



**NATURAL EXPLOITATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS  
DEPICTED IN *IO***

**THESIS**

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**BY:**

**GINA PARIPURNA**

**2110014211004**

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITAS BUNG HATTA**

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## LEMBAR PERSETUJUAN

Judul : Natural Exploitation and Environmental Crisis  
Depicted in *IO*  
Nama Mahasiswa : Gina Paripurna  
NPM : 2110014211004  
Program Studi : Sastra Inggris  
Fakultas : Ilmu Budaya

disetujui oleh:

Pembimbing,

**Femmy Dahlan, S.S., M.Hum.**

diketahui oleh:

Dekan Fakultas Ilmu Budaya



**Diana Chitra Hasan, M.Hum., M.Ed., Ph.D.**

Ketua Program Studi Sastra Inggris

**Dra. Nova Rina, M.Hum.**





## LEMBAR PENGESAHAN

Dinyatakan lulus setelah dipertahankan di depan Tim Penguji  
Program Studi Sastra Inggris Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Bung Hatta

Judul : Natural Exploitation and Environmental Crisis  
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Nama Mahasiswa : Gina Paripurna  
NPM : 2110014211004  
Program Studi : Sastra Inggris  
Fakultas : Ilmu Budaya

Padang, 29 Agustus 2025

### Tim Penguji

1. Femmy Dahlan, S.S., M.Hum.
2. Prof. Dr. Elfiondri, S.S., M.Hum.
3. Dra. Nova Rina, M.Hum.

### Tanda Tangan

1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....

diketahui oleh:



Dekan Fakultas Ilmu Budaya  
Diana Chitra Hasan, M.Hum., M.Ed., Ph.D.

Ketua Program Studi Sastra Inggris

Dra. Nova Rina, M.Hum.



## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify the originality of this thesis which I now submit to fulfill a requirement for an S1 in the English Department Faculty of Humanities Universitas Bung Hatta. The content of this thesis is entirely my work. All assistance received in writing this thesis and the sources cited have been acknowledged within the text of my work.

Padang, 29 Agustus 2025



Gina Paripurna

# NATURAL EXPLOITATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS DEPICTED IN *IO*

Gina Paripurna<sup>1</sup>. Femmy Dahlan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student of the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Bung Hatta

Email: [ginapariurna13@gmail.com](mailto:ginapariurna13@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer of the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Bung Hatta

Email: [femmydahlan@bunghatta.ac.id](mailto:femmydahlan@bunghatta.ac.id)

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how natural exploitation and environmental crisis are depicted in *IO*. The writer employs ecocriticism theory in doing this study. This study is engaged with a qualitative descriptive approach. The data were gathered using non-participatory and observational method. The writer finds a total of 33 data in this study, 14 of which come under the category of natural exploitation, and 19 come under the category of environmental crisis. For natural exploitation, there are four categories found: (1) The use of chemicals, (2) Human expansion, (3) The dependency on emissions and artificial systems, (4) The use of animals in experiments and engineered genetics. For environmental crisis, there are five categories found: (1) Air and water crisis, (2) Climate crisis, (3) Resource depletion, (4) The extinction of wildlife, (5) The devastation of the earth. In conclusion, the movie consistently depicts natural exploitation done by humans and the impact on the environment as presented in the environmental crisis. These findings highlight the toxic behavior by humans in the natural environment that makes the environment struggle to survive. this study gives the reader environmental awareness through the movie *IO*.

**Keywords:** *IO, Ecocriticism, Natural Exploitation, Environmental Crisis*

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed an unexpected escalation of the environmental crisis that threatens the stability of Earth's ecosystems and human civilization. Climate change has accelerated dramatically, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reporting that global temperatures have already risen by approximately 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, triggering more frequent extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and disruptions to agricultural systems worldwide (Pörtner et al. 6). The last five years, biodiversity loss has reached alarming proportions, with current extinction rates estimated to be 100 times higher than natural background rates, prompting scientists to declare that humans are experiencing the sixth mass extinction event in Earth's history (Ceballos et al. 2). Deforestation, freshwater scarcity, and various forms of pollution further compound these crises, creating what scientists have termed "planetary emergency." These issues depict the unsustainable relationship between human activities and natural systems, showing the urgent need for reassessment of humanity's interaction with the environment.

Environmental crisis, as conceptualized in environmental studies and ecological criticism, refers to the severe, often irreversible degradation of natural systems resulting from anthropogenic activities that exceed the Earth's regenerative and absorptive capacities (Buell 73). This concept encompasses both acute environmental conditions and systemic deterioration of ecosystems that threaten



their functionality and resilience. Natural exploitation, meanwhile, denotes the extraction, utilization, and commodification of natural resources and systems primarily for human benefit, often without adequate consideration for ecological sustainability or the intrinsic value of non-human life (Plumwood 109). The illustration of both natural exploitation and environmental crisis has emerged broadly along with the development of technology. The depiction of both has emerged in various media, such as television, cinema, newspapers, and literary texts.

Literary works are distinguished by their imaginative and creative expression, employing language in innovative ways. These works possess aesthetic value, with their formal structure enhancing their artistic impact, and they examine multifaceted themes that offer profound understanding into human experience (Wellek and Warren 21). The evolution of cinema has elevated film to a distinctive form of literary analysis. Movies utilize visual language, film structure, and symbolic elements that parallel conventional literary techniques while introducing unique aesthetic dimensions (Osborne 42). In the realm of education and social transformation, visual media have also been proven to increase learners' understanding and engagement, especially when used to communicate complex topics (Elfiondri et al. 56). Media representations of the environmental crisis and natural exploitation have evolved significantly over the past decades, reflecting shifting societal concerns and ecological awareness. Science fiction, when specifically addressing climate change, has emerged as a significant genre that directly engages with ecological concerns through speculative narrative. This genre

has experienced remarkable growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, paralleling increasing public awareness of the environmental crisis formed by what is identified as a cultural need to imagine and process potential ecological futures (Svoboda 46).

In analyzing environmental concepts in literature, ecocriticism offers an understanding of ecological concerns. The term “ecocriticism” was first coined by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*, where he proposed applying ecological concepts to the study of literature (Rueckert 107). Along with this emergence of ecocriticism, Greg Garrard, in his seminal work *Ecocriticism*, further developed this theoretical approach, where he emphasizes that it is associated with the implementation of the intricate relationship between humans and their environment and how humans behave in it (4). He particularly focuses on how ecocriticism can be investigated through six tropes: pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animals, and the earth (7). In literary studies, ecocriticism has emerged as a pivotal framework for critiquing how human-nature stewardships are investigated.

In order to analyze natural exploitation and environmental crisis, one such film examined by the writer is *IO*, a science-fiction film directed by Jonathan Helpert, released in 2019, which serves as a notable example of how humans behave and impact nature. This film portrayed a post-apocalyptic Earth abandoned by most of humanity due to environmental destruction. Centering Sam Walden, a scientist who remains on earth, struggling to understand and survive in a world ravaged by human exploitation of natural resources. This film shows the main character, Sam, who is left alone on the earth while others have moved to the appropriate planet for



living, called IO. The earth is pictured with dirty air, an abandoned, apocalyptic look of the unused manmade vehicles, and collapsed and abandoned buildings. The lack of natural resources encouraged Sam to continuously experiment in her private lab, hoping that the Earth could recover from the apocalypse and be a safe place for humans to live. Due to many areas of the earth being in crisis, Sam used animals like bees and her pig in her experiment, creating solutions for her to survive. This experiment had killed the animals used, so there were no any species of animals left in that environment. This experiment led to the loss of natural resources and resource depletion in other cases. This movie situates itself in the form of crisis environment due to a catastrophic event and experimental activities that require natural elements, where there is overuse of chemicals that contaminate many aspects of the environment.

The uniqueness of *IO* as the object of this study is that the film pictures the more complex environmental crisis and the natural exploitation as the impact of human activities toward natural resources compared with the previous studies such as a study by Veronika (2024) in *Elit Journal: International Journal of Education, language, and Literature* entitled *Exploitation of Nature Portrayed in The Sea Beast Movie* which is focused only on the animals exploited by humans. *IO* depicts the relevant and more complex data based on the theory of ecocriticism, where the movie shows the environmental crisis, continuing with the natural exploitation where humans take control over nature, causing significant changes to the environment. The portrayal of an individual struggling to survive in a devastated environment also reflects a deeper issue of ecological illiteracy—how limited

knowledge and disconnection from sustainable values can contribute to the crisis itself. As supported by Dahlan et al. (33), community-based education, even in unconventional settings like correctional institutions, has the potential to foster environmental responsibility and long-term behavioral change. In this context, films like *IO* may serve not only as mirrors of environmental degradation but also as catalysts for eco-education and critical reflection on humanity's role within nature.

In light of the previous statements, the writer is interested in analyzing environmental disasters and natural exploitation as depicted in the Netflix original entitled *IO*. The writer considers choosing this movie due to the interest in environmental issues happening in today's era, which can also shape the future of human life on earth as represented through *IO*. Therefore, to analyze the object of this study, the writer is engaged with ecocriticism. Referring to the research topics, ecocriticism is best suited to the center of this study. Therefore, "Natural Exploitation and Environmental Crisis Depicted in *IO*" is a suitable title for this study.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the background stated above, the research questions are:

1. How is natural exploitation depicted in *IO*?
2. How is the environmental crisis portrayed in *IO*?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Based on the research questions stated above, the purposes are:

1. To describe the natural exploitation portrayed in *IO*.
2. To describe the environmental crisis depicted in *IO*.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study uses the object of data gathered from Netflix's original science fiction movie. The scope of the research is limited to examining two primary aspects: the portrayal of environmental crisis and the representation of natural exploitation by human activities as depicted in the film's visuals, script, and character interactions. The first research question will explore how *IO* pictures natural exploitation based on Garrard's ecocriticism theory, which examines six aspects: pollution, apocalypse, dwelling, wilderness, animals, and the earth. The second research question will investigate how *IO* depicts the environmental crisis due to the exploitation of nature by human activities. The writer limits the analysis to the cinematic elements of the movie, including its plot, characters, visual effects, script, and dialogue, as the primary analysis. The research excludes extended discussions on unrelated themes such as interpersonal relationships or non-environmental conflicts, unless they directly contribute to the ecological issue.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is hopefully useful in both aspects - theoretical and practical:

- A. Theoretically, this study is expected to be useful in understanding ecocriticism, especially in enriching knowledge of natural exploitation and environmental crisis represented through movies. It demonstrates how visual screens communicate complex

environmental issues and how these issues relate to current world situations.

- B. Practically, this study is expected to be useful in raising awareness about environmental disasters and the consequences of human exploitation of nature. For educators, this study might be a tool for environmental education, and for environmental government, this study can offer insight into the role of media in shaping public perceptions of environmental issues.