Unveiling Victorian Hypocrisies through Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this master dissertation titled "Unveiling Victorian hypocrisies through Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*" is entirely my own work and that it contains no material previously published or written by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text. I also certify that all sources used have been properly referenced, and that this work has not been submitted previously for any other degree or qualification.

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Dedication

To myself

To my beloved parents, who taught me so much

To the most affectionate brothers and my heart's closest companion- my sister

To Mimi whose presence filled my days with warmth

Acknowledgments

This research would not have been completed without the grace of God and the encouragement of my loved ones. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my supervisor Dr. MEHDAOUI for her valuable guidance throughout this research. My gratitude goes also to the respectable members of the committee who accepted to examine and evaluate my work.

Abstract

Great Expectations is one of Charles Dickens' most prominent works that depicts the harsh reality and the dark side of the Victorian era. Through an interpretive reading employing Marxist and Gramscian theories, the current study aims to unveil Victorian hypocrisies, particularly those related to respectability and meritocracy, by examining the encounter of the protagonist Pip, who belongs to the working class, with the upper class, which turns his simple life upside down. By applying Marxist theory, including Marx, who claims that social relations and consciousness are shaped by material conditions of production, to Gramsci, who emphasizes the role of consent to hegemony and the importance of creating a counter-hegemonic discourse, this research reveals how Dickens, as intellectual, challenges the contradictions between Victorian values and the harsh realities of life under capitalism. As the study reveals, Dickens mocks the superficiality of the morals that the Victorian upper classes claim to uphold and how every aspect of society serves their personal interests. The study also exposes how literature reflects and challenges the social structures, values, and inequalities within society.

Key words: Class hierarchy, *Great Expectations,* Hypocrisy, Ideology, Victorian era.

Table of Contents

List of figures

General Introduction

General Introduction

Prior to the Victorian era, literature was mostly accessible to the upper classes. However, the technological advancements of the era changed Britain's cultural landscape. With the development of the printing press, the pace of book production and printing increased unlike before, which in turn reduced the price of books and made them available to all groups, including the lower classes.

As literacy rates rose, novels in particular gained prominence, not merely as means of entertainment, but as a tool for addressing real social concerns, such as poverty, class disparities, gender inequalities, and moral hypocrisy. As a result, this era came to be known as the golden age of the novel.

Charles Dickens, drawing from his own childhood struggles with poverty, stands as one of the most prominent literary figures during the Victorian era. His narratives gave voice to the oppressed and revealed the harsh consequences of industrial capitalism, seeking empathy and reform.

Published in 1861, *Great Expectations* is one of Dickens's most nuanced critiques of the values which Victorians claim to uphold. Set between the rural life of England and the industrialized city of London, the novel reveals the stark contrast between social classes and the dominance of the upper class.

The ideologies and beliefs prevalent in Victorian society were instrumental in perpetuating social hypocrisy. While these ideologies were presented as moral and natural norms, in reality they were meant to maintain the class structure of society and to justify inequality. These ideologies include the concept of respectability associated with wealth and outward appearances, and the idea of meritocracy, which gives individuals the illusion that class mobility can be achieved through hard work despite the persistence of rigid class barriers. Dickens also reveals the symbolic nature of charity practiced by the upper class and the role of superficial religiosity in justifying greed and exploitation. Through these ideological frameworks, social injustice is not only perpetuated, but also given a false veneer of moral legitimacy, which this study seeks to analyze and expose through a Marxist critical perspective.

While previous studies offered a significant Marxist analysis of *Great Expectations* as a novel _through Carl Mark's theory_, they were concerned mainly with economic and psychological aspects, overlooking the role of ideology in perpetuating class distinctions. This research attempts to fill this gap in scholarship by analyzing how dominant ideologies impact and shape individuals' perception of their social class, reinforcing class divisions beyond more economic constraints. By using Gramsci' theory of hegemony, this study illuminates how

dominant ideologies perpetuate class hierarchies by shaping consent and obscuring the exploitative nature of capitalist relations.

In light of this, this study will address the following research questions:

1. How does the novel of *Great expectations* depict and criticize the moral and social hypocrisies of Victorian society?

2. What are the ideological structures of Victorian society within the novel, and how do they reinforce the class disparities?

3. How does Dickens both expose Victorian hypocrisies and suggest a path for social reform?

The aforementioned research questions are hypothesized as follow:

1. In *Great expectations*, Dickens reveals and critiques the moral and social hypocrisies of this era, by portraying how ideals like respectability and charity serve to mask deep class injustices and exploitation and how wealth can be used to achieve personal advantages.

2. The ideological structures dominant within the novel are meritocracy and respectability which creates a false sense of moral superiority to characters mainly Pip, who will ultimately be trapped in the pursuit of unattainable ideals.

3. Through *Great expectations* Dickens not only criticizes Victorian hypocrisies, but also highlights how true social reform comes from honesty and personal virtue rather than chasing wealth and appearances.

This research aims to:

1. To contextualize the social, economic, and ideological landscape of Victorian England, highlighting its contradictions.

2. To outline key Marxist theoretical concepts relevant to literary analysis, particularly in relation to class, ideology, and power.

3. To apply this theoretical framework in the novel of *Great Expectations*, to show how Dickens critiques the moral and material realities of capitalist society.

In order to answer the research questions and testify the hypotheses, this study adopts a qualitative approach, collecting data from books, articles, and reliable online sources.

This study is organized into three chapters. The first chapter entitled " Victorian society and its contradictions", provides a social and historical background of the 19th century Britain, highlighting the major transformations brought by the Industrial Revolution, and the prevailing moral values. The second chapter entitled «Marxism and literature", presents a comprehensive understanding of Marxism as a theoretical framework that challenges the notion of capitalism and its role as a literary theory. The third and last chapter entitled "Victorian hypocrisy in *Great Expectations*", reveals the superficiality of the claimed values of the upper class through a Marxist lens.

Chapter 1: Victorian Society and its Contradictions

1.1 Introduction

The Victorian era was a time of various changes in The United Kingdom, this period was marked by rapid industrialization and significant social and economic changes. However, while this period is often praised for its innovations and economic achievements, it also reveals the deep social inequality and strict class structure in England which affected people's lives. In this chapter we will examine the historical and social background of this era, besides the social changes that occurred following the Industrial Revolution, we will also explore how literature serves as a major feature of society.

1.2 The Victorian Era: Context and Significance

The period from 1837 until 1901 England was under the rule of Queen Victoria, one of the longest reigns in British history. This era was known of its great advancements in many important spheres including economic, scientific, and technological. During this time the English empire was territorially enlarged, according to Lloyd (2001), "The British Empire covered approximately one quarter of the world's land and surface and governed around one fifth of its population, becoming the empire in which, the sun never sets" (p.1). Reflecting not only the empire's expansion on unparalleled scale but also the pride Victorians took in their imperial accomplishments, this empire included Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India mainly.

On the technological side, this period was characterized by the development of the steam train and the expansion of the railway lines, which improved transportation and connected cities to each other, it also had a direct impact on trade and also made it easier for people to move between urban centers and regions. All this contributed to social interaction and economic development. Controversial discoveries also characterized science during this period, such as Darwin's theory of evolution in the Origin of Species, which had a dramatic impact on thought and culture. In terms of productivity, machine usage accompanied large scale factory systems, which largely transformed the British economy into an industrial one based predominately on manufacturing components as opposed to agrarian ones.

However, all these notable achievements were perhaps not as monolithic and momentous as one expected, society during the Victorian era was full of contradictions as there were several contrasts of prosperity and poverty, morality and disparity, peace and protests. Moreover, all these profound transformations were driven by the Industrial Revolution which reshaped virtually every facet of daily life within society.

1.3 Class Divisions and Social Inequality

The Industrial Revolution, a term that was first popularized by the English economic historian Arnold Toynbee in his lectures and writings during the late 19th century in order to reflect the vast socio-economic changes in England (Bezanson, 1922, p. 343). This period of rapid industrialization, witnessed the shift from manual labor to machines-based production, with innovations such as the spinning jenny, steam engine, and power loom.

The introduction of machines led to a wide economic growth in England, due to faster and larger scale production, factories could make goods more quickly and cheaply compared to earlier times when industries faced limitations because of the unpredictability of nature and the physical demands on workers which restricted output and made goods more expensive as Perkin (2003) claimed that " The Industrial Revolution was a revolution in men's access to the means of life, in control over their ecological environment, in their capacity to escape from tyranny and niggardliness of nature"(p. 45).

In addition to economic changes, industrialization also brought significant social changes, the rapid growth of urban centers and factories led to mass migration from rural areas to cities, this urbanization resulted from the desire of many people to find jobs in factories, thereby resulting in a rigid class hierarchy, which can be viewed through the lens of the British caricaturist George Cruikshank in his work "The British Bee Hive" which stands as a metaphorical representation of these classes. Shea and Whitlam (2014) stated:

> The British Bee Hive worked as metaphor for social harmony…those below the queen and her court were the classes and the masses, living lives which varied from the comfort and pleasure of the rich to the desperation of the poor. (p.7)

Alternatively, Benjamin Disraeli also shared his perspective arguing that the divisiveness of the bee-hive represents the human costs of the industrial revolution, which split England into two nations, the rich and the poor, demonstrating the condition of the three social classes: the upper class, the middle class, and the lower class (p. 7).

1.3.1 The Upper Class

Also known as the aristocracy, represented a rooted social group in Britain, it was mainly comprised of the hereditary aristocracy who were born into nobility, and the new gentry who achieved their status with the development of commerce, industry, and professions. This was the upper class that dominated the political system by well excluding working classes and middle-class individuals from political participation. Their identity and consciousness were in

essence anchored on elite education that reinforced their status and power in society (Cody, 2021).

People of the upper class prioritized public image, they attended church, and organized luxury gatherings where they celebrated with other people who shared the same status and wealth as them, they also supported charitable donations. However, their private behaviors were largely contradicted with the public image they were trying to adhere, and most of them exploited children who worked for them for a lower salary.

1.3.2 The Middle Class

The Industrial Revolution gave rise to the working class, which included merchants, professionals, and skilled workers who worked hard to earn a living, according to Friedrich Engels (1844), the working class had a belief that their existence was directly linked to earning money through work, and that their life was determined by their ability to produce and contribute economically (p.25).

As a result, their whole life revolved around the rhythm of work, where long hours of hard work signified to them a sense of accomplishment and personal pride, as the hard working persons were respected within their community, regardless of the harshness of the conditions or the poor financial gain.

1.3.3 The Lower Class

The lower class included extremely poor individuals who lived in severe poverty, they were compelled to work for their daily needs, even though the paying was low and the jobs were unstable, their access to education and healthcare was almost limited and any other luxury was far from their imagination (Morrison, 2022).

Women and children from the lower class had to work under dangerous conditions in order to help their families; they worked in factories for long hours or in blacksmithing. As noted by Friedrich Engels "But as to the great mass of working people, the state of misery and insecurity in which they live now is as low as ever, if not lower" (1844, p. 25).

This exploitation of children was described by Edward Thompson as one of the most shameful events in the history of industrialization (1963, p. 349), because these children worked not only in factories, but also as chimney-sweeps, which was an extremely dangerous job at the time.

Figure 1

The British Bee Hive by George Cruikshank.
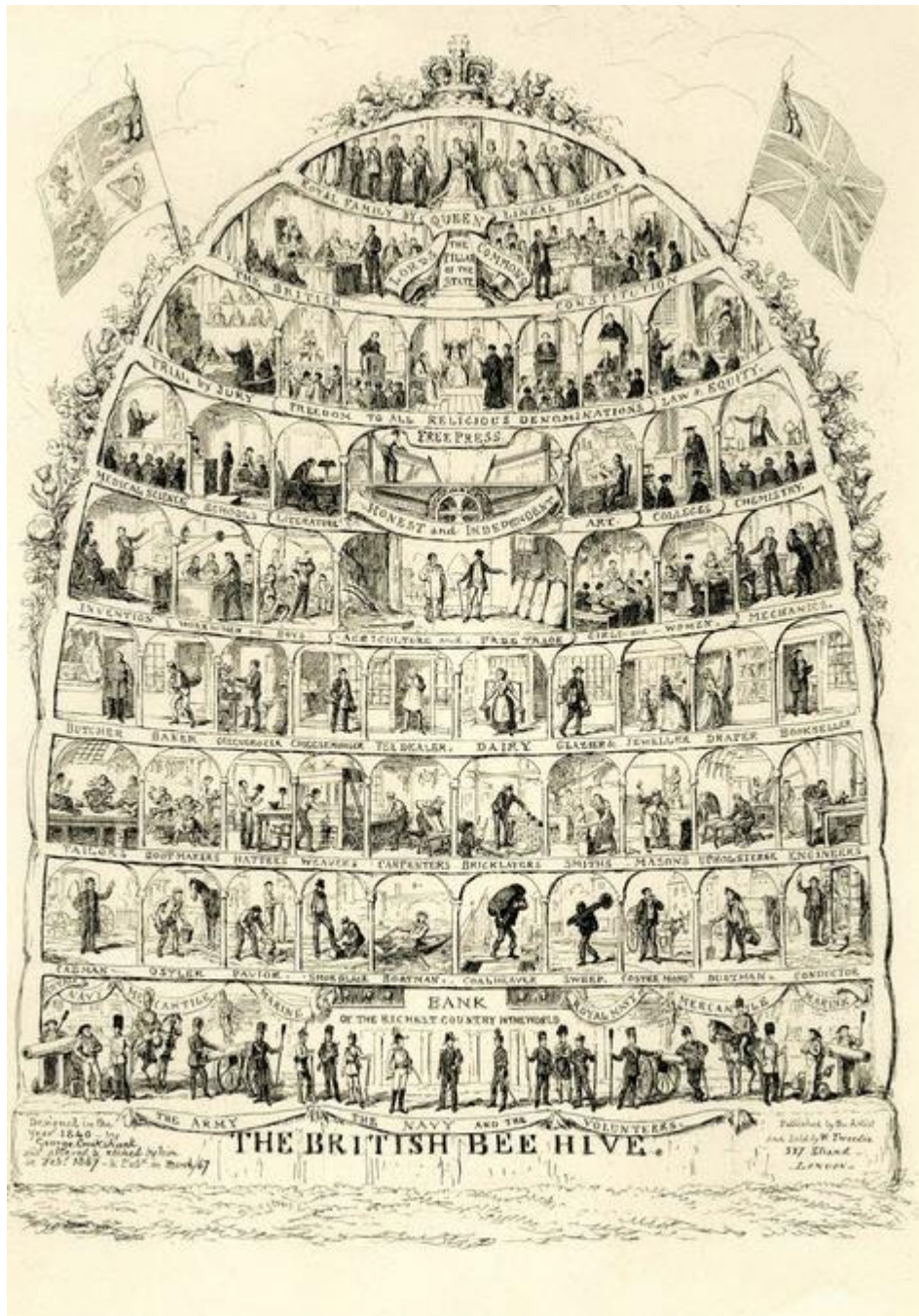
1.4 Victorian Values

The Victorian period, has not only recorded great social, economic, and cultural changes in Britain, but it also had a great effect on the moral and ethical aspects of the society. This period witnessed the emergence of great emphasis on morality, respectability, and hard work.

The American historian Gertrude Himmelfarb stated in her book on *Victorian Values* that "These values, thrift, prudence, diligence, temperance, self-reliance, were indeed bourgeois

ones but they were also classical ones" (1987, p. 12). She has also mentioned that the expression of manners and morals is peculiarly, unmistakably Victorian. Which demonstrates the importance of manners and values not only as desirable traits for individual characters, but also as crucial for ethical living and the well-being of this community, and that they were not confined to a specific class.

Manners and respect were of great importance, during this time, children would mainly address their father or other males as Sir, reflecting the emphasis on respect for authority and the role of family.

Moreover, all men whether they were rich or poor, were seen as the head of the family and the keeper of the family morals (Parker, 2024, p.6). While men were considered as figures of control, women on the other hand were required to remain at home, in order to manage household responsibilities and raise their children. The former Prime Minister of Great Britain was reported during her speech to British Jewish Community claiming that "I was asked whether I was trying to restore Victorian values. I said straight out I was, and I am" (Thatcher, 1983). Suggesting that she considered these principles essential to British identity and the societal ideals.

1.5 Victorian Hypocrisy

Although this period was acclaimed for its focus on values and manners, many historians and writers considered these values as a facade of hypocrisy, The Oxford English Dictionary defines hypocrisy as "The assuming of a false appearance of virtue or goodness, with dissimulation of real character or inclinations".

In respect of religious life or beliefs, society during this time was full of contradictions, mainly in how gender roles were implemented, and the duality of public versus private life of individuals, particularly those of the upper class. This is highlighted in the famous quote by the French author and moralist François de La Rochefoucauld "hypocrisy is a tribute that vice pays to virtue" (1665). While women were expected to present purity and submissiveness by staying at home and creating a peaceful domestic environment for their family, women in the working class were not concerned with these ideals, they had to work under difficult circumstances to provide help for their families, they also felt restricted as they did not have the right to vote or to be a part of any political affairs.

Additionally, religion also had a significant influence on the values of this deeply Christian age, driven by The Methodist movement, which stressed the importance of virtues

such as temperance, modesty, and charity (Gardiner, 2002, p.6). The church urged wealthy people to give charity; however, they applied these morals hypocritically by participating in charitable acts, so as to maintain a public image of virtue and piety towards the poor, while neglecting their real needs. Gardiner (2002) suggests that the reason Victorians were accused of hypocrisy, was because the whole age was struggling to come to terms with modernity, and that it might also be seen as an example of psychological over-compensation amongst people deeply uncertain of their surroundings, as a result, while they were trying to adapt with the developments of their era, they gradually began to abandon their values (p.16).

Marriage was also related to Victorian hypocrisy, and was deeply connected to class and social expectation. For the social elite, marriage was rarely a romance, but an arrangement between families to secure wealth, status, and connections. Social respectability simply meant marrying for women, and those who remained unmarried faced social stigma and lack of prospects. In this context, marriage was a public display of virtue and decency. But in private, many marriages were less than ideal, plagued by infidelity, emotional distance or strict gender roles.

1.6 Victorian Literature and Social Issues

Literature has always served as a tool reflecting social realities, by depicting the positive and negative aspects within society, in order to help people, address these mistakes and encourage change.

As mentioned before, Britain changed significantly following the Industrial Revolution in various fields even in literature, it has witnessed remarkable changes in the printing press, which turned into a faster and efficient machine. These improvements made the production and distribution of written materials more efficient and accessible, also with the establishment of public libraries, literate people from various social classes who had interest in news and literature were able to access these works (Lilly Library, 2023).

Alongside these developments, this period also marked the rise of many influential Victorian writers including, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, The Brontë sisters, Oscar Wilde, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Mathew Arnold. Despite their varying styles and perspectives, these writers addressed similar concerns (Bloom, 2004, p.55). They dedicated their pens to address social issues, providing strong critiques of the norms and inequalities of their time. Moreover, Victorian literature was closely linked to melodrama, which heightened

emotional and moral conflicts to provoke active responses from the audiences. Amigoni (2011) stated that:

> Victorian literature of Britain was itself powerfully engaged with spectable end especially the power of sensation, both as an effect of the nerves and as cultural phenomenon, Victorian literature was deeply attached by melodrama, in which authority and power and the forms of gender and class feeling that they inflected (p. 19).

These narratives often focused on themes of authority and power, investigating how these elements influenced society and personal relationships. The dynamics of gender and class in Victorian literature were especially shaped by melodrama, as authors explored how authority and societal expectations affected individuals. For instance, melodramatic storylines often portrayed the challenges faced by women limited by the rigid gender roles or the tensions between the upper and lower classes.

The 19th century literature was also known for its prose, and its great poets including Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Mathew Arnold. These poets criticized religion and philosophy through religious skepticism. According to Harrison (1998), Queen Victoria herself was a great admirer of how culturally and ideologically Tennyson exposes his works, and that his poem *The Idylls of the King* was dedicated to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, he also mentioned that she considered his death a great national loss (p.45- 46).

In this period theatre also became popular, and plays became means of conveying stories and moral values to the audience, Oscar Wilde emerged as one of the most important playwrights of the Victorian era, he achieved widespread fame through his plays such as *The Importance of being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband,* which served as a satirical critique of the hypocrisy of Victorian society mainly the upper class in terms of marriage and social classes, also George Bernard in his play *The Man of Destiny,* in which he reflects hypocrisy and social tensions.

1.6.1 The Rise of The Novel

The novel became a dominant literary genre during the Victorian era, as a result this period was referred to as the golden age of the novel, it played a crucial role in revealing the effects of industrialization, social class divisions, and the tensions that escalated from these radical changes, it also became both a primary source of entertainment and education especially by the middle class, Bloom (2004) claimed that:

> The novel was a form of entertainment, and well-brought up children were taught to not to read novels before luncheon. An educated Victorian reader

idled away an evening with a novel when he did feel equal to reading something important history for example (p.198-199).

The Victorian novelists wrote in a unique and emotional style, they freely expressed their attitudes and sympathies; they were also distinguished by the complexity of plots, often interspersed with melodramatic or comic elements, with many of them adhering to clear social aims (Bloom, 2004, p.48). Among them Charles Dickens and his famous novel *Hard Times* (1854), which portrays the image of the industrial society with its vast contradictions, and conflicts, also the novel of *North and South* (1855) by Elizabeth Gaskell, which exposes the clash between industrial progress and traditional values, other significant works are *The Picture of Dorian Gray (*1890) by Oscar Wilde which captures the hypocrisy of the Victorian upper class, and how respectability hides moral corruption

Another genre became famous at the time which is bildungsroman, novelists focused on tracing the life of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood, they played a dual role as a moral guide and psychoanalyst of the characters, bearing a responsibility to present a realistic picture of society to their readers. These novels reflected the writers' quest to highlight the contradictions of the world they lived in, as they presented their protagonists as members of society who felt alienated, with a deep desire to change their destinies.

Novels were not directly published as complete volumes, many writers serialized their novels, they have published only few chapters of their works in magazines or in newspapers, and with a volume of the novel appearing every week or month, readers were eagerly waiting for the release of the next part of their stories.

1.6.2 Realism

Realism is a literary movement that emerged in the second half of the 19th century, primarily as a reaction to the idealism that characterized the romantic era. This movement originated in France and spread throughout European literature, mainly in novels, realism sought to depict life as it is and was also characterized by a departure from the idealized and delicate elements that characterized romantic literature, such as exaggerated sentimentality and idealization. Instead, it focused on the material and physical details of life. According to James (2006), realism is a "description of facing up to things as they really are and not as we imagine or would like them to be" (p.29).

In England, realism emerged during the Victorian era, where literature tended to provide accurate descriptions of life, society, and characters, it also largely focused on the working and

the lower class and their struggles. The primary goal of writers was no longer to build a complex plot, but to present realistic and complex characters that reflected human nature.

Furthermore, realism also rejected the focus on heroes and aristocrats, preferring to depict the ordinary citizen and his daily issues, one of the most famous realist writers is Charles Dickens, whose novels such as *Hard times, Oliver Twist,* and *Great Expectations* portrayed the harsh reality of the Victorian society, and the lives of poor people. In these works the protagonists were from the lower class as they were struggling with upper class members, they also depict the work of children and their suffering in order to gain their living.

1.6.3 Dickens A Voice of the Oppressed

Charles Dickens, one of the most famous writers of the 19th century, he was a novelist and social critic, his works are widely celebrated for their vivid storytelling and keen insights into the Victorian society, driven by his own experiences.

1.6.3.1   Early Life

Charles John Huffam Dickens (1812-1870), was born and raised in England to a working-class parent. Charles went to school unlike many children at the time, although at the beginning of his childhood his family's living conditions were stable, his father spent money irrationally, which eventually led to his imprisonment for accumulated debts that he could not pay. Charles's life changed, he abandoned school and was forced to work under difficult circumstances, in order to help his family. During his working journey, Charles's view on the backdrop of the industrial revolution was shaped and was reflected in his later works.

Charles Dickens was very fond of reading and acting during his childhood, he read several literary works beyond the realm of the English literature, *Arabian Nights*, also known as *One Thousand and One Nights* had a strong impact in the development of his imagination (Forster, 1982, p.5). He used allusions from this book in his writings to give a sense of beauty and mystery, for instance in his novella *Christmas Carol*, he used a character from *Arabian Night*, which is Ali Baba.

It is not surprising that Charles Dickens' great powers of observation were sharpened in his early life. After his father was released from prison, Charles returned to school but soon left it again, after he discovered he had other interests, he worked as a reporter when he was only 19 years old, for one of the morning papers (Forster, 1982, p.24). He covered the British Parliament professionally, and this work required him to follow parliamentary sessions and use his quick writing skills.

By the time Dickens began to publish his work, he became popular all across England that Queen Victoria herself conveyed her strong admiration to his literary works repeatedly, and asked to arrange an interview with him (Forster, 1982, p.421). He has also performed many plays in the presence of her and Prince Albert. His novels were known for their blend of social critique as he criticized the hypocrisy of the rich and the division of social classes, characters development, and moral lessons, as they included the stories of individuals who faced challenges including poverty, explotation, or injustice.

Not only in Britain, Dickens achieved a widespread popularity all across the world including America and Russia, during his visit to America he was stunned by their greeting, his novels and tales were published in major American periodicals (Forster, 198, p.485), his novels resonated deeply with the American society especially with the rapid industrialization.

In Russia, his novels were translated to the Russian language, according to Forster (1982), Dickens once received a letter from a Russian man sending him the translate version of his novel *Dombey and Son* claiming that;

> For the last seven years your name has enjoyed a wide celebrity in Russia, and from the banks of the Neva to the remotest parts of Siberia you are read with avidity, your *Dombey* continues to inspire with enthusiasm the whole of literary Russia (p.256).

1.6.3.2   Famous Works

Dickens had a firm belief in the power of literature to bring positive change in society, he used his works to convert humanitarian messages about social justice, poverty, and child abuse, his works are widely read because they contain universal values and messages that transcend the boundaries of time and space, making them lasting tool for motivation and change as stated by Bloom "apart from his supreme value as an entertainer in fiction Dickens earned the gratitude of posterity for awakening the social conscience, in an age marred by callousness and complacency Dickens never lost faith in fundamental human goodness" (2004, p.186).

The first major published work by Dickens was his *Sketches by Boz* (1836), which first had the signature of Boz, a pseudonym he used which was originally the name of Mosses being facetiously pronounced through the nose (Farster, 1982, p.27). These sketches provided lively portraits of London, revealing both its finest and worst attributes as perceived through Dickens's deep observations at its streets, theaters and rivers. Sketches By Boz became very popular and made his career. This was followed by his first full-length novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), a comic serial that launched Dickens to celebrity. According to Bloom

"Dickens's major contribution to literature, that which gives his rank among the giants, was his discovery of new sources of humor" (2004, p.185).

In his subsequent works, Dickens continued to build on this foundation of humor, where he deepened his engagement with social issues, using irony and satire as tools to expose the moral and social duplicity of Victorian society. His novel Hard Times (1854), set in the industrial south provides a picture of how crushingly hard were Victorian times (Amigoni, 2011, p 20). The last phase of Dickens literary career belongs to *Great Expectations* (1861), which is regarded by many critics as his best (Bloom 2004, p184). That highlights a widespread phenomenon during the Victorian period which is child labor and the hypocrisy of the upper class.

1.7 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has provided a historical, social, and cultural background on the Victorian era, it has also addressed the significant changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, and how it affected society by creating class disparities and social inequalities. It has also revealed the contradictions between the celebrated values and the harsh realities within this society. Hence, this class hierarchy that characterized Victorian society provide a strong basis for applying Marxsit theory, to delve more into this capitalist society where the upper classes grew more powerful, while the working class and the poor class had few opportunities to improve their social and economic status.

Chapter 2: Marxism and Literature

2.1 Introduction

While economic and social structures greatly shape society via powerfully determining authority structures and class relations, the extensively developed theory of Karl Marx acts as a social, political, and economic approach to analyze all of these social structures through an examination of capitalism's strict influence upon labor, wealth distribution, and ideology.

This chapter comprehensively examines the core tenets and deep importance of Marxist thoughts when it comes to understanding social hierarchies and power relations, further exploring how economic systems considerably shape ideology and class divisions, as well as Marxism's wide-ranging role as a literary theory, establishing a foundation for analyzing *Great Expectations* through a Marxist perspective.

2.2 Historical Foundations of Marxism

Since its early days, Marxism presented a challenge to the cruel realities of the industrial capitalism and class exploitation. However, over time it has evolved into a dynamic framework to address cultural, social, and ideological power dynamics, offering insights into how social norms and ideologies shape our lives.

Marxism is social, political, and economic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, it analyzes multiple aspects of class struggle and the dynamics of capitalism, as Burns (1939) stated, "Marxism is a general theory of the world in which we live, and of human society as a part of that world" (p.6).

Marxism also argues that capitalism fundamentally exploits the proletariat via the bourgeoisie which controls the means of production, as a result it advocates for a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system to establish a communist society characterized by collectively owned resources.

2.2.1 The Decline of Feudalism

Societies are largely shaped by different economic systems that influence how wealth and power are distributed among its members. However, overtime shifts in production and social organization led to various changes in the economic structure of society mainly Europe, according to Harman (1989):

> The transition from feudalism to capitalism is necessarily of enormous interest to Marxists. It is about how the system we live in rose on the western fringes of Europe and then spread to the rest of the world. It is

the most recent example of how one mode of production changes into another.

Over centuries, medieval Europe's economic system was dominated by Feudalism, which was based on land ownership and an entirely rigid hierarchy which was described by Dobb (1964) as:

> Virtually identical with what we usually mean by serfdom: an obligation laid on the producer by force and independently of his own volition to fulfill certain economic demands of an overlord, whether these demands take the form of services to be performed or of dues to be paid in money or in kind. (p.35)

Kings granted generously land to nobles in exchange for necessary military service, while peasants who were bound to their lords worked the land in return for protection (Clay, n.d., p.2). During these times, society under the feudal system remained extensively agricultural as many people lived in small villages and served the land using traditional methods. However, although this system provided stability for centuries, it restricted economic growth and innovation.

Nevertheless, several radical changes occurred by the beginning of the 14th century in Europe which weakened feudalism. By the year 1384, Black Death swept through England leading to the death of a significant portion of the population, as a result there was a severe labor shortage within this agricultural society. Horrox (1994) stated:

> Mortality destroyed more than a third of the men, women, and children … such a shortage of workers ensued that the humble turned up their noses at employment, and could scarcely be persuaded to serve the eminent unless for triple wages… As a result, churchmen, knights and other worthies have been forced to thresh their corn, plough the land and perform every other unskilled task if they are to make their own bread. (p.70)

The shortage of labor led to the destabilization of power in society, as peasants took advantage of this situation, they gained leverage and started asking for better wages with more improved working conditions, which weakened the bonds between lords and serfs, paving the way for the gradual decline of feudalism.

2.2.2 The Rise of Capitalism

The devastating outcomes of the Black Death reshaped Europe's social and economic structure. In Britain with almost half of the population gone, workers who survived the pandemic gained leverage, they became no longer bound to their lords, on the contrary, they

demanded wages and looked for opportunities elsewhere in cities. Clay(n.d.) asserted that "However deadly and devastating the plague was for the population, it set the course for the surviving peasants to triumph over the manorial system" (p .9).

Devastated landowners, offered pay, breaking the bonds of feudal servitude. This shift encouraged the movement of peasants, as countless people were drawn into greatly growing towns where multiple trades and innovations prospered, also wealth progressively shifted from landownership to commerce (Giunta, 2024).   As a result, a world driven by mobility and profits started to emerge overshadowing the old feudal system.

2.2.3 Industrial Capitalism

As feudalism declined, Europe particularly Britain, experienced many important changes that established the groundwork for modern economic systems. The rise of capitalism, an economic system in which private individuals or companies own capital goods, while production and income distribution are considerably guided through the operation of markets (Heilbroner & Boettke, 2025).

Moreover, The Industrial Revolution had a major impact on the economy, characterized by technological advancements and mechanized production, it replaced rural and handcraft economies. The expansion of industries led to urbanization, people moved from their villages to cities seeking job opportunities in factories. These massive changes resulted in two dominant social classes The bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In *The Communist Manifesto (*1848), Marx and Engels framed this progression asserting:

> The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (p.15).

From this growing divide, economic inequality certainly arose. The bourgeoisie controlled all the means of production and owned factories, while the proletariat were exploited and worked long hours in harsh conditions for lower wages.

2.3 Philosophical Foundations of Marxism

The power of Marxism was derived from a strong philosophical base which is important for understanding its critical perspective on society, as Karl Marx was influenced by the German philosopher Hegel and his dialectics.

During his university studies, Karl Marx was a member of young Hegelians, a group of intellectuals who engaged with philosophical ideas (Hund,1999, p.47). However, while Marx was considerably influenced by Hegel's philosophy, he ultimately criticized and rejected his idealism. According to Croce (1914), Marx argued that Hegel's view of history as progression of ideas and consciousness was flawed since it overlooked the material condition, and he famously stated that history with Hegel was standing on its head, emphasizing ideas over material reality (p.6).

Marx developed his own materialist approach which is historical materialism after rejecting Hegel's idealism and claimed that:

> My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is it direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought (1909, p.25).

Unlike Hegel who believed that history is driven by the evolution of ideas, Marx believed that material conditions such as economic structures and class relations drive historical change, considering that the foundation of any society is its mode of production.

2.4 Core Marxist Concepts

In order to understand the structure of societies, Marxist theory provides a framework focusing on how economic systems affect social institutions through the concepts of base and superstructure, class struggle, alienation, and commodity fetishism. First one will indulge into the original work of Marxist theory by sketching out Karl Marx core concepts, those important to this study, then shift to further conceptual creations by Louis Althusser whose discussion of the role of ideology extends Marx's theory even clearer.

2.4.1 Base and Superstructure

In order to explain how the material side of life like work and the economy shape cultural and ideological parts within society, Karl Marx divided society into two main parts,

the base and the superstructure. In his book *A Contribution to the Critique of Political economy* (1875), he claimed that "the changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure" (p.21).

The base or the infrastructure includes all means of production which are owned by the bourgeoisie, such as factories, machines, and raw materials. On the other hand, the superstructure includes law, politics, religion, art, and above all ideology. However, these elements are not independent, they are shaped and influenced by the base, as Marx explained:

> Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. (1968, p.9)

As a result, from Marx's perspective, people's thoughts, beliefs, and cultural values are a reflection of their material life.

2.4.2 Class Struggle

Among the fundamental concepts of Marxist theory lies the concept of class struggle, which refers to the inherent conflict between two social classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels viewed the inherent conflicts in society between classes are the reason behind historical change (p.14). The proletariat which refers to individuals who are forced to sell their labor, represent the source of wealth in the capitalist system, however, their value is denied by the bourgeoisie as they receive lower wages which does not fulfill their needs, which reinforces economic disparities and continually perpetuating social inequality. In this context, Marx emphasized that this exploitation is a defining characteristic of capitalism, where labor is viewed as a product, reducing workers to mere instruments of production rather than recognizing their human worth (Sociology, 2024).

2.4.3 Alienation

In his critique of capitalism, Karl Marx used his theory of alienation to depict the dehumanizing effect which laborers are objected to under capitalist system, leading to a profound disconnect from their labor, the product of their labor, and from their own human potential.

Workers experience several types of alienation including their alienation from the product of labor, as the products they create are owned by capitalists, which make the worker feel detached from the outcomes of his efforts. Workers become also alienated from the labor process itself, because work becomes a coercive and repetitive activity instead of improving and affirming their skills, stripping work from its creative aspect. Additionally, they may experience alienation from their own human potential because labor is merely a means of survival. The capitalist system's competitive nature also creates individual isolation and rivalry instead of fostering collaboration and solidarity which weakens social connections among people (Gurukul, n.d.)

2.4.4   Commodity Fetishism

Central to the concepts of Marxist theory is the concept of commodity fetishism, which Karl Marx introduced in his book *Capital,* Volume 1 (1909), to describe how people in a capitalist society see goods (commodities) as having values in themselves, he claimed:

> A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labor (p.47).

The shift from feudalism to capitalism had a great impact and is closely tied to the development of commodity fetishism. Within feudal societies, the production process was in a small scale and rooted in personal relationships. However, with the rise of capitalism particularly during the Industrial Revolution, production became mechanized, and goods were no longer created within a visible, social spaces but in factories. As a result, the relationship between producers and consumers weakened.

In this way, people often tend to ignore the actual process of production and the conditions in which goods are made. Instead, their attention is placed solely on the finished commodity, leading to a largely distorted perception of the economy that ignores the real value of human labor behind every product (Encyclopedia,2024).

To further understand how social structure works, the coming parts will reinforce the discussion by bringing two eminent scholars, Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci who created different diversions to Marx's theory adding to its core principles and sometimes

challenging it. While the first is introduced to this study just to clarify the importance of ideology as a concept (including Ideological State Apparatuses and Repressive State Apparatuses discussion of institutions); the second (meaning Gramsci) adds a modern perception of how social structures work.

2.5 Ideology and Social Control

Louis Althusser is a prominent Marxist philosopher known by his theory of ideology in which he argued that ideology is a material and practical force that shapes individuals and maintain social order.

According to Althusser's theory, ideology is not a set of false beliefs but rather a material force which is embedded in various institutions such as family, the educational system, and religion. Althusser referred to these institutions as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) which he contends that they inculcate and enforce the dominant worldview that supports the ruling class through social norms, rituals, and customs these institutions work alongside with Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) such as military, courts, prisons, and the police. However, while Repressive State Apparatuses use force in order to maintain power, the Ideological State Apparatuses on the other hand function through more subtle means to ensure individuals accept their roles in society.

Moreover, Althusser argued that although the family is regarded as private sphere, it works as part of the state by helping to perpetuate an ideology that encourages compliance with class structures. Through this process members are shaped to maintain the existing social order, demonstrating how ideology operates through concrete social practices to sustain the ruling class's dominance (international socialist review, n.d.).

2.6 Cultural Hegemony

Known for his profound influence on Western Marxism, Antonio Gramsci is one of the most influential Marxist thinkers of the 20th century. He is also known for his theory of cultural hegemony, in which he claimed that the ruling class in society maintains power not only through force but also by influencing the values and beliefs of society. While traditional Marxism focused on economic structures and oppression, Gramsci's focus was on the central role that ideology plays in perpetuating the dominance of the ruling class over other classes in society.

On the one hand, the traditional Marxist theory divided society into two major parts the base consisting of economic relationships and material production, and the superstructure including education, media, law, and religion. According to Marx's view, the economic base plays a major role in determining the social and political structure of society, emphasizing that since the ruling class controls the means of production, the ideas of the ruling class become the dominant ideology.

On the other hand, Gramsci argued that the dominance of the ruling class is not limited to economic control, he introduced the concept of hegemony, in which he emphasized that power is not solely maintained by force but also through the strategic manipulation of ideological frameworks.

Additionally, Gramsci refined Marx's theory by dividing the superstructure into two spheres of political society as well as civil society. Political society represents powerful groups, such as the government, military, and law, which impose order by force. In contrast, civil society includes institutions of education, media, cultural organizations, and religion, which influence public consciousness and generate consent.

However, Gramsci believed that this hegemony can be challenged despite its pervasive influence, he suggested that counter hegemony takes place when the oppressed groups develop alternative narratives and cultural expressions that expose and resist dominant ideologies. Intellectuals, activists and social movements play a crucial role in this process by raising awareness and mobilizing people against the status quo. Thus, change comes not only from changing economic conditions, but also from challenging the cultural and ideological frameworks that support the hegemony of the ruling class (El Aidi & Yechouti, 2017).

2.6.1 Traditional and Organic Intellectuals

Central to Gramsci's theory of hegemony is his reevaluation of intellectual's roles within society. In his *Prison Notebooks* (1971), Gramsci challenged the traditional notion of intellectuals of being separate and independent group, arguing that "the notion of the intellectuals as a distinct social category independent of class is a myth" (p.131), highlighting that intellectual activity is closely related to social classes. He saw that intellectuals are not merely scholars, artists, or cultural elites but include also a broad range of social agents who play a directive or organizational role in society (Gramsci,1971).

Gramsci classified intellectuals into two main groups, traditional and organic intellectuals. Traditional professional intellectuals, such as writers, academics, and media figures deny the class nature of their work and appear to occupy a neutral position among social classes, giving them a feeling of independence. However, in reality their roles and expertise are shaped by historical and contemporary class structures, as noted by Gramsci " traditional intellectuals…whose position in the interstices of society has a certain inter-class aura about it but derives ultimately from past and present class relations and conceals an attachment to various historical class formations" (p.131).

As a result, despite their claims of objectivity, these traditional intellectuals are frequently aligned whether consciously or unconsciously with the interests of the dominant upper class, thereby supporting and reinforcing its power and ideological dominance (Bodenheimer, 1976, p.22).

In contrast, organic intellectuals according to Gramsci, emerge from within social classes, mainly the working class. They represent and organize their class's interests. Distinguished from traditional intellectuals, who are detached from class struggles, organic intellectuals are characterized by their profound engagement in the political practice and daily lives of their class, playing an important role in sustaining or challenging the dominant cultural, political, and economic systems. Their comprehension of society is shaped from their experience within the labor process and the dehumanization that workers endure under the capitalist system, they function as leaders, organizers, and teachers, to mobilize their communities, thereby representing a supreme danger to the ruling class (Bodenheimer, p.23). Hence comes our proposition that Dickens not only writes for entertainment but also to mobilize his audience about factual class struggles and their underpinned causes.

2.6.2 War of Position and War of Maneuver

Gramsci developed two key counter hegemonic tactics, the war of position which creates a revolutionary foundation by emphasizing cultural and ideological struggle, and the war of maneuver, which represents the eventual seizure of power.

The war of position, a cultural and ideological war for the attainment of hegemony, according to Gramsci takes place within civil society, once the proletariat become class conscious, it must take on moral, political, and intellectual leadership in order to fight against the existing hegemonic system. This struggle starts with economic issues, with the working class demanding better wages and working conditions however, it extends beyond material

concerns to a broader political and cultural battle. Thus, by rearticulating existing ideologies, the proletariat seeks to build a new alternative hegemony (Ramos, 1982).

Conversely, the war of maneuver also known as the war of movement, refers to a direct and forceful revolutionary assault on state power. Gramsci believed that this strategy was effective in past revolutions, where the state relied particularly on coercion rather than widespread consent, such as in Tsarist Russia, where the rulers controlled people through strict laws and military force. However, in modern western capitalist countries where power remains not only by repression, but also through cultural and ideological control within civil society, a war of maneuver is usually insufficient.

Therefore, Gramsci contended that revolutionary movements must engage first in a war of position, one that once won, ensures permanent change. In order to gain influence within civil institutions such as media and education, before directly confronting the state (Martin, 2023).

2.7 Capitalist Hypocrisy through a Marxist Lens

From a Marxist perspective, hypocrisy exists as a built-in aspect of capitalism, which arises from the disparity between its professed values such as freedom, meritocracy, and equality and the harsh realities of class oppression and domination. This contradiction of capitalism is perpetuated through Karl Marx's concept of Character Mask (Charaktermaske) which reveals how individuals within a capitalist system adapt roles that conceals the true nature of capitalist social relations by presenting an idealized image of justice and equality of opportunities.

These illusions are strengthened by several institutions including the media, education, and law as they promote that success is solely determined by individual effort, rather than a systematic privilege. However, this hypocrisy often functions unconsciously, people assimilate to bourgeois norms through false consciousness, mistakenly perceiving social inequalities as natural rather than historically constructed (Scribd, 2018).

Antonio Gramasci's theory of hegemony functions as valuable framework for understanding this systematic hypocrisy as a mechanism by which the ruling class maintains power by gaining the consent of the lower classes. This consent is achieved by instilling a dominant ideology that conceals the reality of exploitation, making inequality seem natural and justified. In this context, hypocrisy functions as an ideological tool that reveals the contradictions between the ruling class's rhetoric and actions.

27

Furthermore, Gramsci' ideas on cultural hegemony have significantly shaped subsequent theories of power, including Stephen Luke's concept of the third face of power also referred to as the invisible power. While Gramsci contended that the dominance of the ruling class is maintained not only through coercion, but also by shaping ideology and culture. Lukes later built on this by explaining how dominant groups prevent opposition by controlling what the subordinate groups perceive as possible or legitimate, aligning with Marxists concerns about false consciousness, where the working class internalizes the ruling ideology, and fails to recognize the oppression.

Regarding this, Lenin also argued that the bourgeois ideology was so dominant, that the proletariat, without external guidance, would only develop what he termed as trade union consciousness, seeking only minor improvements rather than fundamentally challenging the capitalist system itself. Likewise, civil society institutions such as mainstream media, education, and religious organizations reinforce hegemonic ideas by shaping public consciousness to align with the ruling class interests, for instance, religion often emphasizes obedience and social harmony, discouraging resistance. Media also normalizes economic inequality, framing it as a personal failure rather than systemic barriers, and reinforces beliefs about capitalism as the only viable system.

However, Gramsci emphasizes that hegemony is never absolute, counter hegemonic movements consistently expose the contradictions in the dominant ideology and challenge the values, beliefs, and narratives that sustain the ruling class power. They raise consciousness by revealing systematic oppression, such as the illusion of meritocracy, and create alternative narratives through collective action such as protests and social movements, which weakens consent and open space for ideological resistance (Powercube, n.d.).

2.8 Review of Literature

The British society underwent significant changes, driven by the vast economic and industrial advances, which led to reinforcing a rigid class hierarchy. At the top of this hierarchy stood the aristocracy and rising bourgeois, followed by the working class, and at the lowest rung were the poor and underprivileged.

During this era, many novelists wrote to depict these social issues, among them Dickens whose novels explore themes of class inequality and social hypocrisy, particularly in his novel *Great Expectations*, that explores themes of class, identity, and social mobility

in Victorian England, which can be seen through a Marxsit lens as a critique of the societal structures that shape individual aspirations and relationships.

Marxist literary theory emphasizes that literature is shaped by the prevailing social as well as economic conditions of its time, reflecting the struggles between different classes, Eagleton in *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1976), stated that:

> Marxist criticism is not merely a 'sociology of literature', concerned with how novels get published and whether they mention the working class. Its aim is to explain the literary work more fully; and this means a sensitive attention to its forms, styles and meanings but it also means grasping those forms, styles and meanings as the products of a particular history (p.2)

Therefore, Marxist's view literature as a product of the economic and ideological determinants to a specific era. Marxist critics analyze how texts portray class dynamics, examining how characters navigate or resist oppression and whether the work critiques or reinforces the existing social order, they also investigate how social conflicts are treated, whether they are acknowledged and challenged or blamed on external factors. Additionally, they look for indications of idealized or utopian solutions, revealing the text's ideological stance on the social issues of its time (Delahoyde, n.d.).

In the light of this, several studies have analyzed *Great Expectations* in relation to class dynamics and social mobility, often from a Marxist perspective. Raju Ta's article (2015), *The Question of class in Dickens' Great Expectations,* provides a traditional Marxist critique of the novel, highlighting how economic capital within the Victorian class system influences relationships and individual aspirations, he argues that while financial resources create opportunities, class barriers remain difficult to overcome. Similarly, Helleberg (2021), in her Bachelor's thesis titled *The Portrayal of Class and Social Mobility in Charles Dickens' Great Expectations,* examines the pervasive influence of economic capital. Applying a Marxist theory, her study further reveals how the Victorian society maintained rigid restrictions that made social ascension difficult for those of the lower classes. However, while both Raju Ta and Helleberg emphasized economic conditions, neither fully considered the ideological forces, which deepen class divisions, including social expectations or cultural norms.

Moving from material limitations, other scholars have explored how class struggle affects individual identity. Zaman, Afaq, Sumbal Aftab, Sohail Ahmad, Iram Naeem, and Amada (2023), conducted research *titled The Effects of Class Conflicts on Individuality: A*

Marxist Analysis of Charles Dickens' Great Expectations, focusing on the psychological impact of class conflict on individuals' identity, mainly the protagonist. Their research highlights the dehumanizing effects of economic exploitation, concluding that class conflicts are a central theme in the novel, and that the capitalist system of the Victorian society fosters dissatisfaction. While their study provides an important psychological perspective, it overlooks how hegemonic control contributes to the protagonist's alienation.

To conclude, while the previous studies provide valuable Marxist analysis of *Great expectations,* they largely focus on economic and psychological aspects, neglecting the role of ideology in maintaining class structures. The current study seeks to address this gap by examining how prevailing ideologies shape individuals' understanding of their social position, reinforcing class divisions beyond more economic constraints.

2.9 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has provided a theoretical framework of Marxism by exploring its foundations and key concepts, emphasizing its critique of class structure and power dynamics. Additionally, this chapter has examined the role of Marxist literary criticism in analyzing texts as reflection of social and economic realities.

By establishing this framework, this chapter will guide the next chapter's exploration of *Great Expectations*, in order to reveal how Dickens critiques Victorian social hierarchies and economic inequalities.

Chapter 3: Victorian Hypocrisy in *Great Expectations*

3.1 Introduction

The ideals of social mobility, moral superiority, and hard work were highly valued in Victorian society. However, in his novel *Great Expectations* Charles Dickens reveals how these principles were not fully implemented, showing a society where privilege is inherited, appearances are deceptive, and justice is not served.

Using a Marxist literary criticism approach, this chapter explores how Dickens reveal the contrasts between Victorian ideals and the social realities. By analyzing selected characters' experiences throughout the novel, this chapter also shows how class ideology and systems such as education and law work to maintain upper class control, often under the guise of moral virtue.

3.2 A Childhood of Hardship and Poverty

Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* is a classic coming of age story that follows the journey of its protagonist Phillip Piripp, commonly known as Pip, who recounts his experience through a first person retrospective narration, allowing for a deeply personal and particularly poignant exploration of his early life.

From the outset, Dickens introduces Pip as an orphan, adrift, and devoid of familial warmth. His parents died when he was very young, and he had no description of what they looked like. Instead, he imagined their appearances based on the words written on their tombstones, he reflects:

> As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them for their days were long before the days of photographs, my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, 'Also Georgiana Wife of the Above, I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly (p.2).

This image built not from personal recollections with his parents, but from the cold impersonal inscriptions on their tombstones, emphasizes Pip's profound isolation and lack of familial warmth.

Pip grew up in the marshlands of Kent, with his sister Mrs. Joe Gargery, and her husband the blacksmith Joe Gargery, whom Pip describes as "good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, and dear fellow" (p.9). However, his sister Mrs. Joe was cold hearted and constantly reminded Pip that she *brought him up by hand*, a phrase that rather

than suggesting care or dedication, carries an undertone of discipline and physical punishment. This harsh treatment made Pip feel like a burden and unworthy of love, as he expressed "I was always treated as if I had insisted on being born, in opposition to the dictates of reason, religion, and morality" (p.30).

However, Pip's struggle as a child was not limited to his lack of emotional warmth, the financial condition of the family he grew up with was somewhat difficult. Their income was very limited relying only on joe's work, to the extent where even the simplest aspects of daily life were managed with extreme caution, this is evident in Pip's reflection on the way his sister served breakfast, "she took some butter not too much on the knife and spread it on the loaf in an apothecary kind of way…which she finally, before separating from the loaf, hewed into two halves, of which Joe got one, and I the other" (p.12).

3.3 The Proletarian world of Pip's Childhood

Pip, his sister, and Joe Gargery lived in a wooden house in the marshlands. The forge, where Joe worked was adjoined to the house, with a door in the kitchen directly connecting the two, and the sounds of hammering with the roaring of the fire were a constant part in Pip's childhood, where the rhythm of life intertwined with labor.

While children of more privileged backgrounds had the opportunity to pursue education during the Victorian era, Pip from a very young age was expected to help Joe and ultimately, embrace an apprenticeship. Which deeply reflects how child labor was culturally accepted as a natural part of the proletarian life, and how education and personal growth are sacrificed to the need of contributing in the household incomes.

Moreover, the ideological structures of the working class are evident in the case of Joe Gargery, as his father refused to support his education, believing that work was a priority:

> My mother she'd go out to work, and she'd say, Joe, now, please God, you shall have some schooling, child,' and she'd put me to school. But my father were that good in his heart that he couldn't abear to be without us. So, he'd come with a most tremenjous crowd and make such a row at the doors of the houses where we was, that they used to be obligated to have no more to do with us and to give us up to him. And then he took us home and hammered us. Which, you see, Pip,' said Joe, pausing in his meditative raking of the fire, and looking at me, 'were a drawback on my learning (p.64).

While his statement may seem humorous, it highlights the larger social forces that dictate the lives of the working class families, prioritizing labor over education. However, Pip's

perception of the forge was shaped by his class ideology, as he states "I had believed in the kitchen as a chaste though not magnificent apartment; I had believed in the forge as the glowing road to manhood and independence" (p.150).

According to him the forge represents something more symbolic rather than a simple workplace, which reflects a state of false consciousness common among the proletariat, where hard work is the ultimate means to achieve success and personal worth, without recognizing the oppressive conditions that restrict their social mobility. This ideological belief makes Pip romanticize the forge as a noble and aspirational space.

3.4 Bourgeois Exploitation and Class Control

Within the confines of the Victorian society, Dickens uses the character of Miss Havisham to expose the internal contradictions of this society. Miss Havisham, known by "everyone for miles around" (p.71), not for her presence, but for her inherited wealth, which she used to exert control over others, including Pip, Estella, and Pumblechook whom she used to reach Pip, however, she dismissed him entirely when they arrived, embodying a symbol of the dominant bourgeois class within the Victorian society, which appeared morally superior, but was secretly corrupt and exploitative.

From a Marxist lens, Pip's visit to Satis house reveals a case of an ideological manipulation. Miss Havisham and Estella exploit Pip emotionally, instilling in him a feeling of inferiority and the belief that self worth is directly tied to wealth. When Pip and Estella started playing, she mocked his common language and appearance saying "He calls the knaves Jacks, this boy! And what coarse hands he has, And what thick boots!" (P84.). Her comments made Pip measure himself for the first time through a lens of inadequacy, he admits "I was humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry-I cannot hit upon the right name for the smart God knows what its name was, that had no name" (p.86). This painful reaction reveals his initial profound sense of shame about his social class.

3.5 Class Consciousness and the Path to Gentility

After Pip's encounter with Miss Havisham and Estella his eyes were opened to the harsh realities of the society he was living in, compelling him to confront his place in this social hierarchy. The manipulation and disdainful of Miss Havisham and Estella serve as a turning point in pip's life, shifting his view of his once cherished world to one of disillusionment" it is a most miserable thing to feel ashamed of home. There may be black ingratitude in the thing, and the punishment may be retributive and well deserved; but that it

is a miserable thing" (p.150), says Pip. which reflects his internalization of class shame, a feeling instilled by the Bourgeois treatment.

Earlier, Pip had idealized the idea of working with Joe in the forge. However, after his encounter with the upper class, his reality feels restrictive, demonstrating how his working class identity is no longer a source of pride, but a burden. He admits:

> Once, it had seemed to me that when I should at last roll up my shirt-sleeves and go into the forge, Joe's 'prentice, I should be distinguished and happy. Now the reality was in my hold, I only felt that I was dusty with the dust of small coal, and that I had a weight upon my daily remembrance to which the anvil was a feather. (p.150)

When Pip confesses to Biddy about his yearning to become a gentleman, " I admire her dreadfully, and I want to be a gentleman on her account " (p.182), further reveals how social aspirations are deeply influenced by dominant class ideology, rather than individual will, as Pip believes that gentleman's status is the key for gaining Estella's love and approval.

Unexpectedly, Pip's life changed when Jaggers offered him a chance to become a gentleman, an offer he did not hesitate to accept. He was promised "great expectations" (p.195), which was not simply about money, but also about crossing the class boundaries and becoming someone who mattered:

> No more low wet grounds, no more dykes and sluices, no more of these grazing cattle though they seemed, in their dull manner, to wear a more respectful air now, and to face round, in order that they might stare as long as possible at the possessor of such great expectations farewell, monotonous acquaintances of my childhood, henceforth I was for London and greatness: not for smith's work in general and for you!"(p.208).

With these words, Pip symbolically abandons his working class origins, embarking on a quest for self transformation through the illusion of bourgeois life in London.

3.6 The Commodification of Social Relations

In *Great Expectations*, the relationships between characters are commodified, demonstrating how economic status shaped interpersonal relationships in Victorian society. This Commodification of relations is exemplified by Dickens through the relatives of Miss Havisham. These relatives whom Pip describes as "toadies and humbugs" (p.119), were eagerly waiting for Miss Havisham's inheritance, and their visits were not out of genuine affection, but from their greed to obtain a share of her inheritance.

Another notable example takes place when Joe and Pip visits Miss Havisham to discuss Pip's apprenticeship, however, she pays money to Joe saying "Pip has earned a premium here and here it is. There are five-and-twenty guineas in this bag. Give it to your master, Pip" (p.142), treating their visit as a business exchange, where their presence and actions are valued based on their economic profit, highlighting how human relations are reduced to commodities in a capitalist system, and how individuals are treated as tools for generating economic gain.

Similarly, the shift in Mr. Pumbelchook's attitude towards Pip, upon discovering his newfound wealth is evident. The same man who previously had shown no interest in Pip as a child, nor any affection, now seeks to repair his relationship with Pip, 'Let us drink, thanks to Fortune, and may she ever pick out her favourites with equal judgment! And yet I cannot,' said Mr. Pumblechook, getting up again, 'see afore me One - and likewise drink to One - without again expressing - May I - may I -?" (p.217). This sudden change in his attitude highlights how individuals are valued for their wealth.

Dickens also criticizes this capitalist commodified view of relations through the character of Wemmick, who reflects the capitalist mindset that reduces worth to material value. His obsession with collecting small valuable items, such as jewelry from prisoners who are about to be executed, believing that it is necessary to hold onto things that can be easily turned to money if needed, and he encourages Pip to adopt his philosophy, telling him "They may not be worth much, but after all, they are property and portable. It don't signify to you with your brilliant look-out but as to myself my guiding star always is 'get hold of portable property". (p.282). This behavior underscores the widespread impact of materialism on human connections in a capitalist system, where relationships are driven by economic utility and personal gain.

3.7 The Illusion of Social Mobility

Pip's journey from his humble village to the city of London represents a profound experience of social and psychological alienation, exposing the illusion of social mobility in a society governed by appearances and wealth.

As soon as Pip arrives in London, his feeling of disillusionment begins; the city quickly disappoints his expectations and shatters the idealized image he had built in his mind. He describes it as "ugly, crooked, narrow, and dirty (p.227), a description that symbolizes the beginning of his disillusionment with the upper class world. Although he quickly adapts

to the lifestyle of the genteel class, living extravagantly with Herbert Pocket and adopting their refined manners, this new identity is superficial.

Pip embraces the customs of the upper class, believing that wealth and status will bring him fulfillment and acceptance, especially in the eyes of Estella, yet beneath this outward transformation lays a deepening alienation, as he distances himself from Joe, and begins to measure his worth by class standards he can never truly embody. The illusion of belonging shatters entirely when he discovers that his benefactor is not the aristocratic Miss Havisham, but Magwitch, the escaped convict he once helped as a child, and rather than feeling gratitude towards him, he is horrified, "The abhorrence in which I held the man, the dread I had of him" (p.452). His reaction shows how deeply he has adapted the classist ideology that equates criminality and poverty with moral inferiority and the wealth that had once promised him a place in the upper class is suddenly ruined in his eyes because of its source.

After Magwitch's death, Pip loses everything including his wealth, his social hopes, and Estella. In this moment of failure, he was abandoned by the social world he was once inspired to join. However, Joe returns to take care of him and pays his debts, which makes Pip feels guilty and realize how wrongly he treated Joe and how false his dreams were. His words, "O Joe, you break my heart! Look angry at me, Joe. Strike me, Joe. Tell me of my ingratitude. Don't be so good to me!" (p.655), reflect his deep regret and how he became aware that he never truly belonged to this class. No matter how he tried, he was nothing more than a blacksmith in a gentleman's suit.

3.8 Victorian Hypocrisy in *Great Expectations*

The novel of *Great Expectations*, represents a powerful critique of the moral contradictions at the heart of Victorian society, it challenges the era's cherished ideals by exposing the difference between what society claimed to embrace including justice, charity, and domestic harmony, and how these values were often twisted in reality.

3.8.1 The Illusion of Respectability

One of the clearest forms of Victorian class hypocrisy is the upper class's public praise of virtue, charity and moral superiority, values that they frequently failed to uphold. In *Great Expectations* Dickens reveals this hypocrisy through Miss Havisham, who appears to those who do not know her personally as a generous woman. Pip's sister and Uncle Pumblechook believed that her invitation to Pip was an act of kindness and a charitable act

towards a poor orphan boy. However, in reality, Pip's presence in her house was only to serve her own goals. Similarly, her adoption of Estella was not an act of compassion but an attempt to create a heartless young woman, a reflection of her own wounded pride to take revenge of men.

Isolated in a mansion frozen in time, Miss Havisham embodies the decayed morality hidden beneath the surface of wealth and power. Despite Pip's frequent visits and his devoted service, she never rewarded him, giving him only a daily meal, as Pip reflects "Neither did she ever give me any money - or anything but my daily dinner" (p.133). Her actions show how ideals like charity and love can be corrupted and used not to heal, but to harm.

Moreover, the character of Bentley Drummle also exemplifies the deeply rooted hypocrisy of the Victorian upper class. Despite being born into wealth and holding the title of a gentleman, Drummle lacks any true gentility or morality which is expected of such a status. Pip describes him as "idle, proud, niggardly, reserved, and suspicious" (p.285), qualities that reveal the moral emptiness beneath his privileged position. In social settings, he shows nothing but contempt for others, as Pip recalls "laughed outright, and sat laughing in our faces with his hands in his pockets and his round shoulders raised: plainly signifying that it was quite true, and that he despised us, as asses all" (p.304), reflecting his deep sense of class arrogance and how his status allows him to disregard others.

3.8.2 Class Bias in the Legal System

The Victorian society, which proudly upheld ideals of justice and equality, is exposed by Dickens in *Great Expectations* as deeply hypocritical. The legal system which is supposed to be fair and impartial appears in the novel as a biased tool that serves and protects the upper class, while harshly condemning the poor simply for being poor.

This class bias within the Victorian legal system is vividly illustrated through Pip's childhood fight with the pale young gentleman at Miss Havisham's house, who is later revealed to be Herbert Pocket. After the fight, Pip becomes very anxious, convinced that the law will severely punish him, he says:

> I felt that the pale young gentleman's blood was on my head, and that the Law would avenge it. Without having any definite idea of the penalties I had incurred, it was clear to me that village boys could not go stalking about the country, ravaging the houses of gentlefolks and pitching into the studious youth of England, without laying themselves open to severe punishment (p.131).

This intense fear stems from a deep seated understanding of a system that is inherently biased by class. For boys like Pip the low represents a threat, which favors the wealthy and punishes the poor regardless of the circumstances.

The stark injustice of this system becomes more evident in the case of Magwitch and Compeyson, who were partners in crime, involved in forging banknotes and swindling. However, when they were caught, Compeyson "set up fur a gentleman" (p.489), came from a higher social background, had a gentleman appearance, and formal education, knew how to manipulate others in court to his advantage and received a more lenient punishment. In contrast, Magwitch the poor and uneducated man was seen as a more dangerous figure, received a harsher punishment, and was exiled to Australia, reflecting Louis Althusser's concept of the repressive state apparatuses (RSAs), where the judicial system serves to protect the interests of the rich and penalize the poor harshly under the guise of justice.

3.8.3 The Myth of the Ideal Woman

Victorian society had a strict vision of womanhood, women were expected to be obedient, nurturing, and were confined to domestic roles. However, not all women could conform to these ideals. Characters like Mrs. Joe and Estella reveal the fragility of the idealized "Angel in the house".

Mrs. Joe contrasts with the ideals of womanhood, widely expected in her time. She stands in contrast to the gentle, submissive image of femininity. She rules the house with anger and violence rather than offering warmth or care, as Pip ironically states that he and Joe were "brought up by hand" (p.9). Her duties represented a burden to her that she constantly complained about. Through her character, Dickens highlights how this expectation of domestic responsibility becomes emotionally damaging when forced upon women without choice.

Additionally, Estella, like Mrs. Joe, deviates sharply from the traditional image of Victorian femininity; she has been raised by Miss Havisham not to love, but to hurt. Shaped into a tool of revenge rather than a nurturing wife, Estella tells Pip "I have no heart" (p.335). Her eventual marriage to Drummle because of his status and wealth, underscores how women were often expected to marry advantageously, regardless of their personal happiness.

3.9 Writing for Social Reform

As we mentioned in the first chapter, Charles Dickens was among the most prominent Victorian writers, whose novels addressed social issues related to poverty, class divisions, and social inequalities.

Dickens's writing style is unique, he addresses painful and serious issues without making the tone heavy or depressing for the readers. Instead, he mixes depth with cleverness using often a sharp but light tone to help the reader imagine the harsh reality he describes, in Alkhidir's words, "Dickens was essentially a comic writer who used irony to create caricatures against cruelty and injustice in society" (2018, p.607). He does not attack society directly or preaches the reader, but he lets the story speak for itself, through the actions and words of his characters.

3.9.1 Satire in *Great Expectations*

Dickens criticizes the poor quality of schooling available for those of the lower classes. He satirically draws attention to this neglected sufferance through Pip's early education, highlighting how the educational system also fails the lower class.

Far from being a qualified place of learning, the school is run by Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt whom Pip describes as "a ridiculous old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity, who used to go to sleep from six to seven every evening, in the society of youth who paid two pence per week each" (p.60). Instead of offering real knowledge, Mr. Wopsle who is supposedly a figure of authority, examines Pip and his classmates by performing dramatic speeches, turning what should be education to theater, as Pip complains "What he did on those occasions was to turn up his cuffs, stick up his hair, and give us Mark Antony's oration over the body of Caesar. This was always followed by Collins's Ode on the Passions" (p.60). Through this entire setup, Dickens mocks the state of education of the poor, exposing its emptiness and superficiality.

During the Christmas dinner scene, Dickens also satirizes those who publicly act religiously, in order to appear morally upright, while their actions contradict the values they claim to uphold. Before dinner, Mr. Wopsle, the clerk of church starts the thanksgiving prayer with a theatrical declamation, which Pip describes it as "a religious cross of the Ghost in Hamlet with Richard the Third" (p.33), reflecting how exaggerated it was. However, at the same time, Mr. Wopsle, along with other guests and Pip's sister were abusing Pip

emotionally, making him feel unwelcome. Through this scene Dickens mocks religious figures in society, who use religion for public appearance rather than as a true moral guide.

While Mr. Wopsle and his aunt seem to occupy roles of moral and intellectual authority, their impact on people from the lower classes is far from beneficial. This contradiction aligns with Antonio Gramsci's concept of traditional intellectuals, who claim objectivity and believe they occupy a neutral position among social classes. However, they consciously or unconsciously support the interests of the dominant class and ultimately engage in reinforcing their ideological dominance.

Another significant example of Dickens's satire appears in his portrayal of the Pocket household. Through Pip's observation that "Both Mr. and Mrs. Pocket had such a noticeable air of being in somebody else's hands, that I wondered who really was in possession of the house and let them live there, until I found this unknown power to be the servants" (p.266), Dickens satirically exposes the false sense of authority of the so called refined class, who act responsible and hold power, yet they are entirely dependent on servants to maintain order in their own house.

3.9.2 Irony in *Great Expectations*

In his novel, Dickens masterfully employs irony to challenge assumptions, and also to highlight the moral growth of his characters, creating narrative rich in tension and emotional depth, which invites the reader to engage deeply with the story.

One of the most powerful ironies in the novel lay in the title itself. While Great Expectations seems to promise success, status, as well as happiness to Pip, it brings him guilt and disillusionment. What Pip once saw as a golden path to greatness, turns out to be a painful journey of self realization. Through this ironic contrast, Dickens guides the reader to question society's superficial definition of success.

Pip had long believed that his benefactor was the wealthy Miss Havisham. However, he is shocked ultimately that his real benefactor is the escaped convict he once helped when he was a child. This ironic situation helps Pip and the reader to understand that true worth and generosity are not tied to social class, and that goodness can come from unexpected places.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter was an analytical part of Victorian hypocrisy within the novel of *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. It aimed to reveal the values that the upper class claimed to uphold, which function as an ideological force that ensure the maintenance of class hierarchies. Focusing on how Dickens uses his distinguished writing style and characters to shed light on the contradictions between outward appearances and true morals.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

The current study aimed to unveil the contradictions embedded within Victorian society through the novel of *Great expectations*, using a Marxist analytical approach, and combining Karl Marx's foundational ideas on class struggle and false consciousness, with the theory of ideology and cultural hegemony by Antonio Gramsci. The primary aim was to show how the values claimed by the Victorian upper class such as respect, morality and meritocracy, did not function as true moral principles, but rather as ideological concepts that served to protect and preserve the existing class structure.

By analyzing the novel using this theoretical framework, the study exposed that the moral ideals promoted by Victorian society were not neutral moral values, but rather strategic ideological tools that maintained the existing class hierarchy. The upper class promoted false beliefs among the working and the lower class to make them believe that anyone could achieve social success through respectability, hard work, and personal ambition. However, in reality, privileges were only inherited and confined to the wealthy class, making social mobility nearly impossible for others. *Great Expectations* uncovers this deception through the character of Pip, who chases his dream of social mobility by conforming to these values, but soon he collides with the reality that the success he seeks is not truly achievable in his society.

Therefore, this research contributes to literary studies, by offering a new perspective on Dickens's critique of Victorian society's professed moral values and lived social realities, it also contributes to the understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of Victorian England driven by the capitalist system.

While conducting this study, the researcher faced some limitations, including the lack of prior academic works that dealt with the novel of *Great Expectations* through the lens of Gramsci's theory of ideology. Additionally, the theme of Victorian hypocrisy has not been examined directly through the novels of Dickens. Nevertheless, these limitations also gave the research a sense of originality, as it explored Victorian hypocrisy from another angle.

Building on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests the following topics for further research:

- Comparative analysis of the novel *Great Expectations* and another novel of Charles Dickens for instance, *Hard times*, to explore how they portray class divisions in 19th century Britain.

- Identity construction under social pressure in *Great expectations.*

Glossary

Angel of the house: this term came to be used in reference to women who embodied the Victorian feminine ideal, a wife and mother who was selflessly devoted to her children and submissive to her husband.

Religious skepticism: religious skepticism in literature refers to the use of doubt, and questioning the religious beliefs and practices within works of fiction. It was prevalent during the Victorian era as a result of scientific developments such as Darwin's theory in addition to social and intellectual changes. For instance, Dover Beach by Matthew Arnold.

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