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Consent: a memoir of unwanted attention, Donna Freitas (book review)

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social sciences

BIOGRAPHY

★ **Ackerman, Elliot. *Places and Names: On War, Revolution, and Returning*. Penguin. Jun. 2019. 256p. ISBN 9780525559962. \$26; ebk. ISBN 9780525559979. BIOG**

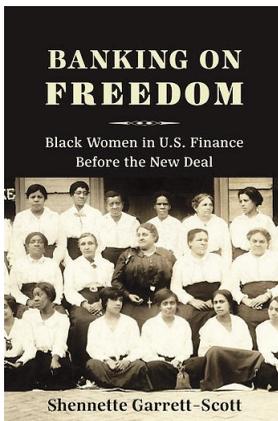
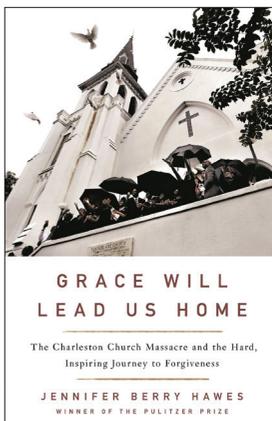
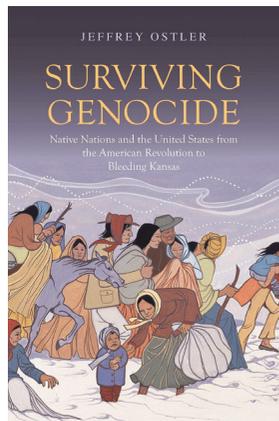
Former Marine Ackerman (*Dark at the Crossing*) crafts his memoir in a unique and entertaining format. Rather than writing chronologically, he begins in the present day with his travels to Syria and Iraq. He befriends a man named Abed who saw the start of the democratic revolution in Syria and introduces Ackerman to another man named Abu Hassar, who was himself involved with ISIS. Hassar and Ackerman realize they were combatants on opposite sides of war, both dealing with the effects of the conflict, the deaths of friends, and the memories of harsh battles. Throughout, Ackerman goes back and forth between his visits to today's Syria

Cohen (founder & CEO, Jigsaw at Google's Alphabet, Inc.; *One Hundred Days of Silence*) offers a fluidly written work on eight U.S. vice presidents who unexpectedly became chief executives. Assassinations of their predecessors installed Andrew Johnson, Chester Arthur, Theodore Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson in the White House, while fatal presidential illnesses ushered in John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Calvin Coolidge, and Harry Truman. What the book does well is describe characteristics and criteria that should influence the selection. Among these are previous experiences as vetted presidential candidates or elected executives rather than their potential to carry states electorally. The book is less valuable as a primary source. Misstatements include referring to 24-year-old Julia Tyler as the youngest First Lady, neglecting Frances Cleveland holding that title at age 21, and citing Henry

ebk. ISBN 9781324001737. BIOG

How does one come to terms with the past? For Cregan (English, Barnard Coll.), that meant writing about it, starting with a depressive episode she experienced after the death of her two-day-old daughter. The author continues by documenting her time in a mental hospital, where she receives electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and attempts suicide; wanting to be helped but believing she could not be helped. Research into her Irish Catholic background leads to a discovery of a family history of depression, along with stoicism and silence around mental illness; "We didn't talk about how we were feeling; we simply made space for the moods and irritability of others." Turning to history and religion for advice, Cregan finds that neither can answer how to respond to the traumatic event of losing a child you didn't know. She details the emotional toll of mental illness, and how her first marriage never recovered from the aftermath of her daughter's death. Later chapters sensitively trace the difficulties of subsequent miscarriages, and ultimately motherhood, with her second husband.

VERDICT While there are quite a few memoirs on depression, Cregan's debut stands out for its personal and profound insights into a subject that can be difficult to grasp.—Stephanie Sendaula, *Library Journal*



Groundbreaking works on government policies and gun control, black women business leaders

and Iraq and his five tours of duty. The account contains many insights into the purpose of war and how it damages all parties involved. The bookend meeting with Hassar and the conclusion help to solidify the beauty of the work. **VERDICT** Any fan of Ackerman's previous novels (*Waiting for Eden*), memoirs on the Iraq or Afghanistan wars, and valuable outlooks on the nature of war and its combatants will find this phenomenal. [See Prepub Alert, 12/3/18.]—Jason L. Steagall, formerly with Gateway Technical Coll. Lib., Elkhorn, WI

Cohen, Jared. ***Accidental Presidents: Eight Men Who Changed America*. S. & S. Apr. 2019. 528p. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9781501109829. \$30; ebk. ISBN 9781501109843. BIOG**

Morgenthau Jr. as the first Jewish cabinet member instead of Oscar Straus. Cohen also engages in counterfactuals, especially regarding unsuccessful assassination plots. Though he includes the attempt in Palm Beach, FL, against John F. Kennedy in December 1960, he leaves out a threat against Richard Nixon in February 1974. **VERDICT** This provocative and timely introductory book for concerned readers during another presidential election cycle might spark additional historical sleuthing.—Frederick J. Augustyn Jr., Lib. of Congress, Washington, DC

★ **Cregan, Mary. *The Scar: A Personal History of Depression and Recovery*. Norton. Apr. 2019. 256p. notes. ISBN 9781324001720. \$26.95;**

★ **Freitas, Donna. *Consent: A Memoir of Unwanted Attention*. Little, Brown. Aug. 2019. 336p. ISBN 9780316450522. \$28; ebk. ISBN 9780316450515. MEMOIR**

Hundreds of letters. Daily phone calls. Uninvited visits. Persistent invitations for coffee, meals, outings, and trips. As a graduate student, Freitas (*Sex and the Soul*) was a confident student who loved learning and aimed to become a professor herself, until she was stalked by her mentor, a professor who was also an ordained priest. Hesitant to confront him because of his institutional position and her own self-doubt, the author eventually found that avoidance, refusals, and even ultimatums had no effect—and when she turned to the university for help, the administration chose to shield him rather than protect her. While some may wish for a more victorious ending to Freitas's experience, the memoir itself—coming after years of silence on its author's part—is a triumph on its own. It is particularly valuable for its intimate portrait of the emotional and psy-

chological damage nonviolent stalking can wreak on a victim and its exploration of the mental and societal pressures that keep such victims from speaking out. **VERDICT** Any reader interested in current discussions on consent and its importance should pick up this heartfelt and harrowing book.—**Kathleen McCallister, William & Mary Libs., Williamsburg, VA**

Johnson, Lauren. *The Shadow King: The Life and Death of Henry VI*. Pegasus. May 2019. 736p. illus. maps. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9781643131283.

\$35; ebk. ISBN 9781643131658. BIOG

Historian Johnson (*So Great a Prince*) aims to help readers interested in late medieval history better understand the life and political choices of Henry VI (1421–71), a complicated, contradictory, and psychologically troubled man. The author is clearly fascinated by the enigma of the so-called “shadow king,” and why he demands our attention. An infant king, he was the only monarch to be crowned in both England and France. Despite his storied background, he was an ineffective ruler who lost England’s French possessions during the Hundred Years War and saw his kingdom descend into the chaos of the War of Roses. Despite all this, Henry became a sainted figure following his mysterious death; he was almost certainly murdered. Using archival sources as well as printed primary and secondary materials, Johnson charts Henry’s rise and fall, presenting him as an individual who struggled in extraordinary situations. Maps, genealogical tables, and explanatory notes assist in learning more about the religiosity of the period, royal lineage and succession customs, the workings of royal households, and even medieval medical practices and therapies. **VERDICT** A complex, yet highly readable and immaculately researched biography for those interested in British royalty and medieval history.—**Marie M. Mullaney, Caldwell Coll., NJ**

McLeod, Darrel. *Mamaskatch: A Cree Coming of Age*. Milkweed. Jun. 2019. 240p. pap. ISBN 9781571313874. \$16; ISBN 9781771622004. \$29.95. MEMOIR

In his first book, McLeod writes about life with a fractured family and surviving a tumultuous childhood. The memoir begins with the story of McLeod’s mother, Bertha, who, along with several female relatives, was sent to a Catholic residential school from which they eventually escaped. Bertha raised her children Catholic alongside a strong respect for Cree traditions. As a result of Bertha’s alcoholism, McLeod spent time living with an extended family, ultimately returning home to his mother. The author struggles to keep up with schoolwork

while caring for younger siblings and suffering abuse, physical and sexual, from his brother-in-law. This is not your ordinary coming-of-age story; it’s a multilayered account of a boy growing into manhood questioning his own gender identity while also confronting racism and bullying. **VERDICT** This poignant memoir presents a story about growing up surrounded by difficulties and also a window into the world of the Cree.—**Jacqueline Parascandola, Univ. of Pennsylvania**

Mulgrew, Kate. *How To Forget: A Daughter’s Memoir*. Morrow. May 2019. 352p. ISBN 9780062846815. \$27.99; ebk. ISBN 9780062846846. MEMOIR

In her first memoir, *Born with Teeth*, stage and screen actress Mulgrew (*Star Trek: Voyager*; *Orange Is the New Black*) discussed her longing for the daughter she gave up for adoption. With this follow-up, she examines a different form of longing—that of her parents’ approval. In two sections, one devoted to each parent, Mulgrew recounts life as the second oldest of eight children, in an Irish Catholic household in Dubuque, IA, with a family history of alcoholism and silent resentment. She details her dad’s hard childhood and his impassivity after the deaths of two of Mulgrew’s sisters while relating her mom’s equally challenging upbringing, losing her own mom at a young age, and retreating into herself after the sudden loss of two children. With candor, Mulgrew shares her efforts at caregiving after her mom develops Alzheimer’s and, later, her dad is diagnosed with cancer. The author’s privilege shows in passages about her reliance on her caregivers of Mexican descent; however, she reveals the painful effects of a family’s long-standing fear of doctors and lack of vulnerability. **VERDICT** Though long-winded at times, this intimate memoir shares the realities of loving flawed parents and coping with grief and loss; a worthwhile read.—**Stephanie Sendaula, Library Journal**

★Page, Susan. *The Matriarch: Barbara Bush and the Making of an American Dynasty*. Twelve: Grand Central. Apr. 2019. 432p. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9781538713648. \$32.50; ebk. ISBN 9781538713655. BIOG

Page, Washington correspondent for *USA Today*, tackles the life of former first lady Barbara Bush (1925–2018) in this new biography. While the work is not officially authorized, Page interviewed Bush many times before her death in 2018 and had access to her voluminous diaries that no other historian has seen. Page’s coverage includes key moments, such as her marriage to George Bush, the death of her daughter Robin, her struggles with depression,

the development of her own political consciousness, and her contentious relationship with Nancy Reagan. While the Bushes’ marriage is often held up as an ideal one, Page concludes that the long-rumored affair that George Bush had with aide Jennifer Fitzgerald was likely true, even though both always denied it. The author spends considerable time analyzing Barbara Bush’s personality, including her quick wit, bluntness, self-deprecation, loyalty to her husband, and strict methods for raising her children and grandchildren; all traits that captivated the public. **VERDICT** An engaging read full of rich behind-the-scenes details of a fascinating matriarch and public leader, including her struggles and triumphs.—**Kate Stewart, Arizona Historical Soc., Tucson**

★Taraborrelli, J. Randy. *The Kennedy Heirs: John, Caroline, and the New Generation—A Legacy of Triumph and Tragedy*. St. Martin’s. Jun. 2019. 624p. notes. bibliog. ISBN 9781250174062. \$29.99; ebk. ISBN 9781250174086. BIOG

The children of President John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Senator Robert Kennedy and Ethel Kennedy, Senator Ted Kennedy and Joan Kennedy, and their siblings comprise the clan’s third generation, according to Taraborrelli (*Jackie, Janet and Lee*). This account, the author’s fourth on the Kennedys, based on 400 interviews conducted over the last 20 years, describes the glamour, advantages, and sorrow experienced by the Kennedy heirs. Although portrayed as arrogant and entitled, their lives were also darkened by the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy, which Taraborrelli argues drove some family members to drug and alcohol addiction and might have contributed to six untimely deaths. Also included are the stories of Patrick Kennedy, Joseph Patrick Kennedy II, Kathleen Kennedy, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, and others who carved out successful political careers or advocated for mental health and environmental issues. Readers will be fascinated by the relationship between Senator Ted Kennedy and members of the third generation, stories about matriarch Ethel, and life inside the family compound. **VERDICT** Kennedy followers will be intrigued by this absorbing narrative of the dynasty’s continuing hold on American life.—**Karl Helicher, formerly with Upper Merion Twp. Lib., King of Prussia, PA**

COMMUNICATIONS

★Hall, Trish. *Writing To Persuade: How To Bring People over to Your Side*. Liveright: Norton. Jun. 2019. 224p. index. ISBN 9781631493058. \$26.95; ebk. ISBN 9781631493065. COMM

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