



HANDS, BODIES, AND SOCIAL CLASS IN CHARLES DICKENS'S *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*

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Abstract

This article examines the hand as a body part that can reveal labour, class, shame, criminality, and respectability in Charles Dickens's Great Expectations. Pip's meeting with Estella lies at the heart of this process, as her disdain for his rough hands leads him to see his working body as socially inferior. Drawing mainly on Pierre Bourdieu's ideas of habitus, distinction, and symbolic violence, and on Karl Marx's views on labour and alienation, the study investigates how a class hierarchy becomes embodied and internalised as shame. The analysis is then extended to include Joe's labouring body, Magwitch's criminalised body and Jaggers's frequent hand washing. By examining these bodily representations, the article contends that in order to become a gentleman, Pip must not only obtain wealth and good manners but also have to get away from the bodily signs of labour and his class background.

Keywords

Body, Hands, Labour, Class, Habitus, Gentility, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens is deeply concerned with the connection between social identity and the body. While Pip's growth is often understood through his desire for wealth, education, gentility, and social advancement, his transformation also includes a changing view of his physical appearance. The novel indicates bodies through factors such as labour, clothing, gesture, physical suffering, cleanliness, punishment, and social behaviour. Of these bodily features, the hand is especially significant because it links physical appearance to both occupation and social status. Hands work, grow rough, touch things, strike, are washed, and show the marks of both labour and social experience. Because of this, Dickens makes the hand a particularly revealing aspect of the body, from which social meaning can be read. Pip's meeting with Estella at Satis House marks a key moment in this development. Because Estella looks down on his rough hands and thick boots, Pip starts to see features of his body that had once seemed normal as signs of his inferiority. The state of his hands is linked to the life he has led at the forge and to his expected apprenticeship with Joe, but Estella imparts class based significance to them. Pip then accepts her assessment and starts to feel ashamed not only of his appearance but also of Joe, the forge, his way of speaking, and his social background. His wish to become a gentleman begins before he acquires any wealth. It begins when he learns to see his own body through another class's standards.

The article sees the hand as part of Dickens's broader depiction of the classed body. Pip's rough hands are compared with Joe's body, which is engaged in manual labour, and Magwitch's body, which has been criminalised and is physically restricted. Jaggers's bodily habits, especially his frequent hand washing, are also significant. In this way, the representations link together apparently distinct aspects of Victorian life such as manual labour, gentility, criminality, the law,



and social respectability. The body thus serves as a point where material conditions and social meanings come together, and what a body does, how it appears, and how others interpret it all contribute to the formation of social identity. The main point of this study is that in *Great Expectations*, class is presented as an embodied system of distinctions. To move towards gentility, Pip needs more than an improvement in his financial situation. He must distance himself from the bodily signs associated with manual labour and his previous social background. The hand is especially significant since it makes this process evident. The article examines how hands and bodies are perceived, categorised, disciplined, and experienced, viewing social mobility as involving not only economic and cultural changes but also bodily ones.

Literature Review:

Scholars have widely discussed the social aspects of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, with particular attention to class, gentility, money, labour, crime, and Pip's moral growth. In *The Dickens World*, Humphry House situates Dickens's fiction within the social and economic context of Victorian England and emphasises the novelist's involvement with class relations and social institutions. John O. Jordan and other Dickens scholars have also promoted interpretations of Dickens in the light of Victorian culture and social structures. These approaches offer a valuable framework for seeing Pip's journey from the forge to London as more than a simple account of personal advancement. His wish to become a gentleman reflects a society in which occupation, education, manners, wealth, and appearance all shape social identity. The importance of the Victorian gentleman has also shaped interpretations of *Great Expectations*. Robin Gilmour, especially in *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*, examines the cultural significance and instability of gentlemanly identity in Victorian fiction. This point is particularly applicable to Pip since his expectations are closely linked to his wish to obtain the manners and appearance connected with gentility. Dickens constantly separates social refinement from moral worth. Although Joe is illiterate and engaged in a manual job, he has both generosity and integrity. Pip's acquisition of gentlemanly habits does not in any way lead to a moral improvement. Magwitch causes an even greater disruption to this social order since the wealth which allows Pip to become a gentleman comes from a transported convict.

Gentility in the novel is thus not a natural identity but one that is made possible by economic means and carried out as a social performance. Materialist viewpoints also offer a significant framework for the current study. Marx's analysis of class and labour enables a look at the material conditions that lie behind apparently personal identities, and later Marxist critics like Raymond Williams have stressed the connection between literary form, culture, and material social experience. Viewed this way, the forge is not merely a setting from Pip's childhood. It stands for a world of productive manual labour that Pip gradually wants to escape. Although Pip's expectations allow him to escape physical work, Dickens undermines this apparent freedom by showing that his new social identity still depends on economic relations and the labour of others. This article builds on earlier discussions of class and gentility but focuses on the body as a site where class can be seen. In this regard, Bourdieu's work is particularly important. His ideas of habitus and distinction show how social position is reflected not just in wealth but also in taste, speech, manners and behaviour, appearance, and bodily posture. His notion of symbolic violence is especially useful for understanding Pip's reaction to Estella. When Estella points out his rough hands and thick boots, she leads Pip to see the bodily features linked to his working environment as signs of social inferiority. Pip then accepts this judgement inwardly. Class distinction thus changes from an external social categorisation into a personal experience of bodily shame. The article also engages the wider debate about the social construction and interpretation of the body. With regard to the historical connection between social refinement and the regulation of bodily



behaviour, the work of Norbert Elias, especially his book *The Civilizing Process*, is pertinent. In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas shows how concepts such as dirt, cleanliness, pollution, and bodily boundaries take on cultural meanings that go beyond physical hygiene. She is especially useful when looking at Jagger's frequent handwashing, since in this case cleanliness can be considered in terms of professional detachment, criminality and symbolic contamination. Through these viewpoints, the discussion shifts from seeing the body simply as a physical entity to seeing it as culturally interpreted and socially disciplined. Criticism currently therefore offers detailed discussions of class mobility, gentlemanly identity, money, labour, and social hierarchy in *Great Expectations*, while theories of embodiment show how social values can be linked to physical features and bodily practices.

This study combines these lines of thought by focusing on the hands within Dickens's broader portrayal of the classed body. It does not assert that hands or bodies have never been the subject of critical analysis. Instead, it examines how Pip's rough hands, Joe's working body, Magwitch's stigmatised body, and Jagger's practices of bodily cleanliness can be interpreted relationally as part of a wider system in which bodies become socially legible. The article thus shifts the main question from how Pip moves between social classes to how class becomes visible and is experienced through the body. The hands provide the key theme through which this process can be traced. Because Pip has done manual labour, his hands show physical signs that Estella takes as proof of his inferiority, and Pip accepts this interpretation as a source of shame.

Methodology:

The study uses qualitative textual analysis, closely examining specific scenes and the repeated appearances of bodily images in *Great Expectations*. It places special emphasis on how hands are represented and incorporates this into the novel's broader treatment of the body. Rather than treating each mention of a hand as equally important, the study examines instances where hands and other bodily features relate to labour, class, shame, criminality, cleanliness, punishment, and respectability. The main point of departure is Pip's reaction to Estella's judgment of his rough hands, since it shows how bodily difference becomes class consciousness. The study examines Pip's body in comparison with that of Joe, Magwitch, and Jagger. Joe serves as a clear example of a body shaped by productive manual labour, his hands are a symbol of hard work and kindness, especially when they tend to Pip when he is seriously ill. Pip recollects: "For the tenderness of Joe was so beautifully proportioned to my needs that I was like a child in his hands" (Dickens, 416)

Magwitch shows an analysis of a body which has been criminalised, physically restrained, and socially excluded. Jagger also introduces a different bodily practice. He constantly washes his hands, a practice that can be read in terms of cleanliness, professional identity, and a desire to keep away from the world of crime that his work always involves him in. The characters are not viewed as separate case studies, instead, their bodily representations are compared in order to show how Dickens assigns different social meanings to labouring, criminalised, professional, and gentlemanly bodies. The concepts of habitus, distinction, and symbolic violence put forward by Bourdieu are applied in order to investigate the way in which bodily differences come to have social value and the manner in which Pip internalises such values.

Marx's ideas on labour and alienation link these symbolic distinctions to the material conditions of work. At the same time, the analysis accounts for Pip's retrospective first person narration, since the older narrator conveys the younger Pip's sense of bodily shame through recollection. The methodology therefore combines close reading, motif analysis, and theories of embodiment and class in order to examine how the body functions both as a material outcome of social conditions and as a site where social hierarchy is interpreted and reproduced. The article suggests that Pip's transformation into a gentleman also involves reshaping the social meaning of



his body. The shift of his hands from rough to gentlemanly refinement is therefore not just a minor aspect of his development but rather a significant method by which Dickens reveals the way class operates through the body.

Habitus and the Classed Body:

Pierre Bourdieu's idea of habitus offers a useful starting point for understanding the connection between body and class in *Great Expectations*. As he explains in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, habitus can be described as "necessity internalised and converted into a disposition" (Bourdieu, 170). This means social conditions do not stay outside the individual, rather, they gradually become incorporated into how people perceive things, behave, speak, move, make judgments, and respond to their environment. For this reason, habitus is so useful when looking at the body, since it shows how class becomes embodied in everyday practices that may seem natural or personal but have been shaped by specific social conditions. The way Pip lives in his early years with Joe shows the connection between one's social surroundings and physical experience. When he first goes to Satis House, Pip does not see his body as a sign of inferiority, he is part of the world of the forge and intends eventually to become Joe's apprentice. Manual labour is included in the kind of life to which he is being prepared, and the physical features connected with that way of life do not at first cause him any embarrassment. The roughness of his hands comes from practical work and is linked to his job rather than indicating any natural defect in Pip. Bourdieu's treatment of the body is particularly pertinent in how he links taste and social position to what he terms the "class body" (Bourdieu, 190). The body does not simply lie outside social classification rather, its appearance, manner of movement, clothing, habits, and physical state can function as signs by which one's class position is identified and assessed. Dickens can therefore use Pip's hands as a highly effective bodily indicator, since hands show what sort of relationship a person has to manual labour. A worker's hands contain tangible evidence of the body's activities, but the meaning of that evidence may vary depending on who observes it. When Pip reaches Satis House, it is important that his body has not changed, but that he has found himself in a different social setting in which his body is interpreted differently. Estella takes his hands and boots as indications of his social status. What had earlier appeared ordinary to Pip now becomes noticeable because a different class interprets his body differently. Estella is disdainful of his clothing, appearance and hands: "He calls the knaves Jacks this boy, said Estella with disdain before our first game was out. And what coarse hands he has and what thick boots. I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt was so strong that it became infectious and I caught it" (Dickens, 52).

This scene shows that the classed body is not simply the result of material conditions but it is also shaped by social recognition and judgement. Joe serves as an important contrast. He stays closely linked with the forge and physical work. As Pip's ambitions grow, Joe comes to represent the physical world Pip wants to escape. Nevertheless, Dickens does not treat Joe's working body as morally inferior, since his generosity, affection, loyalty, and integrity constantly challenge the hierarchy Pip has come to accept. The novel therefore distinguishes between the social value attached to a body and the ethical value of the person who lives within it. Bourdieu's idea of habitus helps us understand how these social classifications form, while Dickens also shows their limits.

Distinction, Symbolic Violence, and Bodily Shame:

The idea of habitus shows us how social conditions become embodied, while Bourdieu's concept of distinction helps to explain why some kinds of bodies are regarded as more valuable than others. In his book, Bourdieu looks at the way in which differences in taste, way of life,



appearance, manners and bodily practices act as “markers of class” (Bourdieu, 2). These differences are by no means neutral, rather, they are arranged in a hierarchical structure so that certain kinds of appearance and behaviour come to be seen as refined, whereas others are deemed to be common or vulgar. Particularly relevant is Bourdieu’s analysis of bodily appearance since he demonstrates how the body can be understood in terms of oppositions such as the “vulgar” and the “distinguished” (Bourdieu, 192–93). Estella’s reaction to Pip’s body exemplifies this kind of social classification. At first glance, her description of his hands as “coarse” seems to be about his physical appearance, but the adjective involves a much deeper judgement of class. The fact that Pip’s hands indicate that he has engaged in manual labour shows that he is removed from the gentlemanly world symbolised by Satis House. In a similar way, his thick boots do too. Estella is therefore not merely describing Pip, she is classifying his body. What matters more than Estella’s judgement is how Pip reacts to it; he starts to see his hands differently because she has made him believe they can be interpreted as signs of inferiority.

The external judgement then turns into an internal feeling of shame. Pip, writing retrospectively, observes: “I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry....that tears started to my eyes” (Dickens, 54). Here Bourdieu’s explanation of symbolic domination proves especially useful. Social hierarchy gains power when those who are subjected to the classifications begin to see themselves through the same categories. Pip does not need Estella to keep reminding him that his hands are coarse, he learns to remind himself. His wish to be genteel therefore goes beyond a simple desire to move up in society. It also includes an effort to escape the physical identity linked with manual labour. Pip’s greater discomfort with Joe is part of this same process. After Pip has taught himself to regard his own working body as inferior, he starts to see in Joe the traits which he would like to avoid. Estella’s judgment of Pip is thus eventually mirrored by Pip in his dealings with another member of the working class. Dickens illustrates how class distinction can be reproduced through actions of this kind. The process endows the hand with a significance that goes well beyond its role as a repeated image. The rough hands of Pip signify the moment at which material labour turns into social classification and social classification in turn becomes a source of personal shame. The body thus serves as the point where external hierarchy meets internal self-perception. Pip’s great expectations may therefore be seen as starting not at the time when he gets money but when he begins to perceive his own body as socially inadequate.

Magwitch undermines these distinctions in a different way. Since his body is linked with chains, punishment, difficulty, and criminalisation, he lies even further outside the kind of body which Pip aims to attain. In the graveyard scene, at the beginning of the novel, Magwitch is described thus: “A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints and stung by nettles....who limped and shivered and glared and growled” (Dickens, 2). However, Magwitch being Pip’s benefactor shows how unstable the hierarchy Pip has accepted is. The criminalised body provides the financial means for the gentlemanly one. Joe’s working body has moral worth, whereas Magwitch’s socially rejected body makes Pip’s gentility possible.

Labour, Alienation, and Pip’s Estrangement from the Working Body:

Karl Marx’s theory of alienation offers a useful way to extend the analysis of hands and bodies in *Great Expectations*. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844 Marx sets out his most detailed early explanation of alienation, especially in that part generally rendered as “Estranged Labour”. His argument starts with the circumstances of labour in a capitalist system. According to Marx, labour ought to be a significant human activity by means of which individuals show off their productive abilities and alter the material world. In the case of alienated labour, however, both the work itself and the products of that work appear to the worker as external things. Marx



illustrates this state of affairs by stating that “the object which labour produces—labour’s product—confronts it as something alien” (Marx, 72). He then points out the various aspects of estrangement: the worker becomes alienated from the product of labour, the labour process itself, his own human productive potential, and other human beings (Marx, 70–81). This approach thus provides a materialist basis for reading the bodies linked with labour in Dickens’s novel. Pip is not of the type of industrial wage labourer who is at the heart of Marx’s critique, and it would therefore be misleading to say that his experience exactly matches Marx’s description of the alienated worker. The concept can, however, be applied more usefully in a particular way. Pip grows more estranged from the working identity symbolised by his own body. Prior to meeting Estella, the prospect of becoming Joe’s apprentice does not seem inherently degrading. The forge links together body, skill, work, and social identity. As Pip points out in his narrative: “I had believed in the forge as the glowing road to manhood and independence. Within a single year, all this had changed. Now it was all coarse and common, and I would not have had Miss Havisham and Estella to see it” (Dickens, 93-94). Joe’s physical existence is likewise connected with his job. The visibility of his hands and body clearly shows his connection to manual labour. Dickens does not at first present this physicality as a moral flaw.

The meeting at Satis House leads to a change in Pip’s relationship with his working class identity. When Estella mentions his rough hands and thick boots, the physical features linked with manual labour become sources of shame for him. As a result, Pip starts to long for separation from the forge. This is significant because his sense of alienation begins before he actually leaves the working environment. He first becomes psychologically detached from the body and occupation that tie him to that environment. The working hand, which had previously been a normal part of his identity, now begins to seem like something he would like to get rid of. Marx’s theory enables us to see the material reality that Pip is ashamed of. The roughness of a hand is the result of physical activity. But in the social hierarchy that Pip meets the value is reversed: the visible sign of productive labour is turned into proof of inferiority, and being removed from manual labour is linked with gentility. Pip thus comes to want a social identity in which the signs of productive work are no longer visible on the body. His change into a gentleman is therefore in part a shift from a body that shows labour to one that appears not to labour. Joe plays a particularly important role in this argument. As Pip moves up in society, he begins to feel embarrassed by Joe’s speech, clothing, manners, and physical appearance. Joe represents the working class world that Pip is attempting to get rid of. Pip’s discomfort with Joe can thus be seen as an external expression of his discomfort with his own origins. By rejecting Joe socially, Pip is also rejecting the earlier version of himself that Joe represents. The alienation in this case does not lie only between the individual and work but also between the socially ambitious individual and the bodily identity shaped by the world of work. Yet Dickens complicates this by not equating freedom from work with true human development. Although Pip enjoys a gentleman’s life that brings him leisure and social standing, it also brings idleness, debt, dissatisfaction, and deteriorating relationships. On the other hand, Joe stays connected to productive work while retaining emotional generosity and moral integrity. Dickens does not merely idealise manual labour, but he does show the weakness of a class system in which being free from visible physical work is taken as a mark of superiority. Magwitch makes this contradiction more distinct. Pip later finds out that his life as a gentleman has been funded by a convict whose body has suffered punishment, transportation, hardship, and hard work. The kind of body that Pip wants to appear refined is thus economically reliant on a body which society has degraded and treated as criminal. The gentleman is not separate from the world of labour. On the contrary, the labour which supports his existence has become invisible to him.



Magwitch's return forces this hidden material history back into Pip's awareness. In a physical sense, Dickens puts the refined gentleman face to face with the body that has been criminalised and is engaged in labour upon which his refinement has been based. Pip looks at Magwitch in horror when he returns: "He ate in a ravenous way that was very disagreeable, and all his actions were uncouth, noisy and greedy" (Dickens, 293). Marx's theory of alienation is important here. For Pip to achieve social advancement, he must detach himself from the physical signs of his background, but Dickens gradually shows that these signs cannot simply be wiped out. Through Joe and Magwitch, labour ultimately surrounds and supports gentility. The novel thus brings to light the contradiction at the heart of Pip's expectations. He wants to get rid of the working body yet at the same time remains dependent on the material world which such bodies generate. Magwitch has been his benefactor, the labouring body who initially worked on the Hulks and later in New South Wales: "I've been a sheep farmer, stock-breeder, other trades besides, away in the New World" (Dickens, 283).

Clean and Contaminated Bodies: Mary Douglas and Jaggers's Hands:

Mary Douglas provides an alternative yet complementary approach to understanding the body in *Great Expectations*. In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, she argues that notions of dirt and pollution are organised by culture rather than merely by hygiene. Her well-known idea that dirt is "matter out of place" illustrates the principle that something becomes dirty or polluting when it breaches an existing system of classification (Douglas, 44). Thus, cleanliness involves not just the removal of physical dirt, it can also serve as a means of upholding social, cultural, and symbolic boundaries. Douglas is useful for examining Jaggers, since Dickens often brings to mind his habit of washing his hands with scented soap. After his professional interactions, Jaggers washes his hands thoroughly. Although this action has a practical aspect, its repetition gives it symbolic significance. As a lawyer, Jaggers constantly crosses the line between respectable professional society and the world that is considered criminal. He handles accused people, convicted criminals, witnesses, courts, prisons, and individuals whose bodies Victorian society regards as morally and socially suspect. His hands thus become the physical link between these two worlds. Handwashing may therefore be seen as a ritual involving separation. Although Jaggers can enter the world of crime in a professional capacity, washing serves as a way of symbolically getting the traces of it off his body. Douglas's theory enables us to understand why the act has importance that goes beyond personal hygiene. Since pollution threatens boundaries and classifications, cleaning then becomes a way of restoring them.

The fact that Jaggers's professional identity relies on his ability to interact with people who are supposedly contaminated without that association causing his own status as a respectable lawyer to be undermined. The hands are particularly important since they are the bodily limbs most closely linked with contact by touching both objects and people they make boundaries physically permeable. The fact that Jaggers washes them over and over again shows his anxiety regarding what contact leaves behind. Although the lawyer is able to deal with criminal individuals and make a professional profit from the criminal justice system, he at the same time carries out a bodily ritual which keeps him separated from those people. Dickens therefore presents the clean hand in a somewhat ambiguous light. Cleanliness may mean respectability, but it can also indicate an effort to deny or keep distance from unpleasant relationships. Douglas's theory also enables a connection to be made between Jaggers and both Pip and Magwitch. Pip wishes to get rid of the social associations connected with manual labour from his identity, Jaggers on numerous occasions removes the imagined dirt from his hands; Magwitch, by contrast, finds it difficult to remove the social meanings that have been attached to his body. His physical presence has always been signified by imprisonment, chains, transportation, and the label of "convict".



Thus the three characters show different ways in which the body and social classification are linked. Pip tries to transform the working body, Jaggers tries to keep his body clean in a professional sense, and Magwitch has a body which society has classified as criminal. The fact that cleanliness and dirt in the novel should not be automatically linked to morality becomes clear from this comparison. Although Jaggers is able to wash his hands, this does not mean that washing can separate his professional life from the criminal world which forms the basis of his practice. The scene in Little Britain, when Pip arrives in London, is a testimony to the fact.

In the same way, Pip may obtain gentlemanly clothes and behaviour, but this refinement will not remove his dependence on Magwitch. Even though Joe's body shows the physical signs of manual labour, he still comes out again and again as one of the novel's most morally admirable characters.

Thus, Dickens undermines any straightforward connection between a clean body and a good person, or between a coarse or criminal body and moral inferiority. Together, Marx and Douglas develop the article's argument in complementary ways. Marx lets us consider how labour produces bodies and how Pip becomes estranged from the working body connected to his origins. Douglas, on the other hand, enables us to examine how bodies are divided into categories of cleanliness and contamination and how these boundaries are upheld through bodily actions such as Jaggers's handwashing. The hands in *Great Expectations* thus show both the material and symbolic structures of social power: some show the effects of labour, others are marked by criminalisation, and some continually try to wash away the consequences of contact. Dickens uses these physical differences to highlight the unstable boundaries separating labour, criminality, gentility, and respectability.

Conclusion:

In *Great Expectations*, Dickens shows class not just as a matter of wealth, one's job, education or social status, but as something that is felt through the body. Pip's coarse hands are especially significant because they combine the experience of labour, social judgement, and self-perception. Prior to meeting Estella Pip does not see his hands as indicating inferiority, it is only when he looks at them within the social world depicted at Satis House that the roughness of them takes on a class significance. From that point on the body becomes one of the main ways in which Pip experiences his dissatisfaction with his background. His expectations therefore arise in his mind before they are realised economically.

Pip's bodily identity in his early years results from the material and social surroundings of the forge, but Estella exposes him to a different system of classification in which his hands, boots, speech, and manners are seen as signs of vulgarity. The importance of Bourdieu's concept of the 'class body' is especially evident in this case since Dickens shows how ordinary bodily features acquire a hierarchical significance when they are interpreted through the lens of class distinctions (Bourdieu, 190). Pip then adopts these distinctions and starts to judge himself according to the values which have shamed him, his shame towards Joe is simply a continuation of this process. After Pip has come to see the bodily signs of manual labour as socially inferior, Joe becomes an uncomfortable reminder of the working-class identity from which he would like to distance himself. Yet Dickens challenges this hierarchy by repeatedly attributing generosity, loyalty and moral dignity to Joe rather than to the so-called superior world of the gentry.

Marx's theory of alienation gives to this direct experience of class a material aspect. Pip's journey towards gentility may be seen as an ever-greater estrangement from the world of productive labour and from the working body which is connected with his background. His rough hands are not in any way naturally inferior; rather their physical state has a material connection with the work he has done. Nevertheless, Pip comes to see the visible marks of labour as defects



which have to be got rid of. His transition into a gentleman thus relies on making the effects of labour less apparent on his own body while continuing to rely on the labour and economic activities of other people. Magwitch brings out this contradiction most clearly. The gentlemanly identity which Pip has wished for is funded by a man whose body has been subjected to punishment, transportation, hardship and criminalisation.

Magwitch's return therefore restores the material history that Pip's appearance as a gentleman has been hiding. Dickens shows that the refined body can never fully separate itself from the labouring and socially stigmatised bodies on whose labour its privilege is based. Mary Douglas's idea of purity and pollution applies this line of argument from the area of labour to the regulation of social boundaries. Jaggers's repeated handwashing can be seen not merely as a personal habit but as a symbolic effort to maintain separation between professional respectability and the criminal world his work constantly involves him in. According to Douglas's view of dirt as 'matter out of place', the cultural function of such cleansing acts becomes clearer (Douglas, 44). Although Jaggers can move between respectable and criminal environments, his regular act of washing serves to symbolically re-establish the boundary between them. The comparison with Joe and Magwitch is important. Joe has the marks of labour without any moral corruption, while Magwitch carries the social stigma of being a criminal even though he is the one who provides Pip with his fortune. Despite the fact that Jaggers washes his hands repeatedly, he cannot escape his professional connection with the world which he is symbolically trying to get rid of. The hands and bodies depicted in *Great Expectations* should therefore be understood in a relational way rather than as separate images. The hands that Joe has, Pip's rough physique which later becomes that of a gentleman, Magwitch's body which has been criminalised and punished, and Jaggers's hands which he washes repeatedly are all part of a broader bodily language by means of which Dickens looks at the Victorian distinctions between labour, class, criminality, cleanliness, and respectability. The novel constantly shows how uncertain these distinctions are. The body of a worker can have moral dignity, a criminalised body can produce the privilege of a gentleman, and a clean professional hand can still be involved in the world from which it is seeking symbolic separation. The hand is therefore more than just a physical feature that occurs repeatedly in the novel. It becomes a concentrated symbol through which the material conditions are turned into social meanings. Because of the way in which *Great Expectations* is read through the body, the nature of Pip's Bildungsroman is altered. His growth does not merely involve a transition from a state of poverty to one of gentility, ending with moral awareness; it also involves the process of learning to read, reject, reconstruct, and eventually re-evaluate his own body in terms of class. Bourdieu demonstrates how class distinctions become embodied and internalised.

Marx shows the material labour which underlies those bodily distinctions and Pip's alienation from the working world; and Douglas explains how bodily practices relating to cleanliness contribute to the maintenance of social boundaries. Together, these views highlight Dickens's broader critique, namely that social hierarchy acquires particular power when it is no longer simply perceived as an external difference between classes but is instead carried over into the individual's relationship with his own body. It is for this reason that Pip's rough hands play a significant role in the novel, since they represent the point at which labour becomes visible as class, class becomes internalised as shame, and the desire for social mobility turns into a desire to remake the self.

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