



Conversion in *Great Expectations*

An analysis of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* from a conversion narrative perspective

Omvändelse i *Lysande Utsikter*

En analys av Charles Dickens *Lysande Utsikter* ur ett omvändelseberättelseperspektiv

Sophie Ryrberg

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

English

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Supervisor: Åke Bergvall

Examiner: Johan Wijkmark

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Abstract

This essay will analyse Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* from a conversion narrative perspective. It will show that the journey of the protagonist Pip have resemblances to the journey of Dante in Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*. The reason for this is that *Great Expectations* is an equally clear example of a conversion narrative as *The Divine Comedy*. Both Pip and Dante meet sinners along their way, but the focus is on how the protagonists deal with their own sins. Pip goes through a typical conversion, where he goes from an avaricious, prodigal and proud person, to a man who values working hard for a sufficient living and being with the ones he love.

Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*, written as a series in his magazine *All the Year Round*, 1860-1861, is about a young boy named Philip Pirrip, or Pip, who dreams of becoming a gentleman. His wish is granted, and before long, he becomes a capitalist who forgets all about his past and the people who love him. The main focus of this novel is about the conversion of the protagonist from bad to good. Therefore, this essay will analyse Pip's journey from the perspective of a conversion narrative. By comparing it to what can be seen as a prototypical Christian conversion narrative, with its descriptions of hell, purgatory and paradise, Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*, this essay will show that the journey of the protagonists Pip and Dante have resemblances beyond pure chance. Both Dante and Pip meet different sinners along their way, but the main theme is the life of one flawed human being, and his way to redemption.

Fiction has through ages provided stories about good and evil, and about heroes and villains (Alsford 8). When fictional characters are going through life they follow a map based on religion, ideology, people, and activities to help making choices (Alsford 6). The choices are divided into what people ought to do and what people would like to do. The philosopher Immanuel Kant stated that what ought to be done is the true form of morality (Alsford 26). Pip's choices in *Great Expectations* are based on morality, but can be interpreted as following the conversion narrative also seen in *The Divine Comedy*. A conversion narrative is from the beginning a Christian concept (Bal 19) and tells "individual stories of descent into sin and redemption by divine power" (Gilpin 257). However, more secular versions developed from this religious origin. This divine power is in *Great Expectations* therefore replaced by the moral changes the protagonist goes through in the capitalistic class society of Victorian England. Since Dickens's view on religion was ambiguous, he did not attend church but kept a respectful attitude towards God, it seems more like he is trying to show that the said Hell and Paradise exist on earth and that there is no need to wait for death to experience them (Tomalin 137). Studies have shown that one important feature to look for when studying conversion narratives is to identify, compare, and account for the formal conversion of individuals and social context (Johnston 552). For a narrative to be seen as one of conversion it has to describe the protagonist's journey through a period of struggle, emptiness, or drift, to a point where he or she hits "rock bottom", and from there forms positive features of him- or herself. This transformative nature of the conversion experience can be shown through metaphoric contrast, as light and dark as well as a contrast between thoughts or actions of the old self and the ones of the new self (Johnston 553).

As a typical conversion narrative is divided into three different parts, *The Divine Comedy*

and *Great Expectations* are also divided into three sections. Not only can the reader make out Pip's quick descent into what could be compared to Dante's "Hell", his trials to become a better person have similarities to "Purgatorio", and lastly he ascends into a perfect and happy life, as in "Paradisio". Dickens has also pointed out the beginnings and ends of these three sections, or stages. He does this by writing: "this is the end of the first stage of Pip's expectations" (136), and later the same thing for the end of the second stage (277). Since both stories, like the typical conversion narrative, are also told from a first person perspective, and beginning on major Christian holidays – *The Divine Comedy* on the day before Good Friday and *Great Expectations* on Christmas Eve – makes their connection even stronger.

Pip's conversion narrative begins when he, on Christmas Eve, goes to the churchyard to mourn his dead parents (Dickens 3). There he meets a fearful convict who threatens to kill him unless he brings him some food and a file (Dickens 6). As Pip promises to do this, one of the most important developments of his life is set in motion. Even if the young Pip helps the convict, he does not do so because he is noble. He does it out of fear, and he can feel that the convict is strongly connected to death. He says that it looks as if the convict is trying to elude the hands of the dead, rising from their graves, trying to pull him down (Dickens 7). Nevertheless, Pip is nothing but kind to the convict when he returns with the food and the file he stole from his sister and guardian Mrs Joe Gargery and her husband Joe Gargery. The convict, on the other hand, is rude, angry and seems to be dangerous. This rude behaviour does not change the fact that Pip wants to help him and is kind to him (Dickens 17).

As can be seen in this act of kindness, Pip is still innocent and has not yet started his descent into Hell. He is merely a young boy who wants to help. Of course, the fact that the man is a convict and threatens to kill him plays a part in why Pip decides to steal from his family to help him. And the fact that Pip steals shows that he has a tendency to fall for sin. What happens next is that Pip starts to feel guilty for stealing from Joe. The guilt, however, seems more to be fear of getting caught, the reader soon finds out, and he does not seem to mind that he stole from Mrs Joe (Dickens 15). Pip says that the reason he is not feeling guilty towards Mrs Joe, is simply because he does not love her. Joe, on the other hand, he loves, because he lets Pip love him, and he wants to tell him the truth about what has happened to his file. He does not do this, though, because he is afraid that Joe would think less of him (Dickens 34). One night, soldiers knock on the door at Pip's house, and he immediately thinks that they have come to arrest him for stealing (Dickens 26). However, they tell them that they are looking for two escaped convicts and ask Pip and Joe if they want to join them in their search (Dickens 27-28). One of these convicts, it turns out, is the man whom Pip helped. Pip

is eager to make sure that he does not think that Pip betrayed him (Dickens 29). The convict seems certain of Pip's innocence and instead tells the soldiers that he stole the food and the file, to make sure that Pip does not get into trouble (Dickens 33).

Now entering the first stage of a conversion narrative, Dickens describes how meeting Miss Havisham and Estella leaves Pip feeling empty and inadequate. Even if Pip has already at this point met some sins, it is still compensated by the kindness of not only himself, but also the convict and Joe. Pip's life does not take a turn for the worse until he goes through the gate of Satis House and meets Mrs Havisham and Estella. Perhaps the warning Dante reads above the Gate of Hell in *The Divine Comedy* would have served right on the gate of Satis House as well:

Through me is the way into the woeful city; through me is the way into the eternal woe; through me is the way among the lost people. Justice moved my lofty maker: the divine Power, the supreme Wisdom and the primal Love made me. Before me were no things created, save eternal, and I eternal last. Leave every hope, ye who enter! (Dante 4)

In a typical conversion narrative, contrasts are used to emphasize the differences between good and bad, for example the contrast between light and dark. The first person Pip meets when he enters Satis House is his light, Estella (Dickens 47). Not only does her name mean star, Pip often describes her as the light in the dark, for example: "Her light came along in the dark passage like a star" (Dickens 50). She also metaphorically calls herself a lighted candle later in the novel (Dickens 265). She, the light, will nevertheless be the reason for every bad, dark decision Pip makes that leads him deeper and deeper into the circles of Hell until he finally realizes that he needs to be redeemed. Next, he meets Miss Havisham, a proud woman who made Estella who she is. She is not only a proud person, but she also takes pride in having raised and trained the proud Estella. Pip, however, does not interpret Miss Havisham as sinful in the way he should when he first meets her. A reason why he might be ignorant to this fact is that she is surrounded by an air of romance, since everything around her is kept from her wedding day. Pip might regard Satis House as a fairy tale, and in this fairy tale Miss Havisham is under a terrible curse. Because he observes the situation this way, he thinks that Miss Havisham is aware of the evil enchantment that she and her house lie under and that she wants him to come there to free her from it (Slater 292). However, there is no reason to think that Miss Havisham understands that her misery derives from more than having been jilted. Instead she seeks to revenge herself against society on its own terms (Raphael 410).

In a conversion narrative there is a point where the protagonist starts making bad choices, and this point in *Great Expectations* is when Pip visits Satis House. When visiting Satis House, Pip immediately falls for Estella and tries to climb for the light, just as Dante does (Dante 1). What both of them forget is that there are no easy ways to get to the top, and both of them are pulled down by sins. In Dante, the sins take form of a leopard, a lion and a she-wolf (Dante 1). These are said to represent lust, pride and avarice, all of which Pip will encounter in himself and others within a short period of time. The sin of lust is most often described as sexual desire (Cunningham 22). However, the Latin term for lust is “luxuria”, which is translated to riotous or excessive behaviour (Cunningham 24). Sexual desires themselves are, therefore, not sinful, but it is when they become an excessive behaviour that they are considered a sin. Pride, on the other hand, is seen as the “fountainhead of all other sin” (Cunningham 72). It is regarded as especially negative since it is the sin of the rebellious angel who later became Lucifer or Satan (72). Avarice, or greed as it is more commonly called today, is used to characterize an excessive desire for material goods (Cunningham 35).

With these sins lurking in the background for now, Pip begins his way into the darkness that will be his future. By continuously pointing out the flaws in how common and coarse Pip is, Estella makes him question himself (Dickens 51). He blames Joe for not raising him better and for making him so common and coarse (Dickens 52). He is mad with himself and goes out for a walk in the garden of Satis House. There he meets a pale young gentleman who wants to fight (Dickens 77). Pip is talked in to fighting the young pale gentleman and then wins the fight. Doing so leaves Pip feeling a gloomy satisfaction, though. He even regards himself as a wolf (Dickens 78). As mentioned earlier, the wolf represents avarice and from this day, Pip is dragged into this sin and wants to become a gentleman (Dickens 83). The reason to why he wants to become a gentleman is because he is in love with Estella. Whether or not this is real love or simply the temptations of lust is hard to tell, but since Estella is a very proud and cold girl, and therefore not enjoyable to spend time with, one can only assume that he is following his lust based on her beautiful appearance (Dickens 47). His behaviour toward her is nothing less than excessive. He thinks about her all the time, and will do anything to get her. He even forgets about other joys in life. In *The Divine Comedy*, the lustful is being punished by blowing around in a hurricane whirlwind (Dante 7). When Pip is visiting Miss Havisham and Estella, he stands by a window. The wind then blows up towards the window, as to attack him (Dickens 68). In other words, he has now lowered himself down into the sin of lust.

The struggle, which is typical for a conversion narrative, continues for Pip, and he feels

emptiness because of Estella and therefore tries to find a way to fill it. One day Pip tells Biddy, his young teacher, that he wants to become a gentleman and that he is unhappy with how his life is now. Biddy then tells him that it is a bad idea and that he should be happy with the life he has (Dickens 107). Pip states that he probably would have been happy with his life if Estella would not have told him that he was coarse and common (Dickens 109). From this point, Pip only cares about the opinions of one person, and that is Estella. He does not care that Biddy wants him to stay and be happy with his life. He does not care that Joe is thrilled by having him as an apprentice in his forge. Little by little, Pip is losing the support that was holding him away from Hell, and a sinful life.

When leading a life of emptiness, one might be more attentive to other people's struggle to fill their emptiness. There are different ways to try to obtain satisfaction, and one might be over-eating. As Dante enters the third circle of Hell, he meets the gluttonous. They are being punished by living under a constant rain of filth on a ground that stinks (Dante 8). In *Great Expectations*, a man called Mr Pumblechook visits Pip, Joe and Mrs Joe on Christmas day. He is described as a "large hard-breathing, middle-aged, slow man" (Dickens 21). These characteristics seem quite prototypical for a gluttonous man. According to Lawrence S. Cunningham gluttony is the only one of the seven deadly sins to be described as both physically and psychologically noxious for human beings. Constant eating and drinking might get results as obesity, dullness and a pleasure of eating for the sake of eating, not because of hunger (13-14). It can also be because one is trying to fill a feeling of emptiness. Pip later says about Mr Pumblechook that he eats in a "gorging and gormandising manner" (Dickens 46). The same day as Mr Pumblechook pays them a visit, Mr Wopsle has a speech about how swine is a symbol for gluttony and how the gluttony of swine is put before them as an example to the young (Dickens 23). Mr Pumblechook is punished for his gluttonous behaviour when he accidentally drinks tar water, which is described as bad-smelling and filthy, when he thinks he is about to drink a tasty brandy. The reason why he drank tar instead of brandy is because Pip gave the real brandy to the convict and wanted to fill the bottle up with something (Dickens 24-25). The different sins both in the form of Pip himself and others, all affect him and become a part of his conversion.

Pip continues his downward journey when he gets himself into the sins of the avaricious and the prodigal. As told, Pip wants to become a gentleman, which not only shows proud behaviour, but also the will to be rich, which makes him avaricious. One day, his dreams come true and a man called Mr Jaggers tells Pip that he is a man of great expectations and that an unknown benefactor has given him a great deal of money (Dickens 117). To be able to

obtain these fortunes, however, Pip has to leave his home and move to London, where he can become a true gentleman (Dickens 117). Even if he has a home with people who love him, and he sees how sad it makes Joe and Biddy, he still decides to leave, for the sake of his money and consequently, according to Pip's imagination, Estella (Dickens 123). These choices point towards an avaricious behaviour. Well in place in London, Pip starts spending excessive amounts of money and gets lost in the ways of the prodigal (Dickens 173). In *The Divine Comedy*, the avaricious and the prodigal are being punished by having to push tremendous weights by around in an endless circle, bumping in to one another (Dante 9). Virgil states about these sinners that "[i]ll-keeping and ill-spending have taken from them the beautiful world, and set them to this scuffle" (Dante 10). Avarice and prodigality are cardinal sins, since they go against the will of Fortune. Fortune is supposed to "transfer the vain goods from race to race, and from one blood to another, beyond the resistance of human wit", meaning that she decides who is rich and who is poor (Dante 10). The avaricious and prodigal oppose this, since they hoard and spend money in a reckless manner, and therefore are not regardful to Fortune. Virgil therefore claims that "[a]ll the gold that is beneath the moon, or ever was, could not of these weary souls make a single one repose" (Dante 10). While Dante is out to show clear examples to symbolize the different sin, one has to remember that they have to be interpreted into more vaguely described symbols in *Great Expectations*. This weight that Pip has to carry around in an endless circle and that he does not seem to be able to get rid of is his love for Estella. It is always weighing him down and making him sad (Dickens 112). "[E]verything in our intercourse did give me pain," Pip states, but he still cannot get rid of the thoughts of her (Dickens 229). In other words, Pip's love, or lust, for Estella is a punishment for his avaricious behaviour.

An important step in our protagonist's conversion is having to deal with wrathful persons in his surroundings. In Dante's Hell, the wrathful are being punished by smiting each other in mud (Dante 10). Two wrathful persons Pip meets early in his life are Mrs Joe and a man who works in the forges with Joe, called Dodge Orlick (Dickens 95). They are both angry almost all the time and seem to be looking for reasons to be angry. These two even get into a fight with each other (Dickens 97). This fight later results in Orlick trying to kill Mrs Joe (Dickens 101). He even later tries to do the same to Pip, which becomes an important step later in our protagonist's conversion (Dickens 359).

Seeing all these sinners being punished, and living up to some of the sins himself, one would think that Pip should see that the path he is going on is leading in the wrong direction. Sadly enough, he is not able to see this yet, since he is blinded by the light of Estella. Instead,

Pip continues all the way down to the eighth circle of Hell. This circle first and foremost contains the seducers (Dante 25). As one might guess, the seducer in *Great Expectations* is none other than the proud, cold and beautiful Estella. Estella is, according to Pip's friend Herbert, "brought up by Miss Havisham to wreak revenge on all the male sex" (Dickens 151). Pip also thinks he hears Miss Havisham whisper in Estella's ear: "break their hearts, my pride and hope, break their hearts and have no mercy," which should have given him some clues to what kind of girl she was (Dickens 80). She also gets her punishment, since she gets married to a man later on who hits her (Dickens 410). In this same manner, the seducers are being punished in Hell by being beaten by a demon (Dante 25).

After meeting these sins, Pip is already deep into his Hell, which in this novel can be described as the effects of capitalism. Capitalism comes from the word capital, which means money, and implies that money rules society (Tyson 62). Continuing down to the deepest circle in "Hell", the sin of Satan is found, which is betrayal of your benefactor (Dante 51). This betrayal can be seen as a kind of pride. The biggest traitor of his benefactor is in *Great Expectations* Pip himself, for leaving Joe and Biddy to become rich. He realizes this mistake, though, but not until he finds out that the convict is his secret founder of fortunes. He then says that he feels a sharp and deep pain for leaving Joe and Biddy (Dickens 276).

The protagonists have now reached the turning point of the conversion narrative, rock bottom, and it is now time for them to begin their climb up through purgatory to cleanse themselves and become better persons. The place to which Pip moves is the "ugly, crooked, narrow, and dirty" London (Dickens 138). He arrives to the shameful Smithfield, filled with filth, fat, blood and foam (Dickens 140). In this godforsaken place, Pip will learn the hard way why sinful behaviour is bad, and he will get rid of all the sins weighing him down, one after another. The first terrace of Dante's "Purgatorio" is the one where the prideful are being cleansed (Dante 68-69). Pride is a sin that imbues the entire novel of *Great Expectations*, and it is also, as stated earlier, the worst of the sins, since it is the foundation of all the other sins. An earlier example of pride, which Pip meets, was Estella and Miss Havisham, but they are far from the only type of pride Pip meets. As Biddy explains to Pip, there are many different types of pride, and far from all of them are bad (Dickens 126). Nevertheless, the form that Pip wants to clean himself from is the negative kind that makes people bad. Pip gets cleansed from this sin when he watches Estella and Miss Havisham have a fight. Miss Havisham becomes angry when Estella is acting coldly towards her and Estella then tells her that she is the one who taught her to be proud and cold. Estella says to Miss Havisham that she can give back everything she gave to her, but she cannot love her: "And if you ask me to give you what

you never gave me, my gratitude and duty cannot do impossibilities” (Dickens 259). Pip then witnesses the bad side of being too proud and sees how it affects both himself and the people around him.

To be able to fully recover from the sin of pride, Pip does not only have to see the two proud sinners fight, but Miss Havisham has to earn forgiveness by showing Pip sincere repentance and later by the death from shock after she has been “burned in a kind of purgatorial fire” (Friedman 419). After seeing Estella and Miss Havisham fight, Pip leaves Satis House and has time to process what he witnessed before he later returns to talk to Estella about how he feels for her. He has a speech about how he has always loved her and about how Miss Havisham did not know how much pain she actually caused him:

It would have been cruel in Miss Havisham, horribly cruel, to practise on the susceptibility of a poor boy, and to torture me though all these years with a vain hope and an idle pursuit, if she had reflected on the gravity of what she did. But I think she did not. I think that in the endurance of her own trial, she forgot mine, Estella. (Dickens 307)

Pip returns to London and after a couple days when Miss Havisham sends him a note telling him to return to Satis House (Dickens 334). She has now thought about what Pip said and realised all the damage she has done. She is now broken and sad and when Pip sees her so sad, he forgives Miss Havisham for all she has done (Dickens 338). Since this forgiving of her symbolizes Pip dealing with the sins she represents, a clear example of what needs to be done to be cleansed from sin is given. Once Pip has forgiven her, she sets herself on fire. Pip manages to put the fire out, but she later dies anyway, from shock after the incineration (Dante 338).

Before Miss Havisham sets herself on fire, though, Pip has time to be redeemed from another sin in her presence, the one of envy. Ever since Pip obtained his fortunes, everybody has been sure that Miss Havisham is the secret benefactor, since nobody knows about the convict, even her own relatives. The relatives are therefore envious of Pip. They even write letters full of bad comments about Pip to Miss Havisham (Dickens 228). There is one relative to Miss Havisham, though, called Mr Matthew Pocket, who is said to be “above small jealousy and spite” (Dickens 228). He does not try to deceive Miss Havisham to get her money, and he does not try to blacken Pip’s name in the eyes of her. He is not envious, and when Pip sees this, he talks to Miss Havisham and tells her that he is not as false as the rest of her relatives (Dickens 306). Mr Pocket is therefore rewarded with the second biggest heritage,

after Estella, of course, when Miss Havisham dies (Dickens 396).

Later in Pip's life, he gets to meet and deal with the old wrathful person of his past when Orlick tries to kill him. Orlick captures Pip and tells him how he is always angry because of Pip. Not only did Pip make sure that he lost his job at Satis House, he also came between him and the woman he loved, Biddy (Dickens 359). Pip was always favoured, while Orlick was bullied and beaten (Dickens 361). He also keeps calling Pip a wolf, which was mentioned earlier as a symbol for Pip's avarice (Dickens 359). Pip shows that he is on his way to redemption by not fearing the death that lies before him. Instead, he fears what will happen when he dies. He fears that Magwitch, the convict, will think that he abandoned him after finding out that he is his benefactor and that he would die because of him, since he has been deported for life, and returning means death. He fears that Herbert would doubt him and that Joe and Biddy will never know how sorry he is. That is worse than death, according to Pip (Dickens 360).

In a conversion narrative the protagonist deals with contrasts between thoughts of his old self and his new self, which Pip does when he reflects over the effect his expectations and avarice have on him. Pip continues to cleanse himself and is now on his way to becoming a person of good moral choices. He then begins to acknowledge the sins that started his journey, and which have been with him for a long time, avarice and prodigality (Dickens 346). Dante also returns to the sins of avarice by mentioning the symbol for it again: the she-wolf. He exclaims, "[a]ccursed be thou, old she-wolf, that more than all the other beasts hast prey, because of thy hungry hollow without end!" (Dante 83). He then explains that the way to redeem the sin of avarice and prodigality is by poverty and generosity (Dante 83). Pip often mentions that he wasted money and came in debt, but after a while he starts to realise that the money is actually affecting both him and his surroundings. Pip says, "[a]s I had grown accustomed to my expectations, I had insensibly begun to notice their effect upon myself and those around me. Their influence on my own character, I disguised from my recognition as much as possible, but I knew very well that it was not all good" (Dickens 232). In other words, he is starting to realise that the money is affecting him negatively, but he still tries to avoid seeing the negative parts. It is not until Pip finds out that Magwitch is his benefactor, and not Miss Havisham, that he decides to not take another penny from him, leaving him broke and in debt (Dickens 276) He does not want Miss Havisham or Mr Jaggers, the man who informed Pip of his expectations, to help him in any other way than to give the money that are missing to help Herbert with his career (Dickens 346).

After Pip gets through all these different sins, he becomes ill and in his sickness he in

earnest reflects over his conversion and the people in it (Dickens 391). Magwitch is dead after an unsuccessful escape plan, and Pip is left alone and deep in debt. In the frenzy of his illness, he processes all the sins he has now made his way through. He thinks he hears the sound of the convict walking up the stairs to tell him that he is his benefactor. He also sees an iron furnace in a dark corner of his room with Miss Havisham burning inside it, after Pip witnessed her set herself on fire (Dickens 391). He starts attacking people, thinking they want to kill him and in the end sees Joe's face everywhere. He later realises that it, in fact, is Joe's face, and that Joe is there to take care of him, as the kind man he is. Pip then exclaims: "Oh, Joe, you break my heart! Look angry at me, Joe. Strike me, Joe. Tell me of my ingratitude. Don't be so good to me" (Dickens 394). This exclamation of repentance shows that Pip has successfully processed these sins and is now ready to proceed to the last two of the sins in purgatory.

As Pip tries to redeem the last parts of his faulty way of life, he meets and argues with Mr Pumblechook, who is already known as a gluttonous man (Dickens 403). Mr Pumblechook has always told others that he is Pip's earliest benefactor and founder of his fortunes, even though this is not correct. He states that Pip is ungrateful to him and that Pip went broke as a "reward of ingratitude to his earliest benefactor, and founder of fortune's" (Dickens 405). "Yet Joe, dear Joe, *you* never tell of it. Long-suffering and loving Joe, *you* never complain. Nor you, sweet-tempered Biddy" Pip thinks when he first hears how Mr Pumblechook has been talking behind his back about how ungrateful he is (Dickens 356). Now, when Pip has a chance to talk to him, face to face, he tells Mr Pumblechook that he does not see his earliest benefactor, and founder of fortunes in the room. Mr Pumblechook continues by telling him that he was right to do it, and that he would do it again, to which Pip answers, "[i]t's a pity [...] that the man did not say what he had done and would do again" (Dickens 405) meaning that Mr Pumblechook has not really done anything at all, and therefore only describes it as "it". Pip does not care what other people, and especially Mr Pumblechook, think of him anymore, because he only cares about Joe and Biddy.

The last sin in Dante's "Purgatorio" is lust, and in *Great Expectations* Pip has to handle his lust of Estella by getting over her and realizing that Biddy is the better choice. As mentioned earlier, Pip falls for the sin of lust when he pines after Estella. She, however, is married now, and Pip is forced to forget about her (Dickens 337). He realises that the best choice for him, which he should have understood from the beginning, is Biddy and he therefore decides to ask her if she would like to spend the rest of her life with him (Dickens 401). He returns home and now finds the countryside more beautiful and peaceful than he had ever known it to be

before (Dickens 405). Meeting Bidy and Joe, he finds out that they are married, and therefore Pip's plan to propose to her falls through (Dickens 406). But since Pip is now cleansed from all sins, he does not think about himself, but rather how happy he is for both of them. He tells them that he has decided to move to Cairo, where Pip's friend Herbert is now partner in a firm, and can therefore give Pip a job as a clerk. But before he leaves, he tells Joe and Bidy that he will not rest until he has paid back all the money Joe used to pay his debts. He also begs for their forgiveness, and they forgive him, but add "if [they] have anythink to forgive" (Dickens 407).

Finally able to stand above all sin, Pip lives a good life in Cairo and is happy, but decides to return to England to meet Joe, Bidy and hopefully Estella. He returns to Joe and Bidy, who now have a son they call Pip (Dickens 409). Even if Pip has left the sin of lust, and its excessive behaviour, he still has not forgotten about her. The lust is now transformed into love. He therefore visits the ruins of the now demolished Satis House for her sake. Pip has heard that Estella is separated from the man who, as previously stated, was very cruel to her, and hit her. He was described as a compound of pride, avarice, brutality and meanness, which means that Estella too got her share of the effects of sins. Her husband, however, also got his punishment, and died in an accident consequent on his ill-treatment of a horse (Dickens 410). For Pip to be able to reach "Paradisio", as mentioned in *The Divine Comedy*, he nevertheless needs to find his Beatrice (Dante 105). Conveniently enough, Estella also visits the ruin on that very same day. She tells him that the ruin is now everything she owns, and that she has had a miserable life. She says that she has "been bent and broken, but – [she] hope[s] – into a better shape", meaning that she too has made her way through sins to hopefully end up in paradise (Dickens 412). She asks Pip how he is doing, and as the converted person he now is, he answers that he is working pretty hard for a sufficient living, and therefore he is doing well. The novel ends with the two of them, walking out of the ruin of the hell where it all started, hand in hand (Dickens 412).

Since the direction on his path often leads him to contrition, Pip could, in a way, be seen as an anti-hero, but what is important here is, however, not if Pip is a hero or an anti-hero, but to see that regardless he awakes our sympathy. "His story is one of failure, failure to understand what is happening to him, failure to win the girl he loves, failure to save his benefactor, failure to make anything of himself" (Tomalin 314). A character is seldom purely good or evil, hero or villain, but instead, there can be aspects of both in the same character (Alsford 124). Pip is one of those characters, and the reader can often question his decisions and actions, but Pip's journey through life is a lesson to learn for him in a very substantial way.

To conclude, the series of events occurring in *Great Expectations* show that the story is about redemption and conversion from being a person of bad moral choices, to one of good. The novel *Great Expectations* follows the parts in a conversion narrative just as *The Divine Comedy* does. Some of the more obvious similarities between *Great Expectations* and *The Divine Comedy* are that they are both parted into three sections as conversion narratives usually are, and they are both told from a first person perspective, which makes it easier for the protagonists to reflect upon their deeds. In the first part, Pip meets Miss Havisham and Estella in Satis House and starts to feel empty and inadequate. This leads to a struggle for Pip to fill his emptiness, which is typical for a conversion narrative. In his struggle, he meets different sins within himself and in others, for example pride, avarice, lust, gluttony and wrath. The second part of the conversion narrative in *Great Expectations* is about how Pip deals with the sins mentioned. Doing so, he reaches the third part of the conversion narrative and forms positive features of himself. In other words *Great Expectations* is a typical conversion narrative.

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