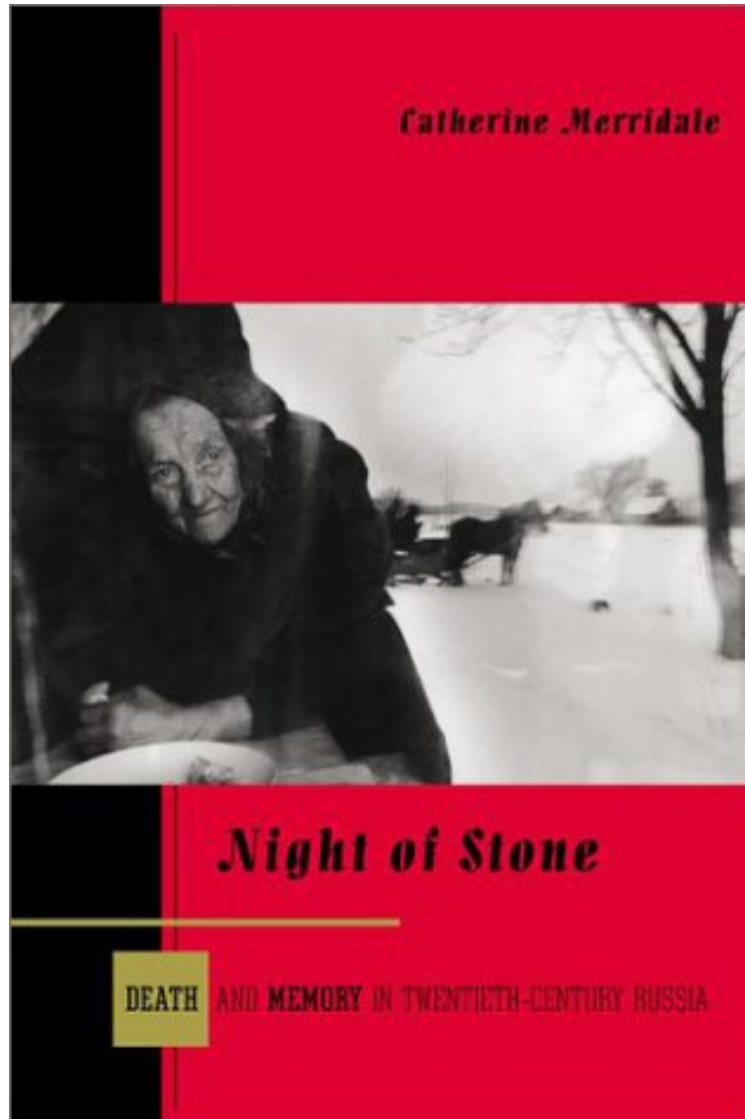


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Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia

Catherine Merridale

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Catherine Merridale : Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Dan K Carson Exactly what I wanted. 9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Finally the stories can be told By Kimberley Mitchell The history of 20th century Russia has led from one death-dealing regime to another, but always with a severe penalty attached to telling the truth about the repression and the people who've died. Catherine Merridale's book tells the stories which before could not be

told. She investigates original documents, footnotes profusely, and interviews survivors. The stories are each unique, and in the absence of communal review, do not form a cohesive unified tale. This in itself may be the most poignant feature of this book, not only the courage and stoicism with which these sturdy people denied past atrocities and went on with their lives, but the profound silence of the denial. It is a grim story, but a true one, and it deserves to be heard. In the face of repressions on this scale, it is easier to put the petty deceptions and injustices of our own time and place into some kind of perspective. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An unusual book By Lee I am interested in this sort of thing, cemeteries, tombstones, customs, how this was affected by the rise of the Soviet Union. I know there are several reviews that are less than happy with it, but I learned much about the culture. Few if any books can relay this sort of information.

A brilliant new work of interpretative history that provides a unique perspective on the beautiful but tortured culture of twentieth-century Russia. Russia has endured more bloodshed than any other European country in the twentieth century. Yet, while countries such as Germany have learned the value of confronting the darker side of their own pasts, Russia has never faced the reality of its troubled history in a meaningful and collective way. In this provocative and highly original book, Catherine Merridale asks Russians difficult questions about how their country's volatile past has affected their everyday lives, their aspirations, their dreams, and their nightmares. Based on extensive research including rare imperial archives, Soviet propaganda, memoirs, letters, newspapers, literature, psychiatric studies, and texts, as well as interviews with doctors, priests, social workers, policemen, survivors, gravediggers, and funeral directors, *Night of Stone* seeks answers to the questions: What is the true impact of violence in the Soviet century? How successfully have the Russians psychologically rewritten their own histories? What rituals have survived the Soviet regime, and what do they tell us of the Russian mentality? Reminiscent of the highly successful *The Hour of Our Death*, *Night of Stone* is an emotionally wrenching, eloquent work that will appeal to all readers of Russian and European history as well as anyone interested in the processes of memory.

From Publishers Weekly "Russia's story of death has been obscured so often," explains Merridale (*Perestroika: The Historical Perspective; Moscow Politics and the Rise of Stalin*). The extraordinary scale of the violence and loss in modern Russian history has been shrouded in secrecy; indeed, the government has only recently acknowledged the hundreds of thousands killed under Stalin. "For 50 years," Merridale writes, "until the fall of Communism, families had kept bereavement of this kind to themselves.... It was dangerous, after all, to mourn the passing of an enemy of the people." Paying particular attention to the ways that Orthodox religion and Soviet atheism have affected Russian bereavement, Merridale explores Russian perceptions of death and afterlife from before the Bolshevik Revolution, through both world wars and the great famines of the 1930s and into the present. Her fascinating study is based on intimate conversations with bereaved Russians, as well as interviews with gravediggers, funeral directors, social workers, doctors and priests, and meticulous readings of imperial archives, Soviet propaganda, letters, memoirs, literature and government documents. (As Merridale points out, much of this research would have been impossible 20 years ago.) Merridale scrupulously avoids imposing her own ideological or cultural prejudices on her subject. By turns solemn and grisly, empathetic and scholarly, this inspired work provides a unique window on Soviet history through the brutality, ceremony and silences of death. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Merridale (history, Univ. of Bristol), the author of *Moscow Politics and the Rise of Stalin: The Communist Party in the Capital, 1925-32* (1990) and *Perestroika: The Historical Perspective* (1991), offers a history of the Soviet Union from the perspective of the Russian view of death. The plodding beginning (a 30-page foreword) gives way to insightful historical perspective. This work is in line with recent histories by Gregory Freeze (*Russia: A History*, LJ 5/1/98), Martin Malia (*Russia Under Western Eyes*, LJ 2/1/99), and Robert Service (*A History of Twentieth-Century Russia*, LJ 3/1/98) but adds new information about the purges of the Thirties and Forties, the liquidation of the Kulaks, and more contemporary pogroms and ethnic cleansings of Chechnia. Chapter 4, "Transforming Fire," begins to set this book apart from earlier works of Sovietologists; its treatment of the USSR funeral industry during the Twenties and Thirties is, in my reading, unique. Merridale's reason for writing is to help comprehend the feelings and actions of the present day. "Confusions about loyalty help to explain why it is that some people still remain within the grip of memories that torment them. They were not happy in the past, but they cannot approve of the present either." Recommended for academic libraries. Harry Willems, Southeast Kansas Lib. Syst., Iola Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Combining personal interviews and archival research, Merridale has written a gut-wrenching, at times absolutely chilling, account of death in Russia during the past century. This isn't a dry rattling off of numbers (although there are plenty of statistics) but a very successful attempt to fill the death count with human attitudes and emotions. Merridale grounds her work with chapters dealing with the czarist era--peasant attitudes toward life and death, political repression, and even teenage suicide; the revolution and civil war; Stalin's pre- and postwar repressions; World War II, which cost an estimated 25 million Soviet lives; and the decline in health care since the fall of the Soviet Union. The interviews are generally with people who have suffered the hardships of war and repression and with those who now bear witness to what such things (along with famine) have done to the Russian

psyche. The writing is never slow, although occasionally gruesome, and Merridale maintains a nice balance among oral and written histories and her own analysis. Frank CasoCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved