the time. Now listen to the reasons for his actions: there is a Kashubian superstition that certain people are born with a caul on their heads, and, soon after they die, such people, known as wieszczs, are reputed to have the ability and power to draw all their relatives into the grave, followed by all their friends, unless the caul is immediately dried after the birth and fed to the child in powdered form. If this is not done, the only way (it is presumed) to break the power of the wieszcz is to chop off its head with a spade after death, place it face down toward the earth between the wieszcz's feet, then rebury the corpse. The man



had committed this sickening desecration of the corpse in an attempt to keep his wife alive. A dreadful superstition!

53.
A CASE FROM CIEKLIN, 1851
Cieklin, Podkarpackie Province

Czas, no. 240 (18 October 1851), p. 3.

We received the following correspondence from Samoklęsk, dated 15 October: Despite not being a member of your esteemed staff of correspondents, I take the liberty of informing you of a *factum* which, although it originates in folk superstition, still provides food for thought and will allow your esteemed staff to satisfy those readers who, upon getting hold of *Czas*, first assuage their curiosity with the chronicle. Two weeks ago, in the village of Cieklin near Dembowiec in Jasło County, a gravedigger — that common authority of the unenlightened folk in times of crisis (for they bury lords and peasants alike and mingle with priests and organists) — gathered some churls who craved action and miraculous goings-on and began chattering about one thing and another before turning the conversation toward the persistent heavy rains. With a roguish face, he blamed them on upiór driven by revenge who wished to torment the living with misfortunes. As usual, his advice and subsequent verdict were that the recently deceased, be they male or female, should be decapitated for being upiór and thus prevented from causing further mischief. Being eager and impetuous participants of such escapades, the locals unanimously promised to accompany the gravedigger on this nocturnal expedition. Indeed, when a grave was opened, after making some mysterious signs, the mentor of the excursion stood the corpse on its feet and struck it in the face with his left hand and a hoe. Eventually, when he had established that the corpse was an upiór, he severed the head and tossed it to the side of the grave, where those present chopped it into little pieces. The shattered head had belonged to a recently buried forester who, while alive, had presumably not foreseen that he would have to rush to the Valley of Jehoshaphat with a shattered head. Five other corpses deemed less guilty were merely ordered to be decapitated, and all the heads were buried near the church wall.

Here, belief in upiór was deliberately confirmed by the gravedigger, because the corpses' hair and hands were allegedly unkempt (presumably due to negligence), which was blatant evidence that, during their outings, they had been driven back into their graves by the crowing of cocks and had not had time to put their tousled shocks of hair back in order.

I relate this incident, so characteristic of our peasants, in all sincerity and would add that village dogs later dug up the heads buried near the church wall and dragged them off into the fields.

54.
A CASE FROM LIPINTSI, 1855
Near Stryi, Ukraine

Czas, no. 264 (20 November 1855), p. 3.

The raging cholera has rekindled people's belief in supernatural influences and devilish forces, to which they ascribe the high death toll. Upiór, in particular, have returned with their former vehemence, and peasants in the village of Lipińcy in Stryj District became convinced that upiór were murdering people. Therefore, they decided to put an end to this disaster by performing the usual executions of upiór. A ringleader in the village told several of his neighbours, "We must find out whoever died on the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul, for they will surely return to this world as upiór and put people to death!" Two people were found to have died on that day, so their graves were visited in secret to determine whether they truly were upiór, or *upirs* as they are known locally. One indication of being an upiór is that it does not lie on its back. By pure happenstance, the dead bodies were found lying on their sides, which should not necessarily be considered characteristic of upiór, especially if their coffins were lowered into the graves unevenly. Nevertheless, for the villagers of Lipińcy, that was enough to brand the deceased as upiór. So, they set to work and acted according to the old custom, to whit, the corpses' heads were cut off and placed between their feet and stakes were driven through their hearts while some mysterious words were chanted. The letter from a credible source that informed us of this case fails to mention whether the cholera subsequently abated in Lipińcy yet adds that the district authorities, who clearly did not believe in

upiór, intervened in the matter and presumably brought those guilty of desecrating the graves to justice, thus preventing the spread of this obsolete, pernicious superstition.

55.
A CASE FROM MYKULYCHYN, 1861
Mykulychyn, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine

Czas, no. 135 (15 June 1861), p. 3.

The rural population is commonly known to believe that chopping off an upiór's head and driving a stake into its body will break its influence. *Gazeta Wiedeńska* has reported a similar case in Mikuliczyn, Stanisławów Region.

The authorities discovered that residents of that area had dug up corpses and decapitated them for being upiory, blaming them for the bad weather and cold spring. Investigations on the scene revealed that the graves of one Mikołaj Tymczak, who had hanged himself that winter, and one Rumgarski had been recently disturbed, and freshly whittled stakes and wood shavings at the cemetery led them to suspect that those corpses had indeed been subjected to such dreadful treatment. *Gazeta Wiedeńska* adds that, even though the culprits have not been found, the county head's speeches have been largely successful in dissuading residents from repeating such deeds, and that it is up to the clergy to enlighten the minds of the benighted peasants.

56.
A CASE FROM OSOWA, 1861
Osowa Łaszewska, Mazovia Province

Dziennik Powszechny: pismo urzędowe, polityczne i naukowe, no. 1
(1 October 1861), p. 3.

In the Łaszewo area of Mława region, Płock Governorate, five settlers began to suspect their uncle, who had died this April, of being an upiór. Their suspicions were based on the fact that the 27-year-old son of one of them had died, and shortly thereafter three of his other children

fell gravely ill. Moreover, news began to spread that their whole family would soon die unless the deceased was beheaded with a spade. So, after getting drunk in despair one day this June, they set off for the Protestant cemetery in the settlement of Osowo, where their late uncle was buried. After digging up the deceased's grave, they opened the coffin, chopped his head off with a spade, and placed it between his feet.

They admitted to these actions and motives during the judicial inquiry.

57.
A CASE FROM LESKO, 1867
Lesko, Podkarpackie Province

Przegląd Lekarski: wydawany staraniem Oddziału Nauk Przyrodniczych i Lekarskich C. K. Towarzystwa Naukowego Krakowskiego, no. 47 (1867), p. 376.

A Recent Instance of Barbaric Superstition

Dr Ignacy Mamczyński, the county doctor and coroner of Lisko, has sent us a letter reporting a recent event whose savagery is reminiscent of the obscurest times of utmost ignorance.

Six cattle died of anthrax this summer in a village high up in the mountains of Lisko County. Doubting the efficiency of methods applied by police and doctors, local residents agreed they would exhume a woman who had died around that time and was believed to be an upiór, then cut off her head, place it at her feet, and rebury her. This barbarism was duly performed at midnight, led by the village head in person, in the presence of several aldermen and other curious residents, including the late woman's husband. When by chance no more cattle died in the village, the ignorant people considered it proof that their sorcery had been a success. After they had bragged about its miraculous assistance, the county authorities became aware of the events, and a judicial inquiry is ongoing.

In those parts, a very red face is considered a definite sign of an upiór, hence the expression "as red as an upiór".

58.
THE CASE OF OCHNIK, 1869
Okrzeja, Lublin Province

Dziennik Warszawski, no. 42 (4 March 1869), p. 412.

Goniec Urzędowy received a letter from Siedlce Governorate reporting that Ochnik, a peasant from the village of Okrzeja in Łuków County, Siedlce Governorate, had died suddenly of a fever on 12 (24) December last year. Directly after his funeral, two villagers, Tomasz Przybyska and Jakób Pietrak, spread a superstitious rumour that the deceased was walking at night. According to these villagers, the corpse could only be prevented from appearing by sprinkling poppy seeds under his arm. Therefore, they set off to the deceased's grave on 16 (28) December and, after exhuming him, were about to put their plan into action when the priest Jakóbowski, the curate of Okrzeja parish, arrived after accidentally discovering why the peasants had gone to the cemetery. He instructed the peasants that their superstition was senseless, after which the grave was immediately filled with earth in the presence of the curate, and the appropriate court was notified of the event.

59.
THE CASE OF SZAFRĄNCOWA, 1869
Bodzentyn and Sieradowice, Świętokrzyskie Province

Dziennik Warszawski, no. 90 (7 May 1869), p. 921.

The following event, which occurred recently in the town of Bodzentyn in Kielce Governorate, proves the extent to which the common people are prone to superstition. On 18 March this year, at the parish cemetery in Bodzentyn, the head watchman noticed that the grave of a peasant woman, Szafrąncowa from Sieradowice, who had died suddenly on 22 February last year, had been dug up. The local mayor conducted an investigation and concluded that Szafrąncowa had apparently visited the house of her husband, Jan Szafraniec, after her death, terrorising him, their children, and even the neighbours. Wishing to rid himself of these



unpleasant visitations, Szafraniec went to the cemetery and, assisted by gravedigger Walenty Czekaj, dug up the coffin, turned her corpse face downward inside it, and tied her hands. Despite these precautions, the visitations continued. Furious, Szafraniec went back to the cemetery, opened the coffin again, chopped off his late wife's head, and buried it elsewhere. Both men who dug up the grave were put on trial.

60.
THE CASE OF GRZEGORZ TARABASZ,
1871
Gadka, Świętokrzyskie Province

Gazeta Polska (formerly Codzienna), no. 141 (28 June 1871), p. 2.

In the last days of April, a peasant, Grzegorz Tarabasz, died in the village of Gatki, Mirzec region, Iłża County, Radom Governorate, leaving a wife and a sizeable fortune. After Tarabasz's death, some of the other villagers (Paweł and Maciej Młodziński, Stanisław and Tomasz Wito, Szczepan Rafalski, and Leonard Strzelec) began to claim that the deceased was walking in the village at night. Terrified, Tarabasz's widow invited these villagers to her house, gave them food and drink, and implored them to do something to stop his corpse from visiting the village. Therefore, on the night of 30 and 31 April (12 and 13 May), the aforementioned villagers set off for the cemetery, dug Tarabasz out of his grave, severed his head and limbs, and nailed them to the bottom of his coffin. The peasants admitted to their actions in court, explaining that they had done no wrong but, on the contrary, had prevented evil.

61.
THE CASE OF PEASANT P., 1871
Kashubia

Gazeta Polska (formerly Codzienna), no. 141 (28 June 1871), pp. 2–3.

Last week, the Supreme Tribunal in Berlin heard a case concerning a crime linked to a folk superstition.

Among village folk in various countries, including some parts of Hungary, there is a deep-rooted superstition, still believed to this day, that the souls of criminals insufficiently punished by human justice on earth will know no rest after death and will turn their bodies into so-called "strzygas" or "upiórs" (which the populace imagine in the form of bats) that emerge from their graves at midnight, frightening those with whom they had the closest relations while alive, thus causing them to die or fall ill. Almost everywhere, people have invented the same sorcery to ward off such strzygas. They dig up the corpse, sever its head, and place it at its feet or between its legs in the coffin. Under its tongue, they place a piece of paper bearing a different name to that of the deceased, ostensibly thus renaming the "strzyga" and rendering it harmless. In different areas, there are numerous variations in the procedure and the ways in which the corpse is exhumed, etc.

On 9 February this year, peasant P. died in a village of Polish inhabitants in Western Prussia. Soon after his death, one of his sons died, and several members of his family fell ill. Naturally, the deceased became a strzyga. Wishing to prevent this evil, the deceased's eldest son went to the cemetery, taking a trusted companion along to assist him. There, they dug up his father's grave, opened the coffin, severed the corpse's head, and placed it at his feet. Meanwhile, the assistant collected the blood that flowed out in a dish, intending to use it as medicine for the sick family members.

Since their first attempt had failed because the local priest interrupted them just in time, they returned to perform this deed under cover of night and filled the grave in again afterward.

By chance, they were seen by a man temporarily residing in a way-side inn opposite the cemetery, who watched the entire scene unfold through the window but failed to understand it. Thinking that they were robbing the grave, he reported it to the authorities. Consequently, both strzyga-slayers had to answer to a court, charged with desecrating graves. The court sentenced the deceased's son and his accomplice to three months' and two months' imprisonment, respectively. However, the court of appeal overturned the first court's sentence and dropped the charges against the accused on the grounds that neither had acted with malicious intent, and they had merely believed they were doing

a good deed. Dissatisfied with this verdict, the prosecutors lodged a complaint with the Supreme Tribunal in Berlin to have it thrown out. Since it had been a punishable offence, the Supreme Tribunal revoked the court of appeal's verdict and ordered that the case be tried again by a higher court.

62. CASES FROM TUKHLA AND SLAVSKE, 1873

Tukhla and Slavske, Skole District, Lviv Oblast, Ukraine

Gazeta Lwowska, no. 172 (28 July 1873), p. 2.

Atrocious superstitions have been reported in Stryj District. As we know, cholera is rife in certain localities around the area. Villagers from Tuchla and Sławsko came to believe in the superstition that cholera is caused by people who “walk after death” (i.e., upiórs). One night, guided by this monstrous superstition, some villagers from Tuchla, following the advice and leadership of Ołexa Ilków from Libuchora, exhumed the body of their late village head, Mikołaj Macewka, whom they had branded an upiór, and drove three stakes into his body — namely, into his head, his side, and his back. Ołexa Ilków then shot the corpse, chopped it into pieces, and took some blood and earth from the grave to hand out as a remedy to ward off cholera. The head of the village of Sławsko, Ludwik Gering, was alleged to have ordered the same thing, but, as if in punishment for defiling the grave, he fell ill with cholera and died the very next day. The Skole gendarmerie learned of these awful manifestations of superstition and notified the Imperial-Royal Administration in Stryj, which immediately contacted the investigative court regarding the entire episode.



63.
CASES FROM TUKHLA AND SLAVSKE
(CONT.), 1873

Tukhla and Slavske, Skole District, Lviv Oblast, Ukraine

Gazeta Lwowska, no. 187 (14 August 1873), pp. 2–3.

Our readers will probably dismiss the account of events published below as atrocious phantasmagoria. Yet these scenes are real, although more reminiscent of the fantastic tales of Hoffmann or the gruesome works of Callot and Breughel, and all this took place here in Galicia, among our own people. Regrettably, in the depths of their souls and the dark wells of their imaginations, they entertain superstitious beliefs in the most horrendous miracles and sorcery...

We previously published a brief report on bodies exhumed from cemeteries in Tuchla and Sławsko in Stryj District. The gendarmerie was informed and notified the Imperial-Royal Administration, who immediately launched an enquiry, and this is what had occurred: Cholera had broken out in Tuchla and Sławsko and spread with startling virulence, claiming many victims. Instead of seeking the medical assistance promised to them by the authorities, the villagers employed a variety of homemade remedies, which, if not harmful, were clearly of no use whatsoever. Finally, it was decided that the cholera outbreak was due to people walking after death, that is, upiórś and werewolves. Ołexa Ilków from Libuchora and Stefan Burak from Jelenkowate assured people that they knew the only sure way to pacify such savage upiórś. Both men went to the cemetery at midnight, between 10 and 11 July, and dug up the grave of the recently deceased village head, Mikołaj Macewka. After his death, he was thought to have become a werewolf, who left his resting place at night to wander about the village, visiting houses and terrifying God's folk, like an omen of the plague...

With axes and a supply of aspen stakes — that vital remedy to stop upiórś — the perpetrators set off on their terrible journey. Ołexa quartered the body in the coffin and hammered aspen stakes through his limbs. Then, out of the dismembered corpse he squeezed thick, clotting blood into a dish. That blood, he claimed, was a reliable medicine

against cholera... One of his companions, Jakim Bereżyniec, took some of the blood away to give to other people. Michał Macewka immediately gave some to his wife, who was ill with cholera, and Jakim gave some to another sick woman in the village.

After this had taken place in Tuchla, they organised an upiór-hunting expedition of their own in Sławsko. There, the exorcist was Stefan Burak, who had his own ceremonies and incantations. Equipping himself with miraculous herbs, he went to the cemetery with another “healer”, Mikołaj Puszkar, burned incense by the graves, caught the wind, and, from the smell of the incense, concluded whether graves contained upiórś or not... In this manner, he discovered three werewolves but did not order their exhumation, however, saying that he knew such a powerful spell that, were he to use it, the upiórś would be unable to remove their coffin lids or cross the boundaries of the hallowed cemetery ground. But Puszkar did not agree to this so, on the orders of village head Gering, the indicated graves were dug up, and the bodies quartered and treated exactly like those in [Tuchla]. Once the corpses had been reburied, Puszkar shouted that he had just found another upiór that was killing cattle, not people. “Look here!” he cried. “He’s turned into a red dog!” Pointing into the darkness, he opened fire with his shotgun, then claimed to have killed it on the spot...

Several days later, six villagers died. They were the same ones who had taken part in these dreadful scenes, but the ringleaders survived and are now in the hands of the law.

64.
THE CASE OF JAREMA CHLIPECKI,
1873

Sanochany, Staryi Sambir District, Lviv Oblast, Ukraine

Kraj, no. 3 (4 January 1874), p. 3.

On 26 December 1873, a peasant named Chlipecki hanged himself in his neighbour's barn in Sanoczany in the Przemyśl area. Upon hearing the news, the locals, i.e., the village head and all the villagers, rushed to the scene. The hanged man was cut down and carried home, where his

body was placed on the ground without removing his clothes, and so he lay until the following day.

On the morning of 27 December, the village head came and, together with his deputy and other members of the community, formed a court, which passed sentence on the deceased with the following justification: "Since we are certain (and no one should have any doubts) that every suicide walks after death, terrifying people, then Jarema Chlipecki's head and legs should be chopped off to stop him walking and terrifying people!" In short, once the judges had made their decision, the sentence was carried out in the blink of an eye!

First, the hanged man's head was cut off with an axe, then both his legs below the knees. Afterward, his dismembered body was gathered up, placed on a cart, and driven through the village, with blood from the wounds dripping out copiously and leaving a trail along the road behind; and thus he was buried.

65.

THE CASE OF JAREMA CHLIPECKI (CONT.), 1873

Sanochany, Staryi Sambir District, Lviv Oblast, Ukraine

Czas, no. 3 (4 January 1874), p. 2.

In the village of Sanoczany in the Przemyśl area, Jarema Chlipecki had borrowed a few dozen złotys for the spring from a Jew in Dobromil and found himself unable to repay them. Despite stalling the moneylender with regular gratuities in the form of various presents, he grew melancholic when threatened with eviction from his land and house and hanged himself in despair on 26 December. The next day, the village head came, accompanied by the aldermen, and they ruled that, since suicides walk after death, frightening people, he ought to be dealt with like an upiór. Therefore, his head was severed and his legs cut off below the knees, and he was taken to a crossroads to be buried! So much for local self-government if the village head and aldermen are so ignorant and barbaric!

66.

A CASE FROM SIEROSŁAW, 1873

Sierosław, Kujawy–Pomerania Province

Gwiazdka Cieszyńska, no. 25 (21 June 1873).

Przyjaciół Ludu has reported a terrible event. For many years, a married couple lived happily and harmoniously in the village of Sierosław, Western Prussia, but the time came, and the wife died. There, it is customary to place a net, money, pebbles, and other trinkets in the coffin. However, they had not been placed in the dead wife's coffin, so the widower was afraid that she would become an upiór and bring death to people's homes. One of her relatives also died several days after the funeral, which left him all the more frightened. Then the widower decided to go to the cemetery with two others to dig up the deceased's grave and decapitate her, to stop her becoming an upiór. Therefore, they went to the cemetery, but when they lifted the lid, they thought they saw the deceased sit up, and all three of them fled. However, they stopped along the way and returned to cut off the deceased's head, place it at her feet, and fill in the grave. The news got out, and the authorities went to the cemetery to determine the truth. The widower might not escape punishment, even though he was acting out of superstition.

67.

A CASE FROM BILWINOWO, 1882

Bilwinowo, Podlaskie Province

Gazeta Handlowa: pismo poświęcone handlowi, przemysłowi fabrycznemu i rolniczemu, no. 93 (27 April 1882).

A correspondent from Suwałki has reported a hideous crime to the local newspaper. In the village of Bilwinowo, Suwałki County, a father talked his two daughters into killing their stepmother with an axe and forced a third (who was not part of the conspiracy) to behead the corpse. Once the stepmother was dead, they also chopped off her fingers. When asked why they had tortured the unfortunate woman in this way, they replied that they had decapitated her so she would not find her way to

the house and severed her fingers so she could not open the door if she came back from the dead. The case will soon be heard in Suwałki court.

68.
THE CASE OF GUTOWSKI, 1887

Gniezno, or thereabouts

Chata, no. 3 (1 February 1887), pp. 45–46.

Folk Superstition

A peasant, Gutowski, was brought before the court in Gniezno because, the day after his father's funeral, he had bribed the gravediggers to ex-hume his father's corpse and cut off his ... head. Gutowski admitted his guilt, explaining that he had committed the act in order to fulfil the last request of his father, who had considered himself a vampire and would therefore have tormented his entire family after death unless decapitated. Witnesses confirmed his testimony and, accepting these extenuating circumstances, the court sentenced Gutowski to fourteen days' imprisonment.

69.
**THE CASE OF THE PEASANT WOMAN
GALINASOWA, 1892**

Simaniškė, Švenčionys District, Lithuania

Głos: tygodnik literacko-społeczno-polityczny, no. 7 (17 February 1894), p. 82.

In August 1892, herdsmen near the village of Symoniszki discovered a dead woman hanging from a tree. The deceased turned out to be a peasant woman, Galinasowa, and her household was duly informed. The late woman's three sons soon appeared in the field, took her corpse down from the tree, and carried her home. The police confirmed Galinasowa's suicide and allowed her body to be buried. Her sons approached the priest in Sudejki, requesting permission to bury their mother at the cemetery, as there was evidence that she had been suffering from



insanity. When the priest learned the cause of her death, he flatly refused. "Then where are we to bury her body?" the sons asked. "Dig her a grave where she hanged herself", the priest retorted and would not even accept money to ring the death knell, adding, "It is a great sin to ring the bells for a soul that has surrendered itself to the devil!"

The owner of the land where Galinasowa hanged herself would not allow her to be buried there, and her sons also dared not bury her on their land. The reason being that they were afraid that Galinasowa would turn into an upiór and harm her neighbours. But there was a healer in Symoniszki who advised them to cut off the deceased's head, place it between her feet, and hammer an oaken stake through her body into the earth, all of which would prevent an upiór from appearing in the world. They consented to this and found an old ex-soldier, Dapkus, who agreed to do it for one silver rouble and a sack of potatoes. In the field, with almost the entire village present, wearing crosses and medals on his chest, he ceremonially chopped off Galinasowa's head, placed it between her feet, and, after giving the command "Bury her!" went off to the wake at the tavern. There happened to be a gendarme in the tavern to whom old Dapkus confessed everything while drunk, and the entire case was built on the gendarme's testimony. During the trial, the exact circumstances were established. The chief witness, the priest Jan Kiszko, confirmed that he had not permitted the deceased to be buried at the cemetery, nor had he accepted any money to say Mass or ring the death knell since it was banned by canon law. He denied all the other details. The rest of the witnesses testified that Galinasowa had been beheaded before her corpse was buried. The accused, Galinasowa's sons and Dapkus, admitted to the offences they had been charged with, and the latter even said, "I was tempted by the money without knowing it was illegal, and the priest didn't give me penance for it after confession". On the whole, even though the accused admitted their guilt, they actually believed they had been entirely justified.

The prosecutor charged them according to art. 234 of the criminal code but, considering the grounds for applying that article (digging up graves) were absent, the court acquitted the accused. This verdict made a huge impression on the peasants in the courtroom, who shouted that suicides always turn into upiórs, walk the earth, and harm people,

which must be true, for if it was otherwise, the court would not have acquitted the accused. The prosecutor appealed against this verdict to the criminal court in Wilno.

70.

A CASE FROM MYSHYN, 1893

Myshyn, Kolomyia District, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine

Gazeta Lwowska, no. 106 (10 May 1893), p. 3.

Deseccration of a Cemetery

While debating the reasons for this year's persistent frosts and winds over a drink, several peasants from Myszyn in Kołomyja District became convinced that the cause of this natural disaster was a recently deceased 83-year-old man, Nykoła Obuszak, who must have been an upiór. Therefore, they resolved to open up Obuszak's grave to see whether he was an upiór, then decapitate him, hammer a stake through his heart, and thus put an end to the disaster. Their intentions were duly carried out on the night of the twenty-fourth of last month, as confirmed on the fourth of this month by the Imperial-Royal Judicial Commission, which included the county doctor. The guilty parties were prosecuted.

71.

A CASE FROM PIENIEŻNICA, 1895

Pieniężnica (formerly Pękuła), Pomerania Province

Wielkopolanin, no. 200 (1 September 1895), p. 3.

The following case proves how much German folk still believe in superstitions. This March, a farmer died in Pękuła. Subsequently, his adult son fell ill, and no remedies could help him. "Wise" people persuaded the son that his father was an "upiór" and would soon drag nine of his relations into the grave with him, starting with his ailing son. They claimed that there was only one means of protecting oneself from this: one of his closest relatives should decapitate him in the grave. The sick

son was so confident in the efficacy of this method that he went to the cemetery at night, dug up the coffin, opened it, and beheaded his father with a spade.

72.
A CASE FROM KOSMACH, 1895
Kosmach, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine

Tydzień, no. 17 (1895), p. 5.

Ignorance

A few days ago, in the village of Kosmacz, Eastern Galicia, an old woman died, whom all the local peasants had believed to be a witch. It was rumoured in the village that the woman came into the world with her teeth and was therefore a *wiedźma*. Before her funeral, in spite of the priest's disapproval, several villagers hammered an aspen stake through the deceased's heart, hoping to prevent her from "walking" and harming people. Based on a gendarmerie report, the courts launched an investigation, and the perpetrators will soon answer to a tribunal for desecrating the body.

73.
THE CASE OF HRYĆKO ANDRZEJCZUK,
1900
Ozertse, Kivertsi District, Volyn Oblast, Ukraine

Gazeta Lwowska, no. 256 (9 November 1900).

Barbaric Superstition

A peasant named Hryćko Andrzejczuk died two months ago in the village of Jeziorko in Łuck County in Volhynia. His son's widow had married Jakób Menczuk. After Andrzejczuk's death, something started to terrify Jakób Menczuk. Wishing to put a stop to it, Menczuk went to see his neighbours and told them everything. The neighbours assured



him that it could only be the handiwork of the late Hryćko Andrzejczuk and suggested he go to the cemetery, dig up his corpse, decapitate him, break his ribs, and hammer an aspen stake through his body into the ground. So, four farmhands gathered, including Jakób Menczuk, and did exactly as they had been advised. When the county authorities learned of it, they summoned a doctor and witnesses to exhume the body, and indeed it was found to have been barbarically desecrated. The culprits were arrested.

74.

A CASE FROM VERBOVETS, 1906

Verbovets, Kosiv District, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast, Ukraine

Zorza Wileńska: gazeta dla wszystkich z rysunkami, no. 29 (26 July 1906), p. 14.

Ignorance and Superstition

A few months ago, a twenty-year-old girl died in Wierzbowiec, near Kosów in Galicia. She was said to have been a *widma* (witch) who consorted with the devil. The day after she died, rain began to pour and did not let up for fifty days. The villagers claimed it was the deceased *widma*, taking her revenge on them, and that she had caused the rain to ruin their harvest. So, one evening in mid-June, five villagers set off for the cemetery, dug up the dead girl's grave, and the youngest of them severed her head from the torso with a spade and put it back in the coffin. After performing this savage act, they filled in her grave, confident that the rains would now cease. By some odd coincidence, the weather did brighten up the next day, so the ignorant folk were positive that the rain had stopped thanks to their sacrilegious acts. But the gendarmerie in Kosów learned of it, launched an investigation, and a medical examiner's commission looked into the actions of these ignorant folk. They admitted their guilt, explaining that they had been driven to it by fear of what the protracted bad weather might bring. Nevertheless, their criminal, sacrilegious deed will not go unpunished.

75.

THE CASE OF DETTLAFF'S MOTHER, 1913

Puck, Pomerania Province

Górnoślązak: codzienne pismo ilustrowane poświęcone sprawom ludu polskiego na Śląsku, no. 234 (8 October 1913), p. 6.

Gdańsk. Dreadful Superstition before the Court

Some time ago, we reported on a terrible superstition carried out illicitly on Midsummer Night in Puck cemetery. The case was brought before the criminal court in Gdańsk on Tuesday. In the dock were the workers Jan Dettlaff and Jan Formela from Połchowo, and Antoni and Bernard Mudlaff from Puck. This is what occurred: In October 1910, Jan Dettlaff's mother died and was buried at the cemetery in Puck. Subsequently, four of Dettlaff's brothers and two sisters died, apparently of consumption. The wife of one of his brothers also died, one married sister had consumption, and another sister also fell ill. Dettlaff's father was told that his wife's death was causing the demise of others, so to prevent any further victims, he should dig up her grave between 12 and 1 o'clock on Midsummer Night, sever her head, and place it between her feet. Despite believing in this foolish nonsense, his father had no desire to do it himself, so he persuaded the two Mudlaffs from Puck to do it, promising to pay them 100 marks, which they never received. On the night of 23 June, Jan Dettlaff, his brother-in-law Formela, and the two Mudlaffs set off for the cemetery and dug up the grave. Bernard Mudlaff chopped off the corpse's head with a spade, placed it between her feet, and then the grave was filled in sloppily. Assuming that the accused had acted out of ignorance and a lack of education, the court gave them rather mild punishments: Bernard Mudlaff was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment, and the other defendants to one month each.

76.
THE CASE OF JÓZEF JURAS, 1921
Wieprz, Silesia Province

Kurier Częstochowski: dziennik polityczno-społeczno literacki, no. 143
(7 August 1921), p. 4.

**Heinous Superstition! Corpse Nailed to a Coffin!
Gory Peasant Tragedy!**

**Hanged Man's Garments Shared Out. His Corpse Defiled.
Was It Murder or Suicide?**

Żywiec County is aghast at a terrible crime that occurred a few days ago.

A 56-year-old peasant named Józef Juras lived in the village of Wieprz. Being a widower, he bequeathed his entire estate to his only daughter, yet soon after, he fell in love with a young girl, the foster child of one Anna Noga, and took her to the altar. The girl was barely twenty years old and had only married Juras in the hope of inheriting his estate, unaware before they were wed that he had left all his possessions to his daughter.

When she finally found out about it, she lost the urge to live with her husband and left him, embittered by the loss of the anticipated inheritance. To make matters worse, once in possession of the will, Juras's daughter threw her old father out of the farmstead, refusing him shelter and care. Another archetypal peasant tragedy!

In desperation, Juras went to see his wife on the night of 25 and 26 July. When she refused to let him in the house, he announced that he had brought along a lot of money from the nearby border, where he made his living as a smuggler.

Craving these riches, the treacherous young wife let her husband inside. Standing over his wife's bed, Juras asked her outright whether she still wanted to live with him, and when she refused, he began slashing at her in blind fury with a large butcher's knife. Hearing the injured girl's screams, her foster mother rushed in and seized the aggressor, while her seriously wounded daughter ran outside, calling for help. After a brief struggle, Juras murdered old Mrs Noga by slitting her throat with the knife, then dashed behind the house and hanged himself from a beam in the barn.



In a flash, the local police sergeant, Piotr Czarny, appeared, and after carrying out a brief investigation in keeping with the medical examiner's regulations, he took Juras's badly injured wife to the county hospital in Żywiec.

When the hanged man's body was taken down, the local people greedily tore at the belt with which the murderer had committed suicide, ripping it to shreds, and also stole the hanged man's hat and other items of clothing "for luck".

According to a common superstition, a hanged man's belt or rope brings luck, while his hat and other items of clothing can render someone invisible while committing a theft.

On 27 July, the hanged man's body was brought to the cemetery mortuary, where one of his relatives, the carpenter Tomasz Juras, who had made the coffin, turned the deceased face down in the coffin at the request of the local residents and, with numerous willing participants, hammered a ten-inch nail through the deceased's back into the coffin to immobilise him in his grave and prevent him from inflicting "nocturnal terrors" on the local population. A second nail was to have been driven into his head, but it proved unfit for the task, as it was too short.

Sergeant Czarny telegraphed his superiors regarding the desecration of the body, and the authorities ordered that the defiled corpse be buried.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the "suicide" had been mortally wounded in the belly, giving rise to suspicions that, as he fled after committing the murder, the peasants chasing him had killed him with his own knife, then hanged him in order to mislead the authorities.

This bloody tragedy and abuse of the hanged man's body, as well as the entire crime and its attendant circumstances, are a terrible consequence of war and its resultant savagery and of a general moral decline.

77.
THE CASE OF JOANNA MILLEROWA,
1933
Wiązowna, Mazovia Province

Gazeta Polska: pismo codzienne, no. 104 (14 April 1933), p. 4.

An Atrocious Display of Ignorance near Warsaw

The gravedigger at the village cemetery in Wiązowna near Warsaw noticed that, during the night, someone had dug up the grave of Joanna Millerowa, who had died the previous February, and had removed her body. The gravedigger duly informed the police.

The police arrested her husband, Edmund, who claimed that his wife had turned into an upiór after her death and returned to terrify him. Wishing to protect himself, Miller had applied one of the methods for fighting upiórs. At midnight, he had disinterred her corpse, carried it to another spot, and reburied it. He was charged with desecrating her body.

78.
THE CASE OF MARCIN SOCHA'S
CHILD, 1933
Nowe Chrósty, Łódź Province

Kurjer Warszawski, no. 168 (20 June 1933), p. 4.

The Power of Ignorance

A few days ago, a son was born to a local peasant, Marcin Socha, in the village of Nowe Chrósty, Brzeziny County. The infant was unusual in that he had been born with nascent teeth, and little teeth were clearly poking through two or three days after his birth. The child also stood out due to his exceptional growth. News spread among the locals that Socha's child was a strzyga-devil, and, once numerous peasants had visited and examined the child, Socha was strongly advised to get rid of the infant before he brought misfortune not only upon his family and relatives but on the rest of the village as well. Swayed by these insinuations

and succumbing to their suggestions, Socha himself began to suspect the infant of various uncanny qualities and exaggerated minor events that would normally have gone unnoticed. Consequently, Socha took up an axe for chopping wood and lopped off the child's head with one stroke. The news reached the police authorities, who arrested this criminal of a father.

4

KURJER WARSZAWSKI. — Dnia 20 czerwca 1933 r.

№ 168

Lotnicy rumuńscy w Warszawie.
Wczoraj o g. 15-tej przyjechali z Bukaresztu do Warszawy na samolocie „Romania” sześć rumuńskich lotników wojskowego jęz. Siechitru oraz 10-ciu oficerów rumuńskiego lotnictwa wojskowego.

Na lotnisku powitali goście przedstawiciele władz lotniczych z szefem departamentu aeronautyki M. S. Wojsk., płk. Rayskim.

Później bawi w Warszawie od dwu dni szef rumuńskiego departamentu lotnictwa Irimescu.

Ś. p. ka. Alfonsa.
(Sz.) W niedzielę, w domu Alfonsa Trepkowski, bardzo niktwa i propagandy misyj, nictwa warszawskiej. Urodził się w r. 1869 i tu kończył nauki średnie, po ku 1887 wstąpił do seminarjum war W r. 1892 był wysłany na kapła karjusz pracował w Łowiczu, Sł Gostyninie i w parafii św. Stanisła w r. 1896 jedyne na Woli.

W 1897 r. przechodzi na ter dzielnej i zostaje proboszczem skąd w 1899 r. przechodzi do Bę stanowisko. Tu pracuje bardzo kościół, zbiera różne tam się zn liska i pamiątki i tworzy mu kościelne, pisze monografię pa W 1906 r. przechodzi do prac i zostaje prefektem w szkole przemianowanej na szkołę im. cuje do r. 1925, kiedy choroba do opuszczenia tego stanowiska. emeryturę, co jednak nie przeszk szym ciągu jest cenzorem ksiąg 1926 r. sędzią sądu arcybiskupiego papieskich Dzieł miayjnych na warszawską. W uznaniu zasług wla mianuje go w 1927 r. na kiej.

Na wszystkich oddaje z nadzwyczajną jako pa bardzo kochany pa uczniów i wpływ na nich. Pracuje gorliwie prefektów i najsumiennie bierze udział w dniach. Ciągłe czyta i kształci się i tylko roba szmusa go do opuszczenia placówki na chrylskiej. W pracy misyjnej odznacza się wia ką inwencją i darem organizacji. Na parę dni przed śmiercią stwarza nową instytucję koła prelegentów. Ożywia życie w kapitule łowickiej, pi sze historje, wygrzebuje stare dokumenty, reorganizuje. Przez całe życie praca jest jego żywiołem i to jest naprawdę dominującą cechą jego prawego charakteru. A przytem nadzwyczajna uprzejmość, nie wyróżniająca nikogo, zarówno w stosunku do starszych, jak i do najmłodszych uczniów.

Ostatnio kiej choro przestaje.

TEATR I M.
* Teatr Narodowy: ostatnie cztery przedst. „Kobiety i interesy” Lindorówna, Dullanka, Samoch, Ryn, dińskim, Rolandem, Ma, zefem Węgrzyńcem w brawurze „Jaskółki” doktora”. W piątek premjera sztuki Wł. Podora „Poculone przed lustrem”.

* Teatr Nowy: dziś „Cień” z Marią Malicką, który grany będzie jeszcze tylko kilka razy. Ceny zmniejszone. Na pocztaku tygodnia premjera komedji J. Deval’a „Stefek” („Etienn”).

* Teatr Letni daje dziś i codziennie rozwiniętą go rago wybora komedji Kied, w teatrze Karmiańska i Kurmakowiczem o rolach.

* Teatr Polaki: codziennie grana jest sztuka Tepy „Prą, ną i Woskowską w rolach głównych.

* Teatr Kameralny: wnetla komedja zwan „Perfum mojej żony” ze Zniczem.

* Teatry im. Żeromskiego: dziś i codziennie „Boston” (na Zoliborzu). „Kobieta śpię” (w gmachu teatru „Bomba”). „Jestem... Zima” (w gmachu kina miejskiego).

* Teatr 8.30: dziś i jutro operetka „Szczęśliwej podróży”.

* Teatr Morale Oko: dziś i jutro „Rewja Warszawy”.

* Teatr Rext: dziś i jutro rewja „Kład gwiazd”.

* Teatr Mignon: rewja.

Aresztowanie komornika. Przed 6-ciu tygodniami zwolniono z aresztu komornika Droboskiego, który dostał się na krótko na sprawozdanie. Wczoraj, z powodu ujawnienia nowych nadużyć, władze śledcze aresztowały D. pozo wanie. Oczekuje go w areszcie centralnym.

Zamach samobójczy w sądzie. Wczoraj o g. 6 i 10 w. w sądzie grodzim, przy ul. Żelaznej 34, rozpatrywana była sprawa karne 30-letniego Adama Majuskiego, który skazano na więzienie. W piątek tegoż dnia, w piątek, kilka ran w brzuch. Po operacji, nie podjęto żadnych działań pod. dostr. policji.

Echa kat. — Jakiś — 10 ton — w Gd —

Ofiary pioruna. W niedzielę we wsi Mogile pod Krasowem piorun uderzył w drzewo, pod którym schronił się 14 osób. Ofiary osoby zostały ciężko porażone i utra przytomność. Ktoś stał nieco dalej, po udzieleniu pomocy, teno do d.

WZNA. — Wczoraj w Poznaniu, do Państwa wyjechał wyjazd z ministrem Andziłino. Na peronie dworca głównego powitali gości, prezydent miasta Ratajski i prase polsko-jugosłowiański generał Serda-Ten. Odkoło się zobranie w ratuszu, potem z fabryki Cegielskiego, oraz obosa wojsko. a. Popołudniu przyjął w ratuszu gości, witaając ich dłuższem przemówieniem, iż łączność interesów polsko-jugosłowiańskich przetrwała okropkiem na ciele króla

y morderstwa. Z Krotoszyńskiego domy z skrytym morderstwem a. p. Arden. Wczoraj w Warszawie, w godzinach po południu, w kilku miejscach, w tym

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KRAKÓW. (Tel. od naszego koresp.)
Gociele z Cieszanowic. W poniedziałek goście w Krakowie grupa szkół i szkole cieszanowskich, po wstępie ze stotu szkolnego we Lwowie. Goście zabrali się do pomieszczeń Mickiewicza i tu przemówił do nich dyrektor Szaryk, a odpowiedział dr. Rewilowski Szaryk. Na zakończenie odpowiadano na pytania i hymn czeski.

Min. Andziłowicza. P. minister Andziłowicza w poniedziałek tożegram na ręce wojewody krakowskiego Kwiatkowskiego, dziękując w imieniu krakowskich parlamentarzystów jagosłowiańskich na gościnie i serdeczności przyjęcia w Krakowie.

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