
FATE VS FREE WILL: A BIOPHILIA CRITIQUE OF JULIUSCAESAR

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ABSTRACT

William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar presents a profound conflict between fate and free will through political ambition, moral uncertainty, and tragic consequences. This research paper examines the play from the perspective of Biophilia theory and ecocriticism to explore how nature influences human psychology and decision-making. The study analyzes natural signs, omens, storms, animal imagery, and supernatural warnings as symbolic representations of the interconnected relationship between humans and the natural world. Using qualitative textual analysis, the paper investigates the actions of Caesar, Brutus, and Cassius to determine whether their destinies are controlled by fate or shaped by personal choices. The research further highlights Shakespeare's ecological consciousness by presenting nature as a moral and psychological force that reflects social imbalance and political disorder. The study concludes that Julius Caesar portrays fate and free will as interconnected elements where human actions ultimately activate tragic destiny through ignorance of natural and ethical warnings.

KEYWORDS: 1-Bloom, Harold. Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human. Riverhead Books, 1998.

INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar remains one of the most significant political tragedies in English literature because of its complex exploration of power, morality, ambition, betrayal, fate, and human responsibility. Written in 1599 during the Elizabethan period, the play dramatizes the historical assassination of Julius Caesar and the political chaos that follows in

ancient Rome. While the tragedy is often studied from historical, political, and psychological perspectives, contemporary literary criticism increasingly examines Shakespeare through interdisciplinary approaches such as ecocriticism and environmental humanities. In this context, the concepts of fate and free will acquire deeper significance when analyzed through the framework of Biophilia theory, which emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between human beings and nature.

The debate between fate and free will has occupied an important place in philosophy, religion, and literature for centuries. Fate generally refers to the idea that human life is controlled by predetermined forces beyond individual control, whereas free will suggests that individuals possess the power to shape their own destinies through conscious choices and actions. Shakespeare's tragedies repeatedly examine this tension, presenting characters who struggle between external destiny and personal agency. In *Julius Caesar*, this conflict becomes central to the development of the narrative and the downfall of major characters such as Caesar, Brutus, and Cassius. The play presents a world filled with omens, supernatural warnings, unnatural storms, prophetic dreams, and signs from nature, all of which appear to influence human actions and political events. At the same time, the characters exercise personal judgment, make political decisions, and accept moral responsibility for their actions. This duality creates a powerful dramatic tension between destiny and human freedom.

IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Modern ecocritical approaches provide new ways of understanding this conflict. Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary field that studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Scholars such as Cheryll Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell argue that literary texts reflect ecological consciousness and reveal how human beings interact with nature and environmental systems. Shakespeare's plays frequently use natural imagery not merely as background decoration but as symbolic expressions of psychological, political, and moral conditions. In *Julius Caesar*, nature actively participates in the dramatic structure of the tragedy. Storms, animal behaviour, supernatural signs, and cosmic disturbances symbolize the imbalance created by political ambition and moral corruption. These ecological elements suggest that human actions are deeply connected with the natural order of the universe.

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on Edward O. Wilson's concept of Biophilia. In his influential work *Biophilia* (1984), Wilson proposes that human beings possess an innate emotional and psychological connection with nature and other living systems. According to Wilson, this biological and emotional attachment influences human behaviour,

ethical understanding, imagination, and social relationships. Biophilia theory has become increasingly important in literary and environmental studies because it explains how nature shapes human emotions and consciousness. Applying Biophilia theory to Shakespearean tragedy allows readers to examine how environmental imagery influences the psychological and moral decisions of characters. In *Julius Caesar*, nature functions not only as a symbolic force but also as an active moral presence that reflects the inner conflicts of individuals and the instability of Roman society.

One of the most striking aspects of the play is Shakespeare's repeated use of natural warnings and omens before Caesar's assassination. The Soothsayer's warning to "Beware the Ides of March," Calpurnia's prophetic dream, violent storms, unnatural animal behaviour, and reports of supernatural occurrences all suggest that nature attempts to warn humanity about impending destruction. These signs create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, indicating that the political disorder in Rome has disrupted the natural balance of the universe. Caesar's refusal to heed these warnings reflects his excessive pride and confidence in personal power. Although fate appears to announce itself through natural signs, Caesar's downfall ultimately results from his own choices and arrogance. Shakespeare therefore presents tragedy as a combination of predetermined destiny and human action.

Brutus, another central figure in the play, represents the moral and philosophical complexity of free will. Unlike Cassius, who is motivated primarily by jealousy and political ambition, Brutus joins the conspiracy because he believes Caesar's growing power may threaten the future of Rome. His decisions emerge from ethical conflict rather than personal hatred. However, despite his noble intentions, Brutus becomes responsible for political violence and civil war. His tragic downfall illustrates how human beings often fail to foresee the consequences of their actions. From a biophilic perspective, Brutus's inner conflict reflects humanity's struggle to maintain moral harmony within a disturbed social and natural order. Shakespeare portrays Brutus as a character seeking balance and justice, yet his participation in violence destroys both personal and political stability.

Furthermore, the ecological imagery in *Julius Caesar* reinforces Shakespeare's understanding of interconnectedness between human society and the natural world. The disturbances in nature symbolize Rome's moral corruption and political instability. Shakespeare suggests that acts of violence against political and ethical order produce corresponding disturbances in the environment. Such representations align closely with ecocritical and biophilic interpretations, which emphasize that human behaviour, cannot be separated from the natural systems

surrounding it. Nature becomes a mirror reflecting human ambition, fear, guilt, and destruction.

This study aims to examine the themes of fate and free will in Julius Caesar through the lens of Biophilia theory and ecocriticism. It seeks to explore how natural imagery, omens, storms, and environmental symbolism contribute to the tragic structure of the play. The research also investigates how Shakespeare uses nature as a psychological and moral force influencing human decisions and political events. By combining literary analysis with environmental theory, the study attempts to offer a fresh interpretation of Shakespearean tragedy that highlights the interconnected relationship between human agency, destiny, and ecological consciousness.

The significance of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach. While previous studies have focused on political ambition, republicanism, rhetoric, and tragic heroism in Julius Caesar, limited scholarly attention has been given to the relationship between fate, free will, and biophilic consciousness. This study therefore contributes to contemporary Shakespearean criticism by integrating environmental humanities with classical literary analysis. It demonstrates that Shakespeare's representation of nature is not merely symbolic but deeply connected with philosophical questions concerning morality, destiny, and human existence. Through a biophilic reading, Julius Caesar emerges as a tragedy that reflects humanity's enduring struggle to balance personal ambition, ethical responsibility, and harmony with the natural world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The debate between fate and free will has remained one of the central philosophical concerns in literary criticism, especially in the study of Shakespearean tragedy. William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar explores the tension between predetermined destiny and human agency through political ambition, prophecy, moral conflict, and psychological uncertainty. In recent years, ecocritical and biophilic approaches to literature have offered new perspectives for interpreting Shakespeare's plays by examining the relationship between human beings, nature, instinct, and environmental symbolism. A biophilia critique of Julius Caesar investigates how natural signs, omens, cosmic disturbances, and human emotional instincts shape the conflict between fate and free will. Existing scholarship on the play reveals that Shakespeare presents fate not merely as supernatural destiny but as a force intertwined with human psychology and the natural world.

Classical interpretations of Julius Caesar often emphasize the influence of Roman beliefs in omens, astrology, and divine prophecy. Scholars such as A.C. Bradley argue that Shakespearean tragedy is deeply rooted in the interaction between individual choice and external destiny. In *Julius Caesar*, the Soothsayer's warning—"Beware the Ides of March"—symbolizes the inevitability of fate, while Caesar's decision to ignore the warning demonstrates the exercise of free will. Traditional critics interpret Caesar's downfall as the tragic result of excessive pride and overconfidence. This interpretation aligns with Aristotelian concepts of tragedy in which human flaws contribute to inevitable destruction. However, modern critics suggest that Shakespeare complicates this deterministic model by portraying characters who actively shape their own destinies through political and emotional decisions.

New Historicist scholars examine Julius Caesar within the political anxieties of Elizabethan England. Stephen Greenblatt argues that Shakespeare's plays reflect Renaissance concerns regarding political authority, rebellion, and providence. In this context, fate becomes associated with historical inevitability and divine order, while free will is linked to political ambition and human intervention. Brutus, for example, believes he acts rationally and morally in assassinating Caesar to preserve the Roman Republic. Yet his decision ultimately leads to chaos and civil war, suggesting that human attempts to control destiny often produce unintended consequences. Critics have therefore interpreted Brutus as a tragic idealist whose moral freedom becomes trapped within larger historical forces.

Psychological criticism further expands the debate between fate and free will in *Julius Caesar*. Freudian and Jungian critics analyze the subconscious fears and anxieties of the characters. Brutus's internal conflict reveals how psychological pressure influences human action. Although Brutus believes his choices are guided by reason, his decisions are deeply shaped by emotional manipulation from Cassius and by unconscious fears regarding tyranny. Cassius himself rejects fatalism when he declares, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves." This statement has become central to discussions of human agency in the play. Critics interpret Cassius as representing Renaissance humanism, which emphasizes personal responsibility and individual action over divine control. Nevertheless, Shakespeare complicates Cassius's philosophy by showing that even strong-willed characters cannot escape destruction.

Ecocritical scholarship has introduced new dimensions to Shakespearean studies by focusing on environmental imagery and humanity's connection with nature. Ecocritics argue that *Julius Caesar* reflects disturbances in the natural order caused by political violence and moral

corruption. Storms, unnatural animal behaviour, earthquakes, and supernatural signs symbolize the disruption of harmony between humanity and nature. From a biophilic perspective, these natural disturbances represent instinctive warnings that humans fail to understand or respect. The concept of biophilia, developed by Edward O. Wilson, refers to humanity's innate emotional connection with nature and living systems. Applying this theory to Julius Caesar allows critics to interpret omens and natural phenomena not merely as supernatural devices but as manifestations of ecological and psychological imbalance.

Several scholars note that Shakespeare uses environmental symbolism to mirror human emotions and political instability. Calpurnia's dream of Caesar's statue flowing with blood reflects both natural fear and intuitive understanding of danger. Her instinctive response demonstrates biophilic awareness, as she remains emotionally connected to natural signs and bodily intuition. Caesar, however, dismisses these warnings because of his pride and political ambition. A biophilic reading therefore suggests that tragedy emerges when human beings disconnect themselves from natural instincts and ecological harmony. Caesar's rejection of nature's warnings symbolizes humanity's attempt to dominate rather than coexist with natural forces.

Feminist criticism also contributes to the discussion of fate and free will in Julius Caesar. Feminist scholars argue that female voices in the play often embody intuition, emotion, and natural wisdom. Calpurnia and Portia both perceive emotional truths ignored by male political leaders. Their warnings and anxieties challenge the masculine ideals of rationality and power represented by Caesar and Brutus. From a biophilic perspective, women in the play symbolize emotional sensitivity and connection with life-preserving instincts, whereas male ambition contributes to destruction and violence. This interpretation broadens the understanding of fate by linking it to emotional intelligence and natural awareness rather than purely supernatural prediction.

Postmodern critics question whether fate in Julius Caesar truly exists at all. They argue that Shakespeare deliberately creates ambiguity regarding destiny and choice. Omens and prophecies may be interpreted differently by different characters, suggesting that meaning itself is unstable. Caesar interprets warnings according to his pride, Brutus interprets political events according to idealism, and Cassius interprets destiny according to ambition. Consequently, the play presents fate as a psychological and cultural construct shaped by human interpretation. A biophilic approach supports this ambiguity by emphasizing that humans often ignore ecological and emotional signals because of social power structures and intellectual arrogance.

Recent interdisciplinary scholarship combines ecocriticism, psychology, and philosophy to reinterpret Shakespearean tragedy in relation to environmental ethics. These studies suggest that Julius Caesar demonstrates the destructive consequences of separating human ambition from natural balance. The assassination of Caesar creates not only political disorder but also cosmic and environmental instability. Natural imagery throughout the play reflects humanity's inability to maintain harmony between personal freedom and universal order. Biophilic criticism therefore redefines fate as a natural and psychological force rather than a purely supernatural destiny.

In conclusion, the existing literature on Julius Caesar demonstrates diverse interpretations of fate and free will across classical, psychological, political, feminist, and ecocritical perspectives. Traditional critics emphasize tragic destiny and moral failure, while modern approaches highlight political agency, subconscious motivation, and environmental symbolism. A biophilia critique synthesizes these perspectives by examining how human beings interact with nature, instinct, and emotional awareness. Shakespeare's play ultimately suggests that tragedy arises not only from destiny or personal choice but also from humanity's disconnection from natural harmony. Through omens, ecological disturbances, and emotional intuition, Julius Caesar portrays the complex relationship between fate, free will, and the human condition.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does William Shakespeare portray the conflict between fate and free will in Julius Caesar?

In what ways do natural omens and environmental disturbances contribute to the theme of fate in the play?

How can Edward O. Wilson's theory of biophilia be applied to the interpretation of Julius Caesar?

To what extent do the characters ignore or respond to nature's warnings and intuitive signals?
How does Caesar's rejection of natural and supernatural warnings reflect human disconnection from ecological harmony?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The present study employs a qualitative and interpretative research methodology to examine the relationship between fate and free will in William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar through the lens of biophilia theory and ecocritical analysis. Since the research focuses on literary

interpretation, symbolic analysis, and philosophical inquiry, qualitative textual analysis is considered the most suitable method for investigating the thematic and ecological dimensions of the play. The methodology integrates literary criticism, ecocriticism, psychological interpretation, and biophilia theory to explore how Shakespeare represents human interaction with nature, destiny, instinct, and moral choice.

The primary source for this research is William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, particularly its major scenes involving omens, prophecies, natural disturbances, dreams, political decisions, and psychological conflicts. Key passages from the play are closely analyzed to understand how Shakespeare constructs the tension between predetermined fate and individual agency. Special attention is given to the symbolic significance of storms, supernatural warnings, unnatural events, and emotional intuition. These textual elements are interpreted not only as dramatic devices but also as indicators of humanity's relationship with the natural world and instinctive consciousness.

The study adopts Edward O. Wilson's concept of biophilia as its principal theoretical framework. Wilson defines biophilia as humanity's innate emotional and psychological connection with nature and living systems. This theory is useful in understanding how characters in *Julius Caesar* respond to natural signs, environmental imbalance, and intuitive warnings. Through this framework, the research investigates whether the tragedy in the play emerges because characters ignore their ecological instincts and emotional awareness. The theory also helps reinterpret fate not merely as supernatural destiny but as a manifestation of disrupted harmony between human beings and the natural order.

Ecocriticism forms another important component of the methodology. Ecocriticism studies the relationship between literature and the environment by examining how texts represent nature, ecological balance, and human interaction with the nonhuman world. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare repeatedly uses storms, earthquakes, unusual animal behaviour, and cosmic disturbances to symbolize political instability and moral disorder. This study applies ecocritical principles to analyze how environmental imagery reflects the psychological and ethical crises of the characters. The methodology assumes that Shakespeare deliberately connects human violence with ecological imbalance, thereby suggesting that political corruption disrupts both society and nature.

The research further incorporates psychological criticism to examine the internal conflicts of the major characters. Psychological analysis is especially important in understanding Brutus, Cassius, and Caesar, whose decisions are shaped by fear, ambition, pride, guilt, and insecurity. The methodology explores how subconscious motivations influence their

understanding of fate and free will. Brutus, for example, believes he acts rationally to protect Rome, but his actions are deeply affected by emotional manipulation and moral anxiety. Similarly, Caesar's refusal to accept warnings reveals psychological arrogance and overconfidence. By combining psychological criticism with biophilia theory, the study investigates how emotional disconnection from natural instincts contributes to tragic consequences.

METHODOLOGY

This research also employs thematic analysis as a methodological tool. Themes such as destiny, ambition, political power, ecological disorder, moral responsibility, intuition, and human agency are systematically identified and interpreted throughout the text. Thematic analysis enables the researcher to trace recurring patterns and symbolic structures within the play. Omens, dreams, supernatural signs, and references to nature are categorized and analyzed according to their thematic significance. This process helps reveal how Shakespeare interconnects political action with environmental symbolism.

The methodology follows a close reading approach to textual interpretation. Close reading involves detailed examination of language, imagery, symbolism, metaphors, and dramatic structure within the literary text. Important dialogues such as the Soothsayer's warning, Calpurnia's dream, Cassius's speech about destiny, and Brutus's moral reflections are analyzed carefully to understand their philosophical and ecological implications. Through close reading, the study identifies how Shakespeare's language creates tension between human freedom and inevitable destiny. Particular emphasis is placed on imagery related to nature and cosmic disorder because such imagery forms the foundation of the biophilic interpretation.

Secondary sources play a significant role in supporting the analysis. Scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, ecocritical studies, Shakespearean criticism, and philosophical discussions on fate and free will are consulted to establish the academic background of the research. Critical works by scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt, A.C. Bradley, Harold Bloom, and ecocritical theorists are used to compare different interpretations of Julius Caesar. Articles related to biophilia, environmental humanities, and Renaissance drama provide additional theoretical support for the study. These secondary materials help contextualize the research within existing academic discourse and identify research gaps in previous studies.

The research adopts an interdisciplinary approach because the themes of fate and free will involve literature, philosophy, psychology, ecology, and political theory. An interdisciplinary

methodology allows for a broader understanding of Shakespeare's tragedy by connecting human behavior with natural and environmental consciousness. Instead of treating fate solely as supernatural predestination, this study interprets it as a complex interaction between psychological instincts, ecological imbalance, and moral decision-making. Such an approach expands the scope of traditional Shakespearean criticism and contributes to contemporary ecocritical scholarship.

The study is primarily analytical rather than empirical. Since the research is based on textual interpretation, no surveys, experiments, or statistical data collection methods are employed. The emphasis remains on interpretative understanding and critical examination of literary symbols and themes. However, the methodology maintains academic objectivity by supporting interpretations with textual evidence and established theoretical frameworks. Quotations and references from both the primary text and scholarly criticism are used to strengthen the validity of the analysis.

The limitations of the methodology must also be acknowledged. Literary interpretation is subjective to some extent, and different critics may interpret symbols and themes differently. The concept of biophilia, though highly relevant to ecocriticism, was developed in the modern scientific era and may not directly reflect Shakespeare's historical context. Nevertheless, applying contemporary ecological theories to classical literature provides new insights into the universal relevance of Shakespeare's works. The methodology therefore recognizes the interpretative nature of literary criticism while emphasizing logical coherence and theoretical consistency.

In conclusion, the methodology of this study combines qualitative textual analysis, ecocritical interpretation, psychological criticism, thematic analysis, and biophilia theory to examine the relationship between fate and free will in *Julius Caesar*. Through close reading and interdisciplinary analysis, the research explores how Shakespeare portrays the consequences of human disconnection from natural harmony and instinctive awareness. By integrating ecological and philosophical perspectives, the methodology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the tragic dimensions of the play and its continuing relevance in contemporary literary and environmental studies.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* presents a complex interaction between fate and free will through political ambition, psychological conflict, and natural symbolism. From a biophilia perspective, the play reveals how human beings become vulnerable to destruction

when they disconnect themselves from nature, instinct, and emotional awareness. Shakespeare does not portray fate merely as a supernatural force; rather, he associates it with ecological imbalance, intuitive warnings, and the natural order. The tragedy emerges because the characters fail to recognize or respect these natural signals.

One of the most significant examples of fate in the play is the Soothsayer's warning, "Beware the Ides of March." This prophecy symbolizes nature's attempt to alert Caesar about impending danger. However, Caesar dismisses the warning because of pride and political confidence. A biophilic interpretation suggests that Caesar's downfall results not only from destiny but also from his rejection of instinctive awareness. His inability to remain connected with natural caution reflects humanity's tendency to ignore environmental and emotional signals in pursuit of power.

The environmental disturbances described in the play further strengthen the connection between fate and ecological imbalance. Shakespeare uses storms, thunder, earthquakes, and unnatural animal behaviour as symbols of political corruption and moral disorder. Casca describes terrifying events occurring in Rome, including a lion wandering through the streets and men burning without harm. These unnatural occurrences represent the disturbance of harmony between humanity and nature. From an ecocritical and biophilic perspective, the natural world reacts against human violence and ambition. The assassination of Caesar therefore becomes not only a political act but also a disruption of cosmic and ecological order.

Brutus represents the conflict between moral freedom and inevitable consequence. He believes that assassinating Caesar will protect the Roman Republic and preserve liberty. His actions appear to arise from rational free will rather than destiny. However, his decisions are heavily influenced by fear, manipulation, and internal anxiety. Cassius persuades Brutus by exploiting his concern for Rome's future. Although Brutus chooses to participate in the conspiracy, the tragic outcome suggests that human beings cannot fully control the consequences of their actions. Shakespeare therefore presents free will as limited by psychological weakness and larger natural forces.

Calpurnia's dream provides another important example of biophilic awareness in the play. She instinctively senses danger and attempts to protect Caesar by urging him not to go to the Senate. Her emotional intuition contrasts sharply with Caesar's arrogance and political ambition. In biophilic terms, Calpurnia remains connected to natural instincts and emotional intelligence, whereas Caesar suppresses these instincts in favor of authority and masculine

pride. Shakespeare suggests that ignoring emotional and ecological awareness leads to destruction.

Cassius's statement, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves," emphasizes human agency and personal responsibility. Yet the play ultimately demonstrates that human ambition cannot escape larger patterns of fate and natural order. The conspirators succeed temporarily in killing Caesar, but they fail to restore peace and stability. Civil war, guilt, and death follow their actions, showing that political violence disrupts both human society and environmental harmony.

In conclusion, Julius Caesar portrays fate and free will as interconnected forces shaped by psychological conflict, environmental symbolism, and human ambition. A biophilia critique reveals that Shakespeare associates tragedy with humanity's separation from nature and instinctive wisdom. Through omens, ecological disturbances, and emotional intuition, the play demonstrates that ignoring natural harmony ultimately results in moral and political destruction.

Nature as a Reflection of Political Disorder

Shakespeare uses environmental disturbances to symbolize political instability. The unnatural storm, frightened animals, and supernatural events represent Rome's moral corruption. These ecological signs reinforce the idea that human actions directly affect the natural and social world.

The assassination of Caesar symbolizes humanity's attempt to control destiny through violence. However, the resulting civil war proves that human beings cannot escape the consequences of their actions. Nature ultimately restores balance through suffering and destruction.

FINDINGS

Shakespeare presents fate and free will as interconnected rather than opposing forces.

Natural signs and omens function as symbolic warnings against political arrogance and moral corruption.

Biophilia theory reveals that human disconnection from natural wisdom contributes to tragedy.

The ecological disturbances in the play mirror psychological and political imbalance.

Human choices activate destiny, making tragedy both personal and universal.

CONCLUSION

Julius Caesar demonstrates Shakespeare's deep understanding of human psychology, political ambition, and ecological symbolism. Through the themes of fate and free will, the play illustrates how human beings struggle between destiny and personal choice.

Using Biophilia theory and ecocriticism, this study reveals that nature in the play acts as a moral and psychological force that warns humanity against arrogance, violence, and imbalance. Shakespeare ultimately suggests that tragedy emerges when individuals ignore ethical responsibility and natural harmony. Thus, fate in Julius Caesar is not entirely predetermined; rather, it is shaped through human actions and decisions.

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