

Course Name: The Novel and Change

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Great Expectations - Part 5

So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course titled The Novel and Change, where we are reading Charles Dickens's novel Great Expectations. So, we will just start off from where we left last time and we will look at how the fictitious quality of capital in the novel, which is simultaneously described as well as feared through different characters, gets further dramatized in the novel and how the whole idea of monstrosity also comes into being. In this particular session that we are about to start now, we will find how the constant references to monstrosity also brings back a very interesting subtext Mary Shelley's Frankenstein which is the novel we finished just before moving on to this which is why we selected this particular essay because it gives you it offers you a sense of continuity a thematic continuity with the idea of monstrosity which is dramatized in Mary Shelley's novel. So in a way we can see how Mary Shelley's novel and you know Dickens's novel they seem to be quite dialogic with each other in very complex ways. So and this should be on your screen. The remote power of capital. So, we talk about the fictitious capital, the proxy capital where the money is always elsewhere, the money is always floating around. So the whole ontology of ownership has been defamiliarized with the new notions of the marketplace and new notions of wealth, new notions of acquiring wealth. So, the remote power of capital is figured most memorably in the novel by the reappearance of Magwitch, Magwitch being the sort of spectral character really, who as a specter, some kind of a ghost, he keeps funding Pip's education. So, there is a spectral quality about investment, which again in a very interesting way seems to anticipate the whole idea of spectral investment today, the whole idea of the ghost investors.

We don't quite know who is investing in these ghost companies, which brings the whole idea of spectrality, the shadowy quality of capital into a very, very interesting, dramatic point of crystallization where the moment of awakening for Pip in the novel is that moment when he finds out that his investor, a person who is invested in him is actually a very spectral shadowy convict, someone outside of the boundary, someone outside of the permitted perimeter, someone who is always already transgressive in quality because the convict is someone who has transgressed something. And it's from that point of outsideness, from the point of marginalization, from the point of exile, the money comes in, right? Which in a way, really reconfigures the sense of centre and margin in very, very interesting and, you know, irrecoverable ways in *Great Expectations*. So, the reappearance of Mancke, which is very important. So, he is a bit like the, the hauntological quality, the haunted quality, something which does not go away, something which keeps piling up, you know, in a very semantic way, in a very capitalist way somewhere else. Capital never dies, in other words, right, and Pip's discovery that his expectations have emanated from the other side of the world, from elsewhere, right. So, for the long time in the novel, as you know, Pip expected, or Pip thought that his entire investment is coming from Miss Havisham. It turns out it is coming from Magwitch, the convict who is sentenced in exile, who is outside of the permitted perimeter, etc. So along with a sense of capital investment comes a sense of shame, the sense of awakening, the moment of awakening, the epiphanic moment. As John Kerry and others have noticed, Magwitch's reappearance in the text is accompanied by allusions to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which is very, very interesting because it's exactly the kind of study we did before coming on to *Great Expectations*.

Yet, the text has already prepared us for the incursion of Shelley's narrative through previous references to monstrosity. There are multiple allusions to monstrosity already in the text. For example, Pip reflecting on his childhood considers that I have no particular reason to suspect myself of having been a monstrosity, but I considered myself as a young monster, right. So, the sense of monstrosity, the sense of an aberration, the sense of an excess, the sense of abruptness, these are already there in the novel, right. They were sort

of condensed in a very cryptic way at the very beginning. So, what happens in *Great Expectations*? is actually quite carefully curated and prepared in the very beginning of the novel. Estella calls him a little coarse monster, and his details of his trip to Miss Havisham are a monstrous invention, while her vanity of sorrow is later described by Pip as monstrous, and onlookers and officials at Magwitch's sentencing are described as civic gigos and monsters. the first direct reference to Frankenstein appears. So there's a direct reference, a completely clear reference to Frankenstein in the following sentence. When Pip started a boy in boots, for after I haunted, after I made my monster out of the refuse of my washerwoman's family, he haunted my existence. So, the sense of being haunted by what you create, what you anticipate, comes back in *Great Expectations* as well and is directly connected in a very subtextual way to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The Avenger or the Avenging Phantom is clearly a recycled version of Mary Shelley's creature. So, there is a direct allusion, a direct sort of a nod to the legacy created by Frankenstein in the sense of the Avenger, the Phantom which never goes away, dead but not quite dead, you know something which is haunting, you know endlessly haunting the lived reality of the contemporary condition. It is Pip's capital which has created the monster. But the story reverses when Magwitch reappears.

Yes, Pip, dear boy, I made you a gentleman on you. It is me what has done it. So the whole idea of Pip being created as a monster by Magwitch becomes interesting because in a way it reverses the maker-maid relationship which we see in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. So Pip realises himself as a monster. The entire story is focalized through Pip's imagination, through Pip's cognitive lens and he realizes he has been made into a monster through this fictitious capital investment which have come from Magwitch, right. So, Magwitch being the ungentlemanly construct in exile is someone who invested into Pip's idea of monstrosity, Pip's embodiment of monstrosity. So, it is Pip who is figured as a creative monster here. But Dickens's use of the Frankenstein story muddles attributions of monstrosity. Magwitch has been attended throughout the text by images of dogs and savage beasts. So, you know, if you look at the descriptions of Magwitch throughout the novel, he is dehumanized. He is compared to bees, he is compared to all kinds of fallen creatures, all kinds of wild creatures. So he is very much a spectral figure of precarity, someone who

just hangs around the margin, lurks in the margins, waiting to prey. He is more of a predator figure, but at the same time he is also the investor. So that, that difference between the borderline between the predator and the investor goes away, it disappears and that obviously creates a very complex condition in the novel where the whole idea of a capital becomes a remote spectral capital. It's been operated from elsewhere.

Right. So, he is described throughout the text by images of dogs and savage beasts like a wild beast and Pip's repeated abhorrence of him recalls Victor Frankenstein's repulsion from the creature he had made. The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him, the repugnance with which I shrank from him, could not have been exceeded if he had been some terrible beast. So, there is this beastly quality which is projected and attributed to Magwitch. Obviously, it gets more complicated because he ends up being the source of investment through which Pip's potential gentlemanliness is created. My blood again ran cold. I got away from him without knowing how I did it. So he's a paralyzing presence. The imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me. There's a reversal in a way of the Frankenstein story. So in Frankenstein, It is Victor Frankenstein who pursues the creature he has made and Dickens has great expectations. Pip is the monster which is being made but he is hunted, he is chased by his own creator. So it is just the other way around because the story is told from Pip's position. So the peril over here is from the position of Pip. So he is a monster over here. He is a creature over here. who has been made and constructed and who has been pursued by his maker. So, it is the other way around because he is a storyteller as well. Baldick has argued that Dickens's purpose in later works is repeatedly to implicate his readers in the creation of the monstrous, so that the new Dickens monster of great expectations appears no longer as an alien to be dismissed, but as a presence beneath our skin. So, this is in a way very interesting because it talks about the normalization of monstrosity. So, the monster is not just out there, the monster is something which informs the in there.

So, again the difference between the inside and the outside blurs away because we realize

how Magwitch the convict who is sentenced in exile outside is also the investor which is consolidating the gentlemanliness in the inside. So, the inside and outside are constantly connected with each other in very complicated, problematic ways right and that creates guilt, that creates shame, that creates a very different affective economy which is not straightforward, which is very complex in quality. So that again the idea of monstrosity is something out there goes away and instead what we have is an increasingly increasing internalization of monstrosities. Everyone is a monster because they are invested in different forms, different odours of monstrosity. And a fundamental monstrosity, of course, here is a frenzied capital, right? The capital which is quickly accumulating, quickly scaling up, quickly becoming industrial, but also constantly carrying with it the possibility of fall, the possibility of crash. I mean, in a literal sense, the share market crash, literal sense, the crash of the entire economy. So, the more quickly, the more kinetic the economy is, the more it is prone, the more it is vulnerable to crash, the more it is vulnerable to annihilation, right. So, that is something which we see happening here as well. So this is a bit of a digression, but there is an interesting comparison to be made, shall we say, between a novel like *Great Expectations* and a novel like Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, right. So again, *Great Gatsby*, as you know, is very much a novel which seems to correspond to *The Great Depression*, *The Prohibition*, etc. So, there is also the monstrosity, the monstrous quality in *Gatsby* as well, in a sense of being this strange, fictitious, spectral capitalist, right? We see something happening here in *Great Expectations*. Nobody seems to anticipate the *Gatsby* moment later. I argue that Dickens's muddled attributions of Mary Shelley's story serve to emphasize the distortions produced by a capital, which in its unceasing circulation transfers value backwards and forwards, muddling identities, effacing origins, and implicating everyone, right. So this entire model of identities, the entire effacing way of identities, the entire deconstruction and reconstruction of identities which is being created by this endless unceasing circulation of capital of production and consumption is what is the ultimate form of monstrosity in Dickens's novel. Karl Marx himself figures this monstrosity in *Das Kapital* when he writes and there is a quote from Marx.

By turning his money into commodities that serve as the material elements of the new

product and as factors in the labour process, by incorporating living labour with the dead substance, the capitalist at the same time converts value that is past, materialized and dead labour into capital and value big with value, a live monster that is fruitful and multiplies. So there's undead quality about the capital where the debt can be reanimated, the debt can be brought back and multiplied into different forms, right. We see that happening in Frankenstein in a very interesting way. We see that happen in obviously Great Expectations, but also we see how that structural paradigm of the debt coming back and then getting reanimated and then multiplying into future in a sort of endless way of progression and transmission. It lends itself this narrative structure lends itself into even modern versions of this. Let us say a film like Terminator, Judgment Day by James Cameron or even Matrix, the Matrix trilogy. We find the same thing coming back, you know, something coming back from the future or something coming back from the past and then multiplying itself in endless ways. That again becomes the dance macabre of the capital, if you will. So, the climactic and explicit introduction of the Frankenstein narrative at the moment. So, you can understand why we are reading this bit with such close textual attention, because exactly what we did in Frankenstein finds some kind of a sequel here, obeyed in a more economic way, in a more market metaphor way, rather than, Frankenstein was more bio-scientific, with Dickens's great expectations is more market oriented. How the market gets reanimated is sort of it is unleashed into some kind of a monstrous construct which is potentially unstoppable and can potentially cause great peril and great precarity. So the climactic and explicit introduction of the Frankenstein narrative at the moment of Magwitch's disclosure is used by Dickens to emphasize Pip's realization that he has been bought by Magwitch. So the ultimate commodity in the novel is Pip who has been bought by Magwitch. So we have a new form of human slavery over here. albeit through a force of the capital, right.

So, Magwitch is a capitalist who invests into Pip and in investing into Pip, Pip becomes the property of Magwitch in very real, literal, symbolic ways. So, he is bought by Magwitch who views him with an air of admiring proprietorship, right. So, Magwitch is looking at it from the focal point of the proprietor, admiring proprietorship. So, looking at a property and admiring it in a very narcissistic projecting kind of a way. Through Pip's realization,

Dickens is able to figure out the fruitful monster of capitalism that makes and destroys people by remote power. So, this remote control of capital is important over here. How Magwitch can control the journey of Pip, how Magwitch can control the growth of Pip, biological as well as economic and social and cultural growth of Pip. from elsewhere. So this remote control of capital is important here because that brings into foreground the idea of the fictitious capitalist, right, the idea of the fictitious capital where the money is always elsewhere, where the money comes and goes into some rabbit hole and no one really owns the money except through different kinds of fluid investment frameworks. Pip marvels that Magwitch is so bound up with my fortunes and misfortunes, and yet so unknown to me, the sense of mystery, the sense of spectrality around language. But it is precisely this invisible hand of capital that Dickens intends to expose. So it is exactly the invisibility of capital which also makes it invincible, right. So the invincibility and invisibility are connected to each other in very organic functional ways and structural ways as well which is the whole point of Dickens and Dickens is dramatizing this entanglement if you will between the invisible and the invincible forces of capital. In New South Wales, Magwitch, who was a real Smileson hero, so Samuel Smiles, the doctrine of self-help and Magwitch becomes, I am going to post a boy for that, he makes it big through self-help and nurturing, etc. Smileson hero of the novel is a successful capitalist. So, Magwitch is in New South Wales, Australia, outside of the imperial centre, the periphery, he is controlling it from the periphery, from the outside. is a successful capitalist. It all prospered wonderful and famous for it. So the fame, the prosperity, the wealth is all acquired elsewhere, right? Through the attenuation of the Frankenstein story across space, so that Magwitch, the capitalist in Australia, can create Pip, the gentleman in London, Dickens registers the potential monstrosity of capital, the endless reach of capital. the absolute and complete control of capital through surveillance, through reach, through connect, through investment where capital can control movement and figures and identities and you know functionalities from elsewhere, from a massive distance, right.

And again, this sort of spatial temporal thing is important over here. Despite being a different space in different time, the flow of capital is uncontrollable, the flow of capital is absolute, right. the flow and the force of capital and the function of capital. So, Dickens

this through this idea of the remote control of capital, Dickens registers the potential monstrosity of capital without responsibility. So, what happens to unchecked capital, unbridled capital, right, capital which is just let go without any breaks, without any checks and balance. So, the potential monstrosity that emerges from this. And in this, this particular novel *Great Expectations* is very increasingly comparable with let us say Bram Stoker's *Dracula* because there too we have this idea of the fictitious capitalist, the strange, spectral, vampiric capitalist who comes in and buys everything, who has this unchecked flow of capital, unchecked and unending access to capital through which new forms of monstrosity, the infection of the capital can be created, can be generated. So, that too is a novel which does it in a very interesting way. So, again there is an interesting case to be made of comparing Dickens's great dissertations with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. So, comparing Magwitch and the Count are spectral figures who are in possession, strangely in possession of unending capital through which they can infect and spread this network of production and consumption. So, this is a potential monstrosity of capital without responsibility. Seltzer's uncertain agency of production, Marx's concealed social character of private labour finally becomes visible and an abhorrent So this abhorrence, the repulsion he has to this is also dramatized in very, very complex ways. Magwitch has been read as symbolic of the productive and working class. Magwitch differed little from the uncouth monster which respectable society envisaged to itself as typical laboring man, says Jackson. So, again the rejection of language is interesting because that is also the rejection and shame of the polite middle class which does not want to see its deep dark underbelly.

So, Magwitch is the underbelly which is suddenly visible, suddenly spectacular and there is a sense of shame in having to confront it in very visual ways. And undoubtedly, as George Orwell also noticed, there is a powerful class antagonism encoded in Dickens's representation of Pip's reaction to him. So there's class revulsion, looking at a lower class, looking at the abhorrent subject. And there is a sense of privilege and discrimination and humiliation, and humiliation coming back through form of self-loathing. So that which I'm supposed to humiliate, that which I'm supposed to reject, is invested into making me as a gentleman. So, that realization creates a self-shame, the self-loathing in Pip which is also quite problematic because that self-loathing is also situating him in very complex ways

through this tenet of a class position and privilege and precarity. So, While Dickens registers some anxiety about the possibility of Smilesian economic transformations resulting in power in the wrong hands, it is the power of Magwitch's money, detached from his source, exchanged and mediated through Jaggers, and precisely, not Magwitch's labour, which has directly intervened in Pip's life. Fifth is crucially bought rather than made, right? So this is a very interesting point. And we stop here today because what we see here is the entire... construction of Pip's identity is through purchase. So, Pip is bought by Magwitch and that which is quote-unquote labor class, that which is the abhorrent, despicable, easily ignored labor class suddenly becomes important, suddenly becomes the moneyed, suddenly comes up on money, right. This is the abruptness of capital that it can very strangely break all kinds of class boundaries, break all kinds of social hierarchy and suddenly Magwitch becomes the moneyed man, the moneyed capitalist who can essentially buy Pip into becoming a gentleman. So Pip's movement into gentlemanliness, Pip's movement into the you know the dark engine of capitalism in London to the big banks and the share market and the stocks and new forms of formalized money transmission is essentially done or you know processed or made or orchestrated or authored and authorized by what is technically and literally and you know in a very, very classical way, the labor class. So, labor class of Magwitch becomes a problem and that confrontation with Magwitch becomes interesting because, you know, that we can't ignore the fact that language, the erstwhile labor class man is now come upon money and now with that money, He is sort of pumping into Pip's, you know, growth and ascent into gentlemanliness, which is paradoxically funded by the mysterious, spectral, fictitious capital that Magwitch has procured and is now controlling from elsewhere, New South Wales, Australia, right. So, a convict elsewhere position, of Magwitch, which is also comparable to the elsewhere position of him as a labour class, paradoxically becomes the fuel through which the engine of Pip's ascent, the engine of Pip's journey into gentlemanliness is orchestrated and made possible, right.

So, we stop at this point today and we will wind up with this essay in the subsequent session. Thank you for your attention.