Cemeteries are repositories of concrete depictions of beliefs about the dead. Their location and layout, the vegetation growing on and around graves, and grave markers all serve as physical representations of beliefs about the dead, of the relationship between the living and the dead, and reflect cultural concerns. As I mentioned in my doctoral dissertation, The Dearly Not-Quite Departed: Funerary Rituals and Beliefs About the Dead in Ukrainian Culture, the arrangements of graves, the placement of grave markers, and the inscriptions on grave markers in Ukrainian cemeteries have symbolic significance; they illuminate elements of Ukrainian beliefs about the dead. Although I cannot present every aspect of this subject here, I will demonstrate that an examination of the material culture of funerary rituals, and of cemeteries and their contents, provides evidence of concern with boundaries and demonstrates that death is depicted in terms of territorial boundaries.

The data in this article comes primarily from my field work in Ukraine. The bulk of my fieldwork was carried out in the spring and summer of 1997 with native folklorists and ethnographers in central, southern, and western Ukraine. The material culture, such as grave markers and cemetery layout, is depicted in photographs from my fieldwork in all three regions in my dissertation, although I am not able to include them here.

The focus of my discussion here will be territorial symbolism depicting beliefs about the journey the dead undergo and that depicting the relationship between the living and the dead. My analysis relies heavily on Mary Douglas’ theories on order, disorder and anomaly. Although she discusses neither funerals nor Ukrainian folklore in her work, these theories can illuminate a number of aspects of Ukrainian funerary rituals, including territorial symbolism. According to Douglas, humans have a need to impose order on existence in order to deal with the multitude of occurrences, objects, and people they encounter in daily life. People impose order by creating categories and attempting to fit all that they encounter into these categories. Those elements which do not fit are anomalies: Douglas defines anomaly as “an element which does not fit a given set or series.” She predicates portions of her theories on the concept that societies are structured and therefore have boundaries and margins, and points out that margins can be dangerous. Both boundaries and margins are anomalous (or at least ambiguous) in that they belong to neither one nor the other category, hence their designation as potential dangers. Tied into this concept is the idea that the body serves as a symbol for society, and concerns about entrances and exits (which are margins in that they are the outer limits of the object in question) can be represented on the body. These ideas are relevant in that a number of instances of marking and crossing boundaries appear not only in funerary rituals, but also in graveyards.

Based on my visits to a number of cemeteries in different regions of Ukraine, Ukrainian
graveyards have similar locations and layouts, vegetation, and grave markers. There are, however, some differences based on age, location, and status of the graveyard. Very old graveyards have different layouts and vegetation than newer ones, and city cemeteries are located in slightly different areas than those serving villages. Also, cemeteries which are “closed,” meaning people are no longer buried in them, have different layouts and vegetation than those that are “open,” or currently used for burials.

Ukrainian village graveyards are usually located on the outskirts of the village. It is fairly rare to find one within the confines of the village, and on those occasions that one does, the graveyards are invariably old ones. This, in combination with the fact that most graveyards are outside of villages, indicates that they were probably outside of the village when they were first designated as cemeteries, and that the village later expanded, encompassing the cemetery as it did so. Old cemeteries are easily identifiable; in addition to having markers with long-ago death dates and/or inscriptions illegible from years of erosion by weathering, they also have a large number of uncared-for graves and graves with no marker at all. Graves are cared for as long as there are living relatives in the area; when there are no longer living relatives and no one remembers whose graves they are, the graves are left to deteriorate. It is also very possible that city and town cemeteries originally lay beyond the boundaries of the settlements. However, one has to keep in mind that there are more severe space limitations in cities and towns.

The boundaries of graveyards, based on my extensive visits, are clearly marked. Ukrainians mark the territory of graveyards in one of two ways: with a fence or with a ditch. City and town cemeteries generally are marked with a fence, as are most village cemeteries. These fences are usually metal and of the picket variety; they are very tall. All fenced cemeteries have at least one gate. If there is more than one gate, one gate is designated as the main entrance. Village cemeteries are sometimes marked only by a ditch surrounding the perimeters. There is still, however, a well worn path leading to the cemetery which serves as the main entrance. Thus, in villages, towns, and cities, the territory of a cemetery is clearly delineated and separated from other territory, and there are defined passages in and out of the cemetery space.

The separation of the cemetery from the rest of the settlement is significant, in light of issues of boundary-crossing. The dead are very clearly separated from the living, and confined within a bounded space. Access to their space is limited; there are traditional entrances and exits to and from that space. The cemetery is a physical representation of traditional beliefs; the dead are separate and reside away from the living, and access to the dead, as well as their access to the living, is restricted rather than free. While there are a number of instances of boundary-crossing and concern about boundaries in Ukrainian funerary rituals, due to space limitations I will mention only a few here. The bounding of graveyards is one example of this concern, as is the following belief, cited by Iv.
Ben'kovskii in his discussion of reasons the folk give for placing money in the coffin or the grave:

According to the second explanation, which I heard in the same Zaslav'skyi uezd and from that same person, as well as in the village of Molchana, Starokonstantinov's'kyi uezd, “money is placed in the coffin for the deceased because in the other world the soul has to stand on guard, by some kind of gates, and if it has money, it can quickly buy off the guards and will not have to stand long, but if it doesn’t have anything to buy [them] off with, then it will stand on guard a long time.”

Ben’kovskii’s explanation does not coincide with any of the explanations I heard. However, the implication that the dead reside in a different place does appear in contemporary belief, and gates are an important element in Ukrainian funerary rituals and beliefs, as in Ukrainian life. In the funeral proper, the gate of the fence surrounding the yard and the gate at the entrance to the cemetery are both marked and treated as special during the funeral procession. The existence of gates at the boundaries of the other world ties in with other beliefs about the dead and Ukrainian worldview. The gates also are symbolic of the boundary crossing that occurs in the journey from life to death; the journey and the accompanying boundary crossing are physically represented in the journey from the home to the graveyard through several gates during the funeral service. Just as the cemetery is bounded, so, apparently, is the other world.

In addition, Ben’kovskii notes that if the corpse’s mouth is open, the head will be tied with a scarf to force it shut. He offers no explanation for the practice of closing the mouth, but in light of beliefs in both prerevolutionary and contemporary Ukrainian folklore that the corpse’s eyes must be shut, open facial orifices seem to present a danger to the living. This practice may at first glance seem unrelated to the belief that the other world is protected with gates and the practice of bounding cemetery territory. However, the link becomes clear if one considers Douglas’ theories on body symbolism.

The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a course of symbols for other complex structures...powers and dangers credited to social structure [are] reproduced in small on the human body. Douglas also states that the margins to which a society attributes power or danger depends on the concerns of the society. Using Douglas’ theories on the body human as a symbol for the body politic,
Samantha Masone has demonstrated that for the East Slavs, beliefs and practices involving the mouth represent societal concerns about margins.

According to the Quadrant system conceptualized by Mary Douglas, Russian and Ukrainian societies, particularly as they existed under the Communist system, are more closely aligned with the characteristics of Quadrant D than with any other quadrant...the social mentality of these groups typically places an emphasis upon the protection of the group from outside forces. Naturally, margins or orifices are of vast importance to both the society and its members as points of contact with such foreign influences, and thus possible entry.

If we accept the theory of Mary Douglas that orifices of the body are thought to mirror the margins or boundaries of society, this means that there are a limited number of openings to deal with on the physical body. For these particular Slavs, the mouth is the orifice of primary importance on the physical body. This is evidenced by the fact that there are a number of everyday rituals which the Russians and Ukrainians engage in that involve taking food or drink into the body.

Thus, the belief that the mouth must be shut is connected to the other instances cited, as it is further evidence of a concern about boundaries. The mouth serves as an entrance and an exit, much as a gate does; the mouth takes in food and air, and allows air and the soul to leave the body. Closing the mouth seems to be primarily aimed at protecting the living, but it may also be intended to protect the dead; the dead while in transition are both dangerous and in danger, in accordance with Douglas' theories.

More interesting for this discussion are the implications of the above for attitudes toward boundary crossing. The body boundaries of the deceased are closed, the house and yard are closed up, the cemetery too is bounded, entrance and exit are often physically controlled with gates as in the case of the yard, and at least at one point there was a belief that the other world was bounded. Also, according to this belief, the other world is not only bounded, but there are guards at its borders. Taken as a whole, these indicate a concern with territorial boundary crossing, but also with the crossing of category boundaries, or anomaly. The living and the dead are separated by the boundaries of the graveyard and the boundaries of the other world; there seems to be an attempt here to firmly fix these categories and their limits or margins with physical representations of boundaries. Death is, in a sense, the ultimate disorder, and break with the community. It leaves a gap in the social structure; the roles that the deceased filled are left empty. Plans and expectations are left in disarray. Order is re-established by firmly fixing boundaries between living and dead and between different types of dead. Although it lies beyond the scope of this discussion, I should mention that several categories of dead can be distinguished in Ukrainian practices, legends, and beliefs. One of these categories is the unquiet dead, who differ from the "normal" dead due to factors such as the age at which they died and the nature of their deaths, as D.K. Zelenin posits in his discussion of East Slavic dead. In Ukraine, unquiet dead traditionally have been buried separately from those who are not unquiet.
Inside the gates or ditch, the layout of the graves differs according to the age of the cemetery. While graves in newer cemeteries are arranged in rows, with narrow spaces between each row and each grave, older cemeteries do not display the same sort of linear layout. In these, the graves seem to be squeezed in every available space, and some graves are very difficult to access. There are no identifiable rows or aisles, simply winding paths through the markers. Even in the newer cemeteries, there are rarely defined paths between graves -- there are simply spaces where it is possible to walk. In “open” cemeteries, there are generally old and new sections which are fairly distinct. In “closed” cemeteries, the two are generally mixed. The cemeteries start out with orderly linear layouts—an attempt, perhaps to impose order on disorder. However, just as disorder and anomaly inevitably occur in life, graveyards too become disordered, and then are “closed”. Order is created, subverted, and re-established in the physical space of the cemetery.

Vegetation in Ukrainian cemeteries is perhaps the most surprising aspect for Americans. Although most cemeteries, and particularly those in cities, seem to have a caretaker, they do not provide “perpetual care” or other individual services standard in American cemeteries. In those regions which are grassy, the grass in the graveyard is not a sea of perfectly manicured greenery. There are no sprinklers, no mowing services. Grass is allowed to grow freely between graves, on abandoned graves, and in empty spaces. Large trees may grow out of older graves. On some newer graves one can find both green and flowering plants. One woman said that pine trees and roses were the items most frequently planted on graves. Another said that roses were planted on the graves of young people, and that cherry, plum, aspen, and lilac trees were planted on graves for all dead, but that maple trees and cranberry were never planted on graves. She did not specify why these are not planted on graves, but the fact that there are customs indicating which ones may be planted points to the fact that this practice is significant and symbolic. If it were done simply for the sake of decoration, or for no real reason at all, there would not be customary taboos on planting certain trees. In addition, the practice is represented on ritual towels or rushnyky, which incorporate symbolic motifs in their designs. One example is a rushnyk in the collection of the the Regional Ethnographic Museum in Cherkasy, which has embroidered depictions of two fenced graves with trees growing on them. The placement of plants and trees on graves may be linked with the physical representation of graves and houses and with Vladimir Propp’s comments on the connection between vegetation and the dead. Just as trees and plants are planted in yards, so they are on graves. The custom also recalls the connection between agricultural fertility and the dead. As Propp noted,

...видно, кто, по греческим представлениям, покойники, находящиеся под землей, могли иметь власть над урожаем...Так обстояло дело не только у греков и римлян, так обстояло дело и у древних славян. Вот почему забота о посевах сочетается с заботой о покойниках и носит двойной характер: усопших надо
...it is clear, that according Greek conceptions, the dead, located in the earth, could have power over crops...So it was not only for the Greeks and Romans, but also for the ancient Slavs. This is why the concern about crops combines with concern about the dead and bears a dual character: the dead must be propitiated, love and honor must be expressed to them. But this is not enough. They must be supported with food, drink, and warmth, it is necessary to share meals with them, to place food on their graves...And this is not enough. It is necessary to provide them not only with life, but with eternal life. It is necessary to associate them with the circuit of life --death-- life, in which nature lives and which is necessary to the farmer, necessary, so that they themselves promoted this circuit.

Although he is speaking of Russian holidays and beliefs, his comments are apropos for my discussion: the East Slavs share a number of beliefs, and customs similar to ones Propp discusses appear in the Ukrainian tradition. Just as there are prohibitions on what may be planted on graves, there are prohibitions against taking items from graves. The same woman who listed the types of trees placed in graveyards stated that one could not take fruit from the graveyard. Another woman said that you cannot take flowers, or anything from the graveyard, but did not know why. Two reasons were given by one Ukrainian: she said that it is a sin to take anything from a cemetery ("Мне кажется, что я грих забрать") and added that the deceased might come after you if you take things from the cemetery.

The prohibition on taking items from a cemetery and the belief that the dead will come to you if you do so makes sense if one understands that graves are traditionally believed to be the houses of the dead. Several of the terms used to describe a coffin come from the root "house", and the motif of coffin as house appears frequently in both old and contemporary laments. Evidence of this belief is not limited to oral culture. Grave markers, and particularly metal crosses, are overwhelmingly painted in the colors used to decorate houses. The colors primarily used to decorate houses are blue and green, and to some degree white. In western Ukraine, silver appears. I was first struck by this in the village of Velikyi Khutir in Cherkas'ka oblast'. Every house we passed or visited in that village was covered in white paint, and the corners and windows of the homes were painted in green, with very few exceptions. The few exceptions had blue in place of the green. I later mentioned this fact to Halyna Kornienko, the folklorist with whom I collected in Cherkas'ka oblast', asking her why. She answered that if the graves are houses, it makes sense to paint the markers, since houses are also painted. Her
reply is logical. If one takes it farther, the connection becomes more clear. The villagers could paint the graves any color; there are other colors of paint. Their choice of specifically the colors used to decorate houses makes the house/grave connection explicit. This is not the only evidence of the physical representation of graves as houses, however, in the interest of space, I will not give further examples here. Instead, I will limit myself to mentioning a few examples from rituals connected with the dead which also demonstrate this belief. For individual memorial rituals, the living go to visit the dead and leave food and drink on the graves for the dead.\textsuperscript{17} The same custom is practiced in many regions on some holidays.\textsuperscript{18} One woman stated that Provoden' is the proper holiday for visiting the dead, saying that her grandmother told her that people should not go to the cemetery on Easter, when the dead go visiting one another.\textsuperscript{19} These ritual practices and the beliefs associated with them demonstrate that the dead are depicted as residing in the cemetery, and that their graves seem to function as homes.

The issue of the colors used to paint grave markers is only one of several productive paths of inquiry into expressions of beliefs about the dead in material culture. Styles of markers and grave types also provide valuable evidence of beliefs and practices. Marker styles have changed to some degree over time and also differ regionally. The oldest markers are generally stone, metal and wooden crosses. One wooden cross I found in western Ukraine is interesting in that it has been carved with plant designs, a further indication of a link between the dead and vegetation.

Another variant style is the roofed cross, of which I found contemporary examples in central and western Ukraine. These are certainly modern variants of a traditional marker style; Hnat Koltsuniak includes five drawings of roofed crosses in the table accompanying the detailed article on types of folk crosses in Kolomyishchyna he wrote eighty years ago.\textsuperscript{20} These roofed crosses seem to be further examples of the physical representation of the grave as home.

Another popular type of marker, which I found many times in all three regions of Ukraine, is a tree. This marker is constructed of off-white or dark brown stone and carved to form a realistic-looking tree trunk. I was told by one man in Cherkas'ka oblast\textsuperscript{21} that these markers were used on graves of Jews and Poles, and I did find the largest number of them in a “closed” Jewish cemetery in Kherson, but the names on these markers in all other cemeteries does not support this statement. Trees are frequently used motifs on rushnyky, and the tree of life is a cross-cultural motif. When one also considers that trees have traditionally been planted on Ukrainian graves and that there is a connection between the dead and vegetation, the markers become more significant and seem to fit a pattern. In addition to those markers which are exact replicas of trees, I also found markers which are mixtures of the tree and other elements of grave marker styles. For example, the tree and the cross are frequently encountered in one grave marker.\textsuperscript{22} Mykola Mozdyr notes that there is a correlation between the tree and the cross in his detailed discussion of markers and their makers.\textsuperscript{23}
Although similar markers appear in different regions, there is also regional variation. Some southern markers appear neither in central nor western Ukraine, and some western markers do not appear in either southern or central Ukraine. Regional variations are to be expected in grave markers, since there is regional variation in other elements of funerals.

A further example of vegetation motifs is the placement of large metal tulips on either side of a grave, a phenomenon apparently unique to southern Ukraine. Although I asked a number of people about these, no one assigned them any particular significance. However, they seem to be part of the grave as house theme, as I also saw the tulips used as a motif on the gate of the fences, which are used throughout much of Ukraine to enclose homesteads, and in place of the carved horse head traditionally located at the edge of the peak of the roof. The correlation between house and marker colors and the use of the tulip motif on both homes and graves are further evidence of the perception of the grave as a house. The use of the tulip is also interesting when considered in conjunction with Propp’s comments on the connection between vegetation and the dead, and the longstanding relationship between the living and the dead. The tulip may be a symbol both of the linkage between the dead and agricultural fertility and the fact that relationships are not severed by death, as visits to the cemetery for memorial services and holidays, to cite only one of many pieces of evidence, attest.

Just as markers and decorations can shed light on belief, so too can the graves themselves. Unlike American graves, Ukrainian graves rise at least slightly above the level of the surrounding ground. The simplest graves are simply low rectangular mounds. Others have a large rectangular stone perpendicular to the grave marker, a sort of platform which serves nicely as a table when bringing food to the cemetery. Finally, some graves are surrounded by metal, stone, or wood; these materials are used to create a rectangle, the center of which is filled with earth. All of these grave types mark the territory of the grave, and in the case of the latter two types, bound it. This is significant because of issues of boundary crossing. Not only is the cemetery bounded, but so is the grave, and one is not to cross those boundaries. A group of family graves may be surrounded by a fence. Aside from bounding the family graves, this also recalls the classic Ukrainian homestead, which is inhabited by several generations and bounded by a fence.

Thus, both the graves themselves and cemeteries display evidence of concern about boundary crossing. Individual graves, family graves, and the territory of the cemetery are all clearly bounded and separated from adjoining territory, as are homesteads. The cemetery is like a village of the dead. The dead have their village parallel to that of the living. The two are separated by physical boundaries.

This delineation of living and dead seems to be an attempt to physically fix the boundaries of the two categories, physically control the upset of order, and establish order on disorder. This is supported by the existence of categories of dead; not only living and dead but living and several types...
of dead can be distinguished. There are normal dead, split into the subcategories of dead in transition and incorporated dead, and anomalous dead, which split into the subcategories of those who will remain anomalous and in transition until their natural death would have occurred, and anomalous dead who can be reclassified through a variant of the standard funerary ritual, the wedding of the dead. To paraphrase Douglas, in the search for order, there is a constant battle with disorder. Order is imposed on the disorder of death, disorder appears, and order is reestablished in a continuous cycle. Attempts to maintain order are depicted through physical representations. The graves also provide evidence to support characterizations in laments of the grave as home, as do some grave markers.

Notes

*Note: full names for all interviewees are in my private archive. The abbreviation s. stands for village (село), r-n. for region (район), and obl. for county (область).*

4. Iv. Ben’kovskii, 244.
10. Agrapina Kharytonivna, collected by author and Halyna Kornienko, s.Moshny, Cherkas’kyi r-n, Cherkas’ka obl., 4-16-97.
11. Halyna Ivanivna, collected by author and Halyna Kornienko, s.Subotiv, Chyhyryns’kyi r-n, Cherkas’ka obl., 5-9-97.
12. Ingram, 192.
15. Nadezhda Ivanivna, collected by author and Hanna Chumachenko, s.Kardashynka, Holoprystans’kyi r-n, 6-1-97.
17. For example, Vira Vasylivna, collected by author and Halyna Kornienko, s.Velykyi Khutir, Drabivs’kyi r-n, Cherkas’ka obl., 4-22-97; Mariia Iakivna and Nadiia Fylipovna, collected by author and Halyna Kornienko, s.Popivka, Zvenyhorods’kyi r-n, Cherkas’ka obl., 4-29-97; Nataliia Mykolaivna and husband, collected by author, m.Tsiurupins’k, Tsiurupins’kyi r-n, Khersons’ka obl., 6-8-97; Liudmila Andriivna, collected by author and Hanna Chumachenko, s.Oleksandrivka, Bilozers’kyi r-n, Khersons’ka obl.
obl., 6-13-97: Mykola Petrovych and Ekateryna Ivanivna, originally from western Ukraine, collected by
author and Lena Golikova, s. Verbivka, Beryslavs’kyi r-n, Khersons’ka obl., 6-14-97.
18. For example, Oľha Ivor’evna, collected by author and Halyna Kornienko, s. Moshny, Cherkas’kyi r-n.
Cherkas’ka obl., 4-16-97; Halyna Ivanivna, 5-9-97; Nadezhda Serhiivna and Iryna Mykhailivna, collected
by author and Nataliia Timchenko, s. Kardashynka, Holoprystans’kyi r-n, Khersons’ka obl., 5-31-97.
19. Agafiia Evmenivna, collected by author and Halyna Kornienko, s. Subotiv, Chyhyryns’kyi r-n, Cherkas’ka obl., 5-7-97.
21. Informal conversation with Mykola Mykolaiovych, s. Ryzyn, Zvenyhorods’kyi r-n, Cherkas’ka obl.,
4-29-97.
22. Ingram, 202-204.