The Representation of Savagery and Civilization in *The Old Curiosity Shop*[1]

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Abstract: Although more than two decades have passed since imperialism in Victorian literature became one of the central subject of scholarly interest, *The Old Curiosity Shop* has never been discussed in relation to imperialism. The only exception is Deirdre David's reading of the novel, which focuses upon the contrast between savage, dark, male Quilp and civilized, pale, female Nell. Her reading, however, fails to explain the complex relationships between savagery and civilization, situating savagery outside a British society. The purpose of this paper is to reexamine the representation of savagery and civilization, which cannot be explained by simple dichotomy. The essay demonstrates that Dickens problematizes the notion of civilization by defining it not in contrast to savagery, but in an inseparable relationship with savagery, and that he presents a new model for the peaceful progress of civilization without violence by evoking a humane sensibility towards others in the reader's mind, trying to propagate his ideal in the real world beyond the world of fiction. I also examine the contemporary critics' response to the novel

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in order to see to what extent Dickens's attempt was successful.

I

Since Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) revealed imperialist ideology informing all aspects of nineteenth-century European culture, a number of critics have been engaged in examining the interplay between literature and empire in the Victorian era. Although at the outset their interest was limited to a handful of late-Victorian and Edwardian writers, Patrick Brantlinger's *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988) opened up the scholarly debate on imperialism in Victorian literature by demonstrating that the early and mid-Victorians, far from being indifferent to the colonies, took a keen interest in various imperialist projects such as emigration, the "opening up" of Africa, and the China trade (3-16). His book has been followed by further studies which re-read Victorian literature and examine how literature as discourse was shaped by, and shaped, imperialist ideology. Among them are Suvendrini Perera's *Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens* (1991), which investigates the crucial role novels had played in the development of imperial ideology during the first seventy years of the nineteenth century, and Deirdre David's *Rule Britannia: Women, Empire, and Victorian Writing* (1995), which focuses on gender and race politics in Victorian writing produced by, and about, women.

Although scores of articles and chapters have been written on imperialism in Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41), a novel which is firmly situated in England, has been resistant to the discussion of the question of imperialism in Dickens. The only exception is David's postcolonial reading of the novel in Chapter 2 of *Rule Britannia*. David elucidates Dickens's uneasiness with mercantile colonialism by placing the novel in the tradition of the early nineteenth-century literature which criticized or satirized British imperial practices, especially those of the East

India Company. In her analysis of the novel, she focuses upon the contrast between savage, dark, male Quilp and civilized, pale, female Nell, and, after demonstrating the similarity between Quilp and the African savages appearing in "The Noble Savage" written by Dickens in 1853, maintains that Quilp is "a dark demonic force" (63), who can be tamed only by the sacrifice of Englishwomen:

> Nell is the suffering female child whose flight from and symbolic death at the hands of the rapacious savage registers Dickens's discomfort with empire as it was developing in early Victorian culture. Appropriating Nell's home, invading her domestic space in much the same way that the "devilish Indian diamond" (symbol of the colonized) invades the English country house (home of the colonizer) in *The Moonstone*, Quilp sends her on the road. He drives her from the city in search of rest, a place "remote from towns or even other villages" where she might live in peace. To be sure, this is the ritualized flight from the infernally secular "City of Dickens" that Alexander Welsh has so fully articulated, but it is also a journey back in time to a place that existed before missionary interference, scientific exploration, mercantile colonialism. In that mythical place, there are no Quilps, no performing savages brought to the city and taught the tricks of a cash-nexus society, the ways in which to get and spend. Yet, paradoxically, Dickens also seems to be saying that it is too late to go back to that place, too late to escape Quilp and his symbolic companion, the savage. (64)

Although illuminating, David's reading fails to explain fully the complex relationships between savagery and civilization in the novel, situating savagery outside a British society, not inside. Quilp cannot be identified with the colonized as her reading postulates, but is rather on the side of the

colonizer, and therefore, those who should be defined as the "civilized," considering the fact that he makes his living by "advanc[ing] money to the seamen and petty officers of merchant vessels," and having "a share in the ventures of divers mates of East Indiamen" (34). The purpose of this essay is to modify David's reading and reexamine the representation of savagery and civilization in the novel, which cannot be explained by simple dichotomy.

The Old Curiosity Shop was written ten years before the Great Exhibition, the event which, in George W. Stocking's words, "did stimulate number of men to speculate about the progress of civilization" (111). Stocking postulates that the thinking of civilization in the first half of the nineteenth century was strongly influenced by Thomas Malthus, who saw human development as progress from savagery to civilization spurred by the need to produce more food to support an increasing population. According to Malthus, although progress in civilization had not yet reached the point at which the mass of people were free from want of food, in Europe "moral restraint" operated as a check to keep population within the bounds of adequate food supply, while among savages it was war, famine, and disease that curbed the increase of population. His thinking was salient in the science of political economy developed by David Ricardo and his followers. They argued that social and economic measures such as free trade, the reform of the poor law, and colonization, as well as prudential restraint, could eventually nullify the impact of the Malthusian principle and make continuous economic development possible (Stocking 30-36). In this context, whereas savagery was defined as the state in which men were at the mercy of the forces of nature, civilization "tended to be seen as a triumph over rather than an expression of the primal nature of man, just as it was a triumph over external nature" (Stocking 36). In a review article of François Guizot's *Progress of European Civilization*,[2] which appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in May 1840, for instance, the writer defined civilization as "the

progress of a nation in religious, social, literary culture; the subordination of its resources, and its taxes, and its revenue to its great end, development of mind, expansion of thought, and expression of free and faithful sentiment" (582), and expressed the belief that European civilization "will . . . advance, shelving off heterogeneous and corrupt excrescences,—ever growing, ever brightening" (583).

This optimistic belief in the progress of civilization, however, was undercut by the reality of the country that faced an economic, social, and political crisis from the late 1830s to the early 1840s. The country's economy had been in a serious recession and the unemployment rate had stayed high in industrial cities since 1837. Prolonged economic difficulty and poor harvests made the life of the working classes harder and harder, and their discontent, together with their disappointment at the Reform Bill in 1832, drove them to violent protests and revolts. Chartism, "the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad . . . of the Working Classes of England" (Carlyle, 3-4), swept the country, and society was riven along class lines (Briggs 253-255). Civilization in Britain, which was considered as the triumph over nature, faced a serious challenge from reality, and social critics articulated their uneasiness with the present state of society. In an article entitled "Discontents of the Working Classes," published in the conservative *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in April 1838, Charles Neaves, for instance, expressed an anxiety that:

> the human race will be left a prey to all the vultures of the mind, to wrath and covetousness, lust and cruelty, under the influence of which, but for the strong arm of some overruling power, this goodly frame the earth would become a sterile promontory, this fair and blooming garden a den of worse than wild beasts. (422)

Neaves saw the country in the crisis of returning to the primitive state under

the sway of nature, “a den of worse than wild beasts.”

Written in this climate, *The Old Curiosity Shop* reflects the anxiety of the time. Dickens visited the Black Country of the Midlands for the first time in 1838, and the wretched life of the people he witnessed there made a deep impression upon him. He wrote to his wife, “[w]e were compelled to come [to Shrewsbury] by way of Birmingham and Wolverhampton . . . through miles of cinder-paths and blazing furnaces and roaring steam engines, and such a mass of dirt gloom and misery as I never before witnessed” (1: 447). This experience had a great impact upon him in writing *The Old Curiosity Shop*. In the novel he depicts a country in confusion, chaos, uncertainty, and full of violence, and problematizes the notion of civilization by defining it not in contrast to savagery, but in an inseparable relationship with savagery. He, however, at the same time presents a new model for the peaceful progress of civilization and tries to propagate his ideal in the real world beyond the world of fiction. In the following discussion I will examine Dickens’s criticism of industrial society and his proposed solution through a consideration of the problem of savagery and civilization.

II

Before examining Daniel Quilp’s depiction as the incarnation of savagery in the novel, we need to clarify what is represented as savage in the first place. Aside from the depiction of Quilp, the word “savage” is used for the first time in the scene at the village school, in which idle boys bored with studying are longing to play outside:

> Oh! how some of those idle fellows longed to be outside, and how they looked at the open door and window, as if they half meditated rushing violently out, plunging into the woods, and being wild boys and savages from that time forth. (193)

The boys who wish to become "wild boys and savages" are full of vital energy and resistant to the force of education aiming at making them civilized. The stark contrast between them and Harry, the favorite student of the schoolmaster dying from exhaustion caused by excessive study, implies that civilization is a process of depriving man of pristine energy.

The use of the word "savage" appearing next in the scene in which Nell and her grandfather stay overnight at the foundry in Wolverhampton, however, suggests that pristine vital energy can also become the motive power for the development of industry and civilization:

> [I]n this gloomy place, moving like demons among the flame and smoke . . . a number of men laboured like giants. . . . Others drew forth, with clashing noise upon the ground, great sheets of glowing steel, emitting an insupportable heat, and a dull deep light like that which reddens in the eyes of savage beasts. (333)

The engines of the factories in the city are represented by the image of untamed animals, "the wrathful monsters, whose like they almost seemed to be in their wilderness and their untamed air" (339). The motive power for industrialization is equated with the energy of a wild monster, ferocious and violent as well as vigorous.

The vital energy promoting industrialization can operate at the same time as the energy of violence and oppression, begetting savagery within civilization. While the factories are described as savage monsters, the people who work there are also portrayed with the image of savages. The man who offers shelter to Nell and her grandfather to stay overnight is, for instance, depicted as "a black figure" (331), who is "miserably clad and begrimed with smoke, which, perhaps by its contrast with the natural colour of his skin, made him look paler than he really was" (332). His originally white skin turned black by smoke and dirt indicates that he is a savage

begotten by the neglect and poverty at the heart of civilization. In this respect he anticipates the poor street child in *The Haunted Man* (1848), "[a] baby savage, a young monster, a child who had never been a child, a creature who might live to take outward form of man, but who, within, would live and perish a mere beast" (397), or Jo in *Bleak House* (1852-53), who is very much like "[t]he blinded oxen, over-goaded, over-driven, never guided, run into wrong places and . . . beaten out" (258). The pent-up power of resentment of the neglected poor in the industrial city explodes in violence and savagery:

> But night-time in this dreadful spot!—night, when the smoke was changed to fire; when every chimney spirted up its flame; . . . when the people . . . looked wilder and more savage; when bands of unemployed labourers paraded in the roads . . . ; when maddened men, armed with sword and firebrand . . . rushed forth on errands of terror and destruction to work no ruin half so surely as their own. (339-40)

This naturalistic depiction of frightening social unrest is derived from Dickens's experience of traveling through the Black Country in 1838. This scene epitomizes the vicious circle of the savage energy promoting industrialization and savage violence of the victimized of the industrial society.

As the above demonstrates, what is represented as "savage" is the vital energy which can operate both as the motive power for industrialization and the power behind oppression and violence. The explosion of the resentment of the victimized is also depicted as savage. What then is described as savage in Quilp? The first thing that is considered as savage in him is his excessive vital energy and voluptuousness. The famous scene of his breakfast, in which he "ate hard eggs, shell and all, devoured gigantic

prawns with the heads and tails on, chewed tobacco and water-cresses at the same time and with extraordinary greediness, drank boiling tea without winking" (45), is an example to illustrate his abnormal vitality and appetite, which are regarded by both the characters and the author as almost sub-human. Looking at him, Mrs. Quilp and Mrs. Jiniwin "were nearly frightened out of their wits, and began to doubt if he were really a human creature" (45). In another scene Quilp, devouring bread, cheese, and beer, is compared to "an African chief" (110)—an expression emphasizing his Otherness. His vitality manifests itself also in his voluptuous appetite for power over women, especially over his wife and Nell, as is indicated by innuendo in various scenes of smoking. He orders his wife to stay up all night when he feels "in a smoking humour" (42), and taints Nell's bed with tobacco smoke after the bankruptcy of her grandfather. The tobacco smoke he puffs in these scenes reminds the reader of other smoke in the novel, that is, the smoke hanging over London and Wolverhampton, which "obscured the light and made foul the melancholy air" (338-39). Looking at "a crooked stack of chimneys on one side of the roofs" through the window of the old curiosity shop, Nell has a fancy of "ugly faces that were frowning over at her and trying to peer into the room" (77). Chimneys of factories and houses, the symbol of vitality of the city, are coupled with vitality of Quilp with his ugly face.

Quilp's excessive vital energy functions at the same time as the energy of violence and oppression inflicted upon various characters and objects, both animate and inanimate, including Mrs. Quilp, Tom Scott, Kit, Quilp's dog, and the effigy of a giant, and his aggressive energy is depicted again with the image of a savage. When he beats Tom and Kit with his cudgel, he deals "such blows as none but the veriest little savage would have inflicted" (52), and he is compared with a "pigmy" (462) in the scene in which he fights with the effigy. Nell, the embodiment of purity, vulnerability, and innocence, is the primal victim of his violence, and the story of her flight

from him can be interpreted as an allegory of pristine nature contaminated and devastated as a result of the operation of developing industry. Malcolm Andrews remarks that Quilp is "a microcosm of Dickens's London, the city whose ferocious and destructive energy is at once repulsive and fascinating":

> On these terms the novel might be read as an indictment of industrialization, its blighting influence on men and their environment, or as an attack on capitalist greed that makes hideous deformities of those who exploit the system, and frightened cripples of their victims. (19)

Quilp, however, is not only the symbol of the victimizer in the capitalist economy as Andrews's reading indicates, but also that of the victimized. His two habitats, the shabby genteel house on Tower Hill and the dilapidated summer-house called the "Wilderness" on the southern bank of the Thames, signify his ambiguous class status. He is, in Kit's words, "a uglier dwarf than can be seen anywhers for a penny" (53), and in this respect he is in the same position as the giants and dwarves of itinerant show business, whose bodies are reduced to commodities as a spectacle. Quilp and the giants and dwarves in the show are connected to a vast number of other commodified creatures in Victorian England, that is, laborers in factories, who are compared to demons and giants in the novel. It was Thomas Hood, the first critic of the novel, that noted the link between the representation of Quilp and that of people of the lower classes. In a review article which appeared in the *Athenaeum* in November 1840, when the installment publication of the novel was still in progress, Hood points out that Quilp reflects the reality of the lives of the neglected poor in London slums. In language which anticipates Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil; Or the Two Nations* (1845), Hood maintains that, Dickens, by creating Quilp,

enlightens "one-half of the world" about the way in which "the other half lives":

> Whether such beings exist in real life, may appear, at first sight, somewhat questionable; but in fairness, before deciding in the negative, one ought to go and view the "wilderness" assigned as his haunt . . . . It has been said that one-half of the world does not know how the other half lives; an ignorance, by the way, which Boz has essentially helped to enlighten: it is quite as certain that one-half of London is not aware of even the topographical existence of the other; and, although remote form our personal experience, there may be such persons as Quilp about the purlieus and back slums of human nature, as surely as there are such places as the Almonry and Rat's Castle. (888)

Hood sees in Quilp thousands of members of the poor working class who live in the "wilderness" within civilization without being cared about, or even being noticed, by the rich middle and upper classes, and who are represented as savage in Victorian writing. Quilp's aggressiveness can therefore be understood as an expression of the anger of the exploited and the oppressed in the industrial society as well as that of the vital energy promoting industrialization.

III

The Old Curiosity Shop thus demonstrates that the primitive vital energy of human beings is the motive power promoting the process of industrialization, and also that it is industrialization itself that begets savagery through violence and oppression. Nineteenth-century British civilization, which was built upon urban industry, is thus proven to be in close proximity with savagery. As Walter Benjamin argues that "[t]here is

no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (248), the novel exemplifies that civilization and savagery do not represent opposite ends of a continuum of development, but are inseparably bound to each other. The disturbing relationship between civilization and savagery is indicated not only in the representation of Quilp, but also in the depiction of various ruins and historical places in the novel. In the old curiosity shop, for instance, among a variety of curiosities there are "suits of mail standing like ghosts in armour here and there" and "rusty weapons of various kinds" (11)—the heritage of the age of violent wars and conflicts. At the old gateway of Southampton, Nell contemplates "how many hard struggles might have taken place, and how many murders might have been done, upon that silent spot" (211). Quilp, who "suddenly emerged from the black shade of the arch" (211) while she is meditating thus, is symbolically linked to the history of the savagery in the past. Even the small village, in which Nell finally finds peace after the long journey through scenes of misery and hardship, is not free from the taint of savagery. The old church of the village is the monument of bloody wars and atrocities in mediaeval times:

> Some part of the edifice had been a baronial chapel, and here were effigies of warriors stretched upon their beds of stone with folded hands, cross-legged—those who had fought in the Holy Wars—girded with their swords, and cased in amour as they had lived. Some of these knights had their own weapons, helmets, coats of mail, hanging upon the walls hard by, and dangling from rusty hooks. Broken and dilapidated as they were, they yet retained their ancient form, and something of their ancient aspect. Thus violent deeds live after men upon the earth, and traces of war and bloodshed will survive in mournful shapes, long after those who worked the desolation are but atoms of earth themselves. (400)

In the novel Dickens finds a certain resolution by expelling Quilp, the incarnation of savagery, from the text. He is in this respect what Michiel Heyns defines as "scapegoat," the "figure that has to bear the burden of guilt of a particular community, usually by being sacrificed or expelled" (4), in order to regain the equilibrium in the narrative. The burden of guilt Quilp bears is savage violence, and by expelling Quilp from the text, Dickens tries to purge the taint of savagery from civilization.

This act of purging, however, means at the same time to deprive human beings of the source of vitality. Nell, who has perpetually been haunted by the vision of Quilp throughout her journey, suffers a steady decline in vitality when she reaches the village of peace and is cut off from the world of savagery. As Steven Marcus points out, Quilp is "the flesh gone wild, and . . . he personifies the energy of life—life conceived as a perverse and destructive element, but life nonetheless" (152). The peaceful and static village is more like dystopia than utopia, in which there is neither violence nor misery, but also no development, and just like Harry, who dies from the lack of vital energy, Nell is unable to flourish but destined to decline and die in the village. The illustration by Samuel Williams depicting Nell sleeping in the old curiosity shop (Illustration 1) and that by George Cattlemole depicting Nell sitting in the old church (Illustration 2) visually represent the contrast of the two worlds. In the former illustration Nell is sleeping peacefully in the middle of the various figures watching her threateningly. The old weapon leaning against the wall looks as if it were about to fall upon her, and there are suits of mail standing vertically in front of the wall beside the window. In the latter illustration, on the other hand, the statues of the warriors in armor lie horizontally on their coffins. Whereas the former signifies that Nell is in the heart of the violent world, the latter suggests that she is already in the realm of eternal peace, in which she is no longer threatened by violence. The realm of peace, however, is at

the same time the realm of death.

IV

While acknowledging that the process of civilization inevitably involves savage violence, Dickens nevertheless seems to argue that civilization can progress without violence. The relationship between Kit and the stubborn pony, Whisker, shows that it might be possible to construct a peaceful society if only those in power have more sympathy towards those they govern. To Mr. Chuckster, who is bullying the pony "for the purpose of striking terror into the pony's heart, and asserting the supremacy of man over the inferior animals," Kit says, "You must be very gentle with him, if you please . . . or you'll find him troublesome. You'd better not keep on pulling his ears, please. I know he won't like it" (289). Kit is the only person who can transform "the most obstinate and opinionated pony on the face of the earth" into "the meekest and most tractable of animals" (288) and maintain a harmonious relationship with the animal. Dickens here presents a model of a society in which all living creatures, including animals, are bound by mutual understanding and sympathy, not by violence or oppression. This humane sensibility is the remedy, if not panacea, he prescribes for a society full of violence and savagery.

Dickens uses the death of Nell to awaken a humane sensibility in the reader's mind and to realize his vision in the real world beyond the world of fiction. When Nell tells the bachelor that she grieves to think that those who die are so soon forgotten, the latter remarks:

> "There is nothing . . . no, nothing innocent or good, that dies, and is forgotten. . . . Forgotten! oh, if the good deeds of human creatures could be traced to their source, how beautiful would even death appear; for how much charity, mercy, and purified affection, would be seen to have their growth in dusty graves!" (408)

These words sound more like those of the author speaking directly to the reader rather than those of one character speaking to another. The author expresses his hope that the humanizing influence generated by the death of the heroine will transcend the boundary of fiction and nurture "charity, mercy, and purified affection" in the reader's mind. After the narrative of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Master Humphrey visits the clock of St. Paul's, and imagining it to be the "heart of London," hears within its tolling a voice bidding him to "have some thought for the meanest wretch that passes, and, being a man, to turn away with scorn and pride from none that bear the human shape" (*MHC* 109). Here again Dickens tries to give his readers lessons of love and sympathy.

Judging from contemporary reviews of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Dickens's attempt to evoke a humane sensibility in the reader's mind through the novel seems to have been fairly successful. Although the excessive sentimentality of the heroine's deathbed scene was ferociously criticized, or even ridiculed, by later readers including Algernon Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, and Aldous Huxley, for contemporary readers and critics it was the testimony of the author's profound sympathy for all human beings, even for the poorest of the poor. Especially in the United States, which Dickens was to describe as a country of violence and savagery in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44), critics were enthusiastic in their praise for the author's humanity. A. P. Peabody, for instance, wrote in *The Christian Examiner* in 1842, "He has a deep sympathy with humanity as such, in all its forms, however lowly and degraded. He sees the divine image, where others behold only squalidness and rags" (16). Cornelius C. Felton remarked in *The North American Review* in 1843, "Dickens writes from no mere intellectual conception of human suffering, but from a profound sense of the woes of men, and a living sympathy with them" (215). They further argued that Dickens's sympathy for the neglected poor would be able to

resolve divisions in society and unite people with each other on the basis of common humanity. Peabody wrote:

> [Dickens] has nobly stepped in as the mediator between man and his brother. He brings forth the unpitied and the forgotten, yea, the erring and sin-stricken, and forces them upon the sympathy of those, who till now had passed by them on the other side. (16)

Felton maintained in the similar vein:

> [T]he man of genius, who throws himself into the broad current of human sympathies . . . speaks to [his contemporaries] in manly tones of their duties to each other, and teaches them, that the poorest outcast, the most abject and friendless being, that ever passed through want and beggary to an unhonored grave, is still one of the universal brotherhood of man, as much as the haughtiest in the land. (216)

Sympathy inspired by the novel is considered to provide the foundation for a harmonious society, in which "man and his brother," from "the haughtiest" to "the poorest outcast," are bound by "universal brotherhood."

Recent criticism of nineteenth-century imperialism has begun to clarify that humanism could sometimes function as a device to assert the superiority of the British people and to conceal the oppressive practices and violence inflicted upon the colonized while Britain was engaged in "the civilizing mission."[3] It is beyond the scope of this essay to show in detail how the humanistic ideal is connected to the establishment of British imperial hegemony in Dickens's writing, as I have discussed the issue in my previous essays on *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Dombey and Son*.[4] What I want to focus on here is the fact that contemporary critics had already noted Dickens's hegemonic power over his readers. Felton eulogized Dickens's

"imperial power over the hearts and minds of men" (213) extending beyond the English-speaking countries to Germany, France, Italy, and Russia, and even to Turkey.

In conclusion, I would like to cite an episode from John Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens* as an evidence of what Felton calls the "imperial power" of Dickens. Forster ends the section of *The Old Curiosity Shop* with a poem entitled "Dickens in Camp," which was written by Bret Harte after the death of Dickens:

> [*Dickens in Camp*] shows the gentler influences, which, in even those Californian wilds, can restore outlawed "roaring camps" to silence and humanity; and there is hardly any form of posthumous tribute which I can imagine likely to have better satisfied his desire of fame, than one which should thus connect with the special favourite among all his heroines, the restraints and authority exerted by his genius over the rudest and least civilised of competitors in that far fierce race for wealth.
>
> . . .
>
> Perhaps 'twas boyish fancy,—for the reader
> Was youngest of them all,—
> But, as he read, from clustering pine and cedar
> A silence seemed to fall;
>
> The fir-trees gathering closer in the shadows,
> Listened in every spray,
> While the whole camp with "Nell" on English meadows,
> Wandered and lost their way. (1: 126)

I have demonstrated that, though being aware of the fact that the civilizing process is inevitably accompanied by violence and savagery, Dickens

nevertheless presents a new model for the peaceful progress of civilization in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Whom Nell tames here with her "gentler influences" are not the native Americans, but the white immigrants exploiting the new land. If Nell brings "humanity" to "the rudest and least civilized of competitors in that far fierce race for wealth," as Forster describes here, then she has contributed greatly to Britain's "civilizing mission" as "the Good Angel of the race" (524), as Dickens envisioned.

Notes

1 This essay is a revised version of the paper entitled "*The Old Curiosity Shop: The City, the Country, and the Empire*," which I read at the annual conference of the Japan Branch of the Dickens's Fellowship and Gaskell Association in 2004.

2 François Guizot (1787-1874) was a French academic politician, with whom, in Stocking's words, "the idea of civilization was perhaps most prominently identified" (29). His book, *Progress of European Civilization*, had a great influence upon H. T. Buckle in writing *The History of Civilization in England* (1857, 1861) (Stocking 113).

3 See, for instance, Catherine Hall's discussion of the anti-slavery movement in Jamaica in the 1830s and 1840s in *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 205-54.

4 See Fumie Tamai, "Globalisation and the Ideal of Home (1): *Martin Chuzzlewit*," *Doshisha Studies in Language and Culture*, 5 (2002), 275-98, and "Globalisation and the Ideal of Home (2): *Dombey and Son*," *Doshisha Studies in Language and Culture*, 6 (2004), 637-53.

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梗　概

ディアドレ・ディヴィッドは『骨董店』の分析において「野蛮な」クウィルプと「文明化された」ネルという二項対立に着目し、ネルの苦しみは野蛮人の脅威の下に苦しむイギリス人女性の苦しみであり、クウィルプは彼女の犠牲によってのみ制御されうる「暗い野蛮な力」(63)を象徴していると論じている。けれども「野蛮な」クウィルプ＝被征服者の象徴と捉え、文明を代表するネルと対比させるディヴィッドの論はこの小説をやや単純化して解釈しているように思われる。そこで「野蛮」と「文明」の表象を再検討し、ディヴィッドの論を修正するのが本論の目的である。

『骨董店』は、文明は外界の自然に対する勝利であると同時に、人間の基本的性質に対する勝利として捉えられていた時代に書かれた。1830年代後半から1840年代前半のイギリスはしかしながら、このような信念とは裏腹に経済的、社会的、政治的危機に瀕した混乱と混沌の時代であった。『骨董店』でディケンズは野蛮と暴力に満ちた社会を描き、文明を野蛮との対比によってではなく、野蛮との分かちがたい関係によって定義した。小説において「野蛮」という言葉は、社会を動かし文明を発展させる人間のエネルギーを表すとともに、抑圧や暴力の力や、被抑圧者の怒りの爆発をも表している。クウィルプの野蛮性とは、彼の持つ本源的なヴァイタリティであり、都市の持つ活力の象徴でもある。しかし、一方でそのヴァイタリティは抑圧の暴力としても働き、ネルはその最大の犠牲者となる。

それゆえ、この小説で描かれているのは、文明と野蛮の対立ではなく、文明のプロセスそのものが常に暴力と抑圧という野蛮な力を伴うというジレンマなのである。ディケンズはクウィルプの死によってこのジレンマに一定の解決を見出している。また優しさや慈悲といった人間的感受性にもとづいた調和的な文明発展の可能性を提示している。彼はテキストを超えた世界でも、ネルの死によって読者の心に「人間性」を呼び覚まし、彼の提示する文明発展のモデルを実現しようとした。そして、ネルがカリフォルニアの荒野にも

「人間性」をもたらしたとするフォースターの記述は、彼女がディケンズの意図した「文明化の使命」を果たしたことを伝えているのである。

Illustration 1: The Child in her Gentle Slumber

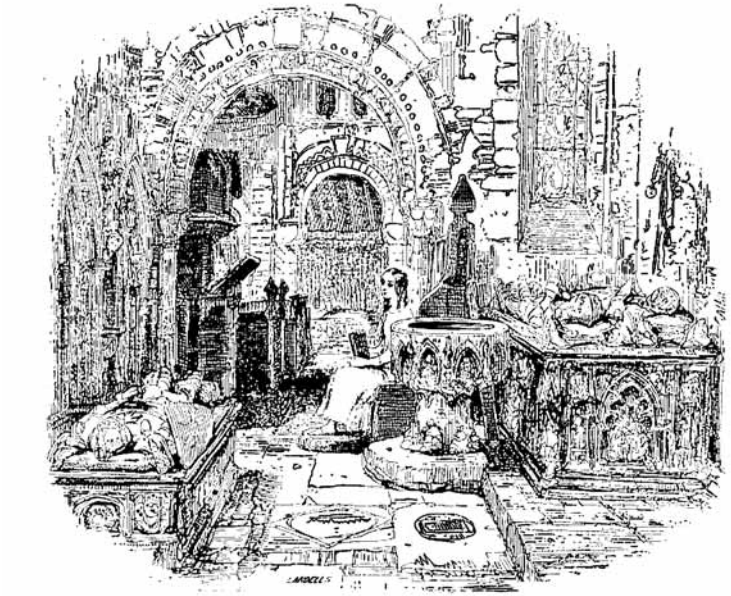

Illustration 2: Resting among the Tombs