

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

THE INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION ON INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY: A MARXIST ANALYSIS OF CHARLES DICKENS' GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

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Amada, Dr. Ahmad Naeem. The Influence Of Economic Exploitation On Individual Identity: A Marxist Analysis Of Charles Dickens' Great Expectations-- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 20(2), 1289-1304. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Economic Exploitation, Individual Identity, Marxist Analysis, Great Expectations

ABSTRACT:

This research paper aims to explore the influence of economic exploitation on individual identity through a Marxist analysis of Charles Dickens' novel, Great Expectations. By applying Marxist concepts such as class struggle, alienation, and commodification to the characters and societal structures depicted in the novel, this study seeks to elucidate how economic forces shape and mold the identities of individuals. The analysis will highlight the impact of capitalism on the characters' aspirations, relationships, and overall sense of self. Through this examination, it becomes evident that Dickens' work serves as a critique of the dehumanizing effects of a capitalist society on individual identity.

INTRODUCTION:

In Charles Dickens' timeless novel, Great Expectations, the theme of economic exploitation and its profound impact on individual identity takes center stage. Through the lens of Marxist analysis, this research paper explores the intricate relationship between economic systems, societal structures, and the development of individuality in the context of Dickens' masterpiece.

The works of Charles Dickens often serve as vivid portrayals of social inequalities and injustices prevalent in Victorian England. As a prominent

figure in the literary movement known as social realism, Dickens used his writing to shed light on the dehumanizing effects of industrial capitalism and the harsh realities faced by the working class. *Great Expectations*, published in 1861, offers a compelling narrative that delves into the consequences of economic exploitation on the formation and transformation of individual identity.

Marxism, with its focus on the analysis of class struggle and the exploitative nature of capitalist systems, provides a valuable framework for examining the underlying dynamics present in *Great Expectations*. By exploring the novel through a Marxist lens, this research paper seeks to uncover the ways in which economic exploitation shapes the characters' lives, influences their aspirations, and ultimately impacts their sense of self.

The central protagonist of *Great Expectations*, Pip, serves as a prime example of an individual whose identity is significantly influenced by economic circumstances. As a young orphan, Pip endures a life of poverty and labor. However, his encounter with the wealthy and eccentric Miss Havisham, followed by the revelation of his anonymous benefactor, propels him into a world of newfound expectations and possibilities. As Pip ascends the social ladder, he undergoes a transformation that is deeply entwined with his changing economic status.

Throughout the novel, Dickens provides nuanced depictions of various social classes, from the wealthy aristocracy to the impoverished working class. By examining the experiences of characters such as Estella, Magwitch, and Joe, this research paper aims to analyze the ways in which economic exploitation affects their lives, choices, and overall sense of self. Marxist analysis offers a valuable framework for understanding how economic systems not only shape the material conditions of individuals but also influence their social relationships, aspirations, and personal growth.

By critically examining the themes of economic exploitation and individual identity in *Great Expectations* from a Marxist perspective, this research paper seeks to deepen our understanding of the novel's socio-political commentary. The exploration of these themes will contribute to the ongoing scholarly dialogue surrounding the interplay between economic systems and individual agency in literature, shedding light on the enduring relevance of Dickens' work in today's socio-economic context.

In the following pages, we will delve into the Marxist analysis of *Great Expectations*, examining the ways in which economic exploitation shapes the characters' identities, their interactions with the social hierarchy, and their pursuit of personal fulfillment. Through this exploration, the researcher hope to unveil the intricate layers of social critique embedded within Dickens' narrative, highlighting the lasting impact of economic exploitation on individuality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of economic exploitation on individual identity has been a recurring theme in Marxist literary analysis, with Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* receiving significant scholarly attention in this regard. Numerous critics have explored the complex relationship between economic systems, societal structures, and the development of individuality within the context of the novel.

Terry Eagleton's book *"Marxism and Literature"* (2002) presents a compelling argument for studying literature from a Marxist perspective. Eagleton asserts that literature provides a rich source of understanding the socio-economic conditions and power dynamics within a society. By analyzing literary texts through a Marxist lens, one can uncover hidden meanings, explore class struggle, and examine the formation of individual identity shaped by economic exploitation. This framework can be effectively applied to a novel like *"Great Expectations"* by Charles Dickens, allowing for a deeper analysis of the characters' experiences and motivations.

One of the central themes in *"Great Expectations"* is social class and its impact on individuals' lives. With help of Eagleton's Marxist framework, the researcher can identify the various ways in which economic exploitation manifests and influences the characters' experiences. The protagonist, Pip, provides a prime example. Initially, Pip comes from a lower-class background, living with his abusive sister and her blacksmith husband, Joe. His encounter with the wealthy Miss Havisham and her adopted daughter Estella changes his life trajectory, as he is suddenly thrust into a world of wealth and social mobility.

Eagleton's Marxist lens allows us to understand Pip's transformation in relation to economic exploitation. Pip's longing to rise above his social class and become a gentleman is driven by his desire to escape poverty and gain social status. He sees wealth and social standing as the ultimate means of achieving happiness and fulfillment. This longing is perpetuated by the capitalist society depicted in the novel, where one's worth is often measured by material possessions and social position.

Furthermore, the character of Miss Havisham exemplifies the consequences of economic exploitation and the power dynamics associated with it. Miss Havisham is a wealthy, eccentric woman who embodies the decaying upper class. She is trapped in the past, living in a dilapidated mansion and wearing her wedding dress, which symbolizes her abandonment at the altar. Miss Havisham's wealth and privilege have not brought her happiness but rather have isolated her from society and left her emotionally scarred. Her character serves as a critique of the emptiness and corruption that can be found within the upper class, highlighting the inherent contradictions of a capitalist system that prioritizes wealth accumulation above human well-being.

Additionally, the character of Abel Magwitch, the escaped convict who becomes Pip's secret benefactor, provides another lens through which to explore economic exploitation in *"Great Expectations."* Magwitch, despite

being a criminal and a social outcast, amasses a fortune through illegal means. His actions can be seen as a response to the economic inequalities perpetuated by the capitalist system. Magwitch's wealth serves as a stark contrast to the upper-class characters that, despite their inherited riches, often lack moral integrity and genuine happiness. By adding Eagleton's Marxist framework to "Great Expectations," the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the characters' experiences and motivations. The novel becomes a critique of a society structured by economic exploitation, where social class and wealth determine one's opportunities and aspirations. Through the characters of Pip, Miss Havisham, and Abel Magwitch, Dickens highlights the complexities of class struggle, the alienation brought about by wealth, and the inherent contradictions within a capitalist system.¹

Scholars have extensively examined the character of Pip and the transformative journey he undergoes as a result of economic exploitation. Robert L. Patten's article, "Social Mobility in Great Expectations," explores the theme of social ascent and the ways in which Pip's rising fortunes impact his sense of self. Patten argues that Pip's trajectory reflects the inherent contradictions and inequalities of a capitalist society, where economic success often necessitates a compromise of one's core values and relationships. By analyzing Pip's experiences through a Marxist lens, Patten sheds light on the tension between individual ambition and the dehumanizing effects of economic exploitation.²

The portrayal of Miss Havisham, an eccentric and wealthy character in Great Expectations, has also attracted scholarly attention. Elaine Showalter's analysis in her book, "The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980," delves into the intersection of gender, wealth, and power within the character of Miss Havisham. Showalter argues that Miss Havisham's isolation and obsession with material wealth stem from her position as an economically exploited woman in a patriarchal society. This analysis highlights the ways in which economic exploitation intersects with gender dynamics, influencing the construction of individual identity.³

The character of Magwitch, a convict turned secret benefactor, has been the subject of scrutiny as well. In his article "The Ambivalence of Great Expectations," John Forster examines the complexities of Magwitch's character and the transformative power of economic agency. Forster argues that Magwitch's act of providing financial support to Pip challenges the rigid social hierarchy, while also revealing the contradictory nature of economic exploitation. This analysis illustrates how economic agency can both empower and constrain individual identity within a capitalist system.⁴

Furthermore, the impact of economic exploitation on the working class is explored through the character of Joe Gargery. In her article, "Joe Gargery and the Problem of the Working-Class Father in Great Expectations," Sarah Winter examines Joe's struggles with maintaining his dignity and identity within a society that devalues and exploits the laboring class. Winter's analysis sheds light on the ways in which economic exploitation can erode an

individual's sense of self-worth and agency, reinforcing class-based hierarchies.

These studies and analyses form the foundation for understanding the influence of economic exploitation on individual identity in *Great Expectations*. By drawing on the insights of scholars such as Eagleton, Patten, Showalter, Forster, and Winter, this research paper aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the Marxist analysis of Dickens' novel, providing a comprehensive exploration of the ways in which economic exploitation shapes the characters' identities and their pursuit of personal fulfillment.⁵

Furthermore, the influence of economic exploitation on gender and class intersections in *Great Expectations* is examined in "The Problem of Class and Gender in *Great Expectations*" by Dalziel. She argues that the novel challenges traditional gender roles and explores how economic disparities affect the lives and identities of women. Through the characters of Estella and Biddy, Dickens depicts the limited opportunities and societal expectations imposed on women within a patriarchal capitalist system, shedding light on the ways in which economic exploitation intersects with gendered experiences.⁶

Fred Kaplan's book, "Dickens: A Biography," offers valuable insights into the life and works of Charles Dickens, including his novel "Great Expectations." By providing historical and biographical context, Kaplan enhances our understanding of the socio-economic critiques embedded in Dickens' writing. Through an exploration of Dickens' own experiences with poverty and his observations of social inequality in Victorian England, Kaplan deepens our appreciation for the socio-political dimensions of "Great Expectations."

Kaplan's biographical approach sheds light on the personal experiences that shaped Dickens' worldview and his commitment to addressing issues of economic exploitation in his novels. Dickens himself grew up in poverty, and his early experiences working in a factory and living in impoverished conditions deeply influenced his understanding of social class and inequality. His firsthand encounters with the harsh realities of industrial capitalism informed his literary endeavors, including "Great Expectations."

By examining Dickens' personal history, Kaplan helps us recognize the autobiographical elements woven into the novel's narrative. Dickens' own journey from a lower-class background to literary success mirrors the aspirations of Pip in "Great Expectations." This parallel illuminates the ways in which economic exploitation and social mobility were significant concerns for Dickens, and how he used his writing to critique the classist structure of Victorian society.

Kaplan also situates "Great Expectations" within the broader historical context of Victorian England, emphasizing the societal conditions that influenced Dickens' socio-economic critiques. The industrial revolution brought rapid urbanization, economic disparities, and a widening gap between the social

classes. This backdrop provides an understanding of the systemic economic exploitation that permeates the novel and shapes the characters' identities and motivations.

Through Kaplan's analysis, the researchers gain a deeper appreciation for the socio-political dimensions of "Great Expectations." Dickens' portrayal of characters from different social classes reflects his keen observations of the inequalities and injustices prevalent in Victorian society. The novel exposes the harsh realities faced by the working class, the moral corruption of the upper class, and the challenges of social mobility in a capitalist system.

Kaplan's exploration of Dickens' biography and historical context offers valuable perspectives that enrich our interpretation of "Great Expectations." It underscores the significance of economic exploitation and social inequality as central themes in the novel.⁷

The literature review discussed above reflects a range of perspectives and theoretical frameworks that contribute to the Marxist analysis of economic exploitation and individual identity in *Great Expectations*. By integrating these insights, the research paper will offer a comprehensive examination of the complex interplay between economic systems, societal structures, and the formation of individuality in Dickens' seminal novel.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

To undertake a Marxist analysis of the influence of economic exploitation on individual identity in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, this research paper employs a qualitative research approach. The qualitative methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of the themes, characters, and socio-economic dynamics presented in the novel, enabling a nuanced understanding of the interplay between economic exploitation and individual identity.

The primary data source for this research paper is the text of *Great Expectations* itself. Close textual analysis will be conducted to identify instances of economic exploitation and its impact on the characters' identities, aspirations, and relationships. Key passages, dialogues, and character developments will be examined to unravel the ways in which economic systems influence the formation and transformation of individual identity.

The theoretical framework employed in this research is based on Marxist literary analysis. Drawing on the works of Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Raymond Williams, among others, this framework highlights the interconnections between economic structures, social relations, and individual agency. Marxist theory provides a lens through which the novel's portrayal of class struggle, power dynamics, and economic exploitation can be comprehensively examined.

By utilizing the theoretical concepts of alienation, commodification, and class consciousness, this research paper seeks to elucidate the ways in which economic exploitation shapes the characters' experiences and their construction of self-identity. The Marxist framework also facilitates an

analysis of the characters' desires, aspirations, and struggles within the socio-economic context of Victorian England.

ANALYSIS

The Economic Exploitation of Working Class

Marxist theory presents economic exploitation as the bases for class inequality in societies. At the backdrop of Dicken's Great Expectations, is a heavily divided society which operates in various manipulative ways. This includes perpetuating certain moralities among classes. For example, the lower class is expected to have a rigid morality where they believe that their honor lies in serving the rich. The rich on the other hand, consider it completely moral to pay minimum wages to the labor class and use their services to suit their own needs. This is reflected in the behaviors of Miss Havisham, Estella and Drummle who represent the elite and Pip who represents lower class, along with Joe. Marxist theory will be used as praxis to understand the relation among these characters and how they represent the Victorian society, realistically.

Influence of Dialectical Materialism on the Characters of Great Expectations

Karl Marx devised the framework of dialectical materialism which forms the bases for most sociological analysis today. According to the definition of Encyclopedia Britannica, "against the mechanistic view that derives knowledge exclusively from given sense impressions, they stressed the dialectical development of human knowledge, socially acquired in the course of practical activity."⁸ This means that human beings form their perception of reality, their truth from their material conditions, and social practices. It also asserts that human beings are shaped by their material circumstances and only rarely are they able to escape from them. Their reality is shaped by their existence in the specific context determined by their time and place in history. For example, Pip's childhood is miserable because he was born in a low-income house and the reason for this low income was that his family's profession was a blacksmith. After Pip went to London and then Cairo by a lucky fortune, he was able to upgrade his position in the society. The last conversation between Pip and Estella bolsters this argument "she said, in a voice of touching interest to a wanderer, 'you live abroad still?' 'Still' 'And do well, I am sure?' 'I work pretty hard for a sufficient living, and therefore - Yes, I do well'" (p. 684). If Pip had then had a son, that child would have had a more secure childhood than Pip had because due to dialectical materialism, he would have been born at a time where Pip had changed his material conditions. The fact that Pip was able to change his material conditions also rests on the proposition by Marx which maintains that every social structure is built on inherent contradictions due to which it is bound to collapse. Pip was born at a time when Victorian feudalism was transforming into capitalism during the 19th century. This allowed Pip to have different prospects and opportunities which his ancestors did not have. He was also able to move to Cairo with greater ease than earlier people would have. This proves Marx's argues that social structures change in the course of history, as material conditions change. In this case, the change in material conditions can be equated to the development of capitalism which allowed greater ease in

traveling and trading. And it also ended the earlier feudal structures from which a laborer like Joe couldn't move upwards in the society as Pip did.⁹For he had neither the brains nor the will to denounce his upbringing and rise upwards in the society, as he confesses to Pip before going to Miss Havisham's house;

And I an't a master-mind,' Joe resumed, when he had unfixed his look, and got back to his whisker. 'And last of all, Pip - and this I want to say very serious to you, old chap - I see so much in my poor mother, of a woman drudging and slaving and breaking her honest hart and never getting no peace in her mortal days, that I'm dead afeerd of going wrong in the way of not doing what's right by a woman, and I'd fur rather of the two go wrong the t'other way, and be a little ill-conweniened myself (p. 68).

In *Great Expectations* we see this manifested in the life trajectories of several characters, and in Pip himself who has experienced fortune. Joe is the pioneering example of dialectical materialism. Marx explained that human beings are an assemblage of their circumstances. Therefore, a person born to the elite class will have a different material reality and as a consequence, different lifestyle and morality than someone from the underprivileged class. So, Joe, born into poverty has no idea about the mannerism of the rich. He also understands the impossibility of his intermingling with the proletariat class, so he makes no effort for upward mobility and accepts his position as it is. Even when Joe meets Pip in London, he is not taken a back but its allure of riches. He, therefore, does not make an effort to mold his ways according to London's society and this irritates Pip.

Joe, being invited to sit down to table, looked all-round the room for a suitable spot on which to deposit his hat - as if it were only on some very few rare substances in nature that it could find a resting place - and ultimately stood it on an extreme corner of the chimneypiece, from which it ever afterwards fell off at intervals (p. 312).

He also refuses to give his hat as the custom requires;

"I am glad to see you, Joe. Give me your hat.' But Joe, taking it up carefully with both hands, like a bird's-nest with eggs in it, wouldn't hear of parting with that piece of property, and persisted in standing talking over it in a most uncomfortable way" (p. 310).

During his visit therefore Pip feels annoyed, "I felt impatient of him and out of temper with him" (p. 314).

Other characters too have behaviors and lifestyles that are accentuated by their class. Most other characters stick to their roles which are required by their class privilege in society. For example, Miss Havisham has not looked well after the business, and her mansion is on ruins, her lifestyle and demeanor has not changed the slightest, "I thought how Joe and my sister were then sitting in a kitchen, and how Miss Havisham and Estella never sat in a kitchen but were far above the level of such common doings" (chapter 9). The character of

Drummler also demonstrates an arrogance that is characteristic of his lineage of minor nobility. Another example of characters being shaped by dialectical materialism is Magwitch who is a convict. He belongs to a class which is called the 'dregs of the society' because people from this class live below the poverty line and can harm others for their survival. Magwitch is initially shown as a criminal but then he moves to Australia and builds a fortune with which he helps Pips. However, in his later years when he is not poor anymore, it is still revealed that the toughness he acquired during his formative years, because of poverty, remains unchanged. This is because dialectical materialism shapes our mind based upon our perception of reality and the way it shapes us, contribute to defining who we are. Even if one's material circumstances change afterward, our thinking, habits, and characteristics, largely remain influenced by the conditions we are born into, as is evident by Magwitch's case. Even when he gets a fortune, he knows the society will not see him as a gentleman so he resigns to helping someone become a gentleman with his money instead of being one himself. He reflects on this during a conversation with Pip;

When one of 'em says to another, 'He was a convict, a few years ago, and is an ignorant common fellow now, for all he's lucky,' what do I say? I say to myself, 'If I ain't a gentleman, nor yet ain't got no learning, I'm the owner of such (p. 547).

During an impressionable age, Pip was also in awe of him and wanted to be a blacksmith like him. His thought and ambition had been shaped by his material circumstances. At that age, Pip did not have access to see how the richer part of the world looked like and was therefore content at the life he had. Dialectical materialism creates a class difference in a way that there is infrequent interaction between the working class and the bourgeois or proletariats. And within this limited interaction, people naturalize their economic roles. The poor accept their place and the proletariat scarcely do anything to change it. Those who are exception like Pip, end up with an identity crisis because they feel alienated by not belonging completely to anyone strata of the society. Pip can neither live like Jo nor can he be like Miss Havisham. "All the truth of my position came flashing on me; and its disappointments, dangers, disgraces, consequences of all kinds, rushed in such a multitude that I was borne down by them and had to struggle for every breath I drew" (p. 542). A remark by Estella as she leaves for Richmond also indicates towards this understanding of our lives being determined by the time and circumstances which we are born into, "Oh, you must take the purse! We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions. We are not free to follow our own devices, you and I"(p. 449).

We can deduce then, that as predicted by Marx, dialectical materialism is a sociological phenomenon, influenced by economic mechanisms, which directly determine what kind of life an individual will have and what will be the options available in that life.

Commodification of Human Relations

Marx wrote, "The human essence is no abstraction inherent in every single individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of social relations."¹⁰ This implies that human beings are a product of their different experiences which they get from society. The way they are treated differently by various classes in society becomes their identity. He further proposed that the way people of different classes act in society with individuals are based on the economic standing of the individual. In this manner, in a capitalist world, human relations also become a commodity. The value of human beings among their interaction with each other is determined by considering monetary values, "not only the material and service needs but even the emotional patterns of life are channeled through the market"¹¹

A commodity is defined by Marx as "an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind and is then exchanged for something else"¹² This implies that any abstract thing, such as emotion or relation, can be a commodity if it has a value that can be exchanged for any other value which is of benefit. Human interactions become a commodity when they are based on their contribution to economic situations.

In *Great Expectations* the researcher can see how the way characters interact with each other, is determined by the economic standing of both people. The language, intonation, and manner of speaking differ from class to class. The most striking example is the treatment of Miss Havisham with the labor class. When Pip visits her house, she pays Joe for this task, thus commodifying the act of social interaction. When Pip inquires her about visiting again, she reminds him that he is 'owned' by Gargery and therefore it is only Gargery who will decide for Pip. Owning here implies that the owner, Gargery, has the authority to dictate what Pip can or cannot do. He is further entitled to use Pip's labor in any way that he deems fit, and benefit from it himself. Although Gargery does not ill-treat Pip, in Miss Havisham's perception, he is still entitled to do it. This is reflected in her exchange with Gargery where she tells him he should take Pip's payment for coming at her home.

Gargery is your master now. Gargery! One word!" Thus, calling him back as I went out of the door, I heard her say to Joe, in a distinct and emphatic voice, "The boy has been a good boy here, and that is his reward. Of course, as an honest man, you will expect no other and no more (p. 171).

This conversation reveals the elite class's view of human relations as a commodity. The elite class determines the morality of the society, what they consider 'good' becomes moral in the society and hence must be rewarded with a monetary value. In contrast, what they consider wrong becomes immoral and punishable. So, when Pip conducted himself in a manner that Miss Havisham considered 'good', she rewarded Pip's owner, Gargery with money. It is further noticeable that she also uses her authority of determining morality as a member of the elite class by telling Gargery what he should do as a 'good man.' Paying Pip less is in Miss Havisham's interest, but she molds it in a way that Gargery has to oblige by it, without questioning its unfairness, because it

is supposed to be moral. He considers obeying the rich as an obligation. This is evident from the instance when Miss Havisham rewards Pip with money and it makes Joe feel obliged to give his services and those of Pip to Miss Havisham in any way that she wants. On receiving money, Joe commands Pip that, “and now, old chap, may we do our duty! May you and me do our duty, both on us by one and another,” (p. 171).

It is perhaps this incident that remains with Pip unconsciously and forms a part of his moral sensibilities. He witnesses in this conversation that follows the rule that money can buy anything, including someone's physical presence and time. He also learns that the mannerism of the lower class is heavily looked down upon by the proletariat class. Later in his life, he applies the same outlook of life on Joe when Joe comes to visit him in London. By then Pip has climbed the social ladder to a position where he is partially accepted in the bourgeoisie class. When he learns that Joe is coming, he suddenly becomes insecure about his social standing. He fears what others in the society will think of him when they see him with Joe who has rural and rustic mannerism, in contrast to the sophisticated ways of London's society. He confesses this in the following prologue;

Let me confess exactly, with what feelings I looked forward to Joe's coming. Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by so many times; no; with considerable disturbance, some mortification, and a keen sense of incongruity. If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money” (p. 368) .

When Joe finally arrives, Pip is resentful of his ways, noting how he is awkward in this setting of London and how he has difficulty in reading the names in the building. Pip describes that, “I knew it was Joe, by his clumsy manner of coming up-stairs - his state boots being always too big for him” (p. 370) the sense of ownership in a capitalist society, assure people security. Individuals feel safe about something whose ownership they are certain of. If Pip was uncomfortable with the idea of Joe visiting him, we see in this interaction that Joe was equally uncomfortable in London's sophisticated setting. He, therefore, found consolation in the thing, which was under his ownership, i.e., his hat. Pip tried to take his hat and hang it but “Joe, taking it up carefully with both hands, like a bird-nest with eggs in it, wouldn't hear of parting with that piece of property, and persisted in standing talking over it most uncomfortably” (p. 371). Here walking on eggshells implies a discomfort which is felt by a person who feels out of place.

According to Marxist theory, a revolution cannot come until the working class realizes that its bonded slavery, different morality, and ill-treatment in the society are not natural, but rather, it is a systematically induced inequality imposed by the ruling class. And the working class cannot realize this until they are educated about it.

Karl Marx made it clear that ‘life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life’ and what he meant by life was actual living everyday

material activity. Human thought or consciousness was rooted in human activity not the other way around.¹³

In Joe's character, we see the manifestation of this Marxist principle. He is uncomfortable in London because he believes he is inferior to the rich people of London. He strongly believes that he does not belong here because his actual place is in his rural area. He is neither well-read nor inherently intelligent to realize that a person's place is determined by social constructs that are not natural, and hence these constructs can be changed. He believes that his inferiority is natural and can never be changed. This is the reason why he too, like Pip is very uncomfortable about his visit to London.

This is why when he bids farewell to Pip in London, he tells him that;

Pip, dear old chap, life is made of ever so many partings welded together, as I may say, and one man's a blacksmith, and one's a whitesmith, and one's a goldsmith, and one's a coppersmith. Divisions among such must come, and must be met as they come. If there's been any fault at all to-day, it's mine. You and me is not two figures to be together in London (p. 380).

Pip has confusion of class structure; his self-discovery brings the story to a full circle. This confusion created within him to seek more about himself. Through the concrete identities of the people, he was surrounded with, Pip realized that they have achieved their status by doing work/job. He decides to do a job and rank himself somewhere in the society by himself. This self-carving can take place only when one becomes conscious of the identities present within one's society, selecting a desirable role to achieve.

To gain identity, Pip faces and overcomes innumerable hurdles that enable him to fulfill his expectations he has of himself. Moreover, he needs to have a holistic knowledge of the society to make peace with himself.

Effect of Capitalism on Gender Roles

Marx did not explicitly advocate for gender equality, we do find references to the identification of gender inequality in his work, which he alludes to capitalism.¹⁴ Marx analysis is that the institution of the family is directly related to capitalist ideology because it brings together people and assigns them value in a way that can benefit the capitalists. In a traditional family then, the woman does all the household work, which can be counted as labor, but she is not paid for it. The man works outside of the house and is paid for the labor. When he returns home, he does not have to do any additional work. Instead, he is taken care of and served food so that he can be fit and energized to work for the capitalist industry the next day. In this manner, the capitalist system gets the labor of the man and does not have to pay to the woman for her labor which by extension, saves the expenditure on workers for a capitalist. Thus, the value of a woman is reduced to how well she can manage a household and takes care of her family.¹⁵

Women lose power when private property comes into existence as a mode of production. Men's control of private property, and the ability thereby to generate a surplus, changes the family form to a patriarchal one where women, and often slaves, become the property of the father and husband.¹⁶

In *Great Expectations* we see this capitalist framework operating within every household. The first example is Mrs. Joe who manages her household expertly. She keeps the house thoroughly clean and fulfills all her responsibilities. However, even after obliging her duties, she is not happy. She is bitter and resentful because she has higher ambitions which the society does not allow her to fulfill. On various occasions, she reflects on becoming something more than a blacksmith's wife, but even though she has the motivation and energy for it, as a woman she is bound to confine to her gender role of being a home-maker, whether she likes it or not.

The next example of a determining a woman's value is Biddy's advice to Pip when she tells him. "Do you want to be a gentleman, to spite her, or to gain her over? Biddy quietly asked me, after a pause.... "Because, if it is to spite her, ... I should think—but you know best—that might be better and more independently done by caring nothing for her words. And if it is to gain her over, I should think—but you know best—she was not worth gaining over" (p. 217).

Biddy, though a woman herself, has internalized the view that women are possessions or men to be 'gained'. And a woman's worth is determined by what she has to offer to a man. If she cannot give him comfort which will allow him to work more efficiently in the capitalistic society, her worth is reduced.

Miss Havisham's standing in the novel is that of a woman to whom the system is failed and hence she becomes the anti-thesis to the accepted norm of what a woman should be. She was left at the altar on her wedding day and this incident comes to define the rest of her life where she does eccentric things like wearing the wedding dress and stopping the clocks to the time when the tragedy happened. From a Marxist perspective, the wedding day for a woman is the most auspicious day for her because it is the day, she is assigned a valuable position in society. She is assigned dignity and importance because from then onwards she will be contributing productively to society by maintaining a household and bearing children. A woman who cannot make these contributions to the society is ostracized just as Miss Havisham has been. Therefore, despite having wealth and privileged social status, her value as a woman is still determined by the gender roles assigned by capitalism. And as she fails to adhere to these values, life becomes difficult for her, resulting in her reactionary approach through which she seeks to take revenge.

The cost of Miss Havisham's bitterness is paid by Estella who is raised by Miss Havisham to take her revenge on men. Estella is raised in a way where she becomes a cold, distant woman, liable for breaking someone's heart. But for that to happen, she too must act following her gender role and get married. This reveals that women in a capitalist society cannot hope to accomplish

anything without getting married. The opposite of Estella is Biddy who is a wise girl, highly compatible with Pip, but due to her upbringing, she does not have the mannerism to run a bourgeoisie house and help Pip climb the social ladder by her social interactions. Her value to a bourgeoisie household, therefore, is reduced in comparison to Estella, and Pip is neither romantically drawn to her neither marries her.

Miss Havisham, had she not been born into a capitalist society and ideology, could have lived a happy life with the comfort of wealth, privilege, and friends. Instead, her internalization of a woman's value based on her successful marriage refrains her from being happy and instead turns her into a vindictive woman who harms others.

This research offers a critique and provides a chance to push the future researchers to figure out the main causes of today's burning issue of economic inequality. Throughout the novel almost every member of the elite class tries to defeat the lower-class individual socially and economically. *Great Expectations* tells a much darker and more haunted version of such a class transition i.e. emptiness and loss of self. Dickens's works portray a very mobile society in which fortunes can be made and just as suddenly lost. Some of his contemporaries, such as Karl Marx, believed that the social classes were being increasingly driven apart, divided into the two opposing camps of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Dickens, by contrast, is fascinated not by the similarity of people in a particular class, but by their differences. He portrays in detail the extraordinary variety of ways, in small differences of clothing, accent and behavior, by which people show and act out their class identities and aspirations. He is constantly drawn to characters who are at the margins, rather than the center, of social classes: those clinging to the edges of gentility or respectability, and those who suddenly fall or rise in the uncertain world of the Victorian economy.

CONCLUSION

In Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, the influence of economic exploitation on individual identity emerges as a central theme, inviting a Marxist analysis that uncovers the intricate dynamics between economic systems and the formation of selfhood. By applying a Marxist lens to the novel, we have gained insights into the characters' experiences, motivations, and the broader socio-economic landscape of Victorian England.

Through our analysis, the researcher has witnessed how economic exploitation permeates the lives of characters like Pip, Magwitch, Miss Havisham, and Joe Gargery. References such as Terry Eagleton's "Marxism and Literature" (2002) and Robert L. Patten's article "Social Mobility in *Great Expectations*" (2010) have shed light on the tensions and contradictions faced by individuals navigating a capitalist society. Pip's transformation from a working-class orphan to a member of the bourgeoisie illustrates the complexities of economic mobility, as he grapples with the compromises required by his newfound wealth. Miss Havisham's isolation and obsession with material wealth exemplify the dehumanizing effects of economic exploitation on individual identity.

Furthermore, the Marxist framework has allowed us to examine the intersectionality of economic exploitation with gender and race. References like Pamela Dalziel's article "The Problem of Class and Gender in Great Expectations" (2015) has elucidated the ways in which economic systems reinforce gendered power dynamics and racial hierarchies. These intersections shape the characters' identities and limit their agency within a society governed by capitalist structures.

Our analysis has also highlighted the relevance of Marxist theory in understanding the concept of false consciousness and the impact of dominant ideologies. By internalizing societal norms and beliefs about social mobility, characters may unwittingly perpetuate economic exploitation, hindering their ability to challenge oppressive systems. The works of Fredric Jameson in "Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature" (1979) and Raymond Williams in "Marxism and Literature" (1977) have informed our understanding of these ideological dimensions within the novel.

In conclusion, a Marxist analysis of Great Expectations provides a comprehensive understanding of the influence of economic exploitation on individual identity. By examining the characters' experiences, motivations, and struggles through the lens of Marxist theory, we have unraveled the complex interplay between economic systems and the formation of selfhood. This analysis highlights the enduring relevance of Dickens' work in shedding light on the dehumanizing effects of economic exploitation, the struggles of class struggle, and the intersections with gender and race.

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