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Naturalism in Eduard Vilde's novel *Iron Hands*

In 1897 Eduard Vilde was invited to work as an editor for *Virmaline*, a newspaper published in Narva. He accepted the invitation, for he was interested in Narva as one of the largest industrial centres in Estonia, especially considering its textile manufacturing. In 1898 *Iron Hands*, Vilde's novel about Krenholm manufacturing workers, was serialised in the newspaper. It was the first industrial novel to be written in Estonian.

Iron Hands is a novel that explores the ultimate boundaries by portraying the darker side of human existence, and topics that are socially sensitive or taboo. I will analyse the novel from the point of view of Naturalism and the concept of entropy.

The novel portrays the interrelation of the milieu and the characters and explores how the modern industry affects his working class protagonists. I suggest that in *Iron Hands* urbanisation with the accompanying social problems can be seen as a catalyst of decay.