

## DEPICTION OF NATURALISM IN THE NOVEL *TAFṢIL THĀNAWĪ* BY ADANIA SHIBLI

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**

Adania Shibli;  
 Emile Zola; *Minor Detail*; naturalism.

Unlike realist novels, whose characters can resist certain authorities, characters in naturalist novels cannot do so freely. Instead, they are often portrayed as swept up in pessimism and powerlessness. This study aims to explore the aspects of naturalism in the novel *Tafṣil Thānawī* (*Minor Detail*), which depicts the condition of Palestine under Israeli occupation following the Nakba tragedy, using Zola's naturalism as its theoretical lens. The research employs a descriptive-qualitative design: the novel is the primary source; secondary sources are books and journal articles on Shibli and Zola. Data were collected through close reading and note-taking, and analyzed via data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate five aspects of naturalism in *Tafṣil Thānawī*, including determinism: impaired rational judgment, and a persistent focus on minute details. Settings: the Negev Desert, the hut of the Israeli military commander, and Ramallah. Pessimism: the Bedouin girl's inability to resist and anxiety about traveling beyond her territory. Objectivity: third-person narration, the commander's directives to soldiers, and the stark depiction of the girl's burial. Plot twists: the Bedouin girl's murder and the female journalist's successful entry into Israeli territory.

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### الملخص

تحتفل الروايات الطبيعية عن الروايات الواقعية، فهي حين يستطيع بطل الواقعية مقاومة بعض السلطات، لا تتمكن شخصيات الطبيعية من ذلك بحرية، بل تصور وهي مندفعة في تيار من التشاوؤم والعجز. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف مظاهر الطبيعية في رواية تفصيل ثانوي التي تصور واقع فلسطين تحت الاحتلال الإسرائيلي عقب مأساة النكبة، وذلك عبر عدسة الطبيعية عند أميل زولا إطاراً نظرياً. تعتمد الدراسة منهجاً وصفياناً نوعياً؛ إذ تعدد الرواية مصدراً رئيساً، فيما تعد الكتب والمقالات العلمية حول اعمال شibli ومذهب زولا مصادر ثانوية. تجمع البيانات عبر القراءة المتمعنة وتدوين الملاحظات، وتحلل من خلال اختزال البيانات وعرضها واستخلاص الاستنتاجات. تظهر النتائج خمسة أوجه للطبيعية في تفصيل ثانوي: تجسد الحتمية ضعف القدرة على الحكم العقلي مع ترکيز دائم على التفاصيل الدقيقة؛ يتجلّى المكان في صحراء النقب وكوخ قائد الجيش الإسرائيلي ومدينة رام الله؛ ييرز التشاوؤم في عجز الفتاة البدوية عن المقاومة وفي القلق من السفر خارج نطاقها؛ تتسم الموضوعية باستخدام ضمير الغائب وتوجيهات القائد لجنوده والتصوير الصارم لعملية دفن الفتاة البدوية؛ وتنتابع التحولات السردية بقتل الفتاة البدوية ونجاح الصحافية في دخول الأرضي الإسرائيلي.

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## INTRODUCTION

If realist literature often portrays social reality as it is, naturalism examines social reality more sharply and in greater detail. Naturalism goes further by investigating how social reality influences the storyline, shapes the characters' behaviors and traits, and so on (Putriani, 2019). It can be likened to this: if realism is a depiction of reality using a camera that captures objects as they are, naturalism is a style of capturing with a magnified lens, so that what is not visible in an ordinary camera becomes more apparent through the magnified model of naturalist depiction (Wulandari & Surur, 2024). The difference lies in the fact that characters in realist literature are usually free to respond to and resist their environment and are also free to determine their fate and future. On the other hand, characters in naturalist literature tend to be resigned, accepting their circumstances, and a bleak or pessimistic future often overshadows the storyline. The lives and futures of characters in naturalist works are typically determined by the influence of the environment, nature, genetics, and the cruel fate they possess—profoundly decisive factors (Surur, 2023). Nevertheless, naturalist literary works aim to improve the condition of the world by highlighting critical situations that are part of the reality faced by the majority of people (Napitupulu, 2021).

Naturalism holds the belief that the environment has a profound impact on human life. The depiction of the setting can be a determining aspect of the story. This relates to the concept of determinism (Aulia, 2014). Such is the case in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* or *Minor Detail* (in its English edition), written by the Palestinian author Adania Shibli. The harrowing portrayal of the characters' suffering is conveyed through the novel's intricate narrative details. Similarly, Israel's sinister agenda to eliminate the remaining Bedouin inhabitants of the desert, in the name of territorial acquisition of the Negev, is also depicted through a structured plot and a defining setting, both supported by Shibli's captivating use of detail. Consider the opening lead of *Tafsīl Thānawī*, a hallmark of Shibli's style, which illustrates the determinism of the Negev Desert's environment with such vivid detail that it brings the desert to life, making the reader feel as if they are witnessing it firsthand:

لم يكن هناك ما يتحرك عدا السراب. مساحات شاسعة جرداً تعاقت حتى السماء مرتجفة  
تحت وقعه بسكون، فيما كاد ضوء شمس العصر الحاد أن يمحو الخطوط التي رسمت  
مرافعتها الرملية الباهنة الصفرة. كان كل ما يمكن تمييزه من تفاصيل هذه المرتفعات حدوداً  
واهنة التوت على غير هدى في انحناءات وانعطافات متباعدة

*Nothing moves in the vastness of the desert but a mirage. The vast, dry distance stretches as far as the eye can see into the silence of the sky. The sharp rays of the afternoon sun almost erase the boundary lines, the heights of which are composed of that pale yellow sand painting. These are all things that are easily distinguishable among the details of the gradations of elevation that weakly meander between twists and turns, and between the endless dunes and hollows (Shibli, 2017).*

The novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* begins by depicting the condition of Palestine after the Nakba event in 1949, using the perspective of an Israeli military soldier. During this period, the Israeli military, which had occupied Palestine, committed acts of rape and murder against several individuals, including a Bedouin girl, in the surrounding area of the Negev Desert. The Negev is a vast desert region located to the west of Palestine, bordering the Sinai Desert in Egypt. In the second part of the novel, the narrative shifts to the perspective of an anonymous Palestinian female journalist, who lives decades after the event, in a

condition where Israel continues to occupy Palestinian territories (Shibli, 2017). In some colonial countries, women suffered because of colonialism. So they started a resistance movement to protect themselves (Ilmia et al., 2024).

Although this novel depicts the occupation of Palestine by Israel, Shibli portrays the situation in Palestine as it is, without idealization and without taking sides with any of the characters. The use of two perspectives in the novel—the first being that of an Israeli military soldier, who works to monitor the occupied territories, and the second being that of a Palestinian female journalist, who attempts to uncover these events anonymously, without assigning specific names to the characters—demonstrates Shibli's objectivity in narrating the story. She aligns with humanity rather than siding with any specific group. This stands in contrast to the accusations made by those who opposed Shibli's receiving an award from the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2023.

This novel, set against the backdrop of the Nakba, has garnered wide attention not only from scholars who have examined it from various perspectives but also from the public, who perceive recent conditions in Palestine as resonant with the story it presents. *Tafsīl Thānawī* has been published in several languages, including English, Dutch, German, Portuguese, French, Italian, Polish, Serbian, Spanish, and Indonesian. On the other hand, scholars consider the novel particularly compelling when analyzed through the lens of Zola's naturalism (1880). Naturalism is a movement that offers a straightforward yet nuanced portrayal (Simangunsong et al., 2022). Naturalism can also be defined as writing that focuses on human life, showcasing both its strengths and weaknesses (Sya'baan & Tike, 2022). A novel narrative can be categorized as a naturalism model as long as it can be identified with the five distinctive elements of Zola's style. These five elements include determinism, objectivity, pessimism, the aspect of the setting, and an often-unexpected plot ending. In his essay *Le Roman Expérimental* (1880), Zola explains that determinism is the idea that human actions or behavior are caused by external factors in their surroundings, which can be understood and changed once their causes are identified. Zola also explains that determinism is different from fatalism, which assumes that change is impossible (Zola, 1880).

Objectivity is the presence of a story written as it is, without the narrator's bias, or the author seemingly not intervening in determining the fate of the characters (Surur, 2023). Although literary works are formed from the author's personal experiences or ideas, naturalist authors often appear to lack full control over their works (Aini, 2021). Pessimism is an element of the character's inability to fight against situations and conditions such as power and others, due to factors like the environment or fate, and so on. Setting refers to the environment that can influence the fate or condition of the character (Wulandari & Surur, 2024). Because a person's fate and personality are shaped not only by genetics but also by environmental influences (Abror & Mahdalena, 2024). Meanwhile, a plot twist is an ending that cannot be predicted or easily guessed by the reader due to the presence of the previous natural elements, such as determinism, pessimism, setting, and objectivity (Surur, 2023). Based on these five elements, it is known that most naturalist literary works explore psychological and social themes (Ayu, 2021).

Research on the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* has previously been conducted and can be divided into two main tendencies. The first examines *Tafsīl Thānawī* from a postcolonial perspective, including the study by Bushra Badareen, which aimed to explore the formation of Palestinian identity in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* through the lens of postcolonialism. This research revealed hidden truths as well as the resilience of the characters in facing oppression (Badareen & Eisheh, 2023). Furthermore, Nashef also used a postcolonial perspective to analyze the narrative of erasure and denial of Palestinian identity in *Tafsīl Thānawī*. Her study demonstrated that colonialism not only destroys physical spaces but also identity, memory, and voice (Nashef, 2022). Similarly, Aun Manal examined the

representation of historical trauma and resistance found in the novel (Manal, 2024).

The study by Maafa Ouala and Loucif Hajir aimed to analyze how Shibli, in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, reflects the dangers of the continuous erasure of history as a result of settler colonialism. Their findings show that Shibli employs archival practices and intertextuality as tools of resistance against colonialism. In this context, archiving functions to preserve the continuity of collective identity, while intertextuality expands the meaning of the archive by emphasizing the interconnectedness of history and memory (Ouala, 2024). Mustafa Mohammed's research, meanwhile, sought to explore forms of resistance to Israeli colonialism in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* through the postcolonial perspective of Frantz Fanon. This study revealed how the author employs poetic strategies, narrative techniques, and character representation to expose the reality of colonialism and demonstrate the function of literature as a tool of decolonization (Abdullah, 2025).

The second tendency focuses on analyzing the narrative techniques used by Shibli in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. This includes Ella Elbaz's research, which aimed to analyze the novel's poetic techniques of narrating Palestinian history. Her study concluded that Shibli uses small, seemingly minor details to construct historical events and employs alternative methods of documenting the past, prioritizing sensory experiences and disappearing landscapes (Elbaz, 2023). Similarly, Layla Al-Ammar's research sought to analyze the narrative distancing devices employed by Shibli across several of her novels, including *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. She highlighted the boundaries of Palestinian subjectivity and the prominence of secondary witnesses, which serve to recognize the trauma of others (Al-Ammar, 2022).

Previous studies that used a postcolonial perspective have focused on the realities of colonialism, historical trauma, identity erasure, and Palestinian resistance in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. Meanwhile, studies analyzing the novel's narrative techniques emphasized the poetic details and narrative strategies used by the author to depict trauma and document the past in the form of Palestinian history. In contrast, this study offers a new perspective in examining *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, namely through the lens of Zola's naturalism. This approach emphasizes that the behavior and fate of the characters are not only understood as symbolic representations of resistance or as narrative constructions, but also as the direct consequence of environmental or social determinism that binds their destiny. Thus, this research aims to contribute a new perspective to the study of *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, which has been previously dominated by postcolonial and narrative approaches.

The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method. It is referred to as descriptive qualitative because it seeks to reveal the elements of naturalism in Zola's works within the *Tafṣīl Thānawī* by Shibli. The data sources used in this research are primary and secondary. Primary data sources are fragments of narration and dialogue in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. Secondary data sources are books, journal articles, and websites related to Zola's naturalism. The data collection techniques used are the reading technique and the note-taking technique. The reading technique was done by reading the narration and dialogue in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. The note-taking technique is done by recording fragments of the novel's story that contain elements of Zola's naturalism. The data analysis technique used is the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, the data were identified through reading and grouped based on the identification of Zola's elements of naturalism; in the presentation stage, the data were presented and interpreted; then, in the conclusion stage, the data were concluded based on the previous presentation and interpretation, using the identification approach of the elements of naturalism in the novel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Naturalist literary works provide readers with the space to gradually, throughout the narrative, identify the interconnected influences and determine how the characters will react to their situations (Thompson, 2020). This is exemplified in the dialogue and narrative of *Tafṣīl Thānawī (Minor Detail)* by Shibli, which can essentially be approached through the lens of Zola's five elements of naturalism. When reading the novel in its entirety, many fragments—whether in terms of plot, narrative structure, or setting—are heavily infused with pessimism and determinism.

From the perspective of Zola's naturalism, which encompasses five key aspects—determinism, objectivity, pessimism, setting, and plot twist—all of these elements are abundantly present in the novel. Below, the elements of naturalism will be laid out, each illustrated with randomly selected excerpts from the narrative that contain these five features, followed by their respective analysis.

### Determinism in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*

The attitudes and actions of characters in literary works can be shaped by external factors, such as the influence of their environment on their development. The portrayal of a character living in an independent country will differ significantly from one residing in a colonized nation. An aspect of determinism, which arises from the setting, will influence the fate of fictional characters. Zola, as cited in Humaira & Surur (2025), argued that a character's behavior or destiny is shaped by their environment, heredity, or social conditions (Humaira & Surur, 2025). Thus, the character in naturalist literature is portrayed as a passive figure who accepts all the fate that befalls them as it is, as a form of response. In this light, the lives of the Palestinian people, who have lived for decades under Israeli occupation and domination, strongly shape the characters in Shibli's novel. Their behavior and responses to various situations are deeply influenced by the oppressive social and political conditions they endure. In the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, two aspects of determinism are evident: irrational behavior (Shibli, 2017: 32) and an interest in minor details (Shibli, 2017: 32).

The data above illustrates the element of determinism in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī (Minor Detail)*, particularly through the female journalist character, who is often unable to respond rationally to situations. Her actions frequently appear inappropriate or disproportionate when reacting to sudden events. As depicted in the narrative, while she is on her way to the office, the bus she is riding is abruptly stopped by Israeli soldiers for a patrol. The female journalist dares to ask a soldier to move the barrel of his gun away while speaking to her. This moment reflects her inability to act in a "normal" or composed manner.

Her irrational or abnormal behavior is not without cause—it stems from an environment filled with restrictions and a tense atmosphere. At that time, the area was under Israeli control, marked by various limitations enforced by the Israeli military, such as checkpoints and patrols. These numerous territorial constraints ultimately lead the female journalist to behave anxiously, unable to act normally or rationally due to a constant fear of crossing a line or making a reckless move. Her choice to remain at home most of the time is also a response to this oppressive atmosphere. She prefers isolation over the anxiety, fear, chaos, and worry brought on by possibly violating imposed boundaries.

The female journalist's attempt to ask the Israeli military to move the barrel of the gun away while speaking to her ultimately proven futile and does not change the way the soldiers address her. This illustrates that the external factor influencing and controlling the journalist's irrational and abnormal behavior is the total control exerted by the Israeli

military over her living environment. Environmental factors or external forces beyond human will, such as fate or surrounding circumstances, can shape or control the behavior of literary characters, placing them in situations that are difficult to resist or avoid (Surur, 2023). In naturalist literature, characters are indeed portrayed as living within a natural environment in which they can react to external and internal forces; however, they are ultimately powerless in the face of these forces (Zhang, 2010).

Although from a postcolonial theory perspective, such situations are seen as the result of the colonizer's domination over the colonized population, not due to natural factors, in this case, determinism. This interpretation is valid, as supported by the earlier study by Nashef (2023), who argued that such circumstances are rooted in ongoing colonialism. However, naturalism often approaches these situations from a more naturalistic and psychological standpoint, detached from the specific context of colonial oppression.

Furthermore, the fascination with minor details is depicted in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, where the female journalist is more interested in the small details, she encounters than in the main incident itself. This is evident in her fascination with the small details of a news report about the rape and murder of a Bedouin girl by Israeli military soldiers—specifically, the coincidence of the incident's date aligning with her birthday. This seemingly trivial detail compels her to conduct an independent investigation, as she does later in the story. The primary incident—rape and murder—has become a "daily occurrence" in the journalist's environment. Yet, for some reason, she becomes deeply intrigued, almost obsessed, with the case of the Bedouin girl's murder, which had been buried in old newspaper archives for decades.

This illustrates the use of the determinism element employed by the author in the narrative. The female character's tendency to focus more on minor details rather than the actual major incident indicates that external factors are responsible for her attitude and the basis of that attitude (*Naturalism in Literature: Definition & Examples*, n.d.-b). The systematic pattern of violence repeatedly carried out by Israel in Palestine makes the character, when hearing or receiving news about rape, no longer interested in the incident itself, but rather in its small details. Thus, it becomes evident that the whole phenomenon—including human behavior—is not a matter of coincidence or mystical fate, but has been determined by the law of cause and effect, namely determinism, which dominates human life. This model of naturalism differs from the study by Badareen & Eisheh (2023), which overlooks the explanation that external factors also influence the behavior and fate of characters.

### **Objectivity in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī***

The element of naturalism in the form of objectivity reflects the author's effort to remain neutral and not take sides with any character in the literary work. Although in the writing process, the author is certainly not free from abstract elements that undeniably exist, such as feelings or personal perspectives (Angesty, 2024). In this context, the author functions merely as an observer, attentively depicting the lives of the characters. In *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, Shibli narrates the condition of Palestine after the Nakba without showing partiality toward the events described or the experiences of her characters. The forms of objectivity found in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* include the use of third-person pronouns in referring to names (Shibli, 2017: 12), the depiction of the Israeli military commander about to celebrate his success (Shibli, 2017: 17), as well as the portrayal of the Bedouin girl's funeral (Shibli, 2017: 26).

The use of third-person pronouns in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* is evident in the scene where an Israeli military commander captures a Bedouin girl he finds in the desert and

takes her to their camp. The commander orders his soldiers to bring the girl to the water reservoir to be bathed. Shibli employs the third-person pronoun "he" for the Israeli military commander and refers to the Bedouin girl only as "the girl," without assigning a specific name to either character, whether the native inhabitant or the representative of the Israeli occupiers.

This illustrates the presence of objectivity in the narrative. The use of third-person pronouns in naturalist literature typically functions as an observer that appears uninvolved. The author does not place strong emphasis on the emotions or feelings of each character, but instead focuses on conveying events as they naturally unfold (*Naturalism: Definition, Authors & Examples*, n.d.). The statement in this study—that the use of third-person pronouns in the novel represents the author's objectivity—is notably different from the findings of Layla AlAmmar in an earlier study, which argues that by not giving names to the characters, the author intends to prevent readers from feeling too connected or overly empathetic with them.

Furthermore, an aspect of objectivity depicted in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* appears when the Israeli military leader gives instructions before commencing the celebration to mark their success in capturing the Bedouin girl in the southern region. The leader commands his soldiers to make every effort to defend and protect the southern territory, based on the belief that the land had been traversed by their ancestors for thousands of years.

The data illustrating how the Israeli military commander gives instructions to his soldiers after capturing a prisoner is presented by Shibli in an objective and convincing manner. Instead of portraying the Israeli military's actions in occupying Palestine as overtly brutal, Shibli renders the scene through a detached narrative style, refraining from taking explicit sides—whether with the Palestinians as the oppressed or with Israel as the oppressor. The author does not hesitate to let the events unfold naturally without favoring any character (Wulandari & Surur, 2024). The author does not conceal reality, nor do they use symbolism, idealism, or excessive emotion. Everything is presented just as it is (Shahin, 2020). This statement stands in stark contrast to Mufidah's study, which analyzes naturalism in literary works but fails to highlight the element of objectivity, instead leaning toward one particular side. Likewise, this view also opposes the findings of Elbaz (2023), who in her research claims that the author writes subjectively, siding with the oppressed. The way Shibli writes the scene where the oppressors give orders to their soldiers demonstrates that the author maintains a fairly objective stance in crafting the narrative of this novel.

Another aspect of objectivity in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* is found in the scene where Israeli soldiers are digging sand in the middle of the desert, which will later be used to bury the Bedouin girl they had captured. However, the woman attempts to escape, resulting in her right temple being shot by the Israeli military commander.

The depiction of the Bedouin girl's burial in the data above reflects the objectivity employed by Shibli as the author. She does not use dramatic language or emotional expressions to evoke sympathy either for the girl being buried or for the Israeli soldiers conducting the burial. Instead, Shibli narrates the burial process in a natural, detailed, and profound manner, without idealizing or romanticizing the scene. The author appears to present the story with vivid visualization and without embellishment. Even when addressing emotions, the focus remains on fundamental feelings or on establishing an emotionally distant tone (Wulandari & Surur, 2024). This stands in contrast to the findings of Badareen & Eisheh (2023), who, in their research, claim that events in the novel are portrayed brutally and in favor of the Palestinian side, rather than being written objectively.

### Pessimism in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī*

Pessimism is an attitude that tends to view everything from a negative perspective. Pessimists believe that things will end badly, the future is filled with difficulties or failures, and that good or happy outcomes are unlikely to happen (Antikasari & Raharjo, 2024). Meanwhile, the element of pessimism in Zola's (1880) naturalism reflects the inability of an individual or character to resist authority or power, which environmental factors or other circumstances can also influence. In *Tafsīl Thānawī*, this is illustrated by the author through the Bedouin girl's helplessness in resisting the Israeli soldiers who attempt to rape her (Shibli, 2017:21) and the female journalist's sense of pessimism regarding her ability to surpass the travel limit imposed by Israel (Shibli, 2017:34).

The aspect of pessimism in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* is depicted in the scene where the Israeli military leader attempts to rape the Bedouin girl they had previously captured in the desert. The Bedouin girl is powerless and unable to resist, no matter how desperately she tries to free herself from the commander's grip. The author portrays pessimism in *Tafsīl Thānawī* through the Bedouin girl's helplessness in resisting the Israeli military leader who attempts to rape her. The girl is powerless and lacks the strength to oppose the commander's authority. In this context, her actions reflect that she has no chance to escape or avoid the assault with all her might, nor can she change her fate. This aligns with the tendency of naturalist writers to depict their characters as individuals engulfed in unrelenting suffering, with no opportunity to alter their destiny (Surur, 2023).

The next aspect of pessimism in *Tafsīl Thānawī* is depicted in the scene where the female journalist feels pessimistic about reaching Area C, which is already close to Area D. As a resident of Area A and a member of the Palestinian community, she faces restrictions on traveling to other regions. Consequently, when she wishes to explore the minor details of these distant areas, she is filled with doubt and pessimism about whether she will be able to reach them successfully.

The author conveys this element of pessimism in *Tafsīl Thānawī* through the uncertainty and hesitation experienced by the female journalist. She lacks the power and freedom to move beyond her place of residence due to the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation of Palestine at that time and is constantly haunted by fear. This reflects naturalist literature, where naturalist writers often hold a cynical and fatalistic worldview (*Naturalism: Definition, Authors & Examples*, n.d.). They portray literary characters as having little to no power or opportunity to make decisions for themselves (Surur, 2023). The harsh realities of their lives—shaped by genetics, nature, or simply misfortune—become the sole determining factors in what happens to them.

### Setting in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī*

The environment is a place where each lives, interacts, adapts, and develops. Indirectly, the environment plays a significant role in shaping each individual's personality and influencing their fate (Sari, 2022). The element of setting in Zola's naturalism highlights the connection between the environment and the fate of the characters (Surur, 2023). In *Tafsīl Thānawī*, the presence of the setting that influences the characters is shown through several locations, including the shack of the Israeli military leader (Shibli, 2017:22) and the city of Ramallah (Shibli, 2017: 30).

The Israeli military leader's hut serves as one of the key settings in *Tafsīl Thānawī*, particularly in the scene where the Bedouin girl is taken into the commander's hut and eventually raped by him. Although she tries to resist and fights with all her strength, the power of the Israeli commander proves far greater, leaving her increasingly pessimistic and resigned to whatever may happen to her. The hut setting reinforces the oppressive

atmosphere and underscores the girl's helplessness in confronting such overwhelming authority.

The author demonstrates that setting plays a crucial role in shaping the actions and character development within the novel. Moreover, the remote location of the hut and military base in the desert makes it nearly impossible for her to escape or seek justice. In such circumstances, it seems she can only surrender and await the fate awaiting her. In such a situation, it seems that he can only surrender and wait for the fate that awaits him. The setting determines the course of a character's fate and serves as a reflection of the conflicts that will unfold. In fact, in naturalist literature, the setting frequently functions almost as a character in its own right (*Naturalism: Definition, Authors & Examples*, n.d.).

Another setting element in *Tafsīl Thānawī* is the city of Ramallah, where the author provides a depiction of the city's condition, the place where the female journalist resides, as described in the second chapter of the novel. In detail, the author portrays the daily reality of Ramallah, where the sounds of gunfire, military patrol sirens, helicopters, and fighter jets are familiar parts of everyday life.

Indirectly, the situation in Ramallah, under the strict surveillance of the Israeli military, influences the attitudes and actions of the female journalist. With such tight control and the various restrictions imposed, she is unable to act rationally and often behaves impulsively. The author attempts to depict the city of Ramallah in detail to reveal the unseen or implicit aspects that shape the character, employing a realist lens (Wulandari & Surur, 2024).

### **Plot twist in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī***

A plot twist is an unexpected ending or turn of events in a story that is not easily guessed by the reader, including the preceding parts that lead up to the unexpected event (Famsah et al., 2022). In naturalism, a plot twist refers to unexpected occurrences in literary works, when the narrative tends to shock or surprise the reader due to the influence of elements such as determinism and pessimism. Such twists can occur at the end of a fragment or even after the story (Surur, 2023). In *Tafsīl Thānawī*, there are several plot twists, two of which include the incident following the Bedouin girl's rape by the Israeli military (Shibli, 2017: 21) and the moment when the female journalist is waiting in line at an Israeli military checkpoint (Shibli, 2017: 37).

One aspect of the plot twist in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* is the incident following the Bedouin girl's rape by the Israeli military. The soldiers then take her into the desert, which might lead readers to assume that she would simply be abandoned there after the horrific mass rape committed by the commander and his troops. However, the narrative takes a tragic and unexpected turn—she is killed. Some readers may have anticipated that she would be released or find a way to escape, especially when she tries to resist by screaming and attempting to run away. This creates a moment of hope or suspense. Yet her attempt to escape ultimately proven futile, as she is shot by the Israeli soldiers.

The narrative in this novel takes an unforeseen course—the character, after enduring immense suffering and struggling to survive, is suddenly and unexpectedly killed. This twist deepens the sense of futility and inevitability that often permeates naturalist fiction (Surur, 2023). While Badareen & Eisheh (2023), in earlier studies, interpreted this as a bitter reality of occupation within a postcolonial literary framework, the reading through the lens of naturalism focuses instead on deterministic tragedy and the unpredictability of fate, highlighting the overpowering forces that strip characters of agency and hope.

Another aspect of the plot twist in *Tafsīl Thānawī* is the scene in which the female journalist is waiting in line to pass through a checkpoint guarded by the Israeli military. Carrying a borrowed blue identity card from a friend, she attempts to enter Israel in search

of information about the rape and murder of a Bedouin girl that occurred decades earlier. This moment creates tension, as her mission to uncover the past seems uncertain, and her journey to access crucial information is fraught with challenges and danger.

In this case, readers might assume that the journalist would fail to pass the heavily guarded checkpoint and safely enter Israeli-controlled territory. Such an assumption is based on earlier descriptions of the strict security measures enforced by the Israeli military at every checkpoint. Surprisingly, however, the journalist manages to pass through the checkpoint with ease and enter Israel without difficulty. This narrative twist aligns with the element of plot twist in naturalism, where the storyline takes an unexpected direction and the outcome is not easily predictable for readers. It underscores the unpredictable nature of life, a defining characteristic of naturalist literature, in which the fate of characters often takes unforeseen turns (Surur, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

The aspects of naturalism in the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* by Adania Shibli, based on Zola's elements of naturalism (1880), consist of five aspects: determinism, the inability to assess things rationally, and an interest in small details. Setting: the Negev desert, the Israeli military leader's hut, and the city of Ramallah. Pessimism, the inability of the Bedouin girl to resist, and the pessimistic view of the character regarding traveling outside her area. Objectivity: the use of third-person pronouns, the military leader's instructions to his soldiers, and the burial process of the Bedouin girl. Plot twist: the death of the Bedouin girl and the journalist's success in entering Israeli territory. Broadly speaking, these aspects are depicted through the rape and murder of the Bedouin girl after the Nakba. The author uses two perspectives to describe the events naturally: the perspective of the Israeli military soldier who guards the southern area and is the perpetrator of the rape and murder of the Bedouin girl, and the second perspective is the point of view of the female journalist, decades after the event, who becomes intrigued by a news story and attempts to uncover the small details of the rape and murder of the Bedouin girl. Shibli objectively portrays how the rape occurred and how the Israeli occupation is still felt many years later, without idealizing it as in realist works, rather than romanticism. The analysis of Zola's naturalism in Shibli's novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* reveals the Nakba and the condition of Palestine in a direct and unembellished manner, without any attempt at romanticization. Nevertheless, the novel *Tafsīl Thānawī* does not merely record the situation of Palestine in the past but also demonstrates its relevance to the current condition of Palestine, which remains in conflict with Israel. Therefore, future research should further explore these elements of naturalism for a more detailed and comprehensive analysis, or alternatively, examine the novel through other approaches and theoretical frameworks.

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