

Society's Books of Note

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Russell Jacoby, *On Diversity: The Eclipse of the Individual in a Global Era*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2020. \$25.95. 230 pp.

Intellectual historian, Russell Jacoby asks what does “diversity” actually mean? Where does it come from? What are its intellectual precedents? How do we square our recognition of the importance of diversity with the fact that the world is becoming more and more homogeneous? Examining diversity (or lack thereof) in language, fashion, childhood experience, political structure, and the history of ideas, Jacoby offers an important analysis of our cultural moment.

Isaac Ariail Reed, *Power in Modernity: Agency Relations and the Creative Destruction of the King's Two Bodies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. \$32.50. 270 pp.

Isaac Ariail Reed proposes a bold new theory of power that describes overlapping networks of delegation and domination in the creation of modernity, which he argues dismantled the “King’s Two Bodies”—the monarch’s physical body and his ethereal, sacred second body that encompassed the body politic—as a schema of representation for forging power relations. Reed’s account then offers a new understanding of the democratic possibilities and violent exclusions forged in the name of “the people,” as revolutionaries sought new ways to secure delegation, build hierarchy, and attack alterity.

Orlando Patterson, *The Confounding Island: Jamaica and the Postcolonial Predicament*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2019. \$35.00. 304 pp.

In *The Confounding Island*, Orlando Patterson returns to the place of his birth to reckon with its history and culture. He investigates the failures of Jamaica’s postcolonial democracy, exploring why the country has been unable to achieve broad economic growth and why its free elections and stable

government have been unable to address violence and poverty. Jamaica’s successes and struggles expose something fundamental about the world we live in. If we look closely at the Jamaican example, we see the central dilemmas of globalization, economic development, poverty reduction, and postcolonial politics thrown into stark relief.

Susan Nieman, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2019. \$30.00. 432 pp.

In the wake of white nationalist attacks, the ongoing debate over reparations, and the controversy surrounding Confederate monuments and the contested memories they evoke, Susan Neiman’s *Learning from the Germans* delivers an urgently needed perspective on how a country can come to terms with its historical wrongdoings. Susan Nieman asks, what can we learn from the Germans? She urges us to consider the nuanced forms that evil can assume, so that we can recognize and avoid them in the future.

Howard Steven Friedman, *Ultimate Price: The Value We Place on Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020. \$25.99. 232 pp.

How much is a human life worth? Individuals, families, companies, and governments routinely place a price tag on human life. Howard Steven Friedman explains in simple terms how economists and data scientists at corporations, regulatory agencies, and insurance companies develop and use these price tags and points a spotlight at their logical flaws and limitations. He argues against the rampant unfairness in the system. This is critical since undervalued lives are left less-protected and more exposed to risk.

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