> The central element of the comic sense of *Great Expectations*

> O elemento central do sentido cômico de *Great Expectations*

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Abstract
Being portrayed as possessing inwardness, Pip, the lead character in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, thinks by himself and changes as an effect of this thinking. This characteristic makes him mature and achieve a full self at the end of the novel. Pip's self, his personality, takes form in his acceptance of a *need for pain*, which is observed in his relationship with Estella, his childhood love. Estella does not love him back, but Pip, even without developing a sexual relationship with her, as the novel's ambiguous ending suggests, accepts the painful nature of love. In other words, he accepts being close to her even though their relationship is painful to him. My main claim, thus, is that the reconciliatory acceptance of his need for pain configures the comic aspect of Pip's personality and the comic sense of the novel.

Keywords: Charles Dickens. *Great Expectations*. Comic sense.

Resumo
Sendo retratado como alguém introspectivo, Pip, a personagem principal de *Great Expectations*, de Charles Dickens, pensa por si mesmo e muda por consequência desse pensamento. Essa característica faz com que ele amadureça e seja capaz de solidificar uma personalidade plena, um "self", ao final do romance. A personalidade de Pip toma forma na aceitação de sua *necessidade de dor*, observada em sua relação com Estella, seu amor de infância. Estella não o ama como ele a ama, mas Pip, mesmo sem se envolver sexualmente com ela, como o final ambíguo do romance sugere, aceita a natureza dolorosa do amor. Em outras palavras, ele aceita estar perto de Estella ainda que o relacionamento deles lhe cause dor. Meu argumento, portanto, é que o caráter reconciliatório da aceitação de sua necessidade de dor configura o aspecto cômico da personalidade de Pip e o sentido cômico do romance.

Palavras-chave: Charles Dickens. *Great Expectations*. Sentido cômico.

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Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown,
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.
William Shakespeare

As Harold Bloom points out, Shuli Barzilai "relates Pip's self-lacerating temperament to Freud's 'moral masochism,' the guilty need to fail"[1]. This "guilty need to fail", in my view, is intimately related to the comic nature of Pip's personality. It is not a secret that *Great Expectations* is intended to have a comic meaning since Dickens himself overtly expressed it in a letter to a friend: "describing 'a little piece I am writing … I can see the whole of a serial revolving around it, in a most singular and comic matter'"[2]. John Cunningham points out that the comic conclusion of *Great Expectations* is regenerative and redemptive.[3] The general meaning of the comic, as is held by Northrop Frye, is that of a reconciliatory and rejoicing sense of release from a sort of irrational or tyrannical constraint. Thus, it might be elucidative to point out a missing link between Pip's masochism, i.e., his guilty need to fail, and the comic sense. Pip's expectations towards Estella are guided by one of the central aspects of comic personalities, i.e., a need for pain. In Pip, this need is not eliminated but fully integrated into his comic nature. Therefore, I argue that, by the end of *Great Expectations*, Pip has a fully developed self who accepts his need for pain and manages to release himself from the constraining suffering that it causes him, thus, achieving comic reconciliation.

According to Frye, "all literary critics are either Iliad critics or Odyssey critics. That is, interest in literature tends to center either in the area of tragedy, realism, and irony or in the area of comedy and romance"[4]. While I disagree with Frye concerning interest – since I think a critic can be equally interested in

[1] Harold Bloom, *Great Expectations*, 2005, p. 8.
[2] "The Story Behind the Story", 2005, p. 12.
[3] John Cunningham, "Christian Allusion, Comedic Structure, and the Metaphor of Baptism in *Great Expectations*", 1994, p. 29-30.
[4] Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 1965, p. 1.

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comedy and tragedy –, I agree with him regarding the major separation between the comic and the tragic. Frye explains that

> the nature of the comic drive [...] emerges when the ascendant society of the early part of the play, with its irrational laws, lusts, and tyrannical whims, is dissolved and a new society crystallizes around the marriage of the central characters. It has also an individual form, an awakening to self-knowledge, which is typically a release from a humor or a mechanical form of repetitive behavior.
>
> Shakespearean romantic comedy presents the full or completed form of this movement; ironic comedy presents incomplete or divergent forms of it... thus we need to have the normal or romantic design at least unconsciously in our minds to understand the parodies of it that irony supplies[5].

Of all the Shakespearean comic personalities, Pip resembles mostly Angelo, a deputy in *Measure for Measure*. Angelo, like Pip, seems to have masochistic tendencies. He is very submissive to Vincentio, the leading character, who forces him to marry a woman he had previously abandoned. *Measure for Measure* is one of the Shakespearean ironic comedies Frye refers to, in which comic reconciliation, however, rancidly, is still met. This structure of release from a constraining element and the culmination in reconciliation is, as I mentioned, the basic structure of the comic.

Still, in *A Natural Perspective*, Frye argues that the "mythical or primitive basis of comedy is a movement toward the rebirth and renewal"[6]. In *The Myth of Deliverance*, he explains that in "most forms of comedy, [...] at least the New Comedy with which Shakespeare was mainly concerned, [...] The climax is a vision of deliverance or expanded energy and freedom"[7]. This "vision of deliverance or expanded energy and freedom", which is one of the core traits of the comic sense, is in direct opposition to that of the tragic, which would provide a vision of destruction and restrained freedom. Frye adds that a typical comedy is one in which

> redemptive forces are set to work that bring about the characteristic festive conclusion, the birth of a new society, that gives to the audience the feeling that 'everything's going to be all right after all.' Such plays illustrate what we have been calling the myth of deliverance, a sense of energies released

[5] Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 1965, p. 85.
[6] Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 1965, p. 119.
[7] Northrop Frye, *The Myth of Deliverance,* 1993, p. 14.

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> by forgiveness and reconciliation, [...] by evading what is frustrating or absurd in law and fulfilling what is essential for social survival. But comedy is a mixture of the festive and the ironic, of a drive toward a renewed society along with a strong emphasis on the arbitrary whims and absurdities that block its emergence. There is a much larger infusion of irony in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* than in, say, *As You Like It*[8].

Shakespeare's Rosalind, in *As You Like It*, is one of the best examples of a character with a comic nature – or a comic personality. According to Bloom, Rosalind is "free of malice; turning her aggressivity neither against herself nor against others [...] [she is] free of all resentments, while manifesting a vital curiosity and an exuberant desire"[9]. Furthermore, "*As You Like It* is poised before the great tragedies; it is a vitalizing work, and Rosalind is a joyous representative of life's possible freedoms. The aesthetic representation of happiness demands a complex art; no drama of happiness ever has surpassed Rosalind's"[10]. The joyous freedom and lack of aggressivity we see in Rosalind allow her to interact with most of the characters and seduce them to follow her. By managing to suppress resentments and negative feelings, a new society, as Frye suggests, crystallizes around the four marriages that take place in the final scene. Pip performs a few actions that are comparable to Rosalind's, such as saving Miss Havisham from her resentful feelings and helping Herbert with his business.[11] However, as Frye also explains, at "the end of a Shakespeare comedy there is usually a figure of authority, like Prospero [in *The Tempest*] or the various dukes, who represents [...] social conservation. We have nothing in Dickens to correspond to such figures"[12]. In *Great Expectations*, a new society is not crystalized around Pip, which makes him a different personality than that of Rosalind. Nonetheless, Pip still remains in the realm of the comic. At the end of the novel, after Pip meets Estella again, he begins a new life, although with its quality undefined because of the ambiguous tone of the ending.

We see that Biddy, in *Great Expectations*, is very reminiscent of Rosalind, especially concerning what Bloom calls a sense of "her wisdom and her benign

[8] Northrop Frye, *The Myth of Deliverance,* 1993, p. 61.
[9] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 1998, p. 208.
[10] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare*, 1998, p. 211.
[11] About helping Herbert, Pip says: "I did really cry in good earnest when I went to bed, to think that my expectations had done some good to somebody" (*Great Expectations,* 2002, p. 295).
[12] Northrop Frye, "Dickens and the Comedy of Humours", 2005, p. 307.

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realism"[13]. Biddy is, of course, an archetypical comic character, but of another strain or order from that of Pip. In chapter 17, in a conversation about Estella, Biddy attempts to convince Pip that Estella is worth neither scorning nor gaining over. So, in Biddy's opinion, Pip should just forget about Estella. To this, Pip responds:

> Exactly what I myself had thought, many times. Exactly what was perfectly manifest to me at the moment. But how could I, a poor dazed village lad, avoid that wonderful inconsistency into which the best and wisest of men fall every day?
>
> 'It may be all quite true,' said I to Biddy, 'but I admire her dreadfully'[14].

Pip considers that his face deserved to be hit by "pebbles as a punishment for belonging to such an idiot"[15]. He also says that "Biddy was the wisest of girls"[16]. Their conversation concludes:

> We talked a good deal as we walked, and all that Biddy said seemed right. Biddy was never insulting, or capricious, or Biddy today and somebody else to-morrow; she would have derived only pain, and no pleasure, from giving me pain; she would far rather have wounded her own breast than mine. How could it be, then, that I did not like her much the better of the two?
>
> 'Biddy,' said I, when we were walking homeward, 'I wish you could put me right.'
>
> 'I wish I could!' said Biddy.
>
> 'If I could only get myself to fall in love with you – you don't mind my speaking so openly to such an old acquaintance?'
>
> 'Oh dear, not at all!' said Biddy. 'Don't mind me.'
>
> 'If I could only get myself to do it, *that* would be the thing for me.'
>
> 'But you never will, you see,' said Biddy[17].

Biddy, "the wisest of girls", is like Rosalind, an amiable, witty and sensible young lady. She is never resentful and even advises Pip to look for Estella when he comes back from overseas[18]. She, as Pip says, "was never insulting, or capricious, or Biddy today and somebody else to-morrow; she would have derived

[13] Harold Bloom, *As You Like It*, 2008, p. xii.
[14] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 126.
[15] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 126.
[16] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 127.
[17] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 128.
[18] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 475.

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only pain, and no pleasure, from giving me pain". She wishes that she could "put Pip right", but she knows that is not possible and accepts their own conditions. She also knows that Pip will never fall in love with her. She is very emotionally mature, just like Rosalind. Pip, on the other hand, has a long path ahead of him until he reaches Biddy's level of emotional maturity. Nonetheless, he is, at least partially, already self-aware of his condition of not being able to "avoid that wonderful inconsistency" and of his dependence on pain, as we see in his demand for punishment by pebbles.

We know exactly how Pip feels concerning Estella: "everything in our intercourse did give me pain. Whatever her tone with me happened to be, I could put no trust in it, and build no hope on it; and yet I went on against trust and against hope. Why repeat it a thousand times? So it always was"[19]. It is not surprising that Barzilai identifies "Pip's self-lacerating temperament" as a form of masochism. Freud claims that every "unpleasure ought thus to coincide with a heightening, and every pleasure with a lowering, of mental tension"[20] and that the "state of sexual excitation is the most striking example of a pleasurable increase of stimulus"[21]. He also claims, when explaining moral masochism, that it is very tempting "to leave the libido out of account"[22]. From these passages, we acknowledge two things from Freud: first, the taste for pain has sexual roots; second, tension is something necessarily painful, but the arousal of sexual tension is ambivalent because it is simultaneously pleasing and displeasing. Freud, then, speaks of a "need for punishment"[23] when discussing moral masochism. Pip's "self-lacerating temperament", which seems to be determinant of his sense of guilt in situations not overtly related to sexuality, fits very well in this notion of "need". Nonetheless, Pip's need for punishment is majorly and overtly related to sexual issues regarding Estella. Furthermore, the pain involved in, as Freud suggests, tension, is referred to in the title of the novel. When we create expectations towards people or events, we also create tension.

[19] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 264.
[20] Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism.", 1986, p. 159-60.
[21] Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism.", 1986, p. 160.
[22] Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism.", 1986, p. 165.
[23] Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism", 1986, p. 166.

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The word "expectation" has a lot of significance and permeates the whole novel. Already in the first chapter, when Pip meets Magwitch, expectations from both sides are created. Magwitch is desperate to get free and catch Compeyson, and Pip is desperate to correspond to Magwitch's expectations. A first-time reader might think that a terrified Pip is expecting to deliver the file to Magwitch in order to get rid of him, but the young boy starts calling Magwitch "his convict"[24], demonstrating a clear relation of affection towards someone who had just made him go through a lot of trouble. Even after this portion of the novel is concluded, after both Magwitch and Compeyson get caught, Magwitch's expectations towards Pip do not end there. On the other hand, Pip's expectations are more ambivalent, and he seems to be slightly relieved to be free from "his convict".

The expectations of the title do not only refer to Pip's money and his expectations towards the possibilities of his new life – "the world lay spread before me"[25]. Most major characters have expectations towards Pip or expectations that involve the protagonist somehow. Mrs. Joe and Pumblechook attempt to use Pip for their own benefit, that is, they expect better opportunities for themselves after Pip is sent to meet Miss Havisham. Joe and Biddy expect that Pip embraces their own modest ways of life – although Joe and Biddy are the two characters in the novel who manage their expectations maturely. Even Orlick seems to expect to someday be able to make Pip pay for his own resentment. Miss Havisham does not expect too much from Pip, but she expects Estella to fulfill her revenge. Pip mainly expects to be together with Estella forever. Of course, there are exceptions, like Mr. Jaggers and Estella, who do not seem to expect anything from anyone (or, at least, expect very little). But exceptions apart, the core of the novel seems to reside around this dwelling in expectation and how the characters manage it, considering especially the relationships between Pip and Joe, Pip and Magwitch, Miss Havisham and Estella, and, of course, between Pip and Estella. Pip seems to forget about Magwitch after the initial events of the novel and his attention is caught by someone who has a much more gripping effect on him.

[24] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 35-38.
[25] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 157.

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After Pip meets Estella, the novel is predominantly taken by his expectations towards her. These expectations only are suspended after she leaves with Drummle and the subplot concerning the conflict between Magwitch and Compeyson fiercely reemerges. From the moment he met Estella to the moment she left with Drummle, Pip's mind was almost entirely occupied with thoughts concerning her. Here is where the gist of the novel and its comic sense reside.

Some characters, like Pip and Miss Havisham, have a harder time managing their expectations towards Estella and are only able to deal with them after they mature (in the case of Pip) or are cleansed (in the case of Miss Havisham). Others, like Joe, are able to curb their expectations more easily. Hence, what makes Pip an archetypal comic hero is the fact that he naturally accepts pain, which configures, like Freud says, a sort of need. This feature of Pip's personality is part of his nature. Therefore, in my view, it is not something that could be changed. What happens to Pip is that he accepts this need. In other words, throughout the novel, Pip does not deal well with his need for pain. He constantly complains that Estella is a source of pain to him, but also complains that staying away from her also causes him pain. In his process of maturation, Pip learns to manage his need for pain. In Shuli Barzilai's text, which I already briefly mentioned, she argues that "the crux of *Great Expectations* is guilt. The plot unfolds, the settings change, the characters develop, but the sense of guilt is constant"[26]. Thus, in my view, Pip's need for pain seems to have been in him since the beginning. In this sense, he does not change. I argue that the need for pain is a characteristic of Pip's personality that, as far as the novel allows us to acknowledge, has been always there. What develops in Pip is the way in which he manages his need for pain, i.e., what "changes" in him is the acceptance of this need. Hence, my claim: Pip does not really change because his nature does not change. Pip, instead, matures by learning to accept his need for pain. This kind of maturation, I insist, is not a change in nature, but a shift in perspective regarding something that was already there and has not changed. Let us examine passages

[26] Shuli Barzilai, "Dickens' 'Great Expectations': The Motive for Moral Masochism", 1985, p. 45.

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of the novel that demonstrate this. First, let us examine the several possible meanings of "expectations".

In chapter 18, Mr. Jaggers refers to Pip's "great expectations" in the literal sense, referring to the money to be received. Of course, this creates expectations in Pip towards his life. But there are also, as I mentioned, expectations from other characters towards Pip regardless of his money. Pip, nonetheless, does not seem to care much about the expectations of others towards him or even his own expectations towards his own future, except for those that involve Estella. Therefore, there are four possible ways of understanding "expectations" as it relates to Pip: it may refer to Pip's money; to Pip's own expectations towards his future; to the expectations of others towards Pip; and to the sexual tension between him and Estella.

The last meaning is, after all, the most relevant. Let us examine this passage from chapter 33: "We stood in the Inn Yard, while she pointed out her luggage to me, and when it was all collected I remembered – having forgotten everything but herself in the meanwhile – that I knew nothing of her destination"[27]. What matters the most to Pip is being with Estella, regardless of what they are doing. He completely forgets "everything but herself" when they are together, including "her destination". Following in the same chapter:

> 'I am going to Richmond,' she told me. 'Our lesson is, that there are two Richmonds, one in Surrey and one in Yorkshire, and that mine is the Surrey Richmond. The distance is ten miles. I am to have a carriage, and you are to take me. This is my purse, and you are to pay my charges out of it. Oh, you must take the purse! We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions. We are not free to follow our own devices, you and I'[28].

To Estella's words, in the following lines, Pip responds: "As she looked at me in giving me the purse, I hoped there was an inner meaning in her words. She said them slightingly, but not with displeasure"[29]. Pip expects to be "inner meaning in her words". Estella's speech actually begins with such a suggestion. She says that their "lesson" is that there are "two Richmonds". "Lesson" seems to

[27] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 261.
[28] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 261.
[29] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 261.

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refer to some kind of knowledge, and this knowledge says that there are two different things of the same kind, that is, two Richmonds. In the context of the speech that follows, Richmond seems to figuratively mean "affective relationship". Therefore, there are two Richmonds, one related to Pip and the other, not. Pip's relationship with Estella is intimate and affective but does not involve sexual activity. Hence, an intimate relationship involving sexual activity would pertain to other men, but not to Pip. Furthermore, in the literality of the situation, Pip and Estella send for a coach and she makes him responsible for paying the carriage's charge with the money she has in the purse. But the inner meaning Pip expects to be present in Estella's words is, of course, figurative. In the context, carriage, in Pip's expectations, would refer to pregnancy, and purse, to the female genitalia. Thus, in a translation of the inner meaning of Estella's words, Pip seems to expect that he is going to take her purse so that she will have a carriage, that is, they are going to have sex and she is going to get pregnant. But another, darker, layer of meaning attached to Estella's words would be as follows. What Estella says is "I am to have a carriage, and you are to take me." Pip expects the carriage to be his, but her words do not necessarily imply that. In this darker meaning, Pip is to be a cuckold since he is taking Estella with a carriage that is not necessarily his. Another possibility is that Pip is to be a pimp since he would pay Estella's charges out of her purse, that is, she would earn her income through her vagina. Regardless of the reading, here, Pip would be a sort of manager of Estella's sexual life, without direct access to it, i.e., Pip would not be, using Estella's own words, "instructed" to genuinely maintain sexual relations with her even though Pip "designs" that in his mind. The meaning here is that, even if Pip had sex with her, it would be without her desire. Of course, Pip expects to actually consummate his relationship with Estella someday, but what seems more important to him, as I mentioned, is that they remain together, even if they cannot have sex[30]. Estella concludes her speech by adding that they "have no choice", must obey their "instructions", and "are not free to follow [their] own devices". In the epigraph from *Hamlet* I used, the Player King says that "Our wills and fates

[30] Later, he says that he could stand Estella marrying anyone expect for Drummle: "Put me aside for ever – you have done so, I well know – but bestow yourself on some worthier person than Drummle" (Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations,* 2002, p. 359).

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do so contrary run / That our devices still are overthrown, / Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own"[31]. The Player King is saying that, regardless of how much we want something (our devices), what is going to decide if we get it or not (our fate) is out of our reach. In this sense, Pip is not free to follow his own devices because his will runs contrary to his fate. What Pip wants (his will) is sexually consummate his relationship with Estella, but his fate seems to be that he will forever hover around her like a moth hovers around a light source.

Estella's stance towards their relationship – just like her words, which, according to Pip's description in the scene just mentioned, are delivered "slightingly, but not with displeasure" –, is never exactly fixed. Pip says that she had "many tones"[32]. Estella, apparently, never nurtured any considerable lust for Pip. According to Robert Garnett, "much of Estella's character [...] remains cloaked in Dickens' reticence or uncertainty [...] he hesitated to intrude on her shadowy inner life. That we never quite understand Estella's character, however, paradoxically deepens our understanding of her. Musing on Estella, Dickens found himself straying into a labyrinth of sexual fascination and desire"[33]. What we get from Estella is a contempt for the world, and not only for men.[34] But we do not know how much of this contempt pleases her. Her aura of mystery, besides her beauty, is still her outstanding feature. This is what she tells Pip regarding his feelings for her: "When you say you love me, I know what you mean, as a form of words; but nothing more. You address nothing in my breast, you touch nothing there. I don't care for what you say at all"[35]. According to Pip, to her, their "association was forced upon"[36] them, suggesting, of course, that Pip's presence would displease her. But she also says that Pip is the only boy she does not "deceive and entrap"[37]. It is never clear, therefore, how exactly Estella predominantly feels about their relationship, whether it is pleasure, displeasure,

[31] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 2003, p. 174.
[32] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 296.
[33] Robert Garnett, "The Good and the Unruly in *Great Expectations*—and Estella", 1999, p. 77-78.
[34] She does not aim to please Miss Havisham. There is also a scene in which she overtly despises Mrs. Havisham's relatives (2002, p. 263).
[35] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 358.
[36] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 296.
[37] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 307.

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or indifference. Additionally, Estella behaves the way she does because she wants to. She overtly tells Miss Havisham that she does not do what she does – namely, breaks men's hearts – to please her mentor: "I am what you have made me. Take all the praise, take all the blame; take all the success, take all the failure; in short, take me"[38]. Of course, Miss Havisham has influence over Estella, but not enough, in my view, to change the heroine's nature, of which she is aware: "It is in my nature, [...] It is in the nature formed within me"[39].

Estella's wisdom is like Biddy's. They both know what their relationship with Pip is supposed to be. The difference resides in that Biddy wished that Pip would love her, but she accepts that he won't. Estella, on the other hand, does not need to accept anything because she does not seem to want anyone's love. Estella is the like a pole – as in a magnetic pole, a point of focus and attraction –, an attractive light source, as she compares herself to.[40] In this sense, she is the one with the power of causing pain rather than taking it. Nonetheless, she tries to warn Pip at least twice that, as Joseph Hynes points out, "his devotion to her is based upon illusion"[41]: "'You ridiculous boy,' said Estella, 'will you never take warning? Or do you kiss my hand in the spirit in which I once let you kiss my cheek?'"[42]. The other instance:

> 'Pip, Pip,' she said one evening . . . 'will you never take warning?'
>
> 'Of what?'
>
> 'Of me.'
>
> 'Warning not to be attracted by you, do you mean, Estella?'
>
> 'Do I mean! If you don't know what I mean, you are blind'[43].

As Stanley Friedman explains, Pip's intention of proposing to Biddy is dissimulative[44], meaning that his obsession for Estella has never ceased. But his

[38] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 299.
[39] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 358.
[40] She compares herself to a "lighted candle" and those who hover around her to helpless moths (Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* 2002, p. 306).
[41] Joseph Haynes, "Image and Symbol in *Great Expectations*", 1963, p. 286.
[42] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 264.
[43] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 296.
[44] Stanley Friedman. "Estella's Parentage and Pip's Persistence: The Outcome of *Great Expectations*", 1987, p. 9.

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obsession for Estella only makes him suffer: "everything in our intercourse did give me pain"[45]; "I never was happy with her, but always miserable"[46]; "I have given the one chapter to the theme that so filled my heart, and so often made it ache and ache again"[47]; "You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line I have ever read, since I first came here, the rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then"[48]. Nonetheless, Pip is confident that, even after Estella gets married, he will never forget her: "I had loved Estella dearly and long, and [...] although I had lost her and must live a bereaved life, whatever concerned her was still nearer and dearer to me than anything else in the world"[49]. Pip seems to be meant to forever expect to consummate a sexual relation with her because of his need for the tension that sexual expectation entails. Hence, Pip's dwelling in expectation corresponds to a maintenance of tension and all its painful features, which he masochistically enjoys. But his expectations toward Estella seem to be surpassed toward the end of the novel. In other words, he keeps loving her even after learning to accept that he might never actually be the object of her lust.

Real love is, after all, as Miss Havisham points out, painful: "'I'll tell you,' said she, [...] 'what real love is. It is blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, trust and belief against yourself and against the whole world, giving up your whole heart and soul to the smiter – as I did!'"[50]. These words by Miss Havisham do not constitute a biased opinion by a melancholy and resentful woman. In her view, love is necessarily painful. But it is also true for Pip since he constantly complains that Estella is always hurting him, as I have shown in the series of quotations in the previous paragraph. The common denominator, thus, seems to be that love necessarily involves humiliation and pain. Hence, what is the difference between Pip and Miss Havisham? The difference seems to reside in the reception of pain. In other words, while Miss Havisham predominantly sees love as humiliation, Pip, who

[45] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 264.
[46] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 267.
[47] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 307.
[48] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 360.
[49] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 406.
[50] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 237.

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possesses a comic nature, does not understand love as predominantly humiliation because he enjoys – even though he suffers – or, rather, in my view, *needs* this humiliation. In conclusion, pain is always there. What differs is in the acceptance of it.

Regarding the similarities between Hamlet and Pip, Wendy Jacobson, in "The Prince of the Marshes: *Hamlet* and *Great Expectations*", claims that both "Pip and Hamlet are alone in their tasks [...] and [...] both novel and play concern themselves with young men whose lives are interrupted by a trauma so major that they will for ever struggle with self-consciousness and conscience; both works explore growth towards self-knowledge; and the process, in both instances, costs them dear"[51]. Moreover, Pip and Hamlet share grace, generosity,[52] and nobility.[53] One point of difference, though, resides in that "Pip never considers self-immolation which is Hamlet's great longing in that soliloquy"[54]. Pip, in my view, would never consider suicide regardless of how much he suffers because of his comic nature. Bloom, on the other hand, claims that "Pip joins Hamlet only as a sufferer, guilty and grieving"[55]. Bloom also argues that in "Dickens' world of caricatures and grotesques, the reader generally is not invited (or tempted) to merge into the characters, who share more with Ben Jonson's [...] fierce cartoons than with the men and women of Shakespeare. And yet there are complexly inward figures in Dickens [...] Pip [...] certainly [being] the most inward of all Dickens' characters"[56]. Ben Jonson is famous for having popularized the comedy of humors, a genre in which characters exhibit dominating traits, i.e., humors. This is why Bloom calls Jonson's characters cartoons and Frye refers to the genre in the title of his essay – "Dickens and the Comedy of Humours". Angus Fletcher, in his *Colors of the Mind*, comparing Shakespeare and Dickens, argues that with "the novelist as with the playwright, we get an impression that the author is racing around inside the minds of his characters, who 'find words' where ordinary

[51] Wendy Jacobson, "The Prince of the Marshes: *Hamlet* and *Great Expectations*", 2006, p. 119.
[52] Wendy Jacobson, "The Prince of the Marshes: *Hamlet* and *Great Expectations*", 2006, p. 122.
[53] Wendy Jacobson, "The Prince of the Marshes: *Hamlet* and *Great Expectations*", 2006, p. 126.
[54] Wendy Jacobson, "The Prince of the Marshes: *Hamlet* and *Great Expectations*", 2006, p. 123.
[55] Harold Bloom, *Charles Dickens'* Great Expectations, 2010, p. 2.
[56] Harold Bloom, *How to Read and Why*, 2000, p. 163.

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mortals lack them"[57]. Thus, Pip, the most inward character in Dickens, like Hamlet, by learning to manage his grief, matures into a fully developed self at the end of the novel. Pip, contrary to Hamlet, needs the pain of love. Hamlet, on the other hand, does not even glimpse at it to begin with. Hamlet suffers, but for other reasons. In conclusion, the expectations of the Ghost toward Hamlet are like those of Magwitch toward Pip, with the difference that Pip's outcome is comic rather than tragic. Pip incurs a guilt-ridden path after he finds out that Magwitch was his benefactor, but, at one point, Pip accepts Magwitch's "parentage" and their relationship is rejuvenated. Hamlet never fully accepts his duty of revenge demanded by the ghost of his father, and when he takes action against Claudius, it is in self-defense. Hamlet tragically dies fulfilling his duty, but never accepting it.

As Cunningham suggests, "Pip is also born into a guilt like the first Adam's, into something like the Fall"[58]. Cunningham is very convincing in showing that the novel is pervaded by Christian images. The comic sense of the novel, however, is autonomous, regardless of how pervaded the text is with allusions to Christianity. The novel is comic, not Christian. It is not supposed to be understood as a display of Christian imagery, but mainly as the depiction of comic human nature.

According to Frye, the "emphasis at the end of a comedy is sometimes thrown, not on the forming of a new society around the marriage of hero and heroine, but on the maturing or enlightening of the hero, a process which may detach him from marriage or full participation in the congenial group. We find this type of conclusion in [...] *Great Expectations*"[59]. Dickens originally wrote an ending for the novel that is different from the one currently available to the general public. In this original ending, Pip and Estella meet in Piccadilly two years after his return to England. Estella reveals that Drummle had died but she remarried a doctor. Although the meeting is strained and sorrowful, they do not

[57] Angus Fletcher, *Colors of the Mind*, 1991, p. 30.
[58] John Cunningham, "Christian Allusion, Comedic Structure, and the Metaphor of Baptism in *Great Expectations*", 1994, p. 2.
[59] Northrop Frye, "Dickens and the Comedy of Humours", 2005, p. 290.

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bind over their emotional memories. Though she's learned compassion, the two characters part ways with no hope of reconnecting. Pip remains single but is delighted to know that Estella is now a different person from the cruel and heartless girl that Miss Havisham had raised her to be. This ending, however, was never published, and the general public only became aware of it after Dickens' death.

Dickens, then, wrote an alternative ending, which has generally been published from Dickens's time to our own so that it is the one most commonly known. Critics have been arguing the merits of both endings since the novel's publication. The alternative ending places their meeting in the garden of the ruined Satis House. As in the first ending, Estella appears "saddened" and "softened" by her abusive marriage. She suggests they will "continue friends apart," but, as Pip takes her hand to leave the garden, he sees "the shadow of no parting from her":

> 'You have always held your place in my heart,' I answered. And we were silent again, until she spoke.
>
> 'I little thought,' said Estella, 'that I should take leave of you in taking leave of this spot. I am very glad to do so.'
>
> 'Glad to part again, Estella? To me, parting is a painful thing. To me, remembrance of our last parting has been ever mournful and painful.'
>
> 'But you said to me,' returned Estella, very earnestly, "'God bless you, God forgive you!" And if you could say that to me then, you will not hesitate to say that to me now – now, when suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have been bent and broken, but – I hope – into a better shape. Be as considerate and good to me as you were, and tell me we are friends.'
>
> 'We are friends,' said I, rising and bending over her, as she rose from the bench.
>
> 'And will continue friends apart,' said Estella.
>
> I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw the shadow of no parting from her[60].

[60] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 477-78.

This ending has usually been understood to imply that Pip and Estella will get married. But there is substantial ambiguity in this final passage. Although they leave holding hands, Estella has just stated that she wishes to remain alone – "and will continue friends apart". Moreover, Estella's conjugal situation is also uncertain. What Pip says is: "for anything I knew, she was married again"[61]. The irony is that Estella's marital state scarcely helps influences Pip's decision. What matters is that Pip wants to remain close to her regardless of her being married or not. In other words, if she is married, Pip will continue to suffer because he will remain close to her knowing that he will not marry her – which refers to my reading of the two Richmonds I explained on pages from 9 to 11, according to which Pip would be a sort of eunuch. If Estella is not married, and, therefore, has no deterrent to stop her from marrying Pip, thus, Pip will continue to suffer in his wish to be close to a woman with whom he will never have sex with since she nurtures no lust for him. Thus, the result is the same regardless of Estella's situation, i.e., Pip will continue to suffer because of Estella. What shifted in Pip, after his return to England, was the way in which he managed his dependence on Estella, i.e., he accepted the pain of his dependence on her.

Additionally, reinforcing the ambiguity, the mists, an image, I argue, intended for uncertainty, rise again: "as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now." Their union, hence, is uncertain. Being with Estella, as I have shown, is painful to Pip. But parting from her is also painful to him. The only certain thing that the ending seems to suggest will continue is Pip's dependence on pain. The difference resides in that Pip accepts this need. Finally, the shadow not parting does not necessarily mean that their union will be consummated, but that they will remain close to each other and Pip will continue to suffer.

Regarding the imagery of the novel, specifically the light of stars and the garden of Satis House, Hynes argues that "throughout the book, stars have symbolized illusion; quite appropriately, then, stars here symbolize the very illusions which Pip and Estella have healthfully dropped, as well as the cooler,

[61] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 2002, p. 475.

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more 'tranquil,' but very real promise left to them after they have shed all misleading glamour"[62]. The same shifting movement occurs with the Satis House garden. According to Hynes, in "his right mind, [...] Pip sees the garden for the anti-Paradise which it has been in his life"[63], but the meaning of the garden changes towards the outcome of the novel. Hynes states that

> this is why [...] Dickens was right to conclude the novel as he did. Just as Pip and Estella see the stars for what they seemed and for what promise they still hold, so finally and just as credibly they see the garden both as it seemed and as it suggests belated growth and renewal. Stars and garden work together symbolically to suggest [...] the mutual emotional rejuvenation made accessible by mutually suffering for illusions. The suffering which such *unnatural* careers imply makes Pip's and Estella's eventual love for each other as *natural* as the mist's lifting from the stars or the garden's displaying at this late date a second growth of ivy "growing green on low quiet mounds of ruin"[64].

Additionally, Hynes argues that "selflessness is the moral burden of the novel"[65]. The Satis House garden was Pip's "anti-Paradise"[66] before, but afterwards, it suggested belated growth and renewal, and the light of stars had their illusion disrupted. In this sense, both Pip and Estella saw the truth and matured. However, in my view, contrary to Hynes's – which argues that their love will be consummated eventually –, there is still no guarantee that Estella will love Pip. There is only a possibility ambiguously delivered by the image of rising mist.[67]

Frye explains that the "total *mythos* of comedy [...] has [...] [this] form: the hero's society rebels against the society of the senex and triumphs"[68]. Thus, in Frye's view, a blocking humor – such as folly, obsession or forgetfulness –, which belongs to the society of the senex, disrupts the hero's society. When the blocking humor is removed by the hero, some sort of restoration occurs. Therefore, the hero's action "is, ritually, like a contest of summer and winter in which winter

[62] Joseph Hynes, "Image and Symbol in *Great Expectations*", 1963, p. 285.
[63] Joseph Hynes, "Image and Symbol in *Great Expectations*", 1963, p. 286.
[64] Joseph Hynes, "Image and Symbol in *Great Expectations*", 1963, p. 286.
[65] Joseph Hynes, "Image and Symbol in *Great Expectations*", 1963, p. 287.
[66] According to Pip, it is "cold, . . . lonely, . . . dreary" (Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations,* 2002, p. 396).
[67] The ending of the final chapter of each "stage of Pip's expectations" always ends up with an image that suggests uncertainty, be it the rising mist at the conclusion of both the first stage and third stage of the novel or the "thick black darkness" (2002, p. 319) at the end of the second stage.
[68] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 2000, p. 171.

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occupies the middle action; psychologically, it is like the removal of a neurosis or blocking point and the restoring of an unbroken current of energy and memory"[69]. In this sense, Pip's "detachment from the false standards of the obstructing group forms the main theme of *Great Expectations*"[70]. Miss Havisham's obsession with revenge is, in Frye's terms, a false standard, and Pip detaches her from those standards through forgiveness. Such a false standard, at least in Pip's mind, obstructs him from being together with Estella. As Garnett suggests, the imagery of "fire in *Great Expectations* is figurative of the painful cleansing necessary to metaphoric death"[71]. Pip's forgiveness is what saves Miss Havisham. Thus, the fire is a symbolic image of that moment. Miss Havisham is a blocking point, and Pip's act of forgiveness cures her, restoring, in Frye's terms, a current of energy. In "Estella's Parentage and Pip's Persistence: The Outcome of *Great Expectations*", Friedman argues that the value that Pip "eventually comes to embrace is clearly forgiveness. He learns that his sister, before her death, asked his pardon [...] and his forgiveness is also sought by another erring mother-figure, Miss Havisham [...] Overcoming his own pain, Pip readily forgives Estella, even without being asked"[72]. Furthermore, Miss Havisham's "regret and suffering may also make us wish her to be given a relatively full moral exoneration, and this seems to require a softening—a retroactive reduction—of the wrong she has done to both Estella and Pip. In effect, only the romantic reunion intimated in the revised ending can achieve this"[73]. Therefore, forgiving Miss Havisham and cleansing her of resentment are additional actions that make Pip an archetype of the comic hero.

Hynes and Friedman, hence, prefer the revised ending. Bloom, on the other hand, prefers the novel's original ending, claiming that the revised one "is highly inappropriate to what is most wonderful about the novel: The purgation, through acceptance of loss, that has carried Pip into an authentic maturity. What

[69] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 2000, p. 171.
[70] Northrop Frye, "Dickens and the Comedy of Humours", 2005, p. 301.
[71] Robert Garnett, "The Good and the Unruly in *Great Expectations*—and Estella", 1999, p. 40.
[72] Stanley Friedman. "Estella's Parentage and Pip's Persistence: The Outcome of *Great Expectations*", 1987, p. 12.
[73] Stanley Friedman. "Estella's Parentage and Pip's Persistence: The Outcome of *Great Expectations*", 1987, p. 12.

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matters in that maturation is not that guilt has been evaded or transcended, but that the reader has come to understand it, however implicitly, as the cost of Pip's confirmation as an achieved self"[74]. In my view, if there is maturation or achievement of a self(lessness), it resides in Pip's acceptance of his condition, which dictates to him a need to be with Estella, however painful to him their relationship is. To Pip, they must remain together even if she is married to someone else and he suffers because of it. The revised ending is stronger because it depicts Pip accepting his condition. In other words, he accepts his dependence on Estella's presence, regardless if they will be sexually intimate or not. Hynes is precise when he says that selflessness is the moral burden of the novel since Pip's surmounting of his expectations is a sign of maturity and selflessness. In the revised ending, after Pip matures, he knows that it is not likely that he and Estella will have a sex life together, but he accepts that all he needs is to be close to her.

According to Bloom, *Great Expectations* refutes "Henry James's judgment that Dickens 'has added nothing to our understanding of human character' [...] because it enters the abyss of Pip's inner self [...] Something in Dickens, descending into Pip's psyche, called on Shakespeare for aid, perhaps not altogether knowingly"[75]. *Great Expectations* revolves around the tensions that permeate human interactions, which are based on expectations. And tension, as Freud alerts us, is something always painful, regardless of how it is received. Dickens enlarges our understanding of human nature because he improves the perception of how expectations and the conflicts that emanate thereof are central to human life. Finally, Frye states: "The obstructing humours in Dickens are absurd because they have overdesigned their lives. But the kind of design that they parody is produced by another kind of energy, and one which insists, absurdly and yet irresistibly, that what is must never take final precedence over what ought to be"[76]. This means that, according to Bloom, "the Dickensian center [is] in the novels' insistence that what ought to be never be annihilated by the prevailing state of things"[77]. In Frye's terms, according to A. C. Hamilton,

[74] Harold Bloom, *Great Expectations*, 2005, p. 8.
[75] Harold Bloom, *Charles Dickens'* Great Expectations, 2010, p. 1-2.
[76] Northrop Frye, "Dickens and the Comedy of Humours", 2005, p. 307-308.
[77] Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 1994, p. 317.

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deliverance, "being synonymous with 'expanded energy and freedom,' implies a heightened consciousness by which one may actively – that is, imaginatively – shape reality rather than remain passively dominated by it"[78]. Furthermore, tragedy "ends in a 'catastrophe,' and [...] in a comedy the end might better be called an anastrophe, a turning up rather than a turning down"[79]. The Fryean notion of *ought to be* is related to an artificial upward movement in opposition to a natural downward movement of *what is*. This is a clear predominance of the comic over the tragic. In other words, Pip's forgiveness is an artificial upward movement, which is in direct opposition to Miss Havisham's natural downward movement of revenge. Pip, thus, belongs to the reconciliatory realm of the comic, while Miss Havisham, to the destructive realm of the tragic.

Pain and suffering are common elements to both the comic and tragic realms. The difference, hence, resides in how an individual deals with pain. One of Pip's most distinguishing traits is his need for pain, observed in his insistence on the relationship with Estella and in his power to forgive. Miss Havisham and Hamlet do not accept the painful nature of reality, or, in Hamlet's words, the "thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to"[80]. On the other hand, Rosalind, Angelo, Biddy, and Pip, through the particular way their individual personalities allow them, find a way to deal with pain and accept it. The need for pain, therefore, inherent to Pip's comic nature, compels life to go on rather than to be destroyed by unacceptance.

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[78] A. C. Hamilton, "Introduction", 1993, p. ix.
[79] Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 1965, p. 72-73.
[80] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 2003, p. 158.

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