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Postmodernism and Neopragmatism in *How Beautiful We Were* by Imbolo Mbue

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Abstract

The exegesis of Imbolo Mbue's scriptural habitus in *How Beautiful We Were* (2021) postulates an ontological reconfiguration of political agency, situated at the intersection of a postmodern deconstruction of colonial metanarratives and a neo-pragmatist teleology of resistance. This novel, a phenomenology of dispossession, portrays the collision between the extractivist voracity of the Pexton Corporation and the resilient finitude of the Kosawa community, constructing a critique of instrumental reason within the peripheries of global capitalism. While contemporary scholarship has extensively explored the ecocritical and postcolonial dimensions of the diegesis, a critical aporia remains regarding the mutation of the militant subject: the transition from a purely discursive deconstruction of power to a praxis centered on outcome efficiency. This study addresses the obsolescence of traditional activism in the face of ubiquitous corporate biopower, necessitating a hybridization of struggle strategies. It interrogates the dialectic between the erosion of postmodern ideological certainties and a neo-pragmatist categorical imperative, shaping a new ethics of subversion where the aesthetics of sacrifice are transmuted into an engineering of political survival. The methodological framework employs a textual archaeology underpinned by a sociocriticism of forms, drawing from *Maffesolian* ethics of aesthetics to analyze how the novel's narrative economy functions as a dynamic apparatus of reconfiguration. While this approach unearths ideological sedimentations and the fragmentation of the subject, it remains perpetually attuned to the fleshly irreducibility of grief as the final, non-negotiable frontier against capitalist rationality. Structurally, the investigation is bifurcated: it first scrutinizes the dissolution of metanarratives and the poetics of fragmentation through narrative polyphony, and subsequently explores the emergence of a strategic rationality, a transition from logos to

techne, as the primary vector for collective emancipation in the desert of the real.

Keywords: teleology, axiology, praxis, hermeneutics, ontology, Imbolo Mbue, Neopragmatism

1. Introduction

The hermeneutics of Imbolo Mbue's novelistic scription, particularly within the narrative economy of *How Beautiful We Were*[1] (2021), necessitates a preliminary deconstruction of persistent colonial structures, perceived no longer as historical residue, but as a metastasis of cognitive and extractivist capitalism. To grasp this mutation, it is relevant to summon a dense theoretical archaeology at the confluence of postmodern ruptures, where the traditional postcolonial subject is dismantled and reassembled within the gears of global neoliberalism. The genealogy of postmodernity, as theorized by Lyotard (1979), teaches an incredulity toward metanarratives that serves here as the indispensable postulate for comprehending the skepticism of Kosawa's youth toward state promises. This mistrust is inscribed within a Foucauldian microphysics of power (1976), where domination is no longer a centralized verticality but a fluid capillary force that seeps into the pores of everyday life, while the Western logocentrism unmasked by Derrida (1967) proves to be the semantic instrument justifying the pillage.

Within this theater of simulation, the contributions of Baudrillard (1981/1994) illuminate the fabrication of a factitious media reality by the Pexton Corporation, which operates within the structural framework of late capitalism analyzed by Jameson (1991). If Habermas's theory of communicative action (1984) provides the necessary counterpoint to evaluate the terminal failure of dialogue, the rhizomatic resistances of both Deleuze and Guattari (1980) allow for a theorization of a nomadic insurrection, one that eschews the tree-like hierarchy of traditional national parties for a splintered, unpredictable militancy. This dynamic is supplemented by Butler's reflections on performativity (1990), framing the villagers' protests as a repetitive assertion of an ontological presence that the state seeks to erase, and the hybridity of Bhabha (1994), which marks the space where Thula's Western education cannibalizes the tools of the oppressor to forge a new, operative literacy.

This classical foundation articulates with a flourishing contemporary exegesis. While the works of Dechasa and Desta (2024) or Abdul Basit (2025) have explored the convergences between ecocriticism and postcolonialism, the seminal work of Daniel Tia (2024, 2025) has established Mbue's novel as a laboratory of thought. Tia's analysis of the "capitalist delusion" in ex-colonies and the dialectics of becoming provides the vital diagnostic for this study; however, an aporia persists: the militant subject's oscillation between the melancholy of a lost lyrical world and the urgency of an uncompromising political engineering. Consequently, it behooves the critic to examine the following question: how does the friction between the exhaustion of postmodern paradigms and the emergence of a neo-pragmatist rationality determine the fundamental mutation of contemporary African activism?

To address the current study proposes to demonstrate that Mbue's activism no longer pertains

[1] For any other references to the novel under consideration (*How Beautiful We Were*), we will use *HBWW*.

to a metaphysical quest for an Absolute Truth, but rather to a rigorous orchestration of efficiency. Better still, he aim is to prove that the transition from an incantatory resistance to a praxis of immanence, operating a kenosis, a radical stripping away of the state's tutelary divinity, helps the subjects extricate themselves from the failed teleology of national liberations. By investing in a neo-pragmatist rationality, the only one capable of responding to the liquidation of modernity's metanarratives, the community transitions from being "bare life" (Agamben, 1998) to becoming operative subjects who no longer seek to be "heard" by power, but to dismantle their "invisible levers."

The preferred method for this investigation is a textual archaeology underpinned by a sociocriticism of forms, an approach that considers the narrative economy not as a passive reflection of social reality, but as a dynamic apparatus of reconfiguration. Drawing from Michel Maffesoli's ethics of aesthetics (1990), this phenomenological lens accounts for the organic structure of nascent cultures, where the *style* of existence and the *surface* of the *sign* condition vital development. By postulating that form is formative, the present analytical exercise proposes to unearth the ideological sedimentations and the fragmentation of the postmodern subject. Crucially, this method does not merely observe the "death of the subjects" but captures their metamorphic survival within the "fleshly irreducibility of grief." This visceral reality serves as the final, non-negotiable frontier against capitalist rationality, a site of anti-extractivist resistance that market logic fails to domesticate or domesticate into a data point.

To conduct this exegesis, two research lines will be explored: "Dissolution of Metanarratives and Poetics of Fragmentation" and "Ethics of Efficiency and Pragmatist Reconfiguration of Resistance." The former demonstrates how Mbue's text formally translates the collapse of postmodern certainties through a discursive battlefield where the universal is exposed as a mask for hegemony. The latter maintains that the resulting skepticism is not a state of passivity, but a sovereign epistemological posture.

2. Dissolution of Metanarratives and Poetics of Fragmentation

The introductory stage establishes a major epistemological rupture from the traditional postcolonial liberation novel by operating a kenosis, a radical stripping away of teleological structures. From the outset of Mbue's narrative, the community of Kosawa is no longer the vessel for a developmentalist promise, but the site of an ontological dereliction provoked by the irruption of the Pexton corporation. This deconstruction of metanarratives, as conceptualized by Jean-François Lyotard, manifests through the bankruptcy of the grand narrative of modernity: specifically, the myth of a protective State and a salvific industry. In his work, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-1985*, Lyotard raises the ensuing question:

> How could the grand narratives of legitimation still have credibility in these circumstances? This is not to suggest that there are no longer any credible narratives at all. By metanarratives or grand narratives, I mean precisely narrations with a legitimating function. Their decline does not stop countless other stories (minor and not so minor) from continuing to weave the fabric of everyday life. (Lyotard, 1992, 19)

This excerpt elucidates how the collapse of overarching myths in Kosawa requires a transition from collective national hope toward a fractured, postmodern reality. When the State and global capital lose their legitimating function through systemic corruption and environmental ruin, the "grand narrative of progress" ceases to be a viable framework for the community's existence. In its place, Mbue's novel constructs a poetics of fragmentation through a narrative polyphony that exposes the performative vacuity of power. The villagers describe this encounter with the hegemon not as a dialogue, but as a redundant spectacle of deceit:

> We barely blinked as we watched him, listening to lies we'd heard before. Lies about how the people who controlled Pexton cared about us. Lies about how the big men in the government of His Excellency cared about us. Lies about how hundreds of people in the capital had asked him to relay their condolences to us. (*HBWW*, 8)

The rhythmic repetition of the word "lies" serves as the linguistic marker of a shattered modern myth. These are not merely falsehoods; they are the exhausted tropes of a developmentalist promise that has lost its ability to persuade or legitimate. By replacing the univocal, idealistic voice of "the people" with a choir of atomized, doubting perspectives who "barely blink" at the theater of power, the text gives form to Lyotard's "minor stories." These myriad accounts weave a new fabric of everyday life that no longer relies on a universal promise of development or the care of a paternalistic State. Instead, identity in Kosawa is forged in a state of shared abandonment. The community is no longer defined by its place within the national story of progress, but by its collective recognition of the "hollow simulacrum" of authority. In the aftermath of these shattered myths, the only truth remaining is the "minor story" of survival amidst the ruins of a global order that has calculated their lives as disposable.

Furthermore, addressing the cultural logic of late capitalism, Fredric Jameson reveals this fragmentation. To him, this is no longer merely aesthetic; it becomes the very condition of existence under the yoke of ubiquitous exploitation. Jameson argues that postmodernism emerges when "modernization is complete and nature is gone for good" (1991, X), resulting in an "immense dilation" of the sphere of commodities. In this "commodity rush," the real is acculturated to the point where the market becomes a substitute for itself. In Kosawa, this manifests as the total consumption of the environment by the Pexton Corporation, a process where the "lifestyle" of the global superstate survives on the "fetishism" of the resources extracted from the village. The Kosawan people decry this systemic absorption as follows:

> Their words would have served no purpose but to further instill within us that we couldn't undo the fact that three decades before, in Bézam, on a date we'll never know, at a meeting where none of us was present, our government had given us to Pexton. Handed, on a sheet of paper, our land and waters to them. We would have had no choice but to accept that we were now theirs. We would have admitted to ourselves that we'd long ago been defeated. On that night, though, that night when the air was too still and the crickets strangely quiet, we did not turn homeward. (*HBWW*, 12)

This passage serves as a haunting literary verification of Jameson's thesis that postmodernism

marks the era where nature is gone for good. For the villagers of Kosawa, the real, defined for generations by the organic vitality of their environment, has been forcibly acculturated into the global market. The revelation that their government had "given them to Pexton" three decades prior on a "sheet of paper" illustrates the precedence of the commodity over the territory. In this *Jamesonian* landscape, the village is no longer a physical place of ancestral belonging, but a mere line item in a corporate ledger. The total consumption of Kosawa is not merely an environmental disaster; it is a semiotic one. The land and waters have been transformed into fetishized resources to fuel the lifestyle of a global superstate, rendering the villagers' physical presence a residual obstacle to a deal struck in a room where "none of [them] was present."

This state of being "long ago defeated" by a bureaucratic signature reflects the ubiquitous exploitation where the market has effectively become a substitute for reality itself. When the villagers admit that their words would have served "no purpose," they acknowledge their entrapment within the "immense dilation" of the sphere of commodities, where the sheer scale of global capital swallows human agency. However, the refusal to "turn homeward" on that strangely quiet night signifies a nascent resistance against this *Jamesonian* "commodity rush." By staying in the darkness, the villagers attempt to re-assert an ontological presence that the "sheet of paper" sought to erase. They transition from being passive "items" within Pexton's inventory to becoming the "minor stories" that Lyotard described, the fragmented, resilient voices that persist even after the "Grand Narrative of Progress" has successfully commodified the very air they breathe.

The most salient illustration of this dissolution of the metanarrative of universal justice crystallizes during the inaugural incident where Pexton's delegates, entrenched behind technocratic arrogance, face the villagers. This moment serves as the final evidence or proof that the institutional architecture of the nation-state has been entirely hollowed out, replaced by a predatory corporate logic. When the community looks toward the judiciary, traditionally the ultimate guarantor of the "grand narrative of justice" they find only an extension of the very entity that dispossessed them. Mbue's text discloses the terminal nature of this realization:

> But we knew it was over. We had lost our last chance at restoration. Filing a lawsuit against the government and Pexton in a Bézam court would be ludicrous. The people who owned those courts were the1 same people who had given our land to Pexton. The judges who would rule in our lawsuit might be the same ones who had condemned the Four to death. We had no chance at justice there. (*HBWW*, 345)

This realization illustrates the total collapse of state sovereignty; the State no longer constitutes a mediating third party but serves as a hollow simulacrum, a pure exteriority of power that performs the rituals of law while executing the dictates of capital. The "ludicrous" prospect of a lawsuit reveals that the law is no longer a tool for "restoration," but a mechanism of capture and a site of lethal repetition. When the villagers look toward the court, they do not see a blind arbiter of truth, but a mirror of their own dispossession. The judges and the executioners are ontologically indistinguishable from the shareholders of Pexton;

they are the human masks worn by the "disjointed puppet" of the State to provide a thin veneer of legitimacy to a process of systemic eradication.

In this void of sovereignty, the law functions as a "zone of indistinction" where the legal protection of the citizens is suspended to allow for the frictionless extraction of resources. The courtroom in Bézam is thus transformed into a biopolitical laboratory: a space where the "Four" are condemned not for a crime, but because their existence as political subjects interferes with the "explicit calculations" of the Pexton-State alliance. By acknowledging that they have "no chance at justice there," the villagers recognize their transition into bare life. They comprehend that the judicial metanarrative is now a closed circuit, a self-referential system where the owners of the land, the owners of the court, and the owners of the law are a singular, predatory entity. Here, the Foucauldian thesis of biopolitics takes on its full meaning: power is no longer exercised to protect the lives of citizens, but to manage their exposure to death. Foucault defines this shift as follows:

> If one can apply the term bio-history to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life. […] But what might be called a society's 'threshold of modernity' has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. (Foucault, 1976, 143)

This theoretical transition from the "grand narrative of justice" to the "explicit calculations" of the Pexton-State alliance is crystallized in the moment the village children begin to die. The State does not intervene to protect the biological threshold of its citizens; instead, it maintains a simulacrum of concern while allowing the toxicity to continue as a managed necessity of capital. Mbue's text reveals the agonizing transition from ancestral belief to the realization of material poisoning:

> Many parents thought it might be a curse, a jealous relative from another village targeting their children – a relative whose wrath was directed at a particular Kosawa family [...]. Our medium, Jakani, spoke to the ancestors and assured our parents that there was no need for atonement – the children's suffering was of this world, not from the spirit world; it was from something poisonous in our village, which was entering their stomachs. [...] Papa's best friend, Bissau, was the first to suggest to Papa and our cousin Sonni that he believed it was the water. (*HBWW*, 34)

This excerpt provides the theoretical skeleton for Mbue's narrative of exploitation. When the "puppet loses its strings," the State abdicates its traditional role of providing justice and instead enters the realm of "explicit calculations." In Kosawa, the "movements of life," the health of the children, the fertility of the soil, and the purity of the water, are no longer protected by law; they are calculated as collateral costs of production. The "biological threshold of modernity" mentioned by Foucault is precisely this point: the survival of the Kosawan people becomes a "stake" in a larger political and economic strategy. By managing the villagers' "exposure to death" through environmental toxicity rather than upholding their "right to life," the power structure transforms from a judicial authority into a biopolitical

agent.

The cold indifference of this management is further elucidated when the Kosawans realizes that their suffering does not register as a moral crisis, but as a pre-calculated budgetary line item where human life is treated as mere refuse. This is most poignantly expressed in the address to a deceased husband, where the biological reality of the children is stripped of its sacred status:

> What would you do if I told you that there's no grave for our sons, because they were killed and tossed aside to rot like garbage, your own flesh and blood? [...] They've told you by now what happened to them in Bézam. You know better than I do the things that were done to them in that city of brutes. Things I do not let my mind dare conjure. (*HBWW*, 230)

By abandoning its protective "strings," the State effectively transforms Kosawa into an *Agambenian* zone of indistinction. In this space, the law is suspended in favor of the firm's sovereign exception and the distinction between the "citizen" and the "disposable body" (*homo sacer*) effectively vanishes. According to Agamben, within this void, the Kosawan subjects are reduced to bare life, a body that can be harmed and "tossed aside like garbage" with impunity because they no longer falls under the protection of the judicial metanarrative. Yet, as Foucault profoundly notes, life "ceaselessly escapes" the very techniques designed to govern it.

This suggests that the "poetics of fragmentation" and the "minor stories" Mbue's text highlights are not merely symptoms of a broken society, but the specific modes through which the community's vitality resists being exhaustively integrated into Pexton's deadly calculations. When the grand narrative of the State becomes a lethal mechanism of "explicit calculation," the only space left for the subjects is the interstice, that is to say, the gap between the official record and the lived experience. In Kosawa, identity is no longer found in the dead law of the State or the sterile contracts of the corporation; instead, it is forged within the resilient, fragmented voices that persist in the face of abandonment. By refusing the "totalization" of a singular, manageable identity, the villagers transform their dispossession into a rhizomatic shield. Their resistance is found in the "minor" register: in the shared grief that refuses to be quantified and in the oral histories that survive the "sheet of paper" that sought to erase them. In this postmodern landscape, life's refusal to be "managed" becomes the ultimate act of decolonial sovereignty.

Subsequently, deconstruction extends to the sphere of language itself. The "blank eyes" of the representatives of Pexton, signify the communicative aphasia that Derrida and Mignolo theorize. The speech of the oppressed, once the bearer of a prophetic charge, collides with corporate semiotics where words such as responsibility or ecocide are devoid of referents. This is what Jacques Derrida terms *différance*: a perpetual sliding of meaning that renders all negotiation impossible:

> *Différance* is not only irreducible to any ontological or theological – ontotheological – reappropriation, but as the very opening of the space in which ontotheology – philosophy

> – produces its system and its history, it includes ontotheology, inscribing it exceeding it without return [...] In the delineation of différance everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. (Derrida, 1982, 6-7)

The confrontation between the elders and Pexton illustrates the tragic failure of the "Logos." In traditional postcolonial narratives, word is a weapon of liberation; here, however, it hits a wall of *différance*. Pexton operates within a corporate semiotics where meaning is perpetually deferred, shunted into legal sub-clauses and financial projections. This linguistic impermeability signals the end of the "grand narrative" of communicative reason. If there is no "transcendent truth" outside the text to govern the field, then the villagers are trapped in a strategic game where the rules are written by the hegemon. The aphasia they experience is the realization that their words are "water flowing over a stone," unable to appeal to a universal moral code that has been subsumed by a nomadic power. The textual manifestation of this semiotic trap occurs when the villagers are presented with the abstract totems of modernity, civilization and prosperity terms that remain untranslatable and, therefore, unassailable:

> 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.' Could the men explain 'civilization' and 'prosperity' in our language? our grandparents had asked. The government men had said it was impossible for them to explain such terms fully, because it would be hard for our grandparents to understand what they'd never witnessed or considered a possibility. But as soon as 'civilization' and 'prosperity' arrived, they added, our grandparents would be in awe of what a beautiful life they offer [...]. They would sing songs of gratitude to the Spirit every morning for having put oil under their land. (*HBWW*, 73-74)

In this passage, the Pexton-State alliance uses language not as a vehicle for clarity, but as a technique of obfuscation. By claiming that these concepts are impossible to explain, the representatives enact a form of epistemic violence that delegitimizes the elders' indigenous linguistic framework. "civilization" and "prosperity" function here as empty signifiers, floating abstractions that promise a wondrous future while masking the material devastation of the present. The representatives' refusal to translate these terms into the local vernacular is a deliberate strategy to maintain the villagers in a state of cognitive lack, positioning the "rapidly changing world" as a metaphysical force that requires "gratitude" and "libations" rather than critical interrogation.

Besides, the transition from a Habermasian communicative rationality to a purely instrumental strategic action marks the tragic climax of Thula's intellectual trajectory. In the context of Kosawa, the "colonization of the lifeworld" is not merely an abstract sociological shift but a violent displacement of communal consensus by the cold, functionalist logic of global capital. When Habermas (1981/1987) identifies the suppression of social integration by systemic mechanisms, he describes the exact moment where the Kosawan people's symbolic reproduction, their rituals, ancestral ties to the land, and collective mourning, is rendered illegible to the Pexton Corporation. Thula's departure, therefore, is a desperate leap

from a collapsing lifeworld into the heart of the system. However, this is not an entry into a republic of letters or a space of mutual understanding. This is an immersion into a discursive battlefield where the universal is exposed as a mere rhetorical mask for hegemony, necessitating a systematic dismantling of the emancipatory metanarrative.

Consequently, the salvific education that Thula initially seeks, is exposed as an aesthetic illusion. This means a humanist mirage that hides the invisible levers of power. In this transmutation, the maternal memory of her departure serves as a poignant ontological rupture: the promise of universal understanding collides with the visceral reality of grief and the "cheerfulness" of the bureaucratic messenger. Thula eventually becomes a technician of the hyperreal, as described by Baudrillard (1981/1994), where her identity is no longer rooted in the soil of Kosawa but in the strategic manipulation of legal and media signs. Her subjectivity is no longer an essence to be protected, but a disruptive output to be deployed, confirming that in the age of global neoliberalism, knowledge loses its "light" to become the cold, calculated techne of systemic destabilization. This shift is anchored in the early communal hope that education might serve as a prophylactic against systemic violence, a belief that ultimately serves as the catalyst for her transformation:

> Our people were dying for lack of knowledge, they said, and if a child of ours could go to America and bring knowledge back to us, someday no government or corporation would be able to do to us the things they've been doing to us. [...] When they came to tell me that she'd been selected to attend this school, I had stared at the news bearer as he spoke [...] he can't seem to wipe off cheerfulness from his face. He has been the representative from the Restoration Movement to Kosawa since our story reached America and people who share no blood with us arrived, determined to save us. (*HBWW*, 130-131)

This memory highlights the "Restoration Movement" as a simulacrum of resistance. The "Sweet One," with his unyielding cheerfulness, represents the face of a benevolence that has already been acculturated into a global performance. For Thula's mother, the "knowledge" promised is a hollow signifier that cannot dry a mother's tears; it is a "map" of salvation that has no room for the "Territory" of her smoking kitchen or her silent crying. This resonates with Jean Baudrillard's thought on the disappearance of the real in favor of the sign:

> The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is henceforth the map that precedes the territory – precession of simulacra – it is the map that engenders the territory, and if we were to revive the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. (Baudrillard, 1981, 10)

Thula's realization serves as the narrative pivot from the real to the simulacrum. In this stage of late capitalism, the "map," the global economic and educational model, has already determined the fate of the "Territory." The actual physical suffering of the villagers is treated as a residual vestige, a shred of the real rotting beneath the pristine digital maps of corporate reports and the optimistic brochures of the Restoration Movement. This "desert of the real" creates a condition where even resistance risks becoming a simulation. Thula's education, initially envisioned as an emancipatory light, is revealed to be a weapon of "discursive

capture," folding the revolutionary spirit into the very system it seeks to oppose. The "Sweet One" and the "people who share no blood" arrive not to save the territory, but to manage the sign of its suffering. Justice cannot be found by appealing to the system's values, because those values are part of the hyperreal *façade* of a global order that "wants to be owned" rather than saved.

Moreover, the multiplicity of narrators (children, mothers, and sages) fragments the temporal perspective. The linear time of progress is replaced by a circular, traumatic time, where each generation reenacts the dispossession of the previous one. This rhizomatic narrative structure, important to Gilles Deleuze, prevents any totalization of the resistance narrative. As Deleuze and Guattari maintain,

> Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point [...] It is not made of units, but of dimensions, or rather moving directions [...] It constitutes linear multiplicities [...] without subject or object [...] In contrast to the tree, the rhizome is not an object of reproduction [...] It is an anti-genealogy [...] The rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, with multiple entries and exits, and its lines of flight.[2] (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, 31-32; Translation mine)

This shift is a deliberate application of the rhizome, which is hierarchical and centralized in traditional Western thought. In Kosawa, the resistance is "anti-genealogical," connecting the trauma of one generation instantly with the militancy of the next without a central committee. This structure allows the resistance to remain "detachable and connectable," adapting its "lines of flight" as the situation becomes more desperate. The massacre of the firm's representatives is the ultimate "irrational rupture" of this rhizome. It is a point of rhizomatic violence that the corporate tree cannot anticipate; because there is no singular center, Pexton cannot simply cut off the head of the rebellion. More to this point, the fragmentation is a strategic refusal to be captured by the master's gaze

This transition constitutes the moment where the Kosawan subject undergoes an epistemic de-linking; effectively abandoning the hope that Western legalism or corporate ethics will ever provide a path to justice. By moving toward the point of non-return that Walter Mignolo describes, the villagers recognize that "civil disobedience," protests, petitions, and legal appeals, only functions within a system that validates the colonizer's "master map" (2009, 19). When they pivot toward epistemic disobedience, they do not merely break the law; they do break the logic of the law itself. This rupture strips away the "tutelary divinity" of the State, revealing it not as a protector, but as a hollow structure, which facilitates the village's destruction. The struggle thus ceases to be a negotiation for reform and becomes a "line of flight" aimed at total ontological survival.

[2] "À la différence des arbres ou de leurs racines, le rhizome connecte un point quelconque avec un autre point quelconque […] Il n'est pas fait d'unités, mais de dimensions, ou plutôt de directions mouvantes. […] Il constitue des multiplicités linéaires […], sans sujet ni objet, [...] À l'opposé de l'arbre, le rhizome n'est pas objet de reproduction […] Le rhizome est une antigénéalogie. […] Le rhizome se rapporte à une carte qui doit être produite, construite, toujours démontable, connectable, renversable, modifiable, à entrées et sorties multiples, avec ses lignes de fuite." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, 31-32)

In consequence, the subjects are thrust into a radical absurdity where the enemy is no longer a localized, visible tyrant, but a "spectral, financial" entity that exists everywhere and nowhere. In this postmodern void, the "grand narratives" of national liberation and human rights are exposed as "discursive captures" that offer no protection against the invisible flows of global capital. The Kosawan subjects find themselves in an asymmetric war against adversaries, the Pexton-State alliance, which operates through "sovereign exception" rather than shared morality. This confrontation with the invisible transforms the nature of resistance; it is no longer a struggle for political recognition, but a visceral, desperate attempt to assert existence within a landscape that has already categorized the community as "human waste" and "bare life." This confrontation with the invisible echoes Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity: a condition where everything that once seemed solid melts into a volatile flow of capital. Through the paradigms of *Liquid Life* (2005) and *Wasted Lives* (2004), we perceive that the community undergoes a systemic liquidation. Power, having become fluid and nomadic, frees itself from all territorial responsibility. Bauman observes:

> Depression is a most unpleasant [...] mental condition, but [...] it is not the only symptom of the malaise that haunts the new generation born into the brave new liquid modern world [...] young men and women [...] know ailments of which older generations were unaware [...] novel reasons to feel ruffled, disturbed and often aggrieved. (Bauman, 2004, 9-10)

The bridge between the cold calculations of the global economic system and the "hot tears" of the Kosawan youth is constructed within the collapse of the social contract. This quotation serves as the sensory proof of an ontological rupture. Clearly, the community has moved beyond the teleological hope of state-sponsored justice and entered a state of shared, visceral persistence where the only remaining "solid" reality is the heat of their collective mourning. In *HBWW*, this liquid modern malady manifests as a collective psychic rupture. The Kosawan young people face a trauma that predecessors, anchored in ancestral certainties, cannot categorize. Their grievance is not merely against a stolen resource, but against a system that renders their existence redundant, the "human waste" necessary for the expansion of the liquid modern world. This systemic "liquidation" represents the ultimate evolution of biopolitical control. Indeed, when the State abandons its "strings," it does not merely exit the scene but actively transforms Kosawa into an *Agambenian* zone of indistinction. In this space, the law is suspended in favor of sovereign exception and the distinction between the "citizen" and the "disposable body" (*homo sacer*) vanishes.

This represents the biological threshold of modernity at its most lethal, where the liquid flow of capital dictates whose lives are fostered and whose are exposed to death. The Kosawans are initially reduced to bare life, a biological reality stripped of political value; yet, as Foucault notes, life ceaselessly escapes these techniques. Therefore, affect is substituted for the concept, and shared pain becomes the visceral foundation of a disaggregated community:

> They'd have to stop crying just as we'd stopped crying for our fathers and uncles who vanished, and even if they cried forever, would their tears ever flow hotter than ours? We wanted our mothers to reassure us, again and again, and they did so, but we couldn't be

> sufficiently put at ease, for we could see the doubt in their eyes. Our sleep that night was only slightly less disturbed than it was the night this all began. (*HBWW*, 315)

This passage captures the moment where the metanarrative of maternal protection, the last vestige of a stable, "solid" world, finally dissolves into liquid uncertainty. The "hotter tears" of the youth signify a shift from political grievance to ontological anguish. When the children see the "doubt in their eyes" of their mothers, they witness the collapse of the domestic sanctuary under the pressure of a "spectral, financial" enemy. Reassurance is revealed as a hollow performance, a simulacrum of safety in a landscape where sleep is "disturbed" by the permanent state of exception. The comparison to the "fathers and uncles who vanished" links this current trauma to a history of systemic erasure, suggesting that the "vanishing" of the subject is the standard operating procedure of the Pexton-State alliance.

Shortly, the preceding axis highlighted the vacuity of power structures and the exhaustion of legitimizing discourses. Now that deconstruction has completed its work of undermining, the subjects are driven toward a new modality of existence: an unprecedented strategic rationality where the finitude of the postmodern subject finds its salvation in an ethics of efficiency and a pragmatist reconfiguration of resistance.

3. Teleology of Efficiency and Neo-Pragmatist Architectonics

The collapse of meta-narrative structures, previously analyzed as an ideological kenosis, does not lead to a paralyzed aporia of action; on the contrary, it catalyzes the emergence of a high-precision instrumental rationality of survival. This dismantling of the "sacred" authority of the state aligns with the thought of Richard Rorty, who, in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), advocates for the radical abandonment of metaphysical foundations in favor of a solidarity conceived as a poetic undertaking of redefinition. In Mbue's scriptural economy, this "emptying out" of the "grand narrative" functions as an epistemological rupture: the community of Kosawa, stripped of the teleological promise of national progress, is thrust into a post-foundational landscape where justice is no longer a transcendent essence to be discovered, but a contingent output to be manufactured. By jettisoning the "Logos" of moral appeal, which assumes a universal listener, the Kosawan subjects embrace a neo-pragmatist architectonics, treating the ruins of the social contract not as a site of mourning, but as raw material for a strategic engineering of destabilization. As Rorty posits:

> The difference between a search for foundations and older forms of cultural life. For in its ideal form, the culture of liberalism would be one which no trace of divinity remained, either in the form of a divinized world or a divinized self. [...] It would drop, or drastically reinterpret, not only the idea of holiness but those of 'devotion to truth' and fulfillment of the deepest needs of the spirit. The process of the de-divinization. (Rorty, 1989, 44)

In the light of this, the Rortyan "de-divinization" of the political sphere functions as a theoretical mirror for the kenosis occurring within Kosawa's collective consciousness. By advocating for a culture in which "no trace of divinity remained," Rorty identifies the exact moment the subaltern subjects stop viewing the State, the Judiciary, or even the concept of

"Universal Human Rights" as sacred entities to which one must remain responsible. In Mbue's narrative, this translates into the death of the Lyrical Subject, who previously sought "justice" as a metaphysical absolute. When Rorty suggests "[we drop the] devotion to truth," he provides the blueprint for Thula's intellectual shift: she realizes that the Pexton-State alliance does not operate on a deficit of truth, but on a surplus of power. Consequently, her education in America is not a quest for "holiness" or the "fulfillment of the spirit," but an apprenticeship in the technical manipulation of a de-divinized world. Justice is stripped of its auratic quality and reinterpreted as a contingent output, a result to be manufactured through the systematic exploitation of legal loopholes and media optics rather than a truth to be revealed.

Furthermore, this Rortyan pivot justifies the transmutation of the villagers' grief from a passive, metaphysical "jealous relative's curse" into a strategic vocabulary of resistance. By recognizing that there are "no nonhuman forces" to ensure their survival, the characters adopt the posture of the liberal ironist. Thula's activism thus moves into the realm of "poetic redefinition," where the language of the oppressor is not used to speak "truth to power," an act that assumes power has a conscience, but to redirect the "invisible levers" of systemic efficiency. This is the hallmark of the operative subjects: those who understand that in a post-foundational world, the validity of a struggle is measured solely by its capacity for interruption and the modification of power relations. The de-divinization of Kosawa's struggle is, therefore, its ultimate empowerment; by accepting the death of the "grand narratives" of progress and protection, the Kosawan community is freed from the paralysis of waiting for a savior and is thrust into the radical, immanent necessity of political survival as techne. This shift is anchored in the realization that the system's word is no longer a moral bond, but a variable in a predatory calculation:

> Our wives waited with our children under the mango tree. The women did not cry as much as our mothers used to in our childhood, but their faces bore little hope that the simple things that make a life content would be abundant in the lives of their children. [...] Pexton was sending less bottled water with each passing year, knowing there was little we could do to make them keep their word. Our air was getting dirtier, despite promises. They spilled their oil on our land with recklessness; we spilled it in vengeance. No new envelopes of cash had touched our hands [...] all we had was more of too little. (*HBWW*, 257)

This passage serves as the sensory proof of an ontological rupture: the Kosawan community has moved beyond the teleological hope of state-sponsored justice and entered a state of shared, visceral persistence where the only remaining "solid" reality is the heat of their collective mourning. The transition from the "mothers who cried" to the wives who "bore little hope" signifies the expiration of the Lyrical Subject's belief in a moral restorative. By acknowledging that Pexton sends less water "knowing there was little we could do," the text exposes the semiotic vacuum of the corporate promise. In this void, the act of "spilling oil in vengeance" is illustrative of the first erratic movement of a nascent operative subject. It is no longer a dialogue of rights, but a symmetry of recklessness; a proto-strategic response to a power structure that has successfully uncoupled itself from the "Logos" of the social contract

and entered the realm of pure, extractivist "Techne."

As a result, the "more of too little" described by the narrators marks the terminal exhaustion of the metanarrative of development. Thula's subsequent intellectual evolution, her "technical incubation" in the West, is the sophisticated refinement of this crude vengeance into a neo-pragmatist architectonics. She understands that if the word of the corporation is merely a malleable signifier, then the resistance must similarly abandon its "devotion to truth" in favor of an orchestration of efficiency. The "bottled water" and "envelopes of cash" are discarded as the debris of a paternalistic simulation, replaced by the mastery of "invisible levers," legal sub-clauses, international media optics, and systemic destabilization. Thus, Thula emerges as the revolutionary-as-architect; a technician of the hyperreal who recognizes that in a de-divinized landscape, sovereignty is not "granted" by a moral authority but is extracted through the cold, calculated manipulation of the system's own internal contradictions.

The most radical illustration of this teleology of efficiency anchored in Thula's psycho-geographic evolution, which constitutes the death of the revolutionary-as-martyr and the birth of the revolutionary-as-architect. Her immersion in the American academic and political system is not a quest for enlightenment, but a phase of technical incubation, a shift from epistemology to ergonomics where the humanist self is subsumed into pure "techne". Mbue's text emphasizes this transition as follows:

> The woman was a nuisance. They never threatened to take away her job if she didn't stop [...] her educational accomplishments were matchless. Standing before rapt students, she flung insults at His Excellency, at his senseless cronies [...] The government yawned when they heard about her Village Meeting. They said: What can one angry woman do? One angry woman did everything, and she failed. [...] What the judge meant by this, Thula explained, was that a man could not go into his neighbor's house and beat him up just because he didn't like the way the neighbor was running his household. (*HBWW*, 344)

The paragraph exposes the terminal exhaustion of communicative reason and the inaugural moment of a neo-pragmatist ergonomics. The state's "yawn" in the face of Thula's matchless academic insults signifies that moral indignation has been successfully neutralized and integrated into the system as a harmless "nuisance." The American court's refusal to intervene, cloaked in the metaphor of the "neighbor's house," unmasks international law as a closed semiotic circuit that prioritizes the sanctity of borders over the preservation of "bare life." For Thula, this failure is the catalyst for her final metamorphosis; the realization that "one angry woman did everything, and she failed" signals the end of the Lyrical Subject's reliance on the "Logos" of universal justice. She recognizes that the judge's verdict is not a denial of the "countless crimes" of Pexton, but a cold affirmation that justice is not a moral requirement but a geopolitical commodity, one that is unavailable to those who remain outside the "explicit calculations" of global capital.

In consequence, Thula's subsequent evolution marks the definitive birth of the revolutionary-as-architect, a technician of the hyperreal who pivots from a quest for "enlightenment" to a phase of technical incubation. By translating the judge's abstract

legalism into the visceral language of the village square, she performs a Rortyan "redefinition" of the struggle, stripping it of its humanist mirage. She ceases to be a daughter of Kosawa seeking "recognition" from a divinized Western court and instead becomes an operative agent who treats the plight of her people as a data point within a larger strategy of systemic destabilization. In this post-foundational void, where the "neighbor's house" is a site of sanctioned ecocide, Thula learns to manipulate the "invisible levers" of the global order not to find "Truth," but to manufacture a disruptive outcome. In the final architectonics of Kosawa's resistance, Thula does not die for a truth; she lives for a function. Therefore, her resistance moves from the "holy" devotion to spirit to a secularized orchestration of efficiency, confirming that in the age of liquid modernity, sovereignty is not an inherent right to be restored, but a technical reality to be engineered through the cold mastery of the system's own internal contradictions.

This shift echoes Donna Haraway's notion of situated knowledge, where the subject no longer aspires to a God's-eye view, the illusory universal justice of the Enlightenment, but to a strategic intervention within a network of interconnected powers. Activism becomes an orthopraxy, a rectitude of action dictated by immediate results rather than metaphysical alignment. For instance, in *A Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway argues that the postmodern subjects are to renounce the mythical unity of an original "We" to embrace a coalitional identity, fragmented yet strategic:

> The acid tools of postmodernist theory and the constructive tools of ontological discourse about revolutionary subjects might be seen as ironic allies in dissolving Western selves in the interests of survival. [...] But with the loss of innocence in our origin, there is no expulsion from the Garden either. Our politics lose the indulgence of guilt with the *naiveté* of innocence. (Haraway, 1991, 24)

Haraway's dismissal of the Garden myth provides the definitive philosophical grounding for Thula's rejection of a restorative nostalgia. In Mbue's diegesis, the original beauty of Kosawa is not a static Eden to be recovered through moral entreaty, but a simulacral memory that has been irrevocably liquidated by extractivist biopower. By accepting that there is "no expulsion from the Garden," because the Garden itself was a construct of an innocent "origin" that can no longer sustain the weight of the present, Thula performs a radical epistemological break. She sheds the "indulgence of guilt" and the "*naiveté* of innocence" that characterize the martyr's path, moving instead toward a clinical sovereignty. In this post-foundational clearing, the "acid tools" of Western legalism and corporate bureaucracy are not viewed as alien poisons, but as ironic allies used to dissolve the very "Western self" that Pexton seeks to impose. Thula's education is thus a process of planned hybridization, where the ancestral "We" is traded for a fragmented, *cyborgian* agency capable of weaponizing the enemy's own codes.

Accordingly, Thula emerges as the postcolonial cyborg: a hybrid entity that functions through a series of tactical plug-ins between the localized micro-resistances of Kosawa and the globalized legal spheres of the metropole. She no longer seeks to be heard by a power structure she knows to be deaf; rather, she seeks to interrupt its signals. By treating her own

body and history as historically constituted materials rather than sacred relics, she gains the ability to navigate the high-frequency networks of international liability and media cycles with the precision of an engineer. Her identity is no longer defined by the trauma of the victim, but by the ergonomics of the operative agent who understands that in the absence of a divine arbiter, survival is a matter of interface. She does not return to Kosawa to restore its purity, but to bridge its organic suffering with the technological mechanics of global disruption, proving that the most effective subversion is one that has successfully dissolved its own humanist limitations to become a pure vector of systemic interference. The following textual evidence testifies to this clinical and dynamic commitment:

> My dad drove cabs fourteen hours a day so my siblings and I could go to college... I don't ever intend to make a career out of [putting bad guys in prison], but at least, the day Kosawa wins, my parents can show the news clipping to their friends. [...] Carlos and his team [...] flew to America with an abundance of videotaped interviews, and photos, and soil and water samples. Their presence had also enlivened the village. They had shared stories about the America of 2007[...] the evening before they left, palm wine had flowed and the Americans had played the drums while the children danced and the adults clapped. (*HBWW*, 322)

Under this Harawayan prism, this technical harvest, the soil samples and videotaped depositions, signifies that activism is liberated from the duality between nature and artifice. Thula becomes the interface through which her people's pain is translated into procedural and media language. This is no longer liberation in the messianic sense, but a politics of infidelity to the master's narratives; she uses the firm's tools (law, communication, capital) to sabotage its internal gears. The scene of the Americans playing drums in Kosawa represents the monstrous hybridization of the struggle: the resistance is no longer a pure ancestral outcry, but a coalitional, high-tech assemblage. Indeed, the teleology of efficiency concludes on a neo-pragmatist rationality where action no longer derives its legitimacy from an ethical transcendence, but from its capacity to produce a fissure, however minute, in the extractivist monolith. As Haraway asserts, it is better to be a cyborg than a goddess; that is, to prefer the hybrid, contingent effectiveness of a news clipping and a data sample over the sterile purity of an unattainable, lost ideal.

Plainly, the clandestine organization Thula structures within Kosawa testifies to a radical break with the romanticism of insurrection, signaling an evolution from spontaneous revolt to a disciplined, machinic assemblage in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari. Unlike the earlier, pulsional eruptions of violence, which were characterized by a localized, reactive heat, Thula's architecture of resistance functions as an interconnected network of "segmentary" cells. This shift represents a transition from striated resistance, fixed, territorial, and easily crushed by the State, to smooth resistance, where the struggle is no longer tied to a single leader or martyr but is distributed across the social body of Kosawa. By de-centering the revolutionary subject, Thula ensures that the movement remains rhizomatic; it possesses no singular heart that the Pexton-State alliance can pierce. Each villager becomes a component in a larger functional machine, a "plug-in" that contributes to a collective agency where the "We" is no longer a sentimental unity, but a high-performance engine of disruption.

Moreover, the sophisticated orchestration of media cycles, legal lobbying, and the calculated manipulation of Pexton's stock prices reveal an acute, almost prophetic mastery of Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity. Thula recognizes that in a globalized era, power is no longer solid; it does not reside solely in the physical buildings of the capital or the oil derricks on the land, but is liquid, flowing through the ethereal channels of international finance and public perception. This strategic fluidity is captured in the early procedural alliance with the journalist Austin:

> I tell Austin what the big river looks like now [...] When I'm done talking and Austin is done writing, he informs me that he'll write the story tonight and send it to America first thing in the morning. His friends in the newspaper office there will do some research to make sure that, in the absence of evidence, our story can be substantiated by known facts. [...] All he can do is write the best story he can and hope that everything flows smoothly and the story he writes is deemed worthy to be printed. (*HBWW*, 118-119)

These textual clues function as the sensory evidence of a semiotic transmutation. By describing the toxic river not as a site of ancestral mourning, but as a "story" to be "sent to America," Thula initiates the process of deterritorialization. The pain of Kosawa is stripped of its localized, "striated" character and is injected into the "smooth" space of global media flows. Austin's role as the intermediary illustrates the transition from a struggle for the "truth of the soil" to a semiotic war fought on the digital tickers of the West. The "absence of evidence" is bypassed by the "substantiation of known facts," proving that in a liquid world, the validity of a struggle is not found in its moral absolute, but in its ability to "flow smoothly" through the gatekeeping mechanisms of the metropole. Thula comprehends that to defeat a liquid enemy, the resistance must become equally fluid, navigating the professional protocols of the Western press as a tactical plug-in to destabilize the corporate narrative.

This teleology of efficiency concludes on a post-humanist pragmatism where the validity of the struggle is decoupled from its ethical purity and measured solely by its capacity for systemic interference. By weaponizing the tools of neoliberalism, lobbying, international litigation, and market destabilization, Thula performs a radical re-coding of the village's suffering, translating it into a language that the extractivist monolith cannot ignore: the language of unprofitability. This is the birth of the operative subject as a technician of the hyperreal. In fact, Thula does not seek to appeal to the "conscience" of the shareholder, but to trigger their risk-assessment protocols. In a world where capital is volatile, resistance must adopt the same fluidity. This transition from moral appeal to financial integration is crystallized in the final legal pivot:

> They told us that the Restoration Movement people in New York [...] had filed papers with an American court to force Pexton to clean up our land and waters and start sharing its profits with us [...] The new leadership had decided it wanted no court case [...] Under the agreement, we would not be receiving an envelope of cash, as had years ago been given to our mothers and fathers. We would receive, instead, a percentage of all the money Pexton made from our land from that day forward. (*HBWW*, 262-263)

The above quotation epitomizes the final dematerialization of the enemy and the subsequent

reconfiguration of the resistance. The shift from the "envelope of cash," a finite, symbolic gesture of paternalism, to "a percentage... every single year" signifies the transformation of Kosawa from a site of "bare life" into a contractual entity. By forcing Pexton to "want no court case," Thula's organization demonstrates a mastery of Bauman's liquid modernity, recognizing that the corporation's only vulnerability is its reputation and market stability. The resistance no longer directs its violence at bodies or derricks, but at flows.

Through this lens, the resistance in Kosawa is no longer a localized tragedy pleading for mercy, but a globalized ergonomic disruption that forces the system to recognize that the cost of ecocide has finally exceeded the value of extraction. Neopragmatism is here embodied as an ethics of consequence that substitutes the metaphysical question "Is it just?" with the operative question "Does it work?" Thula's "clandestine organization" is thus the final architectonic achievement: a machine built from the ruins of a broken world, designed not to find a "savior," but to engineer a permanent fiscal fissure in the absolute. The "original beauty" of the land is not restored in a lyrical sense; instead, its value is recoded into the ledger of the oppressor, ensuring survival through the mechanics of the system that once sought its annihilation. This strategic rationality finds its climax in the sacrifice of affects for analytical coldness. Thula's pragmatism embodies Max Weber's distinction in *Politics as a Vocation* (1919/1965) between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility. While the early resistance of the village elders was rooted in a lyrical adherence to the truth of suffering, a path leading to the beautiful death of the martyr, Thula recognizes that in a liquid struggle against capital, a pure conviction is easily liquidated. Her coldness is a protective armor; she treats visceral suffering not as an emotional burden, but as a variable to be strategically managed. This transition is captured in words:

> I try to explain to him that I cannot give up on the struggle for which Papa and Bongo gave their lives... but when he begs me not to leave him, I know he doesn't understand. How could he, when he didn't live our brand of fragile innocence? When his childhood didn't end with friends dying in succession? [...] How can he appreciate our resolve to give to the children what Pexton stole from us? (*HBWW*, 170-171)

This excerpt functions as the ontological justification for Thula's "analytical coldness." Her inability to yield to Austin's plea is a manifestation of a Weberian paroxysm where individual emotional needs are sacrificed to the "resolve" of the collective. The "fragile innocence" she mentions is the very "humanist self" she has systematically dismantled to survive. This responsibility manifests as a secular ascesis, a stripping away of the daughter, the niece, and the lover to become a high-precision tool of resistance. When she navigates the American judicial system, she stifles the voice of the daughter in favor of the voice of the technician, accepting the "diabolical forces" of the system to secure a durable future.

Better still, Thula embodies Gianni Vattimo's weak thought, a philosophical posture that renounces the flares of heroic violence for an ethics of subversive torsion. Far from a frontal assault, this resistance resides in the patient inhabitancy of the system to divert its trajectory and heal its wounds from within. Her struggle is a constant interpretation where justice is a fragile, iterative process rather than a distant, immutable idol. By summoning Foucault's

theory of biopolitics, one perceives Thula turning the firm's control apparatuses against itself; by documenting diseases and quantifying deaths, the inhabitants of Kosawa appropriate the cold language of power to subvert it.

In essence, this is a sophisticated form of subversive mimicry as defined by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. By imitating the language of neoliberal bureaucracy, the subaltern introduces a fissure, an almost the same but not quite, that destabilizes authority. Here, efficiency lies in this capacity to speak the oppressor's tongue to denounce its internal aporias. In Thula's hands, the acid tools of the West are used to dissolve the sentimental self, leaving behind a cyborgian agent who prefers a contingent, hybrid effectiveness over the sterile purity of a lost ideal. However, this sovereignty of efficiency encounters its intrinsic limit in the risk of becoming a mirror of the very shiny promises once made by the colonizer:

> The European men delivered a message of how we would live a better life after we died if we turned our backs on our Spirit and chose their Spirit ... After we died, instead of joining our ancestors in the fire ... we would spend our afterlives in a place where there was no night, just one glorious morning, a place where the roads were straight and shiny, and the gardens had the most beautiful flowers. (*HBWW*, 219-220)

This passage serves as the hauntological blueprint for the village's eventual pragmatic victory. The "straight and shiny roads" promised by the early missionaries are the architectural ancestors of the legal settlements and percentages Thula eventually engineers. By using this quote, the analysis reveals a bitter symmetry: the "Spirit" was first traded for a promised paradise, and is finally traded for a fiscal contract. The movement exposes itself to a reification of militancy, where the original beauty of Kosawa is sacrificed on the altar of a coldly acquired freedom.

This loss of poietic impetus in favor of pragmatic victory constitutes the quintessential postmodern tragedy. In other words, victory is no longer a spiritual epiphany or a reunion with the ancestors; it is an accounting statement. In the ruins of modernity, resistance is no longer a cry; it is an algorithm. It is no longer a utopia; it is logistics. Thus, *HBWW* conveys not merely as a deploration of loss, but as a survival manual, proving that the reinvention of activism involves a monstrous hybridization between radical deconstruction and a technocratic effectiveness that, while successful, leaves the choir in shiny white robes singing a song that makes "no sense."

4. Conclusion

The central objective of this work was to probe the obsolescence of metanarratives of emancipation in order to witness the emergence of a praxis of immanence upon the ruins of utopia. By articulating the dissolution of teleological structures and the fragmentation of the subject against a burgeoning teleology of strategic efficiency, we have demonstrated that activism in Kosawa no longer proceeds from a romantic faith in universal justice. Instead, it arises from a cold, calculated engineering of survival. This shift marks the transition from a lyrical resistance, rooted in the shared moral vocabulary of the lifeworld, to an operative resistance that inhabits the very systemic logic it seeks to dismantle.

The investigation results that the Derridean deconstruction of the Pexton corporation's discourse is not an end in itself, but the necessary propaedeutic for the establishment of an operative rationality. The subaltern subjects, embodied by Thula and the generation of the Children, operate a major epistemological rupture: they no longer seek to convince the hegemonic center of their inherent morality or shared humanity. Such appeals to a universal humanism are recognized as futile within a globalized market that views the subaltern only as a data point or a localized externality. Instead, the Children appropriate the tools of biopolitics, legal friction, media manipulation, and corporate liability, to subvert biopower from within. It is here that the novel converges with Rortyan neopragmatism: the validity of the struggle does not reside in its correspondence to a transcendent ethical ideal or a metaphysical Truth, but in its concrete efficacy for the preservation of life and the modification of power relations. Thula's technical incubation in America is the ultimate signifier of this shift; she returns not as a prophet of enlightenment, but as a technician of destabilization.

The relevance of the textual archaeology method, underpinned by sociocriticism, has been decisive in analyzing these scriptural data. It allowed for the exhumation of ideological sedimentations and revealed how the narrative polyphony, this choir of divergent and sometimes contradictory voices, mimes the rhizomatic structure of globalized power. This method fulfilled its role by identifying the definitive shift from logos (reasoned and moralizing discourse) to techne (strategic and tactical know-how), proving that Mbue's novelistic form is itself a device of postmodern resistance. By refusing the closure of meaning and the comfort of resolution, the text prefers the radical uncertainty of an ongoing struggle over the sclerotic clarity of heroic defeat. The invisible levers Thula learns to pull are the same gears that turn the narrative itself, creating a text that does not merely describe resistance but performs it through a refusal of classical catharsis.

The strength of this study lies in its multidisciplinary nature. Philosophically, it highlighted the advent of an ethics of contingency where political action reinvents itself without the safety net of providential grand narratives. Literarily, the critic observed a poetics of fragmentation that rejects the unity of the classical hero in favor of a splintered collective subject, a post-identity subjectivity that is defined by its disruptive output rather than its essential nature. Culturally, we noted an epistemic decolonization that does not naively reject Western modernity but cannibalizes it, turning the tools of the colonizer against the interests of predatory extractivism. Politically, this leads to a radical redefinition of sovereignty: it is no longer the state's right to rule, but the community's capacity for interruption, blockage, and the strategic management of systemic friction.

Nevertheless, the study acknowledges certain limitations, notably the relative overshadowing of the religious and metaphysical dimensions of grief. Ancestral mysticism, often relegated to the background by the forced march of secularized activism, could be read not as an archaism but as an ultimate form of resistance to capitalist rationality, a sacred space that refuses to be commodified or technologized. This aporia opens vital perspectives for future research that could explore the intersection between eco-theology and postcolonial resistance. Grief, far from being a mere emotion, thus becomes an impassable ontological frontier, a site where

market logic finally fails to reach, and where the lyrical subject may yet find a final, silent refuge against the totalizing efficiency of the operative world.

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