



## THE DIALECTICS OF FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH realism

**Raximberdiyeva Moxinur Sotimboy qizi**

Student, Chirchik State Pedagogical University

[makhinurrakhimberdiev@gmail.com](mailto:makhinurrakhimberdiev@gmail.com)

Scientific adviser: **Akmalxonov Saidfozilxon**

A teacher, Chirchik State Pedagogical University

[akmalxonovsaidfozil@gmail.com](mailto:akmalxonovsaidfozil@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT.** The nineteenth century in England was a period of major social, economic, and intellectual change. Industrialization, new scientific discoveries, and shifts in moral and religious thinking challenged traditional views of human life. Realist writers responded by portraying life as it really was, showing both social problems and personal struggles. Writers such as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Thomas Hardy explored the tension between freedom and determinism. People desire freedom and self-determination, yet society, family, and nature often limit their choices. Realist novels explore how characters navigate these pressures while trying to act morally and meaningfully. This study examines how nineteenth-century English realism represents the balance between individual freedom and external constraints, showing that freedom exists even within limits.

**Keywords:** Freedom, Determinism, Realism, Victorian Novel, Social Pressure, Human Choice, Industrialization, Moral Values, Naturalism.

**АННОТАЦИЯ.** XIX век в Англии был периодом значительных социальных, экономических и интеллектуальных изменений. Индустриализация, новые научные открытия и изменения в моральных и религиозных взглядах ставили под сомнение традиционные представления о человеческой жизни. Реалистические писатели реагировали на это, изображая жизнь такой, какая она есть, показывая как социальные проблемы, так и личные трудности. Такие писатели, как Чарльз Диккенс, Джордж Элиот, Элизабет Гaskell и Томас Харди, исследовали напряжение между свободой и детерминизмом. Люди стремятся к свободе и самостоятельности, но общество, семья и природа часто ограничивают их выбор. Реалистические романы показывают, как персонажи справляются с этим давлением, стараясь действовать морально и осмысленно. Данное исследование изучает, как английский реализм XIX века отражает баланс между индивидуальной свободой и внешними ограничениями, показывая, что свобода существует даже в пределах этих ограничений.

**Ключевые слова:** Свобода, Детерминизм, Реализм, Викторианский роман, Социальное давление, Личный выбор, Индустриализация, Моральные ценности, Натурализм.





**METHODS.** In this study, I compared several major nineteenth-century English realist novels to understand how freedom and determinism are represented. I focused on Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. I read these texts carefully to examine how the characters, their actions, and the social settings show the tension between human choice and external constraints. I also used ideas from philosophy and literary theory to support my analysis. For example, I referred to John Stuart Mill's thoughts on moral responsibility, Auguste Comte's ideas about social forces, and insights from literary critics such as Georg Lukács and Raymond Williams. By combining close reading of the novels with these theoretical perspectives, I was able to see how nineteenth-century realism explores the balance between freedom and determinism.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that nineteenth-century English realist novels present both freedom and determinism as important parts of human life. In Dickens's *Hard Times*, characters like Sissy Jupe show that kindness and imagination can resist the strict rules of industrial society. In Gaskell's *North and South*, understanding and empathy allow characters from different social classes to connect and act morally. George Eliot's *Middlemarch* presents freedom in a slightly different way. Characters are influenced by social and personal circumstances, but they can still grow morally when they understand their limits. In this sense, freedom comes from self-awareness and careful thought about one's actions. Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* shows a more tragic perspective. Tess faces social rules, fate, and natural forces that limit her freedom. Even though she cannot control everything, her struggle shows the emotional and moral significance of trying to act rightly in a difficult world. Overall, the novels reveal that freedom and determinism coexist. They show that people can make meaningful choices even when they face strong social, moral, or natural constraints. The dialectic between freedom and determinism in nineteenth-century realism reflects Victorian society itself. Industrialization, social hierarchy, and emerging scientific thought challenged the belief in absolute human autonomy. At the same time, moral and religious values emphasized responsibility and ethical action. Realist writers depict freedom not as escaping limits but as living meaningfully within them. Dickens and Gaskell show hope through moral action and empathy. Eliot emphasizes understanding and ethical growth. Hardy demonstrates the tragic but meaningful resistance to societal and natural constraints. By balancing freedom and necessity, realism presents life authentically, showing how human beings act morally, emotionally, and socially despite the limitations they face.





**CONCLUSION.** Nineteenth-century English realism presents the complex relationship between freedom and determinism in human life. The novels show that people are often influenced by social, economic, and natural forces, yet they still have the ability to make choices and act morally. Dickens and Gaskell illustrate that even in a world of strict rules and social pressures, hope and compassion can guide human action and allow individuals to exercise meaningful freedom. Eliot emphasizes that freedom is not absolute but comes through understanding one's own limits and acting with self-awareness and moral responsibility. Hardy, in contrast, presents a more tragic view, showing that life can impose overwhelming constraints, yet human struggle and dignity retain value even when freedom is limited. Together, these works suggest that freedom exists within limits rather than outside them. Realist novels teach readers that moral and emotional action is still significant, even in a society shaped by social, economic, and natural forces. They show that understanding and responding to these constraints can lead to personal growth, ethical behavior, and deeper empathy for others. Ultimately, nineteenth-century English realism encourages readers to reflect on their own lives, showing that human will, effort, and morality remain meaningful, even in the face of challenges beyond one's control.

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