

CORPORATE INGRESSION

A New Approach to Contemporary Anglophone Postcolonial Literature

ABSTRACT

This thesis revolves around the development of a new critical approach to contemporary anglophone postcolonial literature in the form of a concept of 'corporate ingression.' This term denotes a globally recurring process of biopolitical (re)structuring of a community by corporate power and its extended cultural influence on society.

Through an analysis of contemporary engagements with similarly explored events over time and space in the form of three novels (Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*, Lauren Beukes' *Moxyland* and David Mitchell's *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*), this thesis explores the relevance of the concept of corporate ingression as a new approach to such imaginative works. By reading these texts closely, with and against the grain, I enter into dialogue with their discussion of corporate power as the major structural influence in the societies they explore. I also show that a comparative analysis of these texts reveals similarities between the exploration of the period of early colonialism as acted out by the various trade corporations in existence and contemporary forms of corporate dominance. This research thus concerns various contexts and explorations of corporate power and explores the concept of recurring forms of corporate ingression as a new perspective within literary postcolonial and globalisation studies.

Oil on Water (2010) as a political novel explores the complex intricacies of communities structured around corporate power and presents a full account of the stakeholders that are influenced by or connected to the Niger Delta's oil industry. *Moxyland* (2008) as a futuristic cyberpunk novel nuances the destruction implied in *Oil on Water* as a major factor of corporate ingression by exploring corporate power's potential for constructive influence over a community. *The Thousand Autumns* (2010) as a historical novel explores an instance of corporate ingression in which the Dutch East India Company in Japan, despite its significant cultural influence, is subordinate to the host state to its activity. Corporate power is explored as a fallible construction that can be controlled by a strong regime as well as benefited from.

Despite the geographic and temporal distance between the three cases, and despite their exploration of widely differing industries, circumstances and levels of success, the common factors remain recognisable. Critical analysis shows that the contrasts between especially the constructive and destructive corporate activity in the three texts is of great interest, as it highlights the potential of corporate power both for construction and destruction of value. This research also shows how each novel actively resists a binary ethical narrative, instead presenting a set of complex power dynamics within the respective communities.

With this research I show that reading corporate ingression both significantly informs the reading of various postcolonial texts, while also showing that the analysis of these texts reveals that a conventional postcolonial binary approach is insufficient to account for what these works describe and investigate. The concept of a process of corporate ingression as a new perspective on literary explorations of historical, contemporary or futuristic forms of corporate power is thus shown to be a relevant addition to current postcolonial literary scholarship.