

The struggle for life in Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*

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In the Dickensian novel "Great Expectations" (1861), characters pursue various aims and typically achieve both gains and losses through their efforts. This research will textually examine their struggles in order to better comprehend the difficulties Pip and other significant characters have as they (re)construct their (self)identities, seek their ambitions, and either ascend to or preserve their social status. The analysis illustrates how characters struggle for existence both psychologically and physically: one's struggle, at times, equals a coming of age. According to the study's findings, the novel's characters re-imagine their convictions as reality changes their prior ideals.

Keywords: *Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, social adaptation, the struggle for life*

1. Introduction

In the world of *Great Expectations* (1861), Charles Dickens creates a fictional account of a realistic nineteenth-century Victorian society to illustrate how individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds go through their everyday lives. Their existence often entails an effort for survival and social adaptation as characters struggle at multiple stages throughout the novel. For instance, the book's protagonist, Pip, strives to find companionship, social hierarchy emancipation, maturity, and knowledge as the literary work itself captures Pip's coming-of-age. Even if Pip and other characters physically and psychologically battle to achieve particular objectives or fall short of them, doing so comes at a cost.

During the nineteenth-century, with its core in the United Kingdom, the Industrial Revolution brought about work opportunities and a population increase. These signs of progress attract adverse effects such as child labour, the rising gap between social classes, social and economic imbalance, poor working conditions and increased mortality, and a battle for resources. These subjects are all

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embodied in *Great Expectations*, as the author directly came upon these circumstances.

Dickens's experience as a former child labourer influenced his artistic expression (Dutta 2014, 1). Such is the case of *Great Expectations*: in his literary work, he criticizes the establishment for its discriminatory retribution of wealth, the corruptive power of richness, social inequities and child labour. His criticism suggests a return to fundamental human values such as compassion and kindness, which are personified and given names such as Joe Gargery and Bidly.

The struggle for life, the central theme of this essay, is employed by thinkers of the nineteenth-century such as Darwin and Spencer, along with Malthus, Wallace, and Lyell. Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Darwin coined the theory of evolution employing natural selection (the latter published the *Origins of Species* in 1859), and Herbert Spencer extended the idea to humans in his book *Principles of Biology* (1864). They all highlight the existence of intra-species and inter-species competitions for survival and resources: population growth triggers a resource decline. Thus, a greater struggle (or fight) for life ensues. The denial of the "survival of the fittest" paradigm (Spencer 1864, 444) differentiates humans from non-human beings: the latter regulates species growth due to evolution and natural selection. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin distinguishes between non-human and human species, stating that humans protect one another and fight their individual and collective extinction. As such, even the weak have a better chance at life, and this can ensure the survival of more people:

We civilized men [...] do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. [...] excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed. (Darwin, *The Descent of Man* 1874, 76).

In this light, the essay embodies how Dickensian characters in *Great Expectations* strive to deny the "survival of the fittest paradigm": they experience different types of psychological and physical struggles, but come atop so as to ensure survival, avoid individual and collective extinction. Various purposes might drive these efforts, depending on the characters and the unfolding of the narrative plot. To name a few, Dickensian characters pursue survival, acceptance, identity shaping, revenge, and social class advancement. In these pursuits, they work alone and form spoken or unspoken intra-species alliances.

2. Shaping identity and identity shapers: children and guardians

Pip's intra-species and intra-familial relations cause an impending identity crisis. The first depicted struggle of the novel is the battle for survival and the frailty of human life, both of which have an identity-shaping value. The introduction encapsulates these phenomena through the narrator's remembrance, a mature Philip Pirrip. The narrator relates a scene embedded in his upbringing and core childhood memory: Pip, a "small bundle", thus, a young child, curiously explores the names of his family by reading tombstones names (Dickens 1998, 8). The boy reconstructs his family's identity and attempts to understand the deceased's physical and psychological traits by judging the engraved letters' shape.

His actions signify the boy's longing for intra-species connectedness and group cohesion, as his imagination inquires the potentiality his family could have experienced if his parents and five brothers had been alive. They all lost the fight for survival, as symbolized by the tombstones and the cemetery. In extension, the graveyard is a setting which foreshadows the presence of death throughout the novel. Simultaneously, the symbolic value of the cemetery and Pip's inquisitive quest resurface in different forms. The character constructs ideals and blindly follows them, a process similar to ghost chasing: deceit overshadows this pursuit of undefined ideals and values.

Pip's necessity to explore his ancestry eases the achievement of self-knowledge, thus solving his identity struggle. Pip, in his pursuit to reconnect with the family that passed away, strives to discover more than his origin but also a part of himself using the only means accessible to him at his age: imagination. Although playful at first glance, his creative quest and inner struggle for redefining his family's identity cause him to weep: the creativity he employs betrays his solitude and the absence of family members. Contrary to his desires, Pip could only be in his family's proximity through imagination.

In extension, Pip's individual situation converts into a common circumstance as it was rather frequent in nineteenth-century Victorian England: many children were orphans, and families were decimated by poverty, disease and poor working conditions (Pennington 2011). Another struggle for life is embodied in the Pip-Magwitch relationship. To contextualize, the escaped convict, Magwitch, interrupts Pip's attempt to connect with his family in the cemetery. Under the threat of having his throat slashed and being eaten by the convict (still trapped in chains), Pip reveals that his sister's husband, Joe Gargery, is a blacksmith.

To continue living, Pip promises to bring food and a file to Magwitch to remove the ironed restriction (Dickens 1998, 10-11). The scene illustrates the first out of numerous times in which his encounters and relationships with individuals

have a tormenting value on Pip. Even if their motivations differ, they employ their own means to fight for their lives. Magwitch tries to evade the police by using a fellow human, Pip, while Pip tries to service Magwitch to escape the authorities in exchange for his life. Pip's fight is a proper fight for life, while Magwitch's fight for life may mean life outside of bars, thus freedom.

Pip's struggle for life continues at home, where his guardians do not offer him comfort and safety. His delayed return to the marshes of Kent brings him a scolding and beating from his sister, Mrs Joe. Out of fear, Pip does not confess the reason for his late arrival and endures a re-education session with Tickler, a stick ironically baptized in that manner. Through the narrator's confessions, the readers discover that Mrs Joe scolds Pip for his disappearance, blames him for wearing an apron daily (an apparent reference to her discontent with belonging to the lower class) and for easing her way to the cemetery (Dickens 1998, 15). Mrs Joe considers that her efforts to carry the burden of Pip's upbringing age her and drain away her life force.

Consequently, Mrs Joe cultivates Pip's sense of inferiority. Curious about what a convict means because of his previous encounter, Pip continuously asks Mrs Joe about the Hulks prisoner ships. His sister and guardian, nagged by the numerous interrogations, adds that not only criminals are sentenced to be imprisoned there but also the ones who ask too many questions, an obvious reference to Pip. The paragraph below indicates how Pip amplifies the gravity of his discussion with his sister, plus his perception of the previous encounters with the convicts:

I was in mortal terror of the young man who wanted my heart and liver; I was in mortal terror of my interlocutor with the ironed leg; I was in mortal terror of myself, from whom an awful promise had been extracted; I had no hope of deliverance through my all-powerful sister, who repulsed me at every turn; I am afraid to think of what I might have done, on requirement, in the secrecy of my terror. (Dickens 1998, 22).

Pip, now facing a "mortal terror" (Dickens 1998, 22), receives consecutive frights, from both strangers and his guardian. While collecting food from the house, the little boy imagines the outcome of his so-called horrendously-perceived theft: he believes that stealing food from his sister for Magwitch and his younger ally equals a shift of status into a convict. Thus, Pip might be arrested and might possibly inhabit the Hulks, as payment for his law abidance.

Mrs Joe provides her family with food and keeps the domestic sphere in order, even though Pip's sister does not offer him emotional nurturing. As a result,

the readers can identify that Mrs Joe's guardianship only extends to physical needs, such as food and shelter. By applying strict rules and re-educating his brother with Tickler, Mrs Joe appears authoritative in the eyes of young Pip, who perceives her as an "all-powerful sister" (Dickens 1998, 22). Even if there are flaws in her behavior, by judging Joe's relationship with his wife, one can try to view her with understanding and compassion.

Although she exaggerates by saying she wore an apron all her life, this claim holds its ground in the sense that the responsibilities she bears may have turned her into a colder person. The readers should not forget that Mrs Joe witnessed her family's death, and her only living relative is Pip. Mrs Joe's nature is revealed in how other characters address her, as names in Dickensian fiction have a purpose, as indicated by Hartley (2016, 43-45). Pip identifies his sister as "Mrs Joe Gargery" by unconsciously using the husband's name to appropriate the wife's identity. Her guardianship is passed on to Joe Gargery, the male adult figure of the house. This process allows a transfer of values and identities (traits and expectations): the emotional nurturing expected from women becomes Joe's responsibility, while the authority of the house and over Pip and Joe shifts to Mrs Joe.

The boy's need for emotional nurturing sparks from Joe Gargery's compassion, depicted as helpless as Pip in his relationship with the house's authority: the control over the domestic sphere is entirely Mrs Joe's. In Joe, who is not blood-related to Pip, the child finds a confidant and supporter in the struggle with the perceived-authoritarian figure of the house: Joe's kind nature grants him Pip's credibility, and the relationship between the two is that of "fellow-sufferers" (Dickens 1998, 14). As a result, Pip's burden becomes easier to bear since they have a shared struggle.

As a young man of promise, Pip provides Magwitch with food, drinks and a file, although he is conscious of the danger of his actions. The narrator's confessions reveal that young Pip feels more frightened of his sister and the public authorities than Magwitch. The Dickensian manner of portraying images in nuances of grey and never in white or black invites the readers to comprehend characters and their actions from different perspectives, such as in the above-presented case of Mrs Joe. According to Carey, as quoted in Hartley, the author himself "sees almost everything from two opposite points of view" (2016, 11-12). By applying this strategy, Pip's actions can be read as humanitarian since his kindness is the key to Magwitch's survival. Pip sees similarities in how Magwitch eats the received food and how his big dog eats.

The previously-described image serves as a starting point in a possible companionship, with Pip as the provider who prevents Magwitch's starvation. The

perspective of their yet unworded connection starts when Pip keeps Magwitch's secret and receives a "Thankee" as gratitude, uttered by Magwitch (Dickens 1998, 27).

Likewise, Joe portrays the same humanitarian approach toward Magwitch during the Christmas dinner. Interrupted during their meal, Joe and Pip accompany the officers who capture and bind Magwitch and the other convict (who visibly have an ongoing conflict with each other). Magwitch does not reveal how he survived and protects Pip by veiling the truth: Magwitch confesses to stealing food from the blacksmith's home, meaning Mrs Joe's food. Joe feels pity for Magwitch and calls him a "poor miserable fellow-creatur[e]" (Dickens 1998, 55).

Joe proves his compassion by using this expression, a warm manner of replying to Magwitch. Joe's attitude makes Pip feel at ease for two reasons. The first one is Pip's assurance that someone else exhibits kindness to the inmate: the effect is more substantial since Joe shows understanding, mainly because Pip respects him. The second one is Pip's escape from being revealed as the little thief, as he was the trespasser who stole food from Mrs Joe.

Pip and Joe's connection strengthens with the latter's effort to teach the child his profession. Although manual labour is associated with the lower class, Pip does not consider that aspect yet: his status as Joe's novice instils a sense of stability within Pip. The young boy finds companionship in Joe by helping him with his blacksmith chores, and, as a result, Pip's purposelessness and inferiority seem to fade away. Under the guardianship of Joe's kindness and simplicity, the struggle between the two companions in suffering appears less poignant.

His life takes a different turnout when Pumblechook (his uncle) takes Pip to Satis house to attend to Miss Havisham and her adoptive daughter, Estella. The uncle channels his efforts toward gaining resources because he believes Pip could benefit from the wealthy older woman. Until then, Pip's adult companions were his sister and Joe Gargery, as the child's parents and brothers passed away. Consequently, Pip longs for a companion his age.

The absence of explicit benevolence and caring in his relationship with his sister and guardian amplifies Pip's desire for companionship. Mrs Joe Gargery punishes him for transgressing her rules and blames him for experiencing hardships. As Hartley claims, Dickens constructs characters who exhibit an "externalized psychology" (Hartley 2016, 52). In other words, the numerous manifestations of one's thoughts, experiences, and traumas are unveiled to the eyes of other characters and readers by specific means: their movement, appearance, language, and intentions. In this manner, Pip's desire to overcome the trauma of losing all his younger brothers and being an orphan manifests in the desperate need for fellowship. His inferiority and almost lack of validation amplify

once he meets Miss Havisham and her adopted daughter, Estella, contrary to his (great) expectations.

Once acquainted with Estella, Pip's hope of connecting with the girl fails to take shape. Estella treats Pip coldly whenever he comes to visit Satis house and makes Pip realize some issues he was unaware of until then, such as class distinction. Estella, raised by the wealthy Miss Havisham, treats Pip with superiority, not with the closeness Pip desires. For example, Mrs Joe and Estella add to Pip's sense of mediocrity by treating him coldly and deeming him undeserving of empathy and affirmation. Estella's attitude toward Pip, in extension, could reiterate Mrs Joe's and Miss Havisham's behaviour.

Miss Havisham embodies a lack of movement or progress, in contrast to Pip's continuous struggles. Her existence is paralyzed to such an extent that even time has stopped: the clocks in Satis house froze twenty minutes before eight. Moreover, the environment displays stillness and the absence of progress: the rooms are unkempt, and lightning is obscure and provided by dim candles. Mrs Havisham also blends with the environment: her attire continuously consists of an old wedding dress, contributing to the dominating feeling of paralysis which resides over objects and humans.

Clothes are relevant in Dickensian works, considering that they have a language of their own and "speak forcibly" (Hartley 2016, 47) about the characters. Thus, the readers can perceive that the woman is stuck in the past and incapable of physical movements denoting progress. Even so, at a closer glance, Miss Havisham's repressed physical struggle makes her capable of enacting a mental struggle or changes because she poorly educates Estella. In this case, the idea of struggle is not physical but mental. Miss Havisham projects herself onto Estella and brings her into her world where women need to punish men. She passes her perspective onto Estella, who inflicts mental changes in Pip: her coldness amplifies Pip's sense of inferiority and makes him rethink Joe's taught values.

Consequently, Estella's emotionlessness toward Pip results from Miss Havisham's education. The woman wants to obtain revenge on men for being abandoned on her wedding day by teaching Estella how to become spiteful and show a "cold disdain" (Hawes 2007, 70) to men and boys, in Pip's case. As such, Miss Havisham tries to reach her ambitions by using Estella to torture Pip emotionally, to punish all men and boys, regardless of whether they wronged her or toward. Moreover, Estella's appropriated sense of revenge does not manifest only toward boys but also between boys. For example, the fact that Pip and Herbert are beating each other up brings her so much satisfaction that Estella encourages Pip to kiss her (Hartley 2016, 55).

Unaware of Mrs Havisham's intentions, Pip envisages his future and believes that education, manners, and a social position will help him win Estella's validation. He learns how to write and read with Bidly, an orphan girl, and claims support from Joe, who praises his efforts and calls him a "scholar" when reading his letter (Dickens 1998, 62). Pip's efforts are met with opposition when Miss Havisham pays Joe so that the blacksmith will officially turn Pip into his apprentice. Miss Havisham pays for Pip to become a manual labourer (masked support of child labour) and exercises power relations of domination over the lower-class gentry to make Pip feel inferior.

At a first glance, Miss Havisham seems to support Pip's education. Still, at a second glance, the education she provides is not one oriented toward progress (intellectual improvement, possibly along with manual work) but toward struggle (manual labour, excluding intellectual development). In this sense, Miss Havisham can be seen as a caricature of a Renaissance patron who has failed to use her resources well. Therefore, Pip's belief that the gap between him and Estella is diminishing crumbles: he becomes aware of his humble origins and education. This awareness ingrains a sense of shame toward what he had previously treasured.

The idea of Estella witnessing his unkempt appearance haunts Pip, who blindly desires to gain her confirmation: simultaneously, Pip disregards the affirmation he already receives from Joe. By considering the novel's title, the readers can grasp Pip's pursuit and endorsement of Estella. The title embodies Pip's idealistic trait: his expectations are great, meaning he reveres everything around him and is prone to want more than he already has.

His projection of unrealistic aspirations extends its reach to people: for instance, Pip abandons the critic's gaze and contours Estella's image into flawless. As portrayed before, names represent the characters since they "speak forcibly" (Hartley 2016, 47). As Estella's name means 'star', Pip's attempt to obtain her validation and love can be read as his attempt to reach for the stars. In that light, Pip leads his efforts toward a goal which, as he believes, would give him the right to stay beside Estella: becoming an educated gentleman.

Pip's life leads to an unpredictable turnout and makes him feel closer to his ideal than ever before: he and Joe are informed by Jaggers, a lawyer from London, that an anonymous benefactor desires to pay for the boy's education. The news of Pip's fortunate opportunity is met with congratulations from Joe and Bidly. Miss Joe approves with nods, as she was mute and invalid after a yet unidentified person attacked her in the house, later revealed as Orlick.

Once the news spreads in Kent, people change their attitude toward Pip, such as the tailor and uncle Pumblechook: his sudden class advancement makes Pumblechook shake the boy's hand. The boy's infatuation with Estella foreshadows

that wealth's corrupt power will alter Pip. Pip wearing a new gentleman's suit has a symbolic value. Pip's infatuation with his class advancement opportunities makes him eager to change the people around him so that they would better fit in his entourage and not shame him. To illustrate, Pip asks Biddy to educate Joe and not join the coach during his departure to London. The request highlights a shift of perception regarding Joe and the young man's behaviour. It highlights that the criteria used to assess one's inferiority or superiority is social class and not human values, such as kindness.

On the contrary, Pip's attitude toward Miss Havisham differs for two reasons. First, Miss Havisham belongs to the upper-class category he aspires to. Secondly, Pip believes that the woman is his benefactress and wants to help him transform himself for Estella. As such, Pip becomes blinded by the idea of progress and by obtaining the forbidden fruits: Estella and social recognition. As portrayed above, the girl becomes an "object of male desire" (Camus 122), indicating that she is the means which can confirm his once-received validation after becoming a gentleman. While pursuing the acquisition of new values, Pip loses sight of his previously obtained values (inspired by Joe) and follows to reach consecutive ideals. Since his strategy is highly idealized and flawed, Pip acts rudely toward Joe, his former "fellow-sufferer" (Dickens 1998, 14). Although Pip feels guilt for how he treated Joe, he does not return to apologize and goes to London.

Pip's departure to London is a gesture that alludes to the habits of the rich to receive education in the capital city. Dickens's intention is not to criticize this practice but to criticize the ones who desire to educate themselves by having a corrupt motivation. In addition, Pip's change of residence displays a common nineteenth-century trend of industrialized Britain: urbanization, which marks an accelerated population movement toward urban centres in favour of villages. In the 1860s, during the publication of *Great Expectations*, 50% of the population inhabits urban centres such as London (4.5 million), Glasgow, and Liverpool (Mateos 2013, 9).

3. Survival and the mirage of upper-class values: "What does it mean to be a gentleman?"

Pip's following actions in London and his return to Kent and Satis house are all governed by consecutive epiphanies and disappointments. Once away from his first guardians, Pip continues his pursuit and acquires information that helps him to answer the question: "What Does it Mean to be a Gentleman?".

In London, Pip receives substantial alimony, lives with Herbert Pocket and is tutored by his father, Mr Matthew Pocket. The two boys realize that they fought each other at Satis house when they were younger. In Herbert, Pip finds a confidant who reminds him of Joe: Herbert suffered the same treatment from Estella and Havisham, which is why they became friends. From Herbert, Pip learns why Miss Havisham acts strangely: she was deserted on her wedding day by the man she loved, who had conspired with her brother to steal her fortune. As such, Pip realizes that Havisham employed the same stratagems on Herbert as she did on him: both needed to suffer by not obtaining Estella's validation.

Consequently, all involved children endure a subtle child exploitation process. Pip acquires more knowledge and realizes that the people around him have deluded him since childhood. The outcome of these disclosed enigmas helps Pip develop a critic's gaze and to weigh circumstances around him objectively. Once reunited with Estella, Pip finally realizes that Miss Havisham, his supposed benefactress, enjoys seeing Estella treat males coldly. Miss Havisham's desire for revenge sources Estella's dislike toward men. The older woman's pursuit of revenge ends up with a lack of maternal nurturing toward Estella. The young girl acts according to her surrogate mother's preaching. Thus, with no portrayals of empathy and love around her, Estella manifests heartlessness toward her adoptive mother, contrary to what Miss Havisham has expected: the chain of exploitation and mistreatment persists.

Once established in London, Pip receives a familiar figure in his shared home with Herbert: Joe, who wears a suit to fit in Pip's new environment. The readers and Joe are surprised by seeing that Pip has a servant and lives in a richly decorated home. In this scene, Joe informs Pip that he prefers wearing his working suit rather than the formal gentleman-like one. In contrast to Pip, his claim highlights that he did not change and did not aspire to become someone else: Joe keeps his simplicity and only transgresses his normal lifestyle, not to displease his friend and adoptive son. Instead of viewing Joe as a model, Pip feels ashamed of him once more and prefers to keep on the rich façade: Pip continually spends money on furniture and servants and accumulates debts.

A peculiar person's visit shatters Pip's pride: Magwitch, the escaped convict, arrives in London. Magwitch, exiled in the colonies, manages to accumulate a fortune and intends to repay his former child benefactor for assisting him in his struggle for life. Once revealed as his benefactor, the two re-establish a connection. Pip provided Magwitch with food and a file, leading to his survival and freedom; Magwitch proved that he returned the favour and enabled Pip to become a gentleman by using the money he earned in Australia.

Magwitch reciprocates Pip's empathy and tries to achieve his expectations through the young man: Magwitch lived on the streets and lived a life of crime to survive and surpass his condition. As his name illustrates, Abel Magwitch embodies an ambivalent character who has done his share of good and bad deeds and tries to redeem his wrongdoings by helping Pip. Although embarrassed by who his benefactor is at first, Pip ought to save Magwitch and help him leave London with aid from Herbert. His judgment proves that Pip becomes responsible for his decisions and consequences: Pip stops accumulating debts and allows Herbert to start his own business secretly. With these actions and an excellent example from Herbert (who teaches him that a gentleman can have realistic expectations and be moderate in his actions), Pip escapes the feeling of inaction, which he was controlled by before and acts as a guardian and anonymous benefactor to Herbert.

Surprisingly, the idea of progress or evolution manifests in a character for which time has stopped: Miss Havisham. After realizing the consequences of her actions, Miss Havisham is consumed by guilt and apologizes to Pip for her wrongdoings. Upon receiving Pip's forgiveness, Miss Havisham's dress, the clothing item which reminds her of her failed love story, catches fire, burns and wounds the woman before Pip's intervention. Once the main object of her dismay is destroyed, and Miss Havisham receives forgiveness, she gives her last breath: she is free from her deception in love, but she feels remorse for her treatment of Estella and Pip. In this light, considering Darwin's and Spencer's studies, Miss Havisham's death can be understood as an incapacity to adapt to environmental and external factors changes (such as Compeyson). Therefore, she loses the battle for survival.

More mysteries are revealed to Pip, and this makes him realize that his former guardians and representations of ideals are not as truthful as he believed them to be. Pip discovers the identity of the man who betrayed Miss Havisham, the man being no other than the second convict he encountered in the marshes of Kent and who has been following him in London: Compeyson. In contrast to Compeyson, Magwitch has been sentenced to a more extended trial in jail before escaping. The judges ruled upon the case by using the same criteria Pip used to assess Joe's inferiority: social class, meaning that the lower-class Magwitch had to spend more time in jail, even if Compeyson was the one that plotted the plan against Havisham. A wish for revenge rules both convicts, but Magwitch pursues to redeem himself, while Compeyson wants to stop Magwitch from escaping London, and collaborates with the police. The fight between the two convicts can be read as a struggle for resources: Magwitch intends to steal from Miss Havisham for subsistence, while Compeyson wants to steal to accumulate wealth. In a brawl on the Thames River, Pip witnesses the two fight and Compeyson drowning: as such, Compeyson's wrongdoings are punished at last.

The following scene resurfaces the opening scene, presented at the beginning of the essay. Now aware that Estella is Magwitch's daughter, Pip tells Magwitch that he loves her, and the man seals a kiss on his hand before symbolically giving his last breath: as Magwitch thanks Pip for food in the cemetery, he now thanks him with a gesture. Their unworded contract ends with Abel Magwitch's forgiveness and his passing away. He dies peacefully, understanding that Pip will care for Estella since he has repeatedly proven his abilities. In this sense, Pip realizes Estella's humble family origins and pities her. He is advised and supported by Jaggers and Wemmick not to reveal the secret by wishing to protect her. Pip's gestures prove that his previous ideals crumbled: he witnessed some examples of how crooked the rich are and that even a convict can surpass them in terms of humanitarian qualities. As Pip has proven before, he might unveil her family's history to Estella in the distant future, considering that he cannot keep the truth away from the people he loves: Joe, Bidly, and Herbert.

Pip returns to actual values when he is nursed back into health by Joe, who goes back to London. In the *On the Origins of Species* (1859), Darwin's illustration can encapsulate the importance of the gesture: Pip is "a plant on the edge of a desert" (Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* 1859, 62-63), and Joe supports him in fighting back. This compassionate representation allows Pip to survive: Joe represents the expression of human values, a keen demonstrator of empathy. Moreover, Joe pays for Pip's debts and saves him from going to jail, contributing to Pip's survival away from imprisonment. As a more experienced human being, Joe guides Pip to avoid seclusion, criminality and death at the end of his various struggles. Pip's guilt resurfaces, but he decides to act upon it and show his gratitude to Joe: Pip returns to Kent to thank Joe and asks for his forgiveness. Joe, now married to Bidly, reties his connections with Pip: Pip now realizes that the real gentleman and model in his life is Joe: "a gentle [...] man" (Dickens 1998, 609) who stood faithful to his values no matter what obstacles he encountered.

The novel's outcome presents Pip and Estella meeting at Satis house after years have passed. Estella and Pip reconcile, and Pip feels a change in Estella: "the friendly touch of the once insensible hand" (Dickens 1998, 635), meaning that Estella is not cold and spiteful anymore. As such, Estella manages to adapt to her environment and to understand human relations, knowledge which will help her in her struggle for survival and shaping her identity. Amid the cracks in their previous relationship, the struggles which led Pip and Estella to acquire values and feelings become shared and not individual: "I saw the shadow of no parting from her" (Dickens 1998, 638), pointing at a shared future and a shared... struggle for life.

3. Conclusion

The research paper portrayed how characters suffer losses and obtain various lessons throughout the novel's plot, as they engage in a pursuit of self-discovery, revenge, forgiveness, etc. As illustrated throughout the essay, the novel's characters create ideals and follow them blindly, losing sight of the truth, ethical values, and friendships. Even so, these failures are necessary to develop and comprehend some critical lessons: social class does not top kindness, characters should not push their ambitions onto someone else against one's will (Magwitch-Pip, Havisham-Estella), redemption is possible, and forgiveness can save people and counter their wrongdoings.

Pip's quest for identity and a better chance at Estella's love and validation turns him into a snob but teaches him to be responsible for his actions. He understands the meaning of pain and (eventually) eases others' suffering who ask for his forgiveness as a redeeming ritual, such as Mrs Joe, Magwitch, Miss Havisham, and even Estella. Although she had been educated to act coldly toward men, Estella has acquired warmth with the help of her own tribulations and with the aid of Pip. The prospects of her meeting her yet-alive mother, Molly, might still be viable in the future.

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