## Greenwash 2.0: The Poetics of Corporate Environmentalism

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As the climate crisis worsens, public tolerance for corporate greenwashing is diminishing. Recognizing the financial and reputational risks, corporate boards and consultants have declared the 'end of greenwashing.' However, while companies are being more cautious, claims of greenwashing's demise are overstated. Well-resourced companies have devised new strategies that avoid greenwashing's pitfalls while providing similar benefits. This shift towards 'symbolic corporate environmentalism' (SCE) is exhibited by companies like Apple, Dow Chemical, and IKEA, and finds ideological support in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) manifesto for 'stakeholder capitalism' and the UN Global Compact.

**From Greenwashing to Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism**

SCE is more holistic and potentially insidious than greenwashing, because it threatens to undermine public concern and delay urgent action. Through confessional discourse, it positions corporations as reformed actors committed to solving environmental problems. Whereas greenwashing focuses on claims about environmental performance, SCE redefines identities, meanings, and narratives. Dow Chemical, for instance, claims to be "redefining the role of business and society," promoting carbon offsets and marketing its plastics as eco-friendly. SCE employs rhetoric akin to corporate poetry, not because of a lack of seriousness but due to the range of techniques it employs to shape discourse. These strategies lean heavily on three rhetorical features, each of which I will explicitly target analytically:

1. **Identities**: Using psychoanalytical theory, I will explore the production of the "corporate soul." Foucauldian and Laclauian theory are employed to understand how subject positions enable and constrain actors, while Althusser's concept of interpellation explains how subjects are co-opted by dominant interests.
2. **Meanings**: Poststructuralist cultural theory will help trace the relational semiotic networks that produce meaning. Close reading techniques will also be used to account for the context and history of corporate messaging.
3. **Narratives**: Grammar provides cues of time, tense, and agency. Through an intertextual and interdiscursive reading approach, I will explore how corporate environmental discourse invokes either risk-based or techno-optimistic progress metanarratives.

In addition, my study will systematically focus on framing, style, tone, metaphor, and metonym.

**Contribution**

Corporations are eager to convince stakeholders they are addressing environmental challenges. It is true that, in some quarters, they are taking difficult decisions. At the same time, however, the risk is that they leverage the collective power of their rhetorical platform to redefine the very terms of the environmental problematic, sidelining the state and civil society and offering the questionable assurance of a capital-led recovery. My project aims to expose this corporate storytelling for the false reassurance it is.