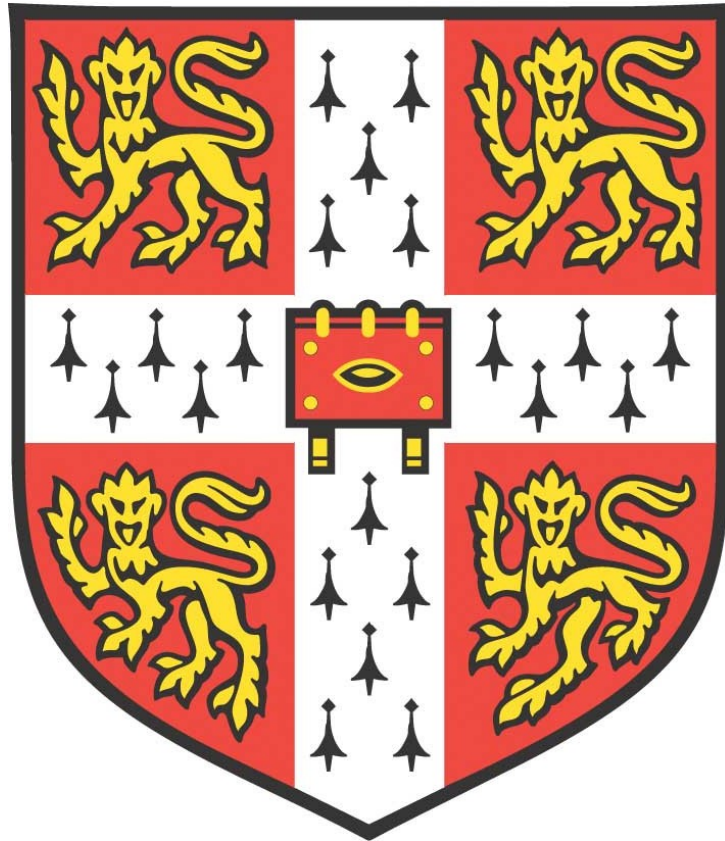


The Heritage of Repression: Memory, Commemoration, and Politics in Post-Soviet Russia



Margaret Anderson Comer

Jesus College

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

Declaration

- This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.
- It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.
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Signed:

‘The Heritage of Repression: Memory, Commemoration, and Politics in Post-Soviet Russia’

Margaret Anderson Comer

Abstract

This dissertation focuses on portrayals of victims and perpetrators at sites related to Soviet repression in contemporary Moscow and Yekaterinburg, Russia. Its aim is to explore the different ways in which site stakeholders choose to interpret victims and perpetrators: specifically, how they handle the issue of intertwined grieving and blaming when the categories of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ are not always clear. It also aims to understand the broader political and sociocultural attitudes underlying why different groups choose various forms of ‘grievability’ and ‘blameability’. Millions of Soviet citizens were victimized in successive waves of Soviet repression, yet there has been little critical study of the tangible and intangible heritage of these acts of violence as they are inscribed (or not) on today’s Russian cityscapes. The idea of ‘grievability’ was developed by Judith Butler; I have developed a typology of grievability that can be used to compare who is being grieved at each site and why each site’s caretakers and stakeholders make these choices. The dissertation then goes beyond grievability to introduce the concept of ‘blameability’, which I propose in order to analyze how blame is assigned at each site. I have developed a typology of blameability that can be used to categorize whom each site blames for the violence that affected the victims memorialized there. For each individual or group identified at a site, their respective degrees of grievability and blameability can be plotted on a chart, allowing for a more thorough and holistic view of how each site’s stakeholders view and portray the issue of intertwined victimhood and perpetration. Finally, the case study data are brought together in order to draw conclusions about overarching attitudes towards the tangible and intangible legacies of Soviet repression in Russia. Linked theorizations of ‘accountability’ and ‘repentability’ are also introduced and their ramifications addressed.

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Dedication

In memory of my grandmothers:

Elizabeth (Betty) Yourtee Anderson (1926-2011)

and

Bernice Brondyke Comer (1917-2015)

Thank you for teaching me, in your different ways, to love history and justice, the world in all its diversity, and life itself. This is for you. I hope it would have made you proud.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Moscow, like many busy capitals, has its share of plaques attached to buildings where something historic happened. It can be easy to ignore these, as there are so many. The apartment building where I lived in 2010 was no exception: a sign affixed to the front, which often had flowers placed around it, read ‘Дом Военных’, or ‘House of Warriors’. There were also several plaques dedicated to specific people, and flowers would sometimes appear around these. One of these people was Yan Gamarnik. Gamarnik, who had held various high-ranking military and political positions since the 1917 Revolutions, was serving as ‘Head of the Army Political Administration and First Deputy People’s Commissar for War’ when he died in May 1937 (Conquest 2008: 200-01).

The house, in the middle of Moscow and complete with an elevator, would have been considered luxurious in the 1930s. Although the Bolsheviks committed themselves to the idea of ‘class warfare’ and the elevation of the working class, even from the early years after the 1917 revolutions, ‘experts’ and high-ranking officials of many types were given special perks. These might be special rations, the right to buy exclusive luxury goods, or expedited permission to buy an automobile (see Fitzpatrick 1999). Possibly the most coveted were the larger and better-appointed apartment buildings reserved for such ‘Soviet elites’. Like the ‘House of Warriors’, such buildings were often set aside for specific ministries, occupations, or academic disciplines.

But when Joseph Stalin came to power and, especially during the Great Terror of 1936-8, managers and leaders of ministries, workforces, schools, and other Soviet institutions began to be targeted, these same elite apartment buildings became sites of terror. In some buildings, the arrival of the secret police to arrest inhabitants was a near-nightly affair. The inhabitants of the elite apartment building known as the ‘House on the Embankment’, as profiled by Yuri Slezkine (2017), were especially hard-hit by these operations. The ‘House of Warriors’ was not spared – the arrests that ended up taking the lives of such prominent Red Army commanders as aviation pioneer Red Army Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky also claimed Gamarnik. Although he was not actually arrested or killed by the NKVD (the era’s Soviet secret police organ), choosing instead to commit suicide in his home when warned of his upcoming arrest, he is now known as one of the first victims of the Great Terror (Conquest 2008). The plaque that I had seen in 2010 on this house lauded his military accomplishments, but it did not mention his repressed status.

This is just one experience that ties into much larger issues of history, identity, memory, and heritage as these relate to the contemporary legacies of Soviet repression in Russia. How does the heritage of mass political repression affect a community's conceptions of history, identity, and justice? In the wake of decades of Soviet repression, the sites of former gulag camps, prisons, and gulag memorials and museums merit study in order to discern which narratives are (or are not) reflected and disseminated within each site's preservation and interpretation. This thesis analyzes landscape and narrative changes made over time at these sites in light of official and dissenting political positions towards the legacy of Soviet repression in order to illuminate prevailing official and social attitudes (and clashes between these) about the role(s) the heritage of repression can have in modern Russia. Studying these connections also reveals the foundations of prevailing attitudes towards human and civil rights issues and towards conceptions of 'Russia'. In light of current Russian federal stances on human rights and the continued existence of labor camps in the prison system, analyzing the pattern of narrative change at gulag sites across Russia will be doubly illuminating, both regarding the effects of official attitudes towards these subjects and about the efforts and motivations of those who insist on keeping such memory present and remembered.

1.2 Sociohistorical Background: Soviet Repression and Contemporary Russia

In order to understand how such sites became what Logan and Reeves have termed 'places of pain and shame' (2008), it is necessary to examine briefly the historical background as well as the current sociocultural context that has led to heritage 'dissonance' (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) at each site.

Like the French Revolution of the late eighteenth century, the two 1917 Revolutions in Russia were not merely political 'coups'. Instead, they each sought a complete remaking of current worlds, each undertaking this through violent means which led to violent backlash and the institution of state-sponsored terror (Mayer 2013). In Russia, this first took shape as the so-called 'Red Terror', a policy of theft and violence against anti-Bolshevik 'enemies' which Lenin and other leaders 'viewed as a means of class war against the 'bourgeoisie'' (Figs 2017: 630). Once the Civil War had ended and the Bolsheviks had consolidated power, the new government was still faced with masses of class enemies such as former priests, kulaks (rich peasants), priests, merchants, and other members of the petty bourgeoisie, with almost all members of the aristocracy having already fled or been killed (Suny 1997).

Under Stalin, the centrality of state terror intensified, as purges of the Communist Party at many levels took place under the guise of Party ‘cleaning’ and ‘verification’ of background (Getty 1987: 41-42). Although these purges were non-violent, such loss of Party membership could lead to the loss of status, jobs, and any associated perks. But the purges took a violent turn from the early 1930s on, especially during the period from roughly 1936-8 known as the ‘Great Terror’, marked by mass arrests, sentences of hard labor in the gulag system, and executions. In the course of these campaigns, it was common for leaders as well as rank-and-file perpetrators of an earlier ‘wave’ of terror to become victims in a later one. This mutable nature led to an ambivalence in characterizing victims and perpetrators that persists to this day, reflected tangibly and intangibly at heritage sites like those analyzed in this thesis.

The gulag system lasted in its most wide-ranging form until 1954. After Stalin’s death, the head of the secret police and security services, Lavrentii Beria, quickly moved to close many camps and release millions of inmates. This was a deep shock to the system, and many returnees were barred from actually returning to their home regions or found it difficult to re-assimilate to a changed society, carrying a stigma that was both widely recognized but impossible to discuss publicly (Dobson 2009). Millions, however, did return to ‘normal’ society and re-entered Soviet life.

Thirty years later, when Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the mid-1980s, seeking to combat decades of ‘stagnation’ in every sector of Soviet life, he allowed a certain amount of freedom of the press and assembly under the *glasnost* policy. In this atmosphere, grassroots groups and networks dedicated to helping survivors of Soviet repression and their descendants quickly mushroomed around the country, also gathering as much factual information about the mechanisms, sites, and victims of repression as they could (see Yaroshevski 1990). In 1990, one of these groups succeeded in bringing a stone from the first gulag labor camp in Russia’s Solovetsky Islands to central Moscow and placing it across from the then-current secret police headquarters, concurrently facing a statue of the founder of the first iteration of Soviet secret police.

For a time, the history and legacy of Soviet repression were truly ‘popular’ subjects, fodder for heated public discussion and the increased circulation of publications documenting and discussing it (Smith 1996). On the landscape, across Russia, first *glasnost* and then the USSR’s collapse in 1991 allowed for mass graves, camp sites, and prisons across the country to be publicly identified. In many cases, local NGOs or other memorial groups organized to

erect memorials or museums on site. In other places, land holding mass graves was ceded to the Russian Orthodox Church so that it could take over these memorial duties. Both of these types of site are considered in this thesis, since there are marked differences in how each type tends to conceptualize and portray people and groups deemed to be ‘victims’ and/or ‘perpetrators’.

Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick, who has defined the Bolshevik ‘Revolution’ era as lasting throughout Stalin’s time in power (2017), goes further in positing that the changing ‘targets’ of mass terror from 1917 and up until Stalin’s death in 1953 represented ‘shifts in the focus of popular *ressentiment*’, one that is probably not fully due to ‘the total manipulability of popular *mentalités*. Some sort of interaction between popular moods and regime intentions seems more plausible’ (2001: 586; italics added). In this interpretation, *ressentiment*, which Fitzpatrick treats as synonymous with ‘vengeance’ while reserving the former term for discussing discourse (2001: 579), becomes a defining feature of Bolshevik, Leninist, and Stalinist history and politics, leading predictably to the question of how that legacy has been addressed or left unaddressed by succeeding regimes.

What is the situation in 2019? On one level, Moscow now boasts both a museum dedicated to the gulag and its victims as well as a memorial to those victims: both have government support. Public commemoration and memorial ceremonies dedicated to the victims of Soviet repression, from the gulag system to the Great Terror and beyond, take place every year, with some ceremonies drawing thousands of participants. Digital resources run by non-governmental actors allow interested parties to access many types of ‘dark heritage’ online.

Yet Stalin’s reputation as a ‘great leader’ and ‘effective manager’ continues to gain credence, and no site related to dark heritage that enjoys government or church support directly addresses the issue of rank-and-file perpetrators. Neither do these address the tangible and intangible legacies of Soviet repression that survive (and, in some cases, thrive) in present-day Russia. The Solovetsky Stone stands as a memorial to the millions of victims of Soviet repression, but the FSB – institutional successor to the NKVD and KGB – still restricts access to the Lubyanka building, the yellow edifice looming over it. This contested and ‘dissonant’ (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) situation among intervisible heritage sites reflects and is reflected by contested narratives and opinions regarding the legacy of Soviet atrocity and human rights abuses in contemporary Russia. This thesis sets out to explore and define these

connections between heritage, politics, history, and culture.

1.3 Research Questions and Rationales

As ways of approaching the overarching questions posed by the situation described above, I proposed for this thesis three key research questions, which I present alongside question-specific rationales.

1. How have official and dissident, state-sanctioned and civil society-forged, gulag remembrances, memorials, and interpretative schemes and narratives at each site changed since 1917, especially after 1991?

In light of the eras in which public commemoration was explicitly banned or implicitly discouraged, it is crucial to look at how private patterns of commemoration and memorialization developed, withstood opposition, and, in some cases, influenced later public commemorations (and vice versa). Using 1917, the year of the February and October revolutions, as a starting point, 1991 will serve as an important ‘turning point’. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, creating the Russian Federation, which in turn led to rapid social, cultural, economic, and political changes. It follows that the changed zeitgeist of this new era would impact and be reflected in narratives and aspects of interpretation at sites related to Soviet repression. The patterns of change at these sites over time need to be documented and analyzed in order to understand how all of these changes affect and affected each other over time.

2. What are the official and dissonant forms of (what I later identify as) ‘grievable’ and ‘blameable’ heritage at each site, and how they do interact with and shape each other?

There has been little formal study of memorialization practices of any type at sites related to Soviet repression, so researching and analyzing these practices will add a new set of case studies and phenomena to the body of heritage research. Second, the contrast, as well as interplay, between official and dissident forms of remembrance speaks to the intertwined nature of politics, ‘Russian’ culture and society, and the heritage of repression (from a more diachronic viewpoint, this

also applies to research question 3). Butler's concept of 'grievability', which I develop in relation to the heritage of repression, as well as a complementary concept of 'blameability' which I propose in this thesis, help identify patterns of difference across and between sites in how victims and perpetrators are presented and interpreted. A key point of inquiry is how these concepts restore personhood to victims while blurring the agency of perpetrators, allowing for how these categories often mix. These two concepts also recognize the differences in power, point of view, and narrative that exist within communities of stakeholders. They account for nuances of the experience of Soviet repression that paradigmatic models of the interpretation of perpetration and victimhood, based on the post-war German model, do not account for. Nevertheless, to understand these entanglements and their repercussions, the actual phenomena must be fully studied and scrutinized.

3. How do specific manifestations of the heritage of Soviet repression reflect broader political and cultural attitudes towards the legacies of Soviet repression that persist in contemporary Russia?

This is the research question that ties the case studies to the wider scope of research inquiry within and beyond heritage studies. Without studying these broader contexts and patterns, the dissertation runs the risk of merely being a group of interesting case studies. Linking changes in phenomena of remembrance to political and cultural shifts holds the potential to shed light on how these forces interact with and shape each other. Without an understanding of those broader political and sociocultural changes, it will be difficult to make the leap to connecting the collected case studies to those larger changes in any meaningful or insightful way. The connection between the two is the heart of the sociopolitical aspect of this project and, thus, of the overarching research question.

The research undertaken during this thesis was designed to answer these questions using an array of methods, with a special emphasis on participant-observer ethnographic methods. These methods were the tools best-suited to studying how people interact with, bring meaning to, and take meaning from the array of sites that made up the case studies. I also relied on conceptual lenses and theories from heritage studies and a range of related fields in order to

analyze and think through what I saw, witnessed, and experienced at these sites, on both ‘normal’ days and during official commemorative or memorial ceremonies. These include the concept of ‘site biography’ (Macdonald 2009), which analyzes how heritage sites affect and are affected by broader sociocultural and political attitudes about specific historical legacies; the ‘heritagescape’ (Garden 2009), which views each site as both heritage and as a landscape in and of itself; and the idea of ‘guardians of memory’ as well as ‘guardians of countermemory’ (Carr 2015), which help identify the motivations of individuals who strive to preserve memories that are officially ‘forgotten’ for any number of reasons.

Further, Etkind’s (2009) trio of concepts of ‘hardware/software/ghostware’ are a useful entry point from which to think through the ways in which memories of Soviet repression do or do not have ‘hardware’ onto which people can upload them, and from there to think about how and where such memories then ‘haunt’ contemporary Russia. However, the most intriguing angle of my research is the discrepancy in ‘grievability’ as well as its counterpart, which I term here ‘blameability’, that different site interpretations attribute to different groups of victims and/or perpetrators. ‘Grievability’ is a concept that theorist Judith Butler (2009) proposed in order to make sense of how some populations are, in life, deemed by powerful governments and institutions to be more ‘grievable’ – and therefore less worth losing in death to military operations or other acts of violence. I unpack this concept in Chapter 5 when dealing with sites of dark heritage to see which types of victim and individual victims are presented as more ‘grievable’ than others as judged by attention, time, and space given to them, as well as the contents of any interpretation. I pay close attention to how such interpretation attempts to reverse the dehumanization of repression. In Chapter 6, I propose the concept of ‘blameability’ to identify and analyze how and to what degree different perpetrators and types of perpetrator are identified as such at a given site. These tools, used separately or in tandem, are designed to help identify types of grievability and blameability that could be used at other, similar sites in future. Such identifications are extremely useful in identifying connections between and within sites to broader motivations behind interpretative and discursive choices.

1.4 Soviet and Stalinist Repression: Timelines and Definitions

Focusing solely on ‘the gulag’ or atrocities committed only during Stalin’s time in power would artificially limit this dissertation’s scope and, thus, potential to shed light on wider

phenomena of attitudes towards legacies of atrocity, memorialization and heritagization at associated sites, as well as more overarching sociocultural and political attitudes. Therefore, I focus mainly on sites related to the Great Terror and the gulag system, because these are irrevocably intertwined in history as well as broadly-held discourses and ‘social imaginaries’ (Gaonkar 2002) of Soviet mass repression. These two historical phenomena occurred and peaked (respectively) while Stalin was in power. However, as alluded to by the exploration of terror and *ressentiment* in the Russian ‘Revolution’ era above, the roots of these systems of repression and terror predate Stalin’s leadership. The focus on violently terrorizing and repressing ‘enemies’ was a part of Bolshevik ideology from the start of the Civil War era (1917-23), and the gulag system was established while Vladimir Lenin led the USSR. And arguably the most iconic act of ‘eliminating’ class enemies occurred while the Bolsheviks were still trying to consolidate power across the former Russian Empire. Faced with the possibility of ‘losing’ Yekaterinburg to Tsarist forces, Lenin ordered the assassination of Tsar Nikolai II and his family, who were killed on the night of July 16-17, 1918. Even at the time, the local Bolshevik forces recognized the symbolic power that these bodies might hold for the opposition (see Verdery 1999 for other examples), as evidenced by their moving the corpses from one location to another before the advancing enemy army. In the post-collapse atmosphere of increased freedom to talk about Soviet repression, these sites were quickly transformed by the Russian Orthodox Church into sites of memorialization and, after the royal family were officially canonized, pilgrimage.

This development in Yekaterinburg’s memorial landscape and ‘heritagescape’ (Garden 2009) was not only worthy of study because of what it conveys about how contemporary institutions, such as the state and Church, have used these bodies to weave a broader narrative about a Russian national identity that spans the pre- and post-Soviet periods and centers on victimization (Rousselet 2011). In terms of ‘dark heritage’ sites in the region, this provides an excellent contrast with the case study of the 12th Kilometer, a mass grave on the outskirts of Yekaterinburg that holds the bodies of tens of thousands of people killed during the Great Terror. This site does not enjoy the levels of infrastructural support and symbolic status that the Romanov death sites do, even though the number of victims buried in that mass grave outnumber the Romanov victims of July 1918 by a magnitude of three. Clearly, the levels of grief and suffering associated with sites within a given town or region’s ‘griefscape’ (see Stein 2017: 3, although she uses the term to refer to an ‘experience of grief [...as] constitutive of a place itself, an internal terrain of grief’) differ, and the reasons behind these differences are

worth scrutiny. The 12th Kilometer may be the resting place of victims of *Stalinist* terror, but the pattern and discourse of state terror that led to their murder is intrinsically linked to the *Bolshevik* discourse and practice of terror that was used to eliminate the quintessential ‘class enemies’ of that regime almost two decades before the Great Terror swept through Yekaterinburg.

The dynamics of how a person becomes a perpetrator of crimes against ‘the other’, have been critically studied, especially in terms of the dynamics of the Holocaust (see Bartov 1998), the twentieth-century state-sponsored campaign of terror, persecution, and annihilation that seems to have set the paradigm for modernity’s atrocities (Bickford and Sodaro 2010). What makes the USSR’s situation different – and complicates this picture – is the very ‘changing’ nature of the enemy, the target of *ressentiment* that Fitzpatrick identified above. If, as Fitzpatrick (2001) posits, the nature of perpetual revolution necessitated a perpetual enemy upon which to be avenged, then new enemies had to be identified as previous targets hid, fled, or were annihilated. And, as historian Wendy Goldman (2011: 2) describes the atmosphere from the mid-1930s onwards, ‘once the hunt began, following several highly publicized propaganda campaigns, it developed a powerful dynamic of its own. Popular belief and fear intermingled to create a toxic atmosphere’ as arrests mounted astronomically.

But that deliberate separation of victims and acts of violence from their individual perpetrators is a discursive and interpretative practice that we can observe at sites related to the victims of Stalinist repression across contemporary Russia. One of this thesis’s aims is to document the different manners in which ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ are presented at these sites. This is important because there is a dearth of literature that specifically studies the heritage of Soviet repression. Simply describing these and making typologies for them does not, in and of itself, help to identify the reasons why each site’s managers and stakeholders might choose one manner of interpretation or presentation, or one narrative of victimization and/or perpetration, over other possibilities. In order to address Research Question 3, namely, ‘how do specific manifestations of the heritage of Soviet repression reflect broader political and cultural attitudes towards the legacies of Soviet repression that persist in contemporary Russia?’, I delve more deeply into exploring each stakeholder’s broader motivations. These are evidenced through interpretative and narrative decisions at each site, as well as statements about these decisions, but also through their other actions and reactions to related events, political situations, and ideologies.

1.5 The Sites

The possible pool of sites for this research would be an astronomical number, since every Russian city and town has sites of violence related to various manifestations of Soviet terror and repression. Even if I limited the choice only to sites related to a given period – the Great Terror, for example – I would still need to choose from an array of prisons, shooting sites, and mass graves from across the country. Given the numbers, there was no question of studying every site of this nature: predictably, no database exists for every such site, although there are some digital initiatives that try to map the location of specific subsets – in fact, one of these projects, which focuses on various types of sites of violence in and around Moscow, ‘It Is Right Here’, is studied extensively in Chapter 7.

For the reasons explained above, I chose Yekaterinburg as one case study city because its ‘dark heritagescape’ (after Garden 2009), connected to both the imperial family’s murder and the later mass murder of ordinary citizens, has had an outsize influence on how legacies of Soviet repression have been approached across Russia.

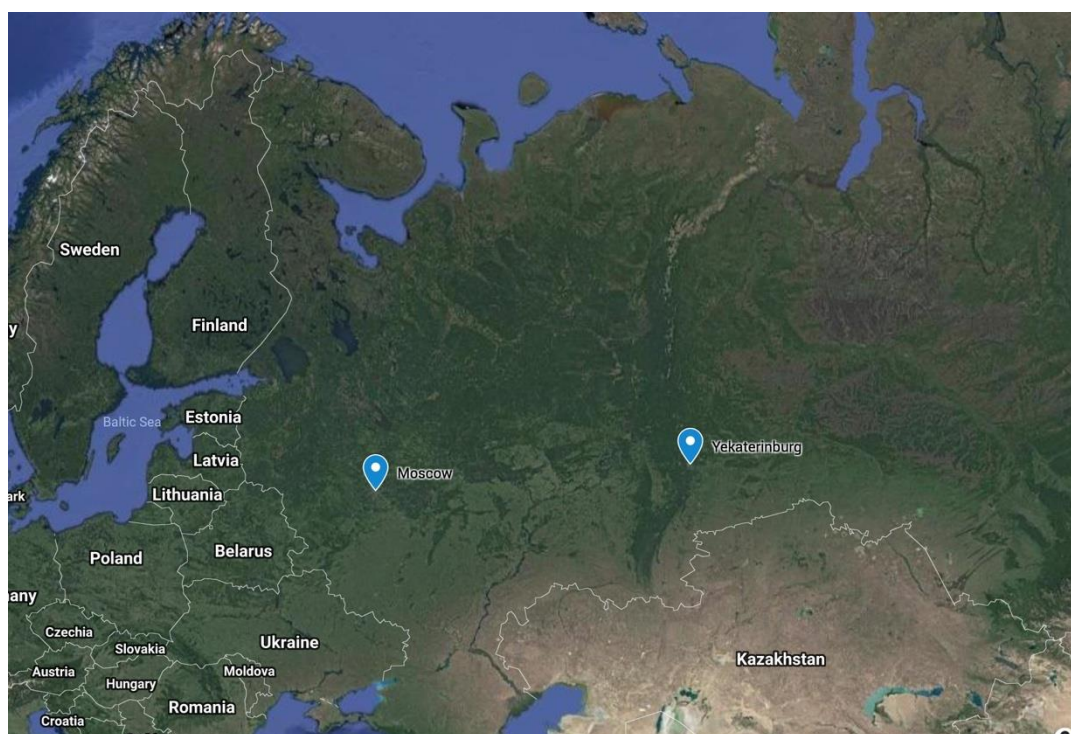


Figure 1.1 Map of fieldwork cities within Russia. (Copyright Google; additions by author)

Moscow has always had an outsize influence on Russian politics, culture, and society, but this has been especially true since the Bolsheviks moved the capital back there in 1918. As a major population center, it had correspondingly high rates of arrests, deportations, and killings during different periods of Soviet repression, but it also holds ‘sites of intended violence’ where decisions were taken that would inflict violence on the entire USSR. In the post-Soviet era, its sites of memory take on a national significance as well as a local one, meaning that the Solovetsky Stone, Gulag Museum, and ‘Wall of Grief’ memorial represent not just Muscovite heritage sites, but ones intended to speak to and for all of Russia. Therefore, I chose to study the three sites just mentioned as well as three mass graves from the Great Terror era and the digitally-organized ‘It Is Right Here’ network of sites. This ensured a suitable variety of managers and/or stakeholders who make interpretative decisions for the respective sites, allowing for thorough typologies to be made and used as analytical tools in Chapter 8.

Table 1.1. Fieldwork sites by chapter. (Table by author)

Chapter	Fieldwork Sites
Chapter 5: Yekaterinburg	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 12th Kilometer 2. Church on Blood 3. Ganina Yama 4. Piglet Ravine 5. Chekist City
Chapter 6: Moscow – ‘Official’ sites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Gulag Museum 7. Wall of Grief 8. Butovo Firing Range 9. Kommunarka Firing Range 10. Noviy Donskoy Cemetery
Chapter 7: Moscow – ‘Unofficial’ sites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Solovetsky Stone and surroundings 12. Lubyanka Square 13. ‘It Is Right Here’ 14. <i>Last Address</i> plaques

The case study sites in Yekaterinburg include three sites connected to the Romanov family's death and burial: The Church on Blood, Ganina Yama, and Piglet Ravine. These are presented and discussed in Chapter 5. These are contrasted to the 12th Kilometer, the mass grave for victims of the Great Terror, as well as the wider 'Chekist City' landscape, a neighborhood intimately tied to the secret police and Soviet industrialization. The Moscow sites are divided into two sets, according to whether they represent 'hegemonic' or 'non-hegemonic' narratives of Soviet repression. The 'official' or 'hegemonic' sites, presented in Chapter 6, include the Gulag Museum as well as the Wall of Grief, a memorial to victims of Soviet repression. It also includes three mass grave sites: Butovo, Kommunarka, and the Noviy Donskoy cemetery. The 'non-hegemonic' sites, presented in Chapter 7, include the Solovetsky Stone and its surrounding network of sites, including the Lubyanka Building, connected to repressive violence, which lack official 'acknowledgement' as dark heritage sites. It also studies 'It Is Right Here', a digital heritage and remembrance project that spills onto the tangible landscape, and *Last Address* memorial plaques.

1.6 Defining Repression and Determining Figures

There is no one 'definitive' estimate, let alone an exact figure, of how many victims there were of any specific 'wave' or 'phase of Soviet terror, let alone 'Soviet terror' writ large. The Red Terror's number of victims is notoriously hard to calculate because of the ad hoc nature of 'revolutionary justice', which often precluded strict record-keeping and procedure (Figs 2017: 533). It is unclear how many people died during the Red Terror: reputable estimates range from 100,000 (Lincoln 1999) to 1.3 million (Beyrau 2017: 57-58). But even once the USSR was established, and documentation was more of a priority, researchers run into issues of definition. For example, even narrowing the scope to the World War II/Great Patriotic War era, who counts as a victim of 'Stalinist terror'? Does one have to have been arrested specifically under laws targeting 'anti-Soviet' agitation or terror, or can people who were arrested for 'crimes' such as taking wheat from agricultural fields count as victims (see Davies 1998)? At different times after Stalin's death, various Soviet and Russian governments have held different stances on this latter point, denying 'rehabilitation' based on non-political criminal activity even if that action was no longer considered 'criminal' (Bazhan 2015; Zubkova 2015). And what about populations that were deported *en masse*? Millions of people died during such operations (Viola 2007), but their deaths were not deliberately carried out as acts of mass murder. Estimates vary wildly; even the 'most reputable' approximations for the Great Terror alone, based on the best available archival evidence, have margins of error that amount to millions of people. For numbers of victims of the Great Terror, I use the

numbers that the Gulag Museum, among other authorities uses, which is based on Soviet archives and is therefore probably incomplete: roughly 1,000,000 people arrested and sent to gulag labor camps and roughly 682,000 people shot (Getty, Rittersporn, and Zemskov 1993: 1023). Getty, Rittersporn, and Zemskov also calculate approximately 1,053,000 deaths in gulag camps between 1934 and 1953 (1993: 1024). Because of these same problems of definition, it is also difficult to discern how many people passed through the gulag system as a whole. Historian Anne Applebaum, attempting to count all of the disparate categories of forced laborer, added together the most reputable figures for gulag laborers, World War II prisoners of war, people ‘detained’ after the war’s end for excessive exposure to Western occupation, and inhabitants of ‘special settlements’ (exiled populations) to come up with a figure of roughly 28.7 million people who were incarcerated in the gulag system between 1937 and 1953 (2003: 517-18). She also cites a gulag ‘death toll’ of 2,749,163 for that same period (2003: 520) while noting that this number is certainly incomplete.

For the purposes of this thesis, I take a wide-ranging definition of Soviet ‘repression’, one that includes mass deportations and post-Stalin forced exiles and incarcerations in psychiatric facilities, alongside mass arrests, mass transportations to gulag labor camps and projects across the USSR, and mass killings. The sites analyzed are both sites of ‘direct’ violence and/or burial as well as sites from whence violence was planned, ordered, and authorized.

In terminological notes, alongside English translations or equivalents, I have tried to provide the original Russian in the Cyrillic alphabet for place names, organization or institution names, and some specific terminology. However, Cyrillic transliterations are inconsistent based on accepted English spellings of well-known place and personal names. I have italicized the names of civil society organizations (e.g., *Memorial*, *Last Address*) and put project names in quotation marks (e.g., ‘It Is Right Here’). The chapter of *Memorial* that operates in Moscow is technically known as *International Memorial*; I have cited their publications accordingly but refer to them simply as *Memorial* in the text to avoid confusion. Finally, the word ‘gulag’ is derived from the acronym ‘ГУЛАГ’¹ – it is sometimes spelled ‘GULAG’ in English to denote this. However, since it has entered English (and Russian) as a word in its own right, I have chosen to use its lowercase spelling throughout.

¹ Главное Управление исправительно-трудовых ЛАГерей [Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps]

1.7 Thesis Structure

This introduction (Chapter 1) briefly introduces the broad research questions, the gaps they fill in existing literature and research, and the case studies.

Chapter 2 presents the methods used in the work. Since the site biography approach forms an important part of each data chapter, a critique of this approach and its suitability is followed by explications of the participant-observer ethnographic methods used. Owing to various cultural and political variables, the suitability of each method often varied between situations; these differences and decisions are duly explained. The choice of fieldwork sites, both at the macro (city) and micro (site) scales, are also explained, as is the decision to focus on sites related to ‘Stalinist terror’ more broadly, not just sites specifically related to the gulag system. A small discussion of research ethics as they pertain to this work closes the chapter.

Chapter 3 provides a historical overview of the phenomena whose heritage is studied in this thesis. It is imperative that the reader has a fuller understanding of the historical background to the memorialization processes (and events that made these necessary) analyzed here. Besides the history of the period from 1917-1953 (when Stalin died), which focuses mostly on the history of repression and its causes throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, I explain the origin and evolution of the Soviet secret police, shifts in official and subaltern memory culture and practices since 1953, and changing heritage practice and ideology over time within the USSR and Russia.

Chapter 4 encompasses a literature review and theoretical background. This first reviews a wide-ranging set of pertinent literature. Beyond the corpus of works dealing with ‘dark’ or ‘difficult’ heritage, especially the heritage of conflict, post-conflict situations, incarceration, and forced labor, it also gives an overview of relevant theories about victimhood, perpetration, bystanders, and guilt/complicity. These are briefly summarized and then analyzed both for the value they bring to this work and for the gaps in theory that remain unfilled. The chapter then reviews a number of key theories through which the data is viewed, including Etkind’s ‘hardware/software/ghostware’, ‘guerrilla heritage’, and others. It also introduces Butler’s ‘grievability’ and introduces the concept of ‘blameability’, which I develop into a new typology of sites of repression in this thesis.

Chapter 5, the first of three data chapters, applies the concepts of grievability and blameability to the ‘peripheral’ city of Yekaterinburg. Here, the main contrast is drawn between the

heritage infrastructure and narratives at the 12th Kilometer, a mass grave from the Great Terror years, as opposed to the sites related to the death and burial of Tsar Nikolai II and his family. This draws on themes already raised about the ‘suitability’ of certain narratives at church- and/or government-supported heritage sites, but it also compares the ‘grievability’ of the two different groups of victims and their perpetrators. A small discussion of a wider ‘topography of terror’ in Yekaterinburg is also included.

Chapter 6 examines the interpretation at the Gulag Museum and the Wall of Grief as well as several mass graves of victims of Stalinist repression on the outskirts of Moscow. The former two are partially funded by the city of Moscow, while the latter are protected and run by the Russian Orthodox Church, making these Moscow’s ‘official’ sites of remembrance and commemoration of victims of Stalinist repression. The chapter traces the site biography of each site and then identifies the main narratives of victimhood and perpetration at each, looking out for silenced as well as voiced narratives, and pays special attention to how different actors’ ‘grievability’ and ‘blameability’ are presented, if at all.

In contrast with the preceding chapter, Chapter 7 examines sites related to the repression that do not have official government or church support (financial or otherwise). Drawing on the ‘Topography of Terror’ collated and interpreted by *Memorial*, it first examines the tangible methods of memorialization that exist on the landscape. If these are absent at sites of terror and/or violence, the reasons for this silence are briefly described and analyzed. The chapter then turns to the intangible (e.g., temporary, cyclical, digital, and transient) forms of remembrance and memorialization that are sometimes present at these sites. The reasons – both theoretical and pragmatic – behind the interpretative choices made at each site are a major focal point of this chapter. This chapter will also particularly underline the multivocality inherent at such sites and the mutability of the heritagization of Stalinist repression in contemporary Russia.

Chapter 8 draws together the disparate case studies discussed in Chapters 5 through 7 in order to tease out salient, relevant phenomena and evaluate the suitability of the different theories through which the data is analyzed. Beyond analysis of the narrative and interpretative decisions made at each site through the frames of grievability and blameability, the measures of these two concepts assigned to specific actors and groups at each site are plotted against each other. This helps ascertain patterns regarding how different types of stakeholders present

measures of grievable and blameable heritage to the public. This is important in order to ascertain whether or not there are actually any underlying, shared patterns of broader attitudes held by different types of stakeholder towards the legacy of Soviet repression or broader issues such as human rights and Russian identity. The roles of respective city and regional governments, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the federal government in the heritagization of Stalinist repression are considered, as are the roles and motivations of non- governmental actors, and subaltern or dissonant remembrances. After introducing typologies of grievability and blameability and methods of plotting these against each other, I synthesize and formally introduce concepts of ‘accountability’ and ‘repentability’ as these might be expressed at museums and memorials to victims of repression inside and outside of Russia.

In conclusion, Chapter 9 draws the work back to its research questions and determines what is revealed by analyzing the data gathered. This involves a brief summary of salient points from Chapter 8, as well as brief recaps of relevant places and/or incidents detailed in Chapters 5 to 7. The chapter then broadens its scope to consider whether the theories conceptualized and put forward in this work might be relevant to other episodes of mass repression in other times and places (e.g., how the concepts of grievability, blameability, accountability, and repentability might be critically and usefully applied to cases of the heritage of other twentieth-century atrocities and even older repressive regimes), as well as how the findings might be relevant to broader political topics.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to describe and explain the methods used in the course of conducting this research. It begins with an introduction of the research questions and their rationales, followed by brief summaries of relevant methods from heritage studies and related fields that could be used to answer these questions. There is a special focus on participant-observer ethnographic methods as these are used in heritage studies research, since these were the methods I generally relied upon in conducting this fieldwork. The chapter will then describe how this thesis's research design was conceived, amended, and carried out over the course of the PhD, with special attention paid to how these plans shifted over time and in response to emerging political and logistical contingencies.

In order to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1, I used a combination of methods drawn from heritage studies as well as the wider fields of anthropology, archaeology (especially landscape archaeology and conflict archaeology), museology, critical geography, and others. These methods, their origins, and their uses in this thesis are explained in the following sections.

2.2 Heritage Studies: Definitions and Methods

There is no 'authoritative' definition of 'heritage': as Yahaya Ahmad (2006: 299) explains, 'While the scope of heritage has broadened to include environment and intangible values, and has received agreement from the international communities, the finer terminology of 'heritage' has not been streamlined or standardised'. Beyond questions of concept and definition, methodology and methods are subject to open-ended debate and negotiation. Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman (2009: 6-8) identified three major categories of heritage studies methods, namely relating to 'text and heritage', 'people and heritage', and 'objects of heritage'. Here, I have worked with all three of Sørensen and Carman's categories, mainly using critical discourse analysis to analyze heritage 'texts', which here mostly consists of museum exhibition and online heritage resource texts; participant-observer ethnography to analyze how 'people' relate to and use heritage; and the notions of 'landscape biography' and 'heritagescape' to examine 'objects of heritage', which in this thesis are mostly inscribed on and exist in the landscape. All of these types of method are further explored below.

Heritage studies draws upon theories and methods drawn from disciplines like archaeology, anthropology, sociology, geography, area studies, history, and many more. But it also presents challenges in that there is no single approved set of methods for the field, leading each researcher to choose a combination of suitable methods.

Dawson Munjeri (2004: 13) identified the ‘official’ (i.e., UNESCO) shift away from a focus on the ‘intrinsic’ value of ‘authentic’ or ‘monumental’ tangible heritage towards one that recognizes that, in fact, such entities ‘become recognized as heritage when they express the value of *society* and so the tangible can only be understood and interpreted through the intangible’ (see also Deacon et al. 2004; Savova 2009; Swensen et al. 2013). Laurajane Smith (2006: 2) defines heritage ‘as a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present’ (2006: 2). Chiara Bortolotto (2007: 28-29), studying UNESCO’s paradigm-setting definitions, argues that UNESCO ‘has revised and, with regard to intangible cultural heritage, abolished the concept of authenticity, constructing heritage in dynamic and evolutionary terms as in the *mémoire* approach to the past’ (2007: 28-29). It was thus clear that this project’s methods would have to both seriously consider and evaluate tangible landscapes and displays as well as the variety of intangible meanings assigned to them and impermanent ways in which visitors and stakeholders interacted with them.

2.3 Place, Authenticity, and Meaning in the Landscape

We could view Pierre Nora’s (1989) text laying out the idea of *lieux de mémoire* as a seminal turning point for what developed into heritage studies. In particular, he connects the rise of the ‘modern’, hyper-mobile, hyper-connected world to a new emphasis placed on physical places where memory can be ‘remembered’ in an orderly, prescribed fashion – an action necessary due to the demise of *milieux de mémoire*, in which communities spontaneously and naturally remember their shared past (Nora 1989: 7-8). Regarding this dynamic, he proclaims that:

[...] if history did not besiege memory, deforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it, there would no *lieux de mémoire*. Indeed, it is this very push and pull that produces *lieux de mémoire* – moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.

What we call memory today is therefore not memory but already history. What we take to be flare-ups of memory are in fact its final consumption in the flames of history. The quest for memory is the search for one's history. (Nora 1989: 12-13)

Peter Carrier develops the concept Nora proposes in that essay further, concluding that 'studying places of memory' 'is designed to 'lend a voice' to silent symbols or 'dispel familiarity' in the case of familiar symbols, and therefore intervene in the status and configuration of the symbolic framework of contemporary memory' (2009: 50-51). Indeed, problematizing the 'taken-for-granted' meanings of heritage sites has often focused on how people perceive and culturally construct 'landscapes'. In terms of the 'landscape', many heritage studies projects focus on mapping and analyzing landscapes and use of space, especially focusing on why given actors make specific choices about how to inscribe or remember the past on the land – or, alternatively, to erase these traces.

Chris Gosden, opining on the relationship between archaeology and anthropology, identified in the late twentieth century 'a movement against spatial analysis, which reduces human action to a series of numerical variables suitable for understanding the relationship between the friction of distance and economic and social behaviour [sic]' (1999: 154). In this, we see a precursor of how projects undertaken under the umbrella of 'heritage studies' tend to go beyond simple documentation and analysis of tangible phenomena and instead examine the multiple layers of meaning that are embodied by and enacted at, as well as between, sites. This view within heritage studies is summarized by Tadhg O'Keeffe: 'Thus all landscapes, from the bleakest urban industrial landscapes to the verdant country estates, are social-ecological, and all landscapes qualify as somebody's heritage' (2007: 9-10).

When researching the dark heritage of the first camp in the Soviet gulag system, located in Russia's Solovetsky Islands (Comer forthcoming), I focused heavily on analyzing the different heritage sites through the lens of 'site biography' (Macdonald 2009). This is a method that seeks to understand how heritage sites shape conceptions of the past and, conversely, how conceptions of the past shape these same sites by tracing how and why different actors make decisions over time about whether and how to preserve, develop, destroy, or otherwise use a given site (Macdonald 2009: 19-20). Critically, this is not meant to simply be a matter of listing decisions over time – an ideal 'site biography' should include ethnographic components so as to truly understand how contemporary populations think about the site (Macdonald 2009: 20-22) within their own 'webs of significance' (Geertz 1973, further discussed below; see also Sørensen and Adriansen 2015 for 'biography').

The ‘heritagescape’ (Garden 2009) also focuses on the site but instead focuses on ‘the way in which the analytical concept of landscape as a social construction is applied to the question of what qualities affect the heritage site as a coherent and convincing entity’ (Garden 2009: 274). With its stress on the interlocking attributes of boundaries, cohesion, and visibility (Garden 2009: 276-77), it is a highly useful tool through which to think through how people variously interact with and conceptualize a site as well as its ‘intervisible’ nature (Lake and Woodman 2003).

The nature of ‘place’ was inherent to the meaning ascribed to the Solovetsky Islands – and, accordingly, to my earlier research there – because of their long-standing associations with exile, violence, and mystery (Nevmerzhitskaya 2006). These associations were added to and strengthened because of the advent of the gulag system there, but it was never the ‘only’ identity with which the islands were identified, especially since the Solovetsky Transfiguration Monastery has been inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Yet as fieldwork preparations for this thesis developed, it became increasingly clear that the meanings tied up in notions of ‘place’ and ‘authenticity’ were much more complicated when it came to other former gulag camp sites. Since these were often, by design, in extremely remote locations, the feasibility and desirability of on-site heritage interpretation immediately comes into question. There are some cities in Siberia and the Far North and East of Russia that owe their existence to forced labor construction and industrial development or resource extraction – examples include Vorkuta (Barenberg 2014) and Magadan (Nordlander 1998).

This theory of an entire city-as-memorial runs aground on a lack of information, however: can an entire city be deemed a memorial to or museum of repression? Even if, like Magadan, its contemporary identity is popularly associated with the gulag and repression, it is also much more than that. In order to better understand how communities navigate these different resonances, privileging one over others at different times and for different reasons, I have worked to record and analyze the different meanings that different stakeholders ascribe to each site, inscribe on the site (where possible) and, increasingly, bring to the site on a temporary and/or digital basis.

2.4 Evaluating Museums and Museological Displays

Stephanie Moser writes that, far from being passive ‘reflections’ of ‘active’ research, ‘as active agents in the construction of knowledge, museum displays are increasingly being recognized

as discrete interpretive documents of great significance' (2010: 22). Many others have described the importance of critically analyzing the discourses of power and knowledge that are reproduced in and by museums (see Golding 2009; Forgan 2005; Foucault 1986; Lord 2006; Macdonald 1998). One of this thesis's major research aims is to connect various forms of interpretation at sites related to Soviet repression to broader, over-arching attitudes about the legacy of Soviet repression and interconnected issues. Logically, then, critically viewing and analyzing 'museum' displays as well as other interpretative material aimed at visitors to each site was an essential method for this research. In performing this method of research, I have looked not at just at what such displays say and show, but at which words or images are represented more or less in comparison to others and, where appropriate, at their spatial relationships. I also looked for absences and silences – i.e., noting when a topic that could reasonably be expected to be present is instead absent. Using photography to help later analysis, I examined text panels and displays, recording the wording of selected text panels, and recording how the museum constructs and disseminates certain narratives through the use of object, text, and layout¹.

This set of methods owes much to critical discourse analysis, which 'focus[es] on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance. Dominance is defined here as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality' of different types (van Dijk 1993: 249-250). Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen conclude that 'CDA's locus of critique is the nexus of language/discourse/speech and social structure' (2000: 449). They also identify Fairclough's (1992) 'three-dimensional framework for conceiving of analyzing discourse': these are 'discourse-as-text', 'discourse-as-discursive-practice', and 'discourse-as-social-'practice' (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000: 448-449). When applied to analyzing museum-texts-as-discourse, this has some clear overlaps with participant-observer ethnographic work, as Danielle Rice (2003: 79) illustrated in her call for museum studies to adopt the model of 'an event horizon. In analyzing museums, we would study the intersections between everyday life as represented by the experiences of actual visitors and professionals, and the more abstract world of theoretical literature' (see also Gosden and Larson 2007; Grek 2005; Karp and Lavine 1991; Smith and Foote 2017).

¹ A note on language: English is my native language, but I speak Russian with a high degree of proficiency and understand, as well as read, at a fluent level. Therefore I was able to comfortably converse with those I met during fieldwork.

The Gulag Museum, as described in Chapter 6, displays some artifacts made or owned by gulag inmates as well as items taken from former prisons and camps. However, the vast majority of the museum's displays are instead textual or based on image or video – the museum is more dedicated to disseminating information than to preserving and presenting objects, although its on-site archives house a massive amount of resources, mostly documentary. At two mass grave sites, Butovo (Chapter 6) and the 12th Kilometer (Chapter 5), the site managers are preparing to open on-site museums, which have so far been delayed for differing reasons. Although I have seen both sites' preliminary 'exhibitions' in the course of this fieldwork, these areas are not yet open to the public and therefore fall outside of this thesis's scope.

Therefore, although I evaluated museum displays at these and other sites with an eye towards critical discourse analysis, this thesis does not delve into the subjects of 'object biography' (Joy 2009; Kopytoff 1986) or object agency (Herle 2012; Hoskins 2006). It focuses instead on analyzing the discourse and vocabulary used in different text panels, oral or digital interpretative narratives, text inscribed on plaques and other 'permanent' fixtures, and any statements or 'meaningful' actions engaged in by visitors.

2.5 Research Design

Originally, this project was meant to document and analyze the state of heritage preservation and interpretation at former gulag camp sites in what is now the Russian Federation. However, as I commenced background research and began planning fieldwork, it became increasingly clear that there were many logistical hurdles to a project focused on such remote sites. Practically, many of the sites I would have wished to see were extremely remote and often inaccessible for parts of the year. As I started to explore what, exactly, was the 'core' question that intrigued me about the heritage and heritagization of Soviet repression, I decided that more interesting theoretical questions centered on tangible and intangible 'heritage' of the gulag that had been brought into urban centers.

I chose Moscow as a main field site because of its cultural, social, and political primacy throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Because of the nature of massive campaigns of arrests, deportations, shootings, and incarcerations, every Russian city and town has sites related to these 'dark' phenomena, although they may or may not be publicly identified as sites of 'dark' heritage. Moscow, with its array of huge mass graves and infamous prisons and crematoria, among other sites, is no exception. However, since Moscow was also the place

where Politburo members and other leaders physically gathered to make decisions, it also has sites of institutional violence, such as the Wannsee House (Digan 2014), that were not necessarily the actual sites of physical violence. A good example is the ‘Shooting House’, or Military Collegium Building, which stands a stone’s throw from the Kremlin and was the site where over 31,000 Soviet citizens were sentenced to death during the Great Terror (Jansen and Petrov 2006: 592; this is also further explained in Chapter 7). None of those people were actually killed at this site, but it is still considered by groups like *Memorial* to be a place deeply connected to Soviet state violence and repression. There are also sites that could be placed in both categories, like the Lubyanka building, which previously was the headquarters of the All-Union succession of secret police and security agencies (see Chapter 7), but also housed an infamous prison in which inmates died. Finally, as the capital, places like the Gulag Museum and the Wall of Grief (profiled in Chapter 6) take on added meaning because of a perceived ‘national’ level of symbolism, regardless of whether or not such sites are ‘officially’ federal or national places of memory. This dynamic was discernable as far back as 1990, when the Solovetsky Stone (literally a stone from the Solovetsky Islands, site of the first gulag camps – see Chapter 7) was brought to Lubyanka Square in order to physically place Soviet dark heritage into opposition with the power base of the KGB. For all of these reasons, I concluded that Moscow was a key site where places of dark heritage were created and interpreted, with these actions affecting sites all over Russia and the USSR. Therefore, no study of the heritage of Soviet and Stalinist repression would be complete without detailed examination of the Muscovite situation.

That said, Moscow is obviously unique for these very reasons. Each city has its own history of twentieth-century state and institutional violence, differentiated by which armies fought in the area during the Civil War, whether or not the Nazis occupied the area (or attempted to) during the Great Patriotic War², the effects of collectivization and dekulakization, the degree to which development in the area was spurred by forced labor, deportations, and deliberate environmental degradation (all further explained in Chapter 3, but see Haynes and Husan 2003, as well as Snyder 2010). Thus, it made sense to find one or more cities with which to compare its heritage landscape (or heritagescape, *qua* Garden 2009). Every city in Russia is unique, but even so, choosing a ‘typical’ city proved more difficult than anticipated. The

² This is the term commonly used to refer to World War II’s Eastern Front in Europe in the former USSR, including Russia.

logistical issues reviewed in the section above were major deterrents to choosing a city that broadly owes its existence to forced labor. In a sense, choosing such a city would have made this study one of the über-metropole and the über-periphery: an interesting comparison, but one of limited value in evaluating general responses to legacies of repression.

That still left a plethora of Russian cities whose histories as cities did not begin with the rapid development of the gulag system (or even industrialization, which was irrevocably intertwined with mass repression, as explained in Chapter 3). I note here that discourse about such ‘development’, especially in Siberia, the Arctic, and the Far East, has had a tendency both historically and now to erase the vastly diverse array of indigenous cultures and histories that have shaped those lands for far longer than a century (Collins 1982; Smith-Peter 2011). Since this thesis’s case study sites are both major cities within European Russia, I did not engage much with these issues, but Olga Ulturgasheva’s (2017) work with an Eveny community in Siberia is an example of work that examines and analyzes a fuller portrait of a landscape and culture shaped (at least in part) by the gulag system.

More broadly, as described in Chapter 3, some aspects of mass Soviet repression were perceived as ‘random’ in whom they targeted as victims, and many campaigns (especially the Great Terror) were indeed marked by such arbitrariness. Yet ‘national campaigns’ targeting specific ethnicities and ‘nationalities’ were also deliberately designed and executed, leading to the deaths of over 100,000 people in the ‘Polish Operation’ alone (Petrov and Roginskii 2003). To this end, it has been important to perceive of people involved in the mechanisms of Soviet repression as people with multiple overlapping identities beyond ‘victim’ or ‘perpetrator’. In other words, I found it useful to think of all of these people through the lens of ‘intersectionality’ (Crenshaw 1991), which takes into account how these various identities combine to make specific people more or less vulnerable to oppression or disenfranchisement in any given society.

In the end, I chose Yekaterinburg as the second case study city for several reasons. First, and most pragmatically, the emails I sent to various chapters of *Memorial* around Russia were most enthusiastically received by the Yekaterinburg group. Second, I realized that Yekaterinburg’s unique history of violence in the last century meant that heritage sites in and around the city embodied a key inequality in the amount of attention paid to different ‘types’ of victim of Soviet repression. As the city where Tsar Nikolai II, his family, and some

attendants were murdered and buried in July 1918, post-Soviet Yekaterinburg has become irretrievably associated with these killings and subsequent public mourning and grieving. The contrast between that memorial landscape, or even memorial industry, associated with the Romanovs' 'martyrdom', and the comparative lack of attention and resources allotted to public remembrance of the victims of later Soviet repression, was striking. I surmised that studying this contrast would help illuminate this foundational difference in what I later termed 'grievability' (see Chapters 4 and 5) as expressed by different stakeholders towards the Romanov family and larger pools of victims of Soviet repression.

I made four research trips to Russia in the course of writing this thesis, each time staying for roughly three weeks, except for a truncated visit in October 2018. Three of these trips (conducted in 2016, 2017, and 2018) centered on the national 'Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression' that takes place on October 30 annually; these were scheduled in order to attend as many memorial and commemorative events around that time as possible. This is the time of year when activity in and around these sites peaks, so it made sense to intensely focus fieldwork sessions on these annual memorial seasons. The remaining period was in June 2016. Upon arriving in both cities, I made contact with potential and existing informants at each site I wished to visit. In Yekaterinburg, I chose to visit and analyze the Romanov death sites as well as a mass grave from the Great Terror era in order to compare and contrast interpretation at these sites using the frameworks outlined in the research questions. In Moscow, I chose a range of sites, including mass grave sites now managed by a variety of stakeholders; museums and memorials to victims of Stalinist repression that are not located on 'sites of violence'; and a network of sites centering on the Lubyanka building and Solovetsky Stone that are subject to a range of memorial interventions. This selection of sites allowed me to compare a range of different stakeholders' decisions about discourse and interpretation at a variety of sites with different 'absences' and 'presences' inscribed on the landscape.

I would often go to the site for a more casual 'social' visit with such an informant before attending a memorial ceremony or conducting an interview. (If this were not possible, I would perform such a preliminary visit regardless.) I found it useful to only make one such appointment per day, since I could not be sure what any visit or appointment might entail. It was common for the person whom I'd arranged to meet to spontaneously insist that I also speak to someone else, view an on-site display at length, or even watch a short video if they

were suddenly called to do something else. I viewed all of these unexpected events as welcome because they revealed what each interlocutor wished for me, an obvious outsider, to learn and understand about their respective organizations and, often, repression in the USSR. These were clear examples of Liisa Malkki's (2007: 180) dictum: 'ethnography is, and always has been, an improvisational practice'. Although it is of course crucial to plan visits to sites and possible informants, it is also necessary to plan for unpredictability and surprise.

2.6 Positionality and Reflexivity

As discussed above, it is no longer accepted, in anthropology and broadly related disciplines, that there is any realistic chance of a researcher observing, analyzing, and drawing conclusions in a totally 'objective' manner (see Jarvie 1964; Hegelund 2005; Pels 2014). John Griblin suggests an 'embedded or situated ethical approach', encouraging:

explicit political positioning [...which] would combat relativism by preventing both the distancing of archaeologists from the political legacies of their work and the abandonment of supposedly "neutral" archaeological interpretation to the political agendas of others (Griblin 2005: 37, citing Hall 2005).

Although we can and should strive to problematize every 'assumption' about culture, meaning, and behavior that we might take 'for granted' in our regular lives (Ramirez 2003), there is no way to fully escape the shaping and framing effect of the norms and discourses (Sherif 1936) within which we grow up and currently live. In the current global political climate, there is no chance of producing 'apolitical' work on the subject of legacies of Soviet repression. Even if I were to cling to an outdated ideal of 'true' objectivity, my work would inevitably be used for political ends by some entity or another. I thus draw on the importance of maintaining a 'reflexive' approach in research design in order to identify, acknowledge, and correct for the assumptions, biases, privileges, and worldviews I bring with me.

2.7 Participant-Observer Ethnography

Mason defines 'reflexivity' in social science research as 'thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions, and decisions shape how you research and what you are' (2002: 5). The research undertaken here has meant studying a broadly- defined 'other' – and, in the words of anthropologist Johannes Fabian, 'there is no knowledge of the Other which is not also a temporal, historical, a political act' (2014: 1).

Since the sites and memorials analyzed in this thesis are designed to communicate a message to an audience, allow space for interested parties to remember and grieve, or both, it was inevitable that a thorough study of these heritage sites and practices would involve a degree of participant-observational ethnographic work. It would have been insufficient to simply map the sites, record the information inscribed or displayed there, and leave without watching and, when appropriate, participating as stakeholders and visitors of different types interacted with the site. In the words of critical geographers Annette Watson and Karen Till (but see also Atkinson and Hammersley 1994; Spradley 1980):

Participant-observation requires that ethnographers pay close attention to, and sometimes partake in, everyday geographies so they can become familiar with how social spaces are constituted in various settings. Only by participating with others can ethnographers better understand lived, sensed, experienced, and emotional worlds (2010: 129).

This fieldwork took two main forms, which can be roughly delineated by whether I was ‘acting as a visitor’ or, alternatively, if I was ‘acting as a normal participant’ in a given memorial activity or as a ‘normal’ visitor to a given heritage site. In both variations, I recorded notes both at the time and later, although I would occasionally record ‘public’ statements (i.e., those made with the expectation that the gathered crowd would listen) on a dictaphone. I also took many photographs. The former positional stance was enacted when I engaged in activities like site visits guided by stakeholders for the express purpose of showing me the site. The latter was enacted when I joined other large groups in rituals like standing in line at ‘The Return of Names’ (described in Chapter 7) in order to read aloud the biographies of Muscovites killed during the Great Terror. In these cases, I took pains to watch what the people around me were doing and saying and to act as much in accordance with them as I could without risking shading into what sociologists Morris Schwartz and Charlotte Schwartz (1995: 349) defined as ‘los[ing] perspective – especially the perspective of the outsider. As a result, the assumptions and values which characterize the observational situation may be unwittingly accepted and thus remain unnoticed and unrecorded’. Later, I reviewed my notes, recordings, and photographs in order to analyze and draw conclusions about embodied and enacted meaning at each case study site.

2.8 Webs of Meaning and Thick Description

Conducting such fieldwork is not simply a matter of recording what people do and what I hear them say. It is also a question of figuring out what these different actions and statements mean.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz best summarizes this process in ethnographic fieldwork through his concept of ‘webs of meaning’, writing:

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical (1973: 311).

At several points in the data chapters, I turn to what Geertz termed ‘thick description’ (1973: 312-13). Famously using the difference between the twitch of an eye and a wink to illustrate the use of such description to convey meaning as it is understood and transmitted through a specific action in a given society, he goes on to say that ‘culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is, thickly – described’ (Geertz 1973: 316) This method is especially helpful when describing and analyzing the ceremonies and other activities that take place at the case study sites; such ‘thick descriptions’ go beyond simple description of surroundings and behavior in order to convey what such phenomena mean in context to their actors and witnesses.

2.9 Ethics

Studies of ‘dark heritage’, as explained above, overlap in many ways with other disciplines, including that of ‘conflict archaeology’. Gabriel Moshenska (2008) has laid out the need for conflict archaeology to seriously consider its disciplinary ethics and the ethical implications of such research. In concluding, he asserts that ‘conflict archaeology is special: in its engagements with the remains of horrors and tragedies, and in its relentless focus on humanity amidst monumental materiality. In ethics as in other areas we must hold ourselves to a higher standard’ (Moshenska 2008: 173). I take seriously this commitment to acting ethically in relation to both living stakeholders and the legacy of deceased victims (see Lee 1995; May 2001) and agree that these commitments should be at the forefront in working with ‘dark heritage’ as well as conflict archaeology and related fields.

Over time I shifted the thesis’s focus away from a history and analysis of heritage management practices, as these have developed over time in Russia, towards an analysis of how victims and perpetrators are portrayed ‘on site’ or via digital media. With this shift, it became clear that the interviews were not as revealing a tool as predicted; in fact, the most interesting comments that

people made about such interpretation tended to be ‘casual’ or ‘off- hand’, recorded in the course of participant-observer ethnographic fieldwork. Other crucial information could be gathered from written and oral interpretation that was designed to be conveyed to the public in the first place – e.g., tour guides’ narrations at sites, the text and photographs openly available on websites, etc. The fact that no one had to ‘officially’ state personal opinions on sensitive topics that they would not otherwise have publicly revealed lessened the amount of risk that any participant was exposed to during the course of this project.

And these risks are not imaginary – a colleague of mine (though not one who was involved with this thesis, they have conducted research on the legacy of Soviet repression) had to flee Russia in 2018 and seek asylum overseas, having been targeted for their academic and activist work. My status as a foreigner conducting research in Russia affords me very real safeties and privileges: for example, although I could conceivably have a visa and/or permission to travel to Russia revoked at any time, I can always return to my native country and so do not run the risk of becoming stateless and separated from family were something like that to happen. I have kept forefront in my mind the fact that this ‘security’ often does not extend to my informants, collaborators, and colleagues within Russia. Therefore, I have always erred on the side of minimizing risk to these people, their affiliated organizations, and their own wide-ranging projects.

2.10 Difficulties and Course Corrections

Initially, there was a chance that this thesis might have gone down a route of intensive ‘site biography’, with a sustained focus on how different sites have developed and changed over time and a keen look into how different actors impacted and were impacted by these decisions. However, early in the research design, it became clear that I would find it difficult to reliably obtain the correct visa mandated for foreigners to conduct archival research in Russia. There was a brief period when researchers could enter Russia on a tourist or business visa, although these were technically ‘incorrect’, and be fairly certain that no one from the archives and/or FSB would actually check or care. However, as historian Mark Kramer (2012) predicted, after Putin’s 2012 re-election, access to archives has tightened, and at least one foreign PhD student has been arrested and deported for pursuing archival research on an ‘incorrect’ visa (Parfitt 2015).

Further, during an early round of fieldwork that included participating in a ‘study school’ with other young scholars from Germany and Russia, it was clear that the FSB was actively monitoring our activities, making the idea of breaching visa conditions even less wise than before. Finally, many crucial files that relate directly to the security services and/or secret police are still inaccessible to the public; the first in-depth investigation of post- Stalinist trials of selected perpetrators of the Great Terror was just published by historian Lynne Viola, and this data only became fully available in Ukraine after the 2014 ‘Maidan revolution’ there (Viola 2018: 6-7).

Fortunately, many original records relating to Soviet and Stalinist repression have been archived online and are freely accessible. These include ‘shooting lists’ and/or ‘books of memory’ listing people killed and buried at different mass graves around Russia, oral histories and other first-person accounts of involvement in heritage and heritagization activities around such sites. These are reputable sources: in the former case, the information is drawn directly from the archives that have been opened since the mid-1980s, and, in the latter case, they are accounts written by people with histories of experience in memorial and heritage work. At meetings and seminars I’ve attended in Russia during the course of this research, attendees have occasionally asked whether or not Soviet archival material can be ‘trusted’. The consensus is that the archival information is often incomplete, but the materials that are accessible are, as a rule, truthful. In other words, if information, such as a shooting list for a given date in a given city, is present in the archives, it is widely held to be accurate, but a lack of such documentation for a given person or event does not necessarily mean that ‘nothing happened’.

Nevertheless, the consensus among my supervisory team that it was best to avoid doing formal ‘archival’ research in government archives precluded the type of research that would have been necessary to write site biographies with a level of detail that would justify making such biographies a centerpiece of this thesis’s fieldwork and analysis, especially for sites that do not have such a publicly-accessible wealth of documentation readily available online. However, I had already begun to be drawn more towards analyzing on-site behavior and discourse, so this development was not entirely unfortunate in terms of ‘narrowing down’ the research project.

I also chose not to conduct a wide-ranging survey or interview project of survivors or their

relatives. First, particularly for survivors of the Great Terror and early iterations of Soviet mass violence, such a sample would almost fully be limited to survivors' descendants since so much time has passed. Second, there is already a plethora of such interviews, personal narratives, and other accounts in both publicly available databases and in works compiled and/or analyzed by other researchers (for the former, see Centre for Russian, Caucasian and Central European Studies 2018; Gulag.online 2019; for the latter, see Applebaum 2004; Figes 2007). There is also a strong argument for avoiding the possibility of re-traumatizing survivors by conducting new interviews when perfectly adequate resources already exist (see Sutton 2018: 30-31), especially for a project that is, at heart, one based on heritage studies.

Early versions of the research design had more of a focus on exploring the dynamics of different organizations involved with preserving and presenting the heritage of Soviet repression. To this end, I devised a framework for semi-structured interviews to be conducted with members – especially leaders – of such organizations. The proposed research questions, rationale, participant information sheet, and participant consent form were approved in accordance with University of Cambridge and European Union regulations. In the first two research trips I took to Russia, I indeed conducted several recorded, semi-structured interviews with high-ranking members of memorial institutions and organizations. All of these participants read the information sheets and signed consent forms.

This tool was designed solely to be used with managers and other 'high-profile' leaders of such organizations. As I discovered during previous fieldwork, it is very difficult for a foreigner (or anyone) to walk up to strangers – e.g., attendees at an annual event memorializing victims of repression – and have them agree to be interviewed 'on the record'. Asking them to read an 'official' participant information sheet and sign a release form is, as noted previously, mandatory under EU regulations but is also a request met with deep suspicion by the average 'casual' informant in Russia. The FSB still closely monitors the activities of human rights and memorial organizations – as noted previously, I myself have been under surveillance by the FSB at times in the course of this fieldwork. Thus, such reluctance to 'officially' have opinions and interviews recorded makes sense, and there was no question of ignoring ethics regulations in order to obtain such data anyway. Asking people for verbal permission to be photographed thus comprised the extent of data gathering directly from participants in memorial events and visitors to the sites studied in this thesis. Otherwise, I relied on recording 'overheard' remarks, casual conversations, and public statements, as well

as recording and analyzing embodied behaviors at sites and ceremonies, in the course of participant-observer ethnography.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the methodologies and methods I used in conducting fieldwork in the course of writing this thesis. In summary, I have used fairly traditional participant-observational ethnographic techniques in order to gather and analyze data with an eye to understanding the ‘webs of meaning’ (Geertz 1973) within which they are embedded and within which they in turn embed themselves. I have also outlined my rationale for choosing specific field sites and explained why some methods that are commonly used in projects of this type were not suitable or feasible for a ‘dark heritage’ research project conducted in contemporary Russia. The next chapter provides a relevant historical background for understanding the phenomena this thesis analyzes and the contexts which make them possible, both shaping and being shaped by them.

Chapter 3: Historical Background

3.1 Introduction

The theories of grievability and blameability, briefly introduced in the preceding chapters, are crucial to this dissertation. Thus, an understanding of who could be ‘officially’ deemed an enemy in different periods of Soviet history, as well as an understanding of different perpetrators’ motives at those times, is essential to fully understanding the memorial phenomena and attitudes to these that emerged afterwards. This chapter aims to introduce key points of Russian and Soviet history as these pertain to the development of ideals and models of secret police, forced labor, incarceration, and punishment, as well as to the intertwined development over time of ideas of criminality, enemy, conspiracy, and secrecy. This chapter will describe and explain key events and patterns in Russian and Soviet history as these pertain to the case studies discussed in this thesis. In order to fully understand the acts and mechanisms of violence, exile, and forced labor – as well as the consequences of each – that are commemorated and memorialized at each of the case study sites, the history of those events is outlined here.

The chapter follows a chronological structure, starting in the Tsarist era and continuing through the Revolution and Civil War, the Great Terror, and other Stalin-era events before turning to post-Stalin eras in the USSR and Russia. Each time period’s developments in incarceration and mass terror are outlined, with a focus on changes regarding who could be considered an ‘enemy’ of the government in each era and why.

3.2 *Tsarist Russia: 1600s-1917*

The forced-labor camp, whether or not it was meant to be a ‘corrective’ force for remolding ‘criminal’ behavior and ideology through work, was not a Soviet invention within Russia. In fact, the Tsarist regimes had a long tradition of exiling politically inconvenient people to faraway locations, and the forced-labor aspect of their sentencing developed over time. Select ‘political’ prisoners were exiled to the remote Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea, beginning in the medieval era, while the islands also became a refuge for self-exiled ‘Old Believers’¹ after the schism in the Russian Orthodox Church.

¹ Orthodox Russians who broke away from the main Church in the schism following Patriarch Nikon’s ecclesiastical reforms in the seventeenth century. Nikon attempted to bring Eastern Orthodox practice in line with ‘correct’ Greek Orthodox practice, while the Old Believers prefer the rites that had developed in the Eastern Church up until 1652.

An examination of the history of forced labor in Tsarist Russia as well as in the USSR helps to illustrate this point. As periodic peasant revolts were joined by intelligentsia-led revolution attempts through the early modern era, most notably the 1825 Decembrist Uprising and the attempted revolution of 1905, the Tsarist government made increasing use of punitive exile and hard labor (see Gentes 2010; Badcock 2016). However, hard labor and exile were not the sole reserve of political criminals and dissidents – murderers and other criminals were also sentenced to such terms. The full history of the Bolshevik party and other revolution- and reform-minded parties of the time is beyond this dissertation’s scope, but the Bolsheviks emerged out of a 1903 split between themselves and the Mensheviks² in the Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) over a dispute on how ‘active’ in the revolutionary struggle Party members had to be (Service 2010: 154). Many Old Bolsheviks, or people who had joined the Bolshevik party before the 1917 October Revolution, including Lenin and Stalin themselves, served at least one term of exile in a far corner of the Russian Empire. After a stint in prison, Lenin served three years in exile in a village on Siberia’s Yenisei River (Sebestyen 2017: 92-106), while Stalin was sentenced to one two-year and two three-year terms but escaped (sometimes being caught and returned) each time (Montefiore 2007). Although conditions were rough, both of them managed to conduct significant research and political writing while in exile. Inmates, mostly non-political, who were explicitly sentenced to time in the *katorga*, or hard labor system, were not so lucky. As Zhanna Popova (2016: 105) describes it, ‘The idea of *katorga* implied extremely hard physical labour, frequently under dangerous conditions (such as work in the lead or silver mines), without any remuneration, combined with being locked in shackles’; death rates from injury, disease, and overwork were high.

There was already at this time a sense that an appropriate part of an arrestee’s punishment was the physical removal from their homes on top of the hardships of imprisonment and compulsory labor; Piacentini and Pallot term this ‘in exile imprisonment’, defined as ‘the product of a long-established and enduring carceralism that takes forward a cultural

² After the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party split in 1903 over a dispute regarding Party membership, Vladimir Lenin led the ‘Bolshevik’ faction, with the word deriving from the Russian for ‘majority’ [bol’shinstvo/большинство]. The ‘minority’ on that vote were later known as ‘Mensheviks’ from the word for ‘minority’ [men’shinstvo/меньшинство].

The Mensheviks traditionally held more moderate views than did the Bolsheviks. I highly recommend Sheila Fitzpatrick’s (2017) *The Russian Revolution* for a more thorough overview of the two revolutions.

attachment to displacing political opposition, criminality and social deviancy to the peripheries' (2013: 22). There was an attempt to make forced labor a profitable enterprise, though mismanagement often thwarted these plans. Similar mismanagement would later hamper gulag and other Soviet forced labor enterprises from turning a profit; however, Gentes argues that while 'cruelty and inhumanity within tsarist *katorga* occurred primarily as by-products of a maladministered system, in the GULag [sic] they were intended *end products* [italics original]' (2005: 83).

Yet the first 'concentration camps' of the Bolshevik regime predate the labor camps on Solovki,³ which were not founded until 1923. According to Pitzer, the new leaders based this idea on Tsarist First World War-era concentration camps⁴ that were set up on Russian soil to hold German 'enemy' nationals and combatants: 'Because the Bolsheviks immediately took a stance in favor of concentration camps, one form of civilian detention flowed into the other with no gap between them. While still detaining foreigners from the global conflict, state terror was launched' (2017: 120).

3.3 Civil War and Red Terror: 1918-1922

The Red Terror,⁵ which started in 1918 and continued, along with the Russian Civil War, into 1922, targeted alleged and real 'White', or Tsarist, supporters and collaborators as well as broadly-defined 'enemies of the revolution' (Haynes and Hasan 2003: 49-51). The advent of the Red Terror, with its 'enemy class' warfare ideology and avowed antipathy to religion, meant that the Solovetsky Transfiguration Monastery's monks and other clergymen were prime targets of the Terror's violence, as was the case all across territory held by the Red Army and Bolshevik-allied forces (Yakovlev 2002: 156). Fresco scenes of the martyrdom of Solovetsky believers, as well as prominent Russian Orthodox leaders across Russia, at the hands of peak-capped Bolsheviks, can be seen at the memorial cathedral built on the site of the Butovo shooting range near Moscow; although the victims of the 1937-38 Great Terror

³ 'Solovki' can refer to either the Solovetsky Islands or any of the gulag forced labor camps that were on the Solovetsky Islands; here 'Solovki' denotes the latter.

⁴ Although some inmates worked on construction or other projects behind the lines, most found themselves in situations akin to an internment camp, though Pitzer uses 'concentration camp' to refer to internment, detention, death, resettlement, and labor camps alike across the twentieth century.

⁵ Since the French Revolution, red flags have been associated with left-wing politics; the Bolshevik 'Red Army' and other 'Red' institutions hearken back to this (see Bergman 2014).

buried at Butovo date from nearly two decades later, this is an excellent material example of the temporal elision that often occurs in historical narratives of Soviet repression.

The KGB's secret police and reputed legions of spies have developed into a remarkable avatar for the Soviet Union and Russia today (Soldatov and Borogan 2010: 3-6). The organization grew out of a series of secret police and security forces inextricably linked with the founding of the Soviet Union. The first in the series of such organizations, the Cheka, or All-Russian Extraordinary Commission,⁶ was founded in December 1917, after the Bolshevik seizure of power in the October Revolution, and tasked with the following:

- 1 To suppress and liquidate all attempts and acts of counter-revolution and sabotage throughout Russia, from whatever quarter.
- 2 To hand over for trial by revolutionary tribunal all saboteurs and counter-revolutionaries, and to work out means of combating them.
- 3 The Commission solely carries out preliminary investigation, in so far as this is necessary for suppression. (*Lenin i VChK*: 36-7, as quoted in Leggett 1986: 17).

As former MI5 intelligence officer and historian George Leggett argues in his definitive history of the Cheka,

Whatever the origins and motivation of Lenin's espousal of terror, there is no disputing its significant role in shaping the course of the Bolshevik revolution. For the resource on which Lenin's regime would ultimately depend was terror—the ruthless application of violence as a sovereign means of persuasion (1986: xxxv).

The Cheka would be followed, in due course, by more than ten versions and re-christenings of the Soviet secret police, a tradition finally inherited by the current Russian Federation's FSB, or Federal Security Service.⁷ For the purposes of this dissertation, the most salient of these are the OGPU, or the Joint State Political Directorate,⁸ which existed from 1923-1934; the NKVD, or People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs,⁹ 1934-1946; and the KGB, or Committee for State Security,¹⁰ 1954-1991. From 1946-1954, secret police duties formerly performed by the NKVD were performed by an organ of the newly-established Ministry of Internal Affairs; from 1956, those duties were performed by the KGB.

⁶ Всероссийская Чрезвычайная Комиссия (Чека)

⁷ Федеральная служба безопасности Российской Федерации (ФСБ)

⁸ Объединённое государственное политическое управление при СНК СССР (ОГПУ)

⁹ Народный комиссариат внутренних дел (НКВД)

¹⁰ Комитет государственной безопасности (КГБ)

In narratives like the one illustrated at Butovo, the Cheka is equated with the NKVD, KGB, and so on; as a quick perusal of social media and oral history would reveal, even today it is common for people to refer to the FSB and/or their NKVD or KGB forebears as ‘Chekists’. However, this elision of perpetration covers up important differences in the causes underlying each wave of repression and why people at every level chose to participate in each. Although people may speak this way about security services and terror over time in passing, the different sites under discussion in this thesis may carefully assign various levels of ‘blame’ to different groups and individuals, a decision that is based on many factors but certainly includes a consideration (or, alternatively, a wish to avoid consideration) of what role the legacy of Soviet repression should play in contemporary politics and society. Further, such sweeping characterizations of the perpetrating organizations and individuals over time do not mean that all victims are regarded in a similarly equal way.

A widely-held interpretation of the ferocity of waves of Stalinist repression – especially the emphasis on ‘unmasking’ hidden enemies and ‘fifth columns’ of traitors in the midst of workplaces, schools, and homes – centers on the idea that the turn to ‘hidden’ enemies was one of near-necessity (Fitzpatrick 2001; Ryan 2012). The Red Terror’s ‘enemy’ categories especially included members of the nobility (although many with means had already fled, the imperial family itself fell victim), the bourgeoisie, the clergy, merchants, and Cossacks. As Figs summarizes, ‘virtually anyone could qualify as a ‘counter-revolutionary’. In this sense the Terror was a war by the regime against the whole of society—a means of terrorizing it into submission’ (2017: 642). Those targeted classes made up the majority of ‘thousands of arrests and 8,000-15,000 that, within eight weeks, had followed Sovnarkom’s [the Central Committee of the time] decree “On Red Terror” of 15 September 1918’ (Smele 2015: 192). The total number of Red Terror victims remains uncertain, but estimates range from between 100,000 (Lincoln 1989: 384) to 1.3 million deaths (Beyrau 2017: 57-58). The concurrent ‘White Terror’, carried out by White (or Tsarist) and White-allied forces, may have claimed up to 300,000 lives (Haynes and Hasan 2003). Liudmila Novikova argues:

Rather than controlling mass violence, different political authorities often tried desperately to channel it and to avoid the most harmful effects of the outbursts of grass-root terror. It was not direction from above but rather the collapse of state authority that made the violent excesses from below possible in the first place; and it was not until the end of the Civil War and the ultimate victory of the Reds that the state gradually reasserted its monopoly of violence (2013: 1767-8).

Further, when I visited Moscow's Andrei Sakharov Center during fieldwork, a woman showing me around the exhibition gallery noted that the practice, widespread in the 1920s and '30s, of making up a 'proletarian' biography and family history had been a genealogical 'nightmare' for Russia. Many Russians, she claimed, cannot trace their family histories back more than two or three generations. Many biographies and stories were simply made up out of whole cloth in order to get ahead or even survive, as members of some 'enemy' classes under both Lenin and Stalin were denied not only places at university and career advancement but necessities such as ration cards, etc. (Figs 2007 contains many of these personal stories). This aspect of the Red Terror and early Soviet history is one aspect of the marked uncertainty that permeates heritage work related to Soviet repression, as we shall see when reviewing the case studies.

3.4 Collectivization and the Beginning of the Gulag System: 1923-1935

Anne Applebaum notes that 'Solovetsky may not have been the only prison in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, but it was *their* prison, the OGPU's prison, where the OGPU first learned how to use slave labour for profit' (2004: 42). The seized Solovetsky Transfiguration Monastery and the rest of the islands' territory was handed over to the OGPU in 1923, with the first Soviet inmates having arrived earlier that year. In the beginning, although food was scarce and disease and abuse by guards both rampant, academic research, art, and writing were still possible. Pitzer likens the atmosphere of the early years on Solovki to 'a museum of the intelligentsia,' who at that time made up most of the inmates sent to that remote place (2007: 126).

However, while political prisoners had been mostly excluded from Tsarist-era *katorga* labor and also from heavy labor in the early days of Solovki, as the gulag system developed and huge numbers of arrestees were convicted for 'counter-revolutionary' activities, the tables turned. In the gulag camps and colonies, 'common' criminals – thieves, murderers, prostitutes, etc. – had more status than the political prisoners, and the 'thieves-in-law',¹¹ loosely organized and sharing their own culture and language, were at the top of the *zek*¹² social hierarchy for most of the peak gulag period (Varese 1998). A new *katorga* regime would even be introduced to the system in 1943, when the Soviet gulag and forced-labor workforce was at

¹¹ воры-в-законе

¹² зек – a common slang term for a gulag inmate, derived from the word *zakliochyonniy* [заключенный], or 'imprisoned'

its peak point (Barnes 2011: 20).

According to legend (although reported in Applebaum 2004: 54-55, among others), an inmate named Naftaly Frenkel, serving out a sentence on Solovki, gave the camp managers a list of ways in which the camp could be made more efficient and a real ‘economic’ enterprise. After 1932, the camp’s mission and overall ethos changed dramatically – although the concept of ‘reforming through labor’ was still given lip service, the focus very much shifted to using inmate labor for narrowly-defined productive purposes. Botanical experiments and experimental theater were abandoned in favor of tightly-disciplined logging and fishing crews. Here, too, the camp pioneered the concept of rationing food in proportion to how ‘productive’ an inmate was; insidiously, once an inmate was ill or injured, they would find themselves distributed fewer and fewer calories, leading to further deterioration and, often, death (Alexopoulos 2017: 21-37).

Many remote parts of the USSR were fundamentally developed and built by forced labor, as with the far-northern city of Norilsk (see Borodkin and Ertz 2005; Ertz 2005). In a study of Vorkuta, a notoriously lethal gulag camp as well as civilian settlement in the Russian Far North, Barenberg ‘argues that the Gulag was closely connected to society at large. In fact, it demonstrates that it was an integral part of that society’ (2014: 8). In many parts of the former Soviet Union, it is impossible to neatly separate the gulag or repression from the rest of history, society, and the landscape. Thus, as an organizer of the online Virtual Museum of the Gulag asked, ‘how do you put an entire city in a museum?’ This greatly complicates the task of interpreting the tangible legacy of Stalinist repression across the former Soviet Union, particularly at sites like Norilsk and Vorkuta. Resources such as the Virtual Museum and Moscow’s ‘It Is Right Here’ initiative (the latter more fully explored in Chapter 7) use digital technology and transient acts of remembrance and commemoration to place or, sometimes, enact this heritage in dispersed locations where more permanent memorialization is impossible for any number of reasons.

But even in situations where the first construction workers, ironworkers, miners, and so forth in remote areas at the vanguard of the industrialization campaign appeared to be ‘free’ labor, many were actually members of disenfranchised and officially ‘enemy’ classes with nowhere

else to go. An unknown multitude of people labeled ‘kulaks’¹³ took on these dangerous and ill-paid jobs, often under a false identity and/or biography (Fitzpatrick 2002: 132-136).

Yet the mechanisms of Soviet and Stalinist terror were not limited to the gulag camps and forced labor brigades. At various times in the Soviet era, mass arrest, deportation, and shooting campaigns also took place. Some specific campaigns in 1937-38, during the Great Purge, were targeted at specific ethnic groups, such as Polish citizens of the USSR (Snyder 2010: 94-107) As Viola (2007) documents in the case of the ‘kulaks’, many millions of Soviet citizens were deported from their homes and forcibly resettled, often in faraway and inhospitable areas. Under Stalin, some ‘traitor’ ethno-national groups, such as the Chechens, were persecuted post-World War II because of suspected collaboration with Nazi occupiers (see Burds 2007) – but the largest and most concerted wave of deportations accompanied the earlier drive to collectivize agriculture in the USSR.

‘Dekulakization’ displaced, disenfranchised, or killed millions of people across the Soviet Union, especially in the agricultural heartlands in contemporary Ukraine and along the Volga River (see Snyder 2011 for the former and Kondrashin 1992 for the latter). ‘Kulak’ was a notoriously nebulous category. In fact, it was common for villagers whom other villagers simply disliked or envied to be labeled ‘kulaks’ and accordingly persecuted (Browning and Siegelbaum 2009: 241-2). Further, Conquest has proposed that the entire ideological category stemmed from the ruling Bolsheviks’ fundamental misunderstanding of village life and society: ‘kulaks’ were not a fixed category, but a sort of stage in the life cycle of a typical peasant family (2001: 94).

Nevertheless, as that central directive to rationalize agricultural production through consolidation of land into large collective or state-run farms was put into place across the USSR, the identification and persecution of ‘kulaks’ accelerated quickly and violently. In the midst of this movement, a major famine struck Ukraine in 1932-3. Deliberate refusals by the central Soviet government to take policy decisions that would have kept more food and seed grain in the affected areas – thereby saving vast numbers of lives – led to what is now referred to as the Holodomor (or ‘Great Famine’), the mass, Soviet state-assisted famine that killed

¹³ In Russian, ‘kulak’ (‘кулак’) means ‘fist’; this meaning comes from the idea of well-off peasants being ‘tight-fisted’ with their money.

around 3.3 million people, according to Snyder's best calculations based on the available archival evidence and demographic projections (2010: 53). However, this number can never be known for certain. It is also widely thought that Soviet agriculture took years to recover its former productivity after the drive to collectivize (Conquest 1987: 337-9)

3.5 The Great Terror: 1936-38

The largest and most destructive campaign of repression, filling camps and cemeteries across the Soviet Union, was the Great Terror. The first crest of this wave of repression began in 1936 with the 'show trials' of prominent defendants, beginning with leading Old Bolsheviks Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev (Conquest 2008: 91-104). Once this 'left opposition', which had allegedly been allied with the now-exiled Leon Trotsky, had been disposed of, equally lethal attention moved to a supposed 'right opposition' and other alleged enemies (see Hedeler 2003). Some researchers have compared the Bolshevik impulse of continuously identifying and 'rooting out' enemies to a religious emphasis on group and individual piety and subsequent purging (Kotkin 1997; Riegel 2005; van Rie 2016), or even to a modern-day witch hunt (Armstrong 1999). Oleg Kharkordin, however, analyzes the evolution of Russian concepts of disciplining the 'individual' versus the 'collective' over time to conclude that 'Heightened admonition in mature Soviet society enforced discipline, whereas the atrocities of the Great Terror in the 1930s happened against the background of a direct merger of practices of revelation and excommunication, unmediated by admonition' (1999: 355). In his theory, the Stalinist state in large part built upon and modified existing Russian attitudes towards self-examination, self-criticism, confession, and penitence.

Some scholars have focused heavily on the individual personality and psychology of Stalin and his inner circle (e.g., Birt 1993; Montefiore 2007); while this is interesting, it does little to explain the motivations of the massive numbers of ordinary citizens who participated in these campaigns in various ways. Academics have long differed over how much of an 'intelligent' Stalin really was (see Harris 2003). In any case, the theory that Stalin grew as powerful as he did even as waves of purges grew more vicious because his previous posts had allowed him to grant favors and positions to many people who then felt grateful or indebted to him is currently fairly widely accepted; this is especially so in terms of how this led to the creation of a new, bourgeois-in-all-but-name, middle or managerial class in Stalinist Russia (see Fitzpatrick 2000). These people benefited from many material perks of working with the system, even if their positions of power sometimes put them directly in the firing line of new waves of purges (Figes 2007; Goldman 2011; Hoffman 1993).

These 1936 show trials laid the groundwork for the Great Terror, which was ostensibly an effort to find and punish the people responsible for the murder of leading Soviet politician Sergei Kirov. Murdered on his way into his Leningrad office, Kirov had been so popular that some had seen him as a possible challenger to Stalin; in fact, his assassination had so many odd points that many then thought and now think that Stalin may have orchestrated the assassination himself (Lenoe 2002).

In 1934, the infamous ‘Article 58’ had been added to the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). This identified ‘counter-revolutionary’ activity as a crime as follows:

“Counterrevolutionary” is understood as any action directed toward the overthrow, subversion, or weakening of the power of worker-peasant councils or of their chosen (according to the Constitution of the USSR and constitutions of union republics) worker-peasant government of the USSR, union and autonomous republics, or toward the subversion or weakening of the external security of the USSR and the fundamental economic, political, and national gains of the proletarian revolution. In consideration of the international solidarity of interests of all workers, acts are likewise considered "counterrevolutionary" when they are directed at any other workers' government, even if not part of the USSR. (Criminal Code of the RSFSR 1934).

The clauses following outlined different categories of ‘counter-revolutionary’, including bourgeois specialists and different military ranks, as well as different types of counter-revolutionary activity that could theoretically be undertaken. The last clause, 58-14, laid out “Counterrevolutionary sabotage, ie. [sic] conscious failure to perform some defined duties or intentionally negligent fulfillment of them, with the special purpose of weakening the authority of the government and functioning of the state apparatus’, which was punishable by prison or gulag terms, ‘confiscation of property’, or even ‘the supreme measure of social defense—shooting, with confiscation of property’ (Criminal Code of the RSFSR 1934).

Clause 58-14 became well-used for convicting workers, managers, and other citizens of ‘counter-revolutionary’ work-shirking, ‘sabotage’, or ‘wrecking’ (Solomon 1987). In the context of rapid, nigh-reckless mass industrialization, costly, destructive, and sometimes injurious or fatal errors were common. These might be due to lack of experience or education with new technology, rampant shortcuts taken in order to fulfill (more likely ‘overfulfill’) set quotas and goals, or sheer incompetence on the part of quickly-promoted new managers and specialists. Historian Stephen Kotkin (1997) portrays all of these factors as they shaped the new, industrial city of Magnitogorsk. As Solzhenitsyn famously wrote, ‘In all truth, there is

no step, thought, action or lack of action under the heavens which could not be punished by the heavy hand of Article 58' (2003: 27).

When the Great Terror's quotas of people to be shot and people to be arrested were drawn up in 1937-8 (also known as Order 00447), Article 58's broad nature meant that almost anyone could become a victim of repression. Gregory, concluding his study of Soviet 'terror by quota', states, 'Terror was planned much as the Soviet economy was planned. It was conducted in campaigns, initiated by Stalin's decrees and operationalized by the state security czar of the day' (2009: 200). The same zeal that led factory managers to 'overfulfill' their assigned quotas of steel beams, felled trees, etc., led NKVD officials to wildly 'overfulfill' these quotas as well (Khlevnyuk 1995). Ellman ends a rigorous statistical review of the available data thus: 'The best estimate that can currently be made of the number of repression deaths in 1937-38 is the range 950,000-1.2 million, i.e., about a million' (2002: 1163).

These victims were formally sentenced, often in absentia and sometimes after their sentences had been carried out in reality, by 'the three-person commission, or troika. Composed of a regional NKVD chief, a regional party leader, and a regional prosecutor, the troikas were responsible for transforming the quotas into executions, the numbers into bodies' (Snyder 2010: 81). Arrestees whose sentence had already been thus decided, if still alive, were then interrogated and often tortured with the aim of getting a confession of their 'counter-revolutionary' crimes. Many, exhausted and terrified, did sign trumped-up confessions of conspiracy, espionage, wrecking, and so on. Combined with the theater of the show trials, this veneer of legal process provided the NKVD and other government organs with a convenient smokescreen (see Viola 2018 for numerous narratives of this process and the legal justifications for it). This has also left behind a legacy of wariness about 'official' legal processes and tribunals that have anything to do with Soviet repression, as profiled by several interviewees in Hochschild (1994). This designed and sustained ambiguity regarding the nature of criminality continues to leak into discourse about the gulag, repression, and their joint legacy in Russia today, a theme that will continue to crop up throughout this dissertation.

Arrestees sent to the gulag then entered a world of hardship in every sense of the word. Usually taken far away (although gulag laborers also worked in and around metropolitan areas, even building the Leningrad metro system) and worked, often to death, there was little chance of escape or achieving the type of 'reforging' into a better person that was championed in the rhetoric of the secret police and camp administrators (Dobson 2009: 8-10).

3.6 *The Great Patriotic War: 1939-1945*

The Solovki camps closed in 1939, but the gulag system was far from extinguished. More camps, prisons, and special settlements were established across the USSR's wide expanse; Kolyma, a network of labor camps, colonies, and work sites, replaced Solovki as a metonym for evil, though both remain powerful, 'haunting' symbols today (Etkind 2009). Kolyma, in Russia's Far East (farther east than even Siberia), was rich in precious minerals, including gold, but severely underdeveloped. Dalstroï, or the Far North Construction Trust,¹⁴ was founded in 1931 to organize the exploitation of these resources. The camps and settlements managed by Dalstroï held around 80,000 people by 1937; they later swelled to hold over 190,000 prisoners at their peak prisoner population in 1940 (Bollinger 2003). Affiliated projects such as the 'Road of Bones', a highway meant to run from Khandynga to Magadan, killed many of their laborers (Ulturgasheva 2015: 5). The population of the gulag system as a whole peaked during the post-war years, with an official figure of 2,561,351 people living in gulag camps and special settlements in 1950 (see Applebaum 2004: 516). Applebaum also notes, however, that death rates peaked in the gulag camps themselves during World War II,¹⁵ as labor needs increased astronomically while the willingness to expend resources on a criminal population ebbed (2004: 103). The post-war surge in gulag inmate numbers can be attributed to the vast numbers of Red Army veterans who, having survived battle with the Axis powers, were deemed to have spent too much time in 'enemy' territory (whether as prisoners of war or simply having served too far west) and were sent straight to forced labor camps and prisons upon arrival back in the Soviet Union (see Werth et al. 1999).

Later, conditions of release from the gulag labor camps and colonies often included a ban on moving back to major Soviet metropolitan areas and/or a period of time in which former inmates had to remain in the area around the gulag camp (see Barenberg 2014: 100-1 for an examination of this process in and around Vorkuta). Famously, many artists and other dissidents moved to communities just outside of major cities in order to skirt these rules, but many former inmates chose instead to stay in the regions of their former prisons (see Figs 2007 for many such stories). In fact, in many of these areas today, the prison guards are descended from former gulag camp guards and/or inmates. In describing this last phenomenon, Pallot and Piacentini expand on Solzhenitsyn's 'archipelago' metaphor, noting:

¹⁴ Дальстрой

¹⁵ Often known as the Great Patriotic War in post-Soviet Russia

The gulag's 'islands' contained very distinctive societies, structurally different from those that surrounded them, and they have been reproducing themselves ever since [...] These island societies have at times been magnets for indigenous local populations in search of employment and higher living standards, but the majority originate from other parts of Russia. This 'society of captors' has traditionally been inward-looking, with limited contacts with communities living beyond (2012: 74-5).

Yet industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture (albeit to a somewhat lesser extent) are today widely viewed as milestones on the path to developing the Soviet Union and pulling its various 'nations' out of backwardness and into a modern socialist society and economy (Monaghan 2015). As numerous as its intended and unintended victims were, to say nothing of the enduring legacy of environmental destruction that these pushes left behind, this overall astronomical leap in development is often regarded as a major achievement of the Soviet Union, and particularly of Stalin (Sullivan 2013: 466-8). This inclination to justify and, where possible, erase tangible legacies of mass loss and suffering in the name of 'progress' is clearly not unique to Russia and the post-Soviet world. Most societies that built up their current wealth and power on a base of paid or unpaid labor tend to silence or obscure those pasts instead of directly reckoning with them. For example, large factions in the United States still find simple statements of historical fact about the stated goals of the Confederate States of America (among these, namely, to protect and uphold the institution of chattel slavery) 'controversial', and public, sometimes violent, protests have accompanied some recent removals of monuments to Confederate soldiers and generals (see Brundage 2009). Meanwhile, in the United Kingdom, bitter debates persist about the rarely-acknowledged yet insidiously persistent legacies of the British Empire's global colonialism (see Lawson 2014).

Was Joseph Stalin the visionary leader who led the Soviet Union into the twentieth century, pushing mass development on many scales? Was he the savior of the USSR – and the world – from Hitler and the fascists? Or was he the mastermind and power behind a vast wave of repressions that killed, imprisoned, and disenfranchised millions of his own people? All of these portraits of Stalin are currently held in Russia, and many popular depictions of him visibly struggle to balance all three representations. Further, there is a popular emic and etic image of Russia as a country that needs or prefers a 'strongman' leader, a theory that links the popularity of Stalin to the high level of public support for Vladimir Putin's decidedly authoritarian leadership (see Roxburgh 2013). Of course it is more palatable and comfortable to emphasize the 'positive' or 'productive' aspects of Stalin and Stalinism and ignore or justify the negative or difficult aspects (Kalashnikov 2018). As discussed above, this is not an impulse confined to Russia alone. Currently, Russian opinions of Stalin, Stalinism, Stalinist repression, and their

legacies in contemporary Russia are far from monolithic. Stalin is often at or near the top of lists of historical ‘Great Russians’. In a 2017 poll conducted by the Levada Center, 38% of respondents chose Stalin when asked to name the top 10 ‘most outstanding people of all time and all nations’ (Levada Center 2017, quoted in Filipov 2017).

3.7 Stalin’s Death and the Thaw: Post-1953

Lavrentii Beria, the last head of the NKVD, is popularly known as a villain – and he was indeed personally sadistic, responsible for the deaths of millions and very likely a sexually-motivated murderer of young girls himself (Montefiore 2007: 516-519). Yet, as soon as Stalin died, he rapidly began closing down and seriously downsizing portions of the gulag system: it had always cost more to run, in the long run, than it had produced (Sokolov 2003: 41-2). In the lead-up to the so-called ‘Doctors’ Plot’ in 1952-3, which is widely held to have been the opening gambit in a planned repression of the USSR’s Jewish population (Brandenberger 2005), Stalin disregarded the idea of reducing the gulag system. However, after Stalin died in March of 1953 and the power struggle, which ended in Beria’s death, was settled in favor of Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev took decisive steps to divert Stalin’s legacy in the Soviet Union.

On February 25, 1956, Khrushchev took the podium at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to deliver a speech entitled ‘On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences’, almost immediately thereafter known as the ‘Secret Speech’. He had previously formed a commission to investigate the full extent of the terror, and the group had concluded that, from 1937-8, over 1.5 million people had been arrested and over 680,000 executed (Tabuman et al. 2000: 100). In the speech itself, Khrushchev revealed many aspects of Stalinism, such as the building of an extensive cult of personality centered on Stalin leading the repression that killed or exiled so many Old Bolsheviks, deporting nationalities, and so on. Later, the speech, in whole or in part, was read out to Communist Party, Komsomol, and other meetings across the USSR. This was followed by many acts of official de-Stalinization, from moving Stalin’s body out of the Lenin Mausoleum in Red Square to officially removing ‘socialist realism’ as the approved party style of the arts (Jones 2013).

Crucially, these reforms included drastically reducing the size and import of the gulag system. In 1956, millions of inmates had their sentences amnestied and began to return home. By 1958, over four million had made such a return, and, by 1960, the system held only a fifth as

many people as it had in 1953 (Dobson 2009: 109). A key characteristic of the gulag system, as well as the Soviet special settlements and places of exile, is that many inmates did ultimately ‘return’. As alluded to above, many faced severe restrictions on where they could live, with the major cities often totally off-limits in theory, but massive numbers of people did indeed return home after their sentences had ended or been lifted by Khrushchev.

Many returned to spouses who had divorced them – sometimes out of true shock and horror at finding themselves married to a ‘counter-revolutionary’, but often out of political and basic necessity – jobs and apartments now held by others, or, in the post-war era especially, entire families and villages gone forever (Cohen 2011: 67-74). Further, they faced a wall of silence about their own experiences and those of everyone else – although Stalin had been officially held culpable for many abuses, true public dialogue about personal experience and loss would have to wait until the mid-1980s and ‘90s.

This silence and institutionalized murkiness are reflected in the attitudes of the state and of private citizens towards family heritages of repression. After Khrushchev took power, gave the Secret Speech, and began closing the gulag camps in the mid-1950s, the family members of victims who would never return started to demand answers from the state. The now-KGB began informing these families of the date, place, and cause of death of their respective relatives, but these were often false, covering up a mass shooting death during the Great Terror under the pretense of a death from illness (often infectious or cardiac) years later in a gulag camp (Figs 2007). Combined with the Secret Speech’s focus on ‘elite’ victims, particularly Old Bolsheviks, this hid the true extent of the Great Terror’s shooting campaigns from a vast number of people. Further, although a wave of official rehabilitations (many posthumous) followed the Secret Speech, the process was somewhat arbitrary and very specific about who was worthy of rehabilitation:

The MVD^[16] categorically refused to review the case of anyone sentenced before 1935, for example. Those who had gained an extra sentence in a camp, whether for insubordination, dissidence or theft, were never given the coveted rehabilitation certificates either. The cases of the highest-ranking Bolsheviks – Bukharin, Kamenev, Zinoviev – remained taboo, and those condemned in the same investigations as those leaders were not rehabilitated until the 1980s. (Applebaum 2004: 460).

¹⁶ Ministry of Internal Affairs [Министерство внутренних дел]; the various Russian and Soviet secret police organs have always been part of this department.

Whether or not families received the truth about their loved ones, many chose not to reveal the details of their relatives' or their own experiences with repression to their families in fear of negative repercussions, up to and including a resurgence of repression (Adler 2017). Many 'true' fates of victims of Soviet repression were finally revealed in the *perestroika* era of the mid-1980s onwards, as newly-formed organizations like *Memorial*, founded in 1987, set out to advocate for and assist survivors of Soviet repression and their family members, as well as investigate and report on contemporary human rights abuses (International Memorial 2018). This dissertation studies and analyzes several memorials, museums, and memorial initiatives dedicated to the victims of Soviet repression that date from this period to the present day. Before the 1980s, although some memoirs, works of fiction, and historical works circulated within and outside the Soviet Union via *samizdat* and *tamizdat*,¹⁷ public commemoration of the losses and legacies of Soviet repression were rare and often taboo. Although Khrushchev had openly acknowledged some of the losses and blamed them on Stalin in his Secret Speech, permanent and public memorialization of the victims was lacking for decades. Further, as Jones (2013) points out in her study of de-Stalinization in the cultural realm, removing traces of Stalin and his cult of personality from widespread sectors of the Soviet state was a delicate and fraught process, not least because former beneficiaries of his patronage were often in charge of those processes.

After Khrushchev was (non-violently) ousted from power by Leonid Brezhnev, there was a period in which Stalin's reputation was somewhat rehabilitated, although this period was thankfully free from the mass arrests and killings of Stalinism (Bacon 2002: 15-16). But there was increased pressure on political dissidents, which led to types of persecution such as exile (see Dubin 2004), forced institutionalization and treatment in psychiatric hospitals (Smith and Oleszczuk 1996), and terms of hard labor in prison camps (Rothberg 1972). The situation liberalized considerably under Gorbachev – in great measure due to the work of these dissidents (Horvath 2002) – and, in this period, organizations like *Memorial* were founded, the Solovetsky Stone was brought to Moscow, and other memorial activities flowered. However, while the USSR's collapse brought greater freedoms of the press and assembly, after the privations of the 1990s and the subsequent strong revival of Russian nationalism under Putin, these organizations have struggled to maintain their prominent place in the public eye (Khazanov 2008).

¹⁷ Respectively, dissident writings produced within the Soviet Union and those produced by dissidents outside of the USSR, both circulated clandestinely.

Meanwhile, although the right to free speech is enshrined in the Russian constitution, journalists reporting on Russian corruption and security operations, among other sensitive topics, have been violently persecuted or even killed. This was the case with Anna Politkovskaya, who had produced work highly critical of the war in Chechnya – after she was shot entering her apartment building, Putin remarked that ‘her political influence was quite insignificant inside Russia’ (quoted in Roudakova 2009 412-413; her ‘influence’ had in fact been seismic). Independent media outlets have been pushed out of operation, while serious political opposition is nearly impossible thanks to a thicket of legal and extralegal maneuvers (March 2009; Gel’man 2015). Laws outlawing ‘homosexual propaganda’ (Edenborg 2018) are mirrored by renewed efforts to persecute homosexual men in Chechnya (Gessen 2018). Political scientist Alfred Evans argues that ‘Putin’s model is of a civil society that is dominated by the state and that serves the interests of the Russian nation’ (2015: 19); as will be discussed in Chapter 7, NGOs that do not follow that plan have been targeted by new, punitive legislation. This is the atmosphere in which memorial and/or human rights organizations work, one in which political repression is a reality and Stalin’s reputation is being rehabilitated through school textbooks (Solinari 2009).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined key events and developments in modern Russia and the Soviet Union, focusing on the ways in which the carceral structure and mechanisms of state-sponsored repression changed over time as well as how ‘enemies’ were identified and created at different points in Soviet history. The case studies to follow will focus heavily on how various sites assign different degrees of blameability and grievability to different groups and individuals. Thus, having this background knowledge about who would have been considered an enemy and why – as well as why perpetrators at the time could have been motivated to carry out acts of repression – is crucial. This chapter has also illustrated that the phenomena of forced labor in Russia were not limited to the Stalinist period. Rather, they have roots in the Civil War era as well as Tsarist Russia, and their legacies continue today. The overview here has also underlined repeated themes of uncertainty and ambiguity embedded within Soviet repression: these aspects are reflected in heritage sites related to the repression, as we shall soon see.

This thesis now proceeds to a literature review and theoretical background for this research. This will outline the existing literature from various disciplines that is relevant to this dissertation and then proceed to explain key theories used to evaluate the case study sites. It

will introduce 'grievability', (Butler 2009) as used in this thesis, and the complementary concept of 'blameability', which I propose for analytical use at sites related to mass government repression.

Chapter 4: Literature Review and Theoretical Background

4.1 Introduction and Introducing 'Grievability'

Having now introduced the methods used in conducting this research, as well as a historical background that contextualizes the phenomena memorialized and commemorated at the case study sites, I now provide a review of the relevant literature from dark heritage and related fields. The fields of study surveyed include the heritages of incarceration, conflict, atrocity, and many other types of violence. It also includes works from fields as diverse as history and philosophy; from the latter, I have taken Judith Butler's theory of 'grievability' as a foundational text for thinking through and about the issues of remembering and forgetting victims and perpetrators of Soviet repression

Judith Butler is perhaps most well-known for her theories about gender, but her interest in personhood more widely has led her to think through how people perceive each other as fellow people (or not) in incisive and thought-provoking ways. A key theory that I use throughout this dissertation is the notion of 'grievable life', as theorized by Butler (2009). Starting from the philosophical premise that all life is 'precarious' – that is, that all life, as a condition of its existence, exists precariously, always at risk of being ended – Butler formulates the crux of differential grievability thus:

The shared condition of precariousness implies that the body is constitutively social and interdependent – a view clearly confirmed in different ways by both Hobbes and Hegel. Yet, precisely because each body finds itself potentially threatened by others who are, by definition, precarious as well, forms of domination follow. This standard Hegelian point takes on specific meanings under contemporary conditions of war: the shared condition of precariousness leads not to reciprocal recognition, but to a specific exploitation of targeted populations, of lives that are not quite lives, cast as "destructible" and "ungrievable." Such populations are "lose-able," or can be forfeited, precisely because they are framed as being already lost or forfeited; they are cast as threats to human life as we know it rather than as living populations in need of protection from illegitimate state violence, famine, or pandemics. Consequently, when such lives are lost they are not grievable, since, in the twisted logic that rationalizes their death, the loss of such populations is deemed necessary to protect the lives of "the living." (2009: 31).

Butler's work, although it addresses issues that can be applied to any human society or community across time and space, is written as a meditation for a very specific moment: the American-initiated wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and these wars' consequent huge numbers of civilian deaths. But this theory is also especially suited to analyzing narratives of loss and suffering related to Soviet repression: from the very first days of 1918's Red Terror, Soviet

citizens were conditioned to look for enemies everywhere. Portrayed as subhuman or inhuman in propaganda and discourse alike, this first wave of ‘enemies’ mostly consisted of aristocrats, bourgeois merchants, priests, and other Tsarist privileged classes (Fitzpatrick 1999: 191-2). Under Stalin, the hunt for enemies turned to hidden ones – ‘wreckers,’ ‘saboteurs,’ ‘spies,’ etc. – who were not as readily apparent to the eye but were just as pernicious and worthy of ‘extermination’ and ‘crushing’ (Fitzpatrick 1999: 19; Applebaum 2003: 21).

Indeed, this pattern of designating entire groups, whether or not they actually existed in any organized way, as subhumans who needed to be wiped out (and, after Butler, were hence ‘ungrievable’), can be discerned in atrocities as varied as the Ukrainian Holodomor and campaigns against the so-called ‘Right Opposition,’ among others. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I will analyze sites that variously memorialize and commemorate victims of Soviet repression through this lens, analyzing who is deemed ‘grievable’ within and across sites and the possible reasons behind varying degrees of grievability. But I am also interested in the flip side of this, or how and why certain groups of people are deemed ‘blameable’ for a given atrocity or crime at different sites of memorialization and memory. Below, I propose a preliminary typology of blameability, which will be applied to field sites in the chapters that follow this one.

Before that, however, this chapter will first outline this dissertation’s theoretical background, which is decidedly interdisciplinary. After a review of seminal works in heritage studies, particularly ‘dark’ or ‘difficult’ heritage, it goes on to review and critique relevant theoretical stances on landscape, metonymy, and remembrance and memorialization. It then turns to a more specific analysis of current work on the heritage of prisons and forced labor. As will become clear through these overviews, very little research has been specifically undertaken on the heritage of Soviet and Stalinist repression; although some theories specific to the post-Soviet situation have been formulated, these have rarely been applied to sites of violence and incarceration themselves, and the literature of such sites is overall very thin indeed. Although some of the ideas scrutinized below are useful, sometimes with some adjustments, to the current heritage situation at these sites, it is eminently clear that new theories and ideas are needed in order to fully understand what is going on at these sites and why – who makes heritagization decisions, and what are their rationales?

Accordingly, the chapter concludes with a review and reworking of Butler’s theory of ‘grievability’ before introducing the concept of ‘blameability’, a key lens through which I view the memorial and remembrance phenomena analyzed in the case studies following this

chapter. Briefly, ‘blameability’ examines and analyzes the type of blame (if any) that is assigned to different actors at each site – who or what is held to be responsible and/or ‘blameable’ for the repression? Although this is a useful tool in its own right for analyzing types and patterns of memorialization and remembrance, studying these patterns might also lead to broader theorizations about contemporary motivations that underlie the different forms of commemoration of repression and atrocity.

4.2 Dark Heritage Literature

In light of the immense and intense political, economic, and sociocultural changes of the past decades, triggered by the breakup of the Soviet Union that began in the mid 1980s, it has almost become a cliché to speak of Soviet and post-Soviet heritage’s ‘difficult’ essence in the contemporary world (see Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Forest and Johnson 2002; Sherlock 2007; Wanner 1998; but see Iacono 2018 for a considered critique of this default consideration). The scope of this study includes sites related to both the gulag system and the mass shootings of repressed citizens. Although myriad historical works about the gulag system and Soviet repression have been published, ranging in scope from the systemic to the personal (see, for example, Applebaum 2004; Suny 2011; Figs 2007), very little work has been published that specifically analyzes tangible and intangible memorialization and commemoration of the heritage of Soviet repression within Russia.

Sociologist Zuzanna Bogumił recently produced a study of four former gulag sites across Russia, focusing on the history of and motivations behind the foundations of museums and memorials during the mid 1980s-early 1990s period that she terms ‘the carnival of memory’ (2018: 7-9). This is an incisive and well-researched work, but, as is the nature of interdisciplinary research, it does not at all engage with ‘heritage studies’ theory at the intersection of politics, place, and the past – even though the book examines all three of these topics. My thesis’s work is intended to complement works like this. Other works, such as Nanci Adler’s (2015: 133) analysis of oral histories, call for more such study ‘to shed important light on complex questions regarding optional and obligatory agency, responsibility, culpability of the individual and the collective, and the under-researched grey zone of the victim-perpetrator divide’. However, these works do not engage with the memorial or commemorative landscape (or heritagescape, to use Garden’s (2009) concept) as such.

Similarly, although this work owes much to heritage scholars such as Sørensen and Viejo-Rose (2015), who jointly emphasize the many-layered complexity of post-conflict heritage,

and Assmann (2013), who underlines the inherently contingent nature of the remembrance of war and conflict, the heritage of Soviet repression and the gulag remains formally unstudied within this admittedly interdisciplinary discipline. In particular, Carr's (2015) formulation of 'guardians of memory and countermemory' is a useful way to think through the activities and motivations of the members of certain civil society groups, while Hirsch's (2008) theory of 'postmemory' becomes more and more relevant as the years pass and survivors and family members pass away.

The most obvious subset of 'dark' heritage – Stone (2006) would categorize it as the 'darkest' heritage of all – into which this dissertation fits is the heritage of atrocity and mass murder. Heritage studies is of course a deeply interdisciplinary and still loosely organized field, but a strong set of works from scholars of heritage studies deals with a vast array of sites of suffering and murder. Studies of the sites themselves and their on-site commemorative and interpretative strategies include the examples of Auschwitz (Young 2009), Cambodia's Tuol Sleng prison and Choeung Ek 'killing field' (Sion 2014), and New York's Ground Zero (Sather-Wagstaff 2011). Young (2009) skillfully summarizes the memory battles over Auschwitz, particularly the seeds of the ongoing dispute over who the 'true' victims of Auschwitz and the Nazi occupation of Poland are. Sion (2014: 116) notably argues that the aforementioned 'official' sites of Khmer Rouge genocide remembrance 'are not directed towards locals who have a personal connection to memory but towards international travellers [...] remembrance of the genocide does take place, but quietly, traditionally, and locally'.

The more specific field of 'dark tourism', as defined by Lennon and Foley (2000), also has useful case studies and theories beyond Stone's (2006) aforementioned spectrum. Although few of the sites examined in this thesis are 'tourist' sites per se, many of those do attract some visitors (even if accidentally, as can be the case for the Moscow sites close to the Kremlin) who have no personal connection to the atrocities mentioned there. Further, *Memorial's* occasional English-language tours and other interpretative offerings at these sites, as well as the Moscow Gulag Museum's near-totally bilingual interpretation, show that various stakeholders do consider the education of non-stakeholder visitors to be a definite goal. Again examining Auschwitz, Biran et al. (2011: 838) suggest that interpretation aimed at non-stakeholder visitors 'should facilitate emotional involvement, yet emphasize the educational experience. For those who attach a personal meaning to the site, along with knowledge enrichment the interpretation should reflect their special connection to the site and allow them

to peruse an intense emotional experience', thus echoing Uzzell's (1989) arguments in favor of 'hot' interpretation at sites of conflict and violence. It is possible that, in future, these sites will attract significant numbers of visitors in search of an experience of 'thanatourism' as theorized by Seaton (1996), but, so far, this is not a noted phenomenon. In analysis of the aims of various stakeholders at each site, we will revisit whether these paradigms of 'dark' tourist and site manager behavior alike, such as those laid out by Austin (2002) in his article laying out visitors' motivations to visit and priorities during the visit, are well-suited to the case of sites of Stalinist repression.

Many of the observations from these sites and the theories borne of these observations are variously applicable to the sites examined in this thesis and will be further discussed when applicable during analysis of each case study. However, it is clear that there is a relative lack of works that specifically deal with the heritage of Soviet, let alone Stalinist, repression within and outside of contemporary Russia. Considering the vast numbers of people who were affected by these waves of murder, incarceration, exile, and so on, the range of lived experience and ways of commemorating and heritagizing (Poria and Ashworth 2009) these events (or not doing so) must be equally vast. Study of the heritage of Stalinist repression is thus valuable in its own right, but this could of course be argued about any under-studied yet immense phenomenon. More pressingly, and discussed in more detail in the section dealing with 'blameability' below, the Soviet and post-Soviet situation regarding the situation regarding the heritage of repression is intimately bound up with contemporary Russian attitudes towards Russia's place in the world, Russian national identity, and civil and human rights. It is impossible to fully understand these broader issues without an understanding of the material and immaterial legacies of Soviet-era mass repressions.

Under the wide-ranging umbrella of 'dark' or 'dissonant' (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) heritage, another key subset is comprised of works dealing with the heritage of imprisonment, incarceration, and internment. The Russian and post-Soviet memorial situation is characterized by ambiguity and a lack of well-defined categories, and the existing literature also showcases this. There is some expected overlap with the literature of the heritage of atrocity in cases like those of Auschwitz and Tuol Sleng, discussed above. Dewar and Fredericksen (2003: 63) scrutinize an Australian case, concluding that, despite the importance of incarceration sites to the national narrative, 'Although there is evidence that visitors to the Fannie Bay Gaol site respond to the powerful sense of atmosphere at the Gaol [...] The

starkness of the cells and structures has meaning only when visitors can understand the people who lived there' (2003: 63).

Examining the case of Long Kesh/Maze prison in Northern Ireland, McAtackney (2014: 273) affirms Meskell (2006: 3; quoted in McAtackney 2014: 273)'s theorization of materiality by arguing that any such conception must 'include the complexities of meaning that can remain static or be transformed by event, time and threat to survival in understanding how certain groups and individuals can connect to unexpected and materially unexceptional things'. Rob van der Laarse has written incisively on the 'dissonance' embodied in supposedly 'beautiful' natural landscapes (as well as 'natural'-looking former concentration camps) and modernist architecture that are direct legacies of the Nazi aesthetic regime (2015); this reading could be relevantly applied to Moscow's spectacular architecture and the 'spectacular' Solovetsky Islands, as well.

In their introduction to an edited work on 'prisoners of war', Mytum and Carr (2013: 4) argue that an archaeology of such 'sites of confinement' 'can provide important counterpoints to the inevitably biased views of both the captors and the imprisoned'; however, they go on to warn against pat characterizations in favor of 'acknowledg[ing] and understand[ing] the complex and often competing feelings and actions as internees, both individually and together, attempted to survive unforeseen and often challenging conditions' (2013: 16). This, too, is an important factor in studying the memorialization and commemoration of Stalinist repression; every aspect of the situation defies attempts at neat sorting and definition using existing theories and frameworks.

Although some stakeholders of the sites analyzed in this dissertation might prefer sweeping characterizations of the victims and/or perpetrators of Stalinist repression, this is impossible to do on a factual basis, as will be further explicated below. The difficulties inherent in using traditional archaeological materials and techniques to investigate this heritage are also detailed elsewhere in this dissertation; however, the overall themes and theories of ambivalence and multivocality that can be gathered from the literature of the heritage of imprisonment are deeply valuable. Casella's and Fredericksen's (2004: 119) argument that 'the *acknowledgement* of this experience [of confinement] is significant and central to the shared experience of being an Australian (belonging to the new settler nation), [thus] places of confinement hold a unique position in Australia's shared post-colonial heritage' is a fascinating lens through which to consider a much wider range of possibilities for how the

heritage of Stalinist repression could be viewed in Russia in future. In the United States, a comparatively wide field of scholarship on the heritage of World War Two-era Japanese-American internment camps has been developed by Ng and Camp (2015) and Shew and Kamp-Whittaker (2013), among others. However, although these were certainly sites of suffering, they were not sites of mass death, a major qualitative difference that limits their usefulness for this thesis's case studies. Finally, though Strange and Kempa (2004), among others, have analyzed interpretation and tourism at several infamous former prisons, several of the former prison buildings examined in this dissertation are still owned by the organizations that operated them as such (and other former Soviet prisons remain prisons to this day). This is an angle that is not so well addressed in the literature and could use more study, although González-Ruibal and Ortiz (2015) provide an illuminating case study of Madrid's now-demolished Carabanchel prison.

4.3 Studying and Exhibiting Perpetration and Victimhood

The academic study of perpetrators, bystanders, and victims, as notably categorized and sub-categorized by Hilberg (1993), the context of mass violence and genocide is not new, hence the entire field of 'perpetrator studies'. These, however, tend to focus on the case of the Holocaust and its perpetrators, either the Nazi Germans or local collaborators of various political and ideological allegiances. In Germany proper, the field remains alive, both in academia and in popular media and culture, even if there are signs of a backlash among younger generations (especially in former East Germany) against this institutionalized remembrance and repentance.

A main, universal question for museums and memorials to victims of repression boils down to this: how to display how and why 'normal' people decide to harm or kill other people, especially their erstwhile neighbors or friends? A first step is to stop seeing them as 'us' and start seeing them as 'other'. Staub (1990: 47) famously isolated several possible behavioral variables that might lead to this 'exclusion' including 'devaluation of groups, just-world thinking, self-distancing by euphemisms or by an objectifying perceptual stance that reduces empathy, and ideologies that identify enemies'. In the context of the Holocaust, this question exploded beyond academia and into the public sphere with Jan Gross's (2001) work examining the culpability of the Polish residents of Jedwabne for the wholesale murder of their Jewish neighbors.

Concurrently, why do so many people choose to act as ‘bystanders’? This last, statistically much larger group sees and acknowledges, tacitly or explicitly, that a group is being wrongly persecuted, but its members individually and collectively do nothing (or virtually nothing) to stop it. This group is now a major focus of the type of public education efforts that typify many Holocaust and human rights museums worldwide; a recent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [USHMM] explicitly studied real-life cases of bystanders in Nazi Germany and its occupied areas. Crucially, the exhibition refrained from passing sweeping judgments on any group of people, instead turning back to the viewer with open-ended questions like “At what age should individuals be held responsible for their behavior?” and “What motives might lead a trusted friend to abandon another?” (USHMM 2017).

In terms of the mission of museums such as the USHMM, which hinge both on remembrance of previous mass atrocities and efforts to make sure such tragedies ‘never again’ occur, utilizing such education and outreach, this emphasis on the role of the bystander is logical. Studying Nazi ‘perpetrator sites’, Pearce (2010: 168) notes the dual mission of many such sites to both remember victims and explain what happened and how: ‘This duality could be seen as deflecting attention away from the perpetrators but it is viewed here as essential in emphasizing both the context of Nazi crimes and the reality of their consequences.’ Broadly speaking, most visitors to such museums, particularly in the West, will or already have found themselves in this role, as opposed to that of the obvious ‘perpetrator’.

This is especially true on the international scale: very few visitors are likely to be actively involved in, for example, the mass persecution and displacement of the Rohingya people, but it is possible that exposure to such exhibits will make them think twice about scrolling past related calls for help or donations on their newsfeeds. Globally, Levy and Sznajder (2002) have written about how collective memories of the Holocaust are transferred from national memory to ‘cosmopolitan memory cultures’ that somewhat base their ethics – and identity – on the Holocaust and its legacy. As MacDonald (2008:2) asserts, ‘the Holocaust now forms a collective past, shared by many Western nations, upon which leaders freely draw to make foreign and domestic policy decisions’. Amy Sodaro, in her definition of memorial museums, identifies three criteria: a ‘museum’ or ‘truth-telling’ function; a ‘memorial function, which is to serve as a space of healing and repair’; and a mission ‘to morally educate visitors to internalize an ethic of “never again”’ (2018: 162-3).

But is this moral mission effective? It is always possible that these lessons and memories will suddenly find resonance in a given culture and society. Would such rhetoric about bystanders find an interested audience in contemporary Russia? Currently, no government-funded museum focuses on the question of the identity and motivations of everyday perpetrators, let alone the roles and motivations of bystanders. Yet a common theme in personal conversation and digital remembrance is the realization that, in the context of Soviet repression and the gulag, there was no such thing as ‘good people’ or ‘bad people’ – there were just people who did good or bad things at different times and in different circumstances.

This is a marked feature of Stalinist repression: the categories between victim, perpetrator, and bystander were constantly shifting. At the very highest level, three successive leaders of the NKVD became victims of their own machinery; at lower levels, many NKVD functionaries, interrogators, officials, etc. ended up arrested and shot or sentenced to terms in the gulag. Within the gulag system, many victims of repression took on roles that moved them over into the category of ‘perpetrator,’ and literally millions of people acted as bystanders in one way or another: knowingly benefiting from forced labor projects, taking over jobs and projects vacating by the newly arrested or dispossessed by virtue of their association with the arrestees, etc. Olga Ulturgasheva concludes that through these dynamics,

The system irreversibly damaged any hope for salvaging meaning, consistency and fair judgment for those who went through the machine of state violence. What is particularly disconcerting about the entire case, with its ambiguities and indeterminacy, is its potential for providing a space for the direct successors of the NKVD to distort perceptions of tragic events and shape public opinion’ (2015: 9).

The Soviet – particularly Stalinist – situation is also distinguished by the primacy of denunciations in repression. There are many, many reasons why someone would report on or denounce someone they knew to the NKVD, and the motivations of fear and a perceived lack of choice cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the overarching categories of ‘perpetrator – victim – bystander’ cannot be assigned based on identity alone, but must be assigned based on actions taken at specific points in each person’s life trajectory.

4.4 Typologies of Dark Heritage

Kenneth Foote’s (1997) typology of ‘dark heritage’ sites within the United States identifies four different forms of memorialization. Briefly, these run the gamut from turning the site into a site of memorialization akin to a shrine (sanctification), to turning it into an avowed site of memorialization and commemoration or simply marking it as a site of tragedy

(designation), to returning the site to its original use (rectification), to erasing it completely (obliteration). Foote acknowledges that his long analyses of the reasons behind a community's choice of one of these strategies, as well as later decisions to maintain or change such strategies, are very much focused on the United States and its sociocultural peculiarities. Although other typologies exist, they often focus too narrowly on one aspect of heritage sites or, alternatively, on a single subtype of heritage sites (see, for example, Stone's (2006) 'dark tourism spectrum,' which attempts to associate 'shades' of darkness with different types of dark tourism sites). Although some of the sites examined in this thesis are sites of dark 'tourism', many cannot really be classified as sites that reliably attract a large number of non-stakeholder visitors. Thus, Foote's typology itself has remained the most useful and thorough one for thinking through a wide range of dark heritage sites. In my work focusing on the Solovetsky Islands (Comer forthcoming), I attempted to assign the five sites within Big Solovetsky Island's chief settlement into these categories. When this proved impossible to do without erasing the nuances, ambiguity, and potential paradoxes embodied within several sites, I added one more category, 'compartmentalization,' to this typology. This category describes a site that has not been 'rectified' to its original use, but has taken on another banal role in society, although it also bears a plaque or other marker usually associated with heritage 'designation'. Thus, the site's dark heritage is compartmentalized, and the visitor can choose whether or how to engage with it at each separate visit and moment in time. Although in earlier works of mine (Comer forthcoming; Comer 2017), I used this term and the rest of Foote's typology, this dissertation moves away from a typology of *sites*, based on overall method of heritagization, to focus instead on analyzing specific *phenomena within and across sites* of grieving and blame assignment. This is because the heritage situation at many sites commemorating the victims of Soviet repression is materially and temporally complex and because the mere presence of 'interpretation' is too blunt an instrument to explore the broader political and sociocultural motivations of a given site's stakeholders and managers. Later in this chapter, I will introduce a preliminary framework of categories of blameability as well as two related theoretical constructs of accountability and repentability.

Another key theoretical lens through which I view these sites is Alexander Etkind's theorization of 'hardware,' 'software,' and 'ghostware' in Russian and post-Soviet memorialization. Stemming directly from computer terminology as well as from Nora's *lieux de mémoire* (1989), Etkind classes what might, in broader heritage terminology, be called 'tangible' heritage – physical monuments and plaques, museum exhibits, memorials – as

‘hardware,’ while memories and memorial and commemorative rituals are deemed ‘software’ (2013: 246). When ‘software’ is uploaded to ‘hardware’ – when, to use an example from this work, people gather at a mass grave site for a small ceremony on a national day of remembrance – there are no computer malfunctions, so to speak, wherein hardware either sits ‘idle’, with no uploaded software, or software has no hardware on which to run. However, Etkind goes further in also identifying a type of such malfunction that he refers to as ‘ghostware’ – in this case, the memories and rituals or acts of commemoration that have no ‘hardware’ to which they can be uploaded. Instead, these often ‘haunt’ other places and phenomena; Etkind focuses on different works of art, especially cinema and literature, but it seems just as plausible to apply these categories to dark heritage sites that Foote might, for example, categorize as ‘rectified’ or ‘obliterated’ – perhaps some ‘compartmentalized’ sites might also be thus thought through.

4.5 The Heritage of Repression on the Landscape: Presences and Absences

The 1972 UNESCO ‘Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage’ [hereafter the World Heritage Convention or WHC] states in its preamble ‘that parts of the cultural and natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole’ (UNESCO 1972). The original convention’s repeated, uncritical emphasis on the existence and primacy of ‘outstanding universal value’ (OUV) has been roundly and thoroughly critiqued from several angles in succeeding decades. For example, the original emphasis on the preservation of ‘original’ (i.e., non-reconstructed) cultural heritage has been softened, while new emphases have been placed on intangible heritage, the idea that OUV even exists, and the very nature of OUV (see Sørensen and Carman 2009; Munjeri 2004). There has also been a growing recognition of heritage’s ‘double-edged sword’ nature, as it can sow dissent and division instead of reconciliation (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Viejo-Rose 2013). In Neil Silberman’s definition, ‘Heritage places can thus be defined – without reference to their specific components – as focal points of reflection, commemoration, and debate about the values of the past in contemporary society’ (2016: 30).

But even if, bearing all of these critiques and criticisms in mind, one takes the position that inscription on the World Heritage List is, on balance, a beneficial development for a site and its respective nation-state, one comes again to a recurring problem of dissonant and contested heritage at sites related to mass repression and atrocity. For example, the Solovetsky Islands,

site of the first forced labor camp in what eventually became the GULAG system, were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1992 as ‘The Cultural and Historic Ensemble of the Solovetsky Islands’. At that time, the site’s nomination dossier and related documents focused almost exclusively on the site’s religious history and rich artistic and architectural heritage, mostly focusing on the storied Solovetsky Transfiguration Monastery, which has been a center of Russian Orthodox ecclesiastical and, later, pilgrimage activity since the fifteenth century. The ‘Long Description’ then described the monastery as ‘an outstanding example of a monastic settlement in the inhospitable environment of Northern Europe’ (UNESCO 1992: 4) and included little information about what it called the ‘Solovky State Farm’, beyond the continued existence of some ‘wooden huts’ from that period (UNESCO 1992: 4).

By the time of the UNESCO General Assembly in May 2017, however, the Russian Federation’s delegation to the GA had approved a ‘Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value’ that more fully and explicitly recognizes the value of the islands’ heritage of repression.¹ Submitted in order to comply with later UNESCO requirements, the new statement of OUV still focuses mostly on the monastery and associated buildings. However, it does deliberately note that ‘The Solovetsky complex represents all periods of the history of the archipelago and the Russian North in general [...] The Solovki [sic] is often recognized by the public as one of the first and best known Soviet special purpose camps of the GULAG’ (UNESCO 2017). The use of ‘by the public’ here is noteworthy; even in acknowledging the islands’ gulag heritage, the document emphasizes that this is not the narrative that the sites’ official caretakers necessarily choose to put forward.

But if, in Smith’s (2006: 2) formulation, heritage should be thought of as ‘not so much as a ‘thing’, but as a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present’, theory and ideology conversely do not exist in a vacuum, especially at literal ‘sites’. The physical properties of these places and even their quotidian levels of being in the world impact their meaning and the messages and memories they are capable of carrying and transmitting to any audience or

¹ Since 2007, each ‘property’ inscribed on the World Heritage List has had to include an explicit statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and the States Parties responsible for properties listed before 2007 are supposed to provide Retroactive OUP Statements for each property to the World Heritage Committee accordingly (UNESCO 2015).

person. Further, real people manage, care for, and interact with sites, and people are fallible. Even the most righteous and passionate campaigner can be foiled by interpersonal issues with another stakeholder or a simple lack of follow-through; even a site that holds deep emotional meaning for its stakeholders can become dilapidated due to a lack of funding and organization. Of course, such a lack of funds often has political causes, especially for a site forwarding an out-of-favor or uncomfortable memory and hoping for government or other official support, but simple financial mismanagement often happens, too.

Finally, Russia's sheer size further complicates the matter of directly associating meaning and memory with a specific geographic location. Russia is the world's largest country, spanning eleven time zones and about one-eighth of the Earth's landmass. As more fully explained in Chapter 3, the Soviet system of forced labor camps and special settlements developed on the imperial Russian tradition of sending prisoners – particularly political ones – to faraway, remote parts of the empire with harsh climates in order to perform manual labor and/or live in exile. In a reversal of the situation described above concerning the impossibility of putting entire cities and other large areas into a museum, many of the Soviet-era gulag camp sites and special settlements would be virtually impossible to preserve as museums as they are either functionally inaccessible or are no longer extant. These are far away from even the nearest small settlement, let alone a large population center and can be dangerous or impossible to access at certain times of year.

To take the example of Magadan, that city's surrounding Kolyma region was once synonymous with the gulag and often-fatal exile and forced labor, especially under Stalin's regime. Though dozens of camps, worksites, mines, and other installations once dotted the region, many, cheaply built and totally abandoned when no longer useful or needed, have now been reclaimed by the taiga and forest. Survey work to find and document such sites is theoretically possible, and, indeed, teams from the Gulag Museum have embarked on such projects to find, document, and bring back material culture from 'forgotten' gulag sites in Kolyma. However, many such sites are hours of arduous, sometimes dangerous or nigh-impossible travel away from Magadan, where less than 100,000 people live and which is not a noted center of tourism. If funding and expertise were to be procured to preserve the remains of a given site and build a suitable interpretative apparatus and/or museum, who would come to see it? Is interpretation and memorial activity that centers on the geographic specificity of the site of suffering and repression the most feasible, necessary, or 'meaningful' way to

remember these sites? Conversely, if these sites are left to decay and physically disappear, does it necessarily follow that their respective stakeholder communities wish to ‘forget’ or ‘erase’ the pasts and narratives associated with them?

To judge by current and past Russian and Soviet example, the answer is ‘no’ on both of these last two counts, although the latter situation is necessarily more complicated. The first permanent memorial to the victims of the gulag, placed in Moscow’s Lubyanka Square in 1990, draws its symbolic power from its material as well as its memorial location: it is a boulder specially brought from the Solovetsky Islands and placed right in front of the former headquarters of the NKVD² and notorious Lubyanka Prison (further described in Chapter 7). Mass numbers of visitors will not (and often physically cannot, for all intents and purposes), make their ways to the physical sites of repression located in the periphery, so any examination of the heritage of repression in the ‘center’ must look at ways in which the periphery is literally brought to the center, and what types of activities and interpretation take place in and near these. Such an analysis must go beyond hardware/software/ghostware to include a consideration of differential temporality and cooperating and conflicting agendas of remembrance at the same sites – particularly different notions of and expressions of grievability and blameability between and among stakeholders at the same site and across different sites.

4.6 Grievability

One of the thorniest issues for the legacy of Soviet repression is the categorization of ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’. Leaving aside, for now, such questions as the nature and possible ‘banality of evil’ (Arendt 1963), the problem of labeling specific people or groups involved in this system of repression is still complex. Especially during the period of the Great Terror (although such mass actions were certainly not limited to that era), successive ‘waves’ of arrests and shootings targeted former ‘perpetrators’ at every level of the repressive structure. From lowly NKVD functionaries to regional officials, former interrogators, guards, executioners, and policymakers were arrested and either shot or sentenced to long terms of forced labor (Conquest 2008: 278-

² The NKVD, or the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (Народный комиссариат внутренних дел), was the Soviet agency dealing with internal security and secret police affairs from 1934-46. Genrikh Yagoda (Генрих Григорьевич Ягода) led the NKVD from July 1934 through September 1936; he was succeeded by Nikolai Yezhov (Николай Иванович Ежов) from September 1936 through November 1938, and then Lavrenty Beria (Лаврентий Павлович Берия) from September 1938 to December 1945 and then again from March through June 1953. All were arrested at the end of their time in office and later shot.

9). Indeed, three successive heads of the NKVD – Genrikh Yagoda, Nikolai Yezhov, and Lavrenty Beria – were arrested, accused of excesses and abuses of power, and executed.

However, the last of these, Beria, was disposed of under Khrushchev, not Stalin. Stalin's reputation was 'buried' in Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' at the 1956 Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in which Khrushchev publicly revealed the scale of arrests and executions during the Great Terror, especially pointing out the losses among Old Bolsheviks and preliminarily rehabilitating some high-profile victims. And with Beria physically liquidated, the blame for the repression could now lie solely with two physically absent villains – both well-known, if not infamous, and yet now outside of the realm of earthly justice (Jones 2013: 140-44). This had the added benefit of taking the spotlight off of extant leaders who had participated in the repression to various degrees, to say nothing of the tens of thousands of workaday NKVD workers and collaborators who continued to live and work in Soviet society (Conquest 2008: 478-82).

The question of perpetration, to say nothing of the task of identifying perpetrators and victims over time, is thus deeply complicated for the case of Stalinist repression. Below I attempt to depict a schematic model of the power relations and embodied consequences of a repressive mechanism (loosely after Foucault 1975), where one might have the so-called 'masterminds' of repression – the policymakers, the governmental ministers and administrators of entire sectors of the gulag, etc. – at the top, with the 'enforcers' – the NKVD workers in charge of arrests, interrogation, executions, as well as their counterparts within the gulag system itself – following their orders and inflicting these upon the 'victims'. In such a model, these would be the subjects upon whom these various forms of state-sponsored and state-sanctioned violence were inflicted by enforcers, following the plans and protocols laid out by the masterminds.

This could be visualized like so, with the thick black arrows representing power enacted on the bodies and minds of people on the respective lower levels:

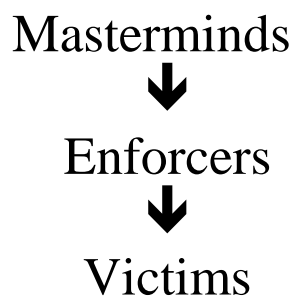


Figure 4.1 Mastermind – enforcer – victim model of repression. (Illustration by author)

Obviously, nothing is ever that simple in reality – people refuse or simply fail to follow orders, mistakes are made, and so on. Further complicating this, however, is the noted fluidity of these categories over time. As mentioned above, many enforcers later became victims, and even some masterminds ended up becoming victims of their own repressive measures. From a purely clinical point of view, then, these latter people could be considered ‘victims’ of the Stalinist repression. Predictably, however, many members of civil society groups dealing with the heritage of repression in Russia today do not agree that these people can be classed as ‘victims.’

According to a talk given by Nikolai Ivanov, a member of Saint Petersburg’s *Last Address*³ organization, *Last Address* will produce and install a memorial plaque in honor of NKVD workers who were later shot by other NKVD workers. However, he noted that the Saint Petersburg *Memorial* organization absolutely will not class former NKVD functionaries as ‘victims’. On the government level, the wave of rehabilitations of victims of repression in the late 1980s and ‘90s included many posthumous rehabilitations of high-profile victims of Stalin’s show trials; however, although co-defendants of both Yagoda and Yezhov, erstwhile chiefs of the NKVD, were thus rehabilitated, the courts categorically refused do the same for these two due to the large role each had played in the establishment and management of the security services’ infrastructure of repression (for the latter, see Jansen and Petrov 2002: 189-91).

³ *Last Address (Последний Адрес)* is a private organization which designs and installs memorial plaques on the 'last known residential address' of victims of repression; several Russian cities, including Moscow and Yekaterinburg, currently have active local *Last Address* organizations.

An equally complicated issue arises when we consider the question of ‘perpetration’ itself. Certainly, the functionaries and leaders of the NKVD are responsible for the abuses committed in the era of Stalinist repression. After Stalin’s death, the ministry was reorganized into the KGB⁴, which became the FSB⁵ after the Soviet Union’s collapse. To date, the FSB continues to tightly control archival materials related to Soviet repression as well as sites that were integral to the creation and management of the repressive apparatus – prisons, gulag camps, labor and exile colonies, etc. But what blame, if any, can or should be pinned on other sectors of government at the time – for example, what about the ministries in charge of heavy industry and natural resources, which, if not always directly involved in the management and allocation of gulag labor, certainly benefited from that unpaid labor and suffering?

On a more personal scale, how should the legacies of leaders like Khrushchev, who personally approved manifold Purge arrests during his time as head of the Communist Party of the Moscow city region, be viewed? In the corollary of the cases of Yezhov and Yagoda, can it be that – at least for some sectors of contemporary Russian society – Khrushchev’s later efforts to expose a portion of Stalin’s and the NKVD’s crimes and excesses, as well as his various attempts to rehabilitate certain classes of ‘victims,’ somewhat or fully absolve him of his earlier culpability?

Finally, there is at least one high-profile case of a victim becoming a mastermind; Naftaly Frenkel, originally an inmate in the Solovki Special Purpose Camp, rose to become commander of that camp and, later, other forced labor enterprises, after he wrote a letter to the then-camp authorities detailing the many ways in which it could be turned into a thriving economic enterprise (Applebaum 2004: 56). Although some details, like his purported invention of the system tying inmate rations to their work productivity, may very well be apocryphal, its wide circulation during the Soviet period does reflect a more widespread phenomenon, wherein certain prisoners, upon their arrival at the camps, voluntarily became guards or other management figures.

⁴ The KGB, or the Committee for State Security (Комитет государственной безопасности), was the Soviet agency dealing with internal security and secret police affairs from 1954 to the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union; it succeeded the NKVD after a wave of reorganizations.

⁵ The Federal Security Service (Федеральная служба безопасности) is the Russian government agency that currently deals with internal security and secret police affairs. It was founded in 1995 after various post-Soviet institutional reshuffles.

Understandably, this has led to certain anxieties – interpersonal, familial, social – as time passes. Even now, allegations that a certain person was a ‘trustee,’ or prisoner who collaborated with camp management in exchange for certain privileges, can spark a firestorm of controversy. For example, witness the drama surrounding Orlando Figes’s epic oral and social history of the repression, *The Whisperers*, wherein *Memorial* withdrew its official support of the book’s Russian translation partly because of disputes over whether certain profiled victims of the repression could be labeled ‘collaborators’ (Booth and Elder 2012). Even though many of the subjects of these profiles were dead, their heirs felt that any hint of ‘collaboration’ with camp and NKVD authorities – although a well-documented phenomenon in general – was an unacceptable slur on their relatives’ memories and reputations. Although Figes cited ‘translation errors’ from English into Russian, as well as authorial or research errors, in several instances he maintained that his characterizations of his subjects were, overall, accurate (Booth and Elder 2012). To date, a Russian-language version of the book has not been published.

Clearly, a diachronic diagram like the one shown above cannot possibly fully reflect the full spectrum of ‘categories’ of victim and perpetrator that existed during the era of Stalinist repression. Although it might be said to accurately show the construction of power at any given, single moment in the era of the Great Purge, it cannot accurately reflect the frequent shifts of status that many individuals underwent over time. A better diagram would reflect such diachronic statuses, but that is difficult to portray in a two-dimensional fashion. Thus, I first propose the following spectrum of victimhood, here broadly defined as the quality and quantity of tangible and intangible harm (e.g., dispossession, arrest, exile, forced labor, death, etc.) deliberately visited upon one person by others in the context of the power mechanisms of Soviet repression:

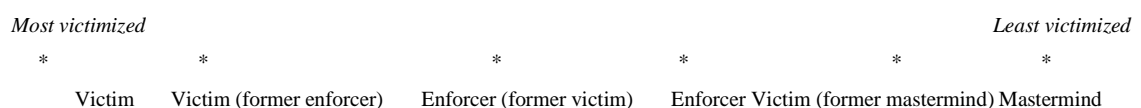


Figure 4.2 Diachronic mastermind/enforcer/victim model of repression. (Illustration by author)

Of course, not every historian, memorial practitioner, mourner, or historically literate citizen would agree with this spectrum, inside or outside of Russia. It could be argued, for example, that enforcers (former victims) were liable to be subject to intense mental or spiritual torment in the process of becoming enforcers. There is probably also fertile ground for debate about the scale of culpability even within categories like ‘enforcer’ and ‘mastermind’, in the fashion of Hilberg’s (1993) more complex model of Holocaust victims, bystanders, and perpetrators. Finally, although some masterminds and enforcers later became victims, as discussed above, there are bound to be those who think that someone later falling prey to a system of repression in which they themselves earlier actively participated does not make them a ‘victim’ on the same level as ‘unconnected’ victims (cf. the debate between *Last Address* and *Memorial* covered elsewhere in this work). People holding this opinion may well think that the lack of heritage ‘hardware’ or, indeed, ‘software’ dedicated to former NKVD workers and victims is not a problem. However, the above formulation provides a solid basis from which to begin thinking through issues of ‘grievability’ and ‘blameability’ as these are made manifest at sites related to Stalinist repression in Russia, if not further afield.

4.7 Blameability

‘Grievability’ was introduced at the beginning of this chapter; to summarize, I have developed it from Butler’s (2009) original theory with the aim of analyzing how and why different groups of people and individuals are more visibly and/or explicitly ‘grieved’ within and between sites related to Soviet repression. This may or may not reflect the ‘grievability’ assigned to different groups in life by the Soviet government during periods of active repression. If marked patterns can be observed in who is deemed more or less grievable by different types of stakeholder across sites, there is potential to analyze the broader political and/or sociocultural reasons underlying these patterns of choice.

In terms of dark heritage interpretation, the largest lacuna at contemporary Russian sites related to Stalinist repression relates to perpetration and perpetrators. Although I had previously noted the lack of impulse to publicly identify prison guards, NKVD workers, and the like at sites like the Solovetsky Islands heritage landscape (Comer forthcoming), this lacuna was repeatedly noted and criticized by the German participants of a conference I attended in the autumn of 2016 on the memory of twentieth-century totalitarianism in contemporary Russia and Germany. At former gulag camp Perm-36 and the Gulag Museum, both of which we visited as part of this conference, there is no exploration of the rank-and-

file perpetrators of Soviet repression, although this absence is manifest in very different ways. Indeed, Perm-36 is sometimes colloquially called ‘the museum of the perpetrator’ because it places such a deliberate emphasis on the lifestyle and activities of its guards without, for example, exploring the larger security and penal infrastructures that led to the guards’ presence at the camp in the first place. At such sites, where there is hardware but no or ill-suited software, it is not enough to point out the software’s overall missing quality; it is much more interesting to examine what software there is for its lacunae and absences. Such examples also again throw into question the primacy of UNESCO-paradigmatic, site-centered commemoration and memorialization; if the site itself exists, but interpretation is lacking or even actively harmful, could more meaningful commemoration of the site only be possible ‘off-site,’ so to speak?

As detailed in Chapter 6 in the description of Moscow’s Gulag Museum, the issue of ‘perpetration’ is very much of the totalitarian school, wherein the blame is, for all intents and purposes, placed squarely on the shoulders of Stalin and his Politburo, especially the successive leaders of the NKVD. This is, of course, partially a response to extant misbeliefs about Stalin’s personal culpability for the repression. However, it also reflects a larger reluctance to place blame on specific people at the ‘enforcer’ level, as Hochschild (1995) so memorably quotes survivors of the period as fearing more tainted accusations, arrests, and disappearances. On the other hand, *Memorial* recently published a list of almost 40,000 NKVD workers’ names from the 1930s online, which sparked deep controversy in memorial, historical, and political circles across Russia. As Holocaust scholars and activists have moved towards more disclosure of names and facts related to perpetration, the majority of historians, curators, and scholars of Soviet repression have been reluctant to do the same, for reasons ranging from a lack of confirmed data to fears that such disclosures might lead to social discontent or even instability. One might phrase this by saying that there are concerns that ‘blameability’ might be decided on an unfair or inaccurate basis and that inappropriate retaliatory action might be taken. However, *Memorial*’s recent action, as well as the stances taken by *Last Address* of Saint Petersburg and similar groups, signal a growing diversity of opinion on this matter. Nonetheless, the political situation in Russia continues to shift rapidly, and continuing crackdowns on NGOs and private memorial organizations may cause this situation to shift yet again.

An important question, then, becomes ‘who is to blame?’ or, rather, ‘according to this site’s

interpretation, who is to blame? Which groups or individuals might find themselves susceptible to being blamed, and which groups or individuals are not considered blameworthy?' 'Blameability' builds on the idea of 'grievability' but turns it around – at a given site, who or what is considered 'blameable' for the repression (generally or in terms of specific acts), and who is not? Or is the question of blame totally elided? This concept further builds on foundations already laid in perpetrator studies and allows for a spectrum of blameability to be laid over tangible representations of Stalinist repression and its victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. I argue that, building on Butler's (2009) definition of 'grievability' to better define and closely examine the roots of differential 'blameability' is a way to examine different attitudes towards more contemporary questions of rights, law, and injustice. This will be further explored in Chapters 6-8.

4.8 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis's next three chapters, I will identify and explain examples of differential grievability and blameability within interpretation at case study sites. In Chapter 8, I will then compare and contrast these iterations of blameability and grievability within and across sites, as well as their underlying causes, in hopes that a more thorough and useful typology or rule might be gleaned from these case studies and applied outside of the Russian context. In that chapter, I will also explore the possibility and feasibility of two more aspects of the remembrance of repression: accountability and repentability. Once sites of memorialization agree that some actors are more 'blameable' than others, it follows that sites could move to holding some actors 'accountable'. After this, such accountable actors and/or their wider communities might publicly and sincerely 'repent' of their actions and those actions' consequences. This is not to say that groups would move through stages in a linear fashion; indeed, many will move back and forth as different ideologies and political stances fall in and out of favor.

This dissertation now moves to an analysis of memorial sites to victims of Soviet repression in and around Yekaterinburg, which serves as an intensive case study of differing ranges of grievability for different groups of victims. The next case studies will expand on that theme as well as that of blameability, all while also considering other relevant theories, both those addressed in this chapter and those introduced later.

Chapter 5: Yekaterinburg: Forgetting and Remembering Repression in the Urals

5.1 Introduction

Following the historical, methodological, and theoretical overviews, we now turn to the case studies for data on which to apply these methods and theories. The chapter opens with a brief rationale for the choice of these sites as case studies and an introduction to their significance for this thesis.

In this chapter, I will trace and analyze landscape and narrative changes made over time at several sites in and around Yekaterinburg. There are many aspects of heritage related to Soviet repression that are dissonant and ambiguous. I will scrutinize similarities and differences between portrayals of victims at each site, which will illuminate prevailing official and social attitudes (and clashes between these) about the role(s) the heritage of repression can have in modern Russia. Studying these connections also reveals the foundations of prevailing attitudes towards human and civil rights issues, especially regarding the ‘value’ or ‘grievability’ of different types of life. In light of current Russian federal stances on human rights, analyzing differences in interpretation as well as infrastructure at such sites promises to be doubly illuminating, both regarding the effects of official attitudes towards these subjects and about the efforts and motivations of those who insist on keeping gulag memory present and remembered.

A short history of Yekaterinburg as it relates to these sites follows, and then the case studies are examined. This first set of case studies consists of the 12th Kilometer, a mass grave of victims of Stalinist repression just outside of Yekaterinburg; the Church on Blood, a Russian Orthodox church built on the site where the Romanovs were killed in 1918; Ganina Yama, where the Romanovs’ bodies were first taken, as well as Piglet Ravine, where they were later hastily interred; and Chekist City, the sector of Yekaterinburg built for the burgeoning Soviet secret police apparatus; and the wider memorial landscape. I will then compare and analyze the interpretative strategies and narratives (or lack thereof) at each site in terms of presence as well as absence of tangible and intangible (or even ‘ghostly’) narratives of victimhood, perpetration, grievability, and blameability.

This thesis mainly focuses on sites related to Stalinist repression, especially sites connected to the Great Terror of 1936-8. Yet many of those sites were involved with mechanisms or

acts of repression before and/or after Stalin's time in power, meaning that it can be difficult to, for example, separate perceptions of 'Stalinist' terror from those of a broader 'Soviet' (or 'Russian') terror. This chapter specifically looks at a Great Terror-era mass grave and sites connected to Stalinist mechanisms and institutions of repression, but also at a complex of sites that are overwhelmingly connected to the deaths of the imperial family in 1918, during the time of the Russian Civil War and prior to Stalin's reign. Nonetheless, the comparison is valid and useful for analyzing and comprehending memorial phenomena across Russia for two reasons. First, since Yekaterinburg's image and history are inextricably linked with the demise of the imperial family, any study of sites of killing, death, and burial in the Soviet era would be incomplete without considering these sites, their narratives, and the ways in which those narratives might impact the interpretations and narratives of atrocity and suffering at other sites of Soviet-era mass death. Second, conducting such a comparison in Yekaterinburg elicited a clear dynamic through which to think through differing degrees of 'grievability' and 'blameability' as these might apply to both these sites and others across Russia and other nations dealing with the legacy of mass repression.

5.2 A Short Biography of Yekaterinburg

This section presents Yekaterinburg's biography within the political, economic, and sociocultural histories of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation from 1917 to the present. Maps of Yekaterinburg show the relative locations of each site (see Figures 5.1 and 5.8).

Yekaterinburg was founded in 1723 in order to exploit the vast natural resources of the nearby Ural Mountains. It also quickly became a center of industry, hosting some of Russia's first iron foundries and other metalworking enterprises (Dukes 2015: 23-4). The major demolition and construction campaigns of the Soviet era notwithstanding, some pre-revolutionary wooden buildings remain, along with a few buildings associated with the nobility and merchant classes.

As a major industrial center and the base of several military outfits, Yekaterinburg was crucial for all sides during Russia's complex and bloody Civil War. In common parlance, this is held to be a conflict between the Bolshevik 'Reds' and the Tsarist 'Whites'; however, in practice, many more players of various sizes and affiliations took part (Haynes and Hasan 2003: 49-51). The fateful advance of the Tsarist-allied Czechoslovak Legion on Yekaterinburg in July of 1918 well exemplifies this. This advance catalyzed the decision to kill Tsar Nikolai II,

his family, and their remaining attendants, then imprisoned in Yekaterinburg (Dukes 2015: 95).

In terms of the landscape, this was an important period for Yekaterinburg. Spurred on by the general revolutionary, avant-garde sentiment visible in art, literature, and politics of the time, Constructivist architects designed buildings for the 'new,' 'liberated' Soviet person. Buchli (1999) describes this in great detail in the context of Moscow's Narkomfin house, which was built with a minimum of barriers between interior and exterior spaces as well as a dearth of private kitchens or other domestic 'work' spaces, in order to help workers leave behind the trappings and emotions of 'bourgeois' private life. In Yekaterinburg, which was called Sverdlovsk from 1924-1991, this movement was exemplified at 'Chekist City,' the apartment building (described below) meant for all the young, new, single employees of the security services in the city.

Sverdlovsk, along with other cities in the Ural region, formed a linchpin of Stalin's plans to massively and rapidly industrialize the Soviet Union. As the seat of Sverdlovsk Region, it was the center of industry (Dukes 2015: 121-2) that could not have met (or exceeded targets) without the use of forced gulag laborers throughout the enormous Ural region (Harris 1999: 95). Finally, as an area that had seen much support for the 'White' forces during the Civil War, the city's inhabitants included many who, by dint of their earlier or present connections with monarchist or political opposition groups, quickly found themselves the targets of purges and repression. Many political and economic leaders were also arrested in the 'purges' of alternative, too-powerful 'cliques' in the Urals and other regions (Harris 1999: 146-8). During World War Two, thousands of factories, institutes, and universities were evacuated from European Russia to the Urals and further east; accordingly, Sverdlovsk filled with war refugees and migrant workers during the war years (Dukes 2015: 133). Such workers, in industry and agriculture alike, were subject to very strict disciplinary measures; many, running afoul of measures such as those designed to combat absenteeism, themselves ended up in gulag camps (Filtzer 2004: 161-2).

After the war, the continued toll of industry combined with nuclear experiments in the new 'closed' towns (Dukes 2015) to contribute to what many current area citizens call 'our problem with ecology'. Indeed, Sverdlovsk city itself was 'closed' to foreigners for decades. In the mid-1980s, as the Soviet political system and society began to face the myriad debilitating issues facing the Soviet Union, local politician Boris Yeltsin won many supporters for his blunt

assessments of the Union's problems, his refusal to be cowed by the establishment, and his strong support for the ideals of 'democracy' (Suny 2011: 515-6). Yekaterinburg, already owing its development to massive investment in the Soviet planned economy and suffering the consequences of 'stagnation', vocally supported Yeltsin and his pro-democracy reforms. After such events as his expulsion from the Central Committee, he received thousands of letters of support from all over the Soviet Union, and the post-Soviet Sverdlovsk region continued to be a staunch bastion of support for his initiatives, such as the new Soviet constitution (Dukes 2015: 185-6). Today, Yekaterinburg is Russia's third-largest city and a center of mining industry and activity. Although, in life, Yeltsin was a controversial figure, not always as dedicated to the mechanisms of democracy as he was to its rhetoric (Suny 2011: 518), he – especially his 'first truly equal' constitution of Russia – has found a new audience via the brand-new Yeltsin Center. Architecturally, the city now boasts miles of new construction, including Russia's second highest skyscraper outside of Moscow. However, until August 10, 2016, not a single permanent monument to victims of repression existed within the city limits. On that day, local members of the *Last Address* movement unveiled three plaques at the last known addresses of six repressed Sverdlovsk citizens – as a local periodical puts it, 'these homes became the last residences for the arrested – their normal lives ended there' (Guseva 2016).

5.3. Case Studies

The case studies examined here comprise, as stated above, sites of repression in the Yekaterinburg region, which was chosen because it represents a peripheral area in contrast to Moscow. The map below (Figure 5.1) shows what I call Yekaterinburg's 'Topography of Terror'.

5.3.1 12th Kilometer

'Now we have Leninist terror, the Red Terror, again – not Stalin's mass terror,' said Anna Pastukhova, director of *Yekaterinburg Memorial*¹. We were standing on a street corner, facing a long, low, yellow building in the very heart of Yekaterinburg. Today, this building is the headquarters of the Federal Security Bureau (the current main security agency for the Russian

¹ Екатеринбургский Мемориал is a civil society memorial organization founded in 1987 and dedicated to preserving and disseminating the memory of victims of Stalinist repression; it is closely affiliated with other local chapters of *Memorial* across Russia.

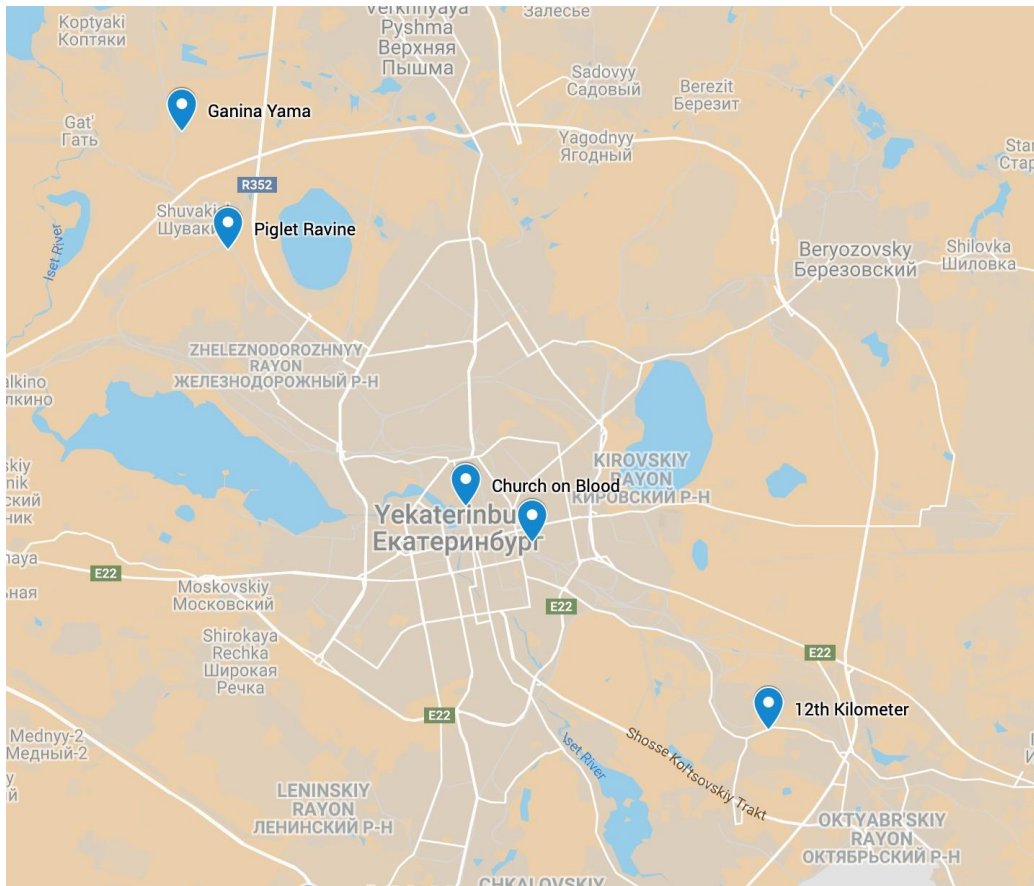


Figure 5.1. Map of fieldwork sites within Greater Yekaterinburg area. (Copyright Google, with additions by author)

Federation) for Sverdlovsk Oblast. Its security service predecessors, from the NKVD to the KGB, were based in these same buildings. Although Pastukhova said that some people were indeed shot here, the vast majority were taken to a site twelve kilometers outside the town, on the road to Moscow. Ferried there by trucks that always left at five or six o'clock in the morning, over 15,000 people were shot and buried from the 1930s-50s, though the majority were shot in the 1930s. That site, now called 'The 12th Kilometer,' was our destination. There is no monument at the former headquarters, although Pastukhova periodically brings groups of schoolchildren there and tells them about the complex's history. Sometimes, private citizens gather here and hold quiet, candlelit vigils, but Pastukhova's vision of a permanent text panel or board, complete with photographs of victims, remains unrealized. In the taxi, Pastukhova lamented that we cannot trace the exact path of the trucks because of major construction by the stadium, prominently positioned on a main route leading out of town. (We were two years out from the 2018 FIFA World Cup, for which Yekaterinburg hosted several group stage games.) This obstacle notwithstanding, tens of thousands of people each day traverse this same route from the NKVD headquarters to or past the 12th Kilometer. 'The city

is soaked in blood,' Pastukhova remarked, 'but [today] there is not a single memorial' to the victims of Stalinist repression inside the city limits.

The 12th Kilometer memorial complex was built in the early 1990s, after human remains were discovered on the site in 1989 by Vadim Viner, a local historian, after an old man named Ivan Dilya approached him at work, hoping to lead him to the locations of several NKVD shooting and burial grounds (Viner 2016).



Figure 5.2. The 12th Kilometer memorial complex, viewed from the plaza. The large memorial cross stands in front of the memorial plaques. (Photo by author)

When we arrived, a wedding party was at the site, toasting with champagne and taking photographs. It is a well-known practice to have the wedding party drive around to regional notable sites for photographs and toasts after the ceremony. Pastukhova, after checking to see whether the small onsite museum was open, walked up to the couple and asked if they knew what the 12th Kilometer was. They did not; they were there because it's on the circuit of 'notable sites' in the Yekaterinburg area. Pastukhova briefly explained that the site is a mass grave holding the remains of thousands of victims of repression and expressed her happiness that people come to the site at all. The couple looked somewhat bemused, reflecting the lack of knowledge among the local population about such sites of terror, but they accepted our congratulations and well wishes and moved on.



Figure 5.3. Memorial plaques, 12th Kilometer. (Photo by author)

The site itself was in a fairly rundown state. The memorial plaques are set onto tiled foundations with cracking concrete, and many tiles are loose or fallen. The grass around the plaques was seriously overgrown; just yards from the paved plaza, my colleague stepped on a small snake in the grassed area. Further, the plaques were produced quickly, so the names engraved on them are not in alphabetical order. Pastukhova later organized a database that allows people to search online for specific names and find the names' locations within the memorial. The caretaker at the site also had a book with this information, and he was more than willing to help visitors navigate. *Yekaterinburg Memorial* has also recently allowed some family members to plant trees at the site: the saplings are surrounded by a small wrought-iron fence, sometimes with a plaque with picture and/or inscription. This is highly reminiscent of traditional and current Russian Orthodox funerary practices, wherein many graves are surrounded by such a metal fence (see Merridale 2000: 107). The trees are here made to stand in for the missing individual graves of loved ones. The main memorial area backs up directly to the forest, and some wooden memorial plaques have been placed on trees at the edge.



Figure 5.4. Detail of memorial plaque showing dilapidation, 12th Kilometer. (Photo by author)

Near the entrance, a plaque set into the ground demarcated the future site of a sculpture by Yekaterinburg-born Ernst Neizvestnii. One of his most famous works is *The Mask of Sorrow*, Magadan’s immense gulag memorial. At the time of fieldwork, a small version of Yekaterinburg’s sculpture could be viewed in his small museum in central Yekaterinburg; although it had been completed and paid for, myriad difficulties had thus far blocked its installation. However, after Neizvestnii’s death on August 9, 2016, local admirers posted condolences on social media and concurrently voiced their frustration at the memorial’s limbo. On November 20, 2017, the finally-installed monument, *The Mask of Sorrow*. *Europe-Asia* was officially opened after 26 years of preparation. An essay on *Yekaterinburg Memorial*’s web site noted that, although various local dignitaries attended, ‘very little was said about the true initiators of the monument’s installation – those who experienced the horrors of the Stalinist camps’ (*Yekaterinburg Memorial* 2017).

This seemingly contradictory dynamic of inaugurating a physical memorial while saying little or nothing about the ‘chief’ perpetrator was also in evidence at the opening of the *Wall of Sorrow* memorial in Moscow on October 30, 2017 (notably, the national Day of Remembrance for Victims of Political Repression). This dynamic will be discussed further

below and in Chapter 6, but we note here that, while both of these new memorials certainly have ‘grievable’ victims, identified tangibly and orally, there is a reluctance to materially identify any ‘blameable’ agents or actors – even Stalin.

At the 12th Kilometer, a few dilapidated wooden benches sit in a grassy area by the road; if it weren’t for the cars speeding past on the busy expressway just beyond, this could be a peaceful area of contemplation. Paradoxically, the complex’s proximity to the road has not translated into higher visitation rates. The nearest exit is only accessible from one side of the road – so, as Pastukhova pointed out, those passing who might be interested in stopping cannot simply pull off at the next exit; they must instead backtrack several kilometers. Further, although a city bus ferries residents to a nearby shopping complex on the outskirts of town, no such service exists to transport people to and from the 12th Kilometer.

I visited the site again on June 18, 2016, on one of the two annual group journeys² to the 12th Kilometer. The other takes place on October 30, the Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression; the June date was the closest Saturday that year to June 22, the federally recognized Day of Remembrance and Sorrow.

The city administration provided support in the form of several city buses lined up in front of city hall, leaving at noon for the 12th Kilometer. Although no one had to stand in the aisles, the buses were nearly full, and the vast majority of riders were elderly. Upon arrival, it transpired that at least a hundred other people had come in their own cars or via some other conveyance. Volunteers set up stands selling tea, sodas, and baked goods, and attendees milled around the small plaza area eating, drinking, and conversing. Some ventured into the small building, which did have a small museum of sorts set up. Many of the displays consisted of photocopied documents, including shooting lists, and photographs of victims. There were also some bags of earth from other nearby mass graves, possibly harkening back to traditional beliefs about the importance of being buried in native soil (Merridale 2000: 47). The little museum also boasts a collection of books and pamphlets about repression, some with a local focus. These were all locked behind glass, however, and of little use to a researcher, especially since the museum is not normally open.

² Поездки



Figure 5.5. Memorial plaza filled with Day of Remembrance and Sorrow visitors, 12th Kilometer. (Photo by author)

Individually or in small groups, the attendees ventured into the memorial plaque area: there, some said prayers, while some left small offerings on the tile supports. Some small groups ate and drank tea among the plaques, reflecting traditional Orthodox funerary and memorial rites (see Merridale 2000: 48-49). Pastukhova and a cameraman affiliated with *Yekaterinburg Memorial* approached an elderly gentleman carefully fixing a piece of paper with a photograph and some information to a plaque. It turned out to be information about the man's father, who had been shot in 1937.

After about thirty minutes, a series of speakers made remarks from a cordoned-off area around the large stone cross. The speakers included the head of another regional memorial organization, representatives from the city and regional administration, and some local literary and cultural figures. Several other dignitaries, including the director of the Gulag Museum in Moscow, were also in attendance. Afterwards, two Orthodox priests and an all-female choir performed a short prayer service, complete with censuring. Throughout all of this, a woman near me stood silently, holding a black-and-white photograph of a woman in a headscarf so that it faced the speakers and priests.



Figure 5.6. Day of Remembrance and Sorrow visitors at memorial plaque. (Photo by author)



Figure 5.7. Day of Remembrance and Sorrow visitors laying flowers at foot of cross; note local official in white jacket placing large basket. (Photo by author)

This was followed by a ceremonial laying of flowers at the stone cross and at the memorial stone to gulag victims. As is usual in contemporary Russian memorial culture, most of the flowers were artificial; as I watched, a top-heavy basket of plastic flowers placed by a local official fell over as soon as she turned away. Fifteen minutes later, we were herded back onto the buses and taken back to central Yekaterinburg. The whole affair took less than two and a half hours.

5.3.2. Church on Blood

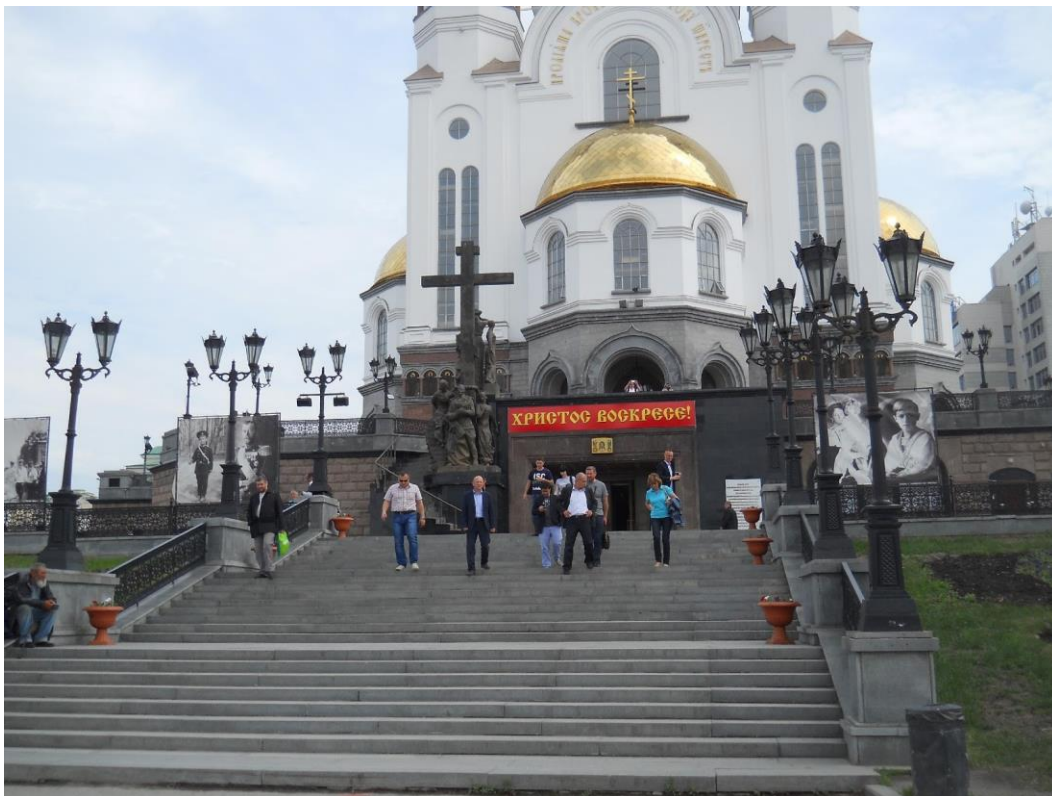


Figure 5.8. Church on Blood, facing lower church. (Photo by author)

One can no longer visit the house where the Romanov family – Tsar Nikolai II, Tsarina Alexandra, Tsarevich Alexei, and the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia, along with several servants and attendants – lived and were killed during the night of July 16-17, 1918. The Ipatiev House³ stood for decades after the killings and even served as the city’s Anti-Religious Museum from 1938-1946, but it was demolished on Yeltsin’s orders in 1977 in order to stop it becoming a shrine for monarchists and reactionaries (Rappaport 2009: 219). In 1974, it had been listed as a Historical-Revolutionary Monument, but the hordes of pilgrims

³ Дом Ипатьева

coming to pay their respects had become a public relations problem to the Soviet regime (Rappaport 2009: 219). Nevertheless, the demolition did not fully wipe out these pilgrimages.

The Church on Blood in Honor of All Saints Resplendent in the Russian Land⁴ officially opened in 2003. The land was signed over to the Russian Orthodox Church in 1990, but construction did not begin until 2000. Today, it is a major religious and pilgrimage site, hosting visitors, worshippers, and pilgrims alike. The ‘upper cathedral’ is only open on weekends, but the ‘lower cathedral’ is open to the public daily. The interior is richly decorated with precious stones, gold, and intricate frescoes. The lower church hosts several services and prayers each day. The church also contains a small museum as well as facilities for pilgrims, like a small dining room, and sells religious and devotional books, candles, and other souvenirs. At the time of my visit, the museum was hosting an exhibit that showcased artifacts, photos, and quotations from high-profile Russian Orthodox victims of Soviet repression, and relevant quotations from the Bible were strategically posted around the room. In the back, near the pilgrim facilities, a much more haphazard exhibition was on display. Different colored printouts and text panels, each absolutely covered in text and photographs, displayed different aspects of the life, faith, and death of the royal family. Everything from the Tsar and Tsarevich’s military activities to quotations taken from the Grand Duchesses’ personal letters is evidence of the saintly nature of their lives – fully befitting their status as martyrs of the Russian Orthodox Church.

When I visited with Anna Pastukhova and another local informant, they pointed out that the church is not actually built on the site of the house: the memorial plaque that purportedly does stand on the actual site is ‘wrong’. The ‘real’ site of the house is purported to be under an anonymous square of paving somewhere between the church and the memorial stone.

⁴ Храм-на-Крови во имя Всех святых, в земле Российской просиявших



Figure 5.9. Display of Romanov materials, Church on Blood. (Photo by author)



Figure 5.10. Plaque marking alleged former site of Ipatiev House, Church on Blood. (Photo by author)

5.3.3 Ganina Yama and Piglet Ravine

Ganina Yama, the site identified as the place where the Romanovs' remains were dumped after the fateful night at Ipatiev House, is located some distance outside of the city itself and now owned and run by the Russian Orthodox Church. Within a week after the deaths of the royal family, 'White' and Czechoslovakian Legion troops took Yekaterinburg and discovered traces of the burned bodies down a mine shaft at what is now Ganina Yama (Massie 1996: 9-11). However, this was no longer the actual burial site – Bolsheviks, aware that the burial job had been botched, had returned to Ganina Yama prior to the arrival of the monarchist forces and moved the remains to Piglet Ravine, an even more secluded location some miles away, down an old colliers' road (Rappaport 2009: 203-5).

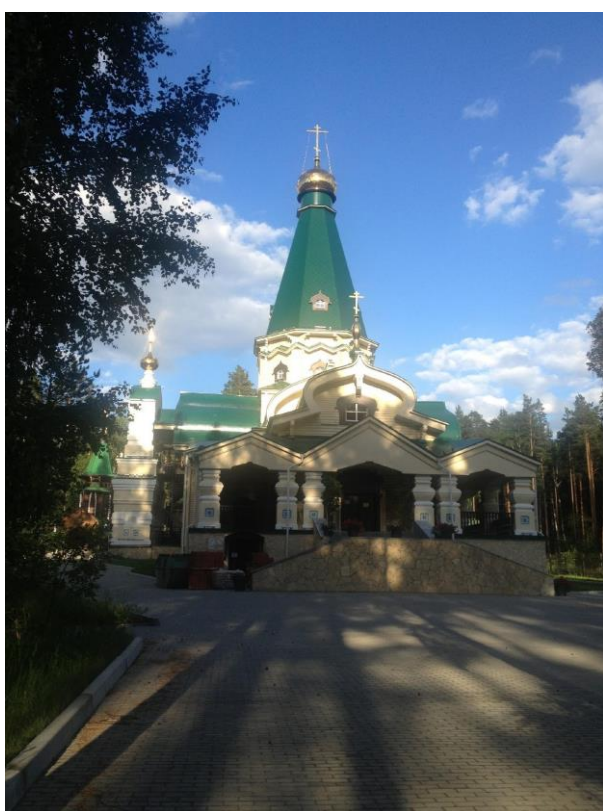


Figure 5.11. Orthodox church, Ganina Yama. (Photo by author)

The remains lay here undisturbed for decades; an area archaeologist came across them in 1979, but he did not reveal their location until the early 1990s because he feared politically-motivated reprisals (Rappaport 2009: 219-20). The ensuing carousel of forensic and DNA identifications and contestations, funeral ceremonies and differential bestowals of 'martyr' and 'passion bearer' by different factions of the Russian Orthodox Church – to say nothing of the subplot, disproven for now, regarding Grand Duchess Anastasia's possible escape from

the gunmen – is beyond the scope of this work. Suffice it to say that new queries have been raised over the exact identities of the people found buried in the two mine shafts by the railroad tracks, but the Russian Orthodox Church has blocked any further testing on any suspected royal remains (MacFarquhar 2016). However, the lasting aura of mystery and uncertainty that surrounds the family’s remains extends to the sites, too; Ganina Yama is widely known as the burial place, though the remains actually lay miles away, at Piglet Ravine, for so many years. Even at that much more dilapidated site, several wooden Orthodox crosses mark the two separate sites where royal remains were found.



Figure 5.12. Memorial cross at alleged site where the Romanovs’ bodies were buried; note former mining pits in background. (Photo by author)



Figure 5.13. Memorial cross at ‘actual’ site of burial. (Photo by author)

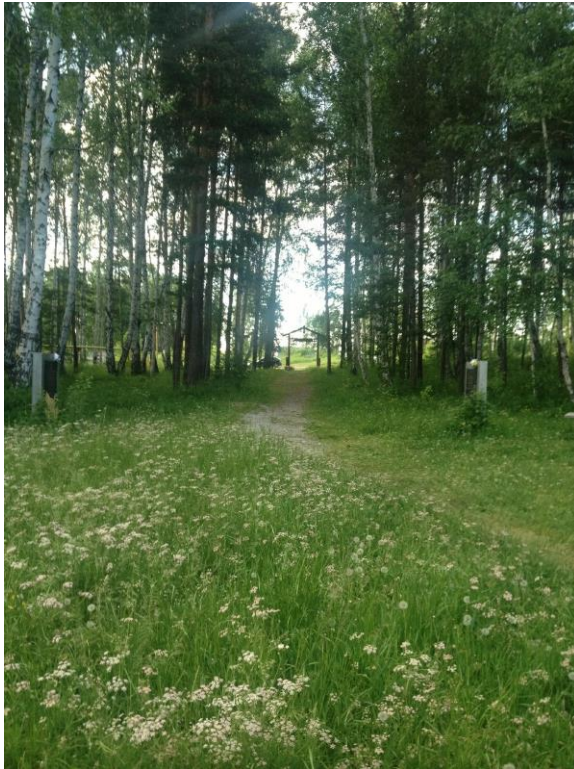


Figure 5.14. View of ‘actual’ burial site; the wooden cross in Figure 5.13 is to the right, behind the memorial tablet on right. (Photo by author)

Ganina Yama today is well-developed for the pilgrim and tourist trade. In recent years, dress code restrictions at Russian Orthodox monasteries and churches across Russia have been loosening; for example, female visitors to Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior need to cover their heads, but no longer need to adhere to strict dress codes. However, the monks at Ganina Yama strictly enforce such sartorial etiquette; women wearing trousers or short skirts are obliged to tie long, heavy skirts, provided at the gates, over their garments. The difference in financial outlay between Ganina Yama and the 12th Kilometer was immediately clear – there is much fresh construction and renovation going on at the former, and all of the existing buildings are freshly painted (or gilded, as is the case for the onion domes) and in good repair.

Maksim Petlin, a local political figure who offered, through Pastukhova, to show me the site because he was in government at the time when the church gained ownership of Ganina Yama, stopped to point out one of several original mine shafts dotting the site, in order to point out what the discoverers would have looked at when they arrived. A large cross marks the spot where the White forces found ash and some fragmentary bone remains, and offerings of flowers and candles are scattered around the area. In contrast, at Piglet Ravine, two wooden Orthodox crosses mark the spots of the actual 'graves', but the site is not well-visited (except by teenagers looking for a place to smoke in peace) and barely interpreted.

5.3.4 Chekist City and the Wider Memorial Landscape

Besides the 12th Kilometer and some material inside the Yeltsin Center, Pastukhova is correct: the only permanent memorial 'hardware' dealing with the victims of repression are the 'Last Address' plaques mentioned above, and they were only installed in summer 2016. However, the repression has left other material and architectural traces around the city and within sundry museums; if one knows where to look, one can easily construct a 'topography of terror' for the former Sverdlovsk.

The Soviet Union had a fraught relationship with architectural heritage preservation. The case of the Constructivists is especially complex, with its cyclical pattern of official favor (see, for example Buchli 1999). In Yekaterinburg, the battle over Constructivist constructions has gone in a slightly different direction. The 1930s 'Chekist City'⁵ complex stands on Yekaterinburg's

⁵Городок Чекистов – literally 'Small City of the Chekists'. 'Chekist' technically refers to the first iteration of the Soviet Union's secret police, the Cheka, but it was later commonly used to refer to any member of the secret service force of the day.



Figure 5.15. ‘Iset’ building, Chekist City, Yekaterinburg. (Photo by author)

Lenin Avenue; within it, the ‘Iset’ building now houses several restaurants of varying price points, as well as the ‘Iset’ hotel, which was a Soviet innovation, while the Sverdlovsk Regional National History Museum⁶, founded in 1870, moved to this location in 1991 (Sverdlovsk Regional National History Museum 2016). The entire building is designed as a stylized hammer and sickle, with the sickle blade forming the curved bit where the restaurants are now located on the lower floors. It and the other immense area buildings were designed as housing for young Chekist (later NKVD) officers (Dukes 2015: 128). A small plaque identifying the complex is affixed to a wall outside the museum’s main entrance. Jarringly, however, the most direct acknowledgement of the buildings’ past is located inside one of the restaurants, which is a sort of upscale *stolovaya*, or cafeteria-style establishment, based on communal dining rooms of the 1920s (Factory Kitchen 2016). Among the blackboards advertising food and drink specials is one that simply says ‘Sverdlovsk – Chekist City – 1933’ around the name of the restaurant, which itself translates to ‘Factory Kitchen’⁷.

⁶Свердловский областной краеведческий музей

⁷ Фабрика Кухня – a common early Soviet term for such establishments



Figure 5.16. Plaque on outside of Natural History Museum, marking the building as the ‘House of Culture’ for Chekist City from 1926 to 1936. (Photo by author)

Inside the Sverdlovsk Regional Natural History Museum, the exhibits are of varying quality and coherence. A separately-ticketed gallery holds the 11,500-year-old Shigir Idol, the oldest piece of wooden sculpture in the world. The idol and associated wooden artifacts are securely housed and well-lit. The archaeology gallery next door, too, is fairly well-organized and displayed. On a catwalk overlooking it, there is a series of artifacts mounted in cases on the wall; each is next to a photograph and biography. The small displays were each personally collected by a notable area archaeologist or philologist; according to their biographies, several of these people were repressed and later rehabilitated, often posthumously. There are similarly scattered, often oblique references to repression at several points in the museum: a small case in the war years section explains the role of non-gulag forced labor in the wartime tank and armament factories of the Urals, and another details the harsh labor discipline and penalties imposed on civilians working in wartime agriculture.

Hidden up a virtual garret stairway, however, there is a well-appointed gallery dedicated to the Romanov family, their demise, and the rediscovery of their remains. A museum attendant I encountered in this area was eager to point the way to the gallery, but no one else appeared for the twenty minutes I spent inside. It includes a somewhat perplexing audiovisual element that allows the viewer to place him- or herself inside Ipatiev House, which is full of furniture

but devoid of people. If one ventures to the basement, one faces a wall riddled with bullet holes, sees flashing lights, and hears shouts and weeping, but, again, no people or even shadows appear. It is literally a bloodless reconstruction. Are museum visitors really so solely interested in the architecture and furnishings of the infamous house? Otherwise, the gallery is well laid-out and lit, though the sections on the recovery of the remains include somewhat graphic photographs and make no mention of the later controversies over identifications.

5.4 Forgetting and Remembering Repression

Across this landscape, it is clear that classically tangible and intangible forms of memorialization often interact and feed off of each other; however, many of these interactions are focused on specific dates. At such times, commemoration and memorialization can incorporate places that boast ‘ghostware’ but no ‘hardware’ (see below – we recall Etkind’s (2013) theorization of ‘ghostware’ as memory that has no tangible memorial ‘hardware’ to which it can be ‘uploaded’ and thus ‘haunts’ non-memorial sites and media, unlike the intangible memory ‘software’ that can be successfully processed at such sites). The candlelit vigils outside of the former NKVD headquarters exemplify this dynamic. Such vigil days include the Day of Commemoration of Victims of Political Repression, on October 30, but can also include days such as the anniversary of Stalin’s death, days such as May 9 that are usually associated with Soviet victory, and so on.

Such differentiated schedules of memorialization and commemoration at such sites might represent a sort of ‘compartmentalization’ in time. Such a theory builds on my previous work theorizing parallel, non-competing forms of memorialization and forgetting embodied in and on the former architecture of Soviet repression (Comer 2015). Certain former barracks buildings of the Soviet Union’s first gulag camp in the Solovetsky Islands are formally marked as such by commemorative plaques, but the buildings themselves now serve as small groceries, clothing stores, or private homes. Thus, the viewer can choose whether or not to remember the gulag and repression each time they encounter the building; neither choice is overtly pushed, but both possibilities exist simultaneously. At sites that lack such a tangible plaque or other permanent marker but are periodically made the scene of transitory memorial events, a similar dynamic of ‘choice’ to remember can be theorized – not just on the part of these events’ participants, but in the memories of passers-by on subsequent days and months, when the candles and silent witnesses have gone.

Although the 12th Kilometer has been turned into a place of memorialization and commemoration, its infrastructural and interpretational difficulties hamper its ability to function as an eternal site of memory. It might thus also be considered temporally compartmentalized. On organized days of remembrance, the gathered crowd, engaged in religious and secular memorial activities, brings its own sacral sensibility to the site. However, on regular days, the inconvenient location, crumbling facilities, and disorganized memorial ‘hardware’ can easily obfuscate the site’s mourning functions, as vividly illustrated by the bridal party’s blissful ignorance.

And what of ‘Chekist City’? As the homes of NKVD agents, many of whom eventually presumably became victims of repression themselves, the ‘last addresses’ contained within the building might be considered sites of tragedy. It would be a stretch to consider Factory Kitchen a site of any type of formal memorialization, but its egalitarian, self-serve model explicitly harkens back to 1920s Constructivist ideals of utopian communal spaces (Factory Kitchen 2016). The Sverdlovsk Regional Natural History Museum contains only scattered and shadowy references to the many facets of Soviet repression within its exhibits – with the exception of the gallery dedicated to the Romanovs’ deaths. There is no evidence that people come here to specifically remember losses besides the royal ones.

5.5 Hardware, Software, and Ghostware

As Anna Pastukhova declared, in June 2016 there was not a single memorial to the victims of Soviet repression within the city of Yekaterinburg, let alone a government sponsored and supported one. Nonetheless, as the annual candlelit demonstrations in front of the former NKVD building demonstrate, city residents and the family members of victims have plenty of software that they bring to certain sites on certain days of the year. These sites are not randomly chosen; each is connected in some way, often strongly so, with Soviet repression and its victims. With due interpretation and ‘heritagization,’ each could become a heritage and/or memorial site; however, at this time, each only temporarily manifests its hardware qualities. Its ‘ghostware’ (Etkind 2009), however, is eternally present for those who know the building’s history. It was not within the scope of this study to survey a large number of Yekaterinburg residents or otherwise try to glean the memories and emotions they associate with this building, but the continued existence of the building and its continued role as the secret police headquarters ensure that the building’s legacy is not fully erased.

The 12th Kilometer boasts a complex of hardware – several memorial stones, memorial plaques, a space for contemplation – and its visitors bring with them plenty of software, whether they visit individually or in groups. Predictably, the software is more concentrated on the days of large, organized group visits, as Orthodox priests and choirs perform requiem prayers and song and family members lay flowers and share information about their lost relatives. The hardware, however, is dilapidated, and the software can only go so far in preserving memory as family members age and die – and, crucially, political currents regarding the memorialization of Soviet repression ebb and flow. As a mass grave, it would seem that the site is by definition equipped with ghostware, but when the memories of the lost pass into ‘postmemory’ (Hirsch 2008) for good, can this site and its shoestring-budget, constantly threatened protectors keep such memories alive?

At the Sverdlovsk Regional History Museum, the hardware consists of a fairly typical Russian regional museum. The exhibitions cover the standard range of areas – ethnography, the Tsarist era, the revolution, the Great Patriotic War, and local natural history, geography, and archaeology. However, the gallery dedicated to the memory (one might even say the martyrology) of the Romanov family constitutes a dedicated set of hardware for that specific family. There is no evidence that people coming to view that gallery bring any specific heritage software with them, and even less evidence of such memorial software being uploaded onto other exhibits. However, the building itself, having formed part of ‘Chekist City,’ arguably serves as ghostware on its own. As the former living space of the secret police – many of whom themselves probably later fell victim to repression, in accordance with wider patterns – the building could also be considered ghostware. Perhaps, as the caretakers of the ‘Virtual Museum of the Gulag’ argue in regards to entire Soviet cities that were built and maintained by forced labor (von Zitzewitz, personal communication, 2015), one could argue the same about this area just beyond central Yekaterinburg.

5.6 Grievable Life

In life, Tsar Nikolai II and his family had little in common with their subjects, at least in the realm of lived experience. After the upheavals of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it seems that the memory and memorials dedicated to each of these communities have again diverged dramatically. On the religious side, Yekaterinburg boasts an ornate Orthodox cathedral, several smaller churches, and a small museum dedicated to the Romanovs and their fate. Outside of the city, Ganina Yama further emphasizes the martyrdom of the family and

turns the act of grieving for them into an explicitly holy and religious task. At the ‘actual’ sites of their burial, however, which are ‘maintained’ by a local authority, there are only simple markers and no permanent interpretation.

Meanwhile, the graves of over 18,000 people at the 12th Kilometer are tangibly memorialized, but the infrastructure is crumbling day by day. The heritage ‘software’ periodically uploaded there and at sites like the former secret police headquarters, however, prove that meanings that could be associated with these sites are being maintained and disseminated away from them. This dynamic is reproduced at mass grave sites across Russia, especially those that are located even farther away from towns and cities (Merridale 2000). For the vast majority of gulag sites, however, this is even more marked – many former camps have no interpretation at all and are very rarely visited by anyone, yet the ‘ghostware’ of prisoner experience has seeped into millions of personal memories and surfaced in different forms of art (Etkind 2013). From the heritage studies perspective, it is not a stretch to extend this haunted ‘art’ to include the buildings built to house NKVD workers – and, indeed, to extend it to the entire cities built by forced labor discussed above.

The issue of grievable life in this instance is thus inextricably entwined with issues of the Russian Orthodox Church’s sociocultural and financial power to dictate agendas of mourning and dark heritagization (see, for example, Fedor 2014). But this cannot possibly fully explain the discrepancy; the Natural History Museum, for example, is not funded by the Church in any way, yet it, too, reproduces this differential. Across Russia, exhibits and other media related to the centenary of 1917 also placed a high emphasis on ‘rehabilitating’ and venerating the Romanov family. At the Hermitage, an exhibition entitled *The Winter Palace and the Hermitage 1917: History was made here* (2017), included personal effects and clothing that had belonged to members of the royal family. The text panels put a special emphasis on the religious faith and purity of the family, especially of Tsarevich Aleksei, who famously suffered from hemophilia and was only 13 when he died. The section of the exhibition dealing with their deaths was even raised slightly above the floor level, as if the photos and images had been placed on a dais. Perhaps, here, part of the impulse to grieve the Romanovs so extravagantly stems from viewing them as a metonym for all of Tsarist Russia and the stability and tradition swept away by the revolution.

At the time of their deaths, the victims of the NKVD had officially been proclaimed 'valueless' enemies of the state. At a simplistic level, one could draw the conclusion that the Romanovs had also been thus designated in 1918 – or was it that they were so valuable as a possible rallying point for the White forces that they had to be destroyed? Meanwhile, although family members – often very elderly – will come from far away at great effort to attend memorial days or to visit the 12th Kilometer on other days, there is no sense of the victims buried there as a metonym for a lost time or ideology. Memorial events at the site and websites (as well as social media posts) connected to the 12th Kilometer and other Stalinist mass shooting sites repeatedly assert the necessity of remembering the victims so that such atrocities can 'never happen again'. Yet it is difficult to grieve a list of names; the mind blanks at the glare of the sheer number and refuses to process it. Pastukhova and her colleagues know this and desperately want images of 'faces', in order that these might be seen, recognized as human, and grieved (after all, who does not know what Grand Duchess Anastasia looked like, in cartoon form if nothing else?), but a lack of money and political support thwarts this approach for now. But as time passes and takes with it more and more of the family members (most survivors of the Great Terror having also already passed away), it will only be harder to pass personal grief onto society as anything more than another lesson about the terrible price to pay when a group turns in on and terrorizes itself.

5.7 Blameable Life

Stalinist (and Soviet) repression had many victims, but it also had a wide variety of perpetrators and bystanders, no matter how determined some actors are to erase or willfully misrepresent those aspects of repression. Here again, a comparison between the Romanov case and the situation of the victims buried at the 12th Kilometer is instructive. In the former case, the 'perpetrators' are well-known: although the members of the group that shot the royal family are not always identified by name, they are consistently referred to as 'Bolsheviks' acting on Lenin's direct orders – although this latter point is not always indicated. However, in these interpretations there are no attempts to explain or explore the motivations of specific people involved in the killing, nor are the various sites of interpretation in the Yekaterinburg-area landscape interpreted or connected in a way that could lead a viewer to understand the multifaceted nature of the political and military considerations and organizations that led to the killing.

In the latter, the perpetrators of the Yekaterinburg arrests and direct shootings at the 12th Kilometer, logically, must have been the NKVD worker denizens of 'Chekist City'. This

connection is not explicitly made anywhere in that area; indeed, if anything, the heritage of the Soviet secret police has become ‘kitsch’ in that neighborhood (see Fischer 2015 for a Hungarian case study involving ‘gulag pizza’). The members of *Yekaterinburg Memorial* strive to communicate such messages about blameability in Yekaterinburg’s landscape of Stalinist terror: if they had their way, there would be exhibits in front of the former NKVD and current FSB headquarters. Yet, so far, even finding the energy and resources to focus on properly and tangibly memorializing the *victims* of Stalinist repression – making sure that there is memorial ‘hardware’ dedicated to these victims, now publicly grievable – has been a herculean task in and of itself. If the museum at the 12th Kilometer ever opens, perhaps there will be room for an incisive examination of who, exactly, arrested and shot all these people and why. For now, though, any visitor coming across the site could easily view it as a site of ‘abdication’ of blame. If it was a place designed to make the visitor stop and think about victimhood and perpetration, of right and wrong, of how they would act in a situation of authoritarian terror, would wedding parties really stop there?

5.8 Access, Infrastructure, and Funding – Pointed Differentials?

No matter how ‘meaningful’ a site may be, it needs funding if it is to host any scale of tourism or visitation. The benefits and pitfalls of different levels and sources of funding have been thoroughly analyzed. Indeed, the growing realization of the centrality of adequate funding and infrastructure has led, elsewhere within the field of heritage studies, to initiatives that emphasize the importance of careful pre-planning and follow-through of funding schemes and preservation. In Yekaterinburg’s memorial landscape of the victims of repression, there is a stark and apparent difference between the levels of funding and resources available to different actors in the heritage landscape. These levels do not necessarily match the level or intensity of heritage activity undertaken at a given site; for example, the FSB enjoys a large national budget, but none of it has been earmarked for heritage work or remembrance at or around the former NKVD headquarters. *Yekaterinburg Memorial* is in serious financial straits, discussed in detail above. Of course, that situation is in no way solely about money and funding; as detailed elsewhere, the Putin administration’s crackdown on ‘foreign agents’ and NGOs with ‘overseas funding’ is highly political and an ominous portent for civil society and organized dissidence in Russia (Cichowlas 2014; Weir 2015).

5.9 Conclusion

The heritage situation in Yekaterinburg is ‘complex,’ in that it encompasses a wide array of vastly different sites – museums, a mass grave, living spaces, and office spaces, some that

have undergone heritagization to various degrees and some that have not. Further, their financial, political, and sociocultural relationships to each other continue to change and are influenced by annual organized and spontaneous outpourings of memorial activity.

The case of Yekaterinburg vividly illustrates the contingency of specific iterations of hardware, software, and ghostware. Works in heritage have duly underlined the contingent nature of heritage; to wit, the idea that ‘heritage,’ even ‘dark’ heritage, does not really exist in a material form on its own, without narratives and meanings imposed upon it or attributed to it by a community or person (Smith 2006; Uzzell 1989). Yet it is clear that people in Yekaterinburg do remember Stalinist repression and its victims in various ways that may or may not be supported by the state, the Russian Orthodox Church, and/or various private or civil society groups. To put it bluntly, the available ghostware far exceeds the hardware and, possibly, the software available to host it.

Further, the different types of loss palpable in Yekaterinburg do not receive the same amounts of attention and, crucially, material and immaterial support. ‘Value’ is an incredibly loaded term, but the question here arises – why does it seem that some lives are ‘valued’ more than others when it comes to grieving their respective losses? After decades of Soviet rule wherein the tsar and his family were officially and popularly painted as public enemies, what specific sociocultural forces explain the disproportionate amount of energy and funds now devoted to memorializing the Romanovs? No one alive today remembers the tsar’s reign, and yet the loss of this family is accorded a disproportionate amount of attention in relation to the much, much larger numerical losses due to Stalinist repression. Here, we see a marked difference in the degree of grievability afforded to the Romanovs and to the victims of repression buried at the 12th Kilometer. After decades of official excoriation, the resurgence of this Romanov near-cult must have a more accurate explanation than the resurgence of ‘ancient’ ‘tradition’. Further, similar formulations of ‘grievability’ seem to be at play in the controversies that led to Perm-36’s closure and major revamp in the last few years. A major flashpoint in a documentary highly critical of Perm-36 was the camp’s Ukrainian nationalist prisoners (Cichowlas 2014) – how could such popularly-termed ‘fascists’ possibly be considered ‘victims’ of any kind? Further, the types of ‘blameability’ present at each site differ: while the Romanovs’ specific killers are well-known, there is no attempt to put them and their actions into a broader perspective.

The case of Yekaterinburg clearly illustrates that the legacy of repression and the gulag reaches far beyond the physical sites of gulag labor and colonies themselves. The power imbalances that underlay the repression and other waves of Soviet terror have certainly shifted, but many of the dynamics remain strikingly similar. These dynamics both reflect and manifest changes in heritage interpretation and the forwarding of narratives related to repression-related suffering, which are themselves far from equitable. The models of grievability and blameability, as I will go on to develop them in this thesis, likewise help us think through why certain actors choose to grieve or blame specific individuals or groups according to their (perceived and actual) roles during the repression.

In the next chapter, I will examine ‘official’ sites of memorialization of the victims of repression in Moscow, including the Gulag Museum, the Wall of Grief, and several mass graves on the city’s outskirts. There, we will further define and think through the concept of degrees of grievability, types of blameability, and the possibility of accountability, as well as abdication of responsibility, for past repressive regimes as manifested through heritage.

Chapter 6: ‘Official’ Sites of Memory in Moscow: An Abdication of Memory?

6.1 Introduction

On October 30, 2017, The Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression, Moscow’s Gulag Museum was open free of charge. The same curator who had led my conference group around a few weeks before attempted to lead a tour of at least fifty people around the galleries, and the small auditorium, showing interviews with survivors, was filled. When, in 2017, I asked museum director Roman Romanov about the day, his response was that ‘every day is important,’ and, although the museum was marking the national date with its free admission and program of activities, he didn’t really see the need to single out one day over all others, although his museum had in fact done just that. Beyond making practical sense for a museum that has to attract an audience for every day of the year, was this an attempt to mark the day while subtly distancing the Gulag Museum from *Memorial* and other civil society organizations that have traditionally used the Day of Remembrance as their biggest day of public action each year?

In the afternoon, a public showing of a documentary on the first Soviet gulag camps in the Solovetsky Islands – made, incredibly, during the Soviet period – attracted fire-code-breaking crowds, with the steps of the little auditorium filled to bursting. Fewer people stayed for a conversation afterwards with a member of the original film crew, but the day’s attendance proved that people – overwhelmingly young, in this case – are very interested in the subject of Stalinist repression and the gulag system.

In this museum, the ‘blame’ for such repression is placed solely on Stalin and his top henchmen, and there is no discussion of the culpability of individual Soviet citizens – NKVD workers, denouncers, prison guards – and what led each of these to actively or passively participate in the repressive mechanisms. Photographs of Stalin and Politburo members are displayed with written proof that they each knew and approved of shooting lists during repressive campaigns, while no interpretation deals with the motivations and actions of any of the millions of lower-ranking perpetrators. Conversely, great emphasis is placed on establishing the individuality and personhood of victims through mechanisms like the scrolling list of Great Terror victims, video interviews with survivors, and display of personal belongings and gulag artifacts alongside detailed information about their owners or makers.

As with the impulse behind the annual ‘Return of Names’ ceremony (described below), great value is placed on the act of publicly naming and identifying victims. As discussed in Chapter 3, since so much state-sponsored misinformation and confusion clouded the process of obtaining even the simplest information about family members’ lives and deaths, this is valuable in and of itself.

This chapter will examine the concept of ‘abdication’ in terms of blameability in dark heritage interpretation as parts of official memory regimes at sites in Moscow. I have already introduced my concepts of grievability, in Chapter 4, and blameability, in Chapters 4 and 5. These explanations will be analyzed here and expanded upon, with a more thorough analysis made in Chapter 8. Overall, across these sites, the repression, Great Terror, and gulag are memorialized in a general way, one that paints all victims ‘equally’ with the same brush yet declines to present the visitor with thorny, complex questions of systemic terror and individual accountability. These differences in interpretation and their underlying reasons, as well as the significance underlying these reasons, will be presented in Chapter 8.

The previous chapter outlined various manifestations of differential types of grievability assigned to different types of victims of Soviet repression in Yekaterinburg, Russia. With that spectrum laid out as a reference, this chapter will focus on ‘hegemonic’, or officially-sanctioned, sites of memorialization and commemoration of the victims of Stalinist repression in Moscow. These include the Gulag Museum, the ‘Wall of Grief’ memorial, the Butovo and Kommunarka firing ranges, and several Moscow cemeteries (see Figure 6.1). The next chapter will turn to examine the various degrees of grievability and blameability assigned to different groups and individuals by non-hegemonic actors in the citywide memorial landscape. Thus, a fuller understanding of the range of memorial phenomena within Moscow will be gained, as well as a deeper comprehension of why certain stakeholders choose certain narratives of grievability and blameability over others and what these choices might tell us about broader attitudes towards the legacy of repression and civil rights in contemporary Russia. This chapter and the next will explore the reasons behind why different stakeholders choose to forward different combinations of grievability and blameability at each site. This formulation will enable us to discern whether there are any shared patterns in underlying motivation and overarching political and sociocultural attitudes.

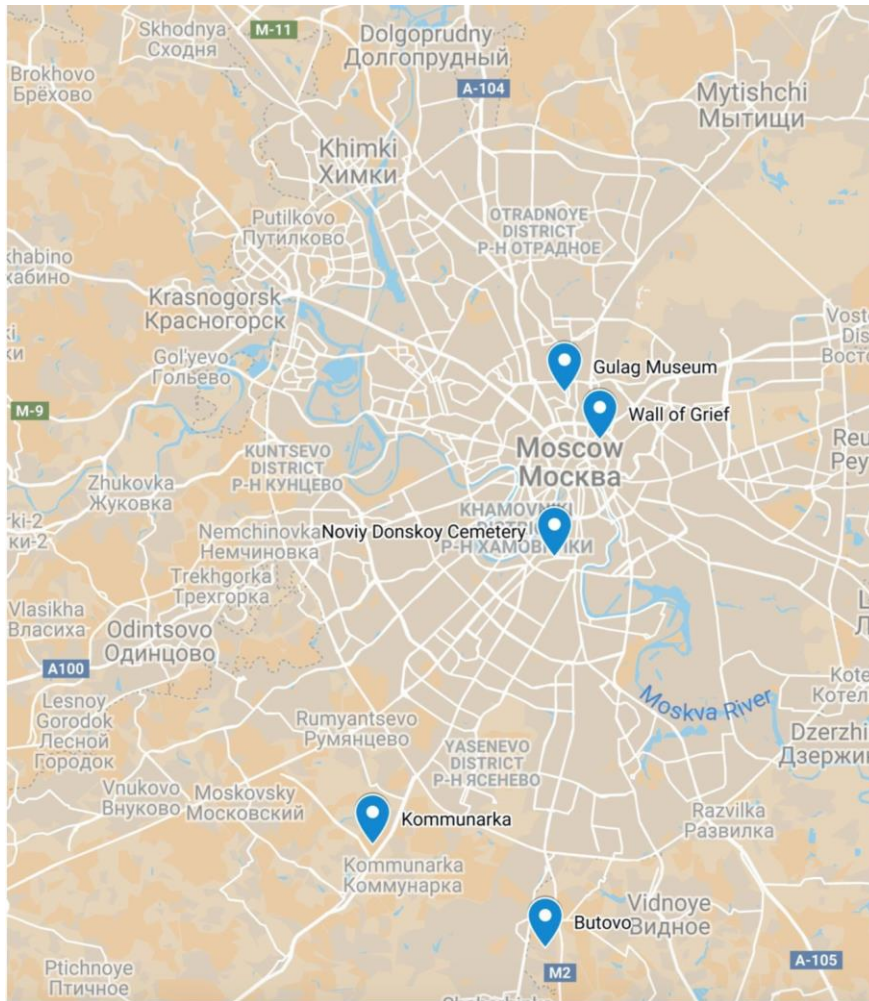


Figure 6.1. Map of ‘official’ Moscow fieldwork sites. (Copyright Google, with additions by author)

Moscow, the capital of the USSR from 1918 and the capital of post-Soviet Russia, has been a center of political, economic, and cultural innovation for decades. The revolution may have been born in Petrograd, but the capital was officially moved to Moscow in 1918 as the Civil War’s Baltic battles threatened the fledgling Bolshevik government. As the seat of Bolshevik and then Soviet government from that point on, decisions were physically made there that led to rapid development and industrialization of the new country, but also led to the death, exile, or imprisonment of millions of citizens. Home to premier Soviet universities, ministries, artistic companies, and industrial concerns, it was a destination many longed to reach. The nerve center from which sweeping changes in culture, politics, technology, and science spread out across the USSR and then the world, Moscow was primed to be the nexus of the coming world revolution. In a study of modernity’s various attempts to defeat death and these experiments’ world-shaking consequences, historian John Gray characterizes the process of

making the USSR thus:

An integral part of this process was the destruction of human life. The Bolsheviks began a type of mass killing not seen before in Russia. The loss of life between 1917 and the Nazi invasion of 1941 cannot be measured precisely. Estimates vary, with figures ranging from a conservative 20 million to upwards of 60 million. Aiming to create a new type of human no longer subject to mortality, the Soviet state propagated death on a vast scale. Unnumbered humans had to die, so that a new humanity could be free of death (2011:51).

Yet Moscow's primacy in so many areas also made its inhabitants – the powerful, striving, or simply caught up in the maelstrom of change – vulnerable to the mass purges that swept through Communist Party cells, boardrooms, and factory floors alike. Massive repressive campaigns were carried out all over the Soviet Union and its various occupied or satellite territories, but Moscow's unique nature meant that its experience of repression was likewise unique (see Slezkine 2017). Further, its continued status as Russia's political, economic, and cultural capital means that decisions and actions taken regarding the heritagization (or lack thereof) of repression echo across the country and the sphere of former Soviet influence.

In the UK and US, non-specialists often ask whether the topic of the gulag and Stalinist repression is 'banned' or 'forbidden' in contemporary Russia, but, as this chapter will show, the subject and discussions of it are not universally 'banned', even if public conversations on this topic tend to touch only on certain aspects; in fact, certain memorial initiatives and institutions that are dedicated to preserving the memory of the repression and its victims enjoy various kinds of government support. Similarly, certain sites of Stalinist repression are now held and managed by the Russian Orthodox Church, which enjoys ever-increasing clout with the current government. However, designated places and approved methods of 'remembrance' and 'memorialization' in and of themselves do not denote a universal approach to handling this difficult past and its repercussions. On the contrary, each site's interpretation techniques and narratives present a different view of the grievability of the victims of Stalinist (and/or Soviet) repression memorialized at each site, as well as the blameability of certain individuals and/or groups of perpetrators.

6.2 Case Studies

6.2.1 Gulag Museum

The Gulag Museum (officially the GULAG History Museum)¹ opened in its current location, just to the north of Moscow's city center, on October 30, 2015, but its earlier, smaller incarnation in the center of Moscow opened in 2004 (see Figure 6.2). The previous location

was in a high-end retail area not far from the Kremlin, but the building was small and cramped; the new building is several times larger and is well-equipped with features such as archival space, storage areas, and visitor facilities. The museum’s interpretation illustrates several themes present across many ‘official’ Russian sites of dark heritage related to Stalinist repression. There is no explanation of the motivations of rank-and-file perpetrators, nor any exploration of the roles of everyday citizens in repressive regimes writ more broadly. Although there are existing links between power structures then and now, as well as legacies in jurisprudence and prisons (discussed in Chapter 3), these remain studiously unexplored. Since the Gulag Museum has strong links to the Moscow City Government and enjoys robust government support, this might be deemed an ‘abdication’ of a responsibility to hold past and present institutions ‘accountable’ at such a dark heritage site. Finally, like many other such sites, the museum attempts to restore identity and dignity to previously ‘nameless’ victims.

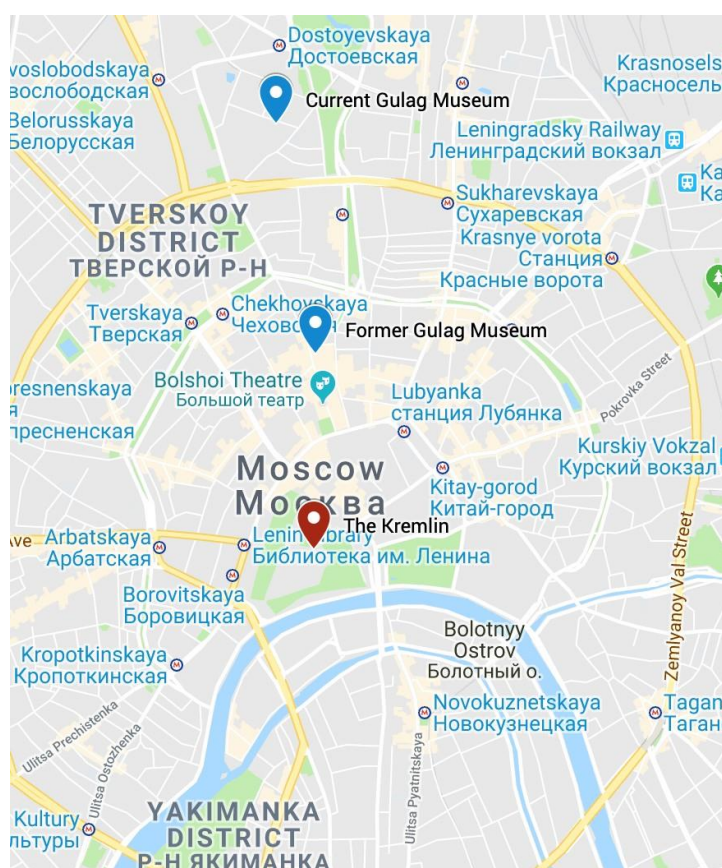


Figure 6.2. Map showing current and former sites of Gulag Museum (Kremlin marked for reference). (Copyright Google; additions by author)

¹ Музей истории ГУЛАГа

One of the museum's chief problems consists of introducing a topic that many visitors, especially the young ones, have never heard of. In the first room, which presents the genesis of the gulag system in the Solovetsky Islands as well as prison experiences, painted outlines on the floor show the exact dimensions of prison cells from notorious prisons across Russia. According to curators, the idea is to simultaneously familiarize the visitor with the size of a cell, imagining having to stay in its overcrowded confines, and estrange the 'familiar' space of a museum exhibit. Authentic cell doors similarly form the walls of a mock cell, while artifacts like pipes and cell door keys decorate the room's walls, accompanied by video showing abandoned prison cells and gulag barracks across Russia (see Figure 6.4).



Figure 6.3. Display showing victims of Great Terror, Gulag Museum. (Photo by author)

According to curators, the placement of the next gallery up a flight of stairs places the visitor into a new physiological state, like that of internees ripped from their homes and placed into prisons and/or labor camps. That upstairs gallery focuses on the Great Terror of 1936-8. Here, there is a strong emphasis on the personal culpability of Joseph Stalin and his Politburo for the excesses and atrocities of the Great Terror. Photocopies of signed shooting lists and orders are abundant, and a small wooden panel shows the face of each leader next to the number of shooting lists each personally signed. Although the issue of perpetration discussed earlier is a fraught one, especially in its treatment of 'totalitarian' leaders, the museum has concrete reasons for establishing the leadership's guilt this way. There are still (mostly elderly) visitors to the museum who believe that Stalin himself had no idea that the mass shootings and deportations were taking place; in their conceptions, the entire affair can be blamed on one or



Figure 6.4. Display of former prison cell doors, Gulag Museum. (Photo by author)

several overzealous or malicious Politburo members. The point of this exhibit, then, is to concretely ‘prove’ that Stalin and his entire team not only knew of the campaigns but actively approved of them. Next to this display, a large video screen lists the names of tens of thousands of Soviet citizens shot during the Great Terror. Every few seconds, a photograph and minimal biography of one of these victims appears; the entire list’s photographs appear over the course of a full year.

The museum includes several design features that are supposed to elicit emotions from the visitor, with some of these expressly designed to mirror the emotional state of victims of repression. For example, a visitor leaving the section just described, which focuses on victims of the Great Terror’s shooting campaigns, has to go around an opening to the floor below, which is meant to represent the abyss into which victims fell. This opening is flanked on either side by anti-‘enemy’ propaganda posters, designed by an artist who was himself later purged, representing the cannibalistic nature of the purges.

In general, such ‘psychological’ design features, along with elements that allow the visitor to view ‘original’ documents and photographs, are the museum’s dominating patterns. There are some displays focusing on original artifacts: one very large room holds a dozen small display cases with themed assemblages of gulag artifacts inside them (see Figure 6.5). For example, one holds examples of embroidery done by female inmates, while another holds wooden

objects whittled by inmates. A small touchscreen next to each case allows the visitor to look up each object in English or Russian and read about it and its creator; when available, these biographies are accompanied by a video of the survivors or family members talking about their experiences.



Figure 6.5. Interactive artifact cases, Gulag Museum. (Photo by author)

The objects are supposed to be at once familiar – cigarette cases and mittens – but also estranged in the stories of how they came to be created and, often, transported out of the camps. For example, objects that were made or smuggled by ‘trusties,’ or prisoners who had special privileges because of collaboration with camp authorities, can be explored via questions about students’ classroom social dynamics – teacher’s pets, unpopular students, and so on. The hunks of bread representing prisoners’ daily rations can be used to spark similar conversations; one guide noted that they often compare calories in a Big Mac to the calories of daily bread and soup rations. The videos at these stations, especially, are quite effective methods of engaging uninformed and/or young visitors who may have never heard of the gulag system or repression at all. Thus, the objects go beyond metonymy, or ‘standing in’ for absent victims; instead, through the audio-visual components, they ‘speak’ to the viewer through victims’ own words or those of a relative. This section also presents the humanity of a select few of the victims of Stalinist repression, partially addressing the age-old dilemma of museums and memorials dealing with mass atrocity: how to humanize the plight of millions of people. There is a second parallel, here, to Holocaust museums: besides the section of

original prison doors and objects at the very beginning of this exhibition, these are the only ‘authentic’ artifacts in the museum. The rest focuses on written and video interpretation, including many facsimiles of documents like shooting lists and orders. In his analysis of the USHMM, Ochsner laid out the intricate difficulties faced by a museum of ‘narrative’ as opposed to ‘objects’:

Because the narrative is primary, the objects serve as evidence of the truth of the narrative, offering immediate physical evidence to American audiences that these events did occur. However, the appropriation of the objects by the narrative cannot avoid separating us from the real experience of the Holocaust itself. On the other hand, without the Holocaust Museum the memory of the history of the Holocaust might be lost (1995: 241).

Holocaust museums and memorials differ from museums and memorials to victims of Soviet or Stalinist repression in several key ways. Yet a similar ‘use’ of the objects and ‘original’ documents on display at the Gulag Museum is discernible here, in that they provide proof to visitors that people really did live (and die) in gulags or prisons. On the other hand, as with the USHMM, trying to relate the experience of gulag prisoners to the experience of schoolchildren – through the aforementioned references to schoolyard politics or McDonald’s, for example – ‘cannot avoid separating us from the real experience of the [repression] itself’ (Ochsner 1995: 241).

The Gulag Museum retains a strong commitment to community engagement and memory preservation: these efforts are showcased in two small galleries. One shows Soviet propaganda films and taped interviews with survivors of the gulag on two opposing screens. The taped interviews are a centerpiece of contemporary social activity at the museum; deemed ‘visual anthropology’ by the management, they provide a focal point for action by young volunteers while preserving firsthand accounts of the repression from a rapidly aging and disappearing population. The ‘My Gulag’² project has now produced over 100 video interviews of survivors talking about their experiences, many of which can be viewed online (Gulag Museum 2018). The anxieties of ‘postmemory’ (Hirsch 2008) are discernable throughout the museum, but especially so here.

The next gallery also uses juxtaposition to interpret Stalin’s death; one small octagon shows

² Мой ГУЛАГ

‘official’ footage from the funeral and many close-up shots of grieving mourners. Outside, a screen shows more interviews of people recounting their own or relatives’ impressions of Stalin’s death, which tended to be more positive than the official response. The rest of that gallery, however, details the 1951 opening salvos of the Doctors’ Plot, widely believed to have been meant to develop into a full-scale purge, not just of the medical establishment, but of the Soviet Jewish population. In Jonathan Brent and Vladimir Naumov’s summation:

The plot grew far beyond the boundaries of an anti-Semitic action. It encompassed the security services and led to widespread purges. Kremlin leaders like Molotov, Mikoyan, and Voroshilov were denounced as spies. Citizens’ committees were formed to identify and denounce Jews and other dubious individuals. Scientists, doctors, and intellectuals were arrested or came under increasing suspicion. As newly discovered documents show, in the months preceding Stalin’s death, four new, large concentration camps were put under construction (2003: 9).

This ‘near-miss’ of a final wave of Stalinist repression could be an opportunity for the museum to examine the various systematic aspects of repression that either ceased to function shortly after Stalin’s death or were carried on by specific institutions into the end of the Soviet era. However, this opportunity is not taken. After a row of literary works and memoirs associated with the repression, the visitor heads upstairs. The management believes, much like with the shooting lists, that showing visitors the original documentation of repressive orders will help ‘prove’ that the repression really happened. Thus, a set of opened filing cabinets are filled with such documents for the visitor’s perusal.

Finally, a small display focuses on Nikita Khrushchev’s ‘secret speech’ and later actions that freed millions of inmates and rehabilitated the reputations of millions more, living and dead. Although text panels detail the trials and tribulations of some freed and rehabilitated arrestees, the story of Soviet repression cuts off in the 1950s. No mention is made of the continued abuses of the Soviet state with regards to forced psychiatric treatment – medication, forced hospitalizations, etc. – of dissidents in the Brezhnev era (for more on these abuses, see Bloch and Reddaway 1985) or the imprisonment (and, in some cases) deaths of dissidents and nationalists from different Soviet republics at camps like Perm-36 up until the late 1980s (Svitlychna 1986). Instead, the last section focuses on the Putin regime’s public support for memorial initiatives like the Gulag Museum and the memorial to the victims of repression, which opened in late October of 2017 in central Moscow (discussed below). This elision of the more recent decades of Soviet power and repression was predicted by Williams (2012a: 117)) in anticipation of both increased government support for the museum and the move to

a more well-appointed building. It also encapsulates the overall dissonance of the museum. Nothing presented is factually incorrect or misleading; however, the topics and people that are allotted space and interpretation are carefully chosen to leave as much culpability in the past as possible and avoid bringing any controversy into the present day.

The museum is well laid-out and maintained; the head curator, Roman Romanov, styles himself a ‘museum-psychologist’ in conversation, and the museological strategy is clearly meant to engage the visitor’s senses as well as emotions. However, each exhibit or campaign can only get so much information across: as with the emphasis placed on ‘proving’ Stalin’s guilt in the same Great Terror exhibit, this focus again limits the space and time that could be used to examine the motivations and identities of rank-and-file perpetrators or connections to contemporary penal and human rights issues. There is no attempt to paint some arrestees or inmates as ‘criminal’ or somehow ‘deserving’ of punishment. Some elements of interpretation, such as the discussion of artists working with anti-enemy propaganda posters, do point to the partial culpability of different groups of people through time. Nonetheless, all of the victims are painted as equally ‘grievable’. This absence could be viewed as a matter of space constraints or narrative simplification; however, in light of the reluctance elsewhere to draw connections between past and present power structures, it seems likely that there is an element of deliberate silence as well.

The history of the gulag system, according to the museum, cuts off in the mid-1950s with the massive return of freed inmates to society. Thus, the subject of political dissidents imprisoned in Mordovia and Siberia through the 1980s is not broached at all, and the subject of the FSB’s inherited NKVD legacy – to say nothing of links that current political and institutional leaders may have to repressive systems and organs – is completely ignored. And it cannot be said that there is simply no discussion of anything past the mass releases. The final video screens of the exhibit show President Putin commemorating victims of Soviet repression; there is absolutely no mention anywhere of his former role as a KGB agent and, later, director of the FSB. The Gulag Museum is partially funded by the City of Moscow, and Romanov took pains to show me a medal it received from the government. Later, in August 2018, he was personally awarded the Medal of the Order ‘For Merit to the Fatherland’, further illustrating the level of support the government holds for him and this specific suite of initiatives. Perhaps, in order to say anything about Soviet repression publicly, some connections need to remain unmade.

The museum's main exhibitions, analyzed here, closed for renovation in summer 2018 and reopened in December 2018 – too late to be included in this thesis. The museum's outreach, oral history, and other projects continued apace, but all exhibitions on site ceased during this time. The new exhibit is entitled 'GULAG in the People's Lives and Nation's History'³ and 'shows the history of mass repression as a united process' (Gulag Museum 2018). The specific details remain to be seen, but the emphasis on 'fate' [судьба] in the Russian original suggests a distancing from an analysis of individual actions, motivations, and consequences.

6.2.2 Wall of Grief

The Wall of Grief,⁴ Russia's first national memorial to the victims of Soviet political repression, officially opened on October 30, 2017. Calls for such a memorial began in the 1950s and then grew louder under *glasnost*. The construction costs amounted to 460 million rubles⁵: of this, 300 million rubles came from the Moscow city budget, while the remainder was raised from private citizens of all income levels through the 'Memory Foundation' charity (TASS 2016). The Memory Foundation⁶, which is closely linked to the Gulag Museum, held an open competition for the memorial's design. The winning design was by architect Georgy Frangulyan, who is well-known across Russia for his monumental sculptures.

The memorial sits on the Garden Ring Road in an odd location; although, on the map, it looks quite central, it is actually not 'near' any other memorials or visitor destinations of note, with the somewhat-dubious exception of the memorial to the man who invented Kalashnikov automatic firearms. Real estate in Moscow, especially a lot of this size, is at a premium, and the cross street is named after famous Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov. From an aesthetic point of view, the memorial fits a certain paradigm of memorials to the victims of the Holocaust and other mid-20th-century European mass atrocities. Anonymous human figures, wrought in bronze, writhe in groups, and one panel has the word 'remember' inscribed on it in various languages. Yet nothing about this portion seems particularly unique to Russia or to the experience of the gulag, the mass shooting campaigns, and other key features of mass Soviet repression. The only written interpretation names the memorial and notes that President Vladimir V. Putin opened it in 2017, but it does not provide any other information about the

³ История ГУЛАГа в судьбах людей и судьбе страны

⁴ Стена скорби

⁵ Roughly 6 million GBP at October 2017 exchange rates

⁶ Фонд Памяти

repression and its victims.



Figure 6.6 'Wall of Grief', Moscow. (Photo by author)



Figure 6.7. Close up of 'Wall of Grief' section. (Photo by author)

Behind the main ‘wall’ of the monument, however, a variety of stones brought from the Russian Federation’s various states and autonomous regions brings a bit of specificity to the memorial (see Figure 6.8). There are 170 stones brought from 58 Russian regions, each ‘a place where gulag prisons or camps were located’ (TASS 2017). Each stone, set into the ground, has a small metal number attached to it, and visitors can identify each stone’s provenance from a plaque embedded nearby. This allows visitors to this Moscow monument to lay flowers or candles, or simply tangibly interact with, a specific physical part of the geographically-immense ‘gulag archipelago’: perhaps a place to which they themselves or family members were sent, perhaps a place infamous for other reasons.

In terms of heritage and place, this is especially meaningful because many of these original gulag sites show little material trace of the forced labor camps and colonies that once marked the landscape. Made of cheap materials, many such buildings and other pieces of infrastructure have already decayed; where they have not, permanent interpretation of any kind at those sites remains extremely rare outside of exceptions like Solovki and Perm-36. The apparatuses of memorialization and/or heritagization at the sites themselves remain scarce and logistically challenging in any case. In this act of bringing the periphery’s stones into the metropolis, the nigh-incomprehensible scope of the geography of Stalinist repression is centralized and made accessible for a wider range of those who wish to remember or memorialize. However, at this time, they will have to bring their own meanings to the site with them, as no information or interpretation is relayed at the site regarding what happened, who the victims were, or who is to blame and/or responsible for the different aspects of repression.

When the memorial opened, on October 30, 2017, President Putin and the current head of the Russian Orthodox Church were present. Putin gave a speech outlining the need to make sure such a horror never happens again, but he did not mention Stalin by name at all (MacFarquhar 2017). This elision of blame, which is echoed in the site’s lack of interpretation, has evident qualities of an ‘abdication’ of the task of identifying culpability. The victims might as well have been carried away by a tidal wave, not targeted and processed through various state mechanisms of repression. As with the Gulag Museum, the federal government publicly supports certain aspects of the remembrance of victims of political repression, here made tangible by the plaque that specifically commemorates Putin’s opening of the memorial. The topic of the repression is not ‘banned’, but the narratives the government chooses to support



Figure 6.8. ‘Memorial’ stones from across Russia, ‘Wall of Grief’. (Photo by author)

are carefully stage-managed. As for the victims, as depicted at the memorial, according to the sculptor, they are just one mass of faceless, ‘anonymous’ writhing forms, struck down ‘indiscriminately’ by the ‘grim reaper’s scythe’ (quoted in MacFarquhar 2017) – a sea of lost humanity with no discernable individual forms. Although this avoids the issue, seen at other sites, of ‘ranking’ types of victim, it also robs them of specificity and humanity, making it hard for a visitor to connect with the scale of loss and grief the monument is purported to represent.

6.2.3 Butovo Firing Range

The Butovo firing range and mass grave lie in a far-southern district of Moscow. Before the revolution, it was a horse farm, but the land was taken over by the new Bolshevik government shortly after the regime change. Turned into a practice firing range, it was later used as a site for executions and mass burials of ‘enemies of the people’; over 20,000 people were shot and killed there from 1937-8 (Butovo Memorial Education and Research Center 2019). After the site ceased to be a killing and burial ground, it was planted over with apple trees (Tzouliadis 2008: 103) and remained officially unremembered and under KGB control until the fall of the USSR. It has been under the management of the Russian Orthodox since 2002 (Butovo Memorial Education and Research Center 2019). Here, we see an emphasis on victims’ martyrdom and personal loss, but no attempt to identify any perpetrators at all. Although there

is an explicitly religious discourse of mourning at the site, there is still no attempt to connect it to present-day abuses of power or living people.

A dedicated bus line runs directly there about once an hour on weekdays from the nearest Metro station; otherwise, visitors can walk from a bus stop that serves a number of routes along a nearby highway, walking for about ten minutes through an apartment complex and some woodland to get there. This is a notable contrast to the situation at the 12th Kilometer, which lacks regular public transport links and is not well-signed from the highway.



Figure 6.9. ‘Church on Blood’, Butovo. (Photo by author)

The mass grave itself is just by the road but completely surrounded by high fencing; if you go in, you are immediately met by signs instructing you to dress and behave appropriately because this is a ‘sacred place’. Inside the fence, a small, wooden ‘Church on Blood’, of a type built on sites of violence in Russian Orthodoxy, stands by the entrance (Figure 6.9), while the lodgings and outbuildings for the resident priest are clustered nearby. The fence supports several large panels of text and photos, most of which focus on the identity and suffering of a specific group of victims (e.g., former Tsarist officials, former leaders of the Belomor canal, built with forced labor in northern Russia between 1931-33, etc.).



Figure 6.10. Text panel on ‘Butovo Hagiorites’, or Russian Orthodox victims who had studied at Mount Athos, buried at Butovo. (Photo by author)

A ‘Memorial Garden’ opened at the site in September 2017 (Figure 6.11). Previously, a series of panels bearing the names of Russian Orthodox monks, leaders, and believers had been installed on the site, but, as I was informed by a guide in October 2016, the panels’ material was not durable enough for the Russian winter. In 2017, the panels could still be seen stacked up around the site. The new Memorial Garden, however, is made of granite and is also much more substantial in the range of victims it commemorates. 20,762 names are engraved on two lines of stone slabs that line a gently sloping alley down to a memorial bell. People come to leave flowers and candles at all times of the year, with a marked increase around certain days of remembrance, such as October 30.

The memorial church, built across the road in 2007, is notable for its elaborate frescoes. These are in the style of many contemporary Russian Orthodox frescoes, but a few eschew the ordinary scenes from the Bible or lives of long-ago saints to show Revolutionary-era martyrs. This includes scenes of the Tsar and his family being shot as well as the martyrdom of monks



Figure 6.11. Memorial Garden, Butovo. (Photo by author)

and other religions figures at Solovki and other locations (Figure 6.12). Outside stands a wooden cross carved in the Solovetsky Islands and transported to the site by boat across European Russia's rivers (Figure 6.13). A text panel nearby goes into great detail about the distance the cross traveled and the symbolism of the images carved on the cross: i.e., the barbed wire represents 'gulag martyrology'. Eventually, a small museum and a 'lower church' with exhibits as well as ritual spaces will open on the site, but, as of 2018, neither of these areas had been completed. However, the preliminary text panels installed in the lower church emphasized the 'martyrdom' of the victims, as does the website (Butovo Memorial Research and Education Centre 2019).

An academic who has worked at Butovo for years has defended this presentation of the victims as 'martyred' by asserting 'that everyone who died at the site, whatever their belief on earth, is now a martyr, praying in the other light for us' (cited in Merridale 2000: 383). In fact, Butovo is the resting place of over 300 Orthodox priests and religious leaders who have been canonized; in Rousselet's phrasing, 'Butovo is at the same time considered a place of

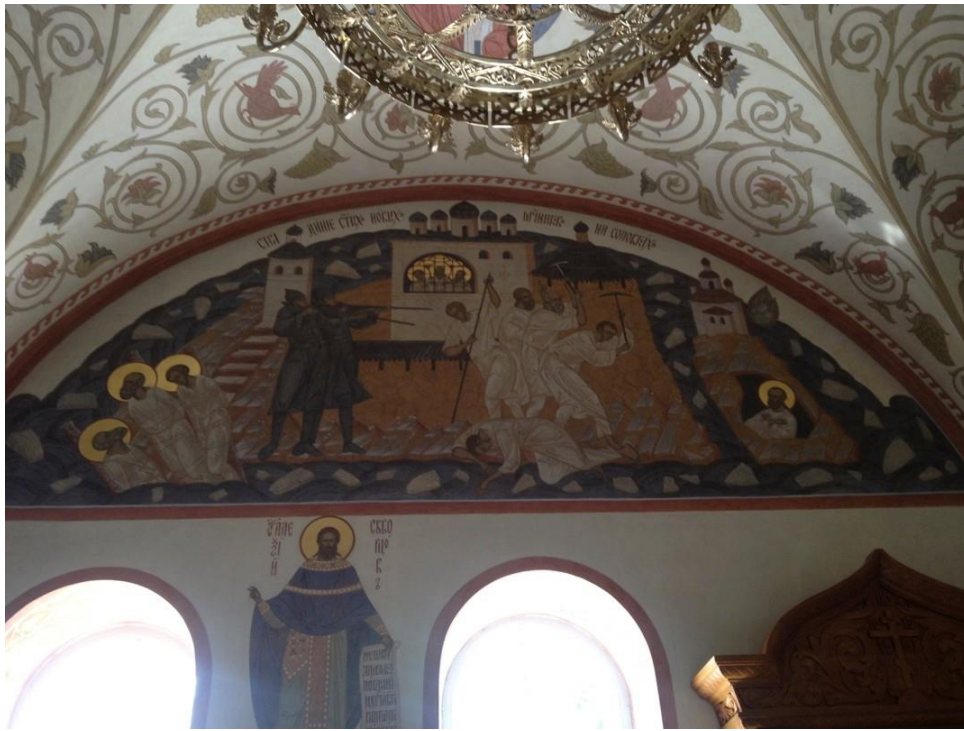


Figure 6.12. Fresco of monks being martyred on Solovetsky Islands, Butovo. (Photo by author)



Figure 6.13. Memorial cross, Butovo. (Photo by author)

memory and a holy ground, a place of veneration of new saints' (2007: 56).⁷

At Butovo, memorial services in memory of the victims buried at the site take place several times per week, but larger, organized commemorative activities take place at other times of year. On 30 October, priests lead special requiems, and mourners and political activists from across Russia come to Butovo to read names, pray, and leave flowers and candles, as they do at scores of sites across Russia, the former Soviet Union, and beyond. For several years, there have been signs that the site is upgrading its visitor services and infrastructure: a small kiosk-‘café’ has been sitting unopened in the parking lot for years, and the separate ‘museum’ building next to the church is still under development at the time of writing.

A fuller analysis of grievability and blameability as assigned to different groups at Butovo will follow in Chapter 8. Briefly, however, we can note that all victims are mourned here, even those who were involved (and are identified at the site itself as having been involved) with earlier iterations of Soviet repression, such as the Belomor canal project. Yet in the past, there has been a marked difference in commemoration of different groups, as when, a few years ago, the Orthodox priests and other ‘believers’ were the only people whose names were inscribed on a set of memorial tablets. Although those tablets have been abandoned, as they were not sturdy enough to survive the Russian winter, in favor of a more inclusive list of names of victims (taken from shooting lists and other NKVD documents), it is still the case that the tone of memorialization is decidedly religious and martyrdom-oriented, even though many of the victims buried at Butovo were not Orthodox (and may even have been militantly atheist) in life. The emphasis is placed on restoring individual identity to specific victims, in contrast to the situation at the Romanov death sites in Yekaterinburg.

Who is to blame for all of this? It is noted repeatedly that the NKVD arrested, judged, and killed all of these people, but there is no attempt to identify individual people or subgroups of NKVD workers (i.e., interrogators, members of shooting squads, ‘civilian’ denouncers) as perpetrators; nor is there an emphasis on blaming any particular Politburo member or other political leader, even Stalin or an NKVD head. Instead, the issue of perpetration is treated almost as a natural disaster: it happened, but there is no attempt to pinpoint its specific causes

⁷ ‘Butovo est considéré à la fois comme un lieu de mémoire et comme une terre sainte, un espace de vénération de nouveaux saints’

or parties responsible. This could be termed an ‘abdication’ of blameability and reflects a broader reluctance to follow consequences of repression into the secular world and present day.

6.2.4 Kommunarka Firing Range

Like Butovo, the Kommunarka firing range and mass grave are also in a far-southern district of Moscow, slightly northwest of Butovo. A few bus lines will drop visitors off at a stop along a main highway, not far from where a dirt road turns off and leads a few hundred meters down a path to the cemetery gates. Visitors must ring a doorbell for the gate to be opened from inside, and the entire site is surrounded by a wooden fence. Around 10,000 people who had been convicted of ‘anti-Soviet crimes’ were brought here, shot, and buried from 1937-1941 by NKVD operatives. At this site, there is again an emphasis on restoring individual identity and dignity to victims of repression, while the issue of perpetration is again skirted – although in less overtly-religious terms than at Butovo.

Before the revolution, the land had been part of a private estate; afterwards, the land was given to the OGPU⁸ and OGPU chief Genrikh Yagoda, who had a dacha there before 1938, the date of his arrest and execution in Moscow’s Lefortovo prison. Later, in June 1938, his wife, Ida Leonidovna Averbakh, along with two of his sisters, were shot and buried at Kommunarka. All three of his relations are listed in a ‘book of memory’ produced by *Memorial* from NKVD shooting lists; Ida is described as having been sentenced ‘as a family member of an enemy of the motherland’⁹ (*International Memorial* 2000: 9). Ida and one sister were rehabilitated in 1990, while the second was rehabilitated under Khrushchev in 1957 (*International Memorial* 2000: 9, 463; see Chapter 3 for a brief overview of different rehabilitation systems over time). In a 2015 decision, Russia’s Supreme Court decided that Genrikh Yagoda could not be rehabilitated under the 1991 legislation governing rehabilitation of victims of Soviet repression. A news article covering the decision quotes the approval of the head of the Presidential Council for Human Rights, Mikhail Fedotov, who holds that the legislation ‘provides the possibility of absolution only for those who did not themselves participate in repression’¹⁰ (Yakovleva 2015). In fact, a 1988 rehabilitation of the rest of the ‘right-

⁸ Joint State Political Directorate (Объединённое государственное политическое управление), the successor to the Cheka and precursor to the NKVD

⁹ ‘как член семьи изменника Родине’

¹⁰ закон о реабилитации жертв политических репрессий предусматривает возможность оправдания только тех, кто сам не участвовал в репрессиях’, 104

Trotskyite' bloc, who were executed for their membership in that made-up faction, also excluded Yagoda. But, as Sokolov argues in recounting this earlier decision, a 'lawful' government should not uphold fictitious convictions, even if that conviction results in the demise of a true murderer and villain (2011: 86).



Figure 6.14. Memorial plaques, Kommunarka. (Photo by author)

In terms of deciding who personally 'participated in repression', Yagoda does not present a difficult case, as a head of the NKVD. Other prominent Old Bolsheviks who fell victim to the Great Terror and are buried at Kommunarka are also listed in the book of memory, including Nikolai Bukharin. However, since October 2018, all victims of repression buried at the site (whose burials have been confirmed by archival research) are listed on new memorial tablets placed there with the help of *Memorial* (see figure 6.14). The inclusion of Yagoda, especially, led to public controversy over 'victims' and 'executioners' being honored together (Radio Svoboda 2018). *Memorial's* stance is that they are not currently in a position to delineate who does and does not 'count' as a perpetrator, so they have opted instead to use the tablets as a 'factual' accounting of people known to be buried at Kommunarka (*International Memorial* 2018b).

note that 'оправдания' can also mean 'justification', in a specific, religious sense of moving to a state of grace from a state of sin.



Figure 6.15. Memorial to victims of political repression, Kommunarka. (Photo by author)

Visiting just after the Day of Remembrance in late October, large flower arrangements and wreaths had been brought to the site. Many high-profile victims, including major Communist leaders of the era from Mongolia and other non-Soviet areas, are buried at Kommunarka, and several large stone monuments to these dignitaries stand by the entrance. There is also one general memorial to the ‘thousands of victims of political repression in the USSR’ buried at Kommunarka (Figure 6.15.) Presumably, some had been placed there by members of the groups coming from ceremonies like the one held at the Solovetsky Stone on October 30. That gathering will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, but after the speeches and more secular remembrances there had ended, attendees split off to attend other ceremonies and gatherings at sites across the Moscow area, from the Church of Christ the Savior to mass graves like Kommunarka and Butovo. There is another small cluster of small memorial plaques and photographs in a back corner of the site (Figure 6.16).

While the mass grave area of Butovo is covered by grass and neatly tended paths, the Kommunarka complex, aside from the church and its outbuildings, is mostly given over to light forest. A few stone memorials are placed here and there around the site, with many clustered near the entrance, but the overall effect is not overtly memorial. I had heard that



Figure 6.16. Memorial plaques and photographs, Kommunarika. (Photo by author)

there was another wooden cross from Solovki at Kommunarika; although a ‘memorial cross’ was marked on a map by the entrance, it was difficult to discern where, exactly, its location might be. The map appeared to show paths, but these were impossible to see on the landscape itself. Wanting to avoid walking across known gravesites (as also marked on the map) if possible, and noting the ‘danger’ signs alluding to the presence of gas lines, I decided to ask for help at the church, a plainer example than the one at Butovo. The monks, busy preparing dinner, were enormously welcoming, and, serendipitously, a film crew affiliated with a BBC project was there that day. Like the mourners who had brought wreaths for the Mongolian dignitaries killed in the Great Terror, these researchers and filmmakers had also been drawn in by a tendril of the international web of Soviet ideology and repression. They had helped place a memorial, which they had paid for themselves, to Iranian victims of the Great Terror who are buried at the site. As we sat and waited for them to return from filming, a Russian member of the team told me that, before she started this research, she had thought that the world was made up of good people and bad people, but she didn’t think that anymore; the research project had convinced her that desperate circumstances will prompt almost

everyone's moral compasses to shift. This woman's move away from a categorical view of morality towards one that takes into account the circumstances and circumscribed choices available to Soviet citizens at the time reflects the overall ambiguity and uncertainty that mark discussions and interpretations of victimhood and perpetration in contemporary Russia. The monks also took pains to point out that the very same building where we were sitting, drinking tea – now housing a refectory and a small chapel – had been Yagoda's dacha.

Informally, the connection between Yagoda and 'the terror' writ large was freely made, but, as at Butovo, the site's official interpretation makes no mention of who the actual perpetrators were or what their motivations might have been. Here, some subsets of victims are considered slightly more grievable because of their status in life, as evidenced by the individualized monuments placed in memory of some around the site. However, it is important to note that this difference in memorialization does not necessarily reflect the views of the site's managers, as here it is possible for specific groups to pay for their own memorial of choice. The managers and *Memorial* have together chosen not to separate out any categories of 'victim' according to whether or not they might be considered 'perpetrators' at any juncture, which again reflects an 'abdication' of interpretation regarding blame, one that speaks to the deep ambivalence and uncertainty surrounding this issue at sites related to the heritage of Stalinist repression.

6.2.5 Noviy Donskoy Cemetery

The Butovo and Kommunarka firing ranges are not the only major Moscow-area burial sites of victims of mass Stalinist repression. The Noviy Donskoy cemetery, located not far from a metro station just outside the Garden Ring Road, is famous for being the site of one of the Soviet Union's first crematoria, which opened in 1927. As Stites asserts, 'The fiery machines of the crematoria were the perfect emblem for the Bolshevik way of death: clean, rational, and economical' (1991: 304). Indeed, in the spirit of reforging the Soviet man in a new model, cremation became part of the 'ideal' Soviet way of death, despite ongoing resistance from the population (Merridale 2003: 182)¹¹.

¹¹ Many prominent Bolsheviks and supporters were cremated and their ashes ceremoniously buried in the Kremlin walls. The ideological tension between this ideal of Bolshevik death and burial and the decision to embalm Lenin (as well as, briefly, Stalin) for public display and veneration is outside the scope of this work, but see Tumarkin (1981) for an exploration of how the 'Lenin cult' fed into existing Russian religious and folkloric hero and savior tropes, as well as a Marxist 'true deification of man' (1981: 46).

Cremation also presented itself to the OGPU and NKVD as one solution to the problem posed by the bodies of the repressed. Starting in 1934, the remains of people who had died or been killed, mostly in Moscow prisons, were brought in trucks to the Donskoy crematorium. After cremation, their ashes were then placed in a mass grave. Merridale recounts the grim nightly activity at the height of the Great Terror:

The staff of Moscow's new crematorium were [...] obliged to accept consignments from the city's major prisons throughout the night. The bodies arrived in batches, accompanied by stamped and duplicated forms that requested they be burned immediately. 'They were such handsome men,' recalled a crematorium worker. 'Some of them were still warm. Some of them were not even dead when we put them into the furnace'. The practice was not secret, at least as far as women like her were concerned (2000: 255).

Meanwhile, the cremations, interments, and burials of other citizens continued as normal. Today, all three mass graves are surrounded by the gravestones and memorial tablets of those who died broadly 'good deaths' (see Abramovitch 2001¹²) through the 1980s, when the cemetery stopped interring remains. In accordance with late Soviet and modern Russian funerary customs, small portraits and photographs look out at the visitor from many of these 'normal' graves (Merridale 2003: 178).

The three mass graves are marked on an online map and at a large map standing at the entrance to the cemetery, but, even with small gray metal posts above each site, they are difficult to find in the cemetery's labyrinth of graves and markers. The largest and most infamous of these mass graves, 'Common Grave Number One', now has a sizable memorial plaque alongside it (Figure 6.17). At each mass grave, many relatives have chosen to place plaques with names, births of date and death, and, often, photographs of their murdered loved ones. Interspersed with artificial flowers, these vary widely in size and design, and the names (of both genders) reflect a panoply of ethnicities and ages. The faces peering out personif

¹² Although, as Abramovitch (2001: 3272) explains, concepts of 'good' and 'bad' death are always culturally specific, in general, 'bad death' 'leav[es] survivors despairing, helpless in the face of meaninglessness, evil, or nothingness. Unpredictability, violence, or intentional harm are widespread attributes of a bad death'. Of course, statistically speaking, a proportion of the people buried in the Noviy Donskoy Cemetery's individual graves or columbarium niches will have died from suicide or other violent causes. Yet the overall moral distinction between the 'good' deaths of citizens and the 'bad' deaths of enemies of the people is evident in the extremely different treatment of their respective remains, detailed in this text.



Figure 6.17. Mass grave 1, Noviy Donskoy cemetery. (Photo by author)

and prove an individuality denied to these people as names printed on a uniform shooting list and disposed of decades ago on a cold, industrial scale. People have placed similar small plaques at Kommunarka as well, but here the effect is magnified because so many are crammed together into such tiny spaces. In the absence of a grave or an even-theoretically retrievable body, the plaques can be seen as a reclamation of identity and a space on the landscape – both the tangible landscape of the cemetery and the intangible memroyscape of a post-terror society.

Visiting on the day after the Day of Remembrance to Victims of Political Repression, I saw many freshly-laid wreaths and floral offerings, including ones left on behalf of prominent victims buried there, such as Count István Bethlen, a former Prime Minister of Hungary who had been arrested in 1945 as a possible threat to the postwar consolidation of the Soviet bloc. He died in a Moscow prison in 1946 and was interred in Common Grave Number One, but

his ‘symbolic ashes’ were brought to Hungary in June 1994’ (Romsics 1995: 388). As a victim of the wave of arrests and mass killings that followed the end of the Great Patriotic War, his story is a sober reminder that the Great Terror was only one aspect of a long series of Soviet repressions. It is also a personification of the ways in which Stalinist terror affected many different ethnicities and nations, both within the borders of the USSR and within its wide-ranging sphere of influence.

Count Bethlen and others fell victim to the power struggle that ended with the Iron Curtain being drawn through the middle of Europe, but other bodies interred at the Noviy Donskoy Cemetery, Kommunarka, and Butovo carry with them traces of stories that began in Mongolia, China, Finland, and even the United States. The international scope of communism and the allure of what was promoted as the vanguard of a global proletarian revolution attracted hundreds of enthusiasts from a United States ravaged by economic depression. Tzouliadis (2008: 2) calls it ‘the least heralded migration in American history [...] Within their ranks were American communists, trade unionists and assorted radicals of the John Reed school, but most were ordinary citizens not overly concerned by politics’. The human scope of the repression contained in these tiny areas of the cemetery are not interpreted at all. Although the small plaques are an attempt by individual relatives to restore individual memory and personality to a site that previously did not acknowledge these victims’ presence, the abdication of blameability again leaves any identification of perpetration lacking.

6.3 Abdication at ‘Official’ Sites of Memory

In developing this theory of blameability, particularly this concept of ‘abdication’ regarding assigning blame or culpability at dark heritage sites, I will turn to consider some of this chapter’s case studies. Starting from a type we might call ‘abdication’, we find sites like the former NKVD shooting range at Butovo. The interpretation there is controlled and designed by the Russian Orthodox church that was opened on the site in 2007. At the mass grave itself, photo boards show dozens of images of different victims of the repression buried there, but comparatively little space is given over to images of perpetrators at any level of responsibility. In the nearby church, the soon-to-be-opened lower cathedral displays items removed from the mass graves, such as shoes and watches, alongside some text panels that emphasize the vast national, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of the Butovo ‘martyrs’. In the upper cathedral, the frescoes show several images of victims of Soviet terror being martyred: these range from the royal family, shot by Red Guards in Yekaterinburg in 1918, to monks from the Solovetsky

Monastery and other religious installations. These frescoes, done in the same style as the more typical Biblical scenes around them, nevertheless emphasize that these religious victims were martyred, and their killers, far from being mere political opponents, therefore acted on the side of evil in a metaphysical way.

As Fedor (2014) has pointed out, this type of blame placement – wherein human actors committed ‘evil’ acts of killing or atrocity, but the characterization of victims as ‘martyrs’ moves the realm of justice into the next world, not this one – is widespread at sites of Soviet repression that are now managed by the Russian Orthodox Church. On the one hand, this is simply in keeping with crude Christian theology – if all evil really originate from Satan, and the world’s problems are rooted in this original sin and evil, then that explains why atrocities and massacres happen on a broad scale. Further, the necessary judgments will be made in the End Times, so the need to settle questions of blame and culpability is taken mostly or wholly out of the mortal realm. In other settings, this sort of abdication of the act of blaming manifests itself differently. For example, a common tactic is to soberly and accurately document the human toll of the repression but say nothing about the perpetrators at all, as if the atrocity and misfortune simply fell from the skies, striking down victims at random with no human agency involved in the targeting.

Another type, much indebted to the totalitarian school of history, as evidenced above, is to solely blame certain leaders or famous figures; we can call this ‘authoritarian’. As described above, at Moscow’s Gulag Museum, a series of text panels and interactive features focuses solely on proving that Stalin and other powerful members of his inner circle personally signed documents related to the Great Terror and Soviet repression. Here, the interpretation includes photographs of shootings lists with the leaders’ signatures fully visible on them, as well as a display of each Politburo member’s portrait next to the number of shooting lists each personally signed.

As several tour guides pointed out independently, many people in Russia (especially the older generation) still believe that Stalin did not know that the Great Terror was happening; if he had, he would have stopped it. In this iteration, the blame for the Great Terror is usually attributed to one or more members of the Politburo, usually the NKVD leader at the time or a Jewish member, although anti-Semitism’s role in Stalinist terror is outside the research focus of this dissertation. It is admittedly difficult to reconcile the image of Stalin as engineer of the

gulag and shooting campaigns with his image as the *vozhd'*, or Great Leader, who saved Russia – and Europe – from the Nazis and led the collectivization and industrialization efforts that made the Soviet Union into a true superpower. Both of these accolades are wildly oversimplified and even erase tactics and decisions Stalin made that led to untold amounts of suffering and death across the Soviet Union. After years of government propaganda and the simplified historical narratives that are told and retold in schools and society, both are still popularly and powerfully attributed to Stalin even today. A 2017 poll undertaken by Levada, an independent pollster, found 38% of respondents chose Stalin as ‘the world’s most outstanding public figure’ (*Moscow Times* 2017), and this is not an outlier. Therefore, the museum’s emphasis on pinning the blame for the repression and terror firmly on Stalin is a necessary service for some visitors.

However, as scholars and survivors of other mass atrocities have repeatedly noted, this authoritarian tactic erases the role of millions of other people whose actions or inactions allowed the mechanisms of repression and death to function. There is a third type of blameability here, which we can call ‘complicit’. From NKVD interrogators to prison guards and orphanage workers, the mass arrests, deportations, and shootings depended on a vast network of people to physically carry them out. The reasons for these people’s acquiescence and cooperation are vastly complex and diverse, as studies of Holocaust perpetrators and survivors alike (respectively, Newman and Erber 2002; Levi 1988) have painstakingly proven. Yet it is this network of personal decisions and individual actions, taken or not taken, which allows repression and atrocity to occur.

It is difficult – maybe even impossible – for people who have not experienced atrocity or repression to understand why a certain person might choose to participate, collaborate, abstain, or resist. But getting a sense of how people lived and felt at any time and place outside of our own is a notorious problem of historical and archaeological studies, all compounded by attempts to effectively communicate that difference at heritage sites and museums (cf. Lowenthal 1985). And the political, economic, sociocultural, and logistical conditions that can lead to the rise of a repressive state are decidedly not consigned to history. Timothy Snyder, a historian of mass violence, repression, and genocide in Eastern Europe, is so deeply concerned about the rise of far-right and populist movements in the West that he has written a special volume, aimed at a general audience and warning of the signs of a coming ‘tyrannical’

government (Snyder 2017). So far, the case studies examined in this thesis have not displayed engagement with this type of ‘complicit’ blameability. The next chapter, which moves to consider ‘unofficial’ sites of the heritage of Soviet repression, will consider its feasibility in contemporary Russia.

6.4 Conclusion

Mass graves like the 12th Kilometer, Butovo, and Kommunarka lie in or outside every Russian city and countless towns and settlements, holding the victims of repressive shooting campaigns from the Red Terror to dekulakization to the Great Terror. Some, like the ones discussed in this thesis so far, are marked and memorialized in some way or other. But, as Tzouliadis summarizes, ‘Most of the mass graves were concealed beneath newly planted forests or newly built factories or apartment buildings. Often access to the land of these ‘special zones’ is still controlled by the Russian security services, and thus denied investigation by civil groups’ (2008: 356). If they were ever mapped, even more mass burial places would mark the outlines of gulag camps and colonies and the other forced-labor installations whose infrastructure has otherwise largely melted back into the tundra and the steppe.

The sites examined in this chapter are some of the more clearly delineated sites of suffering, repression, and murder in the Moscow landscape. However, even at such sites, differences are discernable in visibility and emphasis, on the subjects of both victims and perpetrators. As with the issue of blameability, the exact forms of the broad application of grievability, as well as their underlying causes, differ at each site and will be further explored in Chapter 8. In particular, the idea of a ‘complicit’ type of blameability will be further explored and analyzed.

At other sites in Moscow, the application of models of blameability and grievability is quite different. Why would other sites choose to deliberately put forward some groups of individuals as more blameable and grievable than others, and why does this appear to coincide more frequently with sites presenting non-hegemonic aspects of the heritage of repression? The next chapter looks at these sites and presents their diverse memorialization practices in detail in order to answer these questions.

Chapter 7: 'Unofficial' Sites of Memory in Moscow: Absence and Accountability

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will further explicate all three models of blameability as well as introduce a complementary concept of 'accountability' at dark heritage sites. 'Accountability' explores the idea that former perpetrator groups or their successors might choose to hold themselves 'accountable' for past acts of repression; that is to say, they might admit to their past wrongdoing as perpetrators. Conversely – and in the case studies reviewed below – where such 'official' accountability is not forthcoming, unofficial groups might attempt to assign accountability at heritage sites or memorial/memorializing events and activities, inviting perpetrators to accept accountability, usually to no avail.

Chapters 5 and 6 more fully explicated grievability and blameability as theoretical lenses that can be used to analyze dark heritage sites related to mass repression. They also analyzed why stakeholders might choose one model over another. In Chapter 6, I noted that none of the 'official' sites of memory studied in this thesis so far use a 'complicit' model of blameability. For sites that are managed by the Russian Orthodox Church, utilizing an abdication model, there is no need to assign blame in the mortal realm, while for sites utilizing an authoritarian model, there is often a reluctance to draw connections between past and present institutions of power and jurisprudence. What differences can be observed at sites and in memorial interventions run by 'unofficial' managers, creators, and stakeholders?

The previous chapter examined and provisionally analyzed several sites in and around Moscow that preserve places related to Soviet repression and/or present various 'official' narratives of repression and categorizations of victims and perpetrators. At these sites, analysis through the lens of differential types of grievability shows that most victims are attributed the same model of 'private' grievability, with a heavy emphasis placed on restoring individual names and images, although some categories – such as people convicted solely for being family members of 'enemies of the people', children in general, Old Bolsheviks, etc. – as well as some prominent individuals, are awarded a higher degree of grievability relative to other groups and individuals represented at each respective site. Such analysis through the lenses of differential grievability and blameability also reveals that certain groups and individuals are sometimes – although not always – identified as being less grievable than others due to levels of blame assigned to each, based on their perceived or actual actions and

responsibilities in the mechanisms of state terror. These differences in what each site's managers, creators, and/or stakeholders perceive as types of appropriate grievability and blameability for each group represented at a respective site allow us to compare these relative categorizations at and across sites. At these sites of 'official' memory, the 'abdication' and 'authoritarian' types of blameability are dominant, while 'complicit' types of interpretation are absent.

Several possible reasons for a lack of 'complicit' models at these 'official' sites of memory were posited in the previous chapter. This chapter, in contrast, turns to examine sites related to the heritage of Soviet repression in central Moscow that present 'unofficial' or 'non-hegemonic' narratives of victimhood, perpetration, and ambivalence. Such sites do not receive official funding or support from any level of the Russian government or the Russian Orthodox Church; in fact, in some cases their managers have been specifically targeted by the state¹. These sites include the Lubyanka Building, the Solovetsky Stone in Lubyanka Square, 'Last Address' memorial plaques, and the 'It Is Right Here' digital heritage initiative. Beyond examining these sites to note similarities and differences in interpretative strategies and content among these 'unofficial' sites, this chapter also aims to compare such trends and their underlying causes/rationales with patterns seen at the sites examined in the previous chapters. A fuller analysis of all sites examined in this dissertation follows in the subsequent chapter.

7.2 Ambivalence and Absence in the Memorial Landscape

Sites related to mass death continue to ring the Kremlin in central Moscow today, more or less physically unaltered. These range from the Military Collegium Building where thousands of people were sentenced to death (often in absentia), to a garage formerly used as a shooting range, abutting Cheka founder Feliks Dzerzhinsky's office. Such sites also include residential buildings, from which thousands of people were shot in the middle of the night throughout the Great Terror. The Lubyanka building itself, still under the control of the Russian security agencies, also fits this description. The area itself is thick with memorial 'hardware'

¹ The 2012 'foreign agent' law 'required all organizations engaged in "political activities" and receiving or planning to receive foreign funding to register with the Ministry of Justice as "carrying function of a foreign agent"' (Brechenmacher 2017: 10-12), a status that comes with stringent regulations on self-identification, random inspections, and other obstacles to activist work. *Memorial's* ongoing struggles with this law are summarized here (in Russian): <https://www.memo.ru/ru-ru/memorial/departments/internemorial/news/22>.

of many kinds, but these sites of dark heritage are mostly reflected in ‘software’ and ‘ghostware’ (Etkind 2013). The building next to the garage’s killing field bears a memorial plaque to Feliks Dzerzhinsky² on its front, but no tangible sign of any kind that memorializes or even marks the garage as a site of state mass murder. The Military Collegium of the USSR’s former building, where over 31,000 death sentences were passed *in absentia* during the Great Terror (Vesti 2015), has been completely covered in scaffolding and construction material since autumn of 2016, but its only tangible memorialization in recent years was an autumn 2018 temporary display on the street, organized and installed by the Gulag Museum, of photographs of repression victims sentenced to death there. On nearby Lubyanka Square, the former KGB headquarters (housed in pre-Revolutionary former commercial buildings) stand in the infamous Lubyanka building. That building itself, although allegedly partially accessible via guided tour, are practically inaccessible, and certainly no visitors have managed to gain access to the small, yet infamous, former jail housed inside the building. On the square itself, the Solovetsky Stone – Russia’s first permanent memorial to the victims of Soviet repression – stands among small patches of greenery and park benches. For a few months after its 1990 installation, it stood opposite a statue of Dzerzhinsky, but that statue was torn down in 1991, as were many statues of Soviet grandees across the former Soviet Union and bloc (Verdery 1999: 5). Today, however, many buildings in the immediate area are still owned by the FSB, and *Memorial*’s tours of the area highlight the tangible traces of this repressive heritage, in a landscape they call ‘It Is Right Here’.

7.3 Case Studies

7.3.1 The Solovetsky Stone and Surroundings

Occasional guided tours notwithstanding, *Memorial*’s current efforts are either temporarily tangible or digital. At the end of October 2017, in the days surrounding the official Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression (October 30, described more fully below), the organization installed several temporary wooden signposts around the Moscow city center pointing to sites like the garage shooting range and Military Collegium Building. Ostensibly, people who had come to Lubyanka Square and surrounding locales for the remembrance

² Feliks Dzerzhinsky (Феликс Эдмундович Дзержинский) led the Cheka (ЧК, or ‘Emergency Committee’) and other early versions of the NKVD before his early death in 1926. Although responsible for mass atrocities, including the Red Terror, statues of him used to dot the former Eastern Bloc, including one on Lubyanka Square (now removed).

activities would see these and be made aware of nearby, officially unmarked – but not totally forgotten – dark heritage sites related to the mechanics of Stalinist repression. The main geographic center of remembrance activities was the Solovetsky Stone, a boulder brought from the Solovetsky Islands in 1990 as the first public memorial to victims of Stalinist

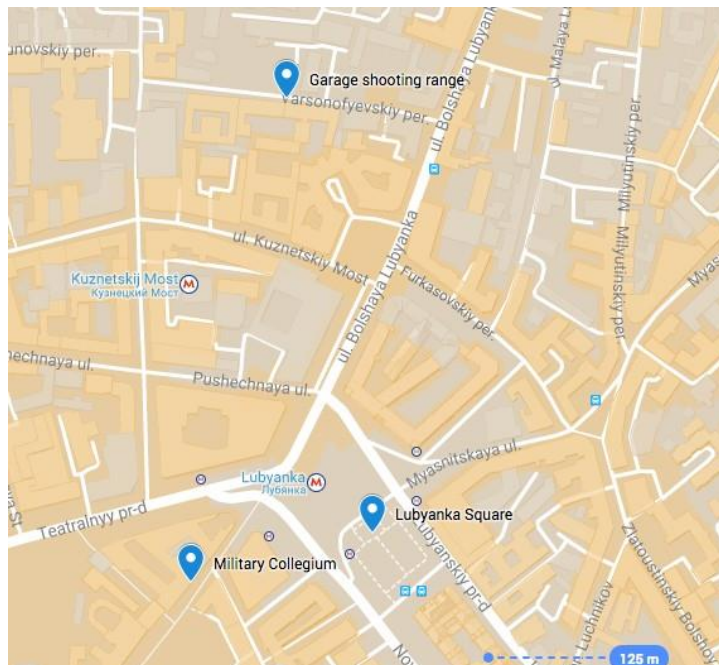


Figure 7.1. Map of ‘unofficial’ fieldwork sites in Moscow. (Copyright Google, with additions by author)

repression in Russia (Bogumił 2018: 46-8). It sits in Lubyanka Square, fully intervisible with the Lubyanka building and others currently occupied by the FSB. On October 29, 2016, *Memorial* conducted ‘The Return of Names,’ a public ceremony memorializing Muscovite victims shot during the Great Terror, in Lubyanka Square. The ceremony has been held every year since 2007. To quote the organizers, ‘people were killed in secret – we remember them publicly’³ (*International Memorial* 2018c). For twelve hours – from 10 am to 10 pm – a line of citizens wove around the Solovetsky Stone and square. As each person reached the microphone, they read out a very brief biography or two of a victim of the Great Terror – name, occupation, age, and date of death. About one fifth would read the names on the piece of paper and then add the biographies of a relative – most often a father or grandfather, sometimes others. Many ended their readings or recitations with a phrase like ‘eternal memory’ or ‘may this never happen again.’ Each then placed a small glass lantern with a votive candle inside on the Solovetsky Stone’s platform; as the day wore on, these

³ ‘Людей расстреливали тайно — мы делаем память о них публичной.’

spilled over onto the surrounding plaza.

Worryingly, in 2016, a few dozen people warned that the country was heading back into a repression. Once or twice, organizers had to step in to stop an attendee from talking for too long, but mostly, the line moved quickly. A coffee truck was on hand to sell cheap, hot beverages to attendees, heat lamps had been strategically set up, and camera crews took still and video photographs of the entire ritual. A live video feed of the event is visible every year over the Internet, allowing ‘witnesses’ from all over the world. Over 100,000 people passed through the square over the course of the event, which ended promptly at 10 pm; as the organizers said upon the ending, there were still enough people in line to provide five to six hours’ worth of names.

In 2017, notably, two different candidates running for the Russian Presidency attended the ceremony, standing in line for hours to read names and then add the names of their own relatives. Ksenia Sobchak, socialite-turned-nominal opposition candidate, attracted much media attention after her turn at the podium. However, in 2017 – as well as other preceding years – a *Memorial* representative stood next to the podium to stop any editorializing, especially about politics. In 2018, this was not the case. Many participants – especially those reading names at night – took the opportunity to add sentiments like ‘Freedom to Political Prisoners’ or state how much they did not want to see the Stalin monument that is slated for erection in the city of Novosibirsk.

The 2018 ceremony had nearly been blocked by the mayor of Moscow just days before. Although construction had been planned for Lubyanka Square for autumn 2018, *Memorial*’s understanding was that the ‘Return of Names’ would proceed as normal. However, on October 19, *Memorial* was informed that the ceremony couldn’t take place at Lubyanka Square because of that construction; the mayor’s office suggested the ‘Wall of Grief’ instead. Public reaction was swift and outraged; in particular, the suggestion of the ‘Wall of Grief’ was deemed ‘totally unsuitable’ because it lacks the Solovetsky Stone (BBC 2018). The Solovetsky Stone has been the site of this event as well as other ceremonies and meetings in support of survivors and victims precisely due to the meaning attributed to its location in Lubyanka Square, ‘which is in itself a reminder of state terror’⁴ (*International Memorial*

⁴ ‘Он установлен на Лубянской площади, которая сама по себе напоминает о государственном терроре’

2018d). Thus, the Solovetsky Stone’s location right below the Lubyanka Building (see Figures 7.2 and 7.7) cannot be underestimated in terms of significance.

But a second layer of meaning is held in the physical materiality of the stone itself. Without that tangible, metonymic piece of stone from the first Soviet gulag camp, the ‘Wall of Grief’ could not carry the meaning that makes the Solovetsky Stone such an affective place of memory and gathering. This is so even though the Wall of Grief does include stones from other sites of violence across Russia, as detailed in Chapter 6. Yet the public protest accompanying the possible ban took for granted the unsuitability of the ‘Wall of Grief’ as a locale. *Memorial*’s stated rationale for the outcry – besides the overwhelming suspicion on social media that this was a government attempt to stop public performances of memorialization of repression’s victims – was that the Solovetsky Stone was the place for this ceremony, and any substitute would be unacceptable, ‘just as it would be impossible to exchange laying flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Alexander Gardens with some other ritual’⁵ (*International Memorial* 2018d).



Figure 7.2. Pensioner reading names, ‘Return of Names,’ Moscow, 2016. Note yellow Lubyanka Building and Solovetsky Stone’s plinth. (Photo by author)

⁵ ‘так же, как невозможно заменить возложение цветов к могиле Неизвестного солдата в Александровском саду каким-то другим ритуалом’



Figure 7.3. Line of waiting readers and Solovetsky Stone, ‘Return of Names,’ Moscow, 2017. (Photo by author)

On October 30 of each year – the official Day of Remembrance – a different group gathers at the square. Where the attendees at ‘The Return of Names’ represented a cross-section of ages, with many millennials and even small children taking their turn at the microphone, this crowd was overwhelmingly composed of pensioners. Many small groups within the crowd held signs identifying themselves as a certain Moscow region’s support group for gulag and repression survivors; others carried photographs of dead family members. Under an awning, representatives of some of these groups, as well as various public figures, gave speeches about the need to support survivors in practical ways as well as the critical need to preserve the memory of the repression and its victims. Before 2017, the planned national memorial was mentioned several times; its advent was welcomed, but several speakers pointed out that they and others started raising money for such a memorial back in 1991, so the action was well overdue. As explained in Chapter 6, almost two thirds of the Wall of Grief’s funding came from the Moscow municipal budget, but it is extremely likely that the money raised through this and other grassroots efforts was part of the remaining budget, funded by private donations. Others decried plans to turn the nearby former building of the Supreme Military Collegium into a shopping mall. The crowd was very against this, and all agreed that it ‘could not happen’, but there was no clear plan of action to stop it. The reality is that that real estate,

literally within sight of the Kremlin, is worth a fortune. No non-profit organization in Russia today could afford to buy the property, and even a well-publicized crowd-funding campaign under the best of political circumstances would probably fall short. The city or federal government would have to intervene to stop this from happening, and the political drive for such an intervention is simply missing.



Figure 7.4 Text panel entitled ‘Victims of the ‘Shooting House’’, Moscow, October 2018. (Photo by author)

As of 2018, the planned shopping mall on the site of the Military Collegium, or ‘Shooting House’, where over 30,000 people were sentenced to death during the Great Terror, was still under construction, with the building swathed in scaffolding. However, *Memorial* had succeeded in placing two text panels (one pictured in Figure 7.4) in front of the site that explained what had happened at the site, with a brief overview of the Great Terror in general, and introduced some victims of the sentences passed there. The verso side of the text panels also showed a miniature ‘topography of terror’ of the area, showing how many victims of repression had previously lived in nearby addresses, as well as showing the locations of other ‘unmarked’ sites of repression across Moscow. This memorial intervention did attract the attention of quite a few passers-by, probably helped by the fact that the interpretation is in both English and Russian. Looking at the map (Figure 7.1), we see that this area is certainly one of the most tourist-heavy areas in the city, as a main thoroughfare to Red Square and the Kremlin. It remains to be seen whether the building itself, when it is finally finished, will have

any more permanent memorial to the victims created by the Military Collegium. Nonetheless, this type of display – exactly the type that Anna Pastukhova had wanted to erect across from the former NKVD headquarters in Yekaterinburg – remains one of the only ‘tangible’ manifestations of memorial activity in this central area, temporary though it may turn out to be.

If the mood at the ‘Return of Names’ was fairly upbeat in 2016 and 2017, the October 30 gatherings at the Solovetsky Stone in those years were both more somber and more urgent. Where the ceremony the day before focused (at least explicitly and officially, attendees’ comments aside) solely on remembrance, the speakers and attendees here were agitating for change. The Solovetsky Stone that day was covered with flowers and political placards. Afterwards, many attendees continued to the metro *en route* to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, where they would pray for the departed. Others ventured out to some of the mass graves outside of Moscow, like Butovo and Kommunarka, where similar ceremonies and individual acts of remembrance were taking place.



Figure 7.5. Day of Remembrance ceremonies, Lubyanka Square, Moscow, 2016.

(Photo by author)



Figure 7.6. Bereaved woman with photograph, Day of Remembrance, Moscow, 2016. (Photo by author)

A final, yet crucial, aspect of remembrance and memorialization of the Great Terror is the centrality of the unknown and absent. During the height of the Great Terror, it was not uncommon for family members of arrestees to be told that their relatives had been sentenced to ‘ten years without the right to correspondence’ – in reality, almost all of these people were already dead, having been shot within months of arrest, in the vicinity of the place where they had been arrested (Cohen 2011).

The story of Ida Slavina’s father, Ilia Slavin, a lawyer who had held high positions in early Soviet jurisprudence, exemplifies a widespread phenomenon of government-sanctioned misinformation, lies, and cover-up:

Ida Slavina successfully appealed for the rehabilitation of her father in 1955. With the certificate of rehabilitation she received a death certificate from the registry in Leningrad which stated that her father had died of a heart attack in April 1939. Ida was puzzled because in 1945 she had been told by the Soviet authorities that her father was alive. She went to the headquarters of the MVD in Leningrad, where she was advised to trust the evidence of the death certificate. Ten years later, in 1965, when she applied for information from the KGB in Moscow, she received the same

advice. Ida continued to believe this version until 1991, when she gained access to her father's file in the KGB archives and discovered that he had been shot, only three months after his arrest, on 28 February 1938. In his file she also found an order from a KGB official in 1955, which stated that 'for reasons of state security' Ida should be misinformed that her father died of a heart attack in 1939. (Figs 2007: 582-3).

Thus, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of family members spent decades believing that their relatives had spent years in the gulag and died there (or simply disappeared). Many of these would have died, of natural or unnatural causes, before the *glasnost* period of the mid- 1980s, and many others may have been too afraid, ambivalent about finding out what could turn out to be an inconvenient truth, or indifferent to a past that had been 'left behind' after Khrushchev's Thaw to seek out information once the archives opened. Even if it later became clear that one's father, for example, had never left the city of his arrest before being shot, the mental and emotional image of him working and freezing in a Siberian gulag could have remained in a relative's mind for decades, 'haunting' the mind and memory, to use Etkind's (2013) terminology once more. This adds another layer of emotional depth to ceremonies like 'The Return of Names,' which reintroduce concrete fact and biography to a sector of collective memory that for decades was shrouded in manufactured mystery. Indeed, one could even take Etkind's theory further and say that all memorials to victims of Stalinist (or even Soviet) repression are thus 'haunted' by the unknown or partially known particulars of victims' fates and lives.



Figure 7.7. Lubyanka Building, central Moscow. (Photo by author)

7.3.2 Lubyanka Building

The huge yellow edifice of the Lubyanka building (Figure 7.7) still stands above Lubyanka Square in central Moscow, just a stone's throw from the Kremlin and Red Square. It is still nearly impossible to enter; on walking tours of the area led by *Memorial* staff and volunteers (described more fully below), the most information on its current state they can offer their charges are a series of photos that appear to show nondescript rooms filled with boxes and discarded furniture. These were taken clandestinely some years back and purportedly show former interrogation rooms and cells. They also retell the Raoul Wallenberg incident, in which some of the disappeared Swedish diplomat's family members, on a trip to Moscow to see the place where he probably died, pounded on the front door of the Lubyanka, demanding to be let in, and were denied entry.

Since then, the doors of the Lubyanka building have continued to be a magnet for protest. The day before the 2018 'Return of Names' ceremony, there was a large protest in front of the building, held without government permission and so technically illegal. It had been organized by parents of young Russian citizens who have been arrested, beaten, and detained by the FSB for their alleged membership in terrorist rings that were planning to attack Russian elections and the 2018 World Cup games. For this reason, they called the protest action 'For Your Children and Ours!'⁶ and chose the Lubyanka building especially because of its 'sacrosanct'⁷ nature (Shenkman 2018), perhaps as a symbol of Russian secret police power. Vitaly Cherkasov, a lawyer for one arrestee, has accused eager young FSB agents of 'fabricating' the terrorist plots in order to further their careers and has even said:

The country went through something like this in the nineteen-thirties, when the special services uncovered all sorts of cells supposedly plotting to overthrow the state, and these people were imprisoned and shot—and then, later, it turned out that most of them were innocent, and were rehabilitated (quoted in Yaffa 2018).

7.3.3 'It Is Right Here' and Digital Heritage

Of course, post-Soviet Moscow is hardly the only city to have been left with a confused and dissonant post-totalitarian landscape. The issue of when to demolish, preserve, or reuse buildings that were the sites of violence – either acts of violence themselves or decisions taken that led to mass violence and suffering – was one that both the East and West German

⁶ 'За наших и ваших детей!'

⁷ 'Сакральное'

governments had to tackle after World War Two, especially in Berlin. Berlin's 'Topography of Terror' and other memorial interventions on the landscape are meant to tangibly and intangibly mediate the presence of Nazi-connected buildings (or traces of buildings) so that the associated 'dark' heritage is not erased (see Cochrane 2006).

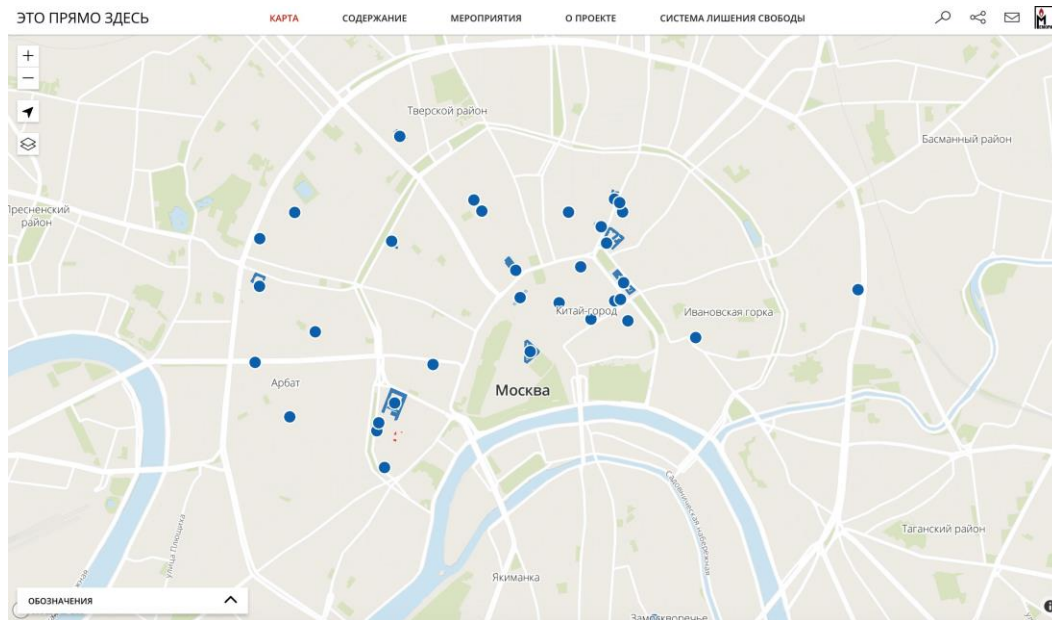


Figure 7.8 Screenshot of 'It Is Right Here' website showing places in Central Moscow associated with decision-making about Soviet repression. (Copyright *International Memorial*)

Memorial and other non-governmental organizations are fully aware of the obstacles to such a tangible memorial landscape that would be visible and 'present' to all viewers. Inspired by the idea of the 'Topography of Terror', however, they embarked on a project to mark the landscape of repression in Moscow digitally. In the beginning, this was even called the 'Topography of Terror'⁸, too; however, it was always a bit awkward to use exactly the same name. Thus, in 2016, the project was renamed 'It Is Right Here'⁹, which has the advantage of underlining the immediate proximity of these buildings to current popular and important locations for Moscow and Russia (see Figure 7.8). This is especially important because, as explained in this chapter's case studies, so many of these sites are wholly unmarked in any visible or material way as sites related to repression.

⁸ 'Топография Террора'

⁹ 'Это Прямо Здесь'

The average visitor to this area, which remains a power center for Russia with its many ministry headquarters, would have no idea of the violence formerly carried out or ordered from inside many of these edifices. It could be argued that the name ‘Lubyanka’ is the most salient mark of these places’ dark heritage, but the area is also extremely close to Red Square and other ‘fashionable’ and expensive areas of Moscow. Even if residents and visitors have a preconceived notion of what the name means, ‘It Is Right Here’, available at <https://topos.memo.ru>, allows for a vast quantity of information to be communicated to viewers and visitors. Each site has been carefully researched, and clicking on it reveals its history, its relationship to various regimes and acts of repression, and, often, multimedia holdings including photographs and video. Viewers can focus on a particular section of the city or choose to view networks of different types of sites: shooting sites, prisons, sites related to the 1968 protests over the Soviet suppression of democratic movements in Czechoslovakia, etc.

This bears an obvious similarity to the case of the ‘Virtual Museum of the Gulag’, which regards its digital home as a response to the impossibility of putting entire cities like Norilsk, which was built using forced labor and came into being as a product of the gulag system, into a museum. Just like the Virtual Museum, however, the fact remains that this digital interpretation is also one of the only platforms on which to portray an unvarnished – and full – vista of the physical landscapes of repression in all its forms. This is especially true when it comes to delineating connections between former institutions of repression and current leaders and/or institutions. The Gulag Museum, for all of its hard and admirable work, cannot afford to draw a direct line between the practices of the NKVD and the practices of the FSB. *Memorial* is already in trouble with the authorities over its alleged ‘foreign agent’ status but cannot compel the government to, for example, open up the Lubyanka building as a memorial or site of remembrance. Caroline Sturdy Colls argues that digital heritage tools ‘provide an alternative means of commemoration and education at sites where in situ memorials or museums are not possible or wanted, or where people are unable to visit sites for whatever reason’ (2015: 49). ‘It Is Right Here’ certainly fills such a gap in the heritage ‘landscape’ that would, if left to official heritage managers in the area, remain vacant.

There is also a large body of digital remembrance and memorial initiatives that exist outside of any formal organization. These include ‘memorial’ groups on social media networks like

Facebook and its Russian-language counterpart, VKontakte, as well as visual campaigns that spread on such sites. In a media situation like the current Russian one, where all television channels are under de facto state control, the Internet and social media networks play a crucial role in hosting and facilitating independent conversation and discourse. Of course, the Russian state is also well-known for its ‘cyberspace war’ (Aro 2016), which is aimed at domestic or Russia-concerned audiences – specifically, with regards to the Ukrainian situation – so the ‘independence’ of the digital sphere should not be overstated. It is not as if the Internet is a place wholly free of manipulation from governments, political parties, and others with vested interests.

Nevertheless, the Internet does allow a degree of latitude in displaying and disseminating memorial and remembrance material that is not readily available in contemporary Russian physical spaces. You don’t need permission to hold an event or install a physical text or image panel; you simply need to upload your text and images to a site or platform and let the other viewers and users, search engines, and other algorithms share or ignore it as they will. Further, the range of viewers that can be reached over the Internet is much wider than those of most physical locations – even at places like the Solovetsky Stone or the billboards near the ‘Shooting House’ or ‘Military Collegium’, discussed previously. There are always the issues of reliability and verifiability, as discussed in Chapter 2, but when it comes to posts and other media that use statistics and information from sources widely regarded as reliable, these concerns can be assuaged – as they often are.

Many of these ‘memorial’ posts take similar forms. Users might, for example, use a local ‘book of memory’ to compile a list of people shot on a given date in a certain region and post a list of names and biographical information to a group on that day. Others might post ‘breaking’ news about memorial initiatives across Russia or about decisions taken by the government that they feel are aimed at erasing or obfuscating memories of Soviet repression. Some take a more artistic approach – a widely-shared project took the faces of young Moscow citizens who were killed during the Great Terror and photo-shopped their faces onto the bodies of contemporary young Muscovites (see Figure 7.9). The effect is striking, as the artistic conceit very much highlights how young and ‘normal’ many of these victims were – of course, more of them tended to work in factories rather than at desk jobs, but it is not at all a stretch of the imagination to picture them walking through Moscow’s contemporary parks

and bustling shopping malls.

Such projects utilize the common museological and memorial tactic of using faces and personal images to attempt to make the visitor or viewer ‘identify’ with the lived experiences of past people. We recall similar efforts at museums such as the Holocaust Museum and Memorial in Washington, D.C., especially the exhibit entitled ‘Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration & Complicity in the Holocaust’ (USHMM 2017). This exhibit examined the life trajectories and decisions of many ‘bystanders’ and community members who helped

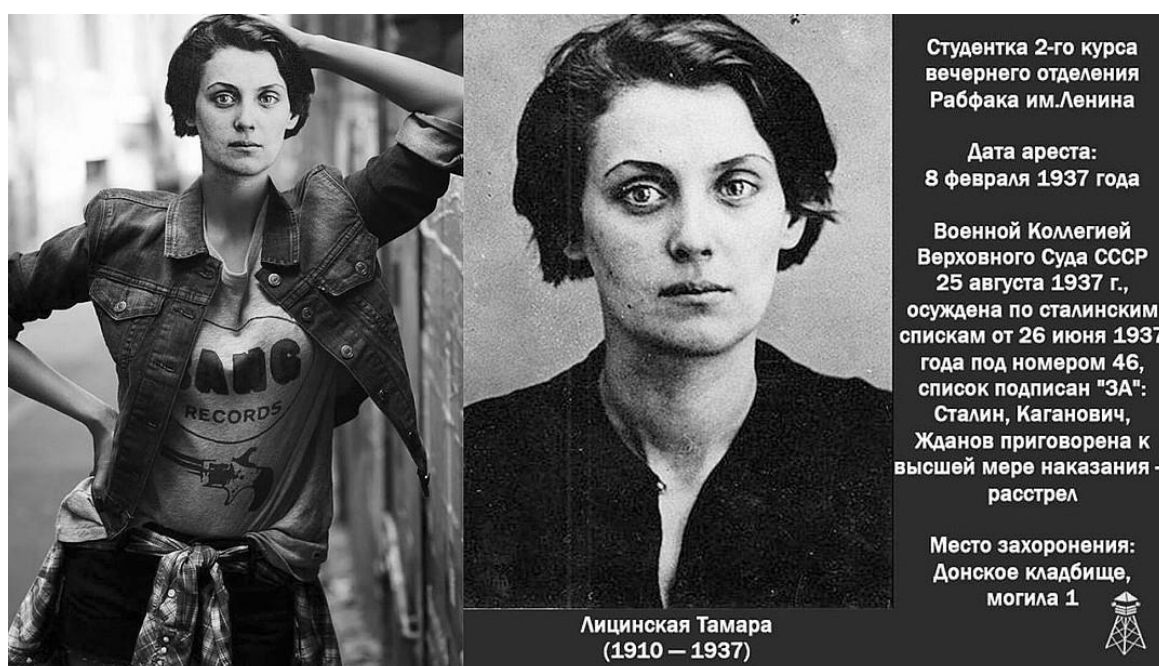


Figure 7.9. Portrait of Great Terror victim Tamara Litsinskaya, by photographer Hassan Bachaev. (Copyright *Komsomolskaya Pravda*: viewable via <https://www.msk.kp.ru/daily/26750.5/3779697/>)

persecute Jews, passively or actively benefited from their dispossession and removal, or actively participated in tormenting and removing them.

From time to time, *Memorial* staff members or affiliates lead walking tours of specific ‘routes’ from the website. The most frequent itinerary is called ‘Topography of Terror. Lubyanka and Surroundings’¹⁰. These surroundings usually include the Shooting House, the Solovetsky Stone, the Garage Shooting Range, the current FSB headquarters, a statue in

¹⁰ Топография террора. Лубянка и окрестности'

memoriam of Vatslav Vorotsky (an assassinated Soviet diplomat), and several churches. Other itineraries have included ‘Varlam Shalamov’s Moscow’, which focuses on sites connected to the author. His works on life in the gulag were based on his own lived experience in the camps. Although they are fictional, they have been credited for creating a type of ‘documentary prose’ that can be more ‘true’ than pure history (Toker 1997).

On a typical tour with the ‘Topography of Terror’ itinerary, the group meets at the Solovetsky Stone. The guide outlines the history of the monument as well as the architectural and institutional history of the Lubyanka building. Briefly, the massive yellow edifice began as the headquarters of an insurance building in 1898 and was amended and added to over the years as the Bolshevik, and later Soviet, security services took on added power and prestige. Indeed, one could call this recitation by the guide a form of ‘landscape biography’ in the style of Macdonald (2008), as the guide takes pains to connect changes in the building’s appearance and use with the decisions of powerful people in each era. The fact that the area remains, in large part, still owned by various sectors of the FSB is similarly emphasized.



Figure 7.10. Fence in front of former Garage Shooting Range, Moscow. (Photo by author)



Figure 7.11. Plaque to Feliks Dzerzhinsky on former Cheka headquarters, adjacent to Garage Shooting Range. (Photo by author)

There are also indications of differing levels of grievability on this tour – why is it that the man whose statue we stop at is so mourned, while the people shot at the garage are totally ignored (or, one could argue, actively snubbed in favor of memorializing Dzerzhinsky on the same site?). For that matter, why is Dzerzhinsky still regarded in some quarters (Lauchlan 2013) as a hero and his death mourned, when his Cheka incontrovertibly murdered so many Soviet citizens?

On one level, these differing levels of grievability echo the situation in Yekaterinburg with the contrasting levels of grievability visible at the 12th Kilometer and the sites connected to the Romanov murders. And yet Dzerzhinsky has a much more violent biography than anyone murdered that night in Yekaterinburg, and the surveillance-oriented ‘Communist’ societies that so revered him all disintegrated decades ago. It seems instead to be a matter of silence and confusion, again: how many people can truly say that they know – and know why – their relatives were murdered at this place? Even if people know that their relatives were victims of repression, this level of detail and pinpointing to this – or any – specific place is not guaranteed. Further, as discussed in Chapter 4, the sheer numbers of victims can ‘numb’ even relatives, let alone contemporary citizens who don’t necessarily see themselves as inheritors of this dark legacy. It falls to memorial interventions like the ones described in this chapter to try to return personhood and identity to victims, as well as knowledge of what happened, to relatives and inheritors alike.

In terms of blameability, in contrast, the tours take pains to not only place blame on specific institutions and groups, but to identify specific people as perpetrators. These people, predictably, include leaders such as Stalin and NKVD chiefs such as Yagoda and Beria, but oral and written interpretation also singles out specific commanders and other NKVD functionaries by name as ‘perpetrators’. This has the effect of identifying individual people outside of the circle of top leadership as responsible for committing atrocities, which is rare at other sites presenting narratives of the heritage of Soviet repression. However, within the interpretation of ‘It is Right Here’, there is little analysis of why such functionaries chose to actively work or collaborate with state terror, and there is also very little emphasis on the cyclical nature of victimhood/perpetration, even though this is a trend crucial to understanding how Soviet – especially Stalinist – repression worked, as discussed in Chapter 3. Recalling *Memorial*’s defense of including ‘perpetrators’ on the list of victims at Kommunarka, it is clear that there is much ambiguity and ambivalence about directly interrogating this cycle and the reasons for its repeated occurrence. This ambivalence and the different ways in which it is handled across sites will be further explored in the following chapter.

7.3.4 Last Address

The area surrounding Lubyanka Square is also home to numerous small metal plaques affixed to the sides of buildings. These constitute another form of remembrance that works around, as well as in opposition to, current hegemonic regimes and practices of forgetting and erasure. Since 2014, the *Last Address*¹¹ project has worked to place plaques with the names, occupations, and dates of birth, arrest, death, and exoneration on the fronts of victims’ last known residential addresses. Instead of a photograph, a small, empty rectangle is cut into each plaque, symbolizing loss. At specific houses that were the literal last addresses of several different victims of repression, each person for whom a plaque is requested has a separate plaque dedicated to them. The organization’s ethos is ‘One name, one life, one sign’,¹² (*Last Address* 2018) which again speaks to the importance these efforts place on restoring individual personhood to each victim of repression. One of the initiative’s founders, Sergey Parkhomenko, has explained the project’s importance thus:

¹¹ *Последний Адрес* is an NGO that installs small plaques with biographical details and the empty ‘photograph’ mentioned in the text to the fronts of the ‘last addresses’ of victims of Stalinist repression.

¹² ‘Одно имя, одна жизнь, один знак’

Each time we visit a building and ask residents for permission to put up a plaque, we see how attitudes can change. Last Address transforms the perception of distant events by zooming in on a specific human life, or the fate of a family. The people we encounter start to speak differently of the past: they no longer use confused or vague political language, instead they give some thought to individual human destinies (Parkhomenko 2018).

Crucially, the organization does not need permission from any municipal office to place the plaques – they only need the permission of the building’s owner and the family member(s) of the victim, who must be the ones to request a plaque in the first place. Usually, these are placed without much difficulty, but, in early 2017, there was a much-publicized incident on Tverskaya Street in central Moscow. As a small group gathered to install a plaque, a police van showed up, and several officers attempted to stop the installation on the grounds that the installation group didn’t have the ‘proper permission’ to gather there (*Meduza* 2017). Eventually, after a short standoff, the police left, and the plaque was finally drilled into the wall, where it remains.

Although *Last Address* was founded by several individuals, working with *Memorial*, it is now its own ‘non-commercial foundation’ (*Last Address* 2018). Nonetheless, strong ties remain between these two entities, and ‘The Return of Names’ always includes large displays explaining what *Last Address* is and how to procure a plaque for your own relatives. Currently, there are over 200 *Last Address* plaques on buildings all over Moscow, and more than 500 are attached to buildings in over 30 cities in Russia (*Last Address* 2018).

The ‘absence’ noted on each building through the empty ‘photograph’ square calls for more analysis, especially since an over-arching, widely recognized ‘symbol’ of Soviet or Stalinist repression, specifically, does not really exist. This type of ‘absence’ in interpretation is present in Russian memorialization of Stalinist repression, but not in architecture. First, there are very few museums expressly dedicated to the gulag and its victims in Russia; the Gulag Museum in Moscow, although sophisticated, does not boast that type of symbolic, evocative architecture. Although the Gulag Museum on Big Solovetsky Island is housed within a former barrack building from the labor camp period (and a plaque on the façade states this), the buildings themselves are not necessarily ‘iconic’ of the gulag system or Stalinist repression, unlike other examples of concentration camps worldwide. In iconography related to the gulag system, rough-hewn guard towers and barbed wire appear far more often than these barracks do.

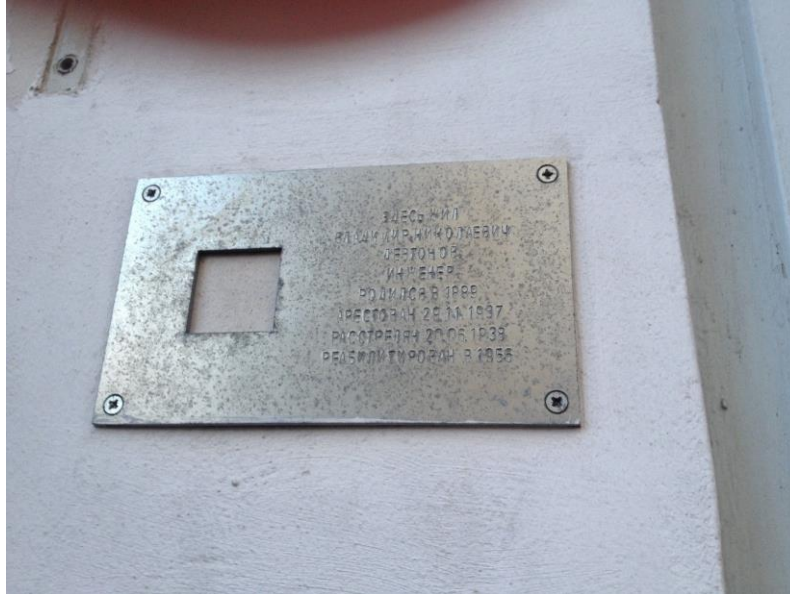


Figure 7.12. ‘Last Address’ Plaque, central Moscow. (Photo by author).

However, the *Last Address* plaques affixed to the facades of buildings across Moscow do incorporate that empty square where a photograph ‘should’ be. Although this project has some parallels with the *Stolperstein* [*Stumbling Stone*] project, which places stones with similar information across European countries, especially Germany, at street level, the differences are key. First, the placement: as *Stumbling Stone* suggests, the passerby should be able to – but is not obliged to – ‘stumble upon’ the information and thus remember the life and loss of the memorialized person (Rosenberg 2015: 84). Second, the permissions needed – putting a *Stumbling Stone* in the ground often requires municipal approval, while a *Last Address* plaque simply requires the building owner’s approval¹³. Finally, any Holocaust victim can be memorialized by a *Stumbling Stone*; although the vast majority are placed outside last known residences, a few similar installations have been put at the location of a group’s last known embarkation to concentration camps, usually at train stations. Local *Last Address* groups, however, differ with other Russian civil society groups in their definitions of ‘victim’ – some will list or officially remember ‘any’ victim, including former NKVD workers, while others explicitly exclude former members of the secret police, even if they themselves later fell victim to the purges.

¹³ However, *Last Address* itself also notes that the weather in Russia takes a heavy toll on paving and other street surfaces, and that roads are often in bad repair (<https://www.poslednyadres.ru/faq/2/>)

7.4 Complicity and Accountability

What connects all of these various, discrete sites of non-hegemonic mourning, memorialization, and remembrance? Certainly, there are issues of differential grievability that are discernable at each one, although pointing out and interrogating these differences is not the principal aim of each site's 'guardians of memory'. Indeed, little of the interpretation at these sites touches on issues of differential blameability – although *Last Address* plaques might note that someone was an NKVD worker before being killed in the repression. Similarly, temporary interventions like the signs outside of the 'Shooting House' and the interpretation on tours blame certain individuals – and, of course, the NKVD and top leaders – but there is little in the way of triangulating grievability and blameability for any given victim/perpetrator. There is also no in-depth exploration of what factors might motivate a person to become a perpetrator of repression at any level.

It is logical to argue that museums and memorials that attempt to examine the reasons behind how people act in times of desperation and repression would be serving a public good. This is not a totally new argument: the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) was 'built to tell America and the world the factual story of this most terrible event in modern history, and to illuminate the crucial moral lessons it entails' (Berenbaum 1993: xiv). Michael Berenbaum, the USHMM's inaugural director, continues: 'The understanding of the passive bystander's inadvertent guilt is probably the most important and most relevant moral lesson the museum can teach its visitors' (1993: xv). This understanding of the 'moral lessons' to be gained from preserving and disseminating the memory of the Holocaust is typical at other Shoah museums and memorials and has also gained traction at sites related to other regimes of mass violence and repression. The USHMM, as well as the Holocaust Gallery at London's Imperial War Museum, carefully considers the role of perpetrators, including 'passive bystanders' at several stages throughout each museum's permanent exhibition. These 'bystanders' are presented, not as monsters or distant leaders, but as real, complex people who had any number of reasons for agreeing to work as a concentration camp guard or member of a killing squad. This is, crucially, not meant to excuse or forgive any behavior, but only to come closer to understanding why people choose to commit 'evil' or repressive acts.

Of course, no one worker anywhere in the machinery of repression could or should be held to the same standard of blame as the masterminds who designed the system and had the power and resources to start and continue a system of repression. Nonetheless, ascribing all the

blame to the masterminds, while tidy, can lead to a dangerous lack of reflection on the present and future as well as the past. If, for example, Stalin is dead, and the Great Terror was the fault of him and his small circle of powerful cronies, then why bother examining our own, current society for injustices and slides towards authoritarianism? But it is exactly that work of critical self-reflection on painful pasts and uncomfortable presents that needs to be done in order to banish the possibility of a new repressive system. Yet that work is hard and painful, and few societies undertake such a thorough, searching moral inventory of their own accord: the Nuremberg trials were mandated by the occupying Allied powers, not the German people themselves. Museums and memorials that see facilitating this work as a moral duty, a calling to remember so that such atrocities can ‘never again’ happen, can play a crucial role in their societies, even if their message gets willfully or accidentally lost in the chaos of everyday life.

Tracking the type of grievability attributed to victims and the type of blameability ascribed to perpetrators at each site, as well as where these do or do not overlap, can help us more fully understand how open a society is towards examining its own complicity in past and present repressive and abusive regimes and practices. Thus, it is a useful lens through which to view sites related to Stalinist repression in contemporary Russia. The fact that the sites studied in this thesis show only partial attempts at narrating ‘complicity’ in repression is noteworthy. It does not only reflect the already-noted ambivalence associated with the blurred categories of victim and perpetrator. As anthropologist Anatoly Khazanov concludes:

[...] there is very little protest against the re-revision of Soviet history because it reflects the prevailing mood in Russia. Not only the political elite but the public at large do not want to make Soviet crimes a focal point in collective remembrance [sic]. Putin’s popularity has proven that nowadays descending from the KGB is not a stigma. On the contrary, the secret services are quite popular in a country longing for order and stability. (2008: 306).

Museum researcher Paul Williams describes the mission of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience as ‘interested in making conspicuous the idea of something akin to a ‘world conscience,’ wherein we might increasingly come to understand the interconnectedness of our local choices, action and inaction’ (2012b: 111). Williams goes on to argue that the underlying idea that ‘vigilance can prohibit recurrence’ so far does not have a stellar track record in preventing atrocity (2012b: 111); however, his article does not convincingly prove that such educational efforts do not lead visitors to seriously examine their roles in current systems of inequality and act against atrocity elsewhere. Underlining complicity also means underlining

the role that ‘ordinary men’ (Brown 2001, although, as women can also perpetrate violence, we should change it to ‘ordinary people’) can play in both abetting and resisting state power. This can be a dangerous topic for a state that wishes to discourage any questioning of its directives and laws. Even for an activism-minded NGO, it can be an uncomfortable topic to raise at the best of times, and a treacherous one when your organization is already under severe pressure from the government, as described above.

But do any of the sites instead wrestle with the issue of ‘accountability’? In that sense, many of these interventions on the landscape, physical or digital, can be viewed as attempts to hold past and present institutions of power and violence *accountable* for their previous deeds. The ‘agency formerly known as the KGB, FKA known as the NKVD’ now goes by a different name, but the connection with Soviet terror remains – it is far from accidental that FSB employees are still commonly called ‘Chekists’ (see Fedor 2011). Despite this re-naming, the sites where decisions were taken that led to the deaths of millions remain officially unmarked, their ‘dark’ heritage unremembered. As Staar and Tacosa (2004) have noted, this can be seen as an attempt to ‘carry over’ power structures – and even individual careers – from the Soviet era to the independent Russian one without officially facing up to the myriad legacies of mass violence and repression that are attached to these institutions. Compounding that situation, in the past few years, the Putin regime has attempted to rehabilitate Stalin’s image as a great leader, one who industrialized the nation in the face of oppositional capitalist ‘encirclement’ and saved the world from Hitler and the Nazis (Khapaeva 2016; Sherlock 2016). Of course, this narrative leaves out the human costs of both of these achievements – in the first instance, the millions of people displaced, dispossessed, deported, or killed in the race to industrialize the country’s economy and collectivize agriculture (see Conquest 1987). In the second instance, this retelling of the Great Patriotic War omits Stalinist culpability for decimating the ranks of Red Army leaders during the Great Purge and other programs of repression; this lack of competent military leadership is directly linked to the disastrous first months of the war for the Soviet Union (Rapoport 1985).

But the allure of painting Stalin as a hero, with the losses of repression as ‘necessary evils’ that he may not even be strictly responsible for – recall Putin erasing any mention of Stalin in his remarks at the opening of the ‘Wall of Grief’ – is instantly recognizable. Why face up to dark chapters of your nation’s past if no one is forcing you to do it? Yet we return here to

Etkind's (2013) idea of 'ghostware' – when 'official' Russian institutions try to ignore or repress this past, it 'haunts' other places.

Yet 'haunting' implies that the presence is unwelcome and eerie for all. Are the memorial activities brought up by NGOs and individuals really 'haunting' in that sense? Although it can be harrowing and deeply uncomfortable to face the human consequences of an inherited legacy, can there be an accompanying catharsis or relief? If so, which groups or individuals might find these 'painful' truths either 'disturbing' (Seaton 1996) or 'healing' (Eaton and Roshi 2014)?

Many of the sites examined in this chapter are subject to different types of interpretative interventions that aim to make present or 'voice' a 'hidden' past. This is not just a matter of returning identities and names to forgotten victims. The evident other goal is to delineate ways in which contemporary power structures, particularly ones that are seen to abuse or limit the human rights of Russian citizens, are the inheritors of past mechanisms of repression and terror. We could theorize, then, about the possibility of identifying and analyzing dark heritage sites through the lens of 'accountability' – in what ways do a site's managers and stakeholders attempt to hold any person, group, or institution 'accountable' for past misdeeds? Further, do they attempt to connect accountability for those misdeeds with accountability for present abuses or injustices?

This differs from blameability in two important aspects. First, blameability is firmly rooted in the past – although, for example, current FSB operatives can be (and often are, in popular culture and speech) identified with their secret-police and state security predecessors, neither they nor their employer can logically be blamed for planning and carrying out Stalinist terror. They simply did not do these things. But accountability for the legacies of these massive atrocities is a different matter. These institutions and, to a lesser extent, their employees can reasonably be scrutinized as to whether or not they have attempted to come to terms with their past actions. Further, they can be reasonably analyzed as to whether or not they have taken action to make amends for previous damage done, altered or abandoned any surviving ideologies or practices that might otherwise continue to repress or oppress present-day populations, or both.

Second, on the level of individual lived experiences, blameability proves to be too blunt a concept to helpfully come to terms with ideas – and realities – of different types of lived

concept to helpfully come to terms with ideas – and realities – of different types of lived complicity within repressive regimes. Sitting on the other side of Europe decades later, it can be far too easy and tempting to unequivocally ‘blame’ individuals and groups for action or inaction during the Great Terror or other periods of Soviet repression, particularly when those acts or failures to act led directly to adverse outcomes for other people. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that previous models of life under ‘authoritarian’ regimes often overstated the lack of agency and free decision-making that people actually had in their lived experiences (see Fitzpatrick 1999 for an incisive look at these lives). Even in periods when denunciations and arrests reached peak rates, each person could choose whether or not to comply with the regime’s demands – although, often, refusal to obey could have fatal consequences, this refusal was still a choice that many made. On the other hand, it is difficult (if not impossible) for most Western academics today to truly empathize with decisions made under serious and immediate threat of death or imprisonment. In the abstract, it is easy to talk about ‘doing the right thing’ and risking your life and the lives of your family members to save a stranger, but the reality of choosing to do that is much starker, more terrifying, and nearly impossible to convey to observers. Beyond the top levels of leadership and those who consented to perform actual, physical acts of violence and killing, even a cursory review of lived experiences during Soviet – especially Stalinist terror – reveals deeply complex and conflicted decisions, allegiances, and ideologies within a single person’s lifetime. Indeed, other scholars have examined the idea of ‘accountability’ as it relates to culpability for past mass atrocities and acts of repression. In the realms of international human rights law, ‘accountability’ is a major theme; as Minow (1998: 48), asserts, ‘Especially when framed in terms of universality, the language of rights and the vision of trials following their violation equip people to call for accountability even where it is not achievable’ (see also Cohen 1995; Strain and Keyes 2003). However, these studies define accountability thus:

Holding perpetrators fully accountable would entail appropriate trial and punishment of each responsible individual for each of the crimes committed, together with appropriate reparations made by perpetrators to victims. In many contexts, one would wish also to utilize some form of truth commission to ensure the credible and authoritative revelation, documentation, and memorialization of the events in question as a comprehensive whole (Morris 1997: 29-30).

Although some arms of these non-governmental organizations may strive to hold organs like the FSB ‘accountable’ for contemporary human rights abuses like the persecution of gay men

in Chechnya or the arrest and torture of dissidents on trumped-up ‘terrorism’ charges, the question of legal, judicial ‘accountability’ is not the main focus of memorial activities centered on victims of Stalinist repression and their relatives. As delineated in Chapter 3, there have been and remain many obstacles to holding a ‘Truth and Reconciliation’-type commission regarding Soviet – let alone Stalinist – repression, and the further issue of assigning any punitive measures has many more pitfalls. Most simply, when it comes to Stalinist repression, the individual perpetrators themselves are dead or extremely infirm, while the institutions themselves will likely remain unimpeachable as long as the current regime stays in power. Thus, ‘accountability’, as chiefly defined in the current literature on ‘crimes against humanity’, will remain out of reach for the perpetrators of Stalinist repression.

However, the second aspect of ‘accountability’ presented by Morris (1998: 29-30) above is much more relevant to theorizing the heritage of repression. In fact, looking at *Memorial*’s stated rationale for holding ‘The Return of Names’, as well as their projects like the ‘Books of Memory’ that list the names of victims buried in specific mass graves, the goal of ‘credible and authoritative revelation, documentation, and memorialization’ is clearly evident. This is especially true when the ‘naming’ or other identification of victims of repression ends up naming individuals who could be considered ‘complicit’ in acts and mechanisms of repression. Such an identification could overlap with assigning a degree of blameability, but it can also be more nuanced, falling into one of the moral ‘gray areas’ that cause such problems for museums, memorials, and private individuals searching for meaning alike. Here, a site that intends to assign a degree of ‘accountability’ to any person, group, or institution might bypass blame to focus on continuities of power and, especially, abuse of power. It is clear that memorial interventions at and around the Lubyanka building in Moscow’s heart may be viewed as attempts to assign accountability to both former iterations of the Soviet secret police and security forces and their contemporary inheritors. These actions by ‘guardians of memory’ (or even ‘guardians of countermemory’, both *qua* Carr 2015) are especially crucial when official acknowledgements of accountability – in terms of legal culpability or more abstract conceptions – are not forthcoming and may even be actively suppressed.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced, described, and briefly analyzed several types of ‘non-hegemonic’ memorial and commemorative heritage practices and narratives at sites related to

Soviet repression. Beyond examining these sites for how they assign (or do not assign) degrees of grievability and blameability, with a special focus on the absence of interpretation that addresses complicity, I have also introduced the concept of ‘accountability’ as it may relate to heritage sites, specifically. The next chapter will more fully flesh out these ideas, developing typologies of grievability and blameability, as well as a complementary theory of ‘repentability’, exploring how all four of these might be applied to other sites in Russia and beyond.

Chapter 8: Analysis and Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapters identified meaningful patterns in how different site managers and stakeholders display and communicate different models of grievability and blameability in their presentations of victims and perpetrators involved in Soviet and Stalinist repression. This chapter further explores and unpacks each of these concepts. In particular, it argues that a key value of expressions of grievability lies in the restoration of personhood to previously-effaced victims of repression. The chapter then turns to plot different sites' manifestations of grievability and blameability against each other to see what insights might be gained by comparing how different sites combine these two conceptions and why they make those choices. Finally, I further discuss and critically examine the idea of concepts of 'accountability' and 'repentability' at sites of dark heritage.

8.2 Grievability

8.2.1 Grievability – An Overview

The first of the concepts used at each site is grievability, which I developed from a concept proposed by Judith Butler (2009) in order to understand why governments can allow for the 'collateral damage' or loss of certain populations or segments of the population. In this conception, the loss of certain people can be considered less 'grievable' relative to other human losses: i.e., if they were lost, they wouldn't be grieved as much as others because they are not considered as 'valuable' as others in life. Therefore, military or foreign policy decisions that might end up killing civilians who fall into these 'less grievable' groups are considered more acceptable than campaigns that would kill 'more grievable' people. Grievability often correlates with a marked difference in geographic location, family or ancestral ties, nationality, ethnicity, and visibility. As outlined more fully in Chapter 4, the concept of grievability applied to dark heritage sites associated with Soviet repression and terror allows us to identify how marked differential grievability associated with various groups of victims might correlate with contemporary ideas of what groups and ideals might be 'grievable' and valuable – or, conversely, lose-able – in modern-day Russia.

In the Russian context, I propose that 'public' grievability is associated with strong state and other powerful institutional support for grieving specific deaths that more broadly symbolize a 'lost' way of life and Russian national identity. 'Private' models of grievability, focusing on individual losses, are associated with deaths caused by repressive mechanisms and regimes

that are less easily explained or characterized, especially in an ongoing atmosphere of partial information, silencing, and ambivalence around the ‘facts’ of the topic, let alone its meaning. Finally, ungrievability denotes a person or group whose actions in life are considered by a particular group to have been so unforgivable that grieving them is almost taboo. However, it is important to note that ‘ungrievable’ characterizations are highly contested between and among stakeholders: no one is universally considered ‘ungrievable’ in contemporary Russia, reflecting the deeply dissonant nature of this heritage.

8.2.2 Public Grievability

In Yekaterinburg, the case study sites can be roughly divided by whether they memorialize the Romanov family’s murder by Bolsheviks in 1918 or whether they memorialize victims of later waves of Stalinist repression, particularly the Great Terror. The idea of the ‘political lives of dead bodies’ (Verdery 1999), in which the corpses of influential people take on great significance (perhaps even greater than in life) is not new (see also McEvoy and Conway 2004; Fontein 2010; Young and Light 2013). I suggest that the Romanov sites similarly grieve the imperial family as a stand-in for an entity, one greater than themselves or the historic ‘divine’ status of the Romanov dynasty (Montefiore 2017: xxiv-xxv), using a ‘public’ model of grievability, which I will now explain through the case studies.

As detailed in Chapter 5, the sites related to the Romanov family’s killing – now deemed a martyrdom by the Russian Orthodox Church – are well-funded, carefully tended, and ornately decorated. They are well-visited by pilgrims and tourists alike – although the Church on Blood, which sits very close to the site of the killing, is very central and thus easy to visit, Ganina Yama and Piglet Ravine are situated out of town, but this does not dissuade visitors. Piglet Ravine, however, is the most neglected of the Romanov sites – unlike the Church on Blood and Ganina Yama, it is not run and maintained by the Russian Orthodox Church, instead lying within a state-controlled park. Although it is the site where the Romanovs were finally buried (we recall that the Bolsheviks, who had previously buried them at Ganina Yama, were afraid that the encroaching White Army forces would find those graves and moved them to an even more obscure location), it is not popularly recognized as the final burial site, so tourist visitation is much lower than it is at Ganina Yama. Sites that are not ostensibly dedicated to the killings, such as the Museum of History and Archaeology of the Urals, often include exhibits dedicated to the family’s fate.

In contrast, the 12th Kilometer mass grave is not mentioned at these other museums and, lying twelve kilometers out of town on the historic road to Moscow, it is not well-signed or catered to via public or privately-arranged transport, with the exception of some municipally-funded buses on specific memorial days. As evidenced by the encounter with a wedding party there to take photographs, it is deemed a local ‘site of importance’, but not every visitor knows *why* it is important or even what happened there. The memorial plaques, less than 25 years old, are already falling down, and the site is in disrepair because of the lack of continued funding for it. The small on-site museum can only be opened on large memorial days, and there is as yet no funding to make ‘professional’ or thematically coherent exhibits inside.

In terms of differential grievability, then, I can use the data from these case studies to conclude that the Romanov family is deemed more ‘grievable’ in terms of attention, emotion, emotional labor, and money and other tangible resources. Although the caretakers of the 12th Kilometer and the relatives of those buried there undoubtedly care deeply for their dead and grieve them, the overall economic and sociocultural power structures of Yekaterinburg favor the Romanovs. The Romanovs’ loss can be viewed as a proxy for the loss of pre-revolutionary Russian culture and society, often romanticized now in popular culture and hailed as a legacy to be ‘reclaimed’ for the post-Soviet Russian nation. Further, there is a logical reason behind why a team of Bolsheviks killed them, as abhorrent as that reason might seem, unlike the marked randomness and uncertainty that surrounded the deaths of other victims of repression. The episode of the Romanov killings seems to have explicitly defined motives, perpetrators, and victims – it is not as uncomfortable an episode to contemplate in terms of societal legacies as are instances of repression like the Great Terror.

On one hand, even at the time of their deaths, the Romanovs were a loss for not only the surviving royal family and the aristocratic circles surrounding them, but for many monarchists, White Army members and supporters, and religious sectarians, as well as other people, especially peasants, who had been raised for generations to regard the Tsar and his family as next to God (Heretz 2008: 97-100). The circle of people who might possibly grieve their loss always extended far beyond Yekaterinburg and even outside of Russia. This very symbolic power is what prompted Lenin and other leaders to order planning for the execution (Rappaport 2010: 134), fearing that a freed royal family might rally anti-Bolshevik forces to a decisive victory in the hard-fought Civil War. The fear that even the discovery of their corpses might prove a similar flashpoint precipitated the decision to move the bodies before

the White Army could capture Yekaterinburg. Even decades after their death, we recall, local Party and municipal leaders were so afraid of the power those corpses might hold to embolden opposition that the Ipatiev House where the family had actually been killed was razed.

The popularity of these sites cannot simply be attributed to the allure of ‘thanatourism’ (Seaton 1996); as we have seen, not every site that holds human remains of victims of repression is a popular tourist attraction. Fieldwork by Alexander Agadjanian and Kathy Rousselet has revealed that some pilgrims to Ganina Yama and the Church on Blood mourn the Romanovs explicitly to ‘repent’ for the ‘collective responsibility of the Russian people for the “tragedy of the twentieth century”’ (2010: 321). In the current atmosphere, this ‘divine’ nature of the Romanovs and of the Russian ‘nation’ itself is becoming a more prominent aspect of Russian national identity in the modern world. As Alicja Curanović explains:

It is not a coincidence that when Russia was unarguably a great power (an empire), it was entrusted not with just one but with numerous exceptional roles and bore moral responsibilities for world affairs. Representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate underline the historical continuity of Russian statehood in order to reinforce Russia’s power status claim. Patriarch Kirill noted several times that Russia’s contemporary mission was a continuation of the legacy of Holy Rus. (2018: 5).

Therefore, the choice of ‘public’ grievability at the Romanov death sites is tied not just to the political significance of certain dead bodies, but to a much broader project of Russian nationalism to be enacted at home and abroad (see Hudson 2018 for one exploration of this dynamic in relation to the current conflict in Ukraine).

8.2.3 Private Grievability

In contrast, looking at the 12th Kilometer as well as the first group of sites from Chapter 6, almost all of the sites studied focus on grieving individual people as individuals, which is deemed to be especially important because of the secretive nature in which victims were arrested, deported, and killed. Thus, these sites present victims of Stalinist repression using what I term ‘private’ expressions of grievability, which I now turn to explicate. At heritage sites, ‘private’ grievability’s material traces may include lists of names, displays of photographs, and individual memorial plaques or signs that display a victim’s image and biographical data. The first two are often organized or supported by a site’s official stakeholders, while the latter are often placed by individual family members. Analyzing the Argentine ‘Dirty War’s’ ‘disappeared’ victims, anthropologist Antonius Robbins asserts

(2014: 146) that, after the cessation of abductions and killings, ‘the disappeared changed from alive yet missing into dead yet unaccounted for’, with various political obstacles blocking society from learning the full truth into the present day. As we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, this same dynamic persisted for decades in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia and helps explain the primacy of restoring identity to victims.

The Gulag Museum, in fact, does not explicitly ‘mourn’ any people in its exhibits, although the mass loss of life illustrated in certain sections, like the digital wall of names of victims of shooting campaigns, reflects a ‘private’ sense of grievability regarding the loss of all of these individual lives. At the Wall of Grief, mourning is predictably more of a focus than education; as noted before, there is no interpretative text there. Again, a ‘private’ model of grievability reigns, with people coming to remember either all victims as victims or remember their individual relatives. Caroline Pearce (2010: 168) notes the struggle that ‘dark heritage’ sites, especially those related to perpetrators, have in balancing the need to remember victims with the need to inform visitors about what happened; as we will see below, in the blameability sections, this combination of ‘private’ grief with an ‘abdication’ of the subject of blame is not uncommon at sites dealing with the heritage of Soviet repression. This is especially so because relatively few Soviet ‘perpetrator’ sites have been formally and tangibly heritagized, so the ones that have been take on outsize importance in both local and national ‘heritagescapes’ (Garden 2009).

The four mass graves – the 12th Kilometer, Butovo, Kommunarka, and Noviy Donskoy Cemetery – similarly apply a ‘private’ form of grievability to the literal tens of thousands of victims buried at each site. Each is grievable on his or her own merits, and with the focus here on enumerating specific names, the sense of individual identity and loss can be viewed as an aim in itself – there is no need to have these victims stand in for a greater symbolic loss. However, it should be noted that the recent controversy over including Yagoda’s name on the list of victims buried at Kommunarka reveals ‘dissonance’ (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) over what memorialization and memory should accomplish at that site. In the eyes of *Memorial* and the religious caretakers of Kommunarka, the plaques are there both to serve as markers of grief and as evidence of the scale of the crimes – no matter who someone was in life, if they were shot and killed there as part of the repression, they should be included on the plaques. Conversely, members of other memorial groups hold that certain actions in life should bar someone killed from actually being labeled ‘a victim’ and memorialized as such. These

arguments are an attempt to label some victims *ungrievable*, although they have not gained traction with Kommunarka's managers.

At the group of sites covered in Chapter 7, the situation is similar. Although the Solovetsky Stone (itself a metonymic symbol of places of Soviet dark heritage) does not name any victims or provide detailed commentary on a permanent basis, it has become a place where people gather privately, year-round, to lay candles and flowers for 'the victims'. At certain times of year, it becomes a place of mass public remembrance and memorialization, never more so than on October 29 of each year, the day before the national Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression. On these days, tens of thousands of victims are remembered in public via the reading of their names and short biographies, but the model of grievability is still a 'private' one under this typology.

As at Butovo and Kommunarka, the emphasis is explicitly on returning each victim's name and life details to them in public – indeed, making them 'people' again in the eyes of society, instead of consigning them forever to a nameless, faceless mass of 'enemies of the people'. The value here lies in this return of personhood, as well as remembering and grieving each individual loss. There is no reason to have them symbolize a larger loss, although 'editorializing' statements from some attendees at the microphone do draw clear parallels between Stalin's Soviet Union and Putin's Russia. This emphasis on restoring individual lives to public recognition also characterizes the 'Last Address' plaques placed at various locations around Moscow, as well as the memorial and memorializing aspects of 'It Is Right Here' and other digital remembrance programs and platforms. In each case, restoring the lost individual as a unique, 'grievable' entity, one who should not have been lost and whose unjust loss should be mourned, is the paramount goal. This restoration of dignity is the opposite of the consignment to 'bare life' (Agamben 1998) that was inflicted on these victims in life.

8.2.4 Ungrievable Grievability

The third type of grievability, *ungrievable*, could be considered instead a lack of grievability. Although comparatively rare, this is evident in situations when controversial figures – such as Stalin, but especially so for former NKVD leaders like Yagoda, Yezhov, and Beria – become attempted objects of grief by contemporary would-be mourners. Nonetheless, as with the other two categories, there are very few people or groups who could be considered 'universally' ungrievable. In Stalin's case, there are widespread attempts to shift the blame

for repression onto other players, while the family members of several NKVD leaders have attempted to gain official rehabilitation for them (always denied, as discussed previously). From the standpoint of memorialization and interpretation, ‘ungrievable’ people or groups can also be identified by conspicuous absences at sites where their acknowledgement might be expected. This absence can be precipitated by a lack of knowledge or a perception on the part of site managers that certain people or groups are not ‘worth’ being publicly identified as victims. The possibility that a group or person can be considered ‘ungrievable’ can also be identified by public controversy and contestation over their inclusion in memorial text or interpretation, as with the conflict over the memorial plaques at Kommunarka.

At and inside the Lubyanka building, there is no mention of any victim of Soviet or Stalinist repression, so everyone is deemed ‘ungrievable’. The Garage Shooting Range paradoxically memorializes the fact that Feliks Dzerzhinsky used to work there but says nothing about the people shot by the building’s parking garage. This is a deeply ‘dissonant’ (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996) situation, where one narrative of on-site physical sacrifice has been heritagized while a much larger pattern of violence is officially ignored by ‘official’ managers. Here, the grievability assigned to Dzerzhinsky via his plaque can be considered ‘public’ grievability because he does not and has never, since his death, symbolized only himself. As discussed in the previous chapter, he has always stood in for the might of Soviet (and, later, more broadly Communist) defense against an encroaching, hostile world through the use of the secret police and security services. In contrast, the victims of the attached shooting range are officially ‘ungrievable’ in their erasure from the building’s memorial hardware – although interpretation from ‘It is Right Here’ does attempt, digitally and through occasional walking tours, to restore ‘private’ grievability to them, though their names are not known exactly.

8.2.5 Towards A Typology of Grievability

In the first type of grievability considered here, ‘public’, the subject is considered ‘grievable’ beyond the parameters of usual, kinship group-oriented grief because of the grieved-for person or people’s symbolic powers. At Yekaterinburg, the Romanovs represent not just themselves as individual people, but imperial Russia, or even the ‘eternal Russia’ so revered by historic and contemporary Slavophiles alike. Grieving the royal family may also be an act of grieving the loss of that older Russia and its associated value systems as well. In the Romanov case, this grief might hearken back to a monarchist idea of ‘Nicholas Romanov, Russian incarnate’, a

medieval idea of the monarch as divinely appointed to rule that had survived into Russia's modern period, or Nicholas II as 'Father-Tsar', 'who knew all the peasants personally by name, understood their problems in all their minute details, and, if it were not for the evil boyars, the noble officials, who surrounded him, would satisfy their demands' (Figs 2017: 11). In the first, the idea of a 'lost' Russian empire – yet one, unlike mortal people, that might yet be regained – weaves through the mourning process, while, in the second, the ideal of an autocratic, yet personally involved absolute leader is evident. As Rousselet (2011: 146) argues, 'new' saints like the Romanovs 'are mainly presented as moral figures—examples for Russian people today'. As martyrs for the Russian Orthodox Church as well as the country (or empire), they stand as exemplars of what modern Russians can aspire to in the face of what is popularly perceived as 'post-Soviet moral disorder'. She goes on to assert that 'This new morality which is created by some elites and stands as a breakdown with the past has not yet [sic] a wide impact on Russian believers. Nevertheless it echoes with the moral demands of some Christian patriots' (Rousselet 2011: 147).

Thus, grieving for the Romanovs can become not just an act of mourning for loss but an assertion of what type of leader, government, or national identity the mourner might wish to resurrect or rebuild in the present day. The dead become grieved not just for themselves, but for the past they represent as well as a future whose loss via inaction or misconduct may well become 'grievable'. In the memorial landscape, this 'public' grievability is tangibly demonstrated through imagery and language that explicitly link the grieved-for individuals with a larger symbolic loss, such as a national, religious, or ethnonational identity. These sites also tend to be well-appointed in terms of infrastructure and benefit from financial and other support from a powerful body like the regional government or the Russian Orthodox Church. This narrative very much fits into the Russian version of the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith 2006: 29-34). But are there ways in which the temporal manifestations of remembrance at memorials challenge the AHD and reflect Smith's concept of 'heritage as process' (2006: 2)? I argue that manifestations of 'private' grievability do just that.

This second type of grievability, 'private', is a more personal type of grief and grieving. This often focuses on relatives: in contemporary Russian sites and ceremonies focusing on victims of the Great Terror, these will often be grandfathers and grandmothers, though members of other generations, such as fathers or great-aunts, are also possible objects of mourning. The

family aspect of grief and mourning is strong, as is the emphasis on identifying victims ‘by name’, thus bringing back their personal identities and shedding light on their previously mysterious and hidden fates. This type of ‘grievable’ victim is accordingly associated with deliberate mourning of that person via recitations of names; flowers and candles left at a place associated with their death and/or burial, especially if a plaque inscribed with their name or a personalized marker exists; and food left and/or consumed at a place of burial and memorialization. This differs from the type of individual-centered grieving seen at sites related to victims of the first type because it does not aggrandize the victims or hold them up as symbols of any larger cause, movement, or entity. Although attendees may use religious imagery or language in memorial ceremonies, especially entreating for ‘eternal memory for the victims’, they are not made to symbolize anything beyond themselves except, perhaps, as an example of the consequences of ‘evil’ or government repression. Of course, many NGOs and private citizens involved in these ceremonies do connect such campaigns of repression and violence to ongoing and contemporary systematic abuses and violent transgressions of human rights; however, the historic victims themselves are not grieved *because* they symbolize these current victims or *because* grieving them necessarily correlates to a specific political or moral stance

Below, I present a preliminary typology of grievability based on observations and analyses made at this project’s case study sites:

Table 8.1 A Preliminary Typology of Grievability. (Table by author)

Type of Grievability	Interpretative Characteristics	Heritage Manifestations	Exemplars
<i>Public</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grieves and/or venerates victims in overtly religious or ideological manner • Victims symbolize a larger entity that has been ‘lost’ • Sites usually well-Appointed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourse that explicitly identifies victims’ loss with broader loss • Plaques, statues, and memorials emphasizing victims’ heroic and martyr-like qualities • Tangible heritage sites in good Repair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church on Blood, Yekaterinburg • Ganina Yama, Yekaterinburg • Dzerzhinsky plaque, Moscow
<i>Private</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims grieved as individuals • Range of mourning discourses and caretaking organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on photographs and biographical data of victims • Cyclical events that focus on returning identity to victims and remembrance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Return of Names’ ceremony, Moscow • Butovo, Moscow • Gulag Museum, Moscow
<i>Ungrievable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singles out particular people or groups as ‘ungrievable’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manifests in absence or controversy over inclusion in heritage ‘hardware’ and/or interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yagoda and other NKVD workers on Kommunarka plaques, Moscow

8.3 Blameability

8.3.1 Blameability – An Overview

Above I introduced a preliminary typology of grievability and examined reasons why various site caretakers and stakeholders might choose one model of grievability over another. The other side of the coin, when it comes to remembering and memorializing a phenomenon like Soviet and Stalinist repression, however, is blameability. Because of the nature of the repression, which often turned former perpetrators into victims and induced many citizens to collaborate with repressive mechanisms (discussed more fully in Chapter 3), it is impossible to neatly draw a line between the categories of ‘victim’, ‘collaborator’, and ‘perpetrator’ (see Hilberg 1993). Many people moved between these categories at different points in their lives, and this makes sweeping characterizations about who or what ‘type’ of person ‘could be’ a perpetrator or collaborator both implausible and somewhat moot. The historic evidence shows that anyone could act in ways that perpetrated, resisted, or more passively collaborated with repressive institutions and actions, while anyone could also fall victim to the repression, very often due to no identifiable action (or inaction) of their own.

If one meaningful difference between sites is how they differentially assign grief to different groups of victims, the meaningful corollary lies in how they assign blame. I propose that models of blameability can also be identified as belonging to one of three overarching types. In Chapter 6, I identified several instances in which site interpretation seemed to ‘abdicate’ the question of assigning blame or culpability to any cause (or group or person) of repression. The ‘abdication’ model does not focus on perpetrators and perpetration at all, or only very minimally, with the focus instead placed almost completely on victims. In contrast, an ‘authoritarian’ model identifies top leaders as the ‘blameable’ parties, which serves a real social function but precludes an examination of the motivations and identities of rank-and-file perpetrators. Finally, ‘complicit’ blameability would more thoroughly analyze the topic of ‘everyday’ perpetration and push visitors to examine their own attitudes towards power and political pressure.

I argue that sites favoring an ‘abdication’ model of blameability are associated with stakeholders who wish to avoid any discussion of the contemporary legacies of past repressive regimes. By focusing solely on victims, with nary a mention of who victimized them, they avoid difficult interrogations of holding power accountable or present-day reparations. Although memorials have a legitimate reason to focus on victims instead of perpetrators, and

religious sites have an obvious reason to remember in the discourse of ‘martyrdom’ where appropriate, the power enjoyed by contemporary stakeholders such as the Russian Orthodox Church means that those ‘powerful’ actors choose not to use their platform to highlight broader issues of human rights and accountability. The ‘authoritarian’ model similarly is employed by stakeholders ostensibly addressing a real need – in this case, widespread beliefs that Stalin or other leaders ‘didn’t know’ about the repression. However, the emphasis placed on proving these leaders’ culpability eschews any discussion of why millions of lower-ranking NKVD operatives, as well as civilians, chose to participate in the repression. Actors such as the Gulag Museum management are able to examine and accuse leaders and power mechanisms of the past, but they deliberately avoid connecting those to any contemporary abuses or any in-depth examination of how individuals cooperate with or resist repression. Finally, ‘complicit’ models of blameability are used by stakeholders who wish to make the connections between past and present abuses legible and to explore the role of individual agency in systems of repression. In Russia, these parties tend to be associated with NGOs or other ‘non-official’ groups, and they struggle to gain official support, financial or otherwise.

We can now examine the case study sites from both cities to see if there are any over-arching patterns as to why certain site managers and stakeholders choose one model of blameability over others.

8.3.2 The ‘Abdication’ Model

The sites related to the Romanov killings in Yekaterinburg overwhelmingly display an ‘abdication’ model of blameability. This type of blameability, it should be noted, can be seen at sites using both ‘public’ and ‘private’ models of grievability. It can be noted through observation of an absence of any information on perpetration beyond the very minimal, alongside a marked emphasis on victims. This emphasis is evidenced through the use of photos and lists of names and/or other biographical data of the victims, with very little mention of who victimized these people. This is the case even though, unlike at many other killing sites related to Soviet terror and repression, the names of the Romanovs’ killers are well-known and verified. Some peripheral sites, such as the Museum of History and Archaeology of the Urals, do identify the killers and even briefly explain the motivations of why they, as well as higher leaders, decided to kill the Romanovs. However, the ‘main’ sites of remembrance and mourning for the Romanovs, such as the Church on Blood and Piglet Ravine, focus overwhelmingly on mourning the losses, not identifying the killers. As religious sites, justice

in the mortal realm can be viewed as outside of their remit – it is not necessary for them to decide blame on earth, as it will be decided in a higher realm. Although, clearly, human individuals did the physical work of killing the imperial family and burying their bodies, there is no exploration of why they did this or the political and geopolitical backdrops behind these decisions. Remembering the victims – in this case, literal martyrs – is by far the aim of these sites.

At the 12th Kilometer, although the site is not managed by the Russian Orthodox Church, the focus is overwhelmingly on the victims, not the perpetrators, placing the site in the ‘abdication’ model of blameability. This is in stark contrast to the way many area activists and ‘guardians of memory’ (Carr 2015) speak about whom they consider to be the ‘leading’ perpetrators of Stalinist repression, especially Stalin, successive heads of the NKVD, and local ‘Chekists’. In conversation, blame is placed quite readily, but, at the site itself, there is little such assignment of blame or culpability. Even the speeches at large public gatherings of remembrance emphasize grieving, remembering, and preventing a similar mass atrocity from happening again over assigning any blame. Going off of Smith’s (2006) work again, we can identify that the AHD of grieving and accepted tropes of heritagization of mass graves do not match how interested parties actually speak about the thorny issue of ‘blame’ in Soviet repression. Nanci Adler (2015: 133), studying the ways in which gulag survivors and their descendants struggle to reconcile suffering with their belief in broader Soviet ideology, notes that ‘An inclusive history could be based on the dynamic reconciliation of dialogue between the personal narrative and national narrative, between the past and the present’. Yet, so far, the sites studied struggle to bridge that gap effectively.

The Wall of Grief, as well as the Butovo and Kommunarka shooting ranges, echo the 12th Kilometer in ‘abdicating’ the question of blameability. In the latter two instances, this is again a reflection of the sites’ religious management and mode of memorialization and remembrance. In the former case, the reasons are murkier. It is worth recalling that, at the Wall of Grief’s dedication ceremony in October 2017, President Putin’s address focused solely on remembering the victims and reflecting that such events should never happen again in Russia – but neglecting to mention Stalin’s name (President of Russia 2017). In the memorial’s design, one can see hints of Levy and Sznajder’s (2002) ‘cosmopolitan memory cultures’, spreading globally but still retaining local unique features in each culture. Although the site of the memorial is not known to have been a previous ‘site of violence’, that situation is

complicated by the presence of the stones brought from different parts of Russia that held gulag camps or prisons. The ‘sites of violence’ have been brought from the periphery to the center (Appadurai 1986) in order to serve as symbols of national memory of repression at a memorial that enjoys support from a successor government to the perpetrating one. Yet, at the site itself, with its total lack of any textual information or context about what happened to these people, the duty of perpetrator sites to ‘explain’ (Pearce 2010) has been abdicated.

Here, the ‘abdication’ model seems borne out of a desire to avoid naming any perpetrators and thus facing up to their legacies in contemporary Russia. Putin’s own remarks, stating ‘Indeed, we and our descendants must remember the tragedy of repression and what caused it. However, this does not mean settling scores. We cannot push society to a dangerous line of confrontation yet again’¹ (President of Russia 2017), support this interpretation – especially since the ‘causes’ are nowhere to be found on site. If the people who planned and carried out the atrocity remain a faceless mass, there is no need to seriously examine what circumstances made their actions possible, or even natural-seeming, at the time. The ‘abdication’ model of blameability thus offers remembrance without reckoning. Again, it can be argued that memorials (as opposed to museums) should indeed place their interpretative focus on victims, not perpetrators, that the ‘never again’ educative paradigm of the ‘cosmopolitan message of peace and reconciliation’ should not be automatically favored over whichever meanings local communities wish to impart on a memorial site (Selimovic 2013: 346-348). Yet the paradox of an ex-KGB chief opening a memorial to gulag victims without ever mentioning who was responsible for these mass abuses is strikingly ‘dissonant’, to use John Tunbridge and Gregory Ashworth’s (1996) term. This is especially so because of the near-total lack of educational or factual interpretation at the site.

8.3.3 The ‘Authoritarian’ Model

The ‘authoritarian’ model, in contrast, does identify specific perpetrators as those most worthy of being blamed for the repression. This is evidenced by stark statements of culpability, or even the presentation of evidence proving the point. The Gulag Museum displays an ‘authoritarian’ model of blameability, wherein Stalin and other leading members of the Poliburo ar

¹ ‘Да, нам и нашим потомкам надо помнить о трагедии репрессий, о тех причинах, которые их породили. Но это не значит – призывать к сведению счетов. Нельзя снова подталкивать общество к опасной черте противостояния’ (<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55948>).

deliberately identified, on text panels and online as well as in oral interpretation, as the people responsible for the Great Terror, the mass arrests, the expansion of the Gulag system, etc. This model does fill an existing need to ‘prove’ that Stalin and his immediate underlings did know about the existence and scope of Soviet repression and, in fact, personally signed thousands of ‘shooting lists’ themselves. However, it also precludes the possibility of exhibits that explore the actions and motivations of rank-and-file perpetrators and collaborators. The questions of why someone would choose to join the NKVD as an interrogator, or why someone would denounce their neighbor to the police at the height of the Great Terror, are crucial in order to understand how ‘cogs’ in the machine of repression operate and why. In fact, talk of ‘preventing’ similar atrocities in future can seem toothless without searching examinations of these very questions.

But these are also the most uncomfortable questions to ask, on both the personal and societal levels. How many of us can say that, faced with a very real wave of terror and fearing for our own lives, we would not knowingly act in a way that harms our neighbor or coworker? How can a repressive regime act on these human instincts of self-preservation and loyalty to kinship networks to manipulate ‘good’ or ‘proper’ citizens into betraying their comrades? And what are the consequences for a nation, government, or institution that does or does not seek to confront the legacy of repression within itself? At the other case study sites actually located in the landscape, there is much less of an educational function, so the absence of material that addresses these issues is less striking, perhaps even unremarkable. After all, a memorial to victims of repression is not the appropriate place to turn the lens on perpetrators and bestow attention on them. Sodaro sums up the USHMM’s mission as a ‘memorial museum’ thus: ‘History is a corrective to memory’s fallibility, and memory is often believed to be a therapeutic alternative to history’s objectivity and scientific claims, and the museum attempts to embody the best of each’ (2018: 44). Going back to Sodaro’s (2018: 162-3, quoted fully in Chapter 4) three missions of a memorial museum: “museum”, “memorial”, and “never again”, we can conclude that the Gulag Museum does not fully engage with the third of these criteria. The Gulag Museum also identifies itself as a ‘museum of memory’² (Gulag Museum 2018), and the fact that this issue goes unaddressed is indicative of a reluctance to face these difficult questions at the level of the individual visitor as well as the country. It also calls into

² музей памяти'

question the ‘universality’ of Sodaro’s criteria.

The Solovetsky Stone itself, at first glance, also seems to use an ‘abdication’ form of blameability. There is no reference to who may have been responsible for the gulag, the Great Terror, or other mass abuses on the stone itself or on the nearby, minimal written interpretation. But this is a deeply contested ‘heritagescape’ (Garden 2009): it is no accident that the stone was placed right in front of the Lubyanka building and, originally, just opposite a statue of Cheka founder Feliks Dzerzhinsky. In its placement, it accuses the Soviet and current Russian security services of past crimes and contemporary silence – in some cases, even complicity with contemporary human rights abuses (see contemporary protests described in Chapter 7). On days of mass public ceremonies like the Return of Names, there is more of an emphasis on the personhood of victims and perpetrators alike, especially when participants come to the microphone and detail their own family stories. The ceremony’s format does not allow for nuanced explorations of different people’s life choices, however. Thus, the placing of blame at these events tends to be squarely ‘authoritarian’, with Stalin and his henchmen or, alternately, the ‘executioners’ as a mass, the subjects of calls for eternal shaming. Neither the Solovetsky Stone nor the Wall of Grief is a government memorial – they were both planned and are now taken care of by independent organizations. However, the ties between the Wall of Grief’s ‘parent’ foundation, the Memory Foundation, and the Gulag Museum, which enjoys strong government support, are visibly strong, never more so than at the memorial’s opening ceremony. Since the Russian government does not have, at this time, a permanent memorial to victims of Soviet repression and/or the gulag, it is clear that the independent Wall of Grief is filling that interpretative gap. With this ‘institutional’ distance from the institutions, like the FSB, that are the inheritors of the legacy of Soviet repression, is there a duty on the part of the Wall of Grief to address issues of perpetration at all? If so, is the Solovetsky Stone as a permanent place of remembrance absolved from such a responsibility because of its long-standing institutional and ideological distance from power?

At sites directly connected to institutions of state repression, such as the Lubyanka Building and the Garage Shooting Range, there is no permanent, tangible aspect of blameability anywhere. If a visitor has come to those places via an entity like an ‘It Is Right Here’ walking tour or other digital media, they may receive an alternative narrative that does address questions of perpetration and individual responsibility. For example, visitors on such a tour to the Garage

Shooting Range are shown a photo of the NKVD operative thought to be personally responsible for overseeing executions there. Such interpretations are more likely to acknowledge that perpetrators often later became victims themselves, but the formats leave little room for nuanced explorations of these onetime perpetrators' motivations. Beyond showing proof that the mechanisms of repression very often turned on their own, thereby blurring the lines between the two categories forever, there is not much exploration of individual life choices and circumstances that led to these outcomes.

8.3.4 The 'Complicit' Model

The typography of blameability nevertheless does have a third category of 'complicit' blameability. At this time, there are no Russian sites or digital networks that focus on complicit models of blameability. The closest that any sites come are the scattered cases viewable through the 'It Is Right Here' project and some other digital remembrance initiatives. At almost all of the sites, the focus is very much on returning individuality to the victims, overwhelmingly through publicly reading or recording their names. I have made the point several times that, for a memorial to victims, this is possibly all that can be reasonably expected from the caretakers and stakeholders³. After all, it would be inappropriate to turn the focus of a dedicated memorial to the perpetrators of an atrocity. This is true for sites like the Wall of Grief and the Solovetsky Stone, as these are not necessarily meant to be places of education for an audience that doesn't know about the existence and scope of Soviet repression. These sites are aimed at an audience of survivors and their relatives: considering the scale of the shooting campaigns, arrests, deportations, and all the other abuses, there are very few people in Russia today who are not inheritors of a legacy of victimhood. It is true that there are many who do not fully know their own family history. The details of longstanding government obfuscation on the subject can be found in Chapter 3, but it is also worth remembering the words of the 'Last Address' project's founder: 'The people we encounter start to speak differently of the past: they no longer use confused or vague political language, instead they give some thought to individual human destinies' (Parkhomenko 2018). Having started the program to combat what he saw as widespread amnesia and confusion about this chapter of Russia's history, in his view the process of installing a plaque brings the past 'home' to contemporary Russians through the lens of a single, unfairly lost life.

³ I thank my supervisor, Dr Gilly Carr, and my advisor, Dr Lila Janik, for raising this point.

But what about museums and the other sites that have a stated educational function, whether the site is itself a museum or a mass grave with museological elements, such as (occasionally) the 12th Kilometer and Butovo? These are the places that might take on the task of exploring individual complicity in atrocity and repression without seeming to take attention away from victims. Yet none of them do. At other sites related to mass repression and atrocity, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington, D.C., and the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Gallery, in London, the focus remains overwhelmingly on the victims, but there are also small, affecting portions that deal with the question of perpetration. At the IWM, for example, there is a small area dealing with perpetrators, which convincingly argues that, although a small proportion of camp staff at Auschwitz II and other concentration camps were sadists or true believers in the Nazi ideology of racial supremacy, the vast majority, to quote Levi (1988: 170): 'were, for the greater part, diligent followers and functionaries: some fanatically convinced of the Nazi doctrine, many indifferent, or fearful of punishment, or desirous of a good career, or too obedient'. The USHMM has a similar small section in its permanent exhibits, and both museums have large sections dealing with the 'build up' to the Holocaust, emphasizing that the path to mass arrests, deportations, and killings is long and does require a large amount of progressive dehumanization of the targeted group, as well as progressive acquiescence – or enthusiastic participation – from the non-targeted population. The overall branding of the USHMM, in particular, specifically focuses on attempting to make sure visitors do put themselves in the place of societies on the cusp of a genocide, in hopes of preventing another one.

In contrast, the Gulag Museum has a program specifically dedicated to collecting and preserving oral histories of victims of Soviet repression, but it has no equivalent center or program that faces out towards the contemporary world and its potential (or real) mass atrocities or acts of repression. Conversely, *Memorial* does explicitly connect its main functions of preserving the memory of victims of Stalinist repression and fighting contemporary human rights abuses. Studying the manners in which these organizations handle the intersections between grievability and blameability for specific groups and people can help explicate broader attitudes towards the legacy of Soviet repression in Russia and towards human rights in the present day. Again, we see here an 'abdication' of Pearce's (2010) duty to educate.

A preliminary typology of blameability, introduced in Chapter 4, is introduced here:

Table 8.2 A Preliminary Typology of Blameability. (Table by author)

Type	Interpretative Characteristics	Heritage Manifestations	Exemplars
<i>Abdication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids placing blame on people (individual or group) • Religious overtones and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language of martyrdom on plaques, memorial walls, and other interpretation • Material evidence and/or portrayals of violence, but no mention of perpetrators • Martyr-like displays of victims' photos and objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butovo firing range, Moscow • Kommunarka firing range, Moscow
<i>Authoritarian</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places blame on government leaders and NKVD officers • 'Totalitarian' view of the causes of Repression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation that 'proves' culpability through visuals or 'original' documents • Emphasis on personal actions and personalities of 'culpable' leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulag Museum, Moscow • Perm-36, Perm
<i>Complicit</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places blame on leaders as well as 'ordinary' collaborators • Uses open-ended questions or short biographies to illustrate different measures of complicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text panels or oral interpretation that focus on individual biographies reasons behind a decision to perpetrate or collaborate • 'Topography of Terror'-type landscape-based mapping and interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital efforts by <i>Memorial</i> et al. • Current lack of such heritage 'hardware' in Russia

8.4 Plotting the Axes of Grievability and Blameability

8.4.1. Plotting the Axes: An Overview

The key differences between sites lie in these intersections between how ‘grievable’ and how simultaneously ‘blameable’ a given person or group is. The ambiguity of the categories of perpetrator and victim means that accurate designations have to be carefully handled, and controversies erupt all the time over what a given stakeholder might deem an ‘inaccurate’ designation, as we saw with the arguments over the Kommunarka plaques.

Is it possible to conclude that any patterns exist in terms of how sites combine types of these two concepts? This section maps each site’s displayed types of each concept, as these are made manifest for each group of people or individual through site interpretation, against each other; these plot points are presented on an x/y axis for each site. The charts I have made, plotting each site’s relative ascriptions of grievability and blameability to different groups and people, are not quantifiable. It is not possible to put a universal numerical scale on these measures, so they should rather be viewed as tools of relative measurement, across and between sites. They are meant to provide an accessible, visual measure of the relationships between these types of idea at each site and for each ‘main’ stakeholder – here, this is almost always the caretaking or managing stakeholder.

8.4.2 Plotting the Axes: Butovo

At the Butovo shooting range, there is no discussion of perpetration, and the victims whose names are inscribed on the walls of the Memorial Garden are not distinguished from each other in any way. However, other interpretative material at the site, like the text panels at the mass grave itself and online text, emphasize the martyrdom of Russian Orthodox clergy and leaders to a greater extent than they do the rest of the victims. As a church-operated and managed site now, this is not an unexpected variation. However, even with the site’s overall ‘abdication’ model of blameability, there is still a difference in how the two groups of victims are viewed. Some of these text panels point out that people heavily involved in other aspects of Soviet repression, such as the Belomor canal, ended up being killed at Butovo. This hints at a partial assignment of culpability for the phenomenon of Soviet repression *overall* but stops short of assigning blame for the Great Terror or the crimes committed at Butovo. There is no suggestion that any of those people ‘deserved’ their later fate. This slight measure of ‘blame’ is far outweighed by the site’s overall mission of mourning the victims of repression

buried there, albeit in a decidedly Russian Orthodox discourse and fashion. Therefore, plotting measures of relative grievability and blameability for ‘Russian Orthodox victims’ and ‘all other victims’ against each other, we have the following chart (Figure 8.1):

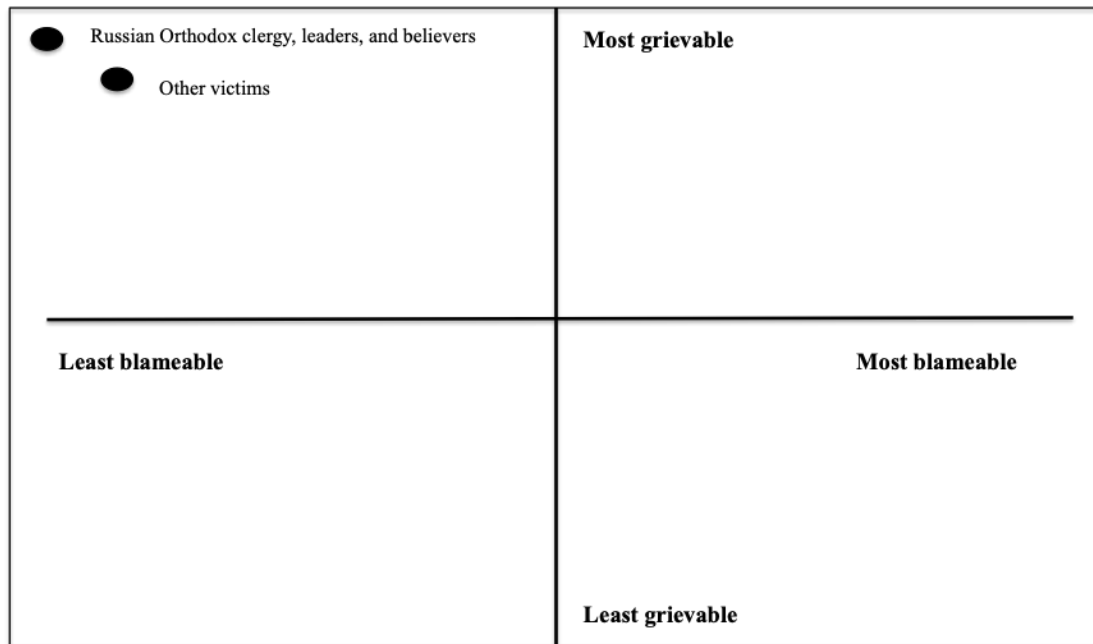


Figure 8.1. Grievability/blameability axis for Butovo Firing Range. (Figure by author)

8.4.3 Plotting the Axes: The Wall of Grief

At the Wall of Grief, all victims are treated equally, with no more or less attention paid to any specific person or group and no attempt made to distinguish any as more grievable than others. The only chance to differentiate among victims is left up to the visitor: they can choose to lay flowers and candles on stone brought from specific parts of Russia, or they can bring biographical information on pieces of paper and leave them with offerings around the site. There is also no text or interpretation that alludes to perpetration of any type. The word ‘grief’ is in the name – this is the memorial’s entire reason for being, leaving the site at a maximum measure of grievability and a minimum of blameability. Thus, the chart (Figure 8.2) looks like this:

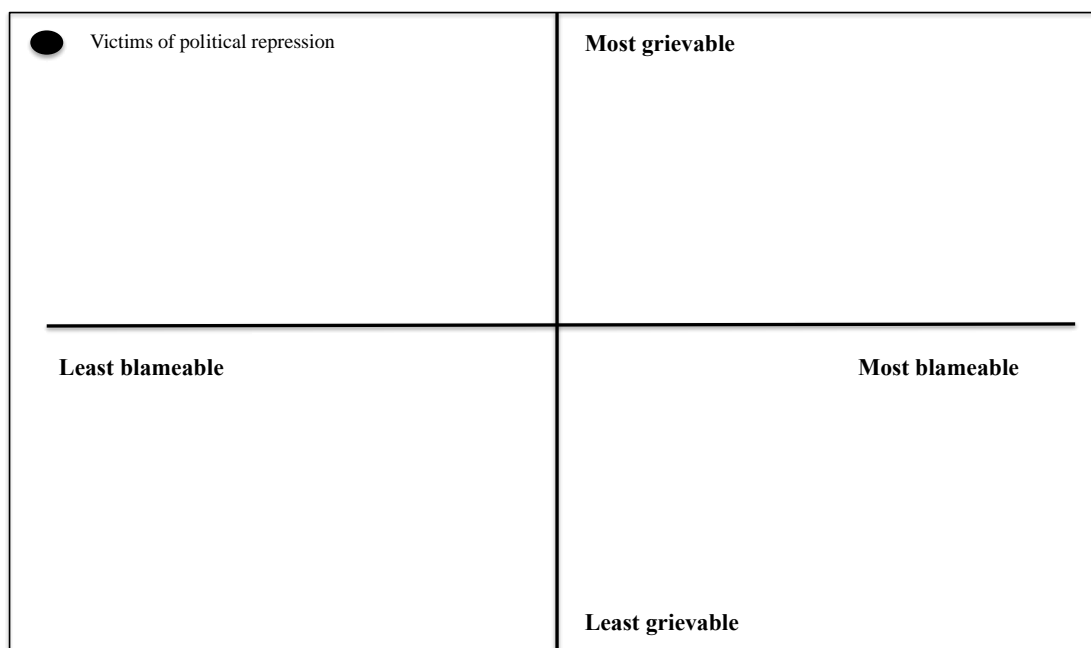


Figure 8.2. Grievability/blameability axis for the Wall of Grief. (Figure by author)

Here, all of the victims are considered as one undifferentiated group, and there is no attempt to place blame at all. This is why the blameability type is one of ‘abdication’, and the grievability meant to be of the ‘private’ type. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is extremely difficult for museums and memorials dealing with the legacy of mass violence to communicate the scope of loss in an emotionally resonant way. With the exception of the stones brought from different areas of Russia that had gulag camps and colonies, nothing about this memorial is specifically and emotionally resonant with the situation of mass Soviet repression. The flowers and personal offerings brought there are often in memory of a specific family member, not the mass of victims as a whole – who, according to Putin’s opening speech and the lack of any written explanation at the site, may as well have been victims of a hurricane or famine, not human actions within a deliberately designed regime. Here, the lack of differentiation regarding the victims and the total absence of any information about what exactly happened to them may be ‘appropriate’ in that all attention is on the victims, not the perpetrators, but it also runs the risk of having the memorial appear sterile and non-resonant. Further, the boycott of the memorial, particularly its opening ceremony, by some leading human rights campaigners and NGOs (more fully discussed in Chapter 5), on the grounds that the Russian state is continuing to engage in similar campaigns of human rights abuses and repression throws the memorial’s complete lack of blameability aspects into a harsher light. It appears to be an attempt to place the entire sequence of events firmly into the past, with no attempt to

connect it to the present or future – which is much the same as the Kremlin’s current stance on the ‘proper’ legacy of Soviet repression in contemporary Russia.

8.4.4 Plotting the Axes: Gulag Museum

Being a museum, the Gulag Museum is able to address a much broader range of issues in more depth than a typical memorial can, so its chart accordingly has more ‘subject’ points than do the previous two. As discussed above, the museum overall uses an ‘authoritarian’ mode of blameability, placing a marked emphasis on ‘proving’ that Stalin and his Politburo members both knew about the existence and scope of the gulag and shooting campaigns and personally approved aspects of the mechanisms of repression. Indeed, Stalin’s demise is treated as a moment of catalysis for the Soviet Union: the section dealing with his death paints it as a moment when citizens across the USSR could finally tell the truth about their fates and those of their families. Stalin is the main villain of the repression, with other contemporary leaders close behind. This is why Stalin’s point is at the maximum value of blameability and the minimum of grievability, while other Politburo members are only slightly less blameable and more grievable, respectively. However, there are acknowledgements of other victims’ culpability with certain aspects of the repressive regime – these include mention of some Old Bolsheviks’ bloody activities during the Red Terror and Civil War, who thus occupy a position nearer the intersection of grievability and blameability than do any other group. There is also reference to others who somehow furthered the repressive mechanisms of the time, usually via forwarding the cause of Soviet terror through propaganda or artistic work. However, the section dedicated to the lives and work of Soviet writers who fell in and out of favor with the government over their work lends ambiguity to judging the ‘artistic’ group. There are also scattered references to NKVD operatives who later became victims, but this narrative is not a focal point. Overall, both of these groups are considered slightly more blameable than ‘family members’, and the attention paid to writers, in particular, gives them a respectively higher position on the grievability axis.

The only people who are considered totally ‘blameless’ are child victims and other family members of those initially arrested, such as wives of ‘enemies of the people’ (especially those arrested and sent to a special camp for such wives in what is today Kazakhstan). This group thus has a maximum value of grievability and a minimum value of blameability. The chart for the Gulag Museum looks like this (Figure 8.3):

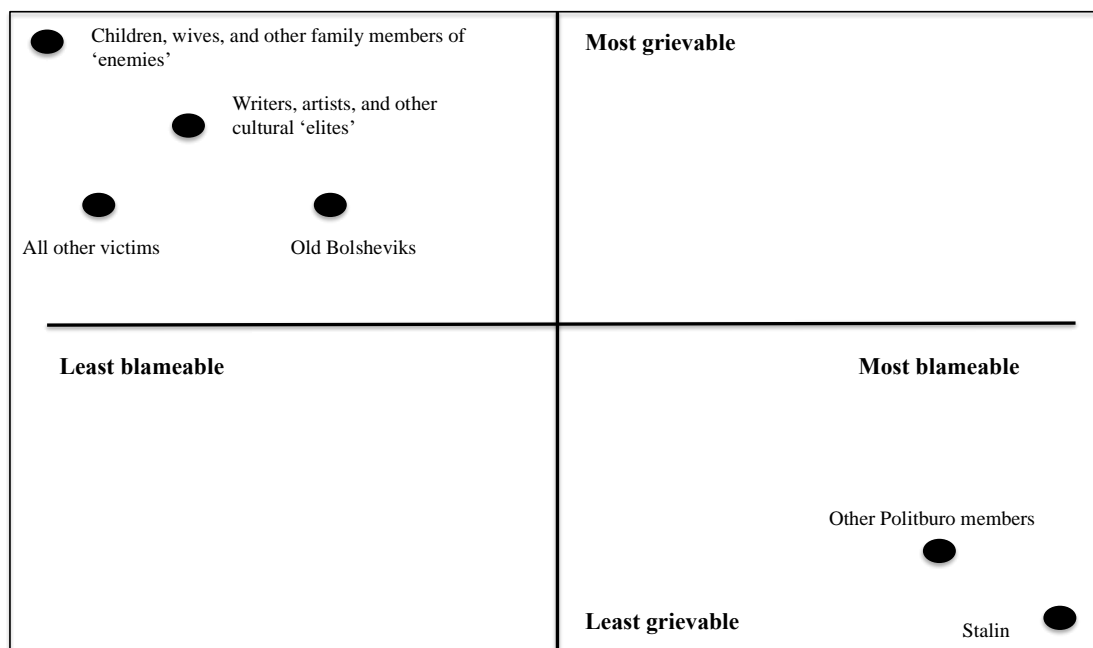


Figure 8.3. Grievability/blameability axis for the Gulag Museum. (Figure by author)

Although the museum abounds in documentary evidence about forced labor output, arrest and death tolls, and population movement – all of which benefited some people while victimizing others – these threads are never joined together to examine *why* people choose to act in ways that victimize others and why those acts might fail to save their own selves later. According to the museum, Soviet terror ended when Stalin died, Beria was arrested and executed, and Khrushchev closed the gulags. Again, the credit is all given to top leaders, as if these decisions came from a higher plane and ‘normal’ people could not have affected them at all. Jarringly, though, there is a section right at the end of the museum’s permanent collections where visitors are invited to leave a note about what they learned. One prompt asks them to complete the sentence, ‘It will never come back again if I...’ while another asks, ‘What should we do today to prevent the return of the past tomorrow?’⁴ But even here, the emphasis is very much on the terror and atrocity being *in and of the past* – if ‘the past’ returns, it will be a resurrection of a once-vanquished evil, not something that is both inherently tied to the past but very much dependent on contemporary actions and inactions, let alone the consequences of unaddressed legacies of repression in society and government

⁴ ‘Повторения не будет если я...’ and ‘Что нужно сделать сегодня, чтобы прошлое не повторилось завтра?’, respectively.

8.4.5 Plotting the Axes: ‘It is Right Here’

Due to the sheer amount of information contained in the digital ‘It Is Right Here’ platform, any diagram in this thesis is necessarily incomplete. What separates it from the other three sites charted here is the placement of ‘NKVD functionaries’ – in many online entries and in oral tour narration, there is acknowledgement that many NKVD workers ended up becoming victims of the repression. This victimization is not regarded as ‘just’ or ‘fitting’, but it is also not used to justify these particular victims’ earlier action. In this ambivalence, the information provided by ‘It Is Right Here’ comes the closest out of all the case study sites to communicating a ‘complicit’ model of blameability to its audience. The chart for ‘It Is Right Here’ looks like this (Figure 8.4):

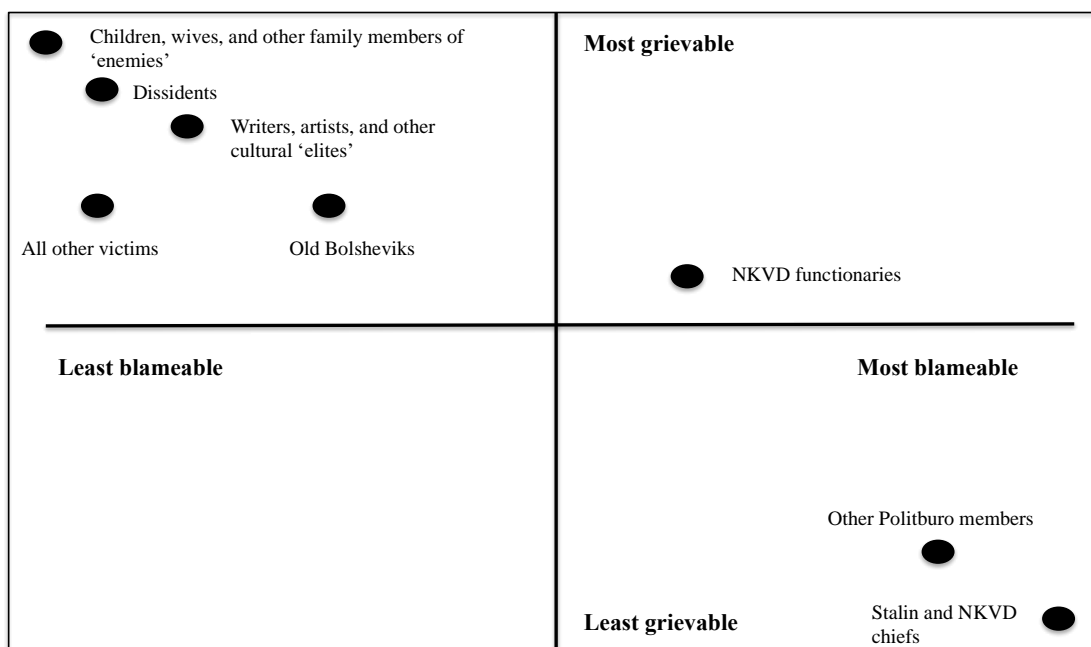


Figure 8.4 Grievability/blameability axis for ‘It Is Right Here’. (Figure by author)

Therefore, the point for ‘NKVD functionaries’ sits midway across the ‘more blameable’ side of the spectrum and partially up the ‘more grievable’ axis. Otherwise, its chart looks much like the one for the Gulag Museum, with a special emphasis on telling the story of the victimization of various dissidents. They are thus placed a bit higher on the grievability scale than other groups, with the exception of family members. This is fitting, as *Memorial* itself is now allied with many prominent dissidents and has always identified as an activist group, standing up for the interests of various subalterns in the former Soviet Union and contemporary Russia. The relatively higher ‘grievable’ value assigned to artists is a particularly interesting parallel with the Gulag Museum’s interpretative values.

8.4.6 Comparing Charts – Patterns and Analysis

These charts show intriguing patterns in the ways that different site managers and stakeholders theorize the intersection between grievability and blameability for different people involved in Soviet repression. The subdivisions (see Tables 8.1 and 8.2) of these concepts of grievability and blameability in heritage are similarly important: comparing the general categorizations of each site helps us ascertain what types of sites forward different models and why. Overall, the sites charted here show a tendency to combine either the ‘authoritarian’ or ‘abdication’ model of blameability with a ‘private’ model of grievability. When ‘public’ models of grievability are present, as at Yekaterinburg’s Church on Blood and Ganina Yama, the blameability models are still of the ‘abdication’ type.

With either combination, there is a clear correlation between it and an emphasis on the part of the site’s managers and caretakers to acknowledge loss but elide any connections with the present day on two ‘difficult’ points. First, these sites do not make connections between the existence of present-day institutions, like the FSB, that have never faced up to the repressive legacy of their preceding institutions, like the Cheka, NKVD, and KGB. Second, the sites with dedicated educational sections do not address the question of rank-and-file perpetrators, let alone collaborators. Silence on both of these points fails to lead visitors into considering points like the legacy of repression in a country where persecuting LGBT+ individuals is still official policy or considering how a ‘normal’ individual might end up actively participating in mechanisms or acts of repression. Both of these are indicative of the political situation in Russia today, which is decidedly authoritarian, reflecting, as they do, a tendency to atomize past atrocities, distance them from current power-holders, and discourage citizens from thinking critically about how governments can deprive citizens of human and civil rights.

Mapping these sites’ designations internally and their categories against each other expose the deeply dissonant and conflicted nature of the heritage of Soviet repression. It is not as if there is a singular ‘acceptable’ narrative of what happened during Soviet repression, yet there are certain topics within that phenomenon that remain officially untouched. ‘Unofficial’ actors like *Memorial* can try to insert aspects of ‘complicit’ blameability into their interpretation, but, even with digital heritage networks and projects, they lack the clout that the ‘official’ sites hold. Finally, the ‘unofficial’ stakeholders themselves disagree on whom to grieve and blame beyond the level of Stalin and his top henchmen, again illustrating the lack of consensus across the field.

8.5 Accountability

In the previous chapter's discussion of the contested heritagescape around the Lubyanka Building, the concept of 'accountability' at dark heritage sites was proposed. The context was the attempts by *Memorial*, through its 'It Is Right Here' program, to remind visitors who come in contact with their interpretative materials about the legacy the Lubyanka building holds, although that legacy is not officially recognized by the FSB or any other government entity. As with many of the other buildings still under FSB management in the Lubyanka area, that dark past is not visible on the landscape at all, and 'civilian' tourists cannot enter these buildings. It is possible to look at these digital and temporary, walking-tour-based interventions as an attempt to hold the contemporary power structures 'accountable' for both their antecedents' actions and their present-day silence. This idea of heritage 'accountability' differs from blameability because there is an element of continued responsibility inherent inside it. 'Blame' is easy to assign without expecting any consequences or reparative actions. We have seen this dynamic especially at the sites that utilize 'authoritarian' models of blameability, wherein placing the lion's share of the blame for a mass system of atrocity on one or several long-dead leaders can both satisfy this need to assign responsibility and also keep questions of justice and systemic, meaningful change solely in the past.

'Accountability' at these sites of Soviet repression, then, is a concept that only NGOs bring to bear in contemporary Russia, and they often must do this in non-official and temporally-dependent ways. As delineated in Chapter 7, digital heritage initiatives like 'It Is Right Here' can add what we might term aspects of 'accountable heritage' to a landscape that lacks official narratives or signs of accountability. Discussing how sites related to Nazi occupation in the Channel Islands might transition from 'taboo' to 'sensitive' heritage, Gilly Carr and Caroline Sturdy Colls (2016: 713) observe that 'When digital heritage media is employed, the transition may occur on the basis that, whilst it is still seen as difficult or negative locally, the nature of digital heritage means that it is a *fait accompli* and, as such, can no longer be ignored'. Perhaps the growing visibility of 'It Is Right Here' and its affiliated projects will continue to spread from the digital sphere to the physical landscape.

For example, as of January 2019, *Memorial*'s website advertises a photographic exhibition on 'forgotten' sites of repression around Moscow as well as a panoply of specialized tours (see the current schedule of events at <https://topos.memo.ru/page/tours/>). However, Bak et al. warn

against viewing the internet – and here we can single out digital heritage – as a ‘trump card’ for movements opposing repressive or authoritarian regimes: ‘Nonetheless, a cursory look at human rights and state repression indices dashes the hopes of any universal protective effect generated by the digital revolution. Many governments remain highly repressive despite their high internet penetration rates’ (2018: 2). Although Russia is a ‘hyper- connected’ country in many ways, digital heritage interventions cannot do all of the work of introducing accountability into a heritage landscape and broader societal awareness. There needs to be some uptake and endorsement from ‘official’ stakeholders for more lasting accountable heritage to take root.

In other post-repression societies, we can see scattered examples of what we could call ‘accountability’ coming from government or other official sectors. In Berlin, Germany, the massive Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, a federally-funded memorial and information center set in the center of Berlin, has been a controversial place since its planning phase. It is especially well-known because its abstract rectangular boxes look, to people who don’t know what it memorializes, like a perfect backdrop for impromptu photo shoots (Shapira 2017). Brigitte Sion has even argued ‘that the memorial fails to perform remembrance but succeeds as a public artwork. Unexpectedly, the modest and didactic Information Centre generates an emotional response from visitors, and involuntarily becomes the site of remembrance’ (2010: 243). But the German Bundestag’s commitment to funding this monumental space is a symbol of the current government holding itself ‘accountable’ for the crimes of its predecessor nation. There is no doubt, within the site’s interpretation, as to who the ‘murderers’ of the memorialized were – although, within the Information Center, the existence and activity of local collaborators are acknowledged, it was the German nation that organized this atrocity. Although the Nazi government is gone, the current, reunified German government holds itself and the country accountable for the crimes that occurred under Nazism. As Harjes argues, since reunification, ‘memorials in Berlin have become means to shape a new national identity via the history shared by both Germanys’ (2005: 138). Yet the commitment to remembering and holding their own nation culpable stands.

Of course, the German situation differs from the Soviet one in many aspects, but concerning this topic, the main one is the relationship that perpetrators had to victims. In Nazi Germany, the government instrumentalized standing societal prejudices against groups like Jewish people, the Roma and Sinti, and people with disabilities in order to dehumanize them in the

years before mass deportations and killing began (Oliver 2011). These groups were very much a visible and constructed ‘other’. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, in the Soviet case – and particularly during the Stalinist mass campaigns of the 1930s – the focus shifted instead to identifying ‘hidden’ enemies and traitors among groups that one would have previously considered to be ‘their own’ (but see Herreros 2006 for an attempt to divine the ‘logic’ behind what is sometimes considered the Great Terror’s ‘arbitrary’ nature of victimization). In the present day, the fact that victims and perpetrators often (although not always – see Chapter 3 again for a nuanced discussion) came from the same group has made delineating these identities for the purposes of memorialization extremely difficult.

Yet we can recognize these complications to the German model while also recognizing that, in both cases, there is overlap between the state that perpetrated atrocity as a matter of state policy and the existing contemporary nation-state. The Nazi government is gone, but the current German government still takes responsibility for its actions. Further, a comparison of the ways in which German and Russian civic organizations have contributed to the memorialization of atrocity concluded that Russia had a comparative lack of public involvement:

In contrast, Russian civic organizations have been both less interested and less influential in publicly confronting the more troublesome aspects of the Soviet past. The relative lack of interest—with the notable exception of Memorial—reflects a broadly shared opinion that such ‘reckoning with’ or ‘atoning for’ the Soviet past is unnecessary for contemporary Russians and would devalue the more positive aspects of Soviet history (Forest et al. 2004: 374).

The Russian Federation may now be run by the descendants of both victims and/or perpetrators of Soviet repression, but its security forces are direct descendants of the organs such as the Cheka and NKVD that carried out those repressions. And these institutions have never acknowledged their violent pasts or been held ‘officially’ accountable. The situation in China might be a more apt comparison from that point of view, as there has never been any official acknowledgement of accountability for the man-made Great Famine beyond attributing it to errors of a ‘leftist “tragedy of good intentions”’ (Wemheuer 2009: 51) on the part of Mao. No officially sanctioned monuments or memorials to the estimated 45 million deaths (Dikötter 2010: 333) exist.

In Argentina and Chile, which had a similar dynamic of identifying enemies from among ‘our own’, ostensibly on the basis of political or ‘subversive’ activity as opposed to ethnicity or another traditionally ‘other-ing’ category, there have been some attempts at holding perpetrators accountable at the legal and governmental levels see (for the former, see Crenzel 2008; Sikkink 2008; for the latter, Weissbrodt and Fraser 1992; Klep 2012). In both of these cases, the reported memories of victims were integral to securing convictions and public judgments of accountability, ‘restoring the reality and veracity of the crimes, and recomposing the spatiality and temporality of these events, as well as the identity of the victims’ (Crenzel 2011: 1069). In Chile, the process of turning former torture site Villa Grimaldi into an educational and memorial site has been mostly conducted by NGOs, which Victoria Baxter (2005: 133) views as suitable for some victims because ‘civil society [...] may have greater moral legitimacy with victims’, even in the wake of government-led truth commissions and legal actions against perpetrators. Because of this continuing contestation and continuing tensions regarding power and perpetration over sites of violence related to ‘Southern Cone’ repressive governments in the twentieth century (see also Jelin 2007; Andermann 2012; Hidalgo 2012; Bishop 2014), I argue that the typographies of blameability and grievability advanced here are relevant for such post-atrocity situations, in which the lines between victim and perpetrator remain blurred to this day.

These are difficult issues for a society to face, and many choose not to do so. The United States, for example, has only had a national museum dedicated to African American history – one that unflinchingly addresses the scope and consequences of slavery – since 2016. The new museum and memorial to victims of lynching is not a government institution and only opened in Birmingham, Alabama, in 2018. More frequently, governments apologize for the wrongs they may have committed in their own countries, but inscribing that accountability on the landscape is a much more difficult matter. When it comes to the legacy of Soviet repression, the difficulties inherent with this process are amplified because of the lack of clear boundaries between ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ groups. However, it is plausible to predict that ‘official’ sites of memory in Russia will not communicate any ‘accountability’ while the current regime is in power.

8.6 Repentability

Finally, I propose a concept that is absent in Russia from sites related to mass repression and atrocity: ‘repentability’. This is, simply, the concept that a site’s interpretation deliberately expresses repentance for some past wrong on behalf of the perpetrators. This can be done either by a former perpetrating group or that group’s ‘official’ successors – political, governmental, or other. The previously-examined Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin is explicitly connected to the German concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (Gay 2010), or ‘working through the past’. As with accountability, very few other nations take such steps with their museums and memorials at an official level, and steps in that direction can be easily undone by a change in government or prevailing ideology. None of the Russian case studies examined here do this. The ‘official’ sites of memory are keen to distance themselves from the past’s perpetrators, so it would be counterproductive to connect themselves to them via repentance. The other, non-hegemonic sites of memory in Moscow cannot display repentance via heritage because they cannot, by definition, ‘repent’ on behalf of someone or something else that held power when they themselves do not. Like with accountability, it is unlikely that the ‘official’ sites of memory will forward narratives of ‘repentability’ while Putin remains in power.

As a starting point, I propose this brief characterization of the four stages for future use and refinement:

- Grievable heritage – focuses on victims in order to restore individual identity and dignity and/or mourn a larger loss through the symbolic bodies of a few
- Blameable heritage – focuses on assigning culpability to ‘other’, specific people or institutions framed in the past
- Accountable heritage – focuses on assigning past culpability and making connections to legacies of culpability held by contemporary people and actors
- Repentable heritage – focuses on perpetrator groups or their ‘official’ successors accepting responsibility for past abuses and working to rectify contemporary legacies of that abuse

Again, this is not a teleological model of ‘development’ – instead, it is a tool to help analyze why different regimes and groups choose different models (or combinations thereof) during different political, economic, and social eras. A diagram showing these four ‘types’ of interpretation at sites related to the repression of mass repression is below, with some examples for each of the ‘dominant’ discourse types (Table 8.3).

<p>Grievable heritage – mourning victims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church on Blood, Yekaterinburg • Wall of Grief, Moscow 	<p>Blameable heritage – assigning culpability to others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulag Museum, Moscow • USHMM, Washington, D.C.
<p>Repentable heritage – apologizing and working through repressive legacies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin 	<p>Accountable heritage – assigning culpability to oneself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin • ‘It Is Right Here’, Moscow [attempted]

Table 8.3 Four interpretative lenses used at sites of mass repression. (Figure by author)

8.7 Conclusion

We have now reviewed the case study sites and applied the theoretical frameworks of grievability and blameability to them. The nexus of meaning for grievability lies in how it restores personhood to formerly-erased victims – meaning that the effacement (or attempted effacement) associated with designating someone ‘ungrievable’ is yet more potent. Concurrently, different models of blameability, as assigned to different actors at respective sites, reveal different stakeholders’ attitudes towards acknowledging and confronting the tangible and intangible legacies of Soviet repression that persist in contemporary Russia. Having mapped different sites’ types of grievability and blameability for comparison, we can conclude that most sites – especially those forwarding an ‘official’ heritage narrative, such as those with government and/or Russian Orthodox Church support – use a combination of an ‘abdication’ or ‘authoritarian’ type of blameability with a ‘private’ type of grievability. Non-hegemonic sites of dark heritage tend to also use a ‘private’ grievability with an ‘authoritarian’ blameability. In all of these cases, the ‘private’ grievability’s focus on personally identifying and naming victims in public rectifies a perceived silence regarding what happened to all of

these citizens during waves of repression. However, the ‘official’ sites’ focus on either assigning no overall blame at all or solely blaming leaders deflects attention away from the rank-and-file perpetrators and overwhelming mechanisms of repression, without which the Great Terror, mass arrests, and deportations to gulag camps and colonies could not have occurred. Meanwhile, non-hegemonic sites of memory attempt to bring forward more nuanced views of perpetration, bystanders, and complicity, but they are hampered by constraints of space and scope, in the digital realm, and propriety in terms of giving attention to victims over perpetrators at memorials and memorial ceremonies.

In the next chapter, I will summarize the contents of all the chapters so far and then return to and address the research questions posed in Chapter 1. I will then draw some overarching theoretical conclusions and suggest some future avenues for research.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

What moral flows from this? Probably none.

*Only that blood flows, drying quickly,
and, as always, a few rivers, a few clouds.*

‘Reality Demands’, Wisława Szymborska

9.1 Introduction

Twelve kilometers outside of Yekaterinburg, a wedding party zooms up to a plaza with evident memorializing features, intent on taking a few photographs as they make the rounds of ‘scenic’ spots surrounding the city. It is not guaranteed that anyone knows that the site is actually a mass grave: the photos are taken nonetheless, part of a series of stops at ‘usual’ photo places stretching from the city center to the symbolic border between Europe and Asia within the nearby Ural mountains.

Near the Dostoevsky metro station in Moscow, a school group tours the Gulag Museum. Elementary school-aged children in 2018 have no living memory of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resource-deprived 1990s that followed, shaving eight years off the average adult Russian male life expectancy (see Stuckler, King, and McKee 2009). Accordingly, they have even less of a frame of reference within which to place the paltry daily bread rations allotted to gulag laborers. Attempting to bridge the generational and experiential gaps, the tour guide compares the caloric content of a Big Mac to that bread ration and expounds on the ‘protein’ options inflicted on inmates.

On the evening of October 29, hundreds of people stand in line in a driving snow. An elderly woman comes to a microphone set next to the Solovetsky Stone, reads out the name and short biography from her assigned piece of paper, then begins to recite the names, details, and fates of her own relatives. The next group, a young family, advances to the microphone. The parents help a young child, consumed by a huge snowsuit, read out a sheet of paper, then move to the stone and lay their flowers and candles.

These are just a few vignettes illustrating how people interact with sites connected to Soviet (particularly Stalinist) repression in contemporary Russia. Each encounter is irrevocably intertwined with questions of place and distance, fact and uncertainty, naming and an aversion

to naming. The thesis has explored the topics of perpetration as well as dehumanization at various points, as these relate to the sites studied here. The unique contribution of this work to these discussions is the exploration of how sites do or do not address the shifting boundaries of victimhood and perpetration over time, both within individual life trajectories and within the Soviet Union as a whole. Existing models of dark heritage interpretation regarding the victims and perpetrators of mass atrocity, which usually take the Holocaust as a paradigm, do not have scope for these nuances. Thus, this thesis has sought to understand how Russian citizens relate to their heritage of repression through such encounters, using the theoretical lenses of grievability, blameability, and (potentially) accountability as each of these are made manifest at sites connected to Soviet repressive violence. Further, these sites complicate the question of the primacy of the ‘original’ or ‘authentic’ place where something ‘happened’ as the logical and ‘worthy’ locus of meaning, commemoration, and memorialization. This final, concluding chapter will review the entire thesis and sum up the findings and arguments that could be carried into future study, as well as recommend some future avenues of inquiry.

This thesis set out to examine and analyze sites of violence related to Stalinist and, more broadly, Soviet repression in contemporary Russia. The research questions sought to ascertain the individual ‘site biographies’ of the case study sites, which is valuable in its own right because so little literature exists that specifically addresses the heritagization – or lack thereof – of such sites within modern Russia. It also sought to further explore and think through how two phenomena intrinsic to the mechanisms of Soviet mass repression affect and are affected by the heritagization of these sites. The first is the lack of clear categories of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’; the second is the massive uncertainty and ambiguity regarding almost every aspect of the repression that still haunts survivors, relatives, researchers, and society at large today. Both of these trends have significant repercussions for contemporary Russian society, especially in the spheres of sociopolitics and identity. Using Butler’s theory of ‘grievability’ as a starting point, I analyzed a series of sites through the lenses of ‘grievable’ and ‘blameable’ heritage, developing typologies for each of these and experimenting with a way to cross-reference the two. Through the course of this research, it has become clear that these nuances in viewing and interpreting portrayals of victims and perpetrators at heritage sites are necessary. As discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 8, models taken from the German post-Holocaust situation are not capable of taking such nuances of meaning and politics into account, so there is a need for theoretical tools such as grievability and blameability, as I

present them here, that help categorize, map, and understand such ambiguities, silences, and uncertainties.

The epigraph for this chapter is taken from a poem by Polish Nobel Laureate Wisława Szymborska. As I conducted this research, I kept coming back to it as I tried to theorize what meaning there is in sites of dark heritage. If there is a moral or ethical imperative to ‘remember’ the victims of atrocity and violence – and I think that this does exist, either consciously or subconsciously, in the rhetoric of many memorial and heritage organizations worldwide – to whom does this apply? What is the basis of this dictum, and what is its intended purpose? This thesis has gone some way to exploring one aspect of this problem – specifically, identifying and analyzing the sociopolitical and ethical issues surrounding portrayals of perpetration and victimhood that face stakeholders at sites dealing with the memory and heritage of mass repression.

9.2 Evaluating the Research Questions

The research questions for this thesis were as follows:

- How have official and dissident, state-sanctioned and civil society-forged, gulag remembrances, memorials, and interpretative schemes and narratives at each site changed since 1917, especially after 1991?
- What are the official and dissonant forms of ‘grievable’ and ‘blameable’ heritage at each site, and how they do interact with and shape each other?
- How do specific manifestations of the heritage of Soviet repression reflect broader political and cultural attitudes towards the legacies of Soviet repression that persist in contemporary Russia?

I will review what insights and further questions were raised while pursuing these questions; we can then consider how those conclusions reflect and refract each other.

9.2.1 Question One – ‘Site Biographies’: Paradigm Shifts in 1917 and 1991

The sites surveyed here have had a range of ‘site biographies’ since 1917, the year of the two revolutions in February and October (in the latter, the Bolsheviks seized power from the more moderate Provisional Government). For each site, 1917 and 1991 were pivotal years, as the

changes wrought by the revolutions and the USSR's collapse set the conditions for how each site would develop in the succeeding years. Some, like the Lubyanka building, retain some material fabric that existed in some form pre-1917, physically recognizable by comparing period photographs with contemporary ones. In that instance, however, the function and symbolism of the building has undergone a seismic shift, from a pre-revolutionary insurance company office to the headquarters of successive iterations of the Soviet and Russian secret police. For this building, as well as many other sites profiled by 'It Is Right Here', the changes of 1991 had little impact on their physical fabric or, arguably, on their intended function. Many buildings in the Lubyanka area are still controlled by the FSB, and only digital or temporal interventions place their 'repressive' histories into public view. 'Solovki' became a metonym for Soviet terror in 1923, as that first camp's *raison d'être* developed from revolutionary concepts of 'Red Terror' and 'reforging through labor' (Jakobson 2015). Thus, the 1990 placement of the Solovetsky Stone into Lubyanka Square owes its resonance both to the post-1917 development of that first camp, as well as to the era of increased civil society activity and freedom that culminated in the USSR's collapse the next year. Similarly, Yekaterinburg's Church on Blood represents a post-1991 intervention that re-placed an erased past – the murder site of the (pre-revolutionary) Ipatiev House – back on the landscape with a deliberately religious and memorial purpose.

The Gulag Museum has changed dramatically since its first iteration near Moscow's heart of power (and symbolic consumer paradise, having been practically next door to TsUM¹). It is now housed in a former pre-revolutionary apartment building that has been extensively renovated as a museum. Its turn from an organization run by a survivor of repression to one headed by a self-described 'museum-psychologist' with substantial financial and other support from the Moscow government has meant that the museum's public profile is much higher, and the museological standards of infrastructure are much higher, but the feeling of an organic connection to survivors has been somewhat lost.

After the revolutions, Butovo, Kommunarka, the 12th Kilometer, Ganina Yama, and Piglet Ravine went from rural estates or undeveloped tracts to become sites of murder. In the former two cases, the secret police had seized the land after the revolution and held it until the end of

¹ The Central Universal Department Store [ЦУМ – Центральный Универсальный Магазин] has been a flagship department store in Moscow since 1908.

the USSR; in the latter cases, the sites remained undeveloped until the USSR collapsed and local ‘guardians of counter-memory’ (Carr 2015) came forward to reveal them publicly. If the events of 1917 produced the catalyst for the killings that took place at each site, the events of 1991 allowed the true stories of these sites to be openly discussed and acknowledged. This was a key step in facilitating the phenomena of ‘private’ memorialization, which re-accords identity and dignity to individual victims, which we see at and beyond these sites today.

In other cases, such as that of the Noviy Donskoy cemetery, the ostensible function of the site has not changed – in this case, the final resting place for deceased Muscovites. Yet both the physical site and its officially sanctioned – if not officially acknowledged – purposes have changed dramatically since 1917. This cemetery became the site of one of the USSR’s first crematoria, an effort inextricably linked to Soviet ideologies of self, meaning, and transcendence (Malysheva 2017: 651), no matter how difficult extending these ideas to the masses was in practice. But the flip side of this liberating ideology called for the eradication of all other creeds and the liquidation of ‘enemies’, however those were defined at any given point in time. This meant that the Donskoy crematorium worked overtime during the shooting campaigns, with thousands of sets of cremated remains unceremoniously dumped into the cemetery’s grounds.

In fact, although these mass graves are now marked, and surviving family members have often paid out of their own pockets for plaques memorializing their loved ones, it is not universally accepted that the victims are buried there at all. I once heard an impassioned speech during a question and answer session about this cemetery; once the presenter had finished her presentation, the aged descendant of a victim of repression ‘buried’ at Donskoy assailed the microphone to forward an alternate theory. According to his calculations, there was no possible way that so many people’s remains could actually be buried on site, even as cremated remains – he forwarded instead a theory that their ashes had been used to pave walking paths in the area, which, although deeply macabre, is not an uncommon legend regarding the bodies of victims of systematic and mechanized repression (see, for example, MCHKEC 2015).

No matter what actually happened, the vignette vividly illustrates a constant theme of these sites of Soviet repression: the difficulty of identifying ‘the truth’ of what happened to any

specific person during those years, let alone the question of assigning blame or accountability. Each of the sites put forward as a case study in the chapters was provided with a very brief ‘site biography’. Individually, these provide a sense not only of each site’s physical development over time, but of the changes in power and ideology that were reflected in each physical space’s shifts in use and fate over time. In the aggregate, they starkly illustrate the limits and challenges of the search for certainty and ‘truth’ in heritage studies and in wider arenas of history, identity, and personal grief. Even questions that seem like they should have straightforward answers come under intense scrutiny and develop into wide-ranging conspiracy theories. This is the case with the Romanov burial site, especially. It is not unusual for heritage sites, ‘dark’ or not, to vie for the title of the ‘real’ place where something happened (see Coupland and Coupland 2014). In this sense, the insistence that Ganina Yama is the ‘burial place’ of the Romanovs, as opposed to Piglet Ravine, is not overly striking. Neither is the insistence among tour guides that the ‘real’ spot of their brief interment at Ganina Yama is ‘not where the marker is’ – this phenomenon of contesting the ‘official’ heritagescape of an established site of memory can be seen all over the world. But the Romanov site is more complex because the question of who, exactly, was buried in the ravine is still not officially settled. Although the skeletons buried at Piglet Ravine were exhumed in 1991, with testing performed at the time that ‘proved’ the remains were the Romanovs, debate continues.

9.2.2 Question Two – Identifying and Categorizing Grievable and Blameable Heritage

The second question asks how ‘grievability’ and ‘blameability’, as heritage concepts, are expressed at each site. Having developed Butler’s original theory of ‘grievability’ so that it could be used as a tool of inquiry at sites portraying victims of mass atrocity, it became clear that ‘blameability’ was the other side of the conceptual coin. The first step to answering this question was to develop a preliminary typology for each of these concepts: each of these outlined the typical traits seen at each site that manifested a specific form of ‘grievability’ or ‘blameability’. These typologies help us more clearly delineate certain attributes of memorialization and heritagization that tend to be observed together at different ‘kinds’ of sites, thereby complicating a simple dichotomy of ‘remembrance’ and ‘forgetting’ or ‘presence’ and ‘absence’. As with every aspect of the heritage of Soviet repression, these sites are marked by ambivalence and selective acts of remembrance, in terms of who becomes the focus of interpretive attention. Making a typology of these ‘kinds’ of site is the first step towards seeing which site stakeholders tend to choose specific models. With this solid identification, we are in a much stronger position to then analyze why different stakeholders make these respective

choices. These concepts were first introduced in Chapter 4, then further developed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, with each site given a preliminary assignment of the relevant concepts. The two theories were finally reviewed and elaborated in Chapter 8.

At that stage, I explored the idea of assigning each site a type of ‘grievable’ and ‘blameable’ heritage and then plotting the measures for specific groups of actors against each other. This is useful and analytically interesting precisely because the two concepts can only go so far if studied independently of each other. After all, each act of violence has a cause – something or someone is culpable. Even if, as in cases of accident, there was no ‘intent’ to cause harm, there is still a traceable reason why harm occurred. But this ‘cause’ is not necessarily what is blamed for an act of violence and its consequences; i.e., the communicated levels of blameability for a given group do not always match real-life culpability. Therefore, studying the intersections of these two identifications for different groups and people at a given site can show us patterns in how and why different types of stakeholder choose to assign identifications of ‘grievable’ and ‘blameable’ to these different historic (or contemporary) actors.

This line of inquiry has shown that the vast majority of sites studied here combine a ‘private’ model of grievability, which focuses on restoring personhood to victims who were previously dehumanized, with an authoritarian or abdication form of blameability. In the case of the Romanov death sites of Ganina Yama and Yekaterinburg’s Church on Blood, where the royal family is grieved not just for themselves, but as a symbol of a lost Russian past, the grievability is instead ‘public’. However, the importance of restoring names and personalities to individual victims means that the ‘private’ manifestations of grievability are critically meaningful at each site that uses them, regardless of their otherwise differing motivations behind grieving and remembering. All of the mass graves and the Wall of Grief use an abdication model of blameability, which totally elides the question of culpability or blame. The focus is totally on the victims, often with massive amounts of biographical information displayed in order to restore identity and dignity. The Gulag Museum, however, manifests an authoritarian model, which deliberately places blame on high-ranking figures, such as Stalin and the Politburo. Although this does fill a perceived gap in general historical knowledge, it also precludes discussion of ‘everyday’ perpetrators. No ‘officially’ sanctioned site of memory uses a ‘complicit’ model of blameability, while several digital or temporally- restricted memorial activities, such as ‘It Is Right Here’ and ‘The Return of Names’, do begin to explore these models. The section just below will turn to analyzing these differences.

.9.2.3 Question Three – Sites and Sociopolitics: Heritage and the Political Past

Fittingly, the final question – How do specific manifestations of the heritage of Soviet repression reflect broader political and cultural attitudes towards the legacies of Soviet repression that persist in contemporary Russia? – is the most over-arching one, requiring that it be addressed as a culmination of the other two. The typologies that I devised for categorizing different manifestations of grievable and blameable heritage, as well as commonly seen combinations of these categories, can be connected to specific political and sociocultural attitudes held by site stakeholders, especially those stakeholders who have the power to direct interpretative, memorializing, and heritagizing decisions. The choice of an authoritarian or abdication model of blameability is in every case intrinsically connected to broader attitudes of discomfort, uncertainty, and ambivalence about the role that the legacies of Soviet repression hold in contemporary power structures, sociopolitics, and human and civil rights discourses.

The choices that managers and other stakeholders make when choosing whom to pick out as specifically ‘grievable’ and whom to identify as particularly ‘blameable’ are neither accidental nor apolitical. So, on one level, it is perfectly fitting for sites such as Butovo, Kommunarka, and Ganina Yama, which are managed by the Russian Orthodox Church, to operate at a nexus of an ‘abdication’ model of blameability and a ‘private’ model of grievability, because the ‘sacred duty’ of the Orthodox Church is to honor the memory of martyrs – regardless of whether or not all of these ‘martyrs’ identified as Orthodox, or even Christian, at all in life. Yet the Russian Orthodox Church is far from a politically neutral institution in contemporary Russia. As the all-encompassing Soviet ideology crumbled with the USSR, the Church has come to fill a crucial gap in providing a sense of identity and meaning to the lives of many Russians. This role has proved very useful for the Russian government, and relations between the two power structures have increasingly warmed since 1991.

The Patriarch and Putin were both at the dedication of the Wall of Grief in 2017, and the Church increasingly supports many of the government’s most domestically conservative policies, as well as internationally aggressive foreign policy and military initiatives, ‘for the purposes of expanding and consolidating the Russian world’ (Payne 2010: 726). So there is no way to view the memorial practices and discourses at these mass grave sites as ‘politically neutral’ – they are anything but neutral. Further, in a national memorial landscape that lacks an ‘official’ site where the questions of individual motivation for participating in and supporting massive

campaigns and mechanisms of repression are explored, this ‘abdication’ of the task of identifying perpetrators cannot be viewed in isolation.

Combined with the Gulag Museum’s ‘official’ emphasis on placing blame and culpability for the mass repression on specific leaders, there is a marked reluctance at these sites to address the causes and consequences of mass individual acts of perpetrating repression and violence. Each of these sites tries to place both the suffering caused by repression and the culpability for that suffering firmly in the past, as if the matter is closed and has no present-day repercussions. But the legacies are discernable everywhere, perhaps, as Etkind (2009) might term it, ‘haunting’ all arenas of Russian life: as former KGB chief Vladimir Putin leads the country, the FSB continues to studiously ignore its predecessors’ pasts while detaining dissidents without cause and violently mistreating them. In the Gulag Museum, a large video display mentions none of this while crediting Putin with safeguarding the legacy of gulag survivors. The Russian prison system, with its far-flung prisons, hard work regimes, and punitive conditions, bears more than a passing resemblance to the gulag system (Pallott 2015: 682-3). And, for sites that use an abdication model, the public rehabilitation of Stalin’s image has led to a memory paradigm in which, Khapaeva (2016: 64) argues, ‘re-Stalinization has turned the “memory of the perpetrators” into a mainstream version of post-Soviet historical memory.’

All of these sites wrestle with the problems of uncertainty and ambiguity in the historic record, which make heritagization, always an imperfect art due to the vagaries of human memory, more contested and complicated than ever. If we make a distinction between ‘memorials’ and ‘museums’, we could argue that memorials do not necessarily have a responsibility to address the question of who perpetrated acts of repression and why. Although the Wall of Grief does not provide any interpretation explaining the historic context of the gulag system and repression in general, one could argue that, in theory, visitors to the site already know what happened during the repression and why – but this argument is undermined by the reports of other ‘guardians of memory’ across many sectors of this intangible heritagescape who report a widespread lack of knowledge about the repression, its causes, and consequences. Nevertheless, the argument that memorials should focus on victims, not perpetrators, remains fairly unassailable in practice and theory alike.

The more educationally-inclined sites present a different problem. Here, the purpose of each site specifically includes ‘education’ with a preventative twist. For example, the Gulag

Museum's official mission is 'the preservation of historical memory [and] understanding of the past in the name of the future. The museum is intended to become a public space for the public presentation, study, and actualization of the problems of the history of mass repression, forced labor, and lack of political freedom in the USSR'² (Gulag Museum 2018). However, there is a disconnection between these aims and the message sent by the interpretation dealing with perpetrators and perpetration. Because the museum adheres to an 'authoritarian' model of 'blameability', there is no room to discuss and examine the roles of individual people who acted in ways that facilitated the mechanisms of repression – these range from working for the NKVD as an interrogator, to deliberately denouncing one's acquaintances or friends, to facilitating through various occupations the Soviet ideas of 'hidden enemies' or 'enemy encirclement' that served as the rationale for widespread repression. Indeed, the museum's interpretation does explicitly point out how propaganda artists and artists – especially writers – produced work that furthered the spread and acceptance of these ideas. In a different section of the museum, there is a long table displaying an array of works by different writers who were victims of Soviet repression in one way or another. Some of these, like Boris Pasternak, also ended up on both sides of Soviet power, first supported by (and, through their work, supporting) it and then victimized by it. Yet the awkward questions about culpability and collaboration are totally side-stepped in favor of 'safer' narratives.

'It Is Right Here' and other *Memorial* initiatives attempt to join *Memorial*'s commitment to safeguarding human rights with its dedication to preserving the memory of victims of Stalinist repression. Although they have, in the past, avoided making (or allowing attendees to make) stark comparisons between Soviet repression and current human rights abuses, that restraint was markedly absent at the 2018 'Return of Names' ceremony. It remains to be seen how such rhetoric will develop in future. However, their digital maps currently focus on the protest movements of 1968, and interpretation does, in some cases, point out a more nuanced characterization of victims and perpetrators. Because of their non-hegemonic and, in some cases, adversarial relationship with the government and other institutions, however, these narratives do not gain wider traction.

² 'сохранение исторической памяти, осмысление прошлого во имя будущего. Музей призван стать общественным пространством для публичного представления, изучения и актуализации проблем истории массовых репрессий, принудительного труда и политической несвободы в СССР.'

9.3 *Complicating the Dichotomy of Grief and Blame*

The ambiguity of the categories of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ is the part of the wide-ranging phenomena of Soviet repression that is so hard to interpret and turn into a narrative that is at once educational and memorializing. As outlined in Chapter 4, there has been a range of works that study perpetrators of mass violence and atrocity. These tend to explore the motivations of ‘ordinary’ people who often do not hold a particularly strong ideology of any type. Nor are such people sadists, yet they end up engaging in acts of violence against other people. These often go hand-in-hand with studies of dehumanization: as Livingston Smith (2011: 15) summarizes, ‘Thinking sets the agenda for action, and thinking of humans as less than human paves the way for atrocity’.

A key obstacle to memorialization and commemoration is this very blurriness in the categories of victim and perpetrator – as we have seen, memorial groups cannot agree amongst themselves on where to draw the line of ‘victim’ if that victim had, at some point, a role to play in perpetrating any of the waves of Soviet mass terror. Is Yagoda a victim of his own repression? The answer depends on whom you ask, with even the definition of ‘victim’ often called into question. In the autumn of 2018, as the controversy over the Kommunarka memorial plaques raged, I was struck by the way *Memorial* carefully balanced opposing public opinions about Yagoda’s presence on the memorial – claiming, among other points, that the respective Soviet and Russian government rehabilitation processes were inherently flawed, so the presence or lack of official rehabilitation could not be taken as a sign of guilt or innocence (*International Memorial* 2018f).

This also is a key factor in why some memorials are so vague in their written language – beyond ‘victim of Soviet repression’ or ‘Stalinist repression’ or ‘the gulag’, what ties all of these people together? It is the very state of victimhood, and only this. Although waves of repression targeted some groups more viciously and consistently than others, the repression swept through every social class, ethnicity, workplace, apartment building, and village in the USSR. Of course, the kulaks (Viola 2007) and the Poles (Morris 2007), as well as Old Bolsheviks and high-ranking managers and Communist Party leaders, suffered disproportionately. Further, the long-term repercussions of mass persecution of ‘enemy nationalities’ such as the Chechens cannot be overstated (Burds 2007); in fact, Campana (2012), among others, draws a direct line between the deportation and dispossession of the Chechens and the bloody, intractable conflict in Chechnya today. The fact that the waves of

repression reached all of these groups can be traced through the group-specific memorials that descendants and representatives place at sites like Kommunarka to this day. This ongoing phenomenon of memorial placement also reflects the ongoing process whereby groups and individuals alike are discovering their pasts, connecting abstract narratives of ‘repression’ to their own family, ethnic, social, or even ideological inheritances (see, for example, the memorial placed to anarchist victims of the Solovki labor camp, described in Comer 2017).

But these identitarian memorials, effective as they are at memorializing their specific victims, do not and cannot reflect the all-encompassing scale of the repression. Even a group of memorials placed together, which again can be seen at sites like Kommunarka, does not communicate the sheer scale of loss, let alone the gravity of each individual victim’s loss to their respective communities. This is of course the eternal problem for memorials and museums memorializing and commemorating the victims of any mass atrocity.

The story of Soviet repression, viewed through the lens of grievable and blameable heritage, is one that demolishes neat categories of victim and perpetrator. This is particularly true for its manifestations wherein neighbor was encouraged to turn against neighbor, and denunciations came to be considered almost a duty for a ‘good Soviet citizen’ in periods wherein the USSR was supposedly ‘encircled’ by ‘hidden enemies’, such as the eras of collectivization and the Great Terror. This is not to say that, even in an ‘authoritarian’ state, individual people were not capable of making any decision besides the ones encouraged or mandated by the state (see Fitzpatrick 1976) – in any situation, no matter how controlled, people have some agency (Schedler 2010: 76), and blanket absolution because of a supposed ‘lack of choice’ gets us no closer to understanding how specific people become involved in mechanisms and acts of terror and repression – or, on the other hand, how they resist such involvement in myriad different manners.

Does this question of understanding the personal as well as institutional and systemic mechanisms of terror matter for dark heritage studies, let alone heritage studies as a whole? I argue that it does, precisely because heritage is never just about the past. From the very highest peaks of the Authorized Heritage Discourse (Smith 2006), UNESCO proclaims ‘That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed’ (UNESCO 1945). Meanwhile, at museums and memorials specifically dedicated to ‘dark’ heritage, there is an often-explicit message that to remember is to prevent such

atrocities from ever happening again. But there is a fundamental disconnection here in terms of how these narratives of perpetration, in particular, are communicated. Focusing on groups or ‘types’ of people who were perpetrators communicates a fallacious, if soothing, narrative of ‘evil’ – to wit, that a certain ‘type’ of person is predisposed to turn on the other – even ‘an other’ made of people who were previously ‘their own’ – and commit acts of violence and repression. In other words, that there are ‘bad’ people who do ‘bad’ things. Yet a close – in fact, maybe even a cursory reading – of the facts of Soviet repression proves this to be untrue. Although the various manifestations of repression ostensibly targeted different groups of ‘enemies’ that were conceivably identifiable by given characteristics – social background, ethnicity, political allegiance, and so on – in actual practice, the organs of persecution and repression became overzealous and ravenous for more vanquished enemies. As the ‘usual’ enemies emigrated, hid themselves, or were liquidated, the search turned to ‘hidden’ enemies lurking within ‘good’ Soviet institutions such as factories and communal apartments. The idea that enemies had to be unmasked meant that, in effect, anyone could be labeled an enemy and subject to lethal consequences at the whim of any disgruntled or over-solicitous actor in their lives. Even more chillingly, in the fever of Stalinist ‘overfulfillment’ of quotas, NKVD organs took pains to request higher quotas of enemies to be arrested and shot, giving every functionary and leader alike a reason to believe accusations, arrest, and convict without too much concern for the ‘truth’ behind a given indictment (Werth 2003: 30- 31).

What is the role of a museum or memorial dedicated to the victims of a mass atrocity? Should these be places where visitors are encouraged to make searching moral inventories of themselves and their capacity to ‘do evil’ (see Sodaro 2018)? Is there one universal answer? Probably not, as universal ‘heritage’ rules and regulations have a conflicted track record of productive and beneficial ‘universal’ application (Hodder 2010; Labadi 2013), and we have seen how post-atrocity societies have very different post-conflict priorities and cultural contexts. But if museums, particularly, are serious about prevention, they should take a hard look at how they characterize perpetrators and acts of collaboration, as well as perpetration, in campaigns of mass atrocity and repression. It is soothing to a visitor, whether they are personally connected to a given ‘dark heritage’ or not, to think of past perpetrators as a different ‘kind’ of person than they are, meaning logically that the visitor could never perpetrate an atrocity against another person. Yet this does little to drive visitors to think critically about their possible roles in injustice and oppression.

9.4 Complicating Models of Victimhood, Perpetration, Place, and Authenticity

The sites studied in this thesis owe their existence to a repression that, in every way, blurred the lines between ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’, to an extent that makes identity-based formulations of ‘victim’, ‘perpetrator’, and ‘bystander’ (Hilberg 1993) inaccurate and not critically useful. Therefore, I have tried to ascertain whether or not models of post-atrocity commemoration, memorialization, and heritagization that are based on contemporary German models are suitable for the post-Soviet situation, specifically within Russia itself. A key motivation in the research conducted here was to critically examine and analyze sites related to Soviet repression in contemporary Russia through lenses of heritage studies discourse and analysis. This is because the literature, so far, has comparatively little material studying such sites within Russia, for reasons that were more fully explicated in Chapter 2. In studying these, it became clear that current models and theories of dark heritage interpretation, commemoration, and memorialization are not designed to take into account two key attributes that characterize these sites.

This is not to fully absolve past (or, for that matter, present) individuals who participated in mechanisms and acts of repression in different ways through appeals to the totalitarian government and society of the time; or through reminders of the very real fear and coercion millions of people were confronted with in the course of wide-ranging, propaganda-backed waves of arrests, deportations, and killings; or even via an attempt to argue that perpetrators who later became victims had their ‘bad’ deeds canceled out by their eventual ‘martyrdom’ or victimhood.

Although the range of public, NGO, and official opinion on many matters relating to the legacy of Soviet repression is vast, none of these three claims above is the public stance of any group or institution profiled in this thesis. Further, it is not the purview of this work to assign or absolve blame to actors in a historic mass atrocity. Rather, the facts of the historic situation mean that any stakeholder or manager of such a site related to the heritage of Soviet repression is faced with this problem of categorizing victims and perpetrators – or making the choice not to do so, which is itself a deliberate decision. If even the people who are charged or who have charged themselves with taking care of this past cannot agree on these categories, this speaks to a level of ambiguity and uncertainty that logically becomes evident in these sites’ interpretation of all kinds. In terms of theorizing and thinking through heritage studies – especially ‘dark heritage’ studies – it also means that theories about how societies deal with

the legacy of mass repression that do not take into account this historic and contemporary murkiness often miss the mark.

‘Heritage’ has many definitions and meanings, both as an abstract idea and as a lived, tangible or intangible reality for each individual person in a given society. However, UNESCO’s World Heritage List and its accompanying definitions, decrees, and charters about what World Heritage ‘is’ and how it should be defined, listed, and protected have had an unquestionably paradigm-shifting effect on global heritage sites. Russia is no exception to this trend; many of the sites profiled in Chapters 6 and 7 are within a stone’s throw of the Kremlin and Red Square, a World Heritage Site since 1990. Even the Solovetsky Islands were listed in 1992. In the latter case, as mentioned previously, according to the dossiers submitted to UNESCO, the islands seem to have been listed in spite of their gulag heritage, not because of them, although that period is briefly acknowledged.

Yet the prominence of the Solovetsky Stone in Moscow’s ‘dark heritagescape’ of Soviet repression is undeniable. Having been deliberately brought from the islands to stand as a memorial to victims of Soviet political repression, itself and its plaza comprise a powerful locale where people gather to remember and memorialize various groups of victims of Soviet repression, as well as publicly and openly discuss the ongoing legacies of that repression. All of these actions are periodic and overwhelmingly tied to a specific calendar of remembrance, but year-round the stone stands as a piece of a former metonym for repression, horror, and exile, silently confronting the formidable Lubyanka building’s façade and close enough to Red Square that visitors can hear the sounds of any martial parades or demonstrations there. When there are occasional illegal protests regarding human rights abuses in front of the Lubyanka building, the stone is intervisible with those protestors, too. When permission to hold the annual ‘Return of Names’ ceremony at the Solovetsky Stone was briefly withdrawn in late October 2018, the mayor’s suggestion to move the ceremony to the brand-new Wall of Grief was roundly rejected by *Memorial* because the ‘new’ site lacked the resonance attributed to the Solovetsky Stone as a site for that memorial activity.

9.5 Future Directions

Soviet Russia, as a perpetrator nation, might be thought of as comparable to Nazi Germany in terms of its memorialization narratives, discourses, and interventions. It is true that Germany has set a powerful example for the world in the way its federal government, as well as other

organs, has dedicated so much official energy and resources to memorializing the victims of the Holocaust and broader Nazi aggression. The process has been far from perfect, and controversies still surround it. However, Germany remains the one ‘perpetrator nation’ that has committed and continues to commit to remembering and atoning for its predecessor government’s atrocities in perpetuity. Yet the heritagization of the abuses of Soviet Russia resist such an easy comparison with the German situation.

It is possible that the rising tide of right-wing populist sentiment in Germany will lead to a future government rolling back its commitment to tangible and intangible memorialization and commemoration of this period and its victims. As with any theoretical model with elements that might appear to be cyclical, there may be a temptation to view the concepts of grievability, blameability, and accountability – as well as the ‘repentability’ briefly put forward in Chapter 8 – as teleological or ‘naturally’ progressing towards a specific ‘end’ state of memorialization. This is not realistic.

First, the motivations of different countries and groups to put forward or privilege one discourse of the four concepts outlined in this thesis are multifaceted and far from universal in their motivations. It would be interesting to engage in a comparative analysis of different countries’ approaches to their ‘dark’ or ‘shameful’ pasts of mass atrocity to see what types of grievable and blameable heritage are forwarded in each, by both official memorial or historical authorities as well as non-hegemonic actors, independent NGOs, and the like. In this work, I have made brief comparisons to specific sites and heritagescapes in Germany, but a more comprehensive cross-analysis would prove beneficial. This is precisely because the ‘official’ German approach to the heritage of atrocity and genocide is so often taken as a universal ‘standard’. Further exploration and analysis of the different ways in which ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ managers and stakeholders of heritage sites represent victims and perpetrators, and why they choose specific narratives and images, would help us better understand the different paths that societies take (or are made to take) in facing or avoiding their histories of repression as well as contemporary human and civil rights abuses. It would also be useful to analyze sites and heritagescapes of mass atrocity and violence in countries that, like Russia, currently do not exhibit ‘official’ manifestations of accountable or repentable heritage. The typologies of grievable and blameable heritage and the idea of the four lenses through which sites that relate to the heritage of mass repression can be interpreted, all developed in this

work, are meant to be applicable to a vast range of sites and situations. Such studies would lead to important clarifications and refinements of our understanding of how and for what ends different groups choose to remember past repressions and atrocities.

This work has also touched on ‘sites of violence’ where the violence was both immediate and visceral as well as systematic and paradigm-setting. The key example is the Lubyanka building, which both housed a prison where prisoners were brutally treated and sometimes died, but also hosted NKVD officials as they charted the course and practice of different campaigns of terror and repression. The Shooting House, although not a site of actual violence per se, was similarly a place where decisions were taken affecting the lives and deaths of tens of thousands of people. Neither of these sites is currently permanently memorialized in the landscape, although a series of memorial interventions, as detailed in Chapters 6 and 7, has been undertaken to try to place these memories back in the minds of visitors and passers-by. In other cities around Russia, it is likewise common for the former NKVD headquarters to still be occupied by the FSB, making permanent memorialization difficult, if not impossible. Since temporal and temporary interventions are so crucial to heritage work at these sites, it would be beneficial to study and analyze how and why different groups choose to engage with them in order to explore how various societies navigate ‘official’ silence around the legacy of repression.

At the time of writing, *Memorial*’s very latest ‘It is Right Here’ initiative focuses on using the website as well as social media to show images of sites across Moscow that were built using forced labor, housed special *sharashka*³ workplaces, or served as prisons during mass campaigns. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the ‘typical’ fate of someone sentenced to a term of forced labor in the gulag involved transportation to a faraway, harsh, and extremely remote camp to perform grueling tasks like mining, logging, or railroad construction. However, in reality, millions of people sentenced to such terms ended up working in major metropolitan areas, constructing such landmarks as Moscow State University. Their presence and the results of their labor cannot be factually relegated to faraway places like ‘Siberia’ or ‘Solovki’, with the accompanying mental distancing from the reality of these millions of individual situations. Instead, as this campaign hopes to demonstrate, ‘It is really right here and surrounding each

³ *Sharashka* [Шарашка] is a term for a secret laboratory or research facility in which scientists and experts, arrested by the secret police, were forced to work. It is a lesser-known part of the gulag system’s forced labor landscape.

of us; every day, we move through these streets and lanes, past these houses and barracks, which are often no longer'⁴ (*International Memorial* 2018e). Gulag inmates were always part of the fabric of urban existence – to say nothing of the physical absence, as well as mental and emotional presence, that they occupied in the minds of their loved ones and friends.

I would particularly like to explore the tangible and intangible heritage of mass forced labor and how societies handle the legacy of having built a massive portion of their wealth on the backs of unwilling workers, with all the types of violence incumbent on such a system. One of the main rationales for rehabilitating Stalin's image and reputation in contemporary Russia is that he industrialized the Soviet Union/Russia – but, as this thesis has discussed in several places, industrialization of that scope and speed, beginning from the fledgling Soviet Union's decidedly modest starting point, could not have happened without the various waves of concurrent mass repression. Millions of the 'free' laborers who built the new industrial cities and the vaunted steel mills, among other industrial triumphs, worked long hours in terrible, unsafe conditions for terrible pay because they had no other choice – as kulaks or inheritors of similarly 'tainted' social backgrounds, they were fleeing dispossession at best and repression – arrest, deportation, even death – at worst (Lazarev 2003). When the campaigns of mass arrests ramped up as the gulag system developed, cities such as Magadan were built chiefly on the back of forced laborers in order to facilitate even more industrial activity, to be carried out by more arrestees (Nordlander 1998). Outside of organized settlements, the timber, gold, uranium, and other resources extracted by forced laborers both helped the USSR to develop its industry in areas with labor shortages and to rationalize even more waves of arrests: for example, 'Dekulakization continued to have two powerful drives: it gave agricultural regions a weapon with which to deal with open resistance to agricultural campaigns; and it gave regions with acute labor shortages access to a ready labor supply' (Harris 1997: 276). The idea that the gulag system was a terrible but necessary endeavor is often repeated when journalists ask 'average citizens' about their opinions on the system: 'Larisa', a Russian history teacher quoted in Walker (2015), gives a representative opinion: "Was there a military threat from Germany? There was. Were there spies in the country? There were. There was no time to decide who was guilty and who wasn't. We should remember the innocent victims but I think it was all necessary."

⁴ 'Это действительно прямо здесь и вокруг каждого из нас, мы ежедневно ходим по этим улицам и переулкам, мимо этих домов и бараков, которых часто уже нет.'

Larisa's view resonates with people struggling to otherwise justify the scale of the terror. What better way than to identify a result – such as defeating Nazism – that no 'sane' person could argue was a bad one? Thus, reluctance to scrutinize the true mechanisms of industrialization, particularly its human costs, has identifiable and understandable roots. Further, Russia is not alone in avoiding serious discussion of the historic sources of its wealth and its modern legacies. A future comparison of the heritage of forced labor in the former USSR/Russia and the heritage of slavery in the United States might explicate how public rhetoric in each country champions the results of such massive, officially-sanctioned forms of forced labor and enslavement while deliberately downplaying the human costs at the time. In both countries, there is little scrutiny of how institutions that profited from each respective system of oppression have continued to benefit from the gains they made during those periods, with little or no attempt at reparations or even apology. There is also no discussion of how these experiences can affect descendants for generations to come, in material, social, cultural, and economic terms. There are, obviously, key differences in each system and its legacies in both countries, but the fact remains that both nations are still benefiting from wealth they gained from forced labor, and neither has truly committed to a path of examining that past and its legacies with an eye to ameliorating those wrongs. This path of inquiry could prove illuminating to disciplines such as the heritage of labor and the heritage of slavery; if taken even further, such an intense study of the mechanisms by which legacies of forced or coerced labor are handled in the present day could also be interesting for heritages of colonialism.

9.6 Concluding Thoughts

Genocide and mass atrocity are not extinct in 2019. In Myanmar, the Rohingya continue to be persecuted, while, closer to home for this study, there is strong evidence that the Chechen government is rounding up and 'disappearing' gay men. In other countries, especially those that have known relative peace and freedom for decades, there is a sense that something like the Great Terror could 'never happen here', but this is not true. Any society can turn on 'the other' and systematically dehumanize them to the point of mass murder – there is no immunity from this, which makes the educational aspect of the 'dark heritage' of repression a critical point of intervention for any society, especially one that, like Russia, is still affected by largely unaddressed tangible and intangible legacies of repression.

And beyond clear cases of violent campaigns of repression, it is not the case that systems built on massive oppression and exploitation disappeared with the fall of the Soviet Union, as comforting as that thought may be. The saying, ‘there is no ethical consumption under capitalism’ has strong traction on social media and in academic writing alike, as any consumer buying virtually anything now is supporting global systems of capital that devastate environments, devalue human life, and, in many cases, subvert democracy in the interests of capital and huge corporations. Considering the global reach of capitalist systems of resource extraction and consumption, there is no real escape from these systems as a whole, which can make resistance seem futile. However, there is room for improvement and meaningful change within the system, and heritage sites that prompt us to reconsider our individual and systematic relationships to power can help us address and meaningfully push for change to unjust systems beyond clear-cut atrocity.

Heritage is not an unalloyed ‘good’ – as case studies from all over the world show (Champion and Díaz-Andreu 1996; Knapp and Antoniadou 1998; Galaty and Watkinson 2004; Graham and McDowell 2008), there is a long history of abusing the past in order to prop up a specific political regime. And it is not an automatic panacea for reconciliation and healing, either. Yet there is still a sense that it can be a powerful force for peace and healing, to say nothing of preventative education. As an academic – and as a global citizen – I am concerned that, too often, this ‘preventative’ heritage education misses the mark. This is especially concerning in Russia’s post-Soviet, but still authoritarian, society, as the government places increasingly stringent restrictions on free speech and free assembly, among other infringements on civil and human rights. Maybe it is the case, as some Russian commentators have it, that the idea of ‘universal human rights’ is a Western and inherently imperialist construction, one unnecessary in Russia, which has its own moral codes and direction (Morozov 2002: 425-6). Maybe – but, considering that opposition political parties do still exist in Russia and agitate for these same ‘universal’ standards and values, this is not an assertion we should be willing to accept as fact just yet.

The historic record shows that anyone has the capability to turn on ‘the other’ – even if that ‘other’ person or group was previously considered ‘like’ the perpetrator. Categories shift over time, too, so that an erstwhile perpetrator can end up the victim of the same or a new regime of power or terror. The tenets of intersectionality instruct us to look at how differences of

status among several categories – gender, race, ethnicity, class, etc. – combine to give people different lived experiences that are affected by all of these different statuses and states of being (Crenshaw 1991). In this way, examining a variety of different ‘life histories’ of people who were involved in the peak frenzies of Soviet repression would show us how and why different individuals become involved in acts and mechanisms of repression. The problem facing heritage sites that do have an educational bent is how to then disseminate this information in ways that push visitors to consider their own potential (and real-time) actions in times of severe stress and pressure. These are individually uncomfortable issues to consider – but they are crucial. Naturally, these questions are likely to lead a visitor to consider their own relationship to power, laws, and unwritten dictates of society and civility, which means that governments tending towards authoritarianism may seek to discourage these lines of personal – and societal – inquiry. In these cases, however, the Internet and other non-traditional spaces of memorialization and communication can provide a platform for these explorations while facilitating commemoration and memory. Further, the nature of the Internet and ubiquitous smartphones now allows for those digital commemorations to be layered onto the physical heritagescape for visitors who wish to explore this part of the Russian past. Of course, the lack of permanent memorialization on the landscape does hamper this communication to visitors who aren’t already inclined to remember this specific past. Temporally-based commemorative ceremonies, such as ‘The Return of Names’, also combat this ‘authorized’ forgetting to an extent. In any case, there is a strong enough network of groups and people who wish to remember the victims of Soviet repression that there is no chance, in the near future, of official ‘forgetting’ of the victims. The crux of the problem is rather that this memorialization, in official venues, is likely to both be decontextualized from contemporary political trends and lack in narratives that lead visitors to question how they, too, might become perpetrators of repression.

This final point is a dilemma shared by many dark heritage sites worldwide, whether through a reluctance to address to the visitor such uncomfortable, possibly wrenching questions; a political situation that is so volatile that addressing these concerns might lead to violence; and/or a political situation in which the leaders are committed to avoiding such examination of the relationships between individual people and power structures. But these difficulties underline what a crucial issue this is for ‘dark’ heritage sites of mass atrocity – if we accept that, at least for some groups, it is not possible to look at such a site and conclude that there is ‘no moral’ to be found from study and remembrance, painful as this might be. I hope this

thesis has gone some way to outlining the problem in one country, providing some theoretical templates for thinking through why certain stakeholders choose to address or ignore this dilemma, and pointing the way forward for more and varied inquiry on this topic.

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