Iyko Day


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What roles do Asian migrants play in the production and reproduction of capitalist relations that are made possible by settler colonialism’s ongoing occupation of Indigenous land and dispossession of Indigenous peoples? Iyko Day’s monograph debut *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* addresses this question by examining the ways in which settler colonial systems of domination in Canada and the United States have negatively aligned Asians with the abstract, destructive dimensions of capitalism. Building on Colleen Lye’s theorization of the “economism of Asiatic racial form” (6), *Alien Capital* carefully charts how the seemingly heterogeneous racializing processes—of both Indigenous and alien populations—in settler colonial capitalism are “bound together by an overarching economic rationale” (30) to “expand white property” (31).

Reading Asian American and Asian Canadian cultural production as genealogical archives of settler colonialism’s capitalist logic, methodologically Day adapts Michel Foucault’s distinction between history and genealogy. Drawing upon genealogy’s potential to “ope[n] up what Foucault calls a counter-memory” (35), Day not only strives to transform dominant representations of historical time; she also gestures towards Marianne Hirsch’s concept of “postmemory” to “indicate a form of future memory, a memory yet to come, to capture the simultaneously utopian and apocalyptic capitalist futurity explored in Asian North American reconfigurations of history" (35). Karl Marx’s dialectical method also informs much of *Alien Capital’s* reading practice, especially in its examination of the logic of romantic anti-capitalism as it is manifested through Asian diasporic literature and visual culture. By romantic anti-capitalism, Day refers to the misperception that confuses the antinomical appearance of capitalist social relations for their essence. Such a misconception subsequently hypostatizes the supposedly concrete social relations and associates capitalism’s destructive power solely with abstract ones. In the context of North American settler colonialism, romantic anti-capitalism perceives Indigeneity—and white settler desire for and engulfment of Indigeneity—as the “concrete, natural, visible, and hence noncapitalist” while negatively aligning Asians with the “abstract, unnatural, invisible, and hence capitalist” dimensions of social relations (36).

Each of the four chapters in *Alien Capital* explores such negative alignment through a dialectical reading of Asian North American literary and visual texts. This multimedia approach, as Day suggests, serves as both a challenge against the ways in which historically anti-Asian sentiment and white supremacy have been expressed through multimedia prongs, and an imaginative response to the challenge to visualize and account for those rendered unrepresentable within the ideological framework of romantic anti-capitalism. Chapter 1 brings