

"WHACKED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN": BURYING THE MOB

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Post-Soviet human rights activists, journalists, and scholars have been actively engaged in the memorialization of the victims of the Great Terror and Great War. One of the most publicized aspects of their project is the recovery of the victims' unmarked mass graves. The goal is to commemorate the massive loss of life in the Soviet Union by creating a "biographical dictionary" of the victims of Stalinist violence. What Viktor Iofe, the head of the Petersburg branch of Memorial, calls "the right to a name."¹ This project focusses on the violent excesses of the Stalinist past erased from public life. In a broader cultural context, the project can be seen in terms of Russia's historical paradigm of rupture, according to which society erases the past in key historical moments, a past that is reclaimed and celebrated later. This paradigm historicizes the religious model of death and resurrection.

Post-Soviet life of the 1990s remains violent, but instead of the state, the perpetrators of violence are members of the business underworld, what has become known as the Russian mafia. Instead of political terror, Russians are haunted by Hollywood-style gang slayings - *razborki* - which Russian and foreign journalists have given ample press.² I

1. From talk by Viktor Iofe at Berkeley in December 1997. The sepulchral biographical dictionary contains the names, dates, and other distinguishing features of the deceased. In the study of death, the term "necropolis" refers to a complete list of those buried in a particular cemetery. In smaller towns, and villages, the list provides a genealogy of those who lived and died there. See, e.g. S.E. Kipnis, Novodevichii Memorial: Nekropol' Novodevichiego kladbishcha, Moscow: Propilei, 1995, or, from the past, V.I. Chernopiatov, Russkii nekropol' za granitsej, 3 vols., Moscow, 1908-1913.

2. Nikolai Modestov, Moskva banditskaia: Dokumental'naia khronika kriminal'nogo bespredela 8-090kh godov, Moscow: Tsentropoligraf, 1997, p. 131). In general, the contemporary Russian mobster style and behavior have been constructed under the influence of Hollywood gangster movies and their Russian counterparts, with their unrelenting excess of blood and guts. The inspirational film hero of many Russian soldiers in Chechnya, who have contributed to gangster ranks, was the brutal, racist green-beret Rambo. (Copolla's Godfather series and other American mafia films have influenced the mob's lifestyle and discourse. According to Nikolai Modestov, the mobsters of Sergei Frolov's Balashikhino gang could recite

will focus in this paper on the luxurious cult of memory of the slain mobster, about which I learned from an article, "Whacked but not Forgotten," published in April 1997 on the New York Times Sunday Magazine. Written by Samuel Hutchinson, a young French journalist, it is the first article about mafia commemoration - in Ekaterinburg.³ (As everybody knows, Ekaterinburg, formerly Sverdlovsk, is Yeltsin's hometown and the place where the Romanov family was executed and buried in 1918; since prerevolutionary times Ekaterinburg has also been the center of the export of rare metals and precious stones, mined in the nearby Urals; for some time, the mob has controlled this billion-dollar business.⁴)

My paper focusses on two Ekaterinburg mafia pantheons and two mafia gravesites in Moscow: one at Vvedensky Hills;⁵ the other at Vagan'kovo. The paper also treats briefly the preparation of the mangled corpse for public viewing. Its main theoretical concerns are the relations between the mafia lifestyle, its funerary practices, and earlier memorialization practices in Russia and the Russian diaspora. One of the questions that interests me is how the commemorative rituals and representations reveal the mob's power.

parts of the Godfather films by heart

3. Samuel Hutchinson, "Whacked but not Forgotten," New York Times Magazine, Apr. 13, 1997. Variants of this article also appeared in the German magazine Forum (March 29, 1997) and the Sunday Times Magazine in London (Apr. 20, 1997). In June of 1997, I tracked down Samuel Hutchinson in Moscow. Very generously, he gave me some unedited video tapes of the mafiosi death rituals. I will make use of them today. Hutchinson writes that twelve Ekaterinburg mob chieftains have been killed in gang wars as of one year ago. The leaders are young; few live to be thirty five.

4. Among the rare metals and stones are platinum and titanium, emeralds and rubies such as platinum, mined in the nearby Urals; the central Urals contain Russia's only titanium and emeralds. One-fourth of Russia's dark metals are produced in factories in and around Ekaterinburg (Andrei Konstantinov and Mal'kol'm Dikselius, Banditskaia Rossiia, St.Petersburg: Bibliopolis, 1997, p. 314).

5. The Vvedensky Hills cemetery was called "German Cemetery" before the Revolution, meaning that it was intended for non-Orthodox Europeans living in Moscow. A European garden cemetery, which is today very heavily wooded, it was referred to in prerevolutionary times as Moscow's Pere Lachaise.

As to the historical paradigm of destruction followed by later restoration of the erased past, I make the claim that the mafia funeral practice conflates violence and restoration by means of Christian iconography.

The modern cemetery, a public space of memory, has always displayed the relation between economic and political power. In the case of the mob, the cemetery glorifies those who have prospered in the cut-throat economy of post-Soviet Russia. First, the mangled mobster corpse is reconstituted, or purified, in the funeral home where it is prepared by the "cash-starved embalmers looking after ... Lenin's mummified body." January 8, 1998, Interfax news agency quoted Yuri Romakov, deputy head of the Biological Research Institute who has worked on the preservation of Lenin's body since 1952⁶: "Many of the laboratory employees," said Romakov, "were using their embalming skills in their spare time to earn money." The Russian government has stopped financing the laboratory; the Mausoleum Fund, a charitable organization, has provided resources to maintain Lenin's body.⁷ The business underworld has appropriated the economics of embalming (which today costs up to \$1500 per day⁸) and immortalizing from the Soviet state, whose Stalinist project was the immortalization of the body of the Great Leader.

6. Aleksandr Ryklin, "Zapasnoe telo vozhdia," *Itogi*, Nov. 25, 1997, p. 29. Romakov has worked on the preservation of Lenin's body since 1952. "Dva raza v nedeliiu brigada uchenykh po sobstvennoi initsiative i sovershenoo beskorystno," writes Ryklin, "prikhodit v mavzolei i sovershaet vse neobkhodimye manipuliatsii - telo obtiraiut bal'zamiruiushchim sostavom. V brigade 12 chelovek. Raz v poltora-dva goda oni sovershaiut bolee slozhnuiu protseduru: sviashchennye dlia mnogikh rossian ostanki opuskaiut v spetsial'niuu vannu s tem zhe rastvorom" (p. 29-30). Experiments to perfect the embalming process have been conducted over many years on nameless corpses obtained from the trust, "Meditsinskie i uchebny posobiia," which also provided corpses to medical schools. "Nam ne vseгда trebovalis' tsel'nye tela, - rasskazyvaet Iiurii Romakov, - ochen' chasto my prosili prosto kakuii-nibud' chast': ruku ili nogu. Skazhem, eksperimenty s vozdeistviem sveta provodilis' imenno na fragmentakakh." Such experiments came to a halt in 1995. (p. 33)

7. "Lenin Embalmers Turn to Mob Victims to raise Cash," Reuters, January 8, 1998.

8. Hutchinson, p. 44.

Instead of giving life to the single body, the practice has been extended to the mob clan as a whole, revealing a shift from an ideology based on the singular power of the charismatic Great Leader to one defined by the power of money.

(VIDEO) The video segment is shot inside the laboratory. As you can see, a team of embalmers is preparing a shot-up corpse for display. You also see nameless corpses on which experiments to perfect the embalming process have been conducted over many years. Body no. 23 or 25, submerged in a bal'zamicheskii rastvor, is 50 years old; no. 72 is 25 years old. "Nam ne vseгда trebovalis' tsel'nye tela, - rasskazyvaet Iiurii Romakov, - ochen' chasto my prosili prosto kakuiu-nibud' chast': ruku ili nogu. [...] eksperimenty s vozdeistviem sveta provodilis' imenno na fragmentakakh." These experiments came to a halt in 1995. (Ryklin, p. 33)

The mafia has also appropriated the Russian Orthodox burial ritual. (slide) Before the church funeral, the reconstituted corpse is displayed in an expensive coffin, which can cost up to \$20,000. (SLIDE) There the mobster lies recumbent as if on his deathbed, erasing the violence of gangster-style death. And after the Orthodox funeral, the mobster is immortalized by means of an eternally youthful larger than life petrified photographic representation at the cemetery. (slide) Instead of a recumbent image, the life-like representation on the giant vertical stele is that of the resurrected mafioso radiating physical and economic power.

(slide) Particularly interesting is the fenced in locked gravesite of four young mobsters at Vvedensky cemetery; (slide) killed between 1993-96, they were members of Moscow's Orekhovo brigade, or brotherhood, the youngest in the capital.⁹ (The term

9. The Orekhovo brigade is part of the Solntsevo mob, which is the most powerful mafia clan in Moscow.

brigade is used by the authorities, brotherhood by the mobsters themselves.) (slide) The key figures are the Kleshchenko brothers - Lenia, po klichke Uzbek, was killed at the age of 23; Sasha was 19. The central image of the monument is the representation of the Crucifixion, with the two crucified thieves and one mourner standing at the bottom of the cross. On both sides of the engraved Christian image are four large photorepresentations of the slain mobsters in life. The location and their occupation evoke the image of the two thieves. If we consider the symbolic meaning of the Crucifixion followed by the Resurrection, it connotes the transfiguration of the body into an immortal one. As adapted by the mob, the Christian iconography refers to the slain mobster's reappearance in the flesh. Death leads to immediate resurrection on the giant headstone, but the threatening image of the mobster invokes the figure of Antichrist, not his sacred Christian double.

In contrast to the Vvedensky Hills monument, where the photographic images are simply gigantic version of the traditional cemetery photo, those in Ekaterinburg are full-length representations which focus on the gangster's typifying accoutrements. Within the mafia there is a table of ranks which in many gangs determines its members' appearance. These emblems are key to the photo engravings. (SLIDE) The dress code of the foot soldiers, the so-called "bulls," or "killers," is either a jogging suit or loose-fitting pants for quick getaway, leather jacket, and athletic shoes.¹⁰(slide) In part their dress reflects the fact

The two control its southwest suburb. I have been able to identify three of the four Orekhovo mobsters. Of the Kleshchenko brothers, the older one, Leonid (1970-1993) was the most powerful. His nickname was Uzbek; killed in October 1993, he was taken to the same funeral home ("Ritual") as the banker Nikolai Tikhonov. The services of the funeral home cost about \$40,000. The younger Alexander, dead at the age of nineteen, was killed in 1996; he was also an Orekhovo leader. The Orekhovo group, which controlled the Southwest suburbs of Moscow, began to break up into smaller warring groups in the early 1990s. During this period Dima Sharapov is known to have blown away three mobsters from a warring group in a cafe near the metro Kashirskaia. This happened in February 1993; he was killed in October (Modestov, pp. 176-182).

10. See Artem Vetrov and Aleksei Mytar', "Ot 'bykov' do 'apel'sinov': Asketicheskii ukhodit v proshloe," *Segodnia*, July 27, 1995, p.?

that many of them are former athletes, no longer supported by the state, or young men that regularly practice body-building sports.¹¹ (slide) At the beginning, leather jackets and headgear were worn by drivers and airplane pilots, signifying male power. In the 1920s, the leather jacket emblemized the Bolshevik commissar, representing ideological power; in the post-Stalin era, it typified the dress code of the rebellious young male writers and artists of the 1960s, whose self-image was associated with male physical athletic prowess. I have in mind the youth writers and artists such as Yevtushchenko, Okudzhava, Aksenov, Neizvestny. The bodies of mobsters of all ranks are decorated with tattoos, which links them to the style of self-representation by convicts since the late nineteenth century. Many young mobsters have very short hair cuts for pragmatic reasons. The clean-shaven punk-style temple and back of the head makes it impossible for an adversary to slow them down in an altercation. In other words, the mobster look displays youthful power, but when represented on the gravestone it also reveals the mobster's proximity to death; hence the predominance of black colors and emblematics of quick getaway, which include a fast car, cellular phone, and a well-trained body.¹²

The "successful" brigade bosses, called "authorities" or "brigadiers," wear expensive designer-made cashmere suits and silk shirts without ties, with some buttons unbuttoned. Their English shoes cost \$500 and up. Watches, preferably Rolex, are solid

11. The Orekhovo brigade is known for its athletes (wrestlers, boxers, handball players [see Modoestov, p. 176]). Gyms everywhere, frequently controlled by the mafia, are one of the meeting places of the tough bodybuilders linked to the mafia; the gym trainers are often from **Omon** (Otriad militsii osobogo naznacheniiia, formed in the late 1980s), or from the ranks of the **spetsnaz** (troops of "spetsial'nogo naznacheniiia"). These were and remain elite SS-like military troops. For that matter, many mobsters are recruited from the ranks of disgruntled veterans of Afghanistan and Chechnia.

12. Most mobsters wear ID bracelets, which include their blood type; the bracelets are called **bratskie smertniki**.

gold, worth a minimum of \$25,000. At least two ostentatious gold rings decorate the fingers; one with a seal, the other with a diamond or other rare precious stone. (ZHULDYBIN VIDEO) They wear heavy gold jewelry around the neck and wrists which reveals their power of life and death. The total value of gold decoration is about \$50,000.¹³

One of the neck chains has an obligatory baptismal cross, not uncommonly encrusted with diamonds. In fact, most of the mobsters wear crosses next to their skin and are religious. But the cross is just another label, on par with the Armani suit, Rolex watch, and Mercedes car. Before the Revolution, the baptismal cross was worn underneath one's clothing. Its display was considered in poor taste. If worn at all after the Revolution, it also remained hidden because of its subversive political connotations. Wearing one's baptismal cross as a piece of jewelry began in Brezhnev's time - as a fashionable form of personal protest among women of the Brezhnev intelligentsia; now it has become part of the mobster style, of the "new Russians" in general.

In contrast to the public style of former Soviet leaders, which was unostentatious, today's mafia is preoccupied with flaunting its personal economic power, in life as well as in death. In today's context, its conspicuous lifestyle and dress code differentiate the gangsters from law-abiding citizens. The "quasi-dissident" cross of the Brezhnev era has become a symbol of economic power and of the power of national and religious identity.

A crucial mark of the mobster's identity is his car. The vehicle of choice is either a sport utility vehicle, which has military associations (they especially like the Cherokee) or the most expensive Mercedes, a sign of bourgeois wealth.¹⁴ The most striking tombstone

13. See "Ot 'bykov' do 'apel'sinov'."

14. Other cars preferred by the mafia are Lincolns and BMWs. While the higher ranks drive western of

representation in this respect is that of Mikhail Kuchin, Ekaterinburg's Central Gang kingpin killed in 1994, at the age of thirty-four. His slaying was allegedly related to the struggle between the Central and Uralmash¹⁵ gangs of Ekaterinburg, the most powerful mob brigades in that city. (The struggle is over control of the export of strategic raw materials.) Kuchin's ten-feet high malachite tombstone cost \$64,000.¹⁶ Encrusted with precious stones, it represents the monument of a powerful brigade leader. The jewels symbolize Ekaterinburg's power over the precious stone industry. An influential businessman, (VIDEO) Kuchin¹⁷ wears a designer suit over an unbuttoned shirt, displaying his baptismal cross. Most importantly, he holds Mercedes keys in his hand. (slide) His widow, Nadezhda, who hosted a lavish feast at his grave on his birthday, claimed that she wanted his tomb to be the envy of those who ordered his murder.¹⁸ To the left of his head and shoulders is a raised Orthodox cross, which signifies Kuchin's affiliation with the church. The cross on the headstone represents his moral purification after death and resurrection in the body, which has been accomplished on the stele. The Mercedes keys symbolize Kuchin's economic status. They are also emblems of quick getaway, one of the

Japanese models, the lower ones drive domestic cars, such as Volgas (models 2106, 2108, and 2109) (Ibid.).

15. The most extensive new gangster pantheon is at the North Uralmash Cemetery of Ekaterinburg. Uralmash is a northern suburb of Ekaterinburg which developed around a huge factory built under Stalin. The majority of the shock-workers at Uralmash were prison laborers, not members of the Komsomol. The combination of work, criminal record, and prestige has a long tradition in Ekaterinburg, especially Uralmash, whose law-abiding citizens were considered black sheep there (Andrei Konstantinov and Mal'kol'm Dikselius, Banditskaia Rossiia, St.Petersburg: Bibliopolis, 1997, p. 311).

16. A simple black stone at Uralmash goes for about \$2000. As Hutchinson writes, "far more popular is the portrait model, at \$5000 and up." (p. 53)

17. Kuchin was the founder of several Ekaterinburg commercial enterprises, such as TOO "MiKuch." His predecessor, Oleg Vagin, was murdered in 1992, as were three of his body guards (see Konstantinov, pp. 313-15). Vagin's gravesite is still in the classical social realist sepulchral style.

18. Samuel Hutchinson, "Krieg der Graber," Focus, March 29, 1997, p. 93.

mob's highly developed skills that is linked to death. Despite Kuchin's failure to exercise this skill in the end (he was killed after all), the stele represents his symbolic power over life and death.

The keys are also emblems of a profession, not just wealth. As an emblem of Kuchin's occupation, they can be compared to traditional professional insignia on gravestones, such as medals on the chests of military men (slide), anchors representing seafarers, or technological signs figuring scientific progress. (2 slides) AN AMUSING EXAMPLE OF PROFESSIONAL INSIGNIA IS ON THE DIASPORIC MONUMENT OF A SEMEN VOLOVKIN (1925-1985) AT A JEWISH CEMETERY IN SAN FRANCISCO CALLED ETERNAL HOME. BESIDES FEATURING A PHOTOENGRAVING OF VOLOVKIN, A TRUCKDRIVER BY PROFESSION, THE HEADSTONE DISPLAYS A VERY DETAILED PHOTOENGRAVING OF A KAMAZ TRUCK WITH THE DRIVER SITTING AT THE STEERING WHEEL. RETURNING TO THE METROPOLIS - a unique representation of professional insignia at New Novodevich'e is the monument of Ivan Peresytkin. (1st phone slide) A Soviet marshall of communication troops during the Second World War, he holds a telephone into which he speaks; he died in 1978. (2nd phone slide) This late Socialist Realist sculpture is characteristic of the Brezhnev era gravestones at Novodevich'e.¹⁹ There are many rows of them, densely spaced; (slide) the important Soviet military men, representing Soviet military might, are always erect, stiff, motionless, standing on pedestals or emerging out of stone (slide), like Peresytkin. The larger than life photographic monument of Alexander

19. I say new because one of the most important prerevolutionary cemeteries was at Novodevich'e monastery, situated inside the monastery wall. As to the monuments, the Soviet sculptures in the monumental Stalinist style may very well be one of the sources of the parodic sots-art paintings of Komar and Melamid.

Naumov reveals a stern military look despite the civilian dress. (Naumov slide) Naumov, killed in 1995, was the brigadier of Moscow's Koptevo gang. The gravesite is located on one of the most prominent corners at Vagan'kovo cemetery.²⁰

The military stance reminds us of the fact that many of the mobsters of the 1990s have been recruited from the ranks of disgruntled veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnia. This fact was elaborated in Alexei Balabanov's film *Brother* (1997), a sequel to Aleksandr Badrov's *Kavkazkii plennik* which treated the war in Chechnya. In contrast to Badrov's humanistic treatment of the warring sides, Balabanov focusses on the war's devastating consequences: the young soldier Badrov becomes an unwilling but brutal mafia killer. The same narrative trajectory characterizes the pulp film *Vse to o chem my tak dolgo mechtali* by Rudol'f Fruntov.²¹ The mob theme has also penetrated Russian high culture: for example, it is the subject of Vladimir Sorokin's 1997 published filmscript *Moscow*, published in *Kinostsenarii* in 1997.²²

20. Theme of brigade brothers; term **bratva** (brotherhood) used by the members of a brigade to denote their clan.

21. *Brat* is a sequel to A. Badrov's *Kavkazkii plennik* (*Prisoner of the Mountain*), which treats the war in Chechnya in relation to Lermontov and Tolstoy, their *Prisoner[s] of the Caucasus*. In the last few years, there have been several Russian films in which the hero becomes a gangster after the war. See e.g. Rudol'f Fruntov's *Vse to o chem my tak dolgo mechtali*.

22. *Moskva* was published in *Kinostsenarii* (no. 1, 1997). Vladimir Sorokin is one of the most important contemporary writers. In an interview that appears together with the filmscript, Sorokin says that he has become firmly convinced that literature in Russia is dead and that the only hope in the arts are visual genres (p. 113). The film director, Alexander Zel'dovich, who commissioned the script, says that the film will be financed by the financial group "Most" and made at the studio "NTV-Profit." Besides treating the hedonist and brutal lifestyle of Russia's financial elite, *Moskva* offers a model of a post-Soviet triple union, what Zel'dovich calls **troinoi brak** (a marital union that consists of three people, p. 115). The Russian-style triple union has its roots in the Russian 1860s (see Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988) and in the marital practices of Russia's cultural elite at the beginning of the twentieth century (see Olga Matich, "Dialectics of Cultural Return: Zinaida Gippius' Personal Myth," *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*, eds. Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, and Irina Paperno, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) and Matich, "The Symbolist Meaning of Love: Theory and Practice," *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, eds. Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman, Stanford:

Some of the Brezhnev era monuments were already in the enlarged photographic style. (video) Consider especially the figure of the admiral speaking into a telephone. These monuments, as well as the earlier sculptural ones, appear to be forebears of the mafia sepulchral gigantomania of the second half of the 90s. However, the youth of the represented mafiosi clearly differentiates them from the members of the Novodevich'e pantheon. (naumov slide) Towering over others, living and dead, the mafiosi, especially their gaze, inspire fear in the onlooker, although a Russian woman who watched me photograph the Naumov graves said with what appeared to be genuine sorrow: "Life disposes so unfairly; they were so young," as if referring to young men victimized by war.²³

Photographs of the deceased are an important component of most graves at Soviet and post-Soviet cemeteries. The use of photographs on otherwise impersonal and frequently unimaginative monuments first appeared in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. Before the Revolution, this new style of memorializing the deceased

Stanford University Press, 1994).

23. When I was photographing the graves of Alexander and Vasilii Naumov, the brigadiers of Moscow's Koptevo gang, I observed a young man pass by the collective gravesite dominated by the towering full-sized photoengraving of the younger brother. The representation of young Alexander Naumov, killed in 1995 at the age of thirty three, seems to "immortalize" a more dignified, legitimate figure than what we know about him. According to Alexander Konstantinov in the 1997 book *Banditskaia Rossiia*, the older brother, Vasilii, killed in 1997, was one of the most brutal mobsters in the Koptevo gang (p.117). The grave is situated close to the main entrance to Vagan'kovo, on one of the most prominent corners of the cemetery. The site is further dignified by a trumpeteer who plays traditional sad Russian tunes. The passer-by that I observed was a body-builder; his strong arms were tattooed; he was wearing a tank top, loose-fitting jeans, and adidas; his hair was cut in the mobster style. He was wearing a cross on a chain around his neck. I watched him closely: he was mean-looking, walked energetically without stopping, swinging an athletic bag, looking all the while with palpable hostility and anger, not at me, but at the two brothers represented on the gravestones. He continued to look back at them after he turned the corner. I suspect that he is a young gangster, perhaps an enemy of the Naumovs or their gang brother.

was rare among the Russian elites; they associated it with meshchanstvo, i.e. bad taste.²⁴ In Europe, the use of photographs became particularly widespread in Mediterranean countries. Philippe Aries compares this style of cemetery to a photo album.²⁵ The photo style came to dominate the Soviet cemetery after the Revolution, especially in the Stalin and post-Stalin eras. It reflected the Communists' anti-Orthodox and anti-gentry politics as well as Soviet man's petty-bourgeois tastes from the 1930s onwards. In contrast to Aries' sentimental simile of the photo album, the photos in Soviet cemeteries were more sinister. They are like entries in an imperial dictionary, in which the photographic image is an eternal identification photo of the dead member of the Soviet empire. Such an interpretation of the funerary photograph stands in stark opposition to Aries's view of the modern cemetery as sentimentalized private space.

In more general theoretical terms, French philosophers and critics, beginning with Henri Bergson and more recently Roland Barthes, associate all photographs with death. In Creative Evolution (1907), Bergson suggests that the photograph produces a deathlike rigor mortis instead of revivifying the living. The representation of time in spatial terms, according to Bergson, is adequate for death, not life.²⁶ The spatialization of time erases time, which is a property of death. Barthes wrote extensively about the inscription of death in photography, linking "the 'mythological' effect of a photograph," especially of the

24. This does not mean that there were no photographic images in Russia before 1917. For example, in Bunin's "Legkoe dykhanie," Olia Meshcherskaia's grave is marked by a wooden cross with a porcelain photograph of the young woman. **or... 19 c images.**

25. Philippe Aries, The Hour of Our Death, tr. Helen Weaver, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981, p. 538.

26. Martin Jay, p. 198.

sensational journalistic sort, to its traumatic effect."²⁷ Besides mythologizing the lost past, it evokes pain associated with the mourning of that loss. In relation to the mob, the press image first captures the bloody razboroka; the photorealistic monument mythologizes the figure of the gangster.

Even though these theoretical observations refer to photography in general, they are particularly relevant to the funerary photograph, which embodies literally the photo's inherent rigor mortis. The photographic image at the gravesite seems to be the source, or reification, of the identification of the technique of photography with death. Even though cemetery photographs usually represent the deceased in the prime of life, they are markers of his death. Invoking his living image, they also evoke his corpse, laying bare Bergson's metaphor of rigor mortis. Barthes' view of the photographic subject as "a spectre of the returned dead" is reified at the mafiosi gravesites. The reference to the return of the dead certainly calls forth the figure of the vampire, so menacingly present in today's representations of the mafia killers and authorities.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the small photographic memento was only one of the components of the tombstone. Lifesize and lifelike representation in death was the exclusive privilege of Lenin. The typical Novodevich'e monument was a sculpture of the deceased, occasionally accompanied by a small photograph which reduplicates the owner's imperial regalia. But in the Brezhnev era, as the technology of photographic representation improved, the lifelike photographic monument began to appear at Novodevich'e and elsewhere.²⁸ The only major change in the photographic representation of the 1990s

27. Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," *The Rustle of Language*, p. 146.

28. My favorite example at Novodevich'e is the stele of Viktor Nikonov, who died in 1993, because of the private life characteristics of the image.

mobster is the youth of the deceased (power has been transferred to the strong and young in the post-Soviet 1990s), the sheer size of the monument, with its photo-engraved full-length body. I would suggest that the size changes the meaning of the represented image. The small photo was simply a memento mori linked to the nineteenth-century cult of memory. The lifesize, or larger than life, full figure is a symbol of physical power in the shape of a naturalistic revived body. And because of his blood-letting or blood-sucking activities, the mobster is like the living dead - the vampire - that haunts the cemetery. Most likely, it is this aspect of the mobster's cemeterial image that dominates his reception by contemporaries, not the idea of resurrection in a Christian sense.

The lifelike representation of the dead is contrary to Orthodox sepulchral tradition. The prerevolutionary Russian Orthodox monument was typically a wooden or stone cross decorated by a small icon of a saint. (The saint according to Christian belief acquires an immortal body before the Last Judgment.) The icon memorialized the soul of the deceased, not his sinful mortal flesh. The Christian stele represents resurrection symbolically - by means of a cross - not naturalistically. At the Soviet cemetery, the photo replaces the saint's icon, making a Soviet or Nietzschean icon of the self. The late Soviet and post-Soviet man of power is deified in death in the manner of the Great Leader, Lenin. The New Russian monument includes the symbol of the Orthodox cross, but instead of dominating, it assumes the space and function of the earlier oval photograph.

The relationship between the saint' icon and the personal photograph changed not only in the Soviet Union, but also in the Russian diaspora. My analysis of this relationship is based on limited evidence - the Russian cemetery in the town of Colma, where San Francisco Russians repose. (video) The older graves before the war through the

1950s were marked for the most part by plain crosses or crosses with icons (video). They contain the remains of the first emigration, especially from Manchuria and China. Photographs appeared in the 1960s, with the photo typically subordinated to the icon. (video) The icon is located on the stem of the cross above the photograph. But the relationship between the two has become uncertain. As we see in the next example, the photograph moves almost to the same horizontal plane as the icon, as on the mobster tombstone in Moscow featuring the Crucifixion. The hierarchical uncertainty problematizes the relation between the two, not to speak of the fact that their size is typically the same. (video) Or of the fact that on family steles there is one icon and many personal photographs. (video)

At Colma, there are a few large tombstones in the Soviet style; they are the work of the third-wave tombstone artist, Leon Rader, author of the truck gravestone and owner of the Art in Stone factory.²⁹ The most interesting headstone at the Russian cemetery is that of Aleksei Lavrushin and his parents; his father, Nikolai Ilyich (1874-1946) was born in Siberia and died in Manchuria; his mother, Efrosinia Konstantinovna (1888-1963) was born in Poltava and died in San Francisco after emigrating there in 1956. Alex Nikolaevich, born in Kharbin in 1926, died in San Francisco in 1995, shortly after the erection of the

29. Leon Rader, the focus of Kira Raik's Russian TV film "Svoi sredi chuzhikh," is the owner of "Art in Stone," a tombstone factory in Colma. Several Russian immigrants work there. The three tombstones at the Russian cemetery made by Rader all bear his signature. He came to the United States from Chernovtsy, Ukraine, twenty years ago; in the Ukraine he worked as a sculptor. The most interesting tombstone by him is the Lavrushin monument, which contains the remains of a couple born in Harbin, Manchuria, and of their son, who died in San Francisco a few years ago. The younger Lavrushin told Leon Rader that he wanted to build for his parents the most beautiful monument at the Russian cemetery. According to Rader, it cost between \$12,000 and \$13,000. At New Carmel Cemetery in Queens, New York, there are rows of headstones of Russian Jews with photographic likenesses etched in granite. They are produced at Al Abramovitz's monument store; the photographic likenesses are engraved on the stone with a "diamond-tipped instruments that looks like an electric drill." (Celia W. Dugger, "Outward Bound From the Mosaic: Where Dead Are Mourned, Many Traditions Mingle," *The New York Times*, October 28, 1997, p. 18.)

headstone, which includes an abbreviated family tree of the Lavrushin family; according to the information on the stone, it lived in Vladimir until 1796. The cemetery's foreman told me that the younger Lavrushin wanted to memorialize his parents in grand style, considering Rader's photoengraving technique particularly artistic. So he set out to "remodel" his mother's gravesite and included his own living image in stone. He fell out of a tree and died several months after the new headstone was placed on the gravesite. I assume this White Russian gentleman from San Francisco was ignorant of the Soviet and post-Soviet signification of the tombstone style which he chose to represent his family in death. In his opinion, it was particularly artistic.

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I would suggest that despite the anti-Soviet diasporic locus of San Francisco's Russian cemetery, the changing relation between the represented immortals and mortals on the gravestones resembles the process that took place over time in the Soviet Union. Both the Soviet and post-Soviet cemetery and the Russian Orthodox one in San Francisco reflect the secularization of Russian commemorative practices in the twentieth century. Putting it another way, they reflect the coexistence of religious tradition in which the icon is the site of prayer, and neo-paganism with its photorealistic ancestor cult. Besides secularization and its commingling with religious practice, the new mobster commemorative style reveals the power of the gangster by means of an apocalyptic representation of the resurrected or vampiric gangster in the flesh. His image also continues socialist realist funerary style,

sculptural and photorealist. In contrast to the earlier snapshot representation of the deceased, the new idealized sculptured photoengraving represents him outside of time. Despite the technique of photorealism, the mythologized image is timeless, as if it is meant to exist eternally. Whether benign or menacing, the gaze of the mobster dominates his presence at the cemetery. The process of memorializing the deceased, which includes embalming and viewing the reconstituted corpse and erecting a gigantic tombstone with a naturalistic representation of the dead gangster can also be read against one of Russia's historical paradigms. Instead of the temporal gap between the erasure of prerevolutionary society and culture and their later restoration in the post-Stalin and post-Soviet eras, the mafia commemorative practice eliminates the gap. Although the scale of destruction and subsequent restoration is very different in the case of the mobster, the mafia has conflated the two activities into one process - by superimposing resurrection over death or by erasing the gap by figures of the undead.

This is only an introduction to the mafia's commemorative practices. Many questions remain unaddressed in my paper, such as the difference between Russian mafia tombstones and those in Italy and United States; or the role of Orthodox priests in the burial ceremony. Are they paid more than usual by the mobster's family or clan? Are the mobster graves defaced, say by rival gangs? If yes, with what consequences? Certainly Kuchin's widow's pronouncement that she wanted her husband's burial to be the envy of his enemies was a provocation to destroy his powerful image.³⁰

30. As to the diasporic cemeteries, there are many differences, especially between such a historic cemetery as the Parisian one at Ste. Genevieve des Bois and the one in San Francisco. Besides the obvious difference in class and the fact that the former is the site of many famous Russians, the Paris cemetery has eliminated the gap between prerevolutionary and Soviet times by means of emigre nostalgia, reflected in its excessive **style russe**. Although there are at least two books devoted to Sts. Genevieve des Bois, neither attempts to consider it from the perspective of cultural studies.

