



Suicide and the Body Politic in Imperial Russia (Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories)

Susan K. Morrissey

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In early twentieth-century Russia, suicide became a public act and a social phenomenon of exceptional scale, a disquieting emblem of Russia's encounter with modernity. This 2007 book draws on an extensive range of sources, from judicial records to the popular press, to examine the forms, meanings, and regulation of suicide from the seventeenth century to 1914, placing developments into a pan-European context. It argues against narratives of secularization that read the history of suicide as a trajectory from sin to insanity, crime to social problem, and instead focuses upon the cultural politics of self-destruction. Suicide - the act, the body, the socio-medical problem - became the site on which diverse authorities were established and contested, not just the priest or the doctor but also the sovereign, the public, and the individual. This panoramic history of modern Russia, told through the prism of suicide, rethinks the interaction between cultural forms, individual agency, and systems of governance.

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