

Wokewashing and Greenwashing: The Silent Architects of Eco-apartheid in *Mbue's How Beautiful We Were*

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ABSTRACT

A positive image is very necessary for a company to promote its values and be accepted in society. However, if the positive image narrated is contrary to reality, then the case can be categorized as green-washing, if it concerns the environment, and woke-washing, if it concerns social welfare. Furthermore, literary works as a mirror of society have room to represent green-washing and woke-washing, one of which is in the novel How Beautiful We Were by Mbue. In the novel, green-washing and woke-washing are not just image manipulation for profit but also play a major role in perpetuating eco-apartheid by the American oil company called Pexton which occurred in the village of Kosawa. Based on this case, this research aimed to rigorously analyze the extent of eco-apartheid inflicted upon the affected community. Furthermore, it also attempt to critically uncover the mechanism that not only mask corporate exploitation but also actively reinforce eco-apartheid. Moreover, to achieve this goal, this research uses descriptive qualitative and the concept of levels of marginalization of eco-apartheid, green-washing, and woke-washing. This study used close reading to systematically identify words, phrases, and sentences that revealed different levels of eco-apartheid, green-washing, and woke-washing. The collected data was then analyzed to uncover the extent and deeper mechanisms that allow eco-apartheid to persist based on the theories used. This research finds that the level of marginalization in eco-apartheid has reached the third level. Then, eco-apartheid is maintained through a green-washing mechanism, namely by creating the illusion of concern for environmental pollution and clean water, and a woke-washing mechanism, namely by promoting Pexton's concern for social welfare, offering job opportunities, compensation money and scholarships.

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1. Introduction

Along with increasing environmental damage, environmental conservation campaigns have become a trend (Muthmainnah et al., 2020), as has the emergence of social justice issues that encourage awareness of social equality (Muhammad et al., 2023; Nahdhiyah et al., 2023; Lanta et al., 2022; Abbas et al., 2024). This is also used by large companies to build a progressive image by implementing environmentally friendly marketing strategies (Putri et al., 2023) as well as a social justice philanthropic image (Rahayuningsih et al., 2024; Rahman, 2018). Sustainability policies that should aim at protecting the environment and natural resources are shifting into a term used for compromises and solutions that prioritize economic interests over the environment (Miller, 2017). Therefore, it can be said that the image that is built is not accompanied by congruent actions, and this can be called image manipulation, known as greenwashing and wokewashing. Greenwashing is when a group provides symbolic support without any real action on environmental issues that occur (Ruiz-Blanco et al., 2022). Green washing is not only implemented to prevent criticism and regulation but also becomes a marketing tool, namely by sharing positive information about environmental records taken by hiding negative aspects (Miller, 2017). Meanwhile, wokewashing is when an image is built as if it cares about social welfare without being accompanied by progressive actions (Ahmad et al., 2024). Both types of washing can have a negative impact on society because they can delay effective regulations for companies and cause large risks from environmental and social issues (Abate, 2023). In other words, both of these things mislead consumers and encourage larger social and environmental issues that have a negative impact on society, especially vulnerable groups.

The term Greenwashing was actually first popularized by Jay Westerveld in 1986 (Miller, 2017). This started when Westerveld visited a hotel and discovered that there was a card in the towels which stated that when you wash the towels you use up millions of gallons of water per day: so, the assumption is that in order to protect nature, you shouldn't ask to change the towels every day. This is of course just a strategy to disguise corporate exploitation and cut cleaning costs and avoid regulatory oversight. To be more convincing, the tag contains a green arrow logo or recycling logo. From Miller's (2017) explanation, several indications of greenwashing can be derived. The first is overclaiming or making up environmental benefits. The second is only-surface-action, namely a campaign only at the marketing level without real action. The third is the lack or absence of evidence of environmental protection actions. The fourth is selective disclosure, namely highlighting positive aspects and hiding negative actions that are not in harmony.

Then, wokewashing is a term that is parallel to greenwashing (Caruelle, 2024). Woke-washing is a term that refers to a company's social initiatives that conflict with the company's business practices and values (Warren, 2022). Critics believe that the social actions carried out by companies are not as much as they offer so it can be said that a corporation only pretends to care about social issues in order to promote its products (Ibid). In other words, wokewashing is a practice in business that gives the impression of concern for social welfare without any real substance. This can be identified by an unclear or uncertain track record in resolving issues that are the company's focus (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Typically the social justice aspects of Washington include racial issues such as Black Lives Matter, gender inequality, sexual preferences, citizenship rights, immigration, and the economy. What differentiates between wokewashing perpetrators and activists is that those in power only focus on the goals of the company or capitalism itself so that the social aspects they focus on must be in line with other business practices or company values (Warren, 2022). In essence, the criticism of washing actors is the inconsistency between company practices and what is advocated.

On top of that, this study looks at the possibility that greenwashing and wokewashing practices are not only a tool of manipulation in marketing company products, but also as a tool to maintain power over colonial areas which leads to ecoapartheid. Environmental apartheid is a phenomenon of environmental racism. Bullard (2021) in Stull, Bell, & Ncwadi (2016) defines environmental racism as a policy, practice or instruction that differentially affects or harms individuals or communities of color. In other words, environmental racism is a term critical of negative impacts on people of color and positive impacts on white people (Dickinson, 2012; Bullard, 2001 in Stull et al., 2016). More deeply, environmental apartheid is an abuse of nature that leads to the marginalization of groups of color both economically and socially. In the case of South Africa, the marginalization of people of color uses aspects of the environment to carry out apartheid, for example separating black people from resources, prosperity and political power. There are at least three levels of rural marginalization (Stull et al., 2016). First-degree rural marginalization refers to the forcible placement of black people to a place far from economic and cultural access dominated by white people. The second level of rural marginalization is the level where black people are placed in areas where the land is infertile and far from access controlled by white people. The third level of rural marginalization is the isolation and neglect of black people who are at the first and second levels of marginalization.

Furthermore, literary works as a reflection of society certainly record similar things (Hasdar et al., 2023; Nahdhiyah et al., 2022; Abbas et al., 2022; Junaid et al., 2024) and indirectly show and explain how these two types of washing can perpetuate the corporate autonomy of white people over people of color without reduce profits even a little. One of the literary works that explains this is the novel entitled *How beautiful We Were*, written by Imbolo Mbue in 2021. In this novel, the phenomena of woke-washing and green-washing are clearly described through environmental exploitation carried out by American multinational oil companies. in a small village in Nigeria called Kosawa. To perpetuate the oil company, the company argues by using the narrative of sustainability and social welfare. Exploitation of the environment has been covered up by these narratives, giving companies freedom to destroy the homeland, air and health of local communities. Not only that, these narratives also cover up increasingly severe social injustices, especially in access to work and health. These practices direct and perpetuate Eco-apartheid, namely a system of inequality that separates marginalized communities, namely people of color in Kosawa, from access to a healthy environment and their basic rights (Vernon, 2021).

Additionally, previously there have been several studies that examined the novel *How Beautiful We Were* and divided them into three categories. The first is the environmental impact of the Pexton oil company. These studies found that the symbiotic relationship between African societies and the natural environment is being disrupted due to corporate profits from exploitation (Nare et al., 2024; Dechasa, & Desta, 2024), the detrimental impact of oil extraction on the environment amidst climate change, which often overlooked as a form of spatial amnesia (Velu & Rajasekaran, 2024), environmental degradation resulting from oil spills has a significant impact on the socio-economic aspects of oil-producing

communities, destroying the quality of water, soil and the ecosystem as a whole (Misra, 2024; Junejo, & Shaikh, 2022; Andika, 2023; Karmakar & Chetty, 2023). The second is the struggle against oil companies. These studies found that various resistance strategies, including media, education, revolution, and peers, to combat environmental degradation (Biana, Oketch, & Kimathi, 2022), the struggle of women in revolutionary movements to protect nature from corporate threats, came to destroy it (Junaid et al., 2024). However, none of the previous studies above have examined in depth the severity of eco-apartheid and why the Pexton oil company survived and the Kosawa people's revolutionary movement failed and did not appear again. Therefore, this research will examine the mechanisms that perpetuate the Pexton oil company and subjugate the people of Kosawa by formulating two research questions, namely: 1) To what extent is Eco-apartheid evident in Kosawa as depicted in *How Beautiful We Were*?; 2) What mechanism enables the persistence of Eco-apartheid in *How Beautiful We Were*?

Over and Above that, this research is based on two arguments. Firstly, literary works, including novels, can be a tool to criticize environmental issues (Sutisna, 2021) and shape society's perspective on them (Oktaviani & Ruddin, 2024). In other words, aesthetic representation in a novel can create empathy, strengthen commitment and encourage collective action that supports social and ecological change. Second, wokewashing and greenwashing are manipulations that obscure actions that lead to environmental and social injustice (Locatelli, Zagaria, Dei, & Sainati, 2024). This fuels the illusion of social and ecological responsibility and is the way power, capitalism and corporate ideology operate to perpetuate their domination over society and the environment.

2. Methodology

This research is a type of literary criticism research that analyzes literary works. In line with what Van Rees (1983) stated, literary criticism is a way of receiving literary works with a critical reading process which aims to interpret, assess and evaluate literary works. Apart from that, this research uses qualitative methods where the data is in the form of text (Pratama & Hanum, 2019). The data source is the novel *How Beautiful We Were*, written by Imbolo Mbue in 2021 in Portable Document Format (PDF). Furthermore, because literary studies are scientific studies that require theory (Ambarini, Harjito, and Umayana, 2010), this research uses the concepts of eco-apartheid by Stull, Bell, & Ncwadi (2016), greenwashing by Miller (2017), and concept of woke-washing by Warren (2022).

Furthermore, to achieve the objectives of this research, data will be collected through several stages. Researchers use close reading strategies to understand the novel *How Beautiful We Were*. Next, researchers identified words, phrases and sentences that showed levels of eco-apartheid, woke-washing and greenwashing. Then, researchers noted or highlighted words, phrases and sentences that showed levels of eco-apartheid, woke-washing and greenwashing. Next, the data that has been collected will be analyzed through several stages. Researchers analyze, interpret and describe data related to levels of eco-apartheid, woke-washing and greenwashing based on the theory used. Then, the researcher made a conclusion as a summary of the discussion.

3. Result and Discussion

This section will present an explanation regarding the two research questions. Therefore, it will be divided into two subsections. The first is the extent of eco-apartheid evident in Kosawa. The second is the mechanisms that enable the persistence of eco-apartheid in Kosawa. The explanation is as follows.

3.1 The Extent of Eco-apartheid Evident in Kosawa

How Beautiful We Were is a novel that powerfully depicts the systemic environmental and social oppression faced by the residents of Kosawa. Eco-apartheid is evident in the community's extended exposure to pollution, depletion of natural resources, and exclusion from decision-making processes. In this section, an analysis is conducted of the marginalization experienced by Kosawa's residents in order to assess how serious eco-apartheid is there based on the data below.

"Even when their bodies bore little strength... they went to the meetings, because we all had to be at the meetings... We were dying. We were helpless. We were afraid. Those meetings were our only chance at salvation" (Mbue, 2021: 6)

"Our mothers and fathers wanted him to offer specifics on exactly when our air and water and land would be clean again... [The leader said] Pexton was not in the business of providing water, but out of concern for us he would talk to people at headquarters..." (Mbue, 2021: 10)

"We thought about our departed friends whenever we developed fevers or someone coughed around us. We feared someone in our homes would catch this sickness... the dirty air had gotten stuck in his lungs. Slowly, the poison spread through his body and turned into something else" (Mbue, 2021: 10-11)

"The year my age-mates and I were born, while some of us were on our mothers' breasts and the rest of us were spending our final days in the land of the unborn, an oil well exploded in Gardens. Our parents and grandparents told us that the explosion sent crude and smoke higher than the trees." (Mbue, 2021: 29)

"We have now begun our entrance into the last decades of our lives. It marvels us how much suffering we bore... so our children could own cars and forget Kosawa. They do not speak our language to their children... One day, we know, our world and our ways will vanish in totality" (Mbue, 2021: 336)

Excerpt 1 above describes the condition of the Kosawa community. The three Pexton parties wanted to hold a meeting. Their condition is very worrying. They are physically very weak and dying due to a mysterious disease caused by the pollution of their environment due to oil mining. Under such conditions, they are required and forced to attend the meetings held. There are two things that compel them. First, they feel afraid of those in power. Second, they believe that only by attending meetings in the square, they can convey their concerns regarding their polluted environment.

Excerpt 2 explains the expectations of the Kosawa people towards the authorities. They want concrete action from the government to deal with water, air and land pollution caused by Pexton oil mining. Furthermore, the authority shows its concern for community problems. Because he is not a clean water entrepreneur, he will report the problems he addresses from the community to the government.

Excerpt 3 describes the Kosawa people's concerns about their health. When they have a fever, their thoughts immediately focus on the people around them who died earlier from the same disease. When they are near people who are coughing, they lighten the people at home and worry that the virus will spread to them. They believe that diseases that disrupt health and even cause death are caused by polluted air. The poisons contained in the air are inhaled, enter the lungs, settle, and over time will spread throughout the body and cause diseases.

Excerpt 4 explains that in the past, an oil well explosion occurred. The explosion caused a burst of crude oil and billowing smoke. Due to the size of the explosion, the spray and plumes of the smoke were higher than the trees.

Excerpt 5 shows how the situation in Kosawa was after the Pexton oil company was established for decades. They seem to have absolutely no power or effort to save their environment and area anymore. This is shown by the phrase "the last decades of our lives". This quote also shows how much suffering the Kosawa people have endured. Because the environment has been damaged and many of the children who have been sent to school by Pexton, they no longer speak the local language. Because of this, their children who have completed their education and grown up can have abundant wealth and own cars; so, they forgot about Kosawa. With this despair, Kosawa residents have resigned themselves to the fact that their social structure and culture will disappear along with the disappearance of Kosawa's environment and identity.

From the interpretation of the data above, it can be seen that there are eco-apartheid practices in Kosawa village by the Pexton company. Eco-apartheid is a policy practice or instruction that differentially affects or harms individuals or communities of color (Bullard, 2001 in Stull et al., 2016). It can be seen from the first quote to the fifth quote that the policies and actions taken by Pexton, as an oil company owned by white Americans, are very detrimental to the Kosawa people of color. Furthermore, the level of eco-apartheid that has occurred will be explained as follows. First, the words "helpless" and "afraid" in the first quote show how people of color in Kosawa village are in a position that is dominated and isolated from social and institutional support. This is in accordance with the first level of eco-apartheid indicators, namely the forced placement of black people in a place far from economic and cultural access controlled by white people (Stull et al., 2016). In this case, even though the placement of the community in Kosawa village was not forced, the closure of economic access is very visible from the monologue in the data which shows a position of dominance and oppression by the authorities, as well as dependence on a power structure where their hopes are only directed at the leader to solve problems. environment at the meeting. Furthermore, in the second and fourth quotes, there are indications of second level marginalization, namely the level at which black people are placed in areas where the land is infertile and far from access controlled by white people (Stull et al., 2016). The concern of the colored community in Kosawa village which was

expressed at the meeting showed that the environment, including land, water and air, had been polluted by Pexton oil mining waste, especially during the oil well explosion several years ago. Moreover, the need for intermediaries to resolve problems between the Kosawa population and the government means limited access to assistance because the area is very far from the authorities.

Furthermore, the third and fifth quotes show the existence of the third level of marginalization, namely the isolation and neglect of black people who are at the first and second levels of marginalization (Stull et al., 2016). In the third quote, it can be seen that there is isolation and neglect of the Kosawa community in the context of health. These quotes do not indicate any form of responsibility on Pexton's part, either in the form of financial or medical assistance. Furthermore, in the fifth quote, it is indicated that there is a disregard for the environment and identity of the Kosawa people. Their environment as a place where oil wells are located is experiencing uncontrolled damage. Not only that, their children who received education using the Augustine and Evelyn fish Memorial peace and Prosperity Scholarship (Mbue, 335) were not taught their mother tongue at all; so, now, the children speak Kosawa, their collective identity. Apart from that, Kosawa's children grew up with values oriented towards material luxury and began to forget Kosawa. The result of limited access and neglect of the collective needs of the Kosawa community, both in the context of the environment, health and collective identity, has made them surrender because there is no other way out of the conditions they are facing. Overall, the eco-apartheid experienced by the Kosawa people has reached the third stage. This is indicated by limited social and economic access, an infertile environment, and isolation and neglect.

3.2 The Mechanisms to Persist Eco-apartheid in Kosawa

Researchers discovered two mechanisms that perpetuate eco-apartheid in Kosawa village. The first is greenwashing. This is characterized by a positive image of environmental preservation without accompanying congruent actions. The second is woke-washing. This is an image of caring about social welfare without actually having an impact on society. The further explanation is below.

3.2.1. Greenwashing

Green-washing is a deceptive strategy used by corporations to appear environmentally responsible while continuing to exploit natural resources. In *How Beautiful We Were*, Pexton employs green-washing by making false claims about addressing pollution and providing clean water, creating an illusion of corporate accountability. This section examines how such tactics manipulate public perception and enable the continuation of environmental destruction in Kosawa based on the data below.

“Woja Beki sent someone to Gardens to talk to the supervisors, who, in turn, sent laborers to inspect the damage, patch up what they could of the old, rusty pipelines, and assure us that the spills were of no harm, the air was fine, Pexton was abiding by the law.” (Mbue, 2021: 33)

“Not long before I turned eight, two children died in one month, both of them having suffered high fevers but otherwise different symptoms.” (Mbue, 2021: 33)

The data above describes a Kosawa leader named Woja Beki who sent someone to Garden, a Pexton oil mining location. This is done to meet and notify the mining supervisor of a pipe leak. The mining supervisor also sent a worker to inspect the pipe and asked him to clean and repair the old and rusty oil pipe. After that, he stated that there was nothing to worry about because the pipe had been repaired and assured that the oil spill from the leaking pipe would not be dangerous, the air would remain clean and healthy because Pexton complies with the law in running its business and those who comply with the law certainly meet environmental standards. and won't damage it. Furthermore, in the second quote above it is shown that not long after that there were two deaths of children suffering from fever with different symptoms from the previous deaths.

Based on this explanation, what Pexton oil mining is doing can be categorized as greenwashing. This is because the behavior described in the data above meets at least three indications of greenwashing proposed by Miller (2017). The first is surface-action only without real action. This can be seen from how the mining supervisor asked his subordinates to repair the leaking pipe. What is in the spotlight are pipes that are old, worn and rusty. This is because pipes in such conditions have a high probability of being damaged and leaking again within a short period of time. The act of simply repairing without replacing it with a more suitable pipe shows that the mining party is not serious about preventing negative impacts on humans and the environment around the mine. Furthermore, this also meets the indications of a lack or absence of evidence of environmental protection actions. In the data above, mining supervisors are only limited to repairing old and rusty pipes. The mining company did not take concrete and continuous action to deal with the oil that spilled from

the pipe. Actions are only limited to repairing pipes without really caring about the handling and impact of previously spilled oil on the environment and human health. Then, the actions mentioned above also include selective disclosure, namely highlighting positive aspects and hiding negative actions that are not in harmony. This is proven by the mining supervisor's statement that the air is fine and will not cause any danger. He also reassured by asserting that Pexton's company strictly complies with the law; Thus, it is assumed that it is very unlikely that Pexton will ignore things that violate the law such as the dangerous impact of oil mining on the environment and humans around it. These three indications of greenwashing were strengthened by the deaths of two children who were suffering from fevers with different symptoms. It can be implicitly assumed that their health was affected as a result of poor management of the Pexton oil mine. With this incident, it can be said that Pexton's environmental care actions are not congruent with what he said to the people of Kosawa. In short, the two quotes above show greenwashing according to the indicators in Miller (2017).

“When they returned, weeks later—the water had to be sent to Bézam for testing—they told our parents that the water was fine, but for the sake of caution it would be best if they boiled it for thirty minutes before giving it to their children. Mama boiled water for two hours every night so that Juba and I would be spared sickness and death. Her efforts were not enough. Anyone could tell Juba's illness was no ordinary illness, this disease which started with him moaning from body aches before progressing to a fever so high his body gyrated like a fish on dry land.” (Mbue, 2021: 35)

The data above shows Pexton's response to the safety of water consumption around mining. Pexton sent water samples to Bezam to be tested for suitability and safety for health. Lab results stated that the water was safe for consumption. Then, to convince the public about safety, Pexton created a narrative that water would be safer to consume if the water was boiled for 30 minutes before drinking. Furthermore, Juba's mother is shown in the quote above carrying out Pexton's instructions. However, these efforts were not enough because in reality, Juba was still suffering from an unknown disease. The symptoms start from aching or pain all over his body which makes him moan in pain to a fever which makes him convulse like a fish on land.

Based on the data presented, it can be said that Pexton mining is carrying out greenwashing, namely parties whose actions are contrary to their claims to care for the environment. This is because this action is in accordance with the indications of greenwashing expressed by Miller (2017). First, Pexton shows only-surface action, namely actions that appear to have a real impact on maintaining the quality of drinking water in Kosawa. The mining company sent water samples to Bezam to be tested for suitability for consumption. This step shows that they are responsible and care about the health of the people of Kosawa. However, at the same time, they also indicate a lack of evidence of environmental protection measures. What Pexton did was just a symbolic act like testing the worthiness of the water. They do not at all reduce and regulate mining activities which can have a negative impact on water in Kosawa. Moreover, Pexton also spreads selective disclosure, namely highlighting positive aspects and hiding negative actions that are not in harmony. In this case, Pexton spreads the narrative that they are responsible by conducting lab tests and stating that drinking water is suitable for consumption, and is required to be boiled for 30 minutes to be truly certain to be consumed. What they are doing seems to be only to reduce threats from people who feel disadvantaged, not to really address the root of the problems that will threaten the existence of the Pexton company. Furthermore, the negative things that are not in harmony that are covered are not revealed directly in the data above. However, this is implicitly expressed in the story of Juba's illness which is contradictory between the actions and rhetoric conveyed by the company.

“... that the children of Kosawa are still in danger, that they're still dying even though the Restoration Movement has shamed Pexton into providing us bottled water for the babies. I am lectured that no one in Kosawa should ever trust the government even if the Sweet One and the Cute One tell us that we can in some instances,....” (Mbue, 2021: 153)

The data above describes the worrying situation of children in Kosawa. They still experience the hardship of limited access to clean water even though the Restoration Movement has urged Pexton to provide bottled water for babies and children. From this incident, the character 'I' feels that he should not trust anyone from the government, 'corporations', even members of the Restoration Movement.

Interpretation of the data above can indicate that there are greenwashing efforts carried out by the Pexton company, namely a practice to build an image of caring for the environment without being accompanied by congruent actions. It can be said that this is because Pexton's response to the water pollution problem meets the indications of greenwashing presented by Miller (2017). The first is surface-only action. Providing water bottles for children and babies can be seen as

a temporary and unsustainable surface treatment. Pexton does not have the effort and seriousness to fix the root of the problems of the Kosawa community by repairing or minimizing sources of pollution from its mining activities which are a source of danger and cause of death for the Kosawa community. The second and third indications are the lack of evidence of environmental protection actions and selective disclosure, namely highlighting positive aspects and hiding negative actions that are not in harmony. This can be seen from the action to provide clean water carried out by the Pexton oil mine which was implemented after receiving pressure from the Restoration Movement. Pexton appears to be simply trying to protect the company's image by focusing on communications strategies to quell criticism and ignoring its greater environmental responsibilities. In short, Pexton's actions described in the data above can be categorized as greenwashing practices because these actions are only intended to improve the company's image from environmental pollution caused by mining without really paying attention to the root of the problem. This strategy could deceive the people of Kosawa and perpetuate environmental injustice.

3.2.2. Wokewashing

With woke-washing, companies can pretend to be socially responsible by backing shallow initiatives that conceal systemic damage. Pexton employs woke-washing in the narrative by proposing employment, financial remuneration, and scholarships as a means of implying care for the villagers' well-being, all the while sustaining eco-apartheid. This section examines the workings of woke-washing as a mechanism of control that hinders genuine change and upholds corporate dominance based on the data as follows.

“They asked us to come to village meetings, to talk about it. They told us we had to trust them.”
(Mbue, 2021: 6)

The quote above explains how the Kosawa community was instructed to attend a village community meeting with Pexton to discuss "that" matter which refers to the losses of the Kosawa community due to Pexton's oil mining practices. Moreover, the people of Kosawa are asked to trust Pexton in resolving the problem.

From the interpretation of the data above, it can be said that there is a wokewashing effort by the Pexton company, namely building a positive image through concern for the social issues of the Kosawa community without being accompanied by real action. This practice is in line with what Warren (2022) said regarding indications of wokewashing. First, wokewashing is a practice in business that gives the impression of concern for Social Welfare without any real substance. From the data above, the Pexton company authority instructed the Kosawa community to hold a meeting. This indicates the formation of an image that Pexton is very open to various dialogues, discussions and criticism. Unfortunately, the meeting held did not show any solution to the main problem. This can be identified by an unclear or uncertain track record regarding the resolution of the issues that are the focus of the company that occur in the novel (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Moreover, in the data above, there is no transparency and concrete steps that will be taken; So, the village meeting is just rhetoric that emphasizes the image aspect alone. Furthermore, in the quote above it is described that the Pexton company asked the people of Kosawa to trust them. This can be categorized as subtle coercion to accept whatever solution is offered by Pexton. In this case of wokewashing, Pexton builds communication to maintain the image that they are a trustworthy authority, even though there is absolutely no real substantive action. It seems that the Pexton company implemented this strategy to manipulate the image of concern for environmental issues and accommodate the aspirations of local communities, although, in reality, this is only used to avoid and reduce social pressure.

“We had to believe him that the people at headquarters were sad about what was happening to us. They were all working hard to resolve this issue so everyone could be healthy and happy again. He spoke slowly, his smile constant, as if he was about to deliver the good news we so yearned for.” (Mbue, 2021: 9)

“‘Pexton and the government are your friends,’ the Leader said. ‘Even on your worst day, remember that we’re thinking about you in Bézam and working hard for you.’ Our mothers and fathers wanted him to offer specifics on exactly when our air and water and land would be clean again.” (Mbue, 2021: 9)

“At Pexton we believe our duty should be to people first, not to governments.” (Mbue, 2021: 246)

The data above describes that the Pexton authorities asked the Kosawa people to trust them and believed that the people at the center felt deep sadness and empathy for the difficulties experienced by the Kosawa people. The authorities also spread a narrative stating that people at the center were trying hard to resolve what happened in Kosawa so that the people could return to healthy and prosperous lives. After the authority delivered his speech, he then smiled to show

confidence. Furthermore, in the second quote, it is described how the authority holder, namely the leader, conveys a positive narrative about the government by stating that they are friends of the Kosawa people who will always try hard to help Kosawa solve the problems they face. Then, the data also states in a contradictory way what the Kosawa people want, namely concrete and specific steps that the authorities will take to help them which were not discussed at all at the meeting. Then, the third quote above also displays a positive narrative about Pexton by emphasizing that Pexton is more obliged to be responsible to the people of Kosawa than the government.

If dissected more deeply, the interpretation of the data above can reveal wokewashing practices by the Pexton company. This is because this explanation contains several indications of wokewashing which are in line with what was conveyed by Warren (2022), namely, the social actions carried out by companies are not as much as they offer so it can be said that a corporation only pretends to care about issues. social. This is shown in the caring narrative that is built in which the Kosawa people have to believe that the people at the head office are trying hard to solve their problems because they are friends of the Kosawa people who are in trouble and are closer and more responsible to the Kosawa people than to the government. However, this narrative is not accompanied by transparency of real actions or concrete steps that will be taken by the government as a solution to this problem as desired by the ladies and gentlemen in the Kosawa region. In other words, what is conveyed by the authorities is only positive rhetoric that diverts focus from the main problem. The statement that the government is trying to solve the problem is only a narrative that contains intentions and hopes to build public optimism regarding the ability and credibility of the authorities. This can be stated as an unclear or uncertain track record related to resolving issues that are the company's focus (Vredenburg et al., 2020). In short, the actions of the authorities show indications of wokewashing practices because they divert public attention by conveying positive narratives without any transparency and concrete steps. In other words, the authorities only focus on image and building credibility without sustainable action.

“The representatives told them that drilling for oil would bring something called “civilization” to our village. One day, the government representatives said, Kosawa would have a wonderful thing called “prosperity.” (Mbue, 2021: 70)

“Pexton had told our grandfathers that if they came to work for them, for a certain number of hours a day, and did as they were told to do, they would earn a fixed amount of money a month. But every time our fathers went to Gardens to apply for work, the supervisors told them that there were no jobs—all the jobs had been taken by men brought in from villages around Bézam, men whose brothers and uncles and cousins and tribesmen worked in government offices and had no doubt conducted secret meetings and signed cryptic documents to ensure that whatever prosperity the oil wells brought would be reserved for their families and clans and tribes.” (Mbue, 2021: 71)

The two quotes above describe how Pexton deceived the residents of Kosawa. In the first quote, it is said that one of the representatives from Pexton told the people of Kosawa that drilling oil wells would bring “civilization” to the area. Furthermore, the local government also emphasized that with the establishment of the Pexton oil company, local residents would experience what is called social prosperity. What is meant is explained further in the second quote above. Pexton, who initially promised prosperity in the form of opening jobs and providing stable salaries every month to the people of Kosawa, did not actually do it. This is indicated by the large number of Kosawa people who apply for jobs at Pexton but are always rejected on the pretext that they have brought workers from villages around Bezam, whose families are connected to government officials. Even worse, there are indications that secret meetings were held to discuss and ensure that all profits from oil drilling in Kosawa would be enjoyed by certain families and tribes.

From the interpretation of the data above, it can be said that this contains indications of wokewashing practices, namely building the image of a company that cares about the welfare and progress of the Kosawa community even though its actions are very contradictory. It can be said that because this contains indications of wokewashing as stated by Warren (2022), namely that the social actions carried out by companies are not as much as they offer, so it can be said that a corporation only pretends to care about social issues. In this case, the reality that occurred in the field was very different from the initial offer from Pexton's representatives, namely opening up employment opportunities for residents if Pexton could dig oil wells in the area and this was not realized well because Pexton carried out nepotism to meet labor needs, namely by bringing in workers from the area around Bezam who are related to government officials. This systemic exclusion emphasizes that “civilization” and “prosperity” are just rhetoric to legitimize resource exploitation by ignoring the needs of local communities. Apart from that, these narratives are also used to minimize the potential for rejection from the local community. The formation of the impression of concern for social welfare without any real substance of course

exacerbates the social and economic inequality of Kosawa society and only a handful of people with political connections can reap the benefits. It can also be identified that unclear or uncertain track records relate to resolving issues that are the company's focus (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Overall, the narrative of "civilization" and "prosperity" promoted by Pexton is a wokewashing practice because it is not accompanied by compatible actions, resulting in exploitation, social inequality and neglect of the needs of local communities.

".... that the Restoration Movement had spoken to schools in America and asked them to help our village by educating our children, and one of the schools had said yes, they would be glad to educate one of our children. The school and the Restoration Movement had looked at the report cards of all the children,...." (Mbue, 2021: 127)

"The Restoration Movement men said the money was just for the time being, to help us dry our tears. They said their people in America would get us more money for every spill that has ever happened. They would make Pexton pay for the toxic waste on the river, and the dirt in the air, and the poison in the well water, and for the farms that might not be fruitful for another generation, and why not for the children who never got a chance to grow up, and the parents whose broken hearts will never heal." (Mbue, 2021: 132)

The data above explains that someone from the restoration movement told Kosawa that the money given by Pexton was only temporary, meaning it was not long term. Furthermore, he also explained that if this happened to the American people, they would demand money for every leak that ever occurred and cover all damages such as land, water and air pollution. He then questioned why the Kosawa people did not do the same, namely demanding that Pexton pay for dysfunctional land that could no longer be used to grow crops and produce natural resources that could be used by the next generation, for children who did not get the opportunity to living and growing, and for the grief borne by parents that can never be healed.

The interpretation of the data above indicates that there were wokewashing actions on the part of Pexton on Kosawa's part to maintain its dominance in the region. This can be seen from the imbalance between the social actions carried out by Pexton and the real impacts felt by the people of Kosawa. It can be said that because the explanation of the data above contains several indications of wokewashing which is in line with what Warren (2022) stated, namely the false image of companies that seem to care about social issues. This is proven by the social actions carried out by Pexton which are not commensurate with the losses borne by the people of Kosawa. This form of responsibility can be said to be a pretense to care about environmental issues and the health of the Kosawa community. Pexton uses this strategy to build a positive image while maintaining the continuity of its mining operations in the region without solving the root of the problem. Moreover, the statement "the money was just for the time being, to help us dry our tears" identifies an unclear or uncertain track record regarding resolving issues that are the company's focus (Vredenburg et al., 2020). This temporary provision of money shows the lack of clarity in the allocation of funds provided. This seems more like "hush money" than an effort to address the losses of the Kosawa community. This is emphasized by the contrasting statements between the Kosawa people and the American people in demanding and receiving compensation for the losses caused by the oil company. It is very clear that acts of concern for the people of Kosawa are only used as a tool to protect the interests of corporate capitalism. In this way, Pexton's actions can be said to be wokewashing behavior because the inconsistency between company practices and what is narrated is a falsification of the image of caring for social welfare just for the sake of company profit.

"'Juba is right,' she said. 'The American courts can only make Pexton give us money, and then we can decide whether to use the money to clean the village. If we get a big enough sum, we can pay for people in America who know about cleaning lands and waters and air to come and look at the village and tell us what our options are.' 'But why can't the courts just make Pexton leave?'" (Mbue, 2021: 299)

The data above describes the possible actions taken by the Pexton company in response to criticism from the Kosawa community. Pexton will only provide compensation money for residents' losses. The rest is the decision of the Kosawa residents themselves to use the money to improve their polluted environment. In the quote, there is a Kosawa resident who had the idea to clean up their environment using the services of Americans and paid for it using the compensation money. Furthermore, dialogue quotes in the data also show that there is systemic injustice where the system can only force the Pexton company to provide compensation money and provide concessions to it as long as Pexton is

willing to provide compensation money, even without providing serious handling of environmental problems arising from oil mining.

Interpretation of the data above reveals that the Pexton oil company carries out wokewashing practices, namely hiding the dominant tactics of environmental exploitation behind an image of concern for society. In this case, Pexton's company tried to create an image of social charity through financial payments. However, the burden of responsibility is not borne as a whole but is borne by the people of Kosawa. This shows that Pexton does not really care about correcting the negative impacts of his company's operations but only wants to reduce public pressure. Moreover, even with the compensation money provided, the Kosawa people still have a dependency on external expertise, namely they plan to pay Americans to clean up their environment. This of course also emphasizes Pexton's lack of seriousness in dealing with negative environmental impacts. Pexton should have taken an initiative to bring in environmental experts to deal with this problem. This is also in line with what Warren (2022) said about wokewashing, namely that companies do not take as many social actions as they offer, so it can be said that a corporation only pretends to care about social issues. In other words, Pexton's practice is a practice in business that gives the impression of concern for social welfare without any real substance. In this case, it was also identified with an unclear or uncertain track record regarding resolving issues that were the company's focus (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

"Pexton created a scholarship in honor of the overseer and his wife, the Augustine and Evelyn Fish Memorial Peace and Prosperity Scholarship. The scholarship was for our children only. It would allow them to go to the best schools and someday become learned, like Thula. There was no land left to fight for, so Pexton had no fear that our children might grow up to wage a war against them. They'd already begun digging a new well in what used to be our village square when they announced the scholarship. They'd already uprooted what was left of the mango tree under which we'd played —whatever hadn't turned to ashes. Most of our children got the scholarships." (Mbue, 2021: 335)

The quote above shows that the Pexton company provides scholarships to Kosawa children. The scholarship is actually in honor of the superintendent and his wife and is named the Augustine and Evelyn fish Memorial peace and Prosperity Scholarship. These scholarships are given to children to educate them in the best schools and shape them into educated people like Thula. Pexton did this with the consideration that there was no longer any land for the educated children to fight for because Pexton had dug a new well in the village square when they announced the scholarship and had also uprooted the mango trees. In short, scholarships are the exchange value of land used for mining without fear of rebellion from educated children.

The explanation above reveals the existence of wokewashing practices from Pexton, namely showing concern for social life by providing scholarships, but at the same time destroying the natural, social and economic environment of the Kosawa community. In detail, the scholarships given by Paxton to children in Kosawa are only a form of philanthropy. In other words, these scholarships are not aimed at helping the education of the younger generation but only as an effort to build a positive image in society by providing scholarships that appear to be the solution to existing social and environmental damage. The scholarship given by Paxton manipulates the fact that Packstan does not really care about the future of the community because it continues with its destructive oil well drilling activities. In other words, providing scholarships is a diversion of attention from the destructive actions they carry out; so that the resistance of the Kosawa people could be tamed. This can be seen from the announcement of scholarship awards which was made at the same time as they were digging an oil well in the village square. This is in line with what Warren (2022) said, namely that companies do not carry out as many social actions as they offer, so it can be said that a corporation only pretends to care about social issues. In other words, Pexton implemented practices in business that gave the impression of concern for social welfare without any real substance. Then, the act of providing scholarships is also an irony between action and damage where Pexton provides scholarships as support for the young generation to develop the Kosawa society at the same time Vecton also carries out actions that destroy the life and culture of the Kosawa community, not only destroying the environment but also erasing local identity such as the village square. This shows an inconsistency between what they report, namely caring for the community, and what they do, namely destroying the environment and the sustainability of local communities. This can be identified by a poor track record regarding resolving issues that are said to be the company's focus (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, & Kemper, 2020).

4. Conclusion

This research concluded the extent of Eco-apartheid evident in Kosawa as depicted and the mechanisms that enable the persistence of Eco-apartheid in *How Beautiful We Were*. First, there are five data that can explain the level of eco-apartheid that is occurring. These five data show that the Kosawa community in the novel experiences the first level of eco-apartheid marginalization because Kosawa residents experience limited access to health and the economy. Then, they also experienced the second level of eco-apartheid marginalization because they showed indications of an infertile and toxic environment. Furthermore, in the end, the eco-apartheid marginalization of the Kosawa community reached the third level due to indications of isolation and neglect of the health, economy and collective identity of the Kosawa community. The mechanisms that maintain eco-apartheid are greenwashing and wokewashing. Greenwashing is carried out by conducting lab tests on water and the impact of oil spills. The Pexton company claims to care about Kosawa's environment by doing this and convinces the public that it is not dangerous. Apart from that, they also act as if they care by providing clean water bottles for children. This act of concern can be said to be greenwashing because in reality this action is only a surface action to reduce public anger and criticism. Supposedly, if Pexton really cared about the environment, they would evaluate and minimize the negative impacts of their mining activities. Furthermore, wokewashing was carried out by Pexton in the form of conveying narratives of concern, job opportunities, providing compensation money, and providing scholarships for children. This narrative of concern was conveyed to convince the people of Kosawa that the authorities are friends who will always try hard to solve their problems. However, this of course was not realized. Then, Pexton's promise to create jobs for Kosawa residents is also inversely proportional to the reality because Pexton takes workers from Bezam whose people are still affiliated with government officials. Furthermore, the compensation money given by Pexton is an effort to build an image of caring about social welfare, which of course is just a manipulation of reality because Pexton is not at all responsible for the strategy for handling environmental problems that occur. Lastly, providing scholarships to Kosawa children is an effort to promote the image that Pexton is responsible for what happened to the Kosawa residents and sends them to school as a form of reciprocation. However, in reality, these children are educated so that their collective identity is slowly erased and they are not introduced to the Kosawa environment at all. In short, the eco-apartheid that occurred in Kosawa has reached the third level and is maintained continuously through greenwashing and wokewashing.

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