Ninety-nine glimpses of Princess Margaret, Craig Brown (book review)

Kathleen McCallister
William & Mary, krmccallister@wm.edu

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the voices of some key players, such as Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton, and John Kerry, as well as a recounting of events surrounding the Benghaz, Libya attack are missing, leaving the work with an incomplete feel. **VERDICT** An excellent starting point to gaining an inside perspective on the Obama presidency.—Chad E. Statler, Westlake Porter P.L., Westlake, OH


In this biography from noted satirist Brown, one expects and gets an effective skewering of both its subject, England’s Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon (1930–2002), only sister to the reigning Queen Elizabeth II, and the entire royal industry and its hangers-on, yet a small balm of sympathy for Margaret is added to the mix. Relegated by choice of birth to a secondary position—always a princess, never a queen—Margaret meandered through life performing official royal duties and acts of personal self-indulgence, which Brown bounds through in 99 chapters of diaries, essays, minutiae, and a few imaginations of his own. The expected portrait emerges of Margaret as snobbish and exacting, an inveterate rank-puller and a dreadful dinner guest—and also a woman who turned to alcohol and affairs to fill up the empty teemedium between charity visits and ribbon cuttings. **VERDICT** Readers wanting a straightforward biography should look elsewhere, but those interested in memoir, 20th-century Chinese and Taiwanese history, and Chinese culture.—Rebecca Brody, Westfield State Univ., MA


Chi (emeritus, English & comparative literature, Williams Coll.) calls him a “chameleonic genius,” but even though he reinvented himself time and again, Semprún never faltered in the flag of the Old Spanish Republic, for which he had fought so long. **VERDICT**

Piper's childhood among secret weapons; business greed and fraud; the benefits of asking for help...