
The Evolution of Psychological Realism in the 19th Century English Novel: Depths of Character and Interior Life

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution of psychological realism in the 19th-century English novel, focusing on how key novelists developed techniques to explore complex interior lives, ethical dilemmas, and social constraints. Authors such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy are examined for their distinct contributions to this shift from plot-driven narratives to character-centered stories that foreground nuanced psychological experiences. The study traces early instances of psychological realism in Austen's works, where subtle character introspection and social commentary serve as precursors to later, more intricate explorations of the mind. It further investigates Dickens's portrayal of the common man's inner turmoil, Eliot's intellectual depth in moral realism, and Hardy's tragic consciousness, showing how each novelist employed unique narrative techniques to convey their characters' interiority and societal challenges. Drawing on narratology and literary history, this article analyzes the evolution of specific literary devices—

such as free indirect discourse, symbolism, and setting—as methods for enhancing psychological depth. It concludes by arguing that the 19th-century English novel’s engagement with psychological realism marked a pivotal transformation in literary form, profoundly influencing 20th-century writers and solidifying its relevance for contemporary readers (Smith, 2020; Johnson, 2018). This study contributes to broader discussions of literary realism, narrative innovation, and the continuing significance of psychological complexity in literature (Brown & Taylor, 2019).

Keywords: Psychological Realism, 19th-Century English Novel, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Narrative Techniques, Moral Complexity, Social Constraints, Literary Realism, Character Development, Psychological Depth in Fiction.

Introduction

The concept of psychological realism, a narrative style prioritizing the intricate representation of characters' internal lives, marked a notable shift in the 19th-century English novel. This approach reflects an intent to capture not just actions but the cognitive and emotional processes that drive them, aligning fiction with “probability or necessity” as Aristotle once noted, emphasizing plausible human behavior (Gallagher, 2023). Key authors like George Eliot and Charles Dickens evolved the novel by rendering characters whose mentalities resonated with readers' psychological realities, setting aside external adventures for intimate, character-driven narratives (Greiner, 2024). This article explores how psychological realism developed throughout this period, particularly in the works of authors such as Eliot and Thomas Hardy, who infused narrative style with psychological complexity that emphasized human motivations and vulnerabilities (Moretti, 2016).

Literature Review

The 19th-century shift from romanticism to realism marked a significant turning point in English literature, as novels began to explore the psychological and social

intricacies of everyday life. This transition allowed for a more nuanced representation of characters' inner lives, reflecting a broader cultural interest in the human psyche influenced by emerging psychological studies. As Gallagher suggests, the 19th-century novel often acted as a "thought experiment" where characters' decisions and emotions were examined in their social contexts, enhancing realism's commitment to plausible, multidimensional portrayals (Gallagher, 2023). Rae Greiner further elaborates on this, asserting that realism in the 1860s emphasized the "interdependence of body and mind," portraying how external pressures shaped internal experiences and human actions (Greiner, 2024).

Among those advancing this nuanced realism, George Eliot and Charles Dickens were instrumental. Eliot's *Middlemarch* exemplifies her dedication to psychological realism by examining characters' introspective conflicts and moral struggles, offering a compassionate, almost scientific, look into motivations influenced by contemporary psychological thought (Eliot, 1968). Dickens, though often associated with plot-driven narratives, adopted a similar depth in *Great Expectations*. Here, Pip's moral dilemmas and self-reflections provide a vivid psychological portrait, establishing Dickens's commitment to realism as one grounded in plausibility and an exploration of human motivations (Cambridge Companion to the Novel, 2016). The comparison highlights a core principle of realism: rather than focusing on grandiose events, realism centers on characters' moral and psychological complexities, bridging a connection with readers through authentic, relatable experiences.

The progression of realism into naturalism brought an intensified focus on determinism, a theme that became central in the works of Thomas Hardy. As Franco Moretti explains, naturalism introduced a deterministic view of human life, with characters portrayed as bound by their environments and heredity, which limited personal agency and underscored realism's darker tones (Moretti, 2016). In novels

like Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Hardy shows how societal and environmental forces shape individuals' fates, presenting psychological realism as inherently tied to social constraints. This divergence between psychological realism and naturalism illustrates a broadening of realist techniques, where authors expanded character analysis beyond personal introspection to reveal external determinants of human behavior, reflecting society's growing interest in understanding the limitations and pressures that govern individual choices.

Together, these authors created a new literary space where psychology and social inquiry intersected, establishing psychological realism as a form that reflects both individual depth and societal forces. By positioning characters within a deterministic world, yet imbuing them with rich interiority, 19th-century novelists redefined realism as a mode of empathetic and observational storytelling. This evolution of the English novel laid the groundwork for 20th-century psychological fiction, deeply influencing authors who would further explore the unconscious mind and complex human motivations (Cambridge Companion, 2020; Schwartz, 2005).

Research Question

The evolution of the 19th-century English novel toward psychological realism enabled authors to portray characters with unprecedented psychological depth, reflecting their complex social, ethical, and emotional struggles. This shift not only allowed readers to engage more intimately with characters' inner lives but also aligned the novel with contemporary developments in psychological thought, marking a significant transformation in literary form and reader experience.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative, textual analysis approach, examining representative texts from 19th-century English literature to investigate the development of psychological realism. Key texts will include works by novelists

such as George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Thomas Hardy, whose narratives delve deeply into the internal motivations and moral conflicts of characters. This approach aligns with recent literary scholarship, which stresses the importance of examining character psychology within historical and social contexts (Greiner, 2024). Primary sources will be supported by secondary analyses from existing literature on realism and psychology, exploring how these authors constructed complex characters and emphasized introspection (Bailin, 2021; Rosenberg, 2019). This method not only contextualizes psychological realism within the broader realist movement but also traces its impact on modern literary analysis.

Historical Context

The rise of psychological realism in the 19th century paralleled advances in psychology and human sciences, with novelists increasingly depicting characters in terms of their internal, often conflicting motivations (Greiner, 2024). This period was marked by a shift from depicting societal events to portraying personal and internalized conflicts, reflecting a growing interest in human psychology, including emerging theories on consciousness (Rosenberg, 2019). Authors like Eliot and Dickens used this style to respond to the complex social changes brought about by industrialization, urbanization, and the shifting social landscape of Victorian England, which affected perceptions of identity and morality (Fiveable, n.d.). By focusing on psychological depth, these authors underscored the nuanced and often contradictory nature of human experience, influencing later modernist techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration.

1. The Beginnings of Psychological Realism in Early 19th Century

The early 19th century marked a shift toward psychological realism in English literature, with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* playing pivotal roles. Austen's novels go beyond external events, delving into her characters' emotional

and psychological worlds. Characters like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse explore self-awareness and moral growth, influenced by social constraints of class and gender. This internal focus aligns with the broader Romantic movement, which emphasized individual subjectivity and emotional depth, laying the groundwork for later realists like George Eliot and Henry James. Austen's nuanced characterizations set the stage for the complex psychological portraits that would define 19th-century literature (James, 2018; Graver, 2019).

1.1 Jane Austen's Characterization and Social Observation:

Jane Austen is often credited with laying the groundwork for psychological realism, particularly in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. Her novels move beyond social critique to examine her characters' inner emotional worlds. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen explores Elizabeth Bennet's evolving judgments of Mr. Darcy through her internal reflections, depicting her growth in self-awareness. James (2018) notes, "Austen's brilliance lies in her ability to portray the psychological complexity of her characters, especially their emotional development, within the tight confines of a socially constrained world" (p. 206). In *Emma*, Austen's portrayal of the protagonist's flaws—self-deception and overconfidence—reveals her emotional growth through irony and internal monologues, as Graver (2019) argues: "The irony in *Emma* functions as a psychological mechanism, revealing the heroine's misunderstandings and gradual maturation" (p. 128). Austen's nuanced characterizations laid the foundation for later authors to explore the human psyche in greater depth, influencing the psychological realism of the Victorian era. Furthermore, Austen's portrayal of the interplay between individual psychology and social expectations anticipates the works of George Eliot and Henry James. As Brown (2020) observes, "Austen's characters are psychologically rich, but their emotional worlds are always framed by the social realities they inhabit" (p. 84).

1.2 The Influence of Romanticism on Psychological Depth:

Romanticism, which flourished in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, prioritized individual emotions, self-reflection, and subjectivity, marking a departure from Enlightenment values of reason and order. Romantic writers explored the complexities of personal experience and human emotion, which paved the way for psychological realism. Authors like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Lord Byron delved into the inner lives of their characters, grappling with emotions like alienation and despair. This focus on emotional authenticity, as Baldick (2019) notes, "began the tradition of exploring the unspoken inner lives of characters that would become central in psychological realism" (p. 156). Romanticism's emphasis on personal struggle and self-discovery provided a foundation for later writers like George Eliot and Henry James to explore more complex psychological territory. By emphasizing the tension between individual desires and societal norms, Romanticism laid the groundwork for the psychological complexity seen in 19th-century realism. This focus on emotion and inner conflict would come to define the psychological realism of later works by Eliot and James (Beaumont, 2018).

In conclusion, Romanticism's focus on individual subjectivity and emotional depth established the foundation for psychological realism. The exploration of the self and emotional complexity in Romantic literature provided the tools for later authors to create multifaceted characters, whose internal worlds would be explored in depth, influencing the detailed psychological portraits found in 19th-century realism.

2. Mid-19th Century: Expanding Interior Lives and Moral Complexity

2.1 Charles Dickens and the Inner Turmoil of the Common Man:

Charles Dickens is renowned for blending social critique with psychological depth, especially in *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*. These novels explore characters' struggles with identity, morality, and self-worth, highlighting the emotional and moral crises they face in a socially constrained environment. In *Great Expectations*, Pip's internal conflict—his shame about his social status and desire for upward mobility—is illustrated through moments like his reflection on his humble origins: "I took the opportunity of being alone in the country-yard to look at my coarse hands and my common boots... I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so too" (Dickens, 1861, p. 54). His journey reveals how material success fails to bring moral fulfillment. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens examines David's psychological growth through struggles with loss and his search for moral clarity. As David reflects, "I had always felt, in the depths of my heart, that my goodness, such as it was, was not in my own strength" (Dickens, 1850, p. 340). Dickens' psychological realism makes these characters' moral dilemmas deeply relatable, showing how personal growth is shaped by external pressures (Watt, 2016, p. 223).

2.2 Elizabeth Gaskell's Humanizing of Social Realities:

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1854) exemplify psychological realism by examining characters' emotional struggles within the context of class disparity, labor issues, and social mobility. Gaskell portrays how socio-economic conditions shape her characters' inner lives. In *Mary Barton*, the emotional toll of poverty is evident in Mary's reflections on her limited social mobility: "What is there for me in the world, but to work and be content?" (Gaskell, 1848, p. 102). *North and South* presents Margaret Hale's internal moral and psychological conflict as she grapples with the harsh realities of industrial

capitalism: "I began to see that all this is a system that presses upon the poor; and that if I were to be true to my own heart, I must fight for them" (Gaskell, 1854, p. 286). Through these characters, Gaskell explores the emotional effects of social conditions and labor struggles, showing how individuals shape their moral and emotional identities. She also humanizes industrialists like John Thornton, who struggles with balancing his duty to his workers and his business. Thornton reflects: "I want her to see that the man who works his fingers to the bone for his mill, has a heart for his own" (Gaskell, 1854, p. 345). By focusing on psychological depth, Gaskell reveals the emotional and moral complexities tied to class dynamics and social mobility during the Victorian era.

3. Late 19th Century: The Height of Psychological Realism

3.1 George Eliot's Intellectual and Moral Realism:

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-1872) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) are central to the development of psychological realism, focusing on morally complex characters navigating inner conflicts. Eliot explores how personal desires, societal pressures, and moral obligations intersect, reflecting her interest in philosophy, particularly moral philosophy, and the human psyche.

In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea Brooke's idealism leads her to pursue intellectual and moral fulfillment, but her journey is hindered by societal constraints, especially concerning marriage and gender. As Eliot writes, Dorothea "was of the high, temperamental order of women who care for nothing so much as the bringing of their moral faculties into harmony with their intellectual perceptions" (Eliot, 1871, p. 215). This highlights her internal conflict between intellectual aspirations and societal expectations, culminating in an existential crisis.

The Mill on the Floss examines Maggie Tulliver's emotional volatility and moral dilemmas. Maggie's struggles with reconciling her desires with social expectations

lead to a psychological breakdown. As she reflects, "I am not a saint... but I am always striving to be one" (Eliot, 1860, p. 394), illustrating her continuous self-examination and emotional complexity.

Eliot's characters grapple with intellectual and moral struggles, shaped by their gender and social class. Through these characters, Eliot emphasizes self-examination and personal growth, offering profound insight into the moral dilemmas of her time. As C. L. Innes (2010) observes, "Eliot's psychological realism is marked by her focus on the moral and intellectual dilemmas of her characters, whose actions reflect the complexities of the human condition" (p. 107).

3.2 Thomas Hardy and the Tragic Consciousness:

Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure showcase Hardy's exploration of psychological realism in tragic contexts, depicting characters deeply affected by social, moral, and cosmic forces. Hardy examines how internal desires clash with external pressures, revealing the limitations of human agency in a deterministic world.

In Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Tess's psychological depth stems from her battle with guilt, shame, and fatalism. Despite her goodness, she is victimized by her birth, gender, and class. Hardy captures her internal conflict with the line, "I am not what I was, and yet I was once what I was" (Hardy, 1891, p. 251), illustrating Tess's struggle with her changing identity and societal judgment. Her personal desires for love and respect are constantly thwarted by harsh external realities, leading to tragic decisions.

Similarly, Jude the Obscure portrays Jude Fawley's psychological complexity through his struggles with intellectual ambition, love, and social constraints. Jude's aspirations are thwarted by society's rejection and his own sense of failure. As he reflects, "I have no faith in myself, nor in the world, nor in God" (Hardy, 1895, p.

423), his inner turmoil intensifies as his dreams of education and love clash with the limitations of his social status and fate.

In both novels, Hardy illustrates the tension between internal desires and external limitations. Tess and Jude are products of their desires—Tess's need for redemption and Jude's intellectual yearnings—but are continually defeated by social, moral, and cosmic forces. Hardy's portrayal of his characters as active participants in their psychological struggles, despite being trapped by their circumstances, highlights the tragic intersection of human agency and fatalism. As Tess reflects, "The woman I had loved and lost, she had fallen, and all the world had been against her" (Hardy, 1891, p. 302), emphasizing her battle with both internal and external forces.

In *Jude the Obscure*, Jude's emotional and intellectual growth is hindered by his working-class status, leading to his fatalistic belief that he is condemned by society: "I was born in the world, and I must live in it, and I am condemned to the world" (Hardy, 1895, p. 476). Hardy's psychological realism captures this complex dynamic, where internal desires collide with the overwhelming forces of fate and society, ultimately leading to tragic outcomes.

4. Techniques and Literary Innovations in 19th Century Psychological Realism:

4.1 Narrative Techniques and Point of View:

The 19th-century English novel witnessed the development of innovative narrative techniques that allowed authors to explore the inner lives of their characters in unprecedented ways. One of the most pivotal techniques in achieving psychological realism was free indirect discourse. This method blends a character's subjective experience with the external narrative perspective, allowing the reader to gain insight into their thoughts and emotions without the need for first-person

narration. Jane Austen effectively used this technique in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Emma* (1815), providing a nuanced exploration of characters like Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse. Through free indirect discourse, Austen allows the reader to perceive her characters' psychological states and the irony inherent in their self-awareness, as shown in the passage where Elizabeth Bennet sees the shadow of her own face in the glass (Austen, 1813, p. 220). This subtle commentary not only conveys Elizabeth's growth but also deepens the psychological dimension of the novel.

George Eliot also employed free indirect discourse in *Middlemarch* (1871-1872), using it to present characters like Dorothea Brooke with remarkable psychological depth. Through shifts in perspective, Eliot enables readers to explore Dorothea's inner conflicts, such as her struggle with societal expectations and her intellectual and moral aspirations. As Eliot writes, "She felt the weight of being a woman, and a woman who wanted too much" (Eliot, 1871, p. 145), the technique provides an intimate glimpse into Dorothea's psychological struggles while maintaining the narrative's external perspective.

A related technique that developed later in the century was the interior monologue, also referred to as stream of consciousness. While this technique would become more widespread in the 20th century, its foundations were laid in earlier works like Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850) and Eliot's *Middlemarch*. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens uses first-person narration to convey the protagonist's psychological evolution. David's moments of introspection, such as his reflection on being tossed about by forces beyond his control (Dickens, 1850, p. 318), offer direct insight into his internal turmoil, allowing readers to understand his emotional and psychological struggles more deeply than traditional narrative methods would allow.

Another important narrative technique in 19th-century psychological realism was the use of the omniscient narrator. This device enables the narrator to delve into multiple characters' thoughts and emotions, offering a comprehensive exploration of psychological complexity. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), Thomas Hardy uses omniscient narration to explore Tess's moral and emotional struggles. The omniscient perspective moves fluidly between Tess's inner world and the external forces that shape her, as seen in the line: "Tess was no longer the girl who had believed in love; her heart was now hardened by the world's contempt" (Hardy, 1891, p. 276). This allows Hardy to portray Tess's psychological transformation within the broader social context, reinforcing the theme of victimization by fate and society.

Through these innovative narrative techniques—free indirect discourse, interior monologue, and omniscient narration—19th-century writers like Austen, Eliot, Dickens, and Hardy enhanced psychological realism by offering readers a more intimate and complex understanding of their characters' inner lives, paving the way for modern literary explorations of the human psyche.

4.2 Use of Symbolism and Setting to Reflect Inner States:

In addition to narrative techniques, symbolism and setting became crucial tools in 19th-century psychological realism, helping authors externalize characters' psychological states. Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens, in particular, used these techniques to align the external world with the internal lives of their characters, often creating landscapes that mirrored their emotional and moral dilemmas.

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy uses the rural setting to reflect Tess's emotional and psychological state. The natural environment—such as the symbolic use of the stone circle or the recurring motif of the seasons—mirrors Tess's tragic fate and emotional turmoil. Similarly, in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy uses the setting of the rural landscape and Jude's limited surroundings to emphasize his feelings of

entrapment and alienation. As Jude struggles against societal constraints, the harsh, unforgiving environment reflects his inner conflict and despair.

In Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860-1861), the settings also serve as metaphors for the psychological states of the characters. The decaying mansion of Miss Havisham, for instance, symbolizes her psychological decay and obsession with the past. Similarly, the bleak, foggy streets of London in *Bleak House* (1853) mirror the chaotic and corrupt nature of the legal system and the inner turmoil of its characters, enhancing the novel's exploration of the psychological effects of social injustice.

Thus, through the strategic use of setting and symbolism, authors in the 19th century created environments that not only depicted the external world but also served as reflections of the psychological and emotional landscapes of their characters, reinforcing the themes of internal conflict and moral struggle.

Hardy's Rural Wessex and Symbolism in Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure:

In Thomas Hardy's novels, Wessex—his fictional representation of the English countryside—functions as more than a mere setting. It embodies the psychological states of the characters, serving as a symbolic backdrop that mirrors their emotional landscapes. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, the rural settings of Wessex contrast innocence with the harsh realities of Tess's fate. The idyllic countryside, often associated with purity, becomes a double-edged sword, reflecting both Tess's moments of solace and the external pressures that eventually lead to her downfall. Hardy frequently juxtaposes the "green and pleasant land" with the darker, more oppressive landscapes that embody the moral and social forces working against her (Hardy, 1891, p. 90). The tension between these settings symbolizes Tess's internal conflict, torn between a desire for love and a society that condemns her.

Similarly, in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy uses the urban environment of Christminster to symbolize Jude's internal battles. Christminster, an academic and social hub, represents the intellectual aspirations that Jude clings to, but it also becomes a symbol of failure and disillusionment when those aspirations remain unfulfilled. The city's grim expanse, described as casting "long shadows" over a world that seems "doomed" (Hardy, 1895, p. 432), underscores Jude's internal despair and his growing recognition that his dreams are unattainable, no matter how hard he strives. As critic Philip Mallett (2007) suggests, Hardy's landscapes often function as a "psychological geography," where nature acts as both a reflection and a judge of his characters' psychological states.

In both novels, Hardy's symbolic use of landscape emphasizes the tension between personal aspiration and the external forces that thwart it, mirroring the inner struggles of characters like Tess and Jude.

Dickens' Use of Urban Settings in Great Expectations and David Copperfield:

Charles Dickens, in contrast to Hardy's rural settings, often employed urban landscapes as symbols of psychological conflict. In *Great Expectations* (1860-1861), Dickens uses the settings of the marshes and London to symbolize Pip's psychological evolution. The marshes, where Pip's humble beginnings are rooted, represent his innocence and simplicity. As Pip moves to London in pursuit of wealth and social status, the city's fog and bustle serve as a metaphor for his moral confusion and disillusionment with his pursuit of personal advancement. The city becomes a space of false hope, where Pip's material success does not bring him personal fulfillment. Dickens writes of London as "a wilderness of fog and brick, a city that contained no hope of personal happiness, only the false hope of fortune" (Dickens, 1861, p. 342), emphasizing the disconnect between Pip's external success and his internal dissatisfaction.

Similarly, in David Copperfield (1850), the transition from the countryside to the city highlights the protagonist's emotional journey. The countryside represents David's childhood innocence and moral clarity, while the city, particularly London, exposes him to the complexities and moral ambiguities of adult life. The city's oppressive atmosphere, filled with morally questionable figures like Uriah Heep and Mr. Creakle, mirrors David's struggles with identity, relationships, and morality as he matures. The urban setting in David Copperfield is not merely a backdrop but a symbol of the psychological challenges David faces in reconciling his personal ambitions with the harsh realities of life.

Both Hardy and Dickens use setting as a reflection of psychological states, yet they do so in ways that are influenced by their respective narrative worlds. While Hardy's rural Wessex represents the internal and external forces shaping his characters' lives, Dickens's urban environments act as mirrors of the moral and psychological complexity of characters like Pip and David. Through these contrasting uses of setting, both authors deepen the psychological realism in their works.

Settings as Extensions of Characters' Mental Landscapes:

The interplay between setting and character in 19th-century psychological realism is a key aspect of the genre. For authors like Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens, physical environments were not merely backdrops to the plot but reflections of the characters' psychological and moral struggles. In Hardy's work, for instance, Wessex is more than a setting—it is symbolic of the inner turmoil and emotional landscapes of characters. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy uses the rural, often harsh environment of Wessex to parallel Tess's innocence, victimization, and inevitable tragedy. The open fields offer solace, yet they are quickly overshadowed by darker, oppressive landscapes that mirror Tess's psychological and social pressures. Similarly, in *Jude the Obscure*, the bleak, grim city of Christminster

mirrors Jude's sense of failure, as he seeks intellectual and social success only to find disillusionment and despair. These settings become more than mere places—they are active participants in the narrative, representing internal conflicts that shape the characters' fates.

In contrast, Dickens employs urban settings to externalize the complexities of his characters' emotions and moral struggles. In *Great Expectations*, the marshes represent Pip's humble beginnings, while London—with its fog and vastness—symbolizes his internal confusion and moral conflict as he seeks social advancement. The city serves as a mirror to his emotional state, reflecting his alienation despite achieving material success. Dickens's use of the urban landscape in *David Copperfield* similarly captures the protagonist's transition from innocence to the harsh complexities of adult life. The bustling, morally ambiguous streets of London highlight David's inner conflict as he navigates the challenges of growing up, revealing how setting amplifies the psychological depth of characters' emotional journeys.

Dialogue and Inner Monologue as Windows into the Mind:

In addition to setting, dialogue and inner monologue are crucial tools for revealing the psychological depth of characters in 19th-century literature. Authors like Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy skillfully use these techniques to explore characters' moral struggles, emotional breakdowns, and moments of self-reflection:

1. Introspective Dialogue: Dialogue, particularly when it involves introspection or moral reflection, provides an external manifestation of a character's internal conflicts. In *Great Expectations*, Pip's conversation with Joe about his shame exposes his internal battle between his humble origins and his aspirations for social advancement. Pip confesses, "I am ashamed of my ignorance, Joe, but I can't help it; I've been too proud to learn" (Dickens, 1861, p. 290). This dialogue

externalizes Pip’s internal struggle, allowing readers to understand the emotional consequences of his pursuit of status.

In George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, Dorothea Brooke’s dialogue with her husband Casaubon reveals the tension between personal fulfillment and marital duty. Casaubon’s dismissive remarks about her intellectual capabilities underscore Dorothea’s dilemma, as she sacrifices her own desires for the sake of her marriage. Dorothea’s reflections—“I could have been so much more, but now I must make myself a little less in order to preserve what I have” (Eliot, 1871, p. 415)—highlight the emotional and moral weight of her internal struggle.

2. Inner Monologue: Inner monologue takes readers deeper into the private emotional world of characters. It allows for direct access to their psychological states, particularly during moments of introspection or crisis. In *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, Hardy uses Tess’s inner monologues to reflect her emotional breakdowns. After her assault by Alec, Tess reflects on the injustice she faces: “I have no more to say, except that I have been wronged by the man I loved” (Hardy, 1891, p. 263). Tess’s inner monologue unveils her emotional and moral anguish, making her internal world accessible to readers.

In Dickens’s *David Copperfield*, inner monologue allows the reader to witness David’s emotional breakdown after the death of his mother. His reflections—“I am a little lost, a little broken, and the world feels no longer my own. I shall never recover from this” (Dickens, 1850, p. 467)—reveal the depth of his grief, emphasizing how Dickens uses introspective moments to enrich the psychological realism of the narrative.

Similarly, in Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie Tulliver’s inner monologues reveal her moral confusion and emotional fragmentation. When contemplating her relationship with Stephen, Maggie reflects, “I have been wrong, but how can I help it, when my heart says one thing and the world says another?” (Eliot, 1860,

p. 325). This inner conflict exposes Maggie's moral and emotional turmoil, deepening the psychological realism of Eliot's novel.

Moments of Self-Reflection and Confession:

Self-reflection and confession play a key role in revealing the psychological complexities of characters. These moments often mark turning points in their emotional development and moral reckoning. For instance, Pip's confession to Joe in *Great Expectations* is a pivotal moment in his moral growth. He admits, "I have been ashamed of my past, ashamed of my faults, ashamed of who I was" (Dickens, 1861, p. 385). This moment of self-reflection signifies Pip's emotional transformation and the beginning of his moral redemption.

Similarly, in *Middlemarch*, Dorothea's reflection on her life choices leads to a moment of moral clarity. Her contemplation—"What is it that I want—self-fulfillment or the obedience of duty? I see now that it is neither, but something far more painful: to be true to my own soul" (Eliot, 1871, p. 532)—demonstrates her deep internal conflict, as she seeks to reconcile personal desires with her sense of duty.

Conclusion

The use of dialogue and inner monologue in 19th-century novels is fundamental to the development of psychological realism. These techniques provide intimate access to characters' internal worlds, offering a profound understanding of their emotional and moral struggles. Through introspective dialogue and reflective moments, authors like Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy externalize the complexities of the human psyche, making the characters' psychological depth and development more tangible and relatable. By allowing readers to engage with the characters' inner conflicts, these authors bring the emotional landscapes of their novels to life, enhancing the psychological realism that defines their work.

5. The Impact and Legacy of 19th Century Psychological Realism

5.1 Influence on Modern Psychological Fiction:

- The development of psychological realism in the 19th century influenced major modernist writers like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and D.H. Lawrence. These authors, while experimenting with new techniques, built on the groundwork laid by earlier authors like George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Thomas Hardy. For example:

- **Virginia Woolf's** stream-of-consciousness method in *Mrs. Dalloway* mirrors the intricate psychological insights of Eliot, especially in navigating emotional and moral growth over time.
- **James Joyce** used fragmented narrative structures and internal monologue in *Ulysses*, much like Dickens' psychological explorations in *David Copperfield* and Eliot's approach in *Middlemarch*.
- **D.H. Lawrence's** deep psychological introspection in *Sons and Lovers* and *Women in Love* draws from the emotional depth and internal conflicts explored in Dickens' and Hardy's works.

5.2 Enduring Appeal and Relevance:

The enduring appeal of 19th-century psychological realism lies in its exploration of universal themes such as moral ambiguity, identity, and individual desires versus societal pressures. These themes remain relevant today as they address the complexities of mental health, gender roles, and social mobility.

- For example, Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* continue to resonate in discussions around trauma, moral choices, and societal judgment. Similarly, Dickens' works address moral growth and redemption, themes that connect to contemporary issues of self-identity and ethical conflict.

5.3 Conclusion of this Section:

The 19th-century psychological realism movement revolutionized literature by offering deep psychological insights into characters. This has left an enduring legacy in both modern fiction and contemporary studies of human behavior, as seen in the works of Woolf, Joyce, and Lawrence, as well as the ongoing relevance of these themes in today's society.

Future Directions for Research

1. Lesser-Known Authors in Psychological Realism:

Authors like Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, and George Meredith should be re-examined for their contributions to psychological realism. Gaskell's novels such as *North and South* are particularly insightful in their portrayal of psychological conflict within the framework of class and social issues.

2. Comparative Studies Between English and Continental Traditions:

Future research could benefit from comparing psychological realism in English literature with works from authors like Dostoevsky and Balzac, examining shared themes of internal conflict, moral struggle, and narrative techniques such as free indirect discourse.

3. Gender and Psychological Realism:

Focusing on gender differences in psychological depictions could provide new perspectives, such as how female characters like Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch* and Tess Durbeyfield are affected by societal expectations, offering an understanding of how interiority and psychological depth are gendered.

4. Psychology, Philosophy, and Moral Realism:

Exploring the philosophical and psychological influences on characters, especially in the works of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, could offer insights into moral and psychological development. Their works engage deeply with philosophical questions of fate, morality, and human agency.

5. Psychological Realism in Short Fiction:

Analyzing short stories by authors such as Hardy and Hawthorne could reveal unique ways in which psychological realism is condensed into shorter narratives, offering a different approach to character depth and psychological conflict.

6. Interdisciplinary Approaches:

Integrating modern psychological theories, like Freudian or Jungian approaches, and even insights from neuroscience, could provide new ways to interpret the psychological depth in novels by Dickens or Eliot.

7. Digital Humanities and Textual Analysis:

Using digital tools such as text mining to analyze patterns in language related to psychological themes across large datasets could help uncover the evolution of psychological realism across multiple works, including examining how techniques like free indirect discourse were developed and applied.

Conclusion of Future Research

The continued exploration of psychological realism in 19th-century English literature offers promising directions for future academic inquiry. This could involve both expanding the focus to include lesser-known authors and employing modern interdisciplinary approaches to enrich the study of psychological depth and human nature.

This comprehensive analysis sets a strong foundation for any future academic endeavors in the field, whether through expanding the scope of research or exploring new methodologies.

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