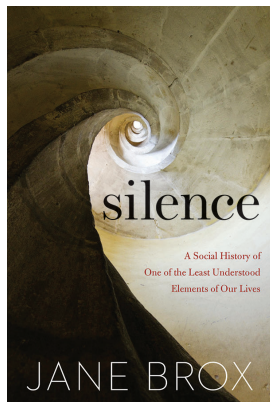


Embracing Serenity

Brox, Jane. **Silence: A Social History of One of the Least Understood Elements of Our Lives.** Houghton Harcourt. Jan. 2019. 320p. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780544702486. \$27; ebk. ISBN 9780544702516. SOC SCI

In this study, Brox (non-fiction writing, Lesley Univ.; *Brilliant: The Evolution of Artificial Light*) examines the role and effects of silence in penitentiaries and monasteries over many years. While silence was once imposed on prisoners as a punishment, it was freely accepted by those entering monasteries as a means of deepening their spiritual lives. Nineteenth-century prison founders believed that isolation and silence would lead to convicts' redemption but failed to see potential dangers in such practices, including a loss of contact with reality and risk of insanity. In contrast, monastic silence was not absolute but intermingled with chanting, reading aloud, and limited conversation. Thomas Merton is cited as a monk who thrived on silence and solitude, although he continued to speak out in his writings about the secular world's concerns. Silence and isolation are now gone from most American pris-



ons and many monasteries are closed, their silent life vanishing in an increasingly noisy world. Brox's balanced account shows both the positive and negative aspects of silence and points out the need to be attuned to our inner voice in a world of constant distractions. **VERDICT** Will appeal to readers interested in the effects of this alternative to the noise of modern life.—Denise J. Stankovics, Vernon, CT

Busch, Akiko. **How To Disappear: Notes on Invisibility in a Time of Transparency.** Penguin. Feb. 2019. 224p. notes. ISBN 9781101980415. \$26; ebk. ISBN 9781101980439. SOC SCI

In an age of social media and constant surveillance, Busch (faculty, Sch. of Visual Arts; *Nine Ways*

To Cross a River) explores the many facets of invisibility in nature, science, and the arts. Her essays run the gamut from children's invisible friends to items in literature, such as rings and cloaks that make the wearer disappear, to the science of making objects appear invisible. The author also shares how plants such as the pebble plant blend into the landscape, how camouflage and countershading protect animal species, and how ocean divers are unperceived and ignored by ocean fauna. Artists paint human models to blend into various backgrounds and photograph them. Marginalized populations and women of a certain age seem to disappear to the rest of the world. The author explains how, in Iceland, spirit beings, the *Huldufolk* or *Alfar*, are real to many. Busch also investigates augmented reality; for example, artist Mark Skwarek digitally restored the natural landscape of the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, deleting the military installations. **VERDICT** An impressive look at myriad, diverse examples of invisibility that will appeal to those interested in social sciences and the arts.—Sue O'Brien, Downers Grove, IL

tinct periods of Kennedy's career: 1962–79, when he implemented a liberal agenda, and 1980–2009, which saw him fight against a conservative backlash to retain these progressive gains. **VERDICT** Heavily detailed and somewhat repetitive interviews make this a valuable resource for Kennedy scholars and political scientists. See also Kennedy's memoir *True Compass* and Nick Littlefield and David Nexon's *Lion of the Senate*.—Karl Helicher, formerly with Upper Merion Twp. Lib., King of Prussia, PA

Schulman, Aaron. **The Age of Disenchantments: The Epic Story of Spain's Most Notorious Literary Family and the Long Shadow of the Spanish Civil War.** Ecco: HarperCollins. Mar. 2019. 496p. photos. notes. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780062484192. \$29.99; ebk. ISBN 9780062484215. HIST

In his first book, journalist Shulman shadows the Panero literary family through the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–75), and the democratic era that followed. Unknown in the English-speaking world, the Paneros were famous in Spain. Leopoldo Panero was the unofficial poet laureate of Franco's regime, denounced by many as a fascist collaborator. He doubled as a domineering patriarch according to wife Felicidad and three sons, all of whom became poets in their own rights: Juan Luis, Leopoldo María, and Michi. Leopoldo María helped unleash a radical artistic movement called the *novísimos* ("newest ones"). But the Paneros scandalized Spain when they sat for the 1973 documentary *El desencanto* ("The Disenchantment"). On camera, they excoriated the elder Leopoldo and one another, trading accusations of malice and cowardice. Their family saga provides insight into 20th-century Spain, torn between dictatorship and democracy. **VERDICT** Part history, part melodrama, and sure to entertain public library patrons attracted to family biographies or Spain.—Michael Rodriguez, Univ. of Connecticut, Storrs

Strauss, Barry. **Ten Caesars: Roman Emperors from Augustus to Constantine.** S. & S. Mar. 2019. 432p. illus. maps. notes. index. ISBN 9781451668834. \$28; ebk. ISBN 9781451668858. HIST

The Roman Empire required, by necessity, an emperor, but the men who filled that role and how the imperial concept played out varied over time. Strauss (history, Cornell Univ.; *The Death of Caesar*) highlights ten emperors from various points in Roman history to emphasize their important personality traits and approaches to governing. What is difficult in this presentation is that without the larger context of the emperors surrounding the chosen ten, it ultimately

Perry, Barbara A. **Edward M. Kennedy: An Oral History.** Oxford Univ. Feb. 2019. 568p. index. ISBN 9780190644840. \$34.95. HIST

In 2008, the year before Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy's death, the late senator John McCain praised him as "the last lion of the senate." Perry (director, presidential studies, Miller Ctr., Univ. of Virginia; *Rose Kennedy*) validates this description in an exhaustive, first-rate oral history based on 23 interviews with Kennedy (1932–2009), skillfully conducted by historian James Stirling Young from 2005 to 2008. Chapters

arranged chronologically investigate Kennedy's youth, family life, and personal scandals, along with his legislative priorities such as universal health care, immigration reform, civil rights, and judicial appointments. Also covered is his unsuccessful presidential challenge to Jimmy Carter in 1980, and his opposition to the Iraq War. Each chapter concludes with "Perspectives" of staff members, officials, and relatives that illuminate Kennedy and Young's dialog. Perry shows that Kennedy relied on bipartisanship during his 46-year tenure and reveals two dis-

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