

## ECO-ANXIETY AND ECOLOGICAL HOPE IN *THE END WE START FROM* (2023)

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### Abstract

The global ecological crisis not only affects the physical environment but also evokes emotional responses, such as eco-anxiety, and hopes for the restoration of nature. This study examines the portrayal of emotional reactions and ecological hopes in the film *The End We Start From* (2023) through Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical framework. Using qualitative descriptive methods and narrative analysis, this study characterizes the main character and visualizes disaster as forms of ecological narrative. The analysis reveals that this film embodies ecological fear and emotional reactions to the environment through the main character's fear, confusion, and alienation, while offering environmental hope through human solidarity and emotional resilience. This study contributes to broadening the scope of ecocriticism by integrating emotional aspects and storylines in the discussion of films about modern environmental issues.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, climate change and environmental degradation have become significant ecological challenges that disrupt the balance of global ecosystems. Tangible impacts, such as rising sea levels, increased frequency of extreme weather, and water and food crises, reflect the disruption of life systems caused by human activities (Yulizah, 2024). According to Subedi et al. (2023), changes in rainfall patterns and global temperatures can impact the biological processes of various living organisms, disrupt natural cycles, and exacerbate environmental damage. These findings are reinforced by research from Sabater et al. (2023), which demonstrates that extreme weather phenomena damage biodiversity and compromise the stability of freshwater ecosystems.

Ecological phenomena, such as climate change, natural disasters, and environmental degradation, not only have a physical impact on the Earth but also elicit a range of psychological responses in individuals and communities. These responses manifest as complex emotional reactions, including fear, anxiety, anger, and feelings of loss and uncertainty about the future. One such reaction is eco-anxiety, a feeling of anxiety and worry arising from awareness of the serious threats to the sustainability of life on Earth (Sangervo et al., 2022).

However, amid rising ecological anxiety, there is another form of emotion that is constructive, namely ecological hope, a hope rooted in the belief that humans have the capacity to repair their relationship with nature and contribute to environmental preservation. This hope serves as a source of psychological motivation, encouraging active involvement, concern, and optimism about the possibility of positive change (Laranjeira et al., 2024). Understanding the dynamics between ecological anxiety and hope is essential because both show that the environmental crisis is not only a matter of natural destruction, but also a reflection of how humans respond to it mentally and socially.

Ecological phenomena do not occur only in the real world but are also represented in literary works and films that depict human emotional experiences of the environmental crisis. According to Mau'udi and Sofyaningrum (2024), literary works often represent emotions and ideas arising from specific social conditions, including fear, loss, and hope related to nature. In the context of film, this representation becomes more tangible through visual elements such as color, lighting, character expressions, and symbols of nature, which create an atmosphere of anxiety and ecological tension. Thus, films serve not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a means of emotional reflection, allowing viewers to deeply experience eco-anxiety and ecological hope (Reddy, 2024).

One film that represents this phenomenon is *The End We Start From* (2023). Directed by Mahalia Belo, this film tells the story of a young mother who gives birth during a significant flood in London. The main character in this film is forced to evacuate while facing the fear of loss and uncertainty about the future. Kyriazis (2024) calls this film a “survival drama that highlights a mother’s anxiety in the midst of a climate crisis.” Meanwhile, critic Tomris Laffly on RogerEbert.com argues that the film’s tension does not rely on visual effects, but rather arises from “a real anxiety about how to protect new life in a world that is falling apart” (Laffly, 2023). Despite its heavy anxiety, the film also offers ecological hope through the characters’ relationships and the mother’s determination to preserve life amid destruction.

This study uses Glotfelty’s (1996) ecocritical approach to examine how the film *The End We Start From* (2023) represents the dialectical relationship between eco-anxiety and ecological hope. These two emotions describe two intertwined sides of human responses to the ecological crisis. Anxiety arises from fear, confusion, and uncertainty, while hope arises through empathy and resilience. Through this emotional contrast, the film serves as a medium for ecological awareness, encouraging viewers to recognize that environmental disasters are not merely natural events but also reflections of broader humanitarian and moral crises.

Several previous studies relevant to the focus of this research include those by Vaškovic and Vičanová (2024), who raised the issue of environmental anxiety and argued that this phenomenon is not merely a psychopathological disorder but an existential-phenomenological condition that fosters ecological awareness. Complementing this research, Pihkala (2022) highlights that the phenomenon of climate change has emotional impacts, such as confusion and helplessness. In contrast, Hiltunen and Rainio (2023) demonstrate how cinematic elements, including sound and lighting, can heighten ecological awareness through the audience’s emotional experiences. Several other researchers have attempted to understand how humans respond to environmental issues through films and stories. Du Preez (2024), for example, uses the story of an astronaut to describe fears and hopes for the future of the Earth. Meanwhile, Robles Pizano (2024) discusses in more depth the depiction of environmental damage in post-apocalyptic films, which often highlight human actions as the leading cause of ecological destruction. However, so far, little research has examined how ecological anxiety and hope are represented simultaneously in a single film narrative, especially in the context of post-climate-disaster.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze how *The End We Start From* (2023) depicts human emotional reactions to the ecological crisis through the relationship between eco-anxiety and ecological hope. Using Glotfelty’s (1996) ecocritical approach, this study interprets

scenes, character expressions, and natural symbols as forms of articulation of the psychological tension between fear and ecological optimism. Therefore, this study focuses on two main questions, including:

1. How is ecological anxiety represented through confusion, fear, and uncertainty in the film *The End We Start From* (2023)?
2. How is ecological hope manifested through empathy, renewal, and the resilience of the main character in facing the ecological crisis?

Through narrative and visual analysis of the film, reinforced by relevant theories and secondary sources, this study aims to contribute to modern ecocriticism, particularly in understanding how popular films can serve as a medium for reflection and ecological awareness amid the global climate crisis.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research encompasses four primary concepts: emotional reactions, ecological hope, Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical theory, and the narrative framework of the film *The End We Start From* (2023). These concepts are interrelated and provide a basic understanding of the emotional and symbolic representation of environmental crises in literary works, particularly films, to foster ecological awareness among audiences.

### Emotional Reactions to Ecological Crisis

Emotional reactions are affective responses that arise from environmental changes and tensions, including anxiety, fear, sadness, and grief, and indicate the emotional relationship between humans and nature (Sunny & Setyowati, 2020). Pihkala (2022) explains that emotional reactions to ecological crises are not merely disturbances but encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from mild concerns to more intense emotional responses that can form the basis for changes in attitudes and actions. In many ecological narratives, emotional responses such as anxiety actually trigger hope when individuals transform fear and despair into motivation to survive and adapt. Recent literature highlights that these emotional reactions can also be a medium for socio-ecological change, for example Laranjeira et al. (2024) states that expressions of ecological hope can mitigate negative emotional impacts and stimulate collective action. Thus, in the context of film, characters can represent the internal process of emotional transformation, from anxiety to meaningful drive, rather than being passive victims of crisis.

### Ecological Hope as a Transformative Response

Although it may seem contradictory, ecological hope is not the opposite of ecological anxiety, but rather an emotional response to that anxiety. In environmental psychology studies, ecological hope is typically discussed as an active optimism that motivates participation in environmental solutions. Bender and Rawluk (2023), in their research on social environmental change, introduced the concept of adaptive hope as a flexible model for addressing socio-ecological uncertainty, demonstrating that hope must adapt to changing realities. In cinematic experiences, ecological hope can be expressed through small moments of solidarity, human awareness, or symbols of continuity, signs that resilience and optimism can grow from anxiety. Through these representations, the film demonstrates that ecological anxiety can be a catalyst for ecological hope, ultimately encouraging humans to seek meaning and sustainability amidst crisis.

### **Glotfelty's Ecocriticism (1996)**

Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) is one of the founding figures of ecocriticism, defining the discipline as the analysis of the interaction between literature and the physical environment. Glotfelty's work demonstrates that environmental issues are not only scientific or political but also have cultural and emotional dimensions. According to him, literature and film significantly shape people's views of nature and their interactions with it. In the realm of film, this approach is known as eco-cinema, a study of the intersection of film and ecology. Chu (2017), in his eco-cinema study, introduces how aesthetic, ethical, and political theories relate to ecological images on screen. Glotfelty's (1996) approach indirectly encourages researchers to explore how ecological themes are conveyed through symbols, characters' emotions, and visual metaphors. In this study, Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical framework serves as the primary theoretical foundation for analyzing how *The End We Start From* (2023) employs cinematic elements to reflect on fears and hopes associated with climate disasters. Through this framework, the study also emphasizes that emotions such as anxiety and ecological hope are not merely individual reactions, but cultural reflections that describe the relationship between humans and nature in the context of a global crisis.

### **Film as Cultural Narrative: *The End We Start From* (2023)**

*The End We Start From* (2023), directed by Mahalia Belo, presents a post-flood narrative in London that focuses not only on natural destruction but also on how humans assign meaning in adversity. Laffly (2023) highlights that the film's tension does not depend on spectacular visual effects but rather on the power of real anxiety in sustaining a new life. This film combines two powerful emotions, such as anxiety and hope, as continuous phases in the main

characters' emotional journey, rather than two opposing poles. In ecological film studies, *The End We Start From* can be positioned as an example of reflective eco-cinema that invites viewers to contemplate the relationship between humans and nature. The film serves as a cultural text that conveys ecological awareness through visual language, natural symbols, and emotional narrative patterns, demonstrating that film can be a medium for emotional and ethical transformation.

By combining literature on these four theoretical elements, this study constructs a comprehensive analytical framework. The connection between emotion and hope confirms that psychological transformation is central to cinematic ecological representation. The review of contemporary literature and classical theory in this study aims to bridge the gap between philosophical ecocritical studies and emotional studies in film, while also contributing to environmental humanities and ecological film studies.

## **METHOD**

This research was a descriptive qualitative study that employed Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical framework to examine the representation of ecological anxiety and hope in Mahalia Belo's film *The End We Start From* (2023). The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to interpret meanings constructed through narrative and visual representations (Pilcher & Cortazzi, 2024). According to Sandelowski (2000), qualitative description enables researchers to capture and portray phenomena as they naturally appear, making it suitable for analyzing symbolic and emotional expressions in visual literary works, especially film.

The primary data were obtained from the full version of *The End We Start From* (2023) on the official streaming platform, *Netflix*. The film, which runs for approximately 120 minutes, was watched five times in full, and several scenes were revisited for detailed annotation. A total of 12 key scenes were selected based on their relevance to the themes of eco-anxiety and ecological hope.

During the data collection stage, the researchers served as the primary instrument, supported by scene note-taking sheets and scene coding tables, which systematically documented visual, verbal, and emotional cues. Each scene was coded based on the appearance of nature, its symbolic significance, character responses, and environmental imagery. Next, researchers reviewed several supporting sources, such as relevant books and journal articles, to strengthen the theoretical foundation and analysis. In the data analysis process, researchers implemented two stages of analysis within Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical approach framework:

- **Narrative and Characterization Analysis:** examining storylines, character interactions, and emotional developments that are explained by the main characters, particularly their responses to ecological disaster and environmental change. This analysis helped reveal ecological tension and resilience.
- **Social and Ecological Context Analysis:** connecting the film's portrayal of climate disaster to broader social and ecological realities, such as uncertainty, displacement, and collective recovery (Briandana et al., 2024).

From these two stages of analysis, the data were interpreted through Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical lens to reveal ecological anxiety as a form of collective trauma and ecological hope as an act of human resilience in *The End We Start From* (2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The film *The End We Start From* (2023) reflects the complex emotional relationship between environmental anxiety and ecological hope in the context of the climate crisis. Drawing on Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical approach, this study examines how humans perceive and respond to ecological disasters through emotional, symbolic, and narrative forms. The analysis focuses on two dimensions: (1) eco-anxiety represented through confusion, fear, and uncertainty, and (2) ecological hope expressed through empathy, renewal, and resilience. These emotional dimensions are visually constructed through cinematography and the characters' behavioral expressions. Each scene in this film is analyzed through its academic elements, such as framing, lighting, and visual composition, and supported by insights from previous studies. According to Glotfelty (1996), environmental representation in visual media not only mirrors ecological issues but also generates affective awareness among audiences. Thus, emotional reactions such as anxiety and hope become significant in understanding how individuals internalize the experiences of environmental crisis. To provide a clearer picture of these emotional dimensions, Table 1 summarizes the manifestations of ecological anxiety and ecological hope, their psychological impacts, analytical interpretations, and coping strategies as depicted in the film *The End We Start From* (2023).

**Table 1. The Representation of Eco-Anxiety and Ecological Hope in *The End We Start From* (2023)**

Scene(s)	Representation/manifestation	Psychological Impact	Analytical Interpretation (+/-)	Coping/Hope Strategy
<b>Figures 1-3</b>	Fear and confusion during the flood and displacement, shown through rising water, evacuation, and the flooded city	Anxiety, helplessness, loss of control	(+) Awareness of nature's uncontrollable force (-) Panic and emotional instability	Accepting human vulnerability and the material instinct to protect life
<b>Figures 4-5</b>	Despair and isolation expressed through silent frustration at the barbed wire and the scream in the dark sea	Loneliness, frustration, hopelessness	(+) Emotional release and introspection (-) Alienation and breakdown	Expressing emotions as a means of self-healing and finding meaning in chaos
<b>Figure 6</b>	The collapse of civilization visualized through the image of London submerged under water	Realization of fragility and ecological loss	(+) Awakening of collective ecological awareness (-) Critique of modern civilization's vulnerability	Recognizing structural failures and moral responsibility towards nature
<b>Figures 7-8</b>	Reconnection and social healing through scenes of sharing food and smiling among trees	Emotional calm, empathy, belonging	(+) Hope grows through social and natural connections (-) Lingering vulnerability and post-disaster trauma	Building solidarity and restoring harmony with the environment
<b>Figures 9-11</b>	Reflection and renewal depicted through the boat journey, calm sea, and viewing ruins with the baby	Acceptance, awareness, regeneration	(+) Transformation of anxiety into reflection and renewal (-) Emotional fatigue and grief from past loss	Strengthening ecological resilience and responsibility
<b>Figure 12</b>	Symbolic closure represented by the final title, <i>The End We Start From</i>	Hope, renewal, optimism	(+) Message of rebirth after destruction and moral awakening (-) Awareness of irreversible loss and uncertainty	Visions of a sustainable future and ecological rebirth

### Eco-Anxiety in *The End We Start From* (2023)

Ecological anxiety (eco-anxiety) is the most dominant emotional dimension in the film *The End We Start From* (2023). As explained by Pihkala (2022), eco-anxiety is a psychological stress that arises from awareness of environmental degradation and threats to human survival. This form of anxiety is not only personal but also existential, as it gives rise to a sense of loss of meaning in the human relationship with nature. In the film, ecological anxiety is conveyed through the main character's emotional reactions, as expressed through body language, facial expressions, and sound design, creating inner tension. This anxiety develops from a fear of disaster to an awareness of human limitations in the face of nature's power.



**Figure 1: What's Going On (Minute 06:27)  
(Source: Screenshot documentation of the film)**

In this opening scene, the main character, a mother, sits on the floor of her house as water begins to seep in. She hugs her pregnant belly, her eyes anxious and her voice trembling as she asks softly, “What’s happening?” a question that arises from confusion and fear. The slow, creeping sound of water serves as an auditory metaphor for the invisible development of an ecological disaster. Instead of heightening the panic through loud sounds, the film’s director, Belo, uses diegetic silence to depict the suffocating emotions. According to Hiltunen and Rainio (2023), minimalist sound design in eco-cinema often creates psychological tension that reflects climate anxiety, enabling the audience to experience the silence of environmental destruction. The faint movement of water and distant echoes build a rhythm that is almost maternal in its slowness, persistence, and inevitability. This symbolizes the uncontrollable force of nature encroaching on human life. The main character’s rigid posture, panicked gaze, and absence of other dialogue build a visual language of paralysis.

As emphasized by Pihkala (2022), ecological anxiety rarely appears suddenly but develops gradually through confusion, silence, and the realization that the once-familiar world is transforming in incomprehensible ways. The film *The End We Start From* embodies this process through visual silence and calm sounds, transforming environmental change into an emotional experience of quiet terror.



**Figure 2: Leaving behind the Flooded Home in London (Minute 12:10)  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)**

The scene above depicts a crucial moment when the main character and her husband rush to leave their home amidst the devastating floods that have engulfed London. Here, a newborn baby is held up as a symbol of new hope in these threatening conditions. In this visual, not only is the physical image of the flood dominant, but also the captured emotional expressions, such as panic, fear, and the warmth of a family supporting each other amidst the crisis.

Analysis of this image shows how the chaos of nature triggers a profound emotional reaction, reflecting the concept of eco-anxiety, the ecological anxiety felt by the main character (Garcia et al., 2010). However, the presence of the baby also highlights the dimension of eco-hope, the ecological hope that grows from human solidarity and resilience. The devastated city serves as a symbolic backdrop for environmental instability, forcing humans to adapt and survive. This role of the image is supported by Glotfelty's (1996) theory of ecocriticism, which posits that visual representations trigger ecological awareness through the viewer's emotional experience (Chu, 2017). Thus, this image serves as an effective figure for analyzing the characters' interactions with the ecological anxieties they experience.



**Figure 3: A Flooded Landscape with a House Partially Submerged (Minute 13:26)  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)**

This image depicts a waterlogged landscape with a partially flooded house. This visual signifies the vulnerability of human civilization to extreme environmental change. This far-from-perfect house symbolizes how fragile the infrastructure and social order humans have built are when faced with unexpected natural disasters caused by climate change and ecological damage. Visually, the submerged house serves as a poignant symbol of the imbalance between humans and nature, prompting viewers to reflect on the long-term impacts of human activity on the environment (Chu, 2017). This image invites the viewer to recognize how ecological vulnerability impacts not only nature but also human survival more broadly. The reviewer notes that the image requires in-depth analysis and support with evidence from secondary sources.

From an ecocriticism perspective, this image is not merely a background illustration; instead, it demonstrates the concrete impact of ecological change on human existence

(Glotfelty, 1996). The flooding signals a widespread disruption to living systems and reflects increased vulnerability due to environmental factors (Borzoni, 2020). This fragility is also relevant in the context of the threat of climate change to the sustainability of human civilization, which impacts health, security, and social welfare (Steel et al., 2022)



**Figure 4: The Main Character Stands in front of a Barbed Wire Fence (Minute 47:46)  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)**

The main character stands silently in front of a wire fence. She has her eyes closed, and bruises and minor cuts are visible on his forehead. Her hands tightly grip the iron wire, while her body is slightly hunched. Amidst the silence, she vents his emotions with a short curse, uttering the word “*fuck*” in a muffled but clear voice. There is no other dialogue; only the overcast sky and the quiet atmosphere reinforce the cold, empty space around him.

This brief but sharp outburst symbolizes the emotional distress the main character has been holding back. She does not cry, nor does she scream at length, but utters one harsh word amidst the silence to convey the emotional devastation she is experiencing. This is not a physical loss, but rather an outburst of frustration and boredom that arises after enduring an extreme situation.

This scene depicts the moment when a person can no longer contain the emotional pressure arising from a damaged, unstable environment. In their ecocritical study, Laranjeira et al. (2024) explain that such conditions can lead to psychological symptoms such as anxiety, despair, and even anger at situations that cannot be controlled. The wire fence in this scene symbolizes the separation between the protagonist and a secure and stable past. Through a serene visual approach, the film emphasizes that the ecological crisis affects not only the physical but also the emotional dimensions of humankind. Under constant pressure, losing control of one’s emotions is not a sign of weakness, but rather a human response to a drastically changed world.



**Figure 5: The Main Character Screams in the Dark Sea (Minute 1:20:03)  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)**

The main character screams across the vast ocean against a dark, cloudy backdrop, her voice shattering the silence and underscoring the profound fear amidst the destruction of London. This scene conveys a powerful sense of loneliness and inner struggle, serving as a visual manifestation of eco-anxiety. This emotional response reflects the fear, anxiety, and even despair caused by ecological threats (Orrù & Mannarini, 2024), while highlighting the isolated yet everyday experiences of individuals facing environmental crises.

From Glotfelty's (1996) ecocriticism perspective, such visual representations not only depict physical destruction but also raise ecological awareness through the audience's emotional experiences. The visual and auditory elements of this scene effectively reflect the psychological dimensions of eco-anxiety, demonstrating how film can serve as a medium for understanding human interactions with the environment and the emotional impact of ecological crises. As such, this scene serves as a key figure for academic analysis, critically connecting the characters' emotional responses to the ecological context.



**Figure 6: London Flooded (Minute 1:30:44)  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)**

This scene depicts a ruined and flooded London. This image demonstrates that what was once considered progress and stability is fragile when faced with the forces of nature. This is evident in the skyscrapers and highways that typically symbolize technological advancement, now submerged and inoperable. This scene not only depicts the impact of a massive flood but

also implies a veiled critique of the way humans build civilization, often without considering the balance with the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, the visualization of a submerged city also conveys an important critique of the resilience of modern civilization. Human-built infrastructure, such as tall buildings and highways, is highly vulnerable to unpredictable natural forces. Through its visuals, the film invites viewers to reflect on how contemporary human lifestyles are often based on the assumption that humans can control nature.

From a visual ecocritical perspective, the image of a submerged city reflects systemic failures that undermine the principles of sustainability. As Chu (2017) explains, eco-cinema, or ecological cinema, raises environmental awareness through visual language that encourages viewers to reflect on the climate crisis and its accompanying structural injustices. Evidence from the film, such as scenes of collapsed buildings or cut-off roads, clearly supports this argument, illustrating that human development that fails to consider the environment has serious consequences.

### **Film as a Medium to Raise Ecological Awareness**

Films serve not only as entertainment but also have great potential in shaping public ecological awareness. In a recent study, Monani et al. (2024) explained that film can act as a reflective medium that encourages viewers to re-examine the relationship between humans and the environment. Through a visual and narrative approach, films can deliver emotional experiences that not only depict the ecological crisis but also voice hope and a call for change. *The End We Start From* (2023) operates within this framework, not merely depicting destruction but also inviting viewers to reflect on its impact and establish a more ethical relationship with nature.



**Figure 7: The Main Character is Eating with Other Refugees (Minute 44:24)  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)**

At the refugee camp, the main character begins to open up to others, marking a shift from silence to subtle connection. She carries her baby while eating with other mothers. When one

of them asks about her child's age, she replies softly, "He's three months old." Her brief but willing answer shows the first step toward rebuilding social engagement. In previous scenes, she avoided communication and showed a withdrawn attitude, but here, eye contact, a more confident posture, and a relaxed tone indicate a readiness to reconnect. The cinematography in this scene also supports the emotional change, as seen in the warmer lighting, the camera widening to include other figures in the frame, and the contrast with the narrow, dim shots of the flood scene. The soft background sounds of quiet chatter, the clatter of cutlery, and the voices of children serve to recreate a sense of normality and togetherness. Through these subtle aspects, the film *The End We Start From* (2023) demonstrates that meaning and hope emerge not from grand events but from everyday actions that strengthen relationships between individuals.

According to Bender and Rawluk (2023), hope often stems from small daily interactions, rather than heroic actions. Small interactions, such as talking, sharing, or simply listening, can help rebuild emotional stability after disasters. This finding aligns with that of Hoppe et al. (2023), who found that interpersonal care and empathy play a crucial role in coping with ecological stress. Thus, this picture shows that the path from ecological anxiety to ecological hope is not marked by extraordinary recovery, but by the quiet courage to reconnect with others and reimagine a sense of security within the community.



**Figure 8: Two Women Smile among the Trees (Minute 45:49)  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)**

This scene features two women sitting outdoors among trees. They smile at each other with serene expressions, offering a sense of respite from the tension that had pervaded the film's narrative. The surrounding environment is lush and shady, further enhancing the peaceful atmosphere.

From a visual ecocritical perspective, this scene illustrates the restoration of humanity's relationship with nature following ecological stress. The smiles and light interactions among the characters indicate the psychological calm that comes from direct contact with the

environment. This aligns with the findings of Ríos-Rodríguez et al. (2024), who demonstrated that exposure to natural environments can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, research by Vitale and Bonaiuto (2024) revealed that nearly all studies report a positive impact of nature-related aspects on emotional regulation. This scene illustrates how human interaction with nature can support social and emotional recovery after a crisis.



**Figure 9: Two Women Sit on a Boat, Holding the Babies (Minute 1:05:41)**  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)

The visualization in this scene highlights human solidarity and resilience in the face of environmental crises. The interaction and care between mother and child reflect crucial social support in the face of natural disasters. Research by Lam and Li (2025) found that exposure to climate-related disasters was associated with increased loneliness and decreased social functioning in the year of the event and for up to 2 years afterward. This image also emphasizes that ecological hope is not merely symbolic but is linked to the human capacity to care for and protect future generations. This aligns with the ecocritical approach, which emphasizes the importance of human relationships with the environment in building socio-ecological resilience.



**Figure 10: The Main Character Sits Calmly Facing the Vast Sea (Minute 1:15:51)**  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)

In this scene, the main character sits alone facing a vast, open sea. The expansive view of the sea and her calm body movements create a reflective atmosphere, emphasizing a moment of introspection after a series of stressful events. The composition of the image emphasizes the

contrast between the vast scale of nature and the small scale of humanity, evoking a sense of human limitations and vulnerability in the face of natural forces.

Through a visual ecocritical lens, this scene reflects on the limitations of our control over nature and the importance of cultivating a more conscious relationship with the environment. According to research by Linder and Lusseau (2024), human interaction with nature is crucial to maintaining human well-being, especially in the context of the ecological crisis. This scene encourages viewers to recognize that realistic ecological awareness is not merely a concept but a foundation for building resilience and a more harmonious relationship with nature.



**Figure 11: The Main Character Views the Ruins of the City from a Boat (Minute 1:31:15)  
(Source: Documentary screenshot of the film)**

In this scene, the main character sits in a boat, holding her baby and gazing at the submerged ruins of a city. Her expression is calm yet reflective, underscoring her awareness of the ecological changes underway. The baby in her arms symbolizes the continuation of life and human regeneration, demonstrating that life persists despite environmental disasters. The presence of the baby underscores the connection between the new generation and humanity's responsibility to rebuild its relationship with nature, while encouraging the audience to recognize the importance of ecological awareness and the need to act to preserve environmental sustainability.

This scene serves as a moment of profound reflection in the story, as a mother sits quietly with her baby, watching the entire city sink before them. The boat is not just a means of transportation, but also a symbol of the transition from an old, broken world to an opportunity to rebuild the bond between humans and nature. The main character's perspective on the submerged city reveals an awareness that the environment is not merely a backdrop but a vital part of the human emotional and social journey. The presence of the baby symbolizes renewal, demonstrating that life continues despite the world's destruction.

According to Chu (2017) in *Eco-cinema Theory and Practice*, film can raise environmental awareness through emotional and symbolic experiences that are closely linked to visual narratives. *Our End Begins From* uses this quiet moment to emphasize that, from the ruins of civilization, humans face the choice to reflect on their relationship with nature, better appreciating, understanding, and preserving the passion.



**Figure 12. The Film's Closing Titles (Minute 1:35:04)**  
**Source: Screenshot documentation of the film**

The title displayed at the end of this section carries powerful symbolic meaning. The phrase "*The End We Start From*" conveys the idea that, from destruction and disaster, a new beginning can emerge. Implicitly, this serves as a moral statement that the ecological crisis is not only the end of the old world but also an opportunity to build a more holistic and humane ecological awareness.

The scene depicting the phrase *The End We Start From* serves not only as a visual element but also as a meaningful conclusion to the story. This phrase emphasizes that environmental damage is not the end of everything, but rather the first step toward a more conscious and respectful lifestyle.

From an eco-cinema perspective, such symbols invite viewers not only to witness the damage but also to reflect on their relationship with the surrounding environment. As explained by Merdhi and Imanjaya (2022), ecological documentaries can raise critical awareness by combining images and narratives that encourage reflection and empathy towards sustainability challenges.

The film *The End We Start From* (2023) effectively reflects the complex emotional interplay between ecological anxiety and ecological hope in the context of the global climate crisis. Using Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical approach, the film showcases the emotional dimension through visualizations of the fear, confusion, and uncertainty experienced by the main character, depicting eco-anxiety, while simultaneously evoking ecological hope through human solidarity and emotional resilience. The cinematography, including framing, lighting,

and visual composition, not only presents images of environmental destruction but also awakens a deep ecological awareness in the audience. By emphasizing emotional and symbolic narratives, this study demonstrates how film can serve as a reflective medium that internalizes the psychological and social experience of environmental crisis, while fostering optimism for building a more harmonious relationship between humans and nature in the future. Thus, the film not only presents a story of survival amid disaster but also inspires a more responsible, humanistic ecological awareness.

## CONCLUSION

The film *The End We Start From* (2023) offers a powerful portrayal of human emotional responses to an environmental crisis. Through intimate narratives and symbolic visuals, the film portrays various forms of emotions, including fear, sadness, confusion, and the will to survive, that arise in response to ecological destruction. These emotional reactions not only reflect individual anxiety but also show humanity's connection to nature in a precarious situation.

On the other hand, ecological hope is a vital element that lends balance to the story. Symbols such as the birth of a baby, calm air, and a slowly recovering landscape signify that, amid destruction, there is still the possibility of starting over. By presenting these elements visually and narratively, the film enables the audience to perceive concrete examples of recovery and continuity, encouraging them to envision a future in which humans and nature coexist more sustainably.

Drawing on Glotfelty's (1996) ecocritical approach, this research highlights that film is not merely an entertainment medium but a reflective space that can convey the ecological crisis through its emotional and symbolic dimensions. Through a compelling story and evocative visuals, *The End We Start From* encourages the audience to develop a deeper, more responsible ecological awareness.

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