

Chastity, the suppression of sexual desire and abjuring of intercourse, was another important aspect of medieval sexuality. A component of the religious vows of monks and nuns from the earliest centuries of Christianity, chastity was one means to make explicit the boundaries separating the clergy from the laity, although it was not easily enforced or affirmed. Tales of immorality involving monks, nuns, and priests abound from the Middle Ages, yet Harvey also suggests that such stories may exaggerate the behavior of religious men and women.

Given the burden of constraints placed on appropriate marital sexuality, it is not surprising that myriad other activities were censured (chapter 6). Fornication, adultery, and bestiality were serious transgressions, punished by both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. The condemnation of incest was not so much about sex between intimate family members but rather was concerned about sex and marriage between cousins and other more distant relatives, including relatives of one's godparents. This prohibition was much abused by medieval elites who strategically used the sudden discovery of an incestuous relationship to dissolve a marriage no longer desirable or politically useful.

Other forms of prohibited sexuality revolved around "unnatural acts" such as sexual positions beyond the "missionary position" even within marriage (chapter 7). Other unnatural acts included masturbation and anal sex, whether between men or between a man and a woman. While same-sex sodomy was frequently considered a mortal sin and a capital crime, Harvey finds that in practice penalties tended to be more lenient than legal or prescriptive texts suggest.

Harvey addresses a variety of sexual transgressions that involved difference and deviance (chapter 8). Christians were forbidden to have sex with Jews or Muslims. Heretics were accused of engaging in orgies or condemning outright marriage and procreation. Heresy and sexual transgression, especially sodomy, were linked as in the case of the Templars who were accused of both crimes. Worst of all, however, was sex with demons who were believed to assume human bodies to have sex with both men and women. Such extreme beliefs led to the notions of devil worship and witchcraft, which in turn led directly to the witch trials of the fifteenth century. This is an excellent analysis of how minor unnatural acts were conceptually linked to heresy and demonic activity.

Harvey concludes her survey by recognizing the challenges inherent in the study of a topic that the primary sources present as a problem, real or anticipated. Prohibitions and transgressions figure largely in the medieval evidence; happy couples or contented celibates rarely appear. Nevertheless, medieval sexuality forms the ideological foundation for modern Western values concerning sex and sexuality, even as those values are being rejected or rendered anachronistic. Katherine Harvey has provided an excellent introduction into the beliefs and the lived experience of sex in the Middle Ages. Her book is rigorous, empathetic, and deeply engaging. *Fires of Lust* is an excellent overview, especially for nonspecialists, students, and general interest readers.

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FRANCIS KELLY. *Captain Francisco de Cuéllar: The Armada, Ireland, and the Wars of the Spanish Monarchy, 1578–1606*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2020. Pp. 312. \$55.00 (cloth).
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Even after centuries of study, stories about the Spanish Armada of 1588 still capture the imagination. Among these we can count the fates of ships wrecked off the coast of Ireland on their way back to Spain and the men who were on them. Perhaps most famously, Francisco de

Cuéllar, a sailor and soldier, has left a historical imprint, especially because he left for posterity an account of his perambulations through Ireland, Scotland, and eventually Flanders: the *Carta de uno que fue en la Armada de Inglaterra y cuenta la jornada* (Letter of one who was with the Armada of England, and an account of the expedition). Though this source gained notoriety in the nineteenth century, Cuéllar's time came in the aftermath of 1988 during the Armada's quinquacentennial and the resultant scholarly activity. With time, Cuéllar became more than a subject of academic interest—he entered popular culture by means of television specials, novels, music, and theater. Cuéllar's story inspired Francis Kelly to the point that he sought to retrace his steps, starting by bicycle in Streedagh, Ireland, and ultimately arriving in the sleepy town of Simancas, Spain, where a different kind of journey began. Amid boxes and boxes of old papers in the Archivo General de Simancas, Kelly began a quest to uncover the minutiae of Cuéllar's life and experiences. The result is a book that reveals the fruits of Kelly's impassioned communion with the remnants, the ghosts of an individual who evokes a whole landscape of the past.

Kelly provides, as far as can be reconstructed, an exhaustive narrative of Cuéllar's career. He first takes the reader to his early career in the infantry company attached to the Indies Guard, his eventual captaincy and his participation in a dramatic battle against English forces off the coast of Brazil, in San Vicente. Then Kelly traces Cuéllar's European career, starting with his participation in the Armada as captain of the *San Pedro*, through to his seven-month odyssey in Ireland, and ultimately his efforts as a soldier in and around Flanders. Cuéllar's career—or at least what survives of it on paper—ended with a captaincy in the Armada of Barlovento that would take him back across the Atlantic. The Irish story, given Cuéllar's own detailed report, is the most fleshed out element of this biography, but Kelly's archival trawling unearths much more than derring-do. We learn, for example, of a career in the shadows of controversy. From his earliest days in the Americas, Cuéllar was accused of failing to follow orders and was duly arrested for insubordination, a matter later adjudicated in his favor. Kelly describes how, during his service to the 1588 Armada, Cuéllar was among several captains court-martialed for failing to follow orders, but, again, he survived to tell his tales. It seems, though, that the curse of ill-repute remained in some quarters. Indeed, the Spanish secretary of state, Esteban de Ibarra, described him as “useless”. Kelly also discusses Cuéllar's more pedestrian experiences, especially his interactions with the Habsburg (not-so-well-oiled) bureaucratic machine. Cuéllar's ongoing petitions for payments were almost as harrowing as his many near-death experiences in Ireland.

Kelly writes about more than one man. Cuéllar's bureaucratic entanglements open vistas into the experiences of sailors and contemporary men of war that Kelly deepens with fine-grained and detailed descriptions of the systems within which Cuéllar operated. Take, for example, a description of the petition process for wages and pensions or an arresting discussion (in light of Cuéllar's legal troubles) of the administration of military justice. There are also extensive discussions about the geopolitical contexts that enveloped soldiers and sailors of Cuéllar's generation, including the lead-up to the Armada, and issues related to Flanders and its defense.

Taken as a whole, there are very few quibbles to be had with such a formidable work. However, paradoxically, the book's virtues occasionally raise some narratological issues. Although Kelly's extensive contextual discussions are among the book's many strengths, their exhaustiveness—especially with reference to geopolitics—sometimes diminish the propulsive quality of the narrative and submerge the book's central figure.

I also wished for an expanded treatment of Cuéllar's most lasting work—the *Carta* describing shipwreck and his Irish experiences. Kelly ably uses the source to construct a story, reading it with appropriate rigor and an occasional dose of skepticism. Still, I wondered if there could have been deeper discussion about the source itself as a kind of political act, as a text rhetorically structured, politically sensitive, and with self-fashioning intent. A more expansive discussion along these lines would not be completely new, but it would have enhanced Kelly's already

arresting narrative. This greediness for just a little bit more, however, was partially quenched by the appendix, which includes (among other key sources) Cuéllar's letter (in translation) for the interested reader's perusal.

Cuéllar ultimately finished his career with a whimper. The last information known of him is that he sought and was granted permission for travel to New Spain, a virtual handout for a man who had served the Spanish monarchy for so long. It may be that he finished his life there contentedly, but, when he last appears in the historical record, Kelly tells the reader, he was destitute, having “virtually nothing to show for his efforts” (223). Perhaps Kelly's most admirable trait as a writer is that he reminds us of the extraordinary lives lived by men of war, so many now forgotten. As Kelly shows, occasionally they can be revived through the patient excavation of sources and the application of a lively historical imagination.

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DEANNA P. KORETSKY. *Death Rights: Romantic Suicide, Race, and the Boundaries of Liberalism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021. Pp. 214. \$95.00 (cloth).
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Scholarship in the social, cultural, and literary history of suicide in the long eighteenth century is certainly on the rise. In recent years, scholars have made significant contributions to understanding of suicide in this period via various conceptual frameworks, including class, nationalism, gender, emotions, and race. Deanna P. Koretsky—a founding member of the Bigger 6 Collective, a group established to challenge the structural racism in the academic study of Romanticism—is the latest to add to this fertile field with *Death Rights: Romantic Suicide, Race, and the Boundaries of Liberalism*. The ambition of the Bigger 6 Collective is writ large in this monograph. The publication presents an important racial critique of the Romantic myth of the tragic suicidal genius, and trenchantly exposes the extent to which Enlightenment and Romantic ideals of liberalism were promulgated via suicide narratives at the expense or exclusion of Black lives, and especially enslaved Africans.

Koretsky's argument is forcefully and provocatively articulated in her introduction, which in many ways places Romanticism squarely on trial: she highlights the Romantic privileging of white male individualism and strips Romanticism of its status as “the defining discourse of the age” (14). In the first chapter Koretsky presents an interpretation of Thomas Day and John Bicknell's abolitionist poem *The Dying Negro* (1773) as a cogent example of how the social death of slaves as a precondition to self-destruction is frequently obscured by liberal notions of self-determination and the emancipatory ideals of sentimentalism. The poem is contextualized in relation to *Somerset v. Stewart* (1772), a landmark trial in the history of abolitionism, theorized using John Locke's principles of property and self-ownership and read through literary form as a suicide note. It is a persuasive reading, one that reifies the structural associations of *white* with *life*, and *Black* with *death*, despite the poem's seemingly best intentions.

Drawing upon the well-documented association between the rights of women—as enslaved subjects of patriarchal rule—and the rights of slaves, in chapter 2 Koretsky turns to question the ethics of the white appropriation of enslavement and dispossession as protofeminist discourse. This time under the guise of female solidarity, Black suicide is once again obfuscated for white political ends. The works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Robinson, Claire de Duras, and Felicia Hemans are analyzed for the varied ways in which suicide is racialized as a nonwhite experience and female emancipation is depicted at the expense of nonwhite women.