

Introduction to Cultural Studies
Dr. Avishek Parui
Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology-Madras

Lecture - 05
The Other Question. (Contd)

Hello and welcome to this lecture on the NPTEL course on Introduction to Cultural Studies. So in this particular lecture we will be continuing with the one that we started already the Homi Bhaba essay that we are examining at the moment it is called The Other Question and the essay as you know by now hopefully is an examination of how the other is created, how the identity of the other is created through a discursive, political process.

It is a process of production really through an apparatus of knowledge, power, race, gender, class. All of those things come to being in this politics of production of the other. Now we will discontinue with this essay and this is page 30 of the essay, the version that we are using for the purpose of this particular lecture and the yellow highlighted section are the sections that we are examining most closely.

Now let us look at the way in how the knowledge is used in a colonial discourse and knowledge is used as a very political phenomenon. So knowledge is not really an innocuous entity in the colonial condition. Knowledge is a profoundly political entity because knowledge is used to measure the other, to create the other, to sort of arrest the attributes of the other and in the process create or sustain or consolidate the superiority of the coloniser.

So the knowledge of the construction of that opposition would be defined you know denied the colonial subject. So the colonial subject will not be so given heterogeneity or complexity. In other words, the colonial subject will become an arrested attribute, a particular stereotype, a particular fetish.

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He is constructed within an apparatus of power which *contains*, in both senses of the word, an 'other' knowledge – a knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulates through colonial discourse as that limited form of otherness, that fixed form of difference, that I have called the stereotype. Fanon poignantly describes the effects of this process for a colonised culture:

a continued agony rather than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. The culture once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yolk of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. . . . The cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking. . . . As though it were possible for a man to evolve otherwise than within the framework of a culture that recognises him and that he decides to assume.¹⁸

He is constructed within an apparatus of power which contains in both senses of the word an other knowledge. A knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulates through colonial discourse as that limited form of otherness, that fixed form of difference that I have called the stereotype. So interestingly Bhaba defines the stereotype as a fixed form of otherness.

I think it is a beautiful definition because what that does is it really highlights the arrested quality of stereotypes. You are arresting a particular attribute. So a person is full of different attributes, very complex attributes. Now what you do very strategically as a coloniser over here you arrest a particular attribute and then you circulate it, you magnify it, you extend on it and then you endlessly circulate and consume it and in the process you create a fetish.

In the process you create a stereotype. Now Frantz Fanon is this remarkable you know the philosopher who works on who used to work on the Algerian condition, the Algerian French relationship, the Algerian French colonialism you know he was a psychiatrist by training and also a profound philosopher and he is one of the very rare philosophers, Fanon who really showed the proxy at work, the execution of literary theory, critical theory at work of ideology at work.

Now Bhaba has all respect for Fanon as he indeed should. Now Fanon poignantly describes the effects of this process for a colonised culture and this is a quotation from Fanon. A continued

agony rather than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture the culture once living and open to the future becomes closed, fixed in a colonial status caught in the yolk of oppression both present and mummified. It testifies against its members.

The cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking as though it were possible for a man to evolve otherwise than within a framework of a culture that recognizes him and that he decides to assume. So the keyword over here is mummification. Now what is mummification? Mummification is a very artificial violent preserving of a particular organic entity.

So what happens in the process is the organicity of the colonised subject disappears completely. The organicity is lost and in the process instead we have an inorganic a recitation of a particular attribute. So the entire attribute becomes arrested and then preserved at infinitum. Hence the word mummification and also it has a morbid quality. It has a necrophilic quality to it right. You are making something dead and in that process you are loving what is dead.

So from a coloniser's perspective if you are arresting the colonised subject as an exotic other and you are fixated on the exoticisation and you love that exoticisation and you are preserving that exoticisation there is a necrophilic quality to it and a love for the dead, the dead attribute, the arrested attribute. That is so permanently frozen in time and that becomes a very interesting form of identity formation in the colonial condition.

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My argument relies upon a particular reading of the problematic of representation which, Fanon suggests, is specific to the colonial situation. He writes:

the originality of the colonial context is that the economic substructure is also a superstructure. . . you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.²¹

Now next we come to and this is the next page, page 31 actually where Fanon talks about the idea of representation. Now representation becomes a really key category in colonial conditions. Now Fanon says the problematic of representation this is Bhaba which Fanon suggests is specific to the colonial situations. The representation as you know is a very important category in any power paradigm. So who is doing the representation? Who is being represented?

Who is the representator? Who is represented? So these are some of the very key questions that emerged in colonial conditions. Now equally important is what is being represented right. Now if we are arresting an attribute, if you are making something into a fetish, if you are making something into a stereotype and then representing it then that becomes an arrested representation which is then circulated as I mentioned and consumed endlessly and this is exactly the process through which a fetish is formed you know, a particular stereotype is formed.

Now Fanon says interestingly, the originality of the colonial context is that the economic substructure is also a superstructure. You are rich because you are white. You are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem and this is a remarkable revision of the Marxist idea of basis superstructure.

And this is something I have already spent some time with on in this particular course and you may remember that we mentioned about the base superstructure model where base is a economic grid which produces the superstructure such as culture, language, art, you know food, festivities you know codes, religion etc. now for the purpose of the colonial condition Fanon says something really interesting.

He says that in the colonial condition the base is superstructure, a more organically linked with each other. Now you are rich because you are white. You are white because you are rich. So white over here becomes a discursive phenomenon. It is not just a race. White over here becomes a discursive category. Now you are wealthy you are white.

You are privileged you are white. So the base superstructure model, the economy privileged model, the economy cultural model becomes really interesting in the colonial condition and this I think is a really interesting way to look at colonialism. Now when you come to you know next we come to a really interesting bit in Bhaba and this is the four-term strategy that Bhaba uses. Now what is the four-term strategy?

The four-term strategy used by Bhaba, he uses you know 4 different categories and associates them together. So first of all he uses metaphor. Metaphor, metonymy, narcissism, and aggressivity. This is a four-term strategy used by Bhaba. Now what is the four-term strategy? The four-term strategy is the following. Now let me elaborate on this a little bit and then it becomes easier for you to understand.

Now he says that there are 2 ways in which you can represent, the 2 ways in which you can identify in a colonial condition, either through metaphor or through metonymy. These are 2 structural ways in which you can identify. The metaphor is association. So when you are using a metaphor if you are using a metaphor for a particular identification when I am saying that he is as brave as a lion or you know he is a lion or he is you know this braveheart etc. what I am doing is I am associating a particular attribute with a particular individual.

Hence this is how metaphor works in the first place. Now there was a degree of identification in metaphor and we cannot deny that. And so identification becomes narcissism. Now what is narcissism? Narcissism is a ability to see yourself. You see yourself in something. You see yourself as reflected in something right. So metaphor and narcissism really go hand in hand in a very contingent process. Now equally important is metonymy.

Now what is metonymy? Metonymy is a process in which a particular part represents a whole, right? So when I am saying for instance respecter is a metonymy of the monarchy or a cricket bat is a metonymy of the game cricket, right. So essentially what I am doing is I am using a particular fragment and then I am using a particular fragment to speak a particular whole, a larger part is the stake over here. So in other words metonymy is an incomplete fragmented identification.

Now in this incomplete fragmented process lies a degree of aggressivity right. There is a degree of aggressivity. There is a degree of violence in metonymy because it is fragmented. It is fragmented, it is broken. It is not really a complete association. So metonymy becomes a fragmented identification and that fragmented identification generates the violence, generates an aggressivity right.

So metonymy and aggressivity are tied together in Bhaba's analysis and metaphor and narcissism are tied together in Bhaba's analysis. So this four-term strategy that Bhaba uses is very important and that is something which is an excellent example of you know colonial identification, colonial sort of relationship, colonial identity formation, colonial other formation etc. Now if you read this section, this is page 31 when he is taking about the motility of the metaphoric narcissist stake and metonymic aggressive systems of colonial discourse.

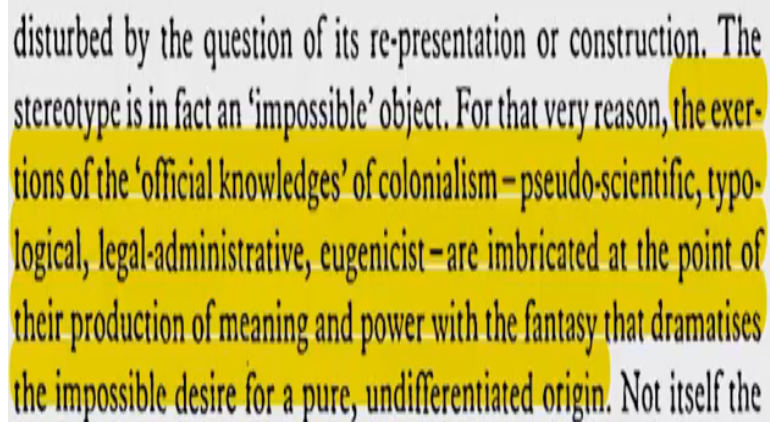
So again the idea is to bring together the different forms of identification and in the process see how identity works and identity is formed and reformed and produced and reproduced in the colonial conditions right. And this is obviously a part of the fetish formation, a part of the stereotype formation etc.

Now, so this is page 30 why he talks about right after the Fanon quote Bhaba talks about the four-term strategy. My four-term strategy of the stereotype tries tentatively to provide a structure and a process for the subject of a colonial discourse right. So the idea of subject formation in the colonial discourse becomes very important you know in case of a metonymy or metaphor. I mean to what extent are you identifying with the subject.

To what extent are you sort of fragmented, fragmenting a particular subject. So fragmenting a subject becomes an act of metonymy and that generates its own violence, that generates its own aggressivity right. So this becomes a very interesting and not just I mean notice the way in which a political situation becomes psychological and I keep saying this throughout this course because you know politics and psychology go hand in hand especially when it comes to something like identity formation.

Because you know if you remember if you think about what you are really as an identity, as a marker in a particular society, as a performing psychological experience or a performing psychological situation to be in what you are as a person what you are as a religious marker what you are as a cultural marker what you are as an ideological marker. These become very psychological conditions and one must be aware of the psychological conditions when one talks about identity formation especially in colonial conditions.

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disturbed by the question of its re-presentation or construction. The stereotype is in fact an 'impossible' object. For that very reason, the exertions of the 'official knowledges' of colonialism – pseudo-scientific, typological, legal-administrative, eugenicist – are imbricated at the point of their production of meaning and power with the fantasy that dramatises the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin. Not itself the

Now, so we come to page 33, we find this is an interesting bit which I have highlighted in yellow the exertions of the official knowledge of colonialism as pseudo-scientific, typological, legal administrative, eugenicist are imbricated at the point of their production of meaning and power with the fantasy that dramatizes the impossible desire for a pure undifferentiated origin. Notice the different kinds of knowledge or systems which are alluded to over here.

Eugenicist, now what is eugenicist. Eugenie, you know eugenics is actually a study of genes, the study of certain kind of and becomes very racist. It becomes certain kind of identity formation because when you are saying that I am a believer of eugenics, what you are essentially saying is I am a believer of racial purity okay. So racism and eugenics go hand in hand especially in colonial conditions.

Hence very important to see, so impressing to see how study of eugenics was very quickly appropriated by the colonial sort of knowledge machinery in terms of advocating of superiority of the coloniser. Equally interesting is the pseudo-scientific typological and legal administrative knowledge formation. So pseudo-scientific, what is pseudo-scientific? Something which does not really have a perfectly scientific pace but it is used in circulation in order to really produce a certain kind of identity right. So pseudo-scientific identity, eugenicist identity.

Now, these are all imbricated Bhaba argues at the point of the production of meaning and power with the fantasy that dramatises the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin. Issues idea of the pure origin, the idea of undifferentiated origin becomes a very important idea in colonial conditions because purity is related to power. Purity is equated to power in a colonial condition.

Because you know if you are a pure coloniser, if you are a pure white man then you are a perfectly powerful person. And equally if you are pure colonised then you become a perfectly powerless person. You know you become as a noble savage or a filthy savage etc. Now this is exactly the model that a colonial condition will want to retain. This is exactly the model that the colonial politics will want to retain and Bhaba is providing a study, an examination of this kind of identity formation.

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modes of civility, lends authority to the official version and mission of colonial power. Colonial fantasy is the continual dramatisation of emergence – of difference, freedom – as the beginning of a history which is repetitively denied. Such a denial is the clearly voiced demand of colonial discourse as the legitimisation of a form of rule that is facilitated by the racist fetish. In concluding, I would like to develop a little further my working definition of colonial discourse given at the start of this article.

Now so if you come to page 35, this is the definition to a certain extent of colonial fantasy. What is colonial fantasy? Colonial fantasy is a continual dramatization of emergence of difference, freedom as a beginning of a history which is repetitively denied. Such a denial is clearly is a clearly voiced demand of colonial discourse as a legitimization of a form of rule that is facilitated by the racist fetish.

So colonial fantasy depends on fetish. Colonial fantasy is basically a dramatization of a particular denial right, as a repeated denial. So what is a denial about over here. The denial over here is the denial of diversity, the denial of heterogeneity, rather we are disinvesting in a colonised subject is an arrested attribute.

Is a homogenous condition where someone is permanently savaged, someone is permanently anarchic, someone is permanently wild, someone is permanently wicked etc. So the permanence of identity becomes a very important part of the colonial fantasy because what the fantasy would try to preserve and this brings us back to the idea of mummification.

It would preserve a certain kind of identity, certain kind of arrested identity which will be forever replicated, forever reproduced and forever circulated and consumed in the colonial discourse right. So the racist fetish over here is part of the colonial fantasy okay.

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then deemed to be both the cause and effect of the system, imprisoned in the circle of interpretation. What is visible is the necessity of such rule which is justified by those moralistic and normative ideologies of amelioration recognised as the Civilising Mission or the White Man's Burden. However, there co-exist within the same apparatus of colonial power, modern systems and sciences of government, progressive 'Western' forms of social and economic organisation which provide the manifest justification for the project of colonialism – an argument which, in part, impressed Karl Marx. It is on the site of this co-existence that strategies of hierarchisation and marginalisation are employed in the management

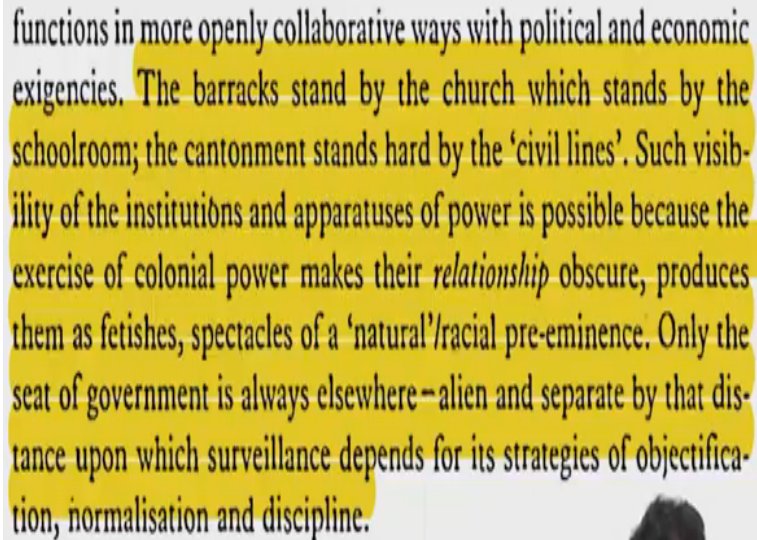
Now what is visible is a necessity of such rule which is justified but those moralistic and normative ideologies of amelioration recognized as the civilizing mission of the White man's burden. However, there coexist within the same apparatus of colonial power, modern systems and sciences of government, progressive Western forms of social and economic organization which provide the manifest justification for the project of colonialism and argument which in part impressed Karl Marx.

Now, this is a really interesting bit for cultural studies because you see in order for one culture to dominate another culture it is not sufficient that you use coercion all the time. It is also important that you create or generate consent and we have already spoken a little bit on consent and I will elaborate on that a little later as well. Now the idea of consent is very important and consent can be produced through legitimacy.

Now, how do you legitimize colonial program, how do you legitimize colonial territorialisation? You can legitimize colonial territorialisation through pseudo or seemingly benevolent acts, benevolent activities such as education, the missionary presence, emancipatory programs, cultural reforms etc. So all these become part of the machinery of colonialism in order to consolidate the colonial control.

The only consolidated colonial control not through cohesion alone but through consent through a legitimization, through a sanction, through a spectacular sanction of the colonial machinery okay.

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functions in more openly collaborative ways with political and economic exigencies. The barracks stand by the church which stands by the schoolroom; the cantonment stands hard by the 'civil lines'. Such visibility of the institutions and apparatuses of power is possible because the exercise of colonial power makes their *relationship* obscure, produces them as fetishes, spectacles of a 'natural'/racial pre-eminence. Only the seat of government is always elsewhere—alien and separate by that distance upon which surveillance depends for its strategies of objectification, normalisation and discipline.

And interestingly Bhaba then talks a little bit about the location of the colonial architecture where the barracks stand by the church which stands by the schoolroom. The cantonment stands hard by the civil lines. Such visibility of the institutions and apparatus of power is possible because the exercise of colonial control, colonial power makes their relationship obscure, produces them as fetishes, spectacles of a natural, racial pre-eminence.

Only the seat of government is always elsewhere alien and separate by the distance upon which surveillance depends for its strategies of objectification, normalization and discipline. So very interestingly is how the colonial architecture, the colonial architectural control is so distributed. So we have the army barracks and the church and the schoolroom to stand side by side right.

So they stand side by side and it is very important to see how the ideological state apparatus such as the church and repressive state apparatus such as the army barracks, they stand side by side in a colonial topography. So it is very visible. So it is spectacularly visible the repressive apparatus and the ideological apparatus you know just pose with each other. Now what is interesting equally is how the center of government, the center of the seat of government, the parliament, the governor house or whatever that is somewhere, that is elsewhere.

That is alien. That is separated by that distance upon which surveillance depends for its strategies of objectification, normalization and discipline. So that is a real center. The center is never really in the center. The center is elsewhere. You cannot really see the center as a palpable presence unlike the army barracks, unlike the church, unlike the schoolrooms. The center is elsewhere right.

And because this elsewhere is very important for the center to control the entire colonial condition through a surveillance system. Now that surveillance system in order for that to be visible the center itself must become invisible right and that is a very interesting reading of the architecture of colonial control, the colonial machinery. And how does colonial machinery control culture, the native culture.

A by converting it into some kind of a you know consent program where you have confirming subjects. People will never going to be rebellious, never going to be subversive because you are training them through schools, you are training them through churches etc. But on the other hand the real center for colonial education (()) (18:55) control must be located elsewhere because you should not be able to see it. It must see everything.

It must be able to have absolute and complete surveillance but it in itself must not be seen and that is the whole point of being the center. It must be elsewhere. It must be almost invisible okay. So the last word begins with Fanon. So Fanon in the end and he gives a really interesting idea of the idea of fantasy.

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³⁰ Frantz Fanon, 'Racism and Culture', op cit, p 44.

confine, to imprison, to harden. Phrases such as 'I know them', 'that's the way they are', show this maximum objectification successfully achieved. . . . There is on the one hand a culture in which qualities of dynamism, of growth, of depth can be recognised. As against this, [in colonial cultures] we find characteristics, curiosities, things, never a structure.³⁰



And Fanon says phrases such as I know them, that is the way they are, show this maximum objectification successfully achieved. There is on the one hand a culture in which qualities of dynamism of growth of depth can be recognized. As against this in colonial cultures we find characteristics curiosities things never a structure. So the idea of a totalitarian knowledge is something which Fanon is dramatizing over here.

That you know for the coloniser they have absolute knowledge of the colonised and so the phrase such as I know them, that is the way they are; that is the way they behave, that is the way they eat, that is the way they kill. So again describing a entire population, describing a entire community of people to a certain arrested attributes right, to giving them some arrested attributes and magnifying these attributes and circulating these attributes endlessly. And in the process identifying that those others as some kind of a savage entity right.

So I know and that is the way they are etc. so these are phrases that are rampant in colonial conditions. So we do not find any organic growth, any organic complexity in a colonial culture as opposed to those growth and complexity we have curiosities never a structure okay. So this is how the essay ends but what I will do very quickly is I will go back to the idea of the four-term strategy because I think that requires some unpacking.

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The construction of colonial discourse is then a complex articulation of the tropes of fetishism – metaphor and metonymy – and the forms of narcissistic and aggressive identification available to the Imaginary. Stereotypical racial discourse is a four-term strategy. There is a tie-up between the metaphoric or masking function of the fetish and the narcissistic object-choice and an opposing alliance between the metonymic figuring of lack and the aggressive phase of the Imaginary. A repertoire

Okay, so if you go to page 29, this is where Bhaba begins to form the four-term strategy and I have highlighted that in a yellow section over here. The construction of the colonial discourse is then a complex articulation of the tropes of fetishism metaphor and metonymy and the forms of narcissistic and aggressive identification available to the imaginary. Stereotypical racial discourse is a four-term strategy.

There is a tie-up between the metaphor or the metaphoric or masking function of the fetish and the narcissistic object choice and an opposing alliance between the metonymic figuring of lack and the aggressive phase of the imaginary. So this is obviously a very lacanian rhetoric using the words such as imaginary etc. Now what is imaginary, imaginary is a speculum in which the reflection of the other is so consolidated, right?

So he is using a very lacanian rhetoric in order to understand the identity formation of the other and he is saying the entire idea of metaphor and metonymy that is related as I mentioned already to ideas of narcissism and aggressivity. So you know you see your exotic yourself in the other and that is narcissism. So you exoticise yourself and you inscribe the exoticised quality to the other and in the process you have this narcissistic psycho-necrophilic quality whereby metaphor becomes a very interesting object of identification.

Metonymy, why metonymy because you are arresting some certain attributes. I have used the phrase many times already. Arresting attributes means you are doing an incomplete and inadequate or fragmented identification of the other and you are preserving that right and hence you are making the metonymic representation and that metonymic representation becomes an aggressive identification.

So aggressivity and narcissism go hand in hand in the process of producing the other right. So again this brings us back to the idea of production of identities. So how is the other produced to a very metonymic metaphoric process and this I believe is one of the really origin things that this particular essay does because what it does it brings us back to the very fundamental idea of culture and culture studies right.

In culture studies we are obsessed, we should be obsessed in politics of production right. So how are identities produced and production happens through a very metaphoric process. Production happens through a process of identification, production happens through a violent process right. So the violence, the identification, the narcissism, the aggressivity, all these things are embedded in the politics of production in a particular culture.

And Bhaba talks about the colonial culture over here and he gives us the model of four-term strategy which is a magnificent model I think which could be used to study almost any colonial culture and that will work fantastically well in terms of looking how the other is formed and produced to different discursive practices. So this concludes our reading of Bhaba's essay, The Other Question. I hope you got something out of it.

Please read the essay carefully, especially the highlighted sections because these are sections which are really important, relevant for us for the purpose of this particular course and from hereon we move on to the other idea of culture and moving away from just the Marxist reading of culture to more psychological reading of culture and again looking at the alliance between the Marxist reading and the psychological reading.

So the next essay we will start off with is George Orwell's essay, Shooting an Elephant because that is a very important essay which shows the real work of colonialism at work, the real work of identity formation at work, the real work of other-ing at work and the experiential understanding of other-ing someone and if you go through the experience of how identity formation is operative and how you become the other and how you see the other becoming in front of you and experience the entire process that is what is the content of that particular essay George Orwell's Shooting an Elephant which is what we will start off in the next lecture.

So this concludes this lecture. Thank you for your attention.