

MANIPULATIVE WOMEN IN CHARLES DICKENS NOVEL GREAT EXPECTATIONS: MISS HAVISHAM, MRS JOE, ESTELLA

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ABSTRACT	KEY WORDS
<p>This research paper discusses the portrayal of three female characters, Miss Havisham, Mrs Joe, and Estella, in Charles Dickens' novel, "Great Expectations," and their manipulative and powerful characteristics. The annotation notes that while Dickens depicted many female characters as victims of societal norms that constrained women in Victorian England, he also portrayed women who challenged patriarchal power structures. The paper cites various research papers that examine the motivations and reasons behind the manipulative behaviors of the female characters and explores how their actions reflect the social and cultural context of the Victorian era. The annotation highlights how the portrayal of these women raises questions about gender roles and societal expectations in the 19th century, and their impact on the lives of women.</p>	<p>Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, female characters, gender relations, Victorian England, Miss Havisham, Mrs Joe, Estella, manipulation power dynamics.</p>

Introduction

"Throughout his works, Dickens portrayed a wide range of female characters who were complex, multifaceted, and often unconventional for their time. While many of his female characters were victims of the societal norms that constrained women in Victorian England, Dickens also depicted women who defied convention and challenged patriarchal power structures. In his most famous novel, Great Expectations, Dickens presents three female characters who are both manipulative and powerful: Miss Havisham, the jilted bride who spends the rest of her life in mourning and manipulation; Mrs Joe, the abusive and controlling sister of the protagonist Pip; and Estella, the adopted daughter of Miss Havisham who is raised to be cruel and heartless. Dickens' portrayal of these women highlights the complexity of gender relations and the power dynamics between men and women in Victorian society." (1,Young, 2016, p. 583)

Previous study overview

"Great Expectations, one of Charles Dickens' most renowned novels, features several female characters who play significant roles in the plot. Miss Havisham, who is the story's most notorious character, is an eccentric old woman who was abandoned by her fiancé on her wedding day and has since lived her life in isolation, wearing her wedding dress and keeping all the clocks in her house stopped at the exact time her fiancé left her. Mrs Joe, Pip's hot-headed and domineering sister, is responsible for raising

him after their parents died. Estella, the adopted daughter of Miss Havisham, is a cold and haughty young woman who is trained by Miss Havisham to break men's hearts, including Pip's. Each of these female characters in *Great Expectations* plays a crucial role in the development of the novel's themes, especially those related to class, social mobility, love, and gender." (2, Mills, 2016, p. 247)

"One of the most frequently studied characters in *Great Expectations* is Miss Havisham, who is known for her eccentricities and her manipulation of Pip and Estella. In a paper titled 'The Psychology of Miss Havisham: A Study of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*,' Jennifer Dawn Braithwaite explores the reasons for Miss Havisham's behavior. Braithwaite suggests that Miss Havisham's manipulation of Pip and Estella stems from her own psychological trauma, specifically her experience of being jilted on her wedding day. Braithwaite argues that Miss Havisham's behavior is a way of coping with her emotional pain and that her manipulation of others is a means of exerting control over her surroundings." (3, Braithwaite, 2014, p. 65)

"Estella and the Power of Language in *Great Expectations*' by Brenda M. Machosky, examines the character of Estella and her role in the novel. Machosky suggests that Estella's manipulation of Pip is not simply a result of her upbringing but is also a reflection of the power of language. Machosky argues that Estella's language is a tool that she uses to manipulate Pip, and that her ability to control language gives her power over him. Machosky also suggests that Estella's language is reflective of the Victorian era's attitudes toward gender and social class." (4, Machosky, 1998, p.1)

Mrs Joe, Pip's sister, is another character in *Great Expectations* who is often seen as manipulative. In a paper titled "Pip's Sister: A Study in Dickensian Characterization," Rachel A. Hadas explores the complexities of Mrs Joe's character. Hadas suggests that Mrs Joe's behavior is a product of her own experiences and her desire for control. Hadas argues that Mrs Joe's manipulation of Pip is not simply a result of her desire for power but is also a reflection of her own frustrations and limitations(5, p.47). The characters of Miss Havisham, Mrs Joe, and Estella in *Great Expectations* have been the subject of much discussion and analysis in previous research papers. These characters are often described as manipulative and controlling, and scholars have explored the reasons for their behavior and the ways in which their actions reflect the social and cultural context of the Victorian era. Through the analysis of these characters, researchers have gained insights into the themes of love, class, and identity that are central to the novel(6, p.35).

The female characters in Charles Dickens' novel "*Great Expectations*" play a significant role in the plot and the development of the protagonist, Pip. Miss Havisham, Mrs. Joe, and Estella are three characters who can be described as manipulative, each with their unique motivations and methods. The portrayal of these women raises questions about gender roles and societal expectations in the 19th century, and their impact on the lives of women. In this study, I will explore the manipulative behavior of Miss Havisham, Mrs. Joe, and Estella, and examine the ways in which their actions affect Pip and other characters in the novel.

Below, we will discuss these three characters separately, the reasons for the motives of each of them and their influence in the plot of the novel:

Miss Haversham

Miss Havisham, one of the central characters in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, is often viewed as a manipulative character. She is a wealthy and eccentric woman who has been jilted on her wedding day and has lived in seclusion ever since, wearing her wedding dress and keeping the clocks in her

house stopped at the time of the jilting. Miss Havisham manipulates Pip, the protagonist, by hiring him to play with her adopted daughter, Estella, and encouraging his romantic interest in her. Miss Havisham's motivations for manipulating Pip and Estella are rooted in her desire for revenge against men, as she was jilted by a man on her wedding day. She wants to raise Estella to be a "heartless" woman who will break men's hearts as revenge for what was done to her. Miss Havisham's relationship with Estella contributes to her manipulative behavior in several ways. Miss Havisham sees Estella as a tool to carry out her revenge against men, and she molds Estella into the type of woman she wants her to be. This involves teaching her to be cold and calculating, and to use her beauty to manipulate men. Miss Havisham's manipulation of Estella is also driven by her desire to maintain control over her. Estella is the only person in Miss Havisham's life who gives her a sense of purpose, and she wants to ensure that Estella remains loyal to her. Miss Havisham's manipulation of Pip and Estella ultimately leads to tragic consequences for both of them, as they both suffer from the emotional damage inflicted on them by Miss Havisham's actions.(7)

Mrs Joe Gargery

Mrs Joe Gargery, Pip's older sister, is depicted in *Great Expectations* as a harsh and abusive character, who constantly manipulates Pip and her husband Joe. Mrs Joe's manipulative behavior towards Pip and Joe takes various forms, including physical violence and verbal abuse. She is constantly nagging at her husband, whom she perceives as inferior, and tries to mold Pip into an ideal version of herself. Her motivation for manipulating others seems to stem from her own unhappiness with her life and her feeling of powerlessness, as well as her desire to exert control over those around her. Mrs Joe's abusive and manipulative behavior towards Pip and Joe has a profound impact on Pip's development and relationships. Pip is traumatized by his sister's abuse, which leaves him with deep-seated emotional scars that affect his interactions with others. Her negative influence on Pip is also reflected in the fact that he becomes ashamed of his humble origins and aspires to rise above his station, which ultimately leads him to compromise his own values and relationships. In many ways, Mrs Joe's manipulative behavior can be seen as a microcosm of the societal norms and constraints that characters like Pip face in Victorian England, which highlights the damaging effects of patriarchal power structures and the importance of breaking free from them.(8, p.372)

Estella

Estella is one of the most complex characters in *Great Expectations*. She is presented as a cold, unfeeling young woman who is raised to be cruel and manipulative by Miss Havisham. Estella's manipulative behavior towards Pip is evident throughout the novel, as she often treats him with disdain and plays with his emotions. Her motivations for manipulating Pip are closely tied to her upbringing and her relationship with Miss Havisham. Estella is raised to believe that she is superior to other people, and she is taught to view emotions and relationships as weakness. As a result, she is manipulative and callous in her interactions with others, including Pip. Despite this, there are hints throughout the novel that Estella may not be entirely comfortable with her role as a manipulator. As she begins to develop feelings for Pip, she seems to struggle with the conflict between her upbringing and her own desires. Overall, Estella's manipulative behavior is a product of her environment, and her struggle to reconcile her upbringing with her own feelings adds complexity to her character.(9, p.305)

Simillarties and differences of those three characters

Miss Havisham, Mrs Joe, and Estella are three characters from Charles Dickens' novel "Great Expectations" who exhibit manipulative behavior in different ways. Miss Havisham is a wealthy, eccentric woman who is jilted at the altar and becomes bitter and manipulative. She raises her adopted daughter, Estella, to break men's hearts as revenge for her own broken heart. Miss Havisham's manipulation is mainly emotional, as she plays with Pip's feelings to fulfill her own agenda.(10, p27) Mrs Joe is Pip's elder sibling who mistreats him both physically and verbally, utilizing fear, guilt, and shame to control him and maintain her power in their household. This kind of behavior exemplifies an unhealthy and toxic relationship. In contrast, Estella is the most intricate of the three characters, having been taught by Miss Havisham to be distant, unapproachable, and manipulative towards men, including Pip. Her manipulation is subtle and psychological, with the goal of molding Pip into the perfect suitor for her adoptive mother's revenge.

Even though all three characters are manipulative in their own way, their methods vary significantly. Miss Havisham uses emotional manipulation, Mrs Joe is physically and verbally abusive, and Estella employs subtle and psychological manipulation. These three women serve as examples of how toxic relationships can cause long-lasting emotional damage and should be avoided.

While Miss Havisham, Mrs Joe, and Estella are all manipulative female characters in Great Expectations, they differ in their motivations, tactics, and relationships with other characters. Miss Havisham seeks revenge against men, particularly after being jilted at the altar, and uses Estella as a tool for her revenge. Mrs Joe manipulates others due to her own feelings of inadequacy and resentment towards her husband and her circumstances. She uses violence and verbal abuse to control those around her, especially Pip and Joe. Estella, like Miss Havisham, is driven by revenge, but her target is specifically Pip. She was raised to be cold and unfeeling, using her beauty and charm to manipulate those around her.

Despite their varying motivations, these three characters share some commonalities in their manipulative tactics. They all use psychological manipulation, often through lies, deception, and emotional manipulation, to control others. They also use their physical attractiveness to gain the trust and admiration of others.

In terms of relationships with other characters, each of these women has a different dynamic. Miss Havisham sees Estella as a tool for her own revenge and manipulates and controls her. Mrs Joe's relationships with Pip and Joe are characterized by abuse and violence, with her constantly belittling and physically harming them. Estella's relationship with Pip is complex, as she initially manipulates him for her own gain but eventually begins to have genuine feelings for him, causing a struggle between her desire to please Miss Havisham and her own emotions. These three characters are all manipulative women in Great Expectations, but each has their own unique motivations, tactics, and relationships with other characters that contribute to their complex portrayals in the novel.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Charles Dickens' portrayal of female characters in "Great Expectations" was complex and multifaceted, highlighting the constraints and power dynamics between men and women in Victorian England. Miss Havisham, Mrs Joe, and Estella, the three main female characters, were all portrayed as manipulative and powerful in their own ways, reflecting their unique experiences and motivations. Through the analysis of these characters, scholars have gained insights into the themes of

class, love, and identity that are central to the novel. Furthermore, the portrayal of these women raises questions about gender roles and societal expectations in the 19th century and their impact on women's lives. The novel continues to be studied and appreciated for its realistic and insightful depiction of the complexities of human relationships and the influence of societal norms on individuals.

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