

single nation. Bulman traces this path through Civil War decision-making, the “Chronic Instability” of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, and into the return of constitutional stability after 1660. The importance of this line of enquiry is clear as while pre-Civil War monarchical and political norms returned to England, consensus politics did not and in fact majoritarian behavior became the convention. In his analysis, Bulman finds that, between 1663 and 1677, the Commons divided 23.6 percent of the time a question was put to the House, in a fashion strikingly similar to modern statistics on divisions in majoritarian rule today (187).

The final evidential chapter, “Little Parliaments in the Atlantic Colonies, 1613–1789,” extends Bulman’s analysis into Ireland and various Caribbean and North American assemblies. Here Bulman finds that majoritarian decision-making quickly became the rule, probably because no form of consensual approach ever took hold. As Bulman saliently concludes, “the ferociously partisan politics of the antebellum United States, like the precociously partisan politics of the British House of Commons, were made possible by the institution of majority voting” (245).

The Rise of Majority Rule is a superb piece of work, an intellectual triumph, that firmly places the practice of politics and institutions back where they belong, at the forefront of historical debate. Much of the work, though, is unashamedly a quantitative analysis and all the better for it, but further qualitative scrutiny of major decisions would either buttress or nuance the overall argument. I remain a little unconvinced at the degree to which consensual politics dominated to the level that Bulman suggests before 1642, and whether this “consensual” politics was actually about preserving the *honor* of the House or simply avoiding the appearance of factional conflicts. Despite these quibbles, Bulman has crafted a book that will become compulsory reading for everyone interested in the field and how legislature politics operates, then and now.

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DREW DANIEL. *Joy of the Worm: Suicide and Pleasure in Early Modern English Literature*. Thinking Literature Series. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022. Pp. 279. (paper). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.210

One does not expect to enjoy a book about suicide. However, just as Drew Daniel’s title, *Joy of the Worm: Suicide and Pleasure in Early Modern English Literature*, paradoxically yokes suicide to pleasure, his writing likewise reflects the power that eschewing certain somber conventionalities of language, tone, and even decorum may command when talking about self-killing. This is not to suggest Daniel’s book is anything less than serious. On the contrary, Daniel’s sustained meditation on ethics and interpersonal responsibility renders us keenly aware of a human behind the elastic prose who has thought deeply, imaginatively, and compassionately about the complexities of this subject.

In constructing an “archive of parasuicidal feeling” (59), this work draws on and stands out from earlier studies (dealing chiefly with Shakespeare) on the subject by Roland Wymer, Eric Langley, and Marlena Tronick. Daniel’s extended reading of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the source of the book’s title, as well as *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens*, establishes Shakespeare’s subversion of suicide in its various forms. However, Daniel also centers anomalous moments of levity or even “joy-within-death” through attentive readings of early modern literary scenes of self-killing (meditated or attempted) in the works of John Lyly, Sir Philip Sidney, John Milton, and Joseph Addison. Shorter focalizing chapters on John Donne’s *Biathanatos* and Richard Burton’s *Religio Medici* complicate Michael MacDonald and Alexander Murray’s

“secularization thesis” by establishing the ironic basis for a continued clash of Christian and classical worldviews undergirding attitudes towards voluntary death in English literature. Taken together, these chapters offer a compelling corrective to the application of “pathological frameworks of present suicidality” (83) to historical literary texts.

Charting an at times meandering, circuitous path through dense literary and theoretical terrain, the story Daniel tells is nonetheless straightforward: after a series of “slapstick” detours through death in scenes from plays that disrupt tragic and even tragicomic framing, Addison’s *Cato* marks a sharp break from these humor-laced literary flirtations with self-killing. The preceding chapter on *Paradise Lost* scaffolds the turn towards psychological models ostensibly behind this shift in drawing upon a diagnostic framework developed by twentieth-century suicidologists to anatomize the epic’s conflict between suicidal despair and affirmation of life. This may be the most vulnerable of his chapters to criticism given the appearance of “triteness” Daniel himself ironically acknowledges. Sometimes risks pay off. In this instance, the unconventional approach inspired by a struggling student’s cartoon yields a reassuringly humane reading of Milton’s own characters in crisis.

In addition to this deeply personal engagement with his subject, Daniel’s consideration of the power of genre as an affective frame constitutes a central strength of this book. Genre both mediates and modulates collective and individual responses to self-destruction, according to Daniel’s argument. His analysis of Sidney’s *Old Arcadia* and Lyly’s *Gallathea* demonstrates that deflationary moments in tragedy in turn create an effect of “camp.” Reading camp as a “technology of survival” (60), Daniel insists that the genre’s queer undermining of seriousness may fortify the spirit against the allure of self-killing. The aesthetic and the ethical collude in this sense to create an effect that establishes the foundation for the book’s ensuing reflection on the relationship between art and action, death and community.

For all its cautioning about presentism in our reading of suicide, *Joy of the Worm* is a strikingly relevant book. By liberally weaving into his discussion allusions to present-day gender and racial politics, social justice movements, and social media practices, Daniel pulls his academic subject into conversation with our current moment of crisis inflamed by alt-right ideology, climate change, and the pandemic. Given this affinity for expansiveness, one might expect some remarks on the afterlife of suicide-related levity, perhaps by looking to satire or the development of the novel. However, the stakes for this discussion are higher as Daniel’s attention turns to how art might keep us tethered to life during challenging times and even on what is to be gained from reflecting on literary engagements with suicide in academic studies. In gamely addressing these questions, Daniel argues for the enduring disorderly power of art as a form that can disrupt tragedy-inflected idealization of self-destruction. Accordingly, *Joy of the Worm* holds inestimable value for literary scholars, early modern literature specialists, and anyone seeking an original treatment of suicide beyond the standard paradigms, narratives, and constructions.

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Feminist Formalisms and Early Modern Women’s Writing gathers a stellar set of scholars and scholarly interventions. In their introductory essay, Lara Dodds and Michelle M. Dowd