

The Old Curiosity Shop: 都市と農村、そして帝国

発表要旨

*The Old Curiosity Shop*と大英帝国との関わりを検証した論としてはDierdre Davidの*Rule Britannia*の第2章がある。OCSをヴィクトリア朝の初期の反商業植民地主義というコンテキストから分析したこの論は、「野蛮・色黒・男性」のQuilpと「文明化された・色白・女性」のNellという二項対立に着目し、Nell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、Quilpは彼女の犠牲によってのみ制御されうる野蛮な力を象徴していると論じている。しかし、「野蛮な」Quilp = 被征服者の象徴と捉え、文明の側に立つNellと対比させるDavidの論はこの小説を単純化して捕らえているように思われる。そこで「野蛮」と「文明」の表象をNellが旅した都市空間と農村空間において再検討し、Davidの論を修正するのが本発表の目的である。

「野蛮」という言葉はこの小説において、社会を動かす原動力ともなりうる人間の本源的なエネルギーを表すとともに、抑圧する暴力としても描かれている。Quilpの描写では、獣的なイメージや人種的他者のイメージを喚起する言葉によって彼の「野蛮性」が強調されるが、その「野蛮性」とは彼の本源的なエネルギーである旺盛な食欲や性的欲望を表している。そして「DickensのLondonの縮図」であるQuilpのヴァイタリティーはイギリスの都市の持つ活力の象徴でもある。しかし一方で彼のヴァイタリティーは抑圧の暴力としても働き、Nellはその最大の犠牲者となる。自由や平和の場であるはずの農村はNellを守ってくれる場所とはなりえず、彼女が旅の途上で出会う様々な人々は、彼女を平和や純潔を侵す脅威となる。こうしたNellの受難の物語はアレゴリカルなレベルにおいて、産業革命の波が都市から農村へと浸透し、苛酷な資本主義経済に農村が巻き込まれていく過程を表しているとも言える。

*The Old Curiosity Shop*において描かれているのは、文明と野蛮との対立ではなく、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もたうものであるというジレンマである。Dickensは小説の中で、Quilpのテキストからの追放とNell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「人間性」に基づいた、もうひとつの文明発展のモデルを提示し、調和的な社会を築く重要性を訴えている。Dickensはテキストを超えた世界でもNellの死を、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する手段としようとした。そしてNellによってカリフォルニアの荒野にも「人間性」がもたらされたと伝えるJohn Forsterの伝記は、Dickensの理想が実現し、Nellが帝国の‘Civilizing Mission’を果たしたことを示しているのである。

1. 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 cash-nexus society, the way 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. (David, 64)

2. Mr. Quilp could scarcely be said to be of any particular trade or calling, though his pursuits were diversified and his occupations numerous. He collected the rents of whole colonies of filthy streets and alleys by the waterside, advanced money to the seamen and petty officers of merchant vessels, had a share in the ventures of divers mates of East Indiamen, smoked his smuggled cigars under the very nose of the Custom House, and made appointments on Change with men in glazed hats and round jackets pretty well every day. (34)

3. 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)

4. [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)

5. "What's that!"

Uttering a half-shriek, she recoiled from a black figure which came suddenly out of the dark recess in which they were about to take refuge, and stood still looking at them.

[. . .]

The form was that of a man, 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. (331-32)

6. 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 near them looked wilder and more savage; when bands of unemployed labourers paraded in the roads [. . .] to work no ruin half so surely as their own. (339-40)

7. [H]e 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, bit his fork and spoon till they bent again, and in short performed so many horrifying and uncommon acts that the women were nearly frightened out of their wits, and began to doubt if he were really a human creature. (45)

8. [O]n the top of [the hill] the traveller might stop, and—looking back at old Saint Paul's looming through the smoke, its cross peeping above the cloud [. . .] and glittering in the sun. (122)

9. On every side, and far as the eye could see into the heavy distance, tall chimneys, crowding on each other, and presenting that endless repetition of the same dull, ugly, form, which is the horror of oppressive dreams, poured out their plague of smoke, obscured the light, and mad foul the melancholy air. (338-39)

10. There was a crooked stack of chimneys on one of the roofs, in which by often looking at them she had fancied ugly faces that were frowning over at her and trying to peer into the room. (77)

11. They were now in the open country; the houses were very few and scattered at long intervals, often miles apart. Occasionally they came upon a cluster of poor cottages, some with a chair or low board put across the open door to keep the scrambling children from the road. [. . .] [H]orses [were] peering over the low wall and scampering away when harnessed horses passed upon the road, as though in triumph at their freedom. (124)

12. Rumbling along with most unwonted noise, the caravan stopped at last at the place of exhibition, where Nell dismounted amidst an admiring group of children, who evidently supposed her to be an important item of the curiosities. (214)

13. [S]he could get none but broken sleep by fits and starts all night, for fear of Quilp, who throughout her uneasy dreams was somehow connected with the wax-work, or was wax-work himself, or was Mrs. Jarley and wax-work too, or was himself, Mrs. Jarley, wax-work, and a barrel organ all in one, and yet not exactly any of them either. (213)

14. There was an empty niche from which some old statue had fallen or been carried away hundreds of years ago, and she was thinking what strange people it must have looked down upon when it stood there, and how many hard struggles might have taken place, and how

many murders might have been done, upon that silent spot, when there suddenly emerged from the black shade of the arch, a man. (211)

15. There were suits of mail standing like ghosts in armour here and there, fantastic carvings brought from monkish cloisters, rusty weapons of various kinds, distorted figures in china and wood and iron and ivory; tapestry and strange furniture that might have been designed in dreams. (11)

16. I sat down in my easy-chair; and [. . .] pictured to myself the child in her bed: alone, unwatched, uncared for, (save by angels,) yet sleeping peacefully. So very young, so spiritual, so slight and fairy-like a creature passing the long dull nights in such an uncongenial place—I could not dismiss it from my thought. (19)

17. If we define the scapegoat as that figure that has to bear the burden of guilt of a particular community, usually by being sacrificed or expelled, then, in my model, the narrative itself constitutes a community, generating pressures that eventually expel those characters that disturb the equilibrium which it is the aim of narrative closure to restore. (Heyns, 4)

18. 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 armour 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)

19. Mr. Chuckster emerged from the office-door, and cried 'Woa-a-a-a-a'—dwelling upon the note a long time, for the purpose of striking terror into the pony's heart, and asserting the supremacy of man over the inferior animals.

[. . .]

"If that pony was mine, I'd break him."

"You must be very gentle with him, if you please," said Kit, "or you'll find him troublesome. You'd better not keep on pulling his ears, please. I know he won't like it" (289)

20. "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)

21. [*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:

(Forster, I, 126)

Text: Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, ed. by Elizabeth M. Brennan, (Oxford: OUP, 1998)

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The Child in her Gentle Slumber



Little Nell as Comforter



Producing a Sensation



Resting among the Tombs