

## Naturalism in Shakespeare's Drama: Coriolanus

Syamsul Bahri<sup>1\*</sup>, Syifa Inayah Hanani Zulfa<sup>2</sup>, Nadia Kumari<sup>3</sup>, Steffani Trifena Napitupulu<sup>4</sup>, Jessica Hotnida Nainggolan<sup>5</sup>  
Universitas Negeri Medan

**Corresponding Author:** Syamsul Bahri; [syamsul.bahri0401@gmail.com](mailto:syamsul.bahri0401@gmail.com)

---

### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords: Naturalism, Drama, William Shakespeare, Coriolanus*

*Received : 5 November*

*Revised : 23 December*

*Accepted: 23 January*

©2026 Bahri, Zulfa, Kumari, Napitupulu, Nainggolan: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



### ABSTRACT

Naturalism is a literary and dramatic movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century to depict human life with scientific precision, highlighting the power of heredity, environment, and social conditions in shaping behavior. This study analyzes William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (1608) through the theoretical framework of Vernon L. Parrington's seven principles of naturalism—Objectivity, Frankness, An Amoral Attitude Toward Material, Determinism, Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail, Characters' Liability to Specific Enticements, and Pessimism. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the research examines selected dialogues from the play to reveal how naturalistic elements manifest within Shakespeare's characterization and thematic construction. The findings show that the aspect of Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail dominates the play (28%), followed by Objectivity and An Amoral Attitude Toward Material (16% each), while Pessimism appears least (8%). These results indicate that *Coriolanus* portrays human existence as governed by social hierarchy, political power, and instinctual forces that undermine individual freedom. The protagonist's downfall—shaped by pride, class conflict, and moral rigidity—reflects the deterministic worldview central to naturalism. Ultimately, Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* embodies the essence of naturalistic tragedy by illustrating that human actions are constrained by external pressures rather than guided by free will, positioning the play as an early precursor of modern naturalist drama

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

Literature is widely regarded as a profound form of human expression, encompassing not only emotions and ideas but also cultural values and social realities conveyed through both spoken and written language. As a symbolic medium, literature does not merely deliver messages but also interprets reality and shapes human perception of the world. Throughout history, it has served as a means of preserving traditions and transmitting collective human experience across generations. According to Mallillin (2024), literature in the 21st century reflects contemporary life and gives voice to social, political, and cultural issues, showing that it is not only a mirror of reality but also an active participant in reshaping it. This perspective highlights the transformative power of literature, where texts are not confined to individual interpretation but interact with broader ideological and cultural frameworks. Literary works often challenge dominant narratives and question existing structures of power, making them critical tools for both cultural preservation and social change. Generally, literary works are categorized into several main genres such as poetry, prose, nonfiction, and drama, each carrying unique structural and thematic traits while sharing the same purpose—to illuminate human reality. Among these, drama holds a distinctive role because of its performative nature, allowing written narratives to be embodied, enacted, and directly experienced by the audience.

Drama is one of the most fundamental and significant branches of literature, designed to portray human conflict through dialogue and stage performance. It presents life, dilemmas, and values in a direct and visually expressive manner. According to Hu and Shu (2025), drama education enhances students' critical thinking skills through collaboration and communication, as dramatic activities foster analytical reasoning and problem-solving in group interactions. This underscores the pedagogical value of drama, where learning extends beyond linguistic mastery into the development of interpersonal, cultural, and reflective capacities. In drama, the narrative is constructed not only through words but also through bodily movement, vocal expression, and the physical presence of actors, as well as the spatial and temporal dimensions of performance. These multiple layers of expression make drama a unique convergence of literature and performing arts, where meaning is co-created by both performers and audiences. Because of these performative aspects, drama becomes an immersive form of literature capable of delivering sharp social criticism, probing deep psychological conflicts, and engaging in philosophical reflection. Furthermore, the adaptability of drama allows it to respond to contemporary issues such as globalization, identity, and social justice, ensuring its relevance across different cultural contexts. Over time, drama has been examined through various theoretical and aesthetic approaches such as realism, expressionism, absurdism, and naturalism, each providing distinct perspectives on how the stage represents and questions human existence.

Naturalism is a significant literary and theatrical movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century as a response to the idealism and emotional excess of earlier traditions. Rooted in determinism and scientific observation, it seeks to represent life with objectivity, focusing on the influence of heredity,

environment, and social conditions on human behavior. Rather than celebrating individual freedom, naturalist writers and dramatists reveal the ways in which people are constrained by forces beyond their control. According to Danielsson and Brandt (2023), contemporary interpretations of naturalism increasingly intersect with ecocriticism and posthumanism, expanding the framework from human determinism to include nonhuman agencies, material environments, and ecological systems that shape human experience. This perspective demonstrates that naturalism is not only tied to its classical foundations in Darwinian evolution and social determinism, but also remains adaptable to present concerns such as environmental crisis and the role of nonhuman forces in literature. In dramatic practice, naturalism highlights the struggles of ordinary characters, often those on the margins of society, whose lives unfold with everyday language, unembellished realism, and often tragic inevitability. Through this lens, naturalism continues to be a powerful mode of exploring the limits of human agency and the pervasive influence of external forces.

William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (1608) stands as one of his most politically and socially charged tragedies, portraying the complexities of power, class conflict, and human pride. The play is selected as the object of this study because it has rarely been examined through the lens of naturalism, despite containing strong elements that reflect the relationship between individuals, their environment, and the social forces that shape human destiny. Through a naturalistic perspective, *Coriolanus* provides profound insight into how determinism, environmental influence, and social pressure define human behavior and fate. The protagonist's downfall – driven by pride, moral rigidity, and the clash between the ruling class and the common people – illustrates that human actions are not purely governed by free will but are largely determined by external conditions that limit autonomy. Its realistic portrayal of political ambition, social tension, and human frailty exposes the harsh realities of life shaped by systemic and societal forces. Viewed through naturalism, *Coriolanus* not only reflects the political dynamics of Shakespeare's era but also reveals the limitations of human control in the face of social and environmental constraints. Ultimately, the play embodies the naturalist vision of humanity – driven by instinct, molded by circumstance, and bound within the inescapable framework of social order.

Naturalism in drama does not act merely as a stylistic embellishment or a romanticized portrayal of life, but as a lens through which the harsh realities of human existence are critically examined, particularly those shaped by social hierarchy, political structures, and inherited circumstances. In William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, naturalism is evident in the depiction of characters who are constrained by societal expectations, political ambition, and personal pride. The tragedy of *Coriolanus* himself exemplifies how an individual's choices are limited by both internal temperament and external pressures, including the demands of family, the expectations of the Roman state, and the volatile sentiments of the populace. A particularly naturalistic moment is seen in *Coriolanus*' exile and subsequent alliance with the Volscians, where his downfall reflects not merely personal failure but also the inescapable consequences of rigid

social structures and the tension between individual will and communal authority.

Coriolanus: "No more of this, it does offend my heart. Pray now, be gone."

Volumnia: "Thou shalt no sooner March to assault thy country than to tread – Trust to't, thou shalt not – on thy mother's womb That brought thee to this world."

Coriolanus: **"O mother, mother! What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope, The gods look down, and this unnatural scene They laugh at. – Oh, my mother, mother! ... You have won a happy victory to Rome; But for your son – believe it, O, believe it, Most dangerously you have with him prevailed, If not most mortal to him. But let it come."**

Volumnia: "Thou art my warrior; I help to frame thee."

This dialogue vividly illustrates naturalistic pessimism, particularly through Coriolanus's cry to his mother. The line **"O mother, mother! What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope, The gods look down, and this unnatural scene They laugh at"** emphasizes the view that human destiny is nothing more than a tragic spectacle in the eyes of higher powers. Here, Coriolanus realizes that his choice is not a personal triumph but his own destruction. Although Volumnia calls him the "warrior" she has shaped, that identity is merely a social construction that traps him in an inescapable dilemma. According to Vernon L. Parrington, naturalism is "pessimistic realism" (pp. 324–325), where individuals are powerless against their environment, and the outcome is usually hopeless sorrow. Coriolanus, as a character, embodies this perfectly: he understands that siding with Rome means "victory" for his mother and his nation, but "mortal" for himself. The pessimism in this scene demonstrates that there is no path to true freedom – whatever he does, he inevitably moves toward ruin.

Previous research on Coriolanus shows that this drama continues to be the focus of Naturalism aspects. According to Heidarzadegan and Yıldız (2020), in their study "Kitchen Sink Drama and Naturalism: Trends of Post-War English Theatre", naturalism is reflected in Kitchen Sink Drama, which depicts the everyday struggles of the working class in post-war England through domestic settings and realistic representation, aligning with Zola's rejection of idealization in favor of detailed portrayals of daily life. Similarly, Bhatta (2021), in "Influence of Past on Present: A Naturalistic Study of Ghosts", highlights that Ibsen's Ghosts reveals how human beings are bound by heredity and societal structures, showing Mrs. Alving and Oswald as victims of forces beyond their control – Oswald with his inherited syphilis and Mrs. Alving constrained by social conventions – thus reinforcing Zola's deterministic notion that the past inevitably shapes the present. In another study, Bahri et al. (2022), "An Analysis of Naturalism in Sean Baker's Movie The Florida Project", apply Parrington's framework of naturalism, which emphasizes determinism, objectivity, pessimism, and the focus on negative details, to illustrate how the protagonist is confined within a harsh social reality. Mashree (2023), in "The Effect of Naturalism School on Eugene O'Neill's Anna Christie", observes that O'Neill incorporates Zola's naturalist principles to underline social and psychological determinism, leaving characters with minimal agency over their destinies.

Likewise, Wulandari and Surur (2024), in their article “Practice of Naturalism in Naguib Mahfouz’s *Midaq Alley*”, identify aspects such as determinism, objectivity, pessimism, harsh environment, and unexpected plot turns – derived from Zola’s theory – as means to portray the grim conditions of lower-class life in post-colonial Cairo. Collectively, these studies demonstrate a consistent application of naturalist principles – whether through Zola’s or Parrington’s frameworks – in presenting human existence truthfully, devoid of romanticism or idealization. However, unlike previous studies that primarily focused on modern and post-war contexts, this research investigates naturalist elements in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* – a classical text that predates the formal emergence of naturalism – to reveal how deterministic and environmental forces were already inherent in early modern drama.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Naturalism is a literary movement that emerged from realism, yet it emphasizes a more scientific and deterministic perspective on human beings and their surroundings. Within this view, humans are regarded as biological entities governed by natural laws and social conditions that lie beyond their full control. Vernon L. Parrington (1927) characterizes naturalism as a form of “pessimistic realism,” portraying individuals as victims of a mechanized and inescapable world. He identifies seven core aspects of naturalism: objectivity, frankness, an amoral attitude toward material, determinism, a tendency toward negative details, characters’ susceptibility to specific temptations, and pessimism. Through these elements, naturalist works depict characters without moral idealization, bound by instinct, and deeply shaped by both environmental forces and biological impulses.

### *Objectivity*

Naturalism is a literary movement that emerged from realism, yet it emphasizes a more scientific and deterministic perspective on human beings and their surroundings. Within this view, humans are regarded as biological entities governed by natural laws and social conditions that lie beyond their full control. Vernon L. Parrington (1927) characterizes naturalism as a form of “pessimistic realism,” portraying individuals as victims of a mechanized and inescapable world. He identifies seven core aspects of naturalism: objectivity, frankness, an amoral attitude toward material, determinism, a tendency toward negative details, characters’ susceptibility to specific temptations, and pessimism. Through these elements, naturalist works depict characters without moral idealization, bound by instinct, and deeply shaped by both environmental forces and biological impulses.

Kent: “*Good my lord, enter*”

Lear: “**....Poor naked wretches, wheresoe’er you are, That bide the pelting of this pitiless night, How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides ... defend you from seasons such as these?**”

Fool: “*Come not in here, nuncle, here’s a spirit. Help me, help me!*”

Kent: “*Give me thy hand, who’s there*”

In this passage, Lear reflects on the plight of the poor who must endure the storm without a home. Shakespeare makes no moral comment on whether

this suffering is right or wrong, merely highlighting the fragile human condition faced by nature. Lear himself is portrayed as an old man finally realizing his weakness, neither a glorified hero nor a doomed villain. This objectivity allows the audience to see Lear as an ordinary human being – a product of his age, his relationships with his children, and the forces of nature that oppress him. In this way, King Lear presents life “as it is,” in accordance with the principles of naturalism.

### ***Flippant Disposition Toward Material***

This aspect shows a dismissive attitude toward material possessions. Characters are often portrayed as indifferent to money, property, or personal belongings. It reflects a life of instability and spontaneous survival. They lack a strong sense of responsibility regarding ownership or financial consequences. This behavior is often rooted in poverty or constant life pressure. Characters seem to live day by day without long-term planning.

Lear: **“Pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination: there’s money for thee.”**

Gloucester: *“O, let me kiss that hand!”*

Lear: *“Here, wipe it first, it smells of mortality.”*

Gloucester: *“O ruin’d piece of nature! This great world should so wear out to nought.”*

Lear’s utterance **“there’s money for thee”** illustrates the aspect of *flippant disposition toward material*. He gives away money carelessly, as though wealth or possessions are meaningless and easily discarded. There is no sense of responsibility toward the value of money, since Lear is more absorbed in his disturbed imagination and inner suffering than in the practical worth of what he gives. This action shows that for him, material possessions hold no lasting significance, functioning merely as tools to sustain conversation or channel his emotions. Within the framework of naturalism, this reflects an indifference toward ownership or financial consequences, arising from life’s pressures and psychological instability. Lear seems to live day by day without long-term planning, where money and property cease to be the center of concern and instead become trivial matters, easily released without hesitation.

### ***Determinism***

Determinism is the idea that humans do not have full control over their lives. Every decision and action is influenced by biological, social, and economic factors. In naturalist works, characters are shown as victims of circumstance, not as agents of free will. They struggle, but outcomes are determined by external forces. Their efforts to escape fate often end in failure. This creates a strong sense of tragedy in the narrative.

Lear: **“Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! ... Here I stand, your slave, a poor, infirm, weak and despis’d old man.”**

Fool: *“O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o’ door.”*

Lear: *“I am a man more sinn’d against than sinning.”*

Kent: *“Alack, bare-headed! Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel; some friendship will it lend you ‘gainst the tempest.”*

In this excerpt, the principle of determinism, which is central to naturalism, is clearly evident. Lear refers to himself as a “slave,” powerless before the forces of nature (storm, thunder, rain) as well as social conditions (the betrayal of his daughters). The statement **“I am a man more sinn’d against than sinning”** reflects his awareness that his suffering is not solely the result of his own actions, but rather the consequence of external factors that befall him. Even the Fool reminds him that it is better to seek shelter than to fight against nature, while Kent suggests finding a hovel for protection. All of this dialogue emphasizes that human beings, no matter how socially powerful (even a king), remain victims of environmental circumstances and biological pressures. Naturalism rejects the notion that humans fully control their destinies; instead, Lear becomes a tragic example of how a person is determined by the forces of nature, aging, and destructive social relationships.

#### *Inclination Toward Negativity in choice of detail*

Naturalism tends to focus on dark and tragic elements of life. The details often include poverty, illness, failure, or trauma. These are used to emphasize the harsh reality of human existence. Writers aim to highlight aspects of life that are often ignored or hidden. This narrative choice reinforces the pessimistic tone of the story. Negativity is not for shock value, but for an honest portrayal of reality.

Lear: **“Down from the waist they’re Centaurs, though women all above: but to the girdle do the gods inherit, beneath is all the fiends’; there’s hell, there’s darkness, there’s the sulphury pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie!”**

Gloucester: *“O, let me kiss that hand!”*

Lear: *“Here, wipe it first; it smells of mortality.”*

Gloucester: *“O ruin’d piece of nature! This great world should so wear out to nought.”*

Lear describes the female body with grim and pessimistic detail: hell, darkness, stench, and decay. This description illustrates how naturalism selects bleak and pessimistic details rather than romantic or idealized ones. Instead of perceiving love or the beauty of the human body, Lear sees only its repulsive dark side. Even when Gloucester wishes to honor Lear by kissing his hand, Lear responds cynically that his hand smells of mortality. Such a choice of detail underscores the naturalist view that the world is a place of suffering, corruption, and ruin that cannot be romanticized. Life is portrayed as it truly is—harsh, painful, and devoid of eternal beauty.

#### *Characters are Liable to Enticements*

Naturalist characters are often easily tempted by instinctual urges. Things like sex, power, or money frequently drive their actions. These desires arise spontaneously and are difficult to control. Characters are unable to resist these temptations due to their environment and psychology. They act based on impulse, not logic or morality. This reveals the limited power of free will in human behavior.

Cordelia: *“Nothing, my lord.”*

Lear: *“Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.”*

Cordelia: **“Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth: I**

**love your majesty according to my bond, nor more nor less."**

Lear: *"So young, and so untender?"*

This dialogue illustrates how Lear's weakness—his ego and his need for flattery—leads him to misjudge. He rejects the honest Cordelia, while trusting Goneril and Regan who offer false praise. Lear's attitude reflects a naturalist character with a weak will, easily swayed by emotional impulses and social influence. He is unable to resist the temptation of hearing sweet words, so his decisions are driven by desire rather than rational judgment. In naturalism, humans are often depicted as fragile beings, controlled by instinct and fleeting moods. Lear ultimately becomes a victim of his own weakness of will.

### **Frankness**

Frankness refers to the open portrayal of basic human drives. Authors do not shy away from showing hunger, fear, or sexual desire. Everything is described plainly and without censorship. The aim is to depict humans as biological beings. There is no idealization—only raw, unfiltered reality. This reflects a scientific approach to observing human behavior.

Lear: **"Let copulation thrive, for Gloucester's bastard son was kinder to his father than my daughters got 'tween the lawful sheets."**

Fool: *"That sir which serves and seeks for gain, and follows but for form, will pack when it begins to rain."*

Lear: *"Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?"*

Fool: *"Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise."*

Lear speaks with striking frankness about sexuality and lineage, even comparing legitimate children with illegitimate ones. For him, social legitimacy does not guarantee affection, so he mocks that illicit unions may in fact produce children more devoted than those born of lawful marriage. This attitude reflects frankness in naturalism, namely the rejection of moral pretenses of the Victorian age (or Elizabethan in Shakespeare's context). Lear does not filter his words but openly addresses human biological drives: sex, love, and procreation. Thus, the dialogue reveals a naturalistic dimension that rejects moral idealization and emphasizes the instinctive realities of human existence as they truly are.

### **Pessimism**

Pessimism in naturalism shows life as a hopeless struggle. Characters often fail despite their best efforts. They exist within a system that cannot be defeated. The world is portrayed as cold, harsh, and indifferent to individual suffering. Endings are typically tragic or sorrowful. This view emphasizes that humans are merely pawns in the forces of nature and society.

Lear: **"When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools."**

Gloucester: *"O, let me kiss that hand!"*

Lear: *"Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality."*

Gloucester: *"O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world should so wear out to nought."*

Lear's words reflect a profoundly pessimistic outlook on life. From birth, humans are depicted as crying not because life promises happiness, but because the world is nothing more than a "stage of fools." This view illustrates the

naturalistic belief that human beings are never truly capable of resisting uncontrollable forces, whether internal (instincts, emotions) or external (environment, society, and nature). Even when Gloucester attempts to show respect, Lear highlights only the fact of death – that the human body is mere flesh destined for decay. The entire exchange reinforces an image of the world as bleak, hopeless, and futile, in line with the naturalist principle that human existence often ends in inevitable sorrow and despair.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with William Shakespeare's drama *Coriolanus* as the primary data source. According to Borg (2024), naturalistic qualitative research involves exploring phenomena in their natural context and analyzing non-numerical data such as narratives and dialogues to understand what, how, and why a social phenomenon occurs. In line with this view, the data in this study consist of dialogues and monologues taken from the script, selected purposively based on their relevance to the seven elements of naturalism proposed by Vernon L. Parrington. Each element is analyzed through a dialogue example considered to best represent the principle of naturalism. The analytical process is carried out through several stages. First, the entire *Coriolanus* script is thoroughly read to understand the plot, character development, and the socio-political context presented in the drama. Second, specific dialogues and monologues are identified based on their direct correlation with each element of naturalism. Third, the selected data are analyzed contextually to show how the elements of naturalism emerge through character actions, conflicts, and social relations in the drama. This approach ensures that the analysis remains systematic, text-based, and aligned with the theoretical framework, thus providing a clear understanding of how *Coriolanus* represents the main characteristics of naturalism in literary works.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tabel 1. Percentage of Parrington Component

| Parrington Component                              | Number of dialogues | Percentage |
|---|---------------------|------------|
| Objectivity                                       | 4                   | 16%        |
| Frankness   | 3                   | 12%        |
| An Amoral Toward Material                         | 4                   | 16%        |
| Determinism                                       | 3                   | 12%        |
| Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail | 7                   | 28%        |
| Characters are Liable to Specific Enticements     | 2                   | 8%         |

|              |    |      |
|--------------|----|------|
| Pessimism    | 2  | 8%   |
| <b>Total</b> | 25 | 100% |

Naturalism as a literary approach highlights heredity, social conditions, and environmental influences as the primary forces shaping human conduct and fate. Individuals are often portrayed not as entirely free agents, but as products of biological inheritance and external pressures that limit their autonomy. Emerging in the late nineteenth century, this movement extended realism by emphasizing scientific detachment and psychological depth. Characters within naturalist works are frequently trapped in circumstances beyond their power, where personal choice holds little significance. In this framework, William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* can also be examined through a naturalist lens, as it presents the struggle between individual ambition and the binding forces of political and social structures. The tension between personal pride, civic duty, and class dynamics illustrates how human action is conditioned by elements outside one's control. The following discussion will analyze *Coriolanus* using Vernon L. Parrington's seven features of naturalism, demonstrating how these traits are woven into the play's text and character relationships.

### **Objectivity**

( Scene 1 : Act 1)

First Citizen: "...the leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularise their abundance; our sufferance is a gain to them. Let us revenge this with our pikes, ere we become rakes: **for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.**

Second Citizen: "Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?"

First Citizen: "Against him first: he's a very dog to the commonalty."

Second Citizen: "Consider you what services he has done for his country?"

In the opening scene of *Coriolanus*, the conversation between the First Citizen and the Second Citizen presents an objective picture of the social tension in Rome. The First Citizen voices the grievances of the common people who suffer from hunger, while the patricians live in abundance. His statement, "**for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge,**" shows that this demand arises from basic needs rather than emotional hatred. When the Second Citizen responds with a rational question about Coriolanus, the dialogue remains within the framework of facts and considerations, without moral or sentimental exaggeration. Here, Shakespeare acts as a neutral observer, portraying the reality of class conflict without offering ethical judgment or glorification. He places the plebeians and patricians in a factual situation: one hungry, the other abundant. This reflects the principle of objectivity in naturalism as explained by Vernon L. Parrington, namely the author's attitude of depicting human beings as products of their socio-economic environment, rather than as the result of moral choice or individual free will. Thus, this exchange between the citizens affirms how naturalism works through the scientific and neutral presentation of reality.

### **Frankness**

(Scene 1: Act 1)

Caius Marcius: *"He that will give good words to thee will flatter beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs, That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you, The other makes you proud."*

First Citizen : *"Against him first: he's a very dog to the commonalty."*

Caius Marcius: **"What's the matter, you dissentious rogues, That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion, Make yourselves scabs?"**

Second Citizen: *"He's not confirmed yet: we may deny him yet."*

In this excerpt, Coriolanus shows a blunt and harsh attitude toward the people. His line, **"What's the matter, you dissentious rogues, that, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion, make yourselves scabs?"** reflects the brutal frankness typical of naturalism. He does not disguise his contempt but directly calls the citizens "rogues" and compares them to a repulsive skin disease. This coarse language is not softened or censored but presented as it is, consistent with the social conditions and the patrician view of the plebeians. This bluntness illustrates the principle of Frankness in naturalism, which is the courage to present reality in its raw form, including the vulgar and bitter aspects of social life. Shakespeare portrays Coriolanus as an aristocrat who speaks without moral filter, openly expressing his hatred and disgust toward the common people. In doing so, he affirms how naturalism presents social reality honestly and without concealment, unlike other literary styles that might soften such insults.

#### *An Amoral Toward Material*

( Scene 1 : Act 3 )

Menenius: **"His nature is too noble for the world: He would not flatter Neptune for his trident, Or Jove for's power to thunder.** His heart's his mouth: What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent."

Sicinius: *"Yet he loves not the common people."*

Menenius: *"Faith, there had been many great men that have flattered the people, who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved, they know not wherefore: so that, if they love they know not why, they hate upon no better a ground."*

Brutus: *"But he hath so planted his honours in their eyes, And his actions in their hearts, That for their tongues to be silent, and not confess so much, Were a kind of ingrateful injury."*

In this conversation, Menenius describes Coriolanus as a figure who is indifferent to material gain or worldly rewards. His words, **"His nature is too noble for the world: He would not flatter Neptune for his trident, Or Jove for's power to thunder,"** show that Coriolanus is not interested in pursuing wealth or power by lowering himself or seeking favor. He prefers to follow his pride and principles rather than calculating material profit and loss. This attitude reflects the aspect of *an amoral toward material* in naturalism, particularly as explained in your journal: the character is portrayed as someone who lives without a strong attachment to property or possessions, as if merely following the spontaneity of life. Coriolanus does not live with long-term planning or financial orientation but acts based on instinct and emotion. In this way, Shakespeare illustrates how a nobleman can remain "indifferent" toward material things, driven instead by personal pride rather than economic needs or the desire for ownership.

### ***Determinism***

( Scene 3 : Act 5 )

Volumnia: "...*The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us, As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit Is that you reconcile them.*"

Coriolanus: "...*My mother bows; As if Olympus to a molehill should In supplication nod: and my young boy Hath an aspect of intercession, which Great nature cries 'Deny not.'*"

Volumnia: "*Speak to me, son: Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour, To imitate the graces of the gods...*"

Coriolanus: "***O mother, mother! What have you done? You have won a happy victory to Rome; But, for your son—believe it, O, believe it, Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd.***"

In this scene, Coriolanus finally yields to the persuasion of his mother, Volumnia, to make peace with Rome. His words, "**O mother, mother! What have you done? You have won a happy victory to Rome; But, for your son... most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,**" show that the decision was not purely his own will but rather the result of family pressure and blood ties. He submits to filial duty, even though the choice threatens his own life. This situation reflects the principle of determinism in naturalism. Coriolanus is not truly free to choose his path; his actions are determined by external factors, namely his mother's demands and his social obligations as a Roman. Shakespeare illustrates that human beings, no matter how powerful, are still controlled by the environment and circumstances that shape them. Thus, determinism becomes clear: Coriolanus's fate is dictated by social and familial forces, not by his individual free will.

### ***Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail***

( Scene 1 : Act 1 )

Caius Marcius: "He that will give good words to thee will flatter beneath abhorring. **What would you have, you curs, That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you, The other makes you proud. Where he should find you lions, finds you hares; Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no, Than is the coal of fire upon the ice, Or hailstone in the sun.**"

First Citizen: "*Against him first: he's a very dog to the commonalty.*"

Caius Marcius: "*What's the matter, you dissentious rogues, That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion, Make yourselves scabs?*"

Second Citizen: "*He's not confirmed yet: we may deny him yet.*"

In this conversation, Coriolanus describes the people with details full of negativity. His line, "**What would you have, you curs, That like nor peace nor war? The one affrights you, The other makes you proud. Where he should find you lions, finds you hares; Where foxes, geese...**" portrays the citizens as curs, timid hares, or foolish geese. All these metaphors reflect Shakespeare's tendency to highlight the darker side of the common people through Coriolanus's perspective. This is what is meant by Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail: the author selects harsh, degrading, and grim details to portray social reality. Instead of presenting the citizens as heroes or noble victims, Shakespeare depicts them through the hateful insults of an aristocrat. In this way, he emphasizes the darkness in class relations, revealing the deep divide bet

ween patricians and plebeians. This scene reinforces the hallmark of naturalism, which prefers to present reality with bitter and unpleasant details rather than with idealized or romantic ones. Coriolanus serves as the channel for this depiction: the people are seen not as honorable human beings, but as weak and degraded creatures.

### *Characters are Liable to Specific Enticements*

(Scene 2; Act 2)

First Senator: *"He hath deserved worthily of his country: therefore, please you, most reverend and grave elders, to desire the people to call him to the consulship."*

Second Senator: *"We pray the people, **that they may call him consul.**"*

First Senator: *"God save thee, noble consul!"*

Citizens: *"God save thee, noble consul!"*

In this scene, the citizens finally shout "God save thee, noble consul!" after the senators urge them to accept Coriolanus as consul. The line "**that they may call him consul**" shows that the people do not choose out of free will but because they are persuaded by higher political authority. They are easily influenced by the senators' position and status, so their voices are merely the result of social pressure rather than an independent decision. This reflects the aspect of Characters are Liable to Specific Enticements in naturalism. Shakespeare portrays how individuals or groups can be moved by specific external forces – in this case, the persuasion and authority of the senators. The people are depicted as a mass easily directed, without critical analysis or resistance. Thus, the scene demonstrates that humans, particularly within a social structure, often do not act freely but rather submit to the influence of persuasion coming from those in power.

### *Pessimism*

(Scene 5: Act 5)

Aufidius: *"Thou boy of tears!"*

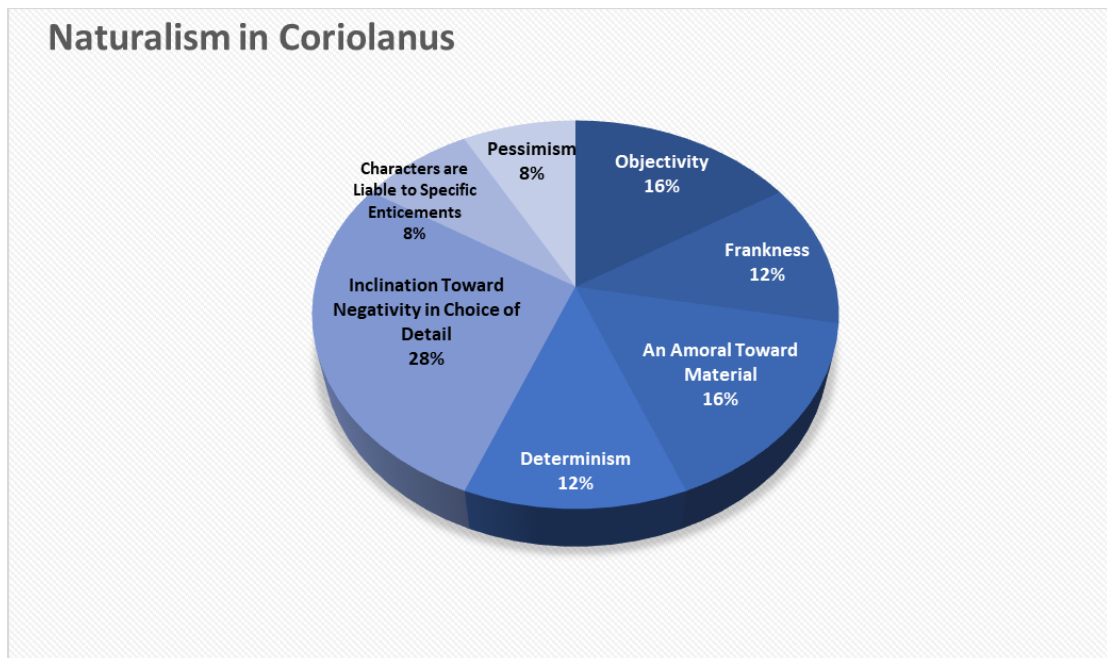
Coriolanus: *"**Cut me to pieces, Volsces; men and lads, Stain all your edges on me. Boy! False hound! If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there, That, like an eagle in a dovecote, I Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli: Alone I did it. Boy!**"*

Aufidius: *"He's down; let him be."*

Lords: *"Bear from hence his body. Though in this city he Hath widow'd and unchilded many a one, Which to this hour bewail the injury, Yet he shall have a noble memory."*

In this final scene, Coriolanus faces his death with utter despair. His line, "**Cut me to pieces, Volsces; men and lads, Stain all your edges on me,**" shows that he has surrendered himself to a tragic fate, fully aware that there is no escape other than to die at the hands of his enemies. These words are filled with bleakness: not hope, but a request to be destroyed. This is what the aspect of Pessimism in naturalism refers to. Shakespeare presents Coriolanus's end not as a victory or reconciliation, but as ruin. The fate of this great figure concludes in blood and humiliation, affirming the naturalist view that human beings, no matter how powerful, cannot escape suffering and destruction. In this way, the play rejects romantic optimism and instead highlights the inevitable darkness of life.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



As a naturalist tragedy, *Coriolanus* by William Shakespeare presents a profound exploration of the tension between human will and the overpowering forces of heredity, environment, and social structure. Through the framework of Vernon L. Parrington's seven principles of naturalism—Objectivity, Frankness, An Amoral Attitude Toward Material, Determinism, Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail, Characters' Liability to Specific Enticements, and Pessimism—the play exposes how individual freedom is systematically undermined by the demands of politics, class hierarchy, and psychological instinct. The analysis reveals that the aspect of Inclination Toward Negativity in Choice of Detail (28%) dominates the text, emphasizing Shakespeare's commitment to depicting life in its most unembellished and tragic form, where corruption, pride, and social hostility define human interaction. This prevalence reflects the playwright's refusal to idealize human nature, instead portraying it as inherently flawed and conditioned by external realities. In contrast, Pessimism (8%) emerges as the least frequent aspect, appearing primarily in climactic scenes such as Coriolanus's death, which encapsulates the futility of resisting predetermined fate. The scarcity of explicit pessimism, however, does not lessen its thematic weight; rather, it functions as the ultimate culmination of all deterministic and social forces that govern the protagonist's downfall. Thus, *Coriolanus* embodies the essence of naturalism by illustrating that human existence operates within an inescapable cycle of power, pride, and submission. Shakespeare, writing centuries before the formal articulation of naturalist theory, intuitively grasped that human behavior is not governed by free choice but by inherited instincts and the coercive mechanisms of society. Through this tragic vision, the play affirms that the struggle for autonomy within rigid social frameworks is not a path toward liberation, but an inevitable journey toward

destruction—a central truth that situates Coriolanus as a timeless precursor to the naturalist tradition in modern drama.

### FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so further research is needed on the topic of Naturalism in Shakespeare's Drama: Coriolanus in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

### REFERENCES

- Bahri, S., Rahmadani, D. A., & Harahap, E. S. (2022). An analysis of naturalism in Sean Baker's movie *The Florida Project*. *Nusantara Hasana Journal*, 2(2), 124–136.
- Bhatta, A. D. (2021). Influence of past on present: A naturalistic study of *Ghosts*. *The Batuk: A Peer Reviewed Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 7(2), 55–66.
- Borg, C. (2024). Qualitative Naturalistic Research. Dalam *Encyclopedia of Translation and Interpreting*.
- Brako, D. (2024). Theatrical metamorphosis: Naturalism's legacy in shaping scenic design narratives. *International Journal of Education Humanities and Social Science*, 7(3), 215–223.
- Danielsson, K. M., & Brandt, K. K. (Eds.). (2023). *The nonhuman in American literary naturalism: Ecocritical theory and practice*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Heidarzadegan, N., & Yıldız, Z. K. (2020). Kitchen sink drama and naturalism: Trends of post war English theatre. *The Journal of Applied Linguistics and Applied Literature: Dynamics and Advances*, 8(1), 139–149.
- Luo, S., Ismail, L., & Ahmad, N. K. K. (2024). Using process drama in EFL education: A systematic literature review. *Heliyon*, 10(11), e31936. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31936>
- Hu, Y., & Shu, J. (2025). The effect of drama education on enhancing critical thinking through collaboration and communication. *Education Sciences*, 15(5), 565. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15050565>
- Mashree, A. S. (2023). The effect of naturalism school on Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie*. *International Academic Journal of Education & Literature*, 4(3), 24–30.
- Wulandari, B. A., & Surur, M. (2024). Practice of naturalism in Naguib Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*. *Poetika: Jurnal Ilmu Sastra*, 12(2), 99–108.
- Sheikh, I. A., Khushi, & Karki, K. K. (2024). Determinism and Descent: A Naturalistic Exploration of Human Tragedy in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Its Lasting Impact on Literary Traditions. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 9(1).
- Khan, M. E. I. (2014). Vividness of human nature in Shakespeare: An introduction. *All Research Journal*, 1(2).
- Naturalism (theatre). (n.d.). Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalism\\_\(theatre\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naturalism_(theatre))
- Naturalism or Realism. (2011, April 20). NPS Shakespeare Blog. <https://npshakespeare.blogspot.com/2011/04/naturalism-or->

realism.html

- Naturalism Meets Classicism: The Training and Early Shakespearean Career of Dame Judi Dench. (n.d.). Academia.edu. [https://www.academia.edu/26582604/Naturalism\\_Meets\\_Classicism\\_The\\_Training\\_and\\_Early\\_Shakespearean\\_Career\\_of\\_Dame\\_Judi\\_Dench](https://www.academia.edu/26582604/Naturalism_Meets_Classicism_The_Training_and_Early_Shakespearean_Career_of_Dame_Judi_Dench)
- Fink, H. (n.d.). Tyrone Guthrie's Radio Theatre and the Stage Production of Shakespeare: Beyond Naturalism. *TRIC: Theatre Research in Canada / Recherches Théâtrales au Canada*.
- Lee, J. (2009). Shakespeare, Human Nature, and English Literature. *Textual Practice*, 23(2), 181–197.
- Carnicke, S. M. (1977). Naturalism to Theatricalism: The Role of Symbolism. *Theatre Journal*, 29(1), 45–59.
- Evolutionary Naturalism and Embodied Ecology in Shakespearian Performance. (n.d.). Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/shakespeare-survey-71/evolutionary-naturalism-and-embodied-ecology-in-shakespearian-performance-with-a-scene-from-king-john/1705D2528E41BBE28E12B9932D564786>
- William Shakespeare: The original Nature boy. (2023). *Country Life*. <https://www.countrylife.co.uk/out-and-about/theatre-film-music/william-shakespeare-the-original-nature-boy-256325>
- Swisher, C., & Shamir, L. (2023). A data science and machine learning approach to continuous analysis of Shakespeare's plays. *arXiv preprint*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2301.06024>