

Book Review Symposium – Organiser’s Introduction

Peter James Hudson, *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780226598116 (paper); ISBN: 9780226459110 (cloth); ISBN: 9780226459257 (ebook)

In April 2018, we gathered for a conversation about Peter James Hudson’s *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean*. Our discussion was part of the Association of American Geographers’ annual congress. We met in New Orleans. I read *Bankers and Empire* slowly. The work of racial capitalism and finance capitalism and the political economy of race often undoes me. The weight of capital – and therefore *we* who make capital what it is – is heavy. The weight is difficult to tease out because it is insidious and oppressive and relentless and, of course, normalized as an extra-human system (without human instruction or input), that just keeps spinning on its own. Indeed, our implication in this infrastructure is often obscured by the ways in which accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2005; Wynter 2003) is rendered an inevitable way of life. I thus read *Bankers and Empire* slowly. In this book, Hudson unravels the intricacies of capitalism to demonstrate how the discursive and material heaviness of business is tied to the economies of race (including economies of whiteness) in the Caribbean. His research brilliantly takes the reader through a density that rests on multiple stories: the business-businesses of empire and their attendant legal and extra-legal geographies, as well as the racial scripts that accompany imperial economies (read: dark finance). Timber, rubber, sugar, fruit, and more, are enmeshed with smuggling, insurgency, and revolt. The intricacies proliferate. Slow. I am grateful for the essayists’ perceptive and smart reading of this book and for Hudson’s wonderfully insightful response to their comments and critiques. I engage the conversation below as a lesson – one that taught me how to read and reread what I have already read differently and one that gave me different frameworks, and new perspectives, on black and Caribbean geographies.

References

Harvey D (2005) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Wynter S (2003) Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Towards the human, after Man, its overrepresentation – An argument. *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3(3):257-337

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