

**ENVIRONMENTAL APOCALYPSE IN IMBOLO MBUE'S *HOW  
BEAUTIFUL WE WERE*: AN ECO CRITICAL STUDY**

**THESIS**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM  
MALANG  
2023**

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**THESIS**

Presented to  
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.)

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MALANG  
2023**

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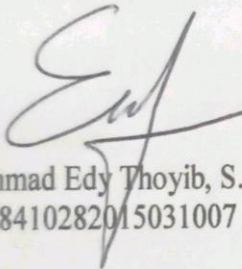
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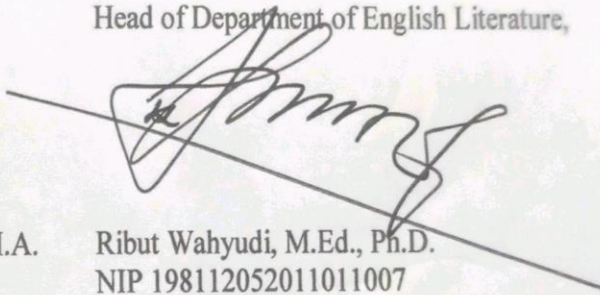
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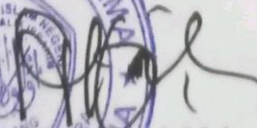
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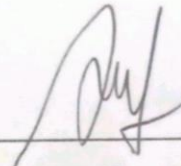
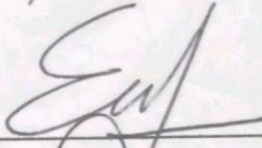
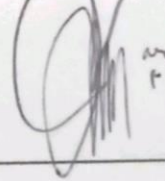
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**MOTTO**

*“Hard work will pay off”*

(Unknown)

## **DEDICATION**

This research is especially dedicated to my adoring father, Mr. Budi Santoso and mother, Mrs. Muis Kartika. It is also dedicated to my sibling, Dennis Ramadhan and all my family members.

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Malang, 9 June 2023



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## ABSTRACT

**Andika, Robi.** (2023). *Environmental Apocalypse in Imbolo Mbue's How Beautiful We Were: An Eco Critical Study*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Muhammad Edy Thoyib, S.S., M.A.

*Keywords: Ecocriticism, Environmental Apocalypse, Environmental Wisdom*

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In the present era, there is a growing focus on environmental issues such as global warming, pollution, over mining which has been a topic of discussion lately. Imbolo Mbue's novel, *How Beautiful We Were*, vividly depicts the natural exploitation caused by oil mining. This research aims to analyze how the environmental apocalypse is described and how the environmentalists react to the ecological damage in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*, employing an ecocritical approach to address the research inquiries. This literary criticism conducted using ecocritical approach in order to response the research questions. First, the forms of environmental apocalypse in the novel (1) depletion of natural resource, proven by depletion on clean water, food and oil resources as an effect of oil mining. (2) Natural imbalance, proven by significant change of ecosystem that leads to loss of biodiversity. Moreover, the reaction of environmentalist toward ecological damages in the Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* viewed through value of environmental wisdom are depicted as exhibiting respect for nature, solidarity for nature and caring for nature.

## ABSTRAK

**Andika, Robi.** (2023). *Environmental Apocalypse dalam novel How Beautiful We Were karya Imbolo Mbue: Sebuah pendekatan ekokritik*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing: Muhammad Edy Thoyib, S.S., M.A.

*Kata Kunci: Ekokritik, Environmental Apocalypse, Kearifan Lingkungan*

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Dewasa ini, isu-isu lingkungan seperti pemanasan global, polusi, dan pertambangan menjadi topik diskusi yang kerap diperbincangkan akhir-akhir ini. Novel Imbolo Mbue, *How Beautiful We Were*, dengan jelas menggambarkan eksploitasi alam yang disebabkan oleh pertambangan minyak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana environmental apocalypse digambarkan dan bagaimana para aktivis lingkungan bereaksi terhadap kerusakan ekologi dalam novel *How Beautiful We Were* karya Imbolo Mbue, dengan menggunakan pendekatan ekokritik untuk menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan penelitian. Kritik sastra ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan ekokritik untuk menjawab pertanyaan penelitian. Pertama, bentuk-bentuk environmental apocalypse dalam novel ini (1) menipisnya sumber daya alam, dibuktikan dengan menipisnya sumber air bersih, sumber pangan dan minyak sebagai dampak dari penambangan minyak. (2) Ketidakseimbangan alam, terbukti dengan perubahan ekosistem yang signifikan yang menyebabkan hilangnya keanekaragaman hayati. Selain itu, reaksi para pemerhati lingkungan terhadap kerusakan ekologi dalam novel *How Beautiful We Were* karya Imbolo Mbue dilihat dari nilai-nilai kearifan lingkungan digambarkan dengan menunjukkan sikap menghargai alam, solidaritas terhadap alam, dan kepedulian terhadap alam.

## مستخلص البحث

أنديكا ، روبي. (2023). نهاية العالم البيئية في Imbolo Mbue's كم كنا جميلين: دراسة بيئية نقدية. أطروحة جامعية. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي ، كلية العلوم الإنسانية ، جامعة الإسلام دولة مولانا مالك إبراهيم مالانج. المستشار: محمد إيدي ذويب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة البيئية ، نهاية العالم البيئية ، الحكمة البيئية

في العصر الحالي ، هناك تركيز متزايد على القضايا البيئية مثل الاحتباس الحراري والتلوث والتعدين والتي كانت موضوعًا للنقاش مؤخرًا. رواية Imbolo Mbue ، كم كنا جميلين ، تصور بوضوح الاستغلال الطبيعي الناجم عن تعدين النفط. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل كيفية وصف نهاية العالم البيئية وكيف يتفاعل عالم البيئة مع الضرر البيئي في Imbolo Mbue's How Beautiful We Were ، باستخدام نهج اقتصادي بيئي لمعالجة استفسارات البحث. تم إجراء هذا النقد الأدبي باستخدام النهج الاقتصادي البيئي للرد على أسئلة البحث. أولاً ، أشكال نهاية العالم البيئية في رواية (1) استنزاف الموارد الطبيعية ، والذي تم إثباته من خلال استنفاد المياه النظيفة والهواء وتدهور التربة والموارد الغذائية والنفطية نتيجة لاستخراج النفط. (2) اختلال التوازن الطبيعي ، والذي ثبت من خلال التغيير الكبير في النظام البيئي الذي يؤدي إلى فقدان التنوع البيولوجي. علاوة على ذلك ، فإن رد فعل دعاة حماية البيئة تجاه الأضرار البيئية في كتاب " Imbolo Mbue كيف كنا جميلين " من خلال قيمة الحكمة البيئية يصور على أنه يظهر الاحترام للطبيعة والتضامن مع الطبيعة والاهتمام بالطبيعة.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes background of the study, problem of the study, significance of the study and definition of key terms.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

Humans and nature have an inseparable relationship in life. Both have a reciprocal relationship in the life cycle. Basic human needs such as shelter, food, and also clothing can be fulfilled by nature as a resource and vice versa, nature will continue to live if humans maintain and preserve it. Efforts or attitudes to preserve nature are known as the concept of environmental wisdom. Environmental wisdom is an awareness to be part of nature to create a harmonious unity (Amrih, 2008). One form of conservation efforts is through literary works. Literary studies on nature or literary ecology have a positive impact on people's lives. Many things about nature can be explored by writers and enjoyed by people from different perspectives. Literary ecology examines the relationship between nature and literature, or specifically, it can be called Literary Eco-criticism (Arbain, 2020).

One area of study in ecological literature is apocalyptic eco-criticism. In Garrard's view (2004) apocalyptic eco-criticism is a description of a damaged nature condition. By describing the forms of apocalyptic eco-criticism, writers try to produce a work that raises the issue of environmental crisis. One of the studies analyzing the



environmental apocalypse is by Wijaya and Wahyuni (2020) analyzing the *Ecological Apocalypse in the Three Poems, We Think We are Less Foolish, Crossing a City Highway and Epithalamia*. It shows that the issue of nature or ecology is a hot topic of conversation these days.

These days, the number of writers who raise issues about nature or ecology is starting to increase. Literary works that discuss the theme of ecology are also known as Green Literature. Green Literature is a literary work that departs from a sense of love for the earth (Pranoto, 2014). One of the well-known writers who care for the environment is Imbolo Mbue (Born 1982), a Cameroonian novelist and short story writer who is a New York Times bestseller and also a winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction and the Blue Metropolis Words to Change Award. One of his Green Literature works that raise the issue of natural exploitation is *How Beautiful We Were*, published for the first time in 2021.

*How Beautiful We Were* tells the story of Kosawa, a fictional village set in Africa where people live amidst the environmental damage caused by an American oil refinery. There is a permit from the local government to drill and process oil without regard to environmental principles. This caused a pipe leak which resulted barren land, air pollution and water pollution.

This study chose the Eco-critical approach to assist in conducting the analysis. In carrying out this research, several previous studies regarding eco-criticism

were used as a reference. The following are some relevant eco-criticism studies with research topics that use eco-criticism by Greg Garrard (2004) as a theoretical basis. First, Jihad (2022) wrote a thesis that focuses on the representation of nature and the relationship between humans and nature. The results of this study indicate a pastoral concept that describes a bustling urban area, characterized by hectic activities and loaded buildings. Then, the relationship between humans is described as respect for nature, solidarity with nature, care for nature and not harming nature (Jihad, 2022). Second, Safina (2021) in her research which focuses on the relationship between humans and nature and environmentalist actions on natural damage. As a finding, this study shows the pastoral aspect in the form of differences between urban and rural life and pastoral in terms of time. Then, environmentalist actions are divided into deeply understanding nature, respecting nature, and raising movements to preserve nature (Safina, 2021).

Several studies also explore the ecological apocalypse by utilizing Greg Garrard (2004) apocalyptic eco-criticism. First, Subagiyo and Yuniawan (2021) analyze Qizink La Aziva's *Kelomang*. The results of this paper are first, the environmental changes that have occurred are garbage pollution, clean water crisis, vandalism, road damage and damage due to mining activities. Then, efforts to prevent environmental damage by collecting garbage in public areas and government offices, as well as the rejection of sand mining. Furthermore, environmental awareness is described by the figures Yanto and Citra. Finally, residents' awareness rejects the sea

sand mining plan by means of demonstrations and refusal of bribes (Subagiyo & Yuniawan, 2021). Second, an article by Borade (2020) that analyzes Arundhati Roy's *The End of Imagination*. As a result, there is an apocalyptic narration implemented by Roy, namely that nuclear development for war will only bring about natural disasters, including; (1) soil, water and air will be polluted, (2) the ozone layer will decrease in affected areas, (3) humans will get disease and (4) genetic mutations will occur in plants and animals (Borade, 2020).

The next study is the analysis of American post-apocalypse narrative ecocriticism and ethic, (Vasso, 2018). Using an ecocritical approach, this study aims to analyze three types of post-apocalyptic narratives, namely *The Road*, *WALL-E*, and *The Last of Us* which are related to American history, and the nature-human relationship in earth. The results of this study are (1) *The Road*, nature which is described as being destroyed due to human and cultural dependence on the environment, (2) *WALL-E* nature which is described as having been destroyed due to consumer culture and (3) *The Last of Us* depicting an environment that is not suitable for human life and the importance of the natural environment as a place for human habitation.

Further, studies that focus on describing the ecological apocalypse in literary works. There are studies by, Wijaya and Wahyuni analyzed three poems which are Marge Piercy's *We Think We Are Less Foolish*; Yusef Komunyakaa's *Crossing a City Highway*; and Joan Kane's *Epithalamia* (Wijaya, E., & Wahyuni, D., 2021), Unix Merita Hadi analyzed Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* (Hadi, U.M, 2020), Arianto; Sayuti; and

Efendi analyzed Conie Sema's *Rawa Gambut* drama script (2021) Marsden analyzed Patrick and Emily Brontë's Poetry (Marsden, M., 2021), Kotva and Mebius analyzed *The Book of Enoch* and Climate Fiction (Kotva, S., & Mebius, E. C., 2021). These five previous studies found the form of environmental apocalypse which are climate change, natural imbalance, the depletion of natural resource and the environmentalist figure that bring hope for better future.

Based on some of the previous studies above, it appears that in-depth exploration is still needed related to the environmental apocalypse; especially in the setting of the novel *How We were Beautiful*. This research departs from the assumption that the environmental apocalypse is very strong in *How We were Beautiful*, this is because of the ideal depiction that there are environmental conditions destroyed by humans. By using the theory of eco-criticism by Greg Garrard (2004) especially with the apocalypse eco-criticism approach, it is assumed that it will answer the form of environmental apocalypse in the novel and how environmentalist actions towards environmental damage. Therefore, there are two objectives of this research, which are how the environmental apocalypse is described and how the environmentalists react to the ecological damage.

## **B. Problems of the study**

This research focuses in answering these following questions:

1. What are the forms of environmental apocalypse in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*?
2. How do the environmentalists react toward the ecological damage in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*?

## **C. Significance of the Study**

This research has both theoretical and practical benefit. From a theoretical perspective, this study aims to contribute to the analysis of literary works through the application of ecocriticism. On a practical level, the findings of this research are intended to serve as a valuable resource for students who are engaged in similar literary studies, as well as for researchers interested in conducting research on the same subject. Furthermore, the researcher expects this study will be perfected by the next research.

## **D. Scope and Limitation**

The focus of the study is to examine the environmental issue in novel entitled *How We were Beautiful* by Imbolo Mbue. This study examining the relationship between nature and humans using apocalyptic ecocriticism by Greg Garrad (2004) and

also the reaction of environmentalist toward the ecological damage using environmental wisdom by Sony Sukmawan (2010).

### **E. Definition of Key Terms**

This study includes several important key terms that are essential for understanding the subject;

#### 1. Ecocriticism

The study of the connection between humans and the physical environment takes the shape of cultural history and encompasses a critical analysis. (Garrard, 2004)

#### 2. Environmental Apocalypse

The Environmental catastrophe or cataclysmic in form of ecological damages that leads to natural disaster caused by human activities. (Garrard, 2004)

#### 3. Environmentalist

An individual who possesses an interest in environmental matters like global warming, pollution, the depletion of natural resources, and willingly engages in actions to conserve nature. (Garrard 2004)

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter provides explanation of ecocriticism, the scope of ecocriticism and ecocritical ethical study.

#### **A. Ecocriticism**

Ecocriticism derives from the word ecology and criticism. "Ecology can be interpreted as a scientific study of the pattern of relationships of plants, animals and humans to one another and to their environments," (Mu'in, 2016). Meanwhile, the word criticism "can be interpreted as a form and expression of the qualities, good or bad of something," (Mu'in, 2016). Ecocriticism is an understanding that emerges in society as a result of criticism of nature and the environment. According to Greg Garrard, ecocriticism plays a significant role in examining how humans conceptualize and depict the interplay between humanity and the environment in all dimensions of life (Garrard, 2004).

Glotfelty (1996) explains that ecocriticism builds the interaction between nature and culture as its subject. In addition, basically eco-criticism can be applied to other disciplines, not only to literature, such as economics, sociology, geography, politics, psychology and others. Thus, it can be concluded that ecocriticism is theoretically related to humans and things related to nature. Meanwhile, the literary approach focuses more on literary works and the earth's environment.

## **B. Scope of Ecocriticism**

In his work, Garrard (2004) categorizes various components of eco-criticism, including pollution, position, wilderness, pastoral, apocalypse, dwelling, animals, and the earth. These components represent significant aspects related to nature and the environment

### **1. Pollution**

Pollution, derived from the Latin term 'polluter' meaning contamination, represents an ecological issue as it pertains to the presence of excessive amounts of substances that are misplaced or out of their natural context (Garrard, 2004). Pollution can manifest in various forms across the Earth, particularly through the accumulation of hazardous elements, whether in solid, liquid, or gaseous states, that disrupt the stability of the environment and ecology.

### **2. Position**

This component exemplifies diverse perspectives through which individuals comprehend the environmental crisis in distinct manners.

#### **a. Cornucopia**

The notion that the environmental crisis is merely an exaggeration or a delusion stemming from human progress in the modern era is put forth by some



(Garrard, 2004). Furthermore, they contend that capitalism will offer a remedy for the environmental crisis. Additionally, they believe that as the population grows larger, human prosperity will increase and lead to environmental improvement. However, Garrard argues that if natural resources become scarce, it will result in an economic crisis that will adversely impact human well-being, ultimately prioritizing human welfare over the welfare of the natural environment.

### **b. Environmentalism**

Individuals or group who adhere to traditional lifestyles and resist radical social change, the majority of whom hold a deep appreciation for rural living (Garrard, 2004). Moreover, they prioritize environmental sustainability and concerns related to ecology. Engaging in practices such as recycling, minimizing plastic usage, and advocating for nature conservation are their endeavours aimed at offering solutions.

### **c. Deep Ecology**

Within the realm of radical environmentalism, Deep Ecology assumes a pivotal position due to its prevailing ideology (Garrard, 2004). It formulates principles that highlight the intrinsic worth of both human and non-human life on Earth. The expansion of the human population is seen as impacting the well-being of non-human life and giving rise to environmental issues such as poverty and the exploitation of natural resources. Fundamentally, Deep Ecology places greater emphasis on the preservation and prioritization of nature over human-centric concerns.

#### **d. Ecofeminism**

Recognizing the connection between women and nature, there exists an association with the material, emotional, and particular aspects. On the other hand, men are associated with culture, the non-material, the rational, and the abstract (Garrard, 2004). This distinction in gender roles leads to the emergence of superiority and subsequent domination over humans. Ecofeminism, as a straightforward concept, centers on gender roles that encompass both masculinity and femininity within them.

#### **e. Social Ecology and Eco-Marxism**

Social ecologists assert the importance of humans being integrated into nature; however, humans frequently engage in actions that are detrimental to the environment (Garrard, 2004). Social ecology and eco-Marxism argue that the environmental crisis encompasses social issues like poverty and the scarcity of clean water sources and essential necessities.

### **3. Pastoral**

Pastoral literature encompasses works that portray a contrasting setting between urban and rural areas, whether explicitly or implicitly (Gifford, 1999). Specifically, Terry Gifford characterizes pastoral life as the rural existence of shepherds who have a deep affection for their work, presenting an idealized depiction of village life.

#### **4. Wilderness**

Wilderness includes the value of the relationship between humans and the wild. Focuses on showing the importance of conserving nature from pollution, especially habitats and species (Garrard, 2004). Wilderness in literary criticism deals with wild landscape characteristics and cultural and natural diversity. In other words, it deals with new worlds construction of nature.

#### **5. Apocalypse**

According to Garrard (2004) apocalypse refers to an abnormal state of nature and the environment characterized by climate change, destruction, the decline of ecosystems, extinction, and an increase of natural disaster caused by human activities. Greg Garrard emphasizes that there is an acknowledgment that the world will not cease to exist, and the environment are likely to endure, even if civilization is not built (Garrard, 2004). Garrard stated that there are three forms of ecological apocalypse, which are climate change, depletion of natural resources and natural imbalance.

##### **a. Climate Change**

According to Garrard (2019), climate change is any significant long term change in the expected patterns of average weather of a region or the whole earth over a significant period of time including temperature, precipitation, wind patterns. It is primarily driven by human activities, specifically the emission of greenhouse gases

(such as carbon dioxide) into the atmosphere, which trap heat and contribute to the warming of the planet. Climate change has several characteristics, including:

1. **Global Impact:** Climate change affects the entire planet, with consequences felt across different regions and ecosystems. It is not confined to specific countries or regions but has a widespread and interconnected impact.
2. **Temperature Increase:** One of the key characteristics of climate change is the overall rise in global temperatures. This is commonly referred to as global warming. The increase in temperature affects various aspects of the environment, including melting ice caps, rising sea levels, and shifts in ecosystems.
3. **Altered Weather Patterns:** Climate change leads to changes in weather patterns and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. This can include more frequent and severe heatwaves, droughts, floods, hurricanes, and storms, affecting both human societies and natural systems.
4. **Sea Level Rise:** The warming of the Earth's atmosphere contributes to the melting of glaciers and ice sheets, resulting in rising sea levels. This poses risks to coastal areas, low-lying islands, and vulnerable communities, as it can lead to increased flooding, erosion, and salinization of freshwater sources.

5. **Biodiversity Loss:** Climate change poses a significant threat to global biodiversity. It disrupts ecosystems, alters habitats, and affects the distribution and behavior of plant and animal species. Some species may face extinction due to the rapid changes in their environments.
6. **Impacts on Human Societies:** Climate change has social, economic, and health implications. It can lead to food and water shortages, displacement of populations due to extreme weather events, increased vulnerability to diseases, and economic disruptions, particularly in sectors reliant on climate-sensitive resources such as agriculture and tourism.
7. **Mitigation and Adaptation:** Climate change calls for both mitigation and adaptation strategies. Mitigation involves reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to cleaner energy sources. Adaptation focuses on preparing and adjusting to the impacts of climate change, such as implementing resilient infrastructure, improving disaster preparedness, and enhancing ecosystem conservation.

#### **b. Depletion of Natural Resource**

According to Garrard (2004), depletion of natural resources is the result of human activities that exceed the capacity of the earth to regenerate and replenish those resources. Garrard argues that natural resources, such as fresh water, forests, and fossil

fuels, are finite and cannot be sustained indefinitely if they are used at a rate that exceeds their natural replenishment.

Garrard identifies several causes of resource depletion, including overconsumption, overfishing, deforestation, and the burning of fossil fuels. These activities result in the loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction, climate change, and other environmental problems that can lead to social, economic, and political instability.

Garrard advocates for sustainable practices that prioritize the conservation and responsible use of natural resources. This includes reducing waste, promoting renewable energy, and adopting circular economy models that prioritize the reuse and recycling of materials. He also emphasizes the need for international cooperation and coordination to address resource depletion on a global scale.

### **c. Natural Imbalance**

Natural imbalance refers to the disruption of the natural balance or equilibrium in ecosystems caused by human activities (Garrard, 2004). Garrard argues that human actions, such as deforestation, overfishing, and the burning of fossil fuels, have resulted in imbalances in the natural systems that sustain life on Earth. These imbalances have led to the loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction, climate change, and other environmental problems.

Garrard emphasizes that natural balance is not a static concept but rather a dynamic process that involves the interactions between living organisms and their environment. When this balance is disrupted, it can have far-reaching consequences for both the natural world and human society. For example, the depletion of natural resources can result in food and water shortages, while the loss of biodiversity can have negative impacts on human health and well-being.

Garrard argues that addressing natural imbalance requires a holistic approach that takes into account the interconnections between different aspects of the natural world. This approach involves not only reducing human impacts on the environment but also restoring damaged ecosystems and promoting sustainable practices that support the natural balance. In essence, Garrard's perspective on natural imbalance underscores the importance of recognizing and respecting the interconnectedness of all life on Earth and working towards a more harmonious relationship with nature.

## **6. Dwelling**

Dwelling involves the various obligations that humans have in relation to their existence, work practices, and mortality. It can be categorized into two distinct models: georgic and primitive. The georgic model symbolizes the agricultural and land-based activities predominantly found in North American and European societies, which often disrupt the natural equilibrium. In contrast, the primitive model, also

known as Indian ecology, embodies a way of living that harmoniously coexists with nature, maintaining a balanced relationship.

## **7. Animals**

The scientific investigation of the human-animal relationship often delves into discussions surrounding the recognition and significance of animal rights, as well as their portrayal within the framework of cultural analysis, as suggested by Garrard (2004). Issues that are often discussed include technological developments that affect the boundaries of dwellings, the destruction of habitats and the presence of animals.

## **8. The Earth**

Earth, is a place where humans live and also source of their needs. This component highlights the earth from various perspectives such as culture, economics, literature, and politics and so on. Global issues have become one of the main objects, according to cultural studies and socio ecology. Therefore, the earth becomes one of the sources of issues related to these aspects.

## **C. Eco-critical Ethical Study**

Sukmawan in his 2013 article titled *Models of Literary Ecocritic Studies* discusses an ethical approach to ecocriticism. The article begins by examining the concept of etiquette, which pertains to the moral principles and values that guide human behavior within specific social groups. Generally, these values, regarded as positive



lifestyle habits, are transmitted through culture and religion, which serve as sources of moral norms and values (Keraf, 2010).

In practice, etiquette relies on methods and medium for its expression. Literary works serve as a medium for expressing etiquette, while language and non-language aspects serve as the means. Language-based expression of etiquette can take various forms, such as environmental wisdom, which emphasizes the awareness of being interconnected with nature and striving for harmonious unity (Amrih, 2008).

### **1. Environmental Wisdom**

Sukmawan (2013) introduced the concept of environmental wisdom as a body of knowledge and practices derived from deep human contemplation of nature and past encounters. This process aims to establish practical principles, ethics, and values that can effectively address life's challenges and positively impact the environment. Based on this perspective, it becomes apparent that environmental wisdom is intricately connected to human beings. Consequently, environmental problems can be attributed to human behaviours that deviate from the principles of environmental wisdom.

Environmental wisdom materializes through moral principles, which include respect for nature, moral responsibility for nature, cosmic solidarity, caring for nature, and no harm.

### **a. Respect for Nature**

Respecting nature establishes a moral responsibility for humans to honor and value the intrinsic worth of nature. This perspective arises from the understanding that human consciousness is interconnected with nature, and nature possesses inherent value (Keraf, 2010). In the realm of environmental ethics, the notion of respecting nature as an ecological entity stems from recognizing the intrinsic value it holds, thereby deserving respect. This respect is not only rooted in humanity's dependence on nature for sustenance but also acknowledges the ontological reality that humans are inseparable members of the ecological community. Demonstrating respect for nature encompasses several aspects: (1) acknowledging the integrity of nature, (2) recognizing nature's entitlement to respect due to its inherent rights, (3) appreciating nature's inherent value, (4) utilizing human capacity to honor and respect nature, and (5) allowing nature to naturally live, exist, and develop according to divine will (Sukmawan, 2013).

### **b. Moral Responsibility for Nature**

The principle of respect for nature is intrinsically linked to a sense of moral responsibility towards nature because humans are fundamentally interconnected with nature. This responsibility extends beyond individual actions and encompasses collective efforts. Moral responsibility for nature entails the development of policies, initiatives, and measures aimed at safeguarding nature and its components. It highlights

that the protection of nature is a shared obligation for all human beings. This moral responsibility takes various forms, including the admonishment, prohibition, and punishment of those who harm and endanger the natural world. Furthermore, this moral responsibility has a cosmic dimension, signifying the universal call to protect nature and maintain the balance and integrity of ecosystems (Sukmawan, 2013).

### **c. Cosmic Solidarity**

Being an integral part of the universe, humans are inherently equal to nature and other living beings (Keraf, 2010). This fundamental truth fosters a sense of solidarity and interconnectedness, promoting a shared responsibility towards nature. As a result, individuals develop an awareness of the need to protect and preserve it. Solidarity towards nature manifests in various ways: (1) a collective commitment to conservation, preventing human activities that harm nature and its inhabitants, (2) cultivating empathy by empathizing with the experiences of nature, (3) recognizing the inherent kinship with nature and other living beings, and (4) making efforts to align behaviour with the functioning and harmony of the ecosystem (Sukmawan, 2013).

### **d. Caring for Nature**

A caring attitude towards nature arises from the recognition that all living beings, as members of the ecological community, have the right to be nurtured, protected, and unharmed (Keraf, 2010). This moral principle is based on the notion of selflessness, where care is offered without expecting anything in return. Caring for

nature involves a deep desire and behaviour to safeguard and preserve it to the best of our abilities. Achieving cosmic tranquility and harmony is possible by fostering an attitude of harmony and non-interference among all cosmic elements. This state of harmony and tranquility exemplifies compassion. Sustaining affection among all beings is contingent upon humans exhibiting love and compassionate actions towards their fellow living beings (Saryono, 2008). Based on the explanation, it can be concluded that caring for nature is rooted in the understanding that (1) all living entities have the right to receive care, (2) all living entities have the right to be protected from harm, and (3) all living entities should be nurtured and protected without expecting anything in return or reward (Sukmawan, 2013).

**e. No Harm**

Humans bear a responsibility and moral duty towards nature, which entails refraining from causing unnecessary harm to it. This is because humans do not possess the moral right to engage in actions that inflict harm upon their fellow beings. The attitude of non-interference in the survival of one's counterparts reflects the value of human tolerance. Avoiding harm towards nature is manifested through various aspects: (1) being aware of the need to refrain from causing unnecessary harm to nature, (2) upholding and internalizing the obligation to not harm nature as a social norm, (3) maintaining an attitude that does not pose a threat to the existence of other living beings in nature, and (4) allowing nature to exist in its pristine and untouched state within the universe (Sukmawan, 2013).

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this section, the research methodology, sources of data, methods of data collection, and approaches to data analysis are presented.

##### **A. Research Design**

This study adopts a literary criticism approach as it aims to analyze a specific literary work, aligning with the field of literary studies (Peck & Coyle, 1984). In order to conduct this literary criticism, the ecocriticism approach is used to reach the intent of this research. First, this research intent to explain the forms of ecological apocalypse reflected in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*; in order to do it, the researcher using Apocalyptic ecocriticism by Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2004). Second, this research intended to describe the action of environmentalist towards environmental crisis using Sony Sukmawan's *Environmental Wisdom* (2010).

##### **B. Data Source**

The research source data is a novel consists of 317 pages entitled *How Beautiful We Were* by Imbolo Mbue which were published in March 9th, 2021 by Random House. The data collected for this research consist of textual elements such as words, phrases, and sentences that are relevant to the themes of nature and the environment.

**C. Data Collection**

This study use documentative technique which is collecting data through some following steps. In conducting it, the researcher read the data source carefully to get a deep understanding of the content. Then, underlining the data source related to nature and environment aspect. The researcher categorized every data according to concept of Ecocriticism and classified the data of ecological apocalyptic.

**D. Data Analysis**

In this stage, the researcher processing and sorting the data found according to the research objectives. Then, presenting and analyzing the data in order to answer research questions. Creating conclusion that relates to the research questions and providing relevant suggestions.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter describe the findings and the discussion according to the background of this research. The first discussion of this chapter discusses about form of environmental apocalypse in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*. The second discussion discuss about the reaction of environmentalist towards the ecological damages.

#### **A. Forms of Environmental Apocalypse in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were***

Environmental apocalypse basically refers to a condition of environment degradation caused by nature or human activities that leads to ecological damage and cataclysmic event. To discuss the form of environmental apocalypse the ecocritical theory by Greg Garrard is used. Several forms of environmental apocalypse according to Garrard (2004) are climate change, depletion of natural resource and natural imbalance. In this object of the study the depiction of environmental apocalypse forms is occurred at fictional African Village called Kosawa in early 1980s up to several decades.

##### **1. Depletion of Natural Resource**

Another form of environmental apocalypse is the depletion of natural resources where is often the result of human activities, such as overconsumption and overexploitation of natural resources. According to Garrard (2004), depletion of natural

resources is the result of human activities that exceed the capacity of the earth to regenerate and replenish those resources. Human activities such as deforestation, overfishing, and mining, among others, are leading to the depletion of natural resources and the degradation of ecosystems. As found in the Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* where oil mining affecting Kosawa Village natural resource. The analysis below shows the effect of oil mining toward the water resource.

*Please, you must do something, one of our aunts cried to the Leader, her baby limp in her arms. It was the poison —the baby was too pure for the filth in the village well's water, the toxins that had seeped into it from Pexton's field. One of our fathers asked if Pexton could in the meantime send us clean water, at least for the youngest children. (p.6)*

The datum above describes a situation where people of Kosawa are suffering from the effects of pollution caused by the activities of a company called Pexton. It can be seen from one of the babies that had sick because of the pollution has contaminated the village well water, leading to sickness and even death among the villagers. The people are struggling to find clean water, and they have appealed to the leader for help.

The datum highlights the issue of depletion of natural resources, specifically water resource, due to human activities such as industrial pollution. It can be seen from the sentence that says one of the fathers asked for clean water to the leader prove that Kosawa running out of clean water resource. Since water is a finite resource, and oil mining have been degrading water quality and reducing the availability of clean water in Kosawa Village, this depletion of clean water resources has serious consequences for Kosawa's people health and well-being as well as for the health of ecosystems.



The second datum will present the depiction of depletion of food resource in Kosawa Village as the narrator mentioned about soil degradation.

*At the end of that first dry season, a pipeline burst and oil flooded the farm of the mother of one of my friends—her family barely had any harvest that year; some days, I had to share my food with her during recess. Weeks later, a new spill turned into a fire that ravaged the farms of six families, forcing mothers to go searching for new land deep in the forest, a trek that left many with little strength for toiling. In the midst of all this, the gas flares got worse, the smoke blacker. (p.27)*

This data shows the reflection of natural depletion in term of food depletion. It tells that the oil spills and fires caused by pipeline bursts are significant examples of how human activities can lead to soil degradation. The oil that flooded the farm of the mother of one of the narrator's friends destroyed the soil, leading to a reduced harvest. The fire caused by a new spill also ravaged the farms of six families, further contributing to soil degradation.

The soil degradation caused by the pipeline bursts and oil spills led to a reduced harvest, forcing the narrator's friend's family to rely on food from others. The loss of fertile land due to soil degradation also forced mothers to go searching for new land deep in the forest, that many were left with little energy to work after completing the physically challenging task.

Another data that shows the depletion of natural resource can be found in the story where Thula writing a letter to their companion in Kosawa.

*Many nights I lie in bed and imagine myself turning into a fan, blowing away the air over Kosawa, driving it past the hills behind Gardens, dumping it where strong winds will take it afar and bring back to us good air. I picture myself a wall that stretches from the sky to the inner core of the earth, allowing no pipelines to pass through, no poison to flow into our water. I want to give the children simple things. Clean water.*

*Clean air. Clean food. Let them soil it if they like it dirty—how dare anyone refuse them this right? (p.71)*

In the data above it is clear that the people in Kosawa lack of clean resources, particularly for children who have a right to clean water and food. The depletion of clean water and is the effect of the pollution caused by Pexton factories without paying attention to the environment. The mention of clean food also can be assumed that they also lack of food resource since water, and soil are polluted, it is likely that the health of animals in the area would also be negatively impacted. This could lead to a depletion of animal resources, either through reduced population numbers or through the contamination of meat and other animal products.

In addition, the line Thula imagined herself turning into a fan is implying the desire to protect the resources and ensure their availability for future generations reflects the principles of sustainability and conservationism. As in line with Desjardins (2012) that argue the depletion of natural resources is a result of a number of ethical failures, in this case Pexton, including a failure to recognize the value of nature and the services it provides, a failure to take into account the long-term consequences of resource depletion, and a failure to consider the needs and interests of future generations.

The next analysis shows the depletion of natural resource which is oil resource of the village that over mined.

*I remember someone at that meeting asking the representatives how long it would take for Pexton to take all the oil it needed and leave the valley. The representatives looked at each other and stammered that it wouldn't take long, not long at all. Of course it wouldn't take long, we thought—how much oil could there be under the ground? We imagined Pexton would spend months, no more than a few years, in our midst. In that*

*time they'd pull out more oil than they would need. Then they'd be gone. When we asked if our thinking was right, the men did not tell us it was wrong. Nor did they tell us that Pexton would channel all of its production water and toxic waste into the big river. They did not tell us that poison might travel through the soil from their site and shorten the lives of our children's children. (p.197-198)*

The datum shows that Pexton, an oil company, is extracting oil from the valley without considering the long-term consequences of their actions. The representatives from Pexton admit that it wouldn't take long to extract all the oil they need, which suggests that the oil reserves in the valley are finite and will eventually be depleted.

Moreover, the mention of poison might travel through the soil strengthens the previous datum that the oil mining activity causing soil degradation that effects the food quality resource which resulted in shorten of children lives. Babies sick even die because of contaminated well water, reduced harvest because of soil degradation as effect of oil spill, lack of food resource since the air, water, and soil are polluted, over mining.

After analyzing the four data above, it can be concluded that depletion of natural resource can be found in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*. In line with (Garrard, 2004) that depletion of natural resources is the result of human activities that exceed the capacity of the earth to regenerate and replenish those resources, the depletion of natural resource in the novel is manifested in form of clean water, air, soil degradation that leads to lack of food, and oil resource.

## 2. Natural Imbalance

This section will discuss about natural imbalance in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*. Natural imbalance refers to the disruption of the natural balance or equilibrium in ecosystems caused by human activities that affect the survival of living things on earth. Garrard argues that human actions, such as deforestation, overfishing, and the burning of fossil fuels, have resulted in imbalances in the natural systems that sustain life on Earth (Garrard 2004). These imbalances have led to the loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction, climate change, and other environmental problems. The analysis below, discusses the depiction of natural imbalance that occurred in Kosawa Village.

*When the sky began to pour acid and rivers began to turn green, we should have known our land would soon be dead (p.1)*

The first data imply that the environment in Kosawa has reached a state of severe natural imbalance, where the natural systems are no longer functioning in a healthy and sustainable way. The phrase "sky pouring acid" refers to acid rain, which is caused by the emission of either carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide produced in excessive amounts from industrial and transportation sources. Acid rain can cause damage to plants, soil, and water, leading to ecological imbalances. Another phrase "rivers turning green" refer to factory waste, which are likely caused by oil spills that pollutes water in Kosawa Village.

Taken together, the data suggests that the environmental problems are symptoms of a larger issue of natural imbalance. When natural systems are out of

balance, they may no longer be able to provide the resources and services that necessary to support human and other forms of life.

Here is the data which strengthens the previous data that natural imbalance portrayed in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* when the narrator mention about the industrial pollution.

*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. (p.120)*

Moreover, this data strengthens the previous data which is the cause of natural imbalance in form of industrial pollution, and also the need for responsibility from those responsible for environmental degradation. The reference to toxic waste on the river, dirt in the air, and poison in the well water implies that the natural environment has been damaged by industrial pollution, with negative impacts on human health, the ecosystem, and agriculture.

The mention of farms that might not be fruitful for another generation highlights the long-term effects of the natural imbalance caused by human activities, with implications for food security and sustainable development. The reference to the children who never got a chance to grow up and the parents whose broken hearts will never heal underscores the human cost of the natural imbalance, with social and economic implications for the affected communities.

*They walked around the village and saw the pipelines and the places where crude oil had spilled over the years. We took them into the forest, and they saw farms that had been rendered useless after fires; they examined the shriveled-up products of our soil. They took pictures of waste floating on the big river. They pointed at leaves with holes and said it was from acid rain; they explained to us that our rain long ago stopped being pure water. We led them to see the graves of the children; we saw their lips moving as they counted the smallest mounds. They looked toward Gardens and saw the gas flares. (p.118)*

Furthermore, the data above shows the effect of the natural imbalance caused by human activities, specifically the negative impact of oil spills and industrial pollution on the environment and human health. The descriptions of the condition in the village suggest that the natural balance of the ecosystem has been disrupted, affecting the soil, water, air, and biodiversity of the area.

The reference to the pipelines and crude oil spills implies that the natural environment has been damaged by the Pexton industry, with spills and leaks contaminating the land and waterways. The fires mentioned suggest that the natural balance of the forest ecosystem has been disrupted, with negative impacts on agriculture and food security. The mention of waste floating on the big river also suggest that the water is polluted, posing a risk to human health and the environment. Also, the acid rain and polluted rainwater mentioned implies that the air quality is also affected by industrial pollution, with negative impacts on vegetation, wildlife, and human health.

The phrase “to see the graves of children” suggest that the natural imbalance has also affected human health, in this case the well-being of future generations. As Garrard (2004) emphasizes that natural balance is not a static concept but rather a dynamic process that involves the interactions between living organisms and their

environment. When this balance is disrupted, it can have far-reaching consequences for both the natural world and human society. For example, the depletion of natural resources can result in food and water shortages, while the loss of biodiversity can have negative impacts on human health and well-being (Garrard, 2004).

The next data proves that natural imbalance has been going on for a long time in the village of Kosawa as mentioned with the narrator.

*Some of our parents weren't even born when Pexton first arrived, back when the valley contained only Kosawa and footpaths lined with trees around which animals frolicked and birds sang. (p.61)*

The reference to the parents mostly hasn't born when Pexton first arrived suggests that the impact of the company's activities has been ongoing for a long time, and it has resulted in a significant change in the ecosystem of the valley. The arrival of the company has led to the development of infrastructure, the removal of trees and other natural features, and the pollution of the environment.

The data also implies that the activities of Pexton have disrupted the natural balance of the ecosystem, leading to a loss of biodiversity and other environmental problems. The frolicking animals and singing birds are no longer present, suggesting that the natural environment has been significantly impacted by human activities. In line with McKusick (2000) which argues that natural imbalance refers to the disruptions caused by human activity, such as climate change, deforestation, and pollution. This disruption can upset the delicate balance of ecosystems and cause widespread damage to plant and animal species (McKusick, 2000).

In accordance with natural imbalance concept by Garrard (2004), from the data analyzed above natural imbalance are manifested in form of air and water pollution that cause a loss of living organism, loss of biodiversity as a result of buildings construction and industrial pollution that affects human well-being,

**B. Environmentalists' reaction toward ecological damage in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were***

Glotfelty (1996) argues that ecocriticism is concerned with exploring and understanding the relationship between literature and the natural world. This involves looking at how literary works depict and interact with the physical environment, including all living beings such as humans, animals, and plants. The aims of ecocriticism is to highlight the important connections and interdependencies between literature and the natural world and to promote a deeper understanding of our relationship with the environment.

Consequently, as Garrard (2004) also argues that ecocriticism explores the relationship between people and nature. Additionally, some argue that ecocriticism describes the connection between literature and the environment in the context of the global environmental crisis, and it aims to address this issue through both practical and theoretical means (Dewi, 2014).

In essence, environmentalist are individuals who express worry about the natural world, particularly the negative impacts of pollution on the air and water. According to Garrard (2004), environmentalists represent a group of individuals who



hold a deep appreciation for the agricultural way of life and are active members of environmental organizations like Earth First! and Friends of the Earth. *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1991) offers a similar definition, identifying an environmentalist as someone who works to address environmental issues, including pollution, depletion of natural resources, and uncontrolled population growth. In summary, an environmentalist can be a person who either acts alone or as part of a group and has knowledge of the natural world while making efforts to conserve it.

The aim of this research is to connect environmental discourse with literary studies by conducting a forward-thinking ethical analysis using the concept of environmental wisdom. The research intends to uncover how the interactions between human beings, represented by environmentalist, and the natural world in literary works align with the values of environmental wisdom. As stated by Sukmawan (2013) environmental wisdom values are ethical principles or moral codes that humans follow in their treatment of nature, with practical benefits for humans and positive consequences for the environment (Sukmawan, 2013).

### **1. Respect for Nature**

Sukmawan (2013) suggests that humans are morally obliged to hold nature in high esteem, which he refers to as the idea of "respecting nature". This implies that nature has an intrinsic value that humans must recognize and appreciate by treating it with utmost reverence. Essentially, Sukmawan is saying that it is our ethical

responsibility to acknowledge that nature deserves respect and to act accordingly. In other words, humans must recognize the right of nature to be respected and take steps to uphold this principle (Sukmawan, 2013). The following data shows the value of respect for nature of environmentalist in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*.

*Everyone was silent for several seconds. "Do these people in America understand that money is really not what we're after?" another elder asked. "Money is the only thing the courts in America can force Pexton to give us," I said before Thula had a chance to speak. She never seemed to feel it was a burden to explain everything to everyone, but I longed to relieve her of this task whenever I could. "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." (p.279-280)*

The data illustrates that the natural environment has intrinsic value that cannot be quantified in monetary terms. It highlights the importance of recognizing the value of nature beyond financial considerations. The villagers in the story are faced with a situation where their natural environment has been contaminated by a foreign company, and they are seeking justice from the American courts. However, some of the elders express concern that the Americans may not understand that money is not what the villagers are truly after.

Moreover, the villager, elders and Thula suggest that they should use the money to bring in experts from America to help them clean the land, water, and air. This approach highlights the importance of respecting nature by acknowledging that it is a complex system that requires specialized knowledge and expertise to restore when it is damaged. The idea that money does not equal to nature suggests that the natural

environment has value beyond monetary value. The villagers recognize that their goal is not just to get a pay out from the courts but to restore the natural environment, which is vital for their well-being and the survival of their community.

Furthermore, the data suggests that money alone cannot solve the problem of environmental damage. The villagers recognize that they need expert knowledge and specialized skills to clean up the contamination in their village which can be interpreted that they have awareness that nature has value.

*But it wasn't only the curses we strove to avoid; it was also the blessings we yearned for. We knew what a blessed life looked like, and though our parents were not living it with Pexton's claws deep in their throats, we knew it was possible when times were good, and that it involved a loving family foremost, good health, an abundance of food, laughter, and sunshine. We made our oaths trusting that keeping them would cause blessings to overflow in our lives. We went to bed that night believing the promise of the Spirit that we would soon be free, and we would flourish, and soar on wings like eagles. (p.106)*

The data presented above demonstrates an attitude of respecting nature to live, exist, and develop as divine will. The attitude of respect for nature is expressed as acknowledging and appreciating divine's creation of the natural world. The data tells the narrator state of mind. It is mentioned that the narrator made an oath to be kind to the nature in order to have a blessed life, as the narrator believe that the Spirits will free them from the suffer in return. The narrator's attitude in trusting God's promises that being kind to the nature will give a blessing life in return shows his respect for nature that exists according to God's will.

*I'd long thought that our problem was that we were weak, lack of knowledge our greatest incapacity. My father, my uncle, all those who stood up for Kosawa and lost their lives, I thought they failed because they were unschooled in the ways of the world.*

*I promised myself after the massacre that I would acquire knowledge and turn it into a machete that would destroy all those who treat us like vermin. I badly wanted to grow up so that I could protect Kosawa and ensure that children of the future never suffer like we did. Knowledge, I believed, would give Kosawa power. (p.180)*

The data portrays the perspective of respect for nature as Thula desire to acquire knowledge and use it as a tool to protect his village from those who exploit it for their own benefit. She sees lack of knowledge as the root cause of their weakness and incapacity to defend themselves against external threats. Thula wants to use his education to empower himself and his community to stand up against exploitation.

Thula's motivation to protect his village is driven by his deep connection to the natural environment and his belief that it is their right to exist and thrive in harmony with nature. She sees nature as a source of life and abundance, and recognizes that the destruction of the environment ultimately leads to the suffering and poverty of the people who depend on it. It shows that respect for nature goes beyond simply appreciating its beauty and diversity but involves a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all living things and the responsibility to protect and preserve them for future generations.

After analyzing the three previous data above, it can be inferred that Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* conveys a sense of cosmic solidarity for nature. This attitude of caring for nature, as described by Sukmawan (2013), is evident through the actions and beliefs of the characters in the novel is presented in form of respecting

nature to live, exist, and develop as divine will, awareness that environment has intrinsic value and consciousness of the nature has to be respected because it has rights.

## 2. Cosmic Solidarity for Nature

Sukmawan (2013) argues that showing solidarity with nature means understanding that nature and all living creatures have equal value. This mindset involves empathizing with nature and feeling a sense of obligation to preserve it, as if our own emotions and welfare were at risk (Sukmawan, 2013). The data below will present the attitude of solidarity towards nature in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*.

*The brothers debated at length what to do—leopards were rare, and taking one back to their village would have brought them great fortune, but the leopard's pain was evident in her tears. Ultimately, the brothers decided to let her go home to her children. In gratitude, the leopard made a cut on her paw and asked the brothers to use their spears and make cuts on their fingers too. On this day, the leopard said as she forged a blood pact with each brother, I give you my blood: it will flow in your veins and the veins of your descendants until the sun ceases to rise. All who seek to destroy you will fail, for my power in you will cause you to prevail. Go forth now, and live as indomitable men." (p.25)*

The datum above shows the value of cosmic solidarity for nature, where human recognize having equal status as nature and other living things. In this datum, the attitude of cosmic solidarity is described by releasing leopards back into their habitat rather than take it home for their own benefit. The datum tells the story of the two brothers in the story are faced with a difficult decision when they come across a rare leopard who is in pain. They debate at length about what to do, and in the end, they

choose to let the leopard go home to her children, even though it would have brought them great fortune to capture her.

The leopard, in turn, expresses her gratitude by forging a blood pact with each brother, which symbolizes a bond between humans and nature. The leopard's blood will flow in their veins and the veins of their descendants, signifying the continuity and interconnectedness of all living beings. The leopard promises to empower the brothers and their descendants to be indomitable against those who seek to destroy them, emphasizing the importance of protecting nature for survival.

From the explanation of the datum, it can be concluded that the two brothers consider all the living things are equal and humans can live in harmony with animal, so that humans should not be blinded by their own desires and greed. The blood pact in the story can be symbolized as a sacred bond between humans and nature, which should be valued and protected.

*The manhood passage was always one of our favorite celebrations, because it reminded us of who we were as a people and the kind of life we were created to live. We laughed whenever we reminisced about the night before our passage, when we were taken deep into the forest by male relatives and left there. Some of our age-mates had tried to follow their relatives back home, and the relatives had whipped them and threatened to tie them to a tree. None of us were allowed to return home till the sun rose. We spent all night calling each other's names amid inexplicable noises and smells, struggling to find one another in the darkness, scared we'd step on a snake or a scorpion. Those of us who found friends huddled with them against a tree, shivering; we weren't allowed to take a blanket, though the rituals always took place in the rainy season. If we couldn't find a friend, we climbed on trees for safety, or sat up all night hugging ourselves, too scared to lie down alone. By morning, we were covered with mosquito bites but proud that we'd proved ourselves fearless. Walking to the village, laughing, we interrupted each other and shouted to be heard, eager to share our tales of survival. (p.246)*

The datum above describes the value of cosmic solidarity for nature in term of harmonizing life with nature. The manhood passage ceremony, as described in the story, is a celebration of the coming of age for young men. It involves taking them deep into the forest, where they are left alone to survive a night without the comforts of home. The young men are forced to confront the challenges of nature and learn to adapt to the environment.

This ceremony describes the importance of living in harmony with nature and to live along side with the environment, adapting to its challenges, and respecting its power. The passage ceremony is an example of how humans can harmonize with nature and how this harmonization can be celebrated and valued.

Furthermore, the manhood passage ceremony is an example of how nature can provide a sense of identity and belonging. The young men are reminded of their connection to the land and their people, and the kind of life they were created to live. This connection to nature and the environment can help to foster a sense of community and belonging. The celebration also teaches the importance of respecting nature and understanding its role in shaping human culture. The young men were not allowed to take any comforts from home, such as blankets, and had to rely on their own strength and resourcefulness to survive. This emphasizes the idea that humans should not take nature for granted and must learn to adapt to its challenges in order to survive.

In conclusion, the datum reflects the idea of harmonizing life with nature by showcasing how young men can live along side with nature and adapt to its challenges and also emphasizes the importance of respecting nature and learning to adapt to its challenges in order to survive. The manhood passage ceremony also highlights the harmonizing life with nature value that recognizing the role that nature plays in lives, respecting its power, and understanding connection to the environment.

*Nature makes sure that pain awaits us at every turn so that in our eternal quest to avoid it, or rid ourselves of it, we'll keep on wanting one thing after another and the earth will stay vibrant. We feel pain, we cause pain, a ridiculous endless cycle. All the misery we cause others, what is it but a result of us dumping our pain on them? I don't want to do it anymore, living my life by the dictates of my pain. This pain I'm feeling at your leaving, I want to channel it into love. I want to love and love and love, no conditions. (p.249)*

The data above acknowledging that pain is not limited to individual experiences; it extends to the way they interact with others and the natural environment. It happens when Austin told Thulla his state of mind in responding to the condition of Kosawa Village. He believes that the misery that causes others is seen as a result of the tendency to unload the pain onto them that lead to the infliction of pain on others creating endless cycle in this case the natural condition of Kosawa Village. However, Austin expresses a desire to break free from this cycle. He no longer wants to live their life solely based on the dictates of their pain. This implies a longing for a more meaningful and fulfilling existence that transcends self-centred pursuits.

Austin response to the pain he feels at the departure of someone significant is crucial. Rather than allowing the pain to consume them or seeking to transfer it onto



others, he chooses to channel it into love. This decision represents a transformative shift in their mindset and emotional response. By channelling his pain into love, Austin seeks to approach life with a different perspective that embraces cosmic solidarity for nature. He aspires to love unconditionally, without attaching any conditions or expectations to their affection. This form of love transcends self-interest and promotes empathy, compassion, and interconnectedness. In embracing this new way of being, Austin aims to create a more harmonious relationship with themselves and the natural world. She recognizes the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of fostering a sense of unity and empathy.

Furthermore, the datum shows the value of cosmic solidarity for nature in term of feeling what nature feels by highlighting the characters' intimate connection with the nature. It highlights the realization of interconnectedness between nature and human.

After examining the three datums above, it can be inferred that Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* conveys a sense of cosmic solidarity for nature. This attitude of cosmic solidarity towards nature, as described by Sukmawan (2013), is evident through the actions and beliefs of the characters in the novel is presented in form of recognize having equal status as nature and other living things, harmonizing life with nature and feeling what nature feels.

### 3. Caring for Nature

Sukmawan (2013) states that recognizing that all living beings should be treated as equal participants in the ecological community forms the basis of a caring attitude towards nature. This mindset is demonstrated through respectful human conduct and communication with nature, refraining from causing harm or exploiting it, and instead prioritizing protection and nurturing without expecting any form of reward or compensation (Sukmawan, 2013). The attitude of caring for nature will be presented in the next data.

*Some of the newspapers sent men from Bézam to take pictures and ask us more questions about what we had endured at the hands of His Excellency's government and Pexton. Every time the Sweet One and the Cute One visited, they assured us that we had growing multitudes of supporters across the ocean. They showed us pictures of people in America shaking their fists in front of the office of Pexton. (p.166)*

The data above shows the attitude of caring for nature in form of taking action to preserve natural environment without expecting any reward. The mention of newspapers sending journalists to document and asking questions about the experiences of the narrator implies that the actions of the government and Pexton have caught public attention. Furthermore, the presence of the Sweet One and the Cute One, who are representatives or advocates for environmentalist, demonstrates a commitment to supporting the characters and their cause from overseas. The fact that when the Cute One and the Sweet One show pictures of people in America protesting outside Pexton's office indicates a collective effort to voice opposition and raise awareness about the issue of natural environment exploitation without expecting any reward.

In conclusion, caring for nature can be seen through the involvement of the people who act voluntarily to preserve nature, as they may have endured hardships and faced challenges due to the actions of the government and Pexton. The commitment to environmental causes is likely reflected in their participation in the interviews and discussions with journalists.

*The village still met with the Sweet One and the Cute One. They rarely had much to report except for the fact that things were moving, slowly but certainly. They claimed that as soon as discussions between the Restoration Movement and Pexton were completed, the pipelines would be fixed and the waste swept off the river and the gas flares reduced. For now, though, they said, it would be best if we focused on the fact that children were dying less often, thanks to the bottled water, and buses were taking boys to Lokunja to acquire knowledge.*

*Before we knew it, Kosawa would be Kosawa again. (p.178)*

The data above shows the caring attitude towards nature is the awareness of the right of every living creature to live and not to be hurt. The data tells that Restoration Movement and Pexton engaging in discussions, implying that there is an active effort to restore and improve the village's environmental conditions. The mention of fixing pipelines, sweeping waste off the river, and reducing gas flares indicates a commitment to environmental remediation. By focusing on these aspects, the village is taking steps towards caring for its natural surroundings. The reference to children dying less often due to bottled water imply that they try to recover clean water resource condition. Additionally, the mention of buses taking boys to Lokunja to acquire knowledge implies an investment in education and awareness-building. By educating the younger generation, the village is taking a proactive step towards building a sustainable future.

The statement, "Before we knew it, Kosawa would be Kosawa again," implies a hopeful vision of the village returning to its previous state, presumably one of harmony with nature. This reflects Sukmawan (2013) theory that underlying belief in the potential for positive change and restoration when communities prioritize caring for nature. Overall, the data portrays Kosawa village that is actively engaged in efforts to restore its environment, improve living conditions, and promote education which is form of awareness to the right of every living creature to live and not to be hurt.

*Once the old suit was dropped, Carlos would file a new one, accusing Pexton of conspiracy under something called the Alien Tort Statute. His argument would be that Pexton knew, going into a partnership with His Excellency's government, that it was a government that cared nothing for the welfare of its people. Pexton took advantage of this and violated international laws, causing untold damages to property and lives in Kosawa. (p.278)*

In the data above, the caring toward nature attitude described as awareness of every living creature right to be cared for. It can be seen as in the data above that people of Kosawa hiring Carlos a lawyer to fight for the justice of their environment. The mention of Carlos filing a new lawsuit against Pexton under the Alien Tort Statute demonstrates the belief in legal recourse to hold Pexton responsible for their actions. This indicates his dedication to ensuring that those responsible for environmental harm are held accountable.

The attitude of caring for nature is reflected in the argument Carlos intends to make in the lawsuit. By claiming that Pexton knowingly entered into a partnership with a government that disregarded the welfare of its people it proves that corporate entities should be aware of the social and environmental impacts of their actions. The assertion

that Pexton violated international laws and caused significant damage to property and lives in Kosawa implies that the environmental harm caused by Pexton's actions had far-reaching consequences, affecting both the natural environment and the lives of the people in Kosawa.

Furthermore, by seeking legal action against Pexton and accusing them of conspiring with a government that neglected its people, they aim to bring attention to the detrimental effects of environmental destruction and advocate for the rights of both the environment and the affected community. Additionally, by pursuing legal means to address environmental damages and seeking justice for the community of Kosawa that demonstrates the responsible parties should be held accountable for their actions and underscores the importance of protecting nature's right to be cared for including the well-being of both humans and the environment.

After analyzing the three previous data above, it can be inferred that Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* conveys a sense of cosmic solidarity for nature. This attitude of caring for nature, as described by Sukmawan (2013), is evident through the actions and beliefs of the characters in the novel is presented in form of awareness of every living creature to live and not to be hurt, the right to be cared and taking action to preserve natural environment without expecting any reward.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After examining Imbolo Mbue's novel *How Beautiful We Were* through ecocritical approach, the researcher has reached to the conclusion and suggestion section. This chapter provides conclusions based on the previous discussions in the first part and offer suggestions to readers and future researchers who are interested in studying this novel or using the same theoretical approach in the second part.

#### **A. Conclusion**

First, to find and categorizing the ecological damages in Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*. The researcher analyzed the novel using Greg Garrad's ecocriticism theory to find the forms of environmental apocalypse. As result, the researcher found the forms of environmental apocalypse in the novel (1) depletion of natural resource, proven by depletion on clean water, food and oil resources as an effect of oil mining. (2) Natural imbalance, proven by significant change of ecosystem that leads to loss of biodiversity as a result of tree removal for infrastructure development, environmental degradation because of toxic waste that affect water resource which is important for human-health.

Second, the reaction of environmentalist toward ecological damages in the Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*. In order to answering the problem, the

researcher applies the concept of environmental wisdom to address the issue. By utilizing the theory, the researcher analyzed Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* through the lens of environmental wisdom. The analysis reveals that the interactions between the characters (humans) and nature in the book are depicted as exhibiting respect for nature, solidarity for nature and caring for nature.

### **B. Suggestion**

This research focuses on environmental apocalypse by Garrard (2004) and the act of environmentalist. Nevertheless, there are numerous topics and themes within Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* that can be explored by employing alternative theories and perspectives. In addition, the researcher suggests analyzing this novel using postcolonialism to analyze the literary work deeper and focus on the political aspect. Hence, the researcher hopes that the next research in the future will utilize other relevant theories for analysis.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE



**Robi Andika** was born in Malang on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1998. He graduated from SMA Islam, Malang in 2016. During his study at Senior High School, he actively participated in extra organization such as English group discussion and Music. He pursued his higher education in 2016 at the department of English Literature in UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and finished in 2023. During his final semester of the study, he engaged in some part time jobs as a freelance translator, entrepreneur and content creator.