

**Course Name: The Novel and Change**

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**Lecture 23**

Great Expectations - Part 2

So, hello and welcome to this course titled The Novel and Change. We will continue discussing Charles Dickens's novel The Great Expectations. We have already had an introductory session on this. We will just carry on reading the essay that we had started off with. And the reason that we are looking at this essay as you may have guessed already is because it is a very good study of the text and the context together. So, looking at the text in connection to the context because remember Dickens is also writing at a time where some very interesting social changes are happening or taking place. And of course, we need to remind ourselves that we are reading Great Expectations in comparison and in dialogue with Joseph Conrad's novel Heart of Darkness, which we will begin once we finish reading this. So if you just go back to where we left last time, we were talking about how the whole idea of the fetishization of identity the conversion of the entity into a commodity that is taking place in a very industrial speed and scale in Dickens's England at the time in which great exploitation is emerging. So this is a novel where masculinity, identity, gentlemanliness all become part of the cultural commodity processes. And of course, the whole economy of aspiration, the whole economy of expectations around the subject, all oriented towards this very, very market-heavy identity process.

Now, we also find that the novel is also about a journey, how Pip moves from rural England to a more metropolitan England and that movement is also associated with the loss of innocence, a movement very symbolic as it were from the idyllic pastoral landscape to a more almost cannibalistic cosmopolitan landscape and that is obviously in connection with the social changes happening in England at that point of time. So this should be on the

screen. And if we just, before we just begin, if you remember how the vocabulary in Great Resultation also sometimes draws on a very machinic vocabulary, the whole idea of the machine, the whole idea of the assemblage between the man and the machine, that begins to inform the different cognitive emotional processes in the novel. So, Great Resultations dramatizes Pip's crisis of identity as a direct consequence of his migration from the rural economy of his boyhood to the remorseless capitalist exchange of the city. So, there is absolutely no remorse, there is no compunction, there is no sympathy, there is no pity. It is very much a machinic world where everyone is racing against everyone else. in order to make you to the top. So this is an economy of aspirations, an economy of ambition, of making it big. So gentlemanliness becomes a very coveted commodity in this economy. The question of modernity, the, the juggernaut of capital, the chariot movement of capital, the very coercive structures of modernity, all this is partly figured in the text by the incursions of Pip's involuntary, unconscious and the pain and fear of displacement that Dickens registers here.

So, along with mobility there is also a sense of dislocation. So the obvious aspiration is towards a mobile economy, an upwardly mobile economy. That comes at a cost, it comes at a cost of you know stability, it comes at a cost of you know the whole idea of being rooted somewhere. So there is a sense of alienation, the sense of displacement, a sense of you know uprootedness, all these come in and are dramatized in different degrees in Dickens's novel. Yet Dickens does not allow any return for Pip and it is only at the level of the unconscious that Pip's resistance to his experiences in London is possible. So, it's only at a very subliminal level that any subversion or any resistance is taking place in his dreams, in his unconscious, in his escape into reverie. Whereas in reality he is very much sucked into the matrix of you know cosmopolitanism, capitalism where he finds himself very strongly situated, right. So this situatedness is important over here because it is coming at a cost of being uprooted. From his erstwhile ideal position of rural England, the countryside, from a country boy, he very quickly transforms into a city boy, a city man, moving towards a very mobile, aspirational economy. And in the process, it is also a story about the loss of innocence.

So it is not Pip's bad faith that produces his dreams, which are less dreams of conscience than the dream consciousness of the bewildering logic of the cash nexus of transferable value. Dreams seem to be important in *Great Expectations* because they represent the beleaguered remnant of private identity in a world which increasingly demands the sacrifice of individuality to public conformity. Now this is an important passage because the whole idea of sacrificing agency, sacrificing individuality to the surface of public conformity is important over here because all identities become part of one faceless automatic exchange and the metropolitan modernity that London represents in its novel is part of a sucking machine where it sucks up all human agency, all individuality, all differences and it literally transforms humans into factory produced products. And the whole idea of gentlemanliness, the whole idea of the still fashion gentleman and you know the movement towards the urban capital, the movement towards the aspirational identity is also part of this entire mechanism of producing agencylessness which is what is taking place in *Great Expectations*. And the very title of the essay, if you can sort of focus on the idea of expectations over here and great expectations, it has a sense of failure embedded in it.

So great expectations, it also seems to suggest that maybe the expectations are not met. Maybe there is a sense of failure, a sense of collapse, a sense of the crisis of expectations that is also taking place. So at the level of greatness, there is a sort of pressure and the whole idea of going for something which is a chimera-like construct. So the very oppositions which Marxist claims are threatened by industrial capitalism are those violated in Pip's dreams. What Mark Seltzer has described as the opposition between the personal and the commercial, between private and public, between persons and material objects, right. So these things keep featuring in Pip's dreams and again dreams are important over here because they offer some kind of a ludic landscape, a subversive landscape, which allows for these oppositional categories to mix and merge together, right. So dreams become not just an escape route for Pip, but also some kind of play where he can project his fantasies, his fears, his phobias, which are otherwise very, very constricted and repressed in this very mainstreaming straitjacket of individuality and, you know, gentlemanly behaviour. that London compels a subject to produce and perform and

conform to. In view of Pip's vivid dreams, the famous charges made by George Orwell that Dickens's characters have no mental life and by G.

H. Lewis that Dickens is unable to render the complexity of the organism seem unfounded. So there are these very long drawn out scholarly criticism of Dickens, how his characters are never really ones of flesh and blood. They are not really animated characters. They are not really deep rounded characters. They seem to be sometimes stereotyped, sometimes very stock characters. That seems to be, that criticism seems to be a little bit challenged and undercut in this reading. And that criticism, as you know, also comes historically from George Orwell, who very famously said Dickens' characters have no mental life, there is no mental depth, there is no sense of emotional complexity. And that, to a certain extent, is exposed as unfounded because there is a lot of mental ambivalence and depth and anguish and anxiety that we find in *Great Expectations*. So, unsurprisingly, in *Great Expectations*, dreams, visions and anxieties continually invade the narrative and Tibbe refers often to his mental life. So, there are all these different subliminal, you know, traffic going on in terms of the subconscious, the unconscious, the dreams, the reveries, the different kinds of fantasies and phobias and anxieties which keep, you know, informing and shaping and reshaping each other, sometimes undercutting each other. And all these create some kind of an economy of mental movements, economy of moods, economy of aspirations, which become part of the characterization and great expectations. So, Pip refers to this, his mental life, my inner self, my state of mind within myself and the innermost life of my life. So, this whole idea of inwardness, the whole idea of interiority, self-reflexivity, so all these become important in *Great Expectations*. So, it is in some sense unlike many other Dickens's novels where the function of the characters is to progress the plot. It is to push forward the action in the story, the plot.

Whereas in *queer expectations* sometimes we have really dense descriptions and very detailed self-reflexive descriptions of the character's thought processes, Pip's thought processes. So in that it seems to be quite a quote unquote modernist in quality, it is a bit like the the James Joyce idea of the unconscious or the Virginia Woolf idea of the unconscious where depth and interiority and subliminal, subconscious, all these become

very important categories of characterization, right. So Peter Brooks, among others, in his well-known psychoanalytic reading of *Great Expectations*, noticed the psychological narrative and has diagnosed the end of the novel as dramatizing, there's a quote from Brooks, the return of the repressed, the repressed as knowledge of the self's other story, the true history of his misapprehended desire, which forces a total revision of the subject's relation to the orders within which it constitutes meaning. So Again, the vocabulary is very Freudian, as you can see, the return of the repressed. And what kind of return is this? The repress is knowledge of the self's other story, right? So, the whole idea of the other story, the dark story, the shameful story, which we talked about in the early class as well. Whole idea of finding out or arriving at the moment of knowledge we realize the entire subjectivity is a inglorious constructed inglorious subjectivity a shameful subjectivity right so the true story of this misapprehended desire so it is a misdirected misapprehended desire because obviously in the story pip know, he is expecting that or he thinks that, you know, it is Miss Havisham who is funding his education, funding his gentlemanly upbringing, whereas in reality it turns out there was a conflict Magwitch who was funding it all the time. So, that becomes a bit of a misapprehended desire, so that this whole sense of the pursuit of excellence, the pursuit of social supremacy, it begins to become some kind of a hollow act because you realize that it is only possible if you are using very, very questionable money, very dark money from very dark sources. So it is a total revision, it forces a total revision as Peter Brook says of the subject's relations to the others within which it constitutes meaning. So the entire self-other binary, the entire acceptable-unacceptable binary, the entire desirable-undesirable binary So all these binaries begin to blur away in this very revisionist force which this particular awakening compels the subject to experience. Although Brooks's idea or discussion of the novel is compelling, I am arguing here that a state of hyper-subjectivity, a very important word, hyper-subjectivity, the self-reflexive awareness of the self almost in a very metacognitive way, the awareness of awareness, the subject's understanding of its own subjectivity, so hyper-subjectivity.

The state of hyper-subjectivity which Dickens attributes to Pip is actively constituted by the main plot. The plot which Brooks describes as centrally unashamedly and at first place unsurprised or unsuspectingly concerned with issues of plot and plotting, right. So the

whole idea of issues of plot and plotting as in how to make the plot forward, how to design the plot. So these things also become part of the narrative in a certain sense and we also have moments in great expectations and realize it is almost like the narrative is trying to figure out a way how to navigate it forward. So, there is a self-reflexive quality in the narrative as well and this is important because the manner in which the narrative is designed, the manner in which narrative is operationalized in a way is also dialogic with the manner of self-reflexivity that Pip's own subjective experience you know forces him to undergo or go through. So, Pip is coerced by a self-help culture into an active involvement in this capitalist plot, the mystery plot of his expectations and a crowd of speculations and anticipations which attends it. produces a confusion of his identity and his sense of victimization which Dickens dramatizes in the dreams. So there is a sense of victimization, a sense of being discriminated, being humiliated and that often comes up in Pip's dreams but more importantly what is important over here is the whole idea of the plot, the mystery plot in the sense that and also notice how the word plot is spatial in quality as well. It is territorial, spatial, how it can only give some kind of a, there is a legality about plot. There is a difference between a land and a plot. So, the plot belongs to someone, the plot is a classified territory, the plot has a sense of inclusion, exclusion, transgression, the permitted perimeter of the plot as opposed to the transgression of that same perimeter. So all these different legal, existential, emotional, affective issues come together in this metaphoric plot. Now of course the whole idea of plot is important because it is also the way in which the borders between the public and the private, between the whole idea of security and social mobility and insecurity, they all begin to blur away. And of course there is a sense of mystery in the plot as well. As I mentioned already that there is this constant speculation about why, who is funding Pip's education when it turns out in the end it was the convict's money.

Then of course the plot comes to an abrupt change. It has to be directed somewhere else, right. So, in this sense, the victimization which Dickens dramatizes in the dreams. Furthermore, there is no redemptive recognition or return possible for Pip at the end of the text, enmeshed as he is by then, in a newly literate and commercial society which excludes the unwritten, the private and the dreamt. So, again the whole sense of, you know, the

capitalist market economy that Pip finds himself situated in very squarely, it has no room for dreams, there is no room for the unwritten, for the liminal. So, everything has to be classified you know in a very cartographic kind of a way. So, there is no sense of the private and the dream to the liminal making any impact in the commercial conversations that are taking place you know between subjects, right. So, Dickens was fascinated by dreams and the nature of the relationships to personal identity. In June 1866, Dickens told his friend, G. H. Leavis, curious stories of dreams, etc., a case of inconsequential dreams seeming to come true in the most minute details, and examples of a strange effect which, which shock could have on people's behaviour and perception of themselves. So, as you can imagine, Dickens was profoundly influenced and profoundly interested in the different psychological, almost neural mechanisms through which people's behaviour, perceptions can be altered, redefined. through states of shock, through states of shudder. There is this constant curiosity Dickens has in terms of what happens, of trying to find out what happens to the subject, the feeling, experiencing, lived subject when they come by a very, very extreme experience.

And in the spring of 1870, Dickens had lunch with Levinson, George Eliot, and talked of the dreams again. Again George Eliot of course was one of the best novelists of the time you know in terms of the realism, in terms of the again this tension between the countryside and the city. So all these things happen in Eliot's novels as well. Right, so Lewis's professional interest in psychoanalysis probably made him an attentive listener. Many of Dickens's friends were psychologists or insisted or were interested in psychology. Apart from Lewis, he knew John Connolly, William Thackeray, Charles Reed, John Foster, Richard Monckton Miles and Brian Proctor. Among them were three government lunacy commissioners and one co-proprietor of an asylum. So, it is an interesting mix. We have these writers as well as asylum owners, right? So, again, what we see in common is a discussion about the mind, the state of mental health, etc. So, in *Great Expectations*, he renders psychological phenomena with surprising accuracy. The young Pip is able to recall what I hardly knew I knew. So the whole idea of recall becomes important, recall is reconstruction and how that can sometimes happen even with the subject not controlling it entirely. So, the uncontrollable nature of memory that too becomes an important factor.

Just as G. H. Lewis in a second volume of his *Physiology of Common Life* published in 1860 tells us and there's a quote, we can have a sensation without thinking of that sensation. And in like manner we can think without thinking that we think. So there is this double negation over here, we think without thinking that we think. So, this whole idea of rescuing the mind from thinking, the whole idea of having a sensation without the necessarily going through a thought process which shape it, shapes it.

So, these things become important. The older Pip in *Mortal Danger*, trapped in a lime kiln with a murderous Oleg, is described thus. In excited and exalted state of my brain, I could not think of a place without seeing it, or of persons without seeing them. It is impossible to overstate the vividness of these images, and yet I was so intent all the time upon him. Himself, who would not be intent on the tiger crouching to spring? that I knew of the slightest action of his fingers, right. So, the whole idea of, you know, looking at the other in this case the other being the murderous oleg you know the abject the other or subject. So, these become very important because the vocabulary is a very self-reflexive, the vocabulary is very visceral and the viscerality of the vocabulary is important for us to understand because there is this very dense cognitive condition Dickens is offering over here, which is very unlike to his other characterizations in other novels. Through Lewis and others, Dickens may have been familiar with the work of Henry Holland, whose investigations into the basis of identity and consciousness seem almost to offer a commentary on Dickens's technique in *Great Expectations*. It is an important name, Henry Holland who research in identity and cognition and consciousness and interestingly, it is very interestingly dialogic and resonant and it corresponds to Dickens's own technique of narrative transmission. And we now refer to some of the works of Holland. For example, in 1840, *Medical Notes and Reflections* in a chapter entitled *On Dreaming, Insanity, Toxication, etc.*

Holland writes of, and I quote, the natural function of mind by which we perpetually change our relation to external objects, even when all the senses are open and awake, at one moment abstracting our consciousness from them altogether, at another admitting some sensations. while others are excluded these unceasing changes which in the series make up

the chain or circle of life being sometimes the effect of the will sometimes wholly beyond its control right so this whole idea the whole interplay of willfulness and agencylessness being in control of being out of control so that is seen as the binary which has been deconstructed especially in this novel. And this of course the passage I just read was in this really interesting chapter called On Dreaming, Insanity and Intoxication by Holland that you know Dickens seemed to mention this, someone that Pip knew. So of course Dickens was aware of Holland's work I mean and you know and this was a time again if you go back to a reading of Mary Shelley you realize that you know writers like Shelley and Dickens and Defoe, these are very curious people and they are deeply influenced and they are deeply aware and they engage with the scientific, political, philosophical you know thesis and debates happening around that time. So, Dickens's interest in dreams, states of consciousness, identity and the freedom of will and great expectations clearly reflects contemporary scientific debate around such subjects.

But he uses powerful descriptions of mental states to figure an identity continually under threat of collapse. the perpetual changes that holland describes as natural sense responses to stimuli becoming for pip a forced defense against a relentless battery of novelty strangeness and violence which assails him Right, so how mental states, these different kinds of you know stimuli, sensations, these become paradoxically the only way one can, the subject could defend themselves against this relentless battery of innovation, the relentless vocabulary of violence which the metropolitan modernity was you know subjecting them to. So the subliminal escape of the dreams, the subliminal escape into the unconscious, they the only available routes to escape when the subject finds himself mired in this metropolitan modernity of velocity and violence and viscerality. Right. So, we come back to the dream where Pip describes himself you know as bricks and machinery and that famous passage that we described last time as well. So, Pip's dream of his transformation into bricks and machinery is the last in the novel but other dreams are recounted throughout the text. As a child Pip dreams that he is drifting down the river to the hulks to be hanged and he develops a dread of the file that steals from magwitch in my sleep i saw the file coming at me out of a door without being without seeing who held it and screamed myself

awake so even when he is with magwitch when he's in other situations the dreams the density of dreams keep coming back in pips's mind and again on the eve of his move to london pip dreams again All night I lay, all night there were coaches in my broken sleep, going to wrong places instead of London, and having in their traces new dogs, new cats, now cats, now dogs, now pigs, now men. never horses. So this is important because first of all there is a sense of the coach moving from one place to another place and that itself is a sign of mobility and the associated anxiety with it. But also, at the same time you know the whole idea of seeing many animals becomes important, but never horses.

I mean horses is pre, pre-industrial revolution part of the vehicle, part of the locomotive, part of the moving machines, but never horses. Horses are very, very interestingly and symbolically erased. They don't appear. In London, Pip miserably dreamed that my expectations were all cancelled. are to give my hand in marriage to Herbert's Clara or play Hamlet to Miss Havisham's course before twenty thousand people without knowing twenty words of it. Right, so he is the moment of despair when he gives it all up and says well, I am, just going to you know quit it, now I might become an actor and do some terrible scenes which will create a lot of mockery and resentment, right. So again this is something I discussed already when we talk about the title Great Expectation there is this spectral projection of fear of failure and you almost begin to expect that the focus is so much on expectations that maybe there is a chance there is this possibility that it will meet a colossal failure. So, and returning to Satis house as a young man A thousand Miss Havishams haunted me. So the spectral qualities are in the novel as well. She was in this time a pillow on that, at that head of the bed, at the foot, behind the half-opened door or the dressing room, in the dressing room, in the rooms overhead, in the room beneath, everywhere.

So, Miss Havisham becomes this very spectral, uncanny, ubiquitous presence. Right. When Magwitch reappears in Pip's life, I had the wildest dreams concerning him. and work unrefreshed. Like the bricks and machinery dream, all these are dramatizations of displacement. So, they're getting, the subjects are getting displaced from one place to another place and that obviously adds to its crisis, sense of alienation. The anxiety underlying each one is an anxiety provoked by things being in the wrong place. The file

achieves an autonomous identity. Miss Havisham fragments into a multiple image and fills Pip's room. Horses are replaced by pigs and Pip has to take first Herbert's place in marriage and then Mr. Woopsles is in the play. there is a hallucinatory quality about these dreams. They just sort of feed each other, connect to each other, disconnect to each other. So that spectral hallucinatory quality of dreams also allows us to offer some kind of a throwback in the resistance against the market because you know in the market everything is tangible and classifiable and tactile to a large extent and bought and sold with some standard commercial exchange notes or values. But in the dream, all these distinctions blur away. In the dream, the public is also the private. In the dream, the whole idea of functionality or demarcation based on functionality also does not exist. At a simple level of plot in a text which famously divides Pip in two, both the younger unknowing and the older knowing identity. So this is the trick in Heart of Darkness in Great Expectations as well, where a very old Pip, a much more mature Pip is telling what happened to a less mature Pip. So it's a flashback story in some way, right. So there is a sense of knowing and old and unknowing and young and all those different personas, narrative personas, they begin to blend together.

Right. So the dreams allow Dickens to dramatize Pip's unconscious uneasiness, which is both expressed and simultaneously repressed in the dream. So again, expression and repression go hand in hand in this particular situation. Right. But the dreams dramatize more specific uneasiness too. Karl Marx writes in a section of Das Kapital that's called The Fetishism of Commodity. So again, we are back to this whole idea of commodification and how that produces alienation and how to resist it maybe dreams are the only recourse to go back to some idyllic unbroken past. So Karl Marx wrote, writes in a section of Das Kapital called The Fetishism of Commodities. The quantities of value vary continually independently of the will foresight and action of the producers to them their own social action takes the form of the action of objects which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them this rebellion of things so again this is interesting how things seem to have a life of their own and you know one can think of using something like thing theory by Bill Brown where things animate themselves again they don't need a father figure or human presence to control them anymore so what happens in that condition. So this rebellion of things which perform their actions independently of the will of the producer is clearly

suggested in Pip's dreamlike you know dream life over which though his producer he is a producer he has no control. So again what we can see how the whole idea of going against the norm the going against the normal standard is present in Great Expectations as well.

But what is important here, most importantly, is the whole idea of rebellion of things. Now mind you, the essay doesn't say objects, it's things. So there is a difference between objects and things over here. Things may be seen as objects which have crossed or transgressed the utility perimeter. So no longer are they answerable, no longer are they attached to a subject, but things begin to operate on their own, almost independently and in a very intersectional way and that becomes a problem and that also becomes part of the commodity fetish and the market economy in which Great Expectations is situated. So this is the rebellion of things. So he has no control. So, Pip ironically has no control. He cannot prevent the life, the file or the pig or Herbert's Clara. moving autonomously into the wrong place. And furthermore, the displacements and muddings of, muddling of categories, this very porous, blurry borderline as I mentioned, within the dreams also commends on economy fatally. disconnected from the actual sense of production. So this also goes to show why the English economy was almost bankrupt at that time, right, because that difference between dreams and reality, the tangible and intangible began to blur away. Pip's bewilderment and loss of self in the dreams echoes his uncertainty about the material source or agency of his wealth and urban identity, right. So, he is not sure who funded his urban identity process, who funded his wealth for schools and education and, you know, different kinds of expensive institutions. Now, of course, this is veiled to him, which is veiled to him. And there is a quote, in my sleep I saw the file coming out, coming at me out of a door without without seeing who held it. The dreams mimic the attenuation of agency in capitalist marketplace, the uncertainty and veiling of the agency of production.

In Marxist terms, it is in fact money which affects this veiling process. So when you use the word veil, there's a sense of translucence as well as opacity about veil. So you can sort of see through a little bit, but at the same time it's opaque. It is covering the real intention, it's covering the real agenda at work. The social relations effectively concealed by the veil of money and great expectations are of course crucial to the novel's uneasy investigation

or the power of currency to outrun all social control in a market free economy, right, in a free market economy. So, the power of currency, the power of capital which can rebuild values, which can crisscross values, which can bring up different kinds of a value economy, right. Pip's fantasizing of Miss Havisham's agency is in the place of Margaret's, in the place of Margaret's, reveals the ease with which such veiled and dispatched, displaced origins may be misattributed. Compeyson is, of course, a former and a linguistic games which Dickens plays with Joe's honest forging in a sense of creating use value and Compenson's forgery in a sense of concealing the origin of his writing to fabricate exchange value served to underline the novel's anxious preoccupation with production and anxiety. So I stop at this point today because I think it's important for us to understand or calibrate the anxiety over here. It's a moral panic, of course. It's also an existential panic because, you know, there seems to be a sense of how This whole over-appropriation of production and agency where agency goes for a toss, this over-appropriation of classification and gentrification and giving it a name, it also creates a new kind of social darkness, a new kind of an underclass people, right, which begins to become a problem in this novel and also elsewhere that we have seen, that the system which is so oriented towards economy, oriented towards the market is so designed to create the next big investor, the next big businessman that everyone else becomes secondary in the process. The system will just move forward in an autopilot mode. So I stop at this point today but I hope you are beginning to get a sense of why Great Expectations the novel is very important particularly in this course which is about the novel Unchanged. because it represents some very interesting changes happening in that time and how the sense of the inglorious identity also comes into being. So, we know about glorious identity, transcendental identity. Here we have the sense of the inglorious identity which is funded paradoxically by the empire, by the fringes, by a quote-unquote rogue agent of the empire. So we'll continue with this discussion in the subsequent sessions. Thank you for your attention.