Bleak House
Traveling into the "Savage" Territory in "the Heart of a Civilized World"

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines how the narrative of *Bleak House* employs the image of travel and exploration into "uncivilized" territories to evoke both fear of, and sympathy toward, impoverished and downtrodden people living therein, with special focus on the relationship between mobility and class. First, I will compare the journalistic writings of Henry Mayhew and Charles Dickens about the journey to the London underworld and examine the similarities in the use of language depicting the poor. Next, I will demonstrate how the migrant bodies of the poor constitute a threat to society in *Bleak House* and how the middle-class professionals, such as Inspector Bucket and Allan Woodcourt, travel into the London underworld to contain the "savages" at home. It also examines the female version of the professional housekeeper who restores and maintains order in the domestic sphere. The final section will look at the rise of another group within the middle class in the novel—the entrepreneurs—and the grand narrative of history, that is, "progress" as contrasted with "stoppage." Throughout the discussion, this essay focuses on how the process of establishing middle class hegemony relates to the representation of the mobility of different classes.

KEYWORDS: *Bleak House,* civilizing mission, "savagery" at home, social reform, the middle class

Received: March 20, 2025／Accepted: May 8, 2025
Sun Yat-sen Journal of Humanities, no. 59 (July 2025): 55-75

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Introduction

VICTORIANS were great travelers and builders of the empire, which comprised an estimated one-fifth of the world's landmass at its peak; Charles Dickens was no exception. Not only did he travel to America twice and frequently to France, Italy, and Switzerland but he also sent all his sons, except the fifth one, Alfred, to different parts of the world, including China, India, America, and Australia. There is a plethora of criticisms of Dickens and travel, including essays collected in *Dickens, Europe and the New Worlds* edited by Anny Sadrin and the recently published *Dickens and Travel* by Lucinda Hawksley. While those studies are mainly concerned with Dickens's travel to Europe and the New World, the major concern of this essay is the journey not outside Britain, but inside, that is, the "savage" territory in "the heart of a civilized world" with special focus on *Bleak House.* As Benjamin Disraeli aptly described, there was a deep divide between the rich and the poor, almost as if they were living in "the two nations," and the middle-class reformers regarded London slums as the region that was as savage and alien as the Dark Continent. As Grace Moore discusses, "Dickens was undoubtedly complicit in the construction of the poor (particularly those who dwelt in the cities) as others" (34). This essay examines how images of travel and exploration into "uncivilized" territories are utilized to describe reform-minded or compassionate characters' experiences in London slums. Also, it discusses how the novel depicts the "civilizing mission" at home to provide a model of ideal reform by the hands of the middle class.

Postcolonial theory offers a new perspective in reexamining Victorian literature in the historical context of imperialism in nineteenth-century Britain, and much research discusses the representation of the urban poor in connection with that of the supposedly underdeveloped people in the colonies. My attention, however, is directed toward the relationship between mobility and class, as well as the middle-class characters' experience of travel in slums and chaotic middle-class homes and the reforms accomplished by them. *Bleak House* was written during a period that witnessed the rapid expansion of the railway network in Britain and the empire, but the story is set in the 1830s, in a time before the railway mania struck. The novel captures a moment when the increasing mobility of people was dramatically transforming British culture and society. Mobility is inseparably entwined with class in the novel. On one end of the social spectrum is the dangerous mobility of the working classes connected to vagrancy, criminality, and the spread of the epidemic, which poses a serious threat to society. At the other end of the spectrum is the immobility of the aristocrats, who isolate themselves inside their exclusive society and are blind to the suffering of the poor. The middle class, situated in between, is constantly on the move and succeeds in containing the rebellious energy of the poor and overturning aristocratic rule.

The mobility of the middle-class characters in *Bleak House* is implicitly connected to their capacity to feel and sympathize with others. James Chandler argues that in the modern materialist argument, at least since Hobbes, life is reduced to a principle of motion, and that Dickens evokes this tradition that "the soul itself is defined by a kind of motion or mobility" (179) in *A Christmas Carol,* in which Marley's ghost says to Scrooge, "It is required of every man . . . that the spirit … should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide" (178). In the sentimental tradition of literature that Chandler examines, the capacities to sympathize and experience sensation are bound to each other, and sensation is activated by the motion of the body (174-181). In *Bleak House,* all the compassionate characters, such as Esther Summerson, Allan Woodcourt, and Mr. Snagsby, try to reach out to the poor and downtrodden in society and alleviate their suffering after they travel. The mobility of the soul is deeply connected to the mobility of the body, which makes them more sensitive and responsive to the needs of others.

Moreover, in *Bleak House,* the characters' mobility is embedded in the grand narrative of history that narrates the story of the "progress" of the nation and empire. Not just the characters but the whole society is in motion, in which the transition of power from the aristocracy to the middle class takes place. The following discussion examines the process of the establishment of middle-class hegemony in the novel by focusing on the mobility and movement of its various characters.

Traveling into "the Heart of Civilization" in Mayhew and Dickens

THE opening ceremony of the "Great Exhibition of the Works of All Nations" was a triumphant moment for Great Britain that had then gained unrivaled power in the world after overcoming the prolonged recession of the Hungry Forties. The media celebrated it as an event signaling the advent of a new era of peace and prosperity for the Empire. "The first of May, 1851, will, for a long period, be described in our books as one of the most memorable days in the history of Great Britain, and of the whole human race" ("Opening of the Exhibition" 474), said the leading article of *The Economist* on May 3, 1851. *The Times* commented that in the "peaceful empire . . . the arts and sciences are now establishing over rudeness, ignorance, and brutality" (qtd. in "The Great Exhibition" 1). In "The Great Exhibition and the Little One," an essay written in collaboration with R. H. Horne (*Household Words*, July 5, 1851), Dickens also expressed complacent feelings about the triumph of civilization over barbarism in the age of progress.

The year 1851, however, was not as peaceful or prosperous as signaled by the festive mood of the Exhibition. It was also dominated by contradictions, frustrations, and anxiety. Lord John Russell's Whig administration was precarious and unstable, and the problems of poverty, low wages, long working hours, unemployment, and unsanitary conditions of the wretched slums were neither solved nor alleviated. The dark, overcrowded, and foul slums of the laboring poor starkly contrasted with the light, spacious, and airy Crystal Palace, the venue of the exhibition. Dickens was too aware of this contrast to celebrate the Great Exhibition uncritically. In "A December Vision," an essay that appeared in *Household Words* on December 14, 1850, he made a powerful denunciation of the government for its failure to improve the living conditions of the poor:

> I saw a Minister of State, sitting in his Closet; and round about him, rising from the country which he governed, up to the Eternal Heavens, was a low dull howl of Ignorance. It was a wild, inexplicable mutter, confused, but full of threatening, and it made all hearers' hearts to quake within them. But, few heard. In the single city where this Minister of State was seated, I saw Thirty Thousand children, hunted, flogged, imprisoned, but not taught—who might have been nurtured by the wolf or bear, so little of humanity had they, within them or without—all joining in this doleful cry. (Dickens 1996b: 307)

The English, as self-acclaimed advocates and propagators of civilization and humanity—the powerful self-image that constituted a national identity for Dickens—faced a challenge from the reality that the poor remained in a state of savagery and exhibited "so little of humanity."

The reform-minded writers of the period frequently utilized the image of travel and exploration into "uncivilized" territories to evoke both fear of, and sympathy toward, impoverished and downtrodden people living there. They regarded themselves as privileged travelers endowed with the mission to inform the public of the reality of the lives of the poor. In *London Labour and the London Poor*, which likely inspired Dickens' *Bleak House,* Henry Mayhew refers to himself as "the traveller in the undiscovered country of the poor" (I: iii) and states that the purpose of the book is to provide information concerning "a large body of persons, of whom the public had less knowledge than of the most distant tribes of the earth" (I: iii).[1] In depicting the life of the laboring poor in the London streets, Mayhew employs the language of anthropology to classify them as a race apart from the "civilized" portion of the population:

> The nomadic races of England are of many distinct kinds—from the habitual vagrant—half-beggar, half-thief—sleeping in barns, tents, and

> casual wards—to the mechanic on tramp, obtaining his bed and supper from the trade societies in the different towns, on his way to seek work . . . . In each of these classes—according as they partake more or less of the purely vagabond, doing nothing whatsoever for their living, but moving from place to place, preying upon the earnings of the more industrious portion of the community, so will the attributes of the nomade tribes be found to be more or less marked in them. (I: 2).

Troy Boone argues, "[For] Mayhew, the chief characteristics of the London poor is their uncontrolled wandering, a mobility not subject to the self-regulation that characterizes middle-class men and women who navigate the city space" (19). The presence of the "nomade tribes," "moving from place to place," itself is considered as a serious threat posed to "the more industrious portion of the community" (qtd. in Boone 21). The use of anthropological language in depicting the poor was a commonplace strategy for reform-minded journalists and philanthropists in the latter half of the nineteenth century but was relatively new in Mayhew's time (Boone 19). By emphasizing the unbridgeable gap between different races, Mayhew tries to persuade the reader to pay more attention to the issue of poverty and to learn the need to Christianize and enlighten the "savages" inside the country rather than outside. Mayhew writes:

> [T]hat we should willingly share what we enjoy with our brethren at the Antipodes, and yet leave those who are nearer and who, therefore, should be dearer to us, to want even the commonest moral necessaries is a paradox that gives to the zeal of our Christianity a strong savour of the chicanery of Cant. (I: 43)

He also writes, "[W]e have so many people sunk in the lowest depths of barbarism round about our very homes. It is well to have Bishops of New Zealand when we have Christianized all *our own* heathens" (Mayhew I: 101). In this way, Mayhew strongly criticizes the middle-class people's indifference to their "*own* brethren" suffering from poverty, hunger, and ignorance in London, "the first city in the world" (I: iv).

Behind the reformists' call for the enlightenment of the "savages" at home rather than those abroad was the deep-rooted fear of social rebellion. In the aftershocks of the Chartist movement in the 1840s and the February Revolution in France in 1848, many middle-class writers in the mid-nineteenth century felt the imminent threat of the discontented laboring classes who might subvert the existing order of society. Mayhew maintains that one of the characteristics of "the nomad" was "his desire for vengeance," and it is not difficult for him to detect a similar characteristic in "the nomadic races [of England]" (I: 2):

> To serve out a policeman is the bravest act by which a costermonger can distinguish himself . . . . In their continual warfare with the force, they resemble many savage nations, from the cunning and treachery they use. . . . Their love of revenge too, is extreme—their hatred being in no way mitigated by time; they will wait for months, following a policeman who has offended or wronged them, anxiously looking out for an opportunity of paying back the injury. (I: 16)

This image of the urban "savages," treacherous and defiant, full of hatred and rebellious energy, is the urgent warning to the reader to take immediate action for reform.

The same ambition to reveal the "savage" state of the laboring classes in the heart of the "civilized" metropolis can be detected in Dickens's essays in the early 1850s, when Dickens conceived *Bleak House*.[2] He toured the East End with Inspector Charles Frederick Field, the original inspiration for Inspector Bucket, and wrote an essay, "On Duty with Inspector Field," which appeared in *Household Words* on June 14, 1851. Starting the tour at night from the British Museum, where the spoils of the imperial exploration, such as the Elgin marbles and Egyptian mummies, are displayed, the inspector and the writer explore deep into the slum in Saint Giles's district. The district, which is just "fifty paces from the Station House, and within the call of Saint Giles's church" (Dickens 1996c: 360) is another world segregated from the habitat of ordinary middle-class people, including the reader of *Household Words*. The inhabitants of the slums are repeatedly depicted through the imagery of beasts and insects, such as "maggots in a cheese" (362), "rats," "insect vermin" (364), and "wild beast[s]" (368), which are even more repulsive than "savage" heathens to the genteel sensitivity of the middle-class writer.

In the same essay, Dickens explains how the rebellious energy of the "savage" poor is successfully contained through the systematic surveillance of Inspector Field and the Metropolitan Police, but it does not mean that there is no concern about the social rebellion. The fear of rebellion and breakdown of order in society is intricately entwined with the fear of the outbreak of epidemic, both physical and moral. As David Theo Goldberg contends, "Impurity, dirt, disease, and pollution are expressed as functions of the transgression of classificatory categories, expressed, that is, in terms of laws, as also are danger and the breakdown of order" (54), epidemic signifies not only a physical disorder of individual bodies but also a political disorder of a social body as a whole. Strolling the streets of the East End with Inspector Field, Dickens felt the threat of the laboring poor in the form of smell, foul air, mud, and mire, which could not be confined to one place but drifted and flowed, easily transgressing the boundaries of both space and class. He writes, "How many, who amidst this compound of sickening smells, these heaps of filth,

these tumbling houses, with all their vile contents, animate and inanimate, slimily overflowing into the black road, would believe that they breathe *this* air?" (360). Foul air was threatening, especially when it was widely accepted that an epidemic such as cholera was caused by a miasma generated in dirt or stagnant water, or bred in the stale air of confined spaces. According to contemporary medical theory, once touched off by a certain atmospheric condition of temperature or humidity, miasma spreads epidemics "on the wings of the air" (Longmate 35). Even if the physical bodies of the poor can be confined to a small space in the slum, the miasma can travel far and wide, transgressing the boundaries of class and even nation.

One of the most powerful clarion calls for social reform in Dickens's writing in the early 1850s can be found in "A December Vision," in which Dickens vigorously denounces the government for its failure to improve the sanitary conditions of the slums:

> I saw innumerable hosts foredoomed to darkness, dirt, pestilence, obscenity, misery, and early death. I saw, from those reeking and pernicious stews, the avenging consequences of such Sin issuing forth, and penetrating to the highest places. . . . I saw that not one miserable wretch breathed out his poisoned life in the deepest cellar of the most neglected town, but, from the surrounding atmosphere, some particles of his infection were borne away, charged with heavy retribution on the general guilt. (1996b: 308)

Here emerges the specter of revolution, the ultimate form of social disorder that had been haunting the imagination of middle-class writers throughout the Victorian era.

"A December Vision" can be read as a prelude to *Bleak House,* in which Dickens further develops the theme of barbarism in the heart of civilization. The novel exemplifies the anxiety about the dangerous mobility of the particles of infection, breathed out by "the miserable wretch" and borne away by the wind "to the highest places," as is demonstrated in the next section.

"Savages" at Home in *Bleak House*

LONDON enshrouded with fog and covered with mud and mire in the opening scene of Bleak House symbolically represents the chaotic state of society in which the proper division and order of things have been lost: "Dogs [are] indistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better . . . . Foot passengers . . . slipping and sliding . . . adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud" (13). All creatures, including humans, are involved in a retrogressive movement returning to antediluvian chaos. Then, the third-person narrator's eyes shift from the small

confines of Lincoln's Inn Hall to the perspective of the Thames beyond, and finally to the sea, on which barges, small boats, and ships are floating. This shift in perspective indicates that the chaos dominating London spreads beyond the boundaries of the nation to embrace the entire empire. The narrator's eye then goes back to the ground, penetrates the deep fog covering the city, and finds "at the very heart of fog . . . the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery," which is "most pestilent of hoary sinners" (14). In contrast to the birds-eye perspective of the third-person narrator, the perspective of Esther–the first-person narrator–is limited and cannot capture the entire picture of the city. For her, the travel going into the heart of the city at the beginning of her narrative is the dream-like experience of going into the strange, dark chaos: "We drove slowly through the dirtiest and darkest streets that ever were seen in the world (I thought), and in such a distracting state of confusion that I wondered how the people kept their senses" (42). As if corresponding to the density of the fog, her sense of confusion is intensified when Esther finally reaches and enters the Court of Chancery: "Everything was so strange—stranger for its being night in the day-time, and the candle burning with a white flame, and looking raw and cold that I read the words in the newspaper without knowing what they meant, and found myself reading the same words repeatedly" (43). As Charlotte Mathieson argues, the expanding road network facilitated the circulation of print, including newspapers, which contributed to the evolution of the nation as an "imagined community" (4). Esther's temporary inability to comprehend the words in the newspaper indicates the disintegration of a sense of an expansive community, such as a nation, and the return to the age before modernity.

The entire business of the Court of Chancery is to deal endlessly with legal documents, procrastinate the verdict, and drive suitors to ruin and destruction. Its inefficient bureaucracy is neatly epitomized in the third-person narrator's comment: "The one great principle of the English law is, to make business for itself. There is no other principle distinctly, certainly, and consistently maintained through all its narrow turnings" (621). In criticizing inefficient bureaucracy, Dickens often blames aristocratic government officials, who stood in the way of middle-class reformers' efforts, for being indifferent to the welfare of the people. Dickens' attack on the bureaucracy in *Bleak House* is also obviously anti-aristocratic. The Court of Chancery and Chesney Wold are inseparably entwined and symbolize the institutional evils of aristocratic rule, such as inefficiency, irresponsibility, inhumanity, and anachronism. Both places are characterized by a stagnant atmosphere—the former shrouded by fog and the latter by rain—and communication with the outer world is completely cut off. The Lord High Chancellor sits in his High Court "with a foggy glory round his head, softly fenced in with crimson cloth and curtains" (14), and the world of fashion is "wrapped up

too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger world" (20). Ladies and gentlemen in Chesney Wold "agreed to put a smooth glaze on the world and keep down all its realities" (189).

Barbarism within civilization, not on the periphery of the empire, is a consequence of the irresponsible and anachronistic rule of the aristocracy. The scene of Captain Hawdon's burial is the most appalling revelation of the barbarism lurking deep inside civilization. His body is buried "into a beastly scrap of ground which a Turk would reject as a savage abomination, and a Caffre would shudder at, they bring our dear brother here departed, to receive Christian burial. (180). The words "Turk" and "Caffre" juxtaposed with the word "Christian" have the effect of enhancing the impact of this passage and impressing upon the reader the direness of the situation. The narrator further declares that this is "a shameful testimony to future ages, how civilisation and barbarism walked this boastful island together" (180).

Another testimony to the persistence of barbarism within civilization is Tom-all-Alone's, a dilapidated London slum depicted as an area that is similar to a foreign country, even for a humble lower-middle-class law stationer, Mr. Snagsby:

> Between his two conductors, Mr. Snagsby passes along the middle of a villainous street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud, and corrupt water—though the roads are dry elsewhere—and reeking with such smells and sights that he, who has lived in London all his life, can scarce believe his senses. Branching from this street and its heaps of ruins are other streets and courts so infamous that Mr. Snagsby sickens in body and mind and feels as if he were going, every moment deeper down, into the infernal gulf. (358)

For him, the experience of descending into the uncanny space of the underworld is a revelation that opens his eyes to the reality of another world existing just next door to where he himself lives. Jo, a crossing sweeper living there, is "not a genuine foreign-grown savage" of Borrioboola-Gha, but "the ordinary home-made article," with "[h]omely filth," "homely parasites," "homely sores," and "homely rags" (724). Despite the emphasis placed on his "homely"-ness, the third-person narrator characterizes him as essentially incongruent with those who belong to "civilized" England. He is "scarcely human" (258) and is represented as almost equal to a dog in the street. He lives "in the unintelligible mess" (258), being illiterate and, thus, totally excluded from the community in which people are bound to each other by the shared sign system of written language: "He is not of the same order of things, not of the same place in creation" (724).

The chaos and disorder of the slum, in which there are large numbers of neglected "savage" children, are fraught with the danger of social rebellion, which

takes the form of the "revenge" through the outbreak of the epidemic. Instead of Jo, who is too deprived to have any energy for rebellion, his home, Tom-all-Alone's, "has his revenge" (710) by spreading miasma:

> There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high. (710)

The agency of rebellion is transferred from an individual human being to the inanimate environment in which Jo lives, or, more specifically, the evils hidden within the environment. The whole society that has been generating evils such as obscenity, degradation, ignorance, wickedness, and brutality by neglecting Jo and other children like Jo has revenge taken upon it by those very evils it has generated. As mentioned above, miasma can travel "on the wings of the air" (Longmate 35), transgressing the class boundaries, but it should be noted that the disease is communicated by migrant Jo, who is constantly forced to "move on" (ch. 19) by the police. Commenting on Jo, Mathieson points out that "his displacement and wandering represent a threat to social order, connoting criminality and vagrancy" (21), but the threat of the epidemic communicated through his migrating body is arguably more dangerous, since it is more difficult to control and the effect is more far-reaching. Jo moves back and forth between London and St Albans on foot, spreading disease, supposedly smallpox, on the way and unwittingly becomes the agent of "revenge." The neglected poor can continue to pose a threat to society even after they die, as their dead bodies become the source of miasma. The burial ground of Captain Hawdon is "a hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene, whence malignant diseases are communicated to the bodies of our dear brothers and sisters who have not departed; while our dear brothers and sisters who hang about official backstairs [. . .] are very complacent and agreeable" (180). The dead bodies can be "hemmed in," but the "malignant diseases" generated from them cannot and infect the living bodies "of our dear brothers and sisters."

Thus, the novel reveals the consequences of the irresponsible rule of the aristocracy, who isolate themselves within their world without noticing the imminent threat from the lower classes, stressing an urgent need for social reform.

Civilizing the "Savages"

THE primary concern of Bleak House is bringing the rebellious and dangerous energy of the poor under control and establishing order out of chaos. Jonathan Arac contends that one of the great enterprises of major writers in the mid-nineteenth

century was "the production of knowledge from the observation of disorder and disruption, thereby transforming that disorder into the basis for a newly conceived order" (17). Of all of Dickens's novels, *Bleak House* most clearly exemplifies the drive to establish a new world order following the collapse of the aristocratic rule. Opening with the description of an all-encompassing fog and mire as a symbol of social conditions in confusion and disorder under the rule of Chancery, the novel presents the Detective Police as a unifying force that restores order to society.

The transition of power from the Chancery and its representative Tulkinghorn to the Detective Police and its representative Inspector Bucket indicates the establishment of a middle-class order in the public sphere. Both Tulkinghorn and Bucket are depicted as the central figures of Panopticon-like surveillance, who are endowed with an exceptional power of observation. However, while the former never steps into the most dilapidated part of London slums, the latter habitually goes there and is familiar with every corner of the district. Bucket is free to move around, surpassing the constraint of physicality: "Time and place cannot bind Mr. Bucket. Like man in the abstract, he is here today and gone tomorrow—but, very unlike man indeed, he is here again and gone to-morrow" (803). His superhuman mobility enables him to become an Asmodian "good spirit" appearing in *Dombey and Son*, who "would take the house-tops off . . . and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amidst their homes" (1985: 738). Travelling between London and Chesney Wold, Bucket reveals secrets lurking in both the most affluent and the most impoverished societies of the country. With the bullseye lantern in his hand, he literally enlightens the darkest corner of the poorest slum. He is the incarnation of what Arac calls "commissioned spirits," who are charged with the "mission to reveal and transform through their powers of knowledge and vision the brute circumstances of the changing world in which they and their readers lived" (xvii). Like Inspector Field, who has perfect control over the people with "the power of the law, the power of superior sense . . . and the power of a perfect mastery of their character" (Dickens 1996c: 364), Bucket "pervades a vast number of houses, and strolls about an infinity of streets" (803), and keeps every inhabitant under incessant surveillance.

As a professional doctor, Woodcourt also participates in the surveillance of the poor. Like Bucket, he strolls through the streets of the slums, "often pauses and looks about him, up and down the miserable byways" with "compassionate interest" (711). The doctor and the police cooperate to inspect the diseased body, both individual and social, and to prevent epidemics, both physical and moral, from spreading. Woodcourt makes imperial voyages to China and India as a ship's surgeon but returns to England, and his experience makes him aware that "a way of usefulness and good service" (920) is at home, rather than in distant countries. His career indicates Dickens's reformist view that domestic reform should take

priority over imperial missions, but his experience of traveling to distant countries is regarded as valuable for him to fulfill the mission at home. Timothy L. Carens argues, "Woodcourt discovers his authority, his 'intrepidity and humanity,' when tested by extreme circumstances in tropical locales" (132), and "the adventure abroad prepares the hero for the civilizing mission which awaits him at home" (132). It is Woodcourt who finds "the ordinary home-made" savage Jo dying "in the heart of a civilised world" (719) and converts him into a Christian on his deathbed by having him repeat the Lord's Prayer after him. Chadband's hollow words have never touched Jo's heart, and Mrs. Pardiggle has never succeeded in making the brickmakers understand the teaching of Christianity. Woodcourt, however, succeeds in doing what all bad philanthropists in the novel fail to do, that is, to propagate Christianity to the "savage" child, and to bring him inner peace at the last moment of his life.

While the role of the police is to maintain order in the public sphere without being noticed by ordinary people, the role of a housekeeper is to do the same in the private sphere. Esther is the key figure in restoring order and discipline in the domestic sphere. [3] Although Esther does not travel abroad like the male characters in the novel, she frequently travels within the country and finds some parts of it as chaotic as the distant colonies. She discovers that savages exist not only in the slums but also in the middle of bourgeois households, in domestic disorder and chaos. Just as the government, a kind of parental figure, fails to fulfill its duty to take care of its people, so do some of the mothers in the novel, who fail to provide proper care and protection to their children and, thus, beget barbarism within their homes. Mrs. Jellyby does not manage her household properly, being preoccupied with her missionary project in Africa; consequently, her house falls into a state of chaos. The backroom in which she and her daughter Caddy are working is "not only very untidy, but very dirty" (53), and the dining table has "no top or bottom in particular" (57), which is another indicator of disorder. Her neglected family members are savages. Mr. Jellyby calls his children "[w]ild Indians" (475), and he himself looks like "a native, but for his complexion" (57). The children of Mrs. Pardiggle, another example of a bad philanthropist, are also violent and savage because of the lack of proper parental care. "[A]bsolutely ferocious with discontent," the eldest son, Egbert, looks like "one of the most baleful members" (125) of Tockahoopo Indians. These "savages" in the middle-class households testify to the fragile boundary between the "civilized" and the "savage." They show that the distinction between the two groups of people is not actually biologically determined but socially fabricated and that the former can easily slide into the latter's state unless they are properly educated.

Esther is, in Inspector Bucket's words, "a pattern" (902), and this is not only what she is but also what she is imposing upon the chaotic world in which she lives.

Maintaining order in the house is the role that was specifically allocated to women in Victorian middle-class domestic ideology. For instance, in *Women of England* (1839), Sarah Ellis wrote that a house should be not only "neat and clean" but also "be so ordered as to suit the tastes of all" (26), and that a middle-class housewife needs to "calculate with precision" upon "every passing event" so that "the machinery of the household comfort" should not be "thrown into disorder" (23). In the chaos and confusion of the Jellybys' house, Esther attempts to restore order by making their rooms "a little tidy" and "coaxing a very cross fire that had been lighted, to burn; which at last it did, quite brightly" (58)—a symbolic act to re-establish the sacred hearth. In a word, as Ada aptly puts it, Esther "make[s] a home out of even this house" (58). Mrs. Jellyby's fundamental failure in household management lies in the fact that she is neither able to see the chaotic state of her house, nor can she keep her children under proper surveillance: her eyes "had a curious habit of seeming to look a long way off. As if . . . they could see nothing nearer than Africa" (52). Esther, on the other hand, has "always rather a noticing way . . . a silent way of noticing what passed before [her]" (28). This ability to notice enables her to become a competent housekeeper who assumes the role of what Jacque Donzelot has called "the policing of the family." According to Donzelot, women in the nineteenth century were regarded as increasingly important in providing children with proper nurturing and inspection and guaranteeing social stability (3-47). Esther takes care of Mrs. Jellyby's children and makes them her friends: "Esther nursed them, coaxed them to sleep, washed and dressed them, told them stories, kept them quiet, bought them keepsakes" (84-85). She "civilizes" the savage children whom their incompetent mother has neglected.

Esther's efforts to establish middle-class order and discipline in a chaotic world have more far-reaching effects in the long run than Mrs. Jellyby's "Telescopic Philanthropy" (49). Esther says to Mrs. Pardiggle, "I thought it best to be as useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could, to those immediately about me; and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself" (128). Unlike the diffusing fog that covers London in the opening scene, Esther's expanding circle has a center from which every action originates. She has command over "the perfect working of the whole little orderly system of which [she is] the centre" (603). What she and her "circle of duty" epitomize is the idealized version of the civilizing mission, which is capable of imposing a new order on the world.

The metaphor of the gradually expanding circle is used in the review article by Dickens on *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Niger in 1841* (1848), published in *The Examiner* on August 19, 1848, which criticizes the missionary

project on the bank of the river Niger, the original of Mrs. Jellyby's Borrioboola-Gha project. In this article, Dickens maintains that philanthropy should start at home, not in a distant region of the globe, and naturally expand its territory.

> It is not, we conceive, within the likely providence of God, that Christianity shall start to the banks of the Niger, until it shall have overflowed all intervening space. The stone that is dropped into the ocean of ignorance at Exeter Hall, must make its widening circles, one beyond another, until they reach the negro's country in their natural expansion . . . . Gently and imperceptibly the widening circle of enlightenment must stretch and stretch, from man to man, from people on to people, until there is a girdle round the earth. (1996a: 125)

This passage is significant in considering imperialism in Dickens not only because it manifests his reformist view that domestic reform is more urgent than the imperial mission, but also because Dickens emphasizes here the importance of a gradual transformation of the world, "from man to man, from people on to people," not revolutionary changes of order like the ones which occurred in Europe in 1848. Dickens envisions the reconstruction of world order through the action originated in the center and conveyed to the periphery "[g]ently and imperceptibly."

The Consolidation of Middle Class Hegemony

IF the discontented poor people and the unruly children are successfully kept under surveillance and control, there should, theoretically, be no danger of rebellion. There is, however, one rebellion taking place in the novel—that of the "Ironmaster" in the north country, Rouncewell, against Sir Leicester Dedlock in the election. The latter considers the former, who has shown genius in invention since he was very young, as a potential threat to society—"one of a body of some odd thousand conspirators, swarthy and grim, who were in the habit of turning out by torchlight, two or three nights in the week, for unlawful purposes" (107). This description is apparently intended to evoke the memory of the Chartists, which was still vivid for contemporary readers. Sir Leicester's fear of rebellion raised by the classes below him becomes a reality when Rouncewell defeats him in the election. Upon hearing the news of his defeat from Tulkinghorn, he says, "the floodgates of society are burst open, and the waters have—a—obliterated the landmarks of the framework of the cohesion by which things are held together!" (648). Hence, rebellious energy is transferred from the laboring classes to the entrepreneurial middle classes, who overturn aristocratic rule and establish a new world order. Rouncewell's rebellion against Sir Leicester is comparable to that of Wat Tyler against Richard II. For Sir Leicester Dedlock, to challenge "a slow, expensive British, constitutional kind of

thing" (25) is "to encourage some person in the lower classes to rise up somewhere—like Wat Tyler" (26). Richard II was the founder of Chancery and the originator of the Poll tax, and Dickens describes the suffering of the people under his reign in *A Child's History of England*: "[T]he common people of England had long been suffering under great oppression. They were still the mere slaves of the lords of the land on which they lived, and were on most occasions harshly and unjustly treated" (1958: 294). Wat is depicted as a hero, "a hard working man, who had suffered much, and had been foully outraged" (1958: 297) by the tyrannical king. The analogy between Rouncewell, who has "the strong Saxon face" (1996: 453), and Wat Tyler suggests that Rouncewell's victory over Sir Leicester Dedlock is regarded as part of the history of the Anglo-Saxon's battle against the "Norman yoke."

The battle between the middle class and the aristocracy is the battle between "Progress" and "Stoppage." The Dedlocks and the people gathering at Chesney Wold, who are "particularly careful not to be in earnest, or to receive any impress from the moving age" (189), belong to the world of "the perpetual stoppage" (189). "Stoppage" is the word Dickens uses in opposition to "Progress" in the comparison between the East and the West in "The Great Exhibition and the Little One." In the concluding paragraph of the essay, he writes, "Reader, in the comparison between the Great and the Little Exhibition, you have the comparison between Stoppage and Progress" (329). In the stagnant aristocratic culture of the "Dandyism" (189) of Chesney Wold, Dickens sees the same "deadlock" that he sees in Oriental culture. Rouncewell, on the other hand, represents "Progress," from which stem the power and strength of the West. In the essay, the "Progress" of the West is particularly associated with new inventions such as "[t]he railway engines, and agricultural engines, and machines; the locomotives, in all their variety; the farm-engines" (323), and so on. This list of inventions, particularly those associated with transportation, is intended to give contemporary readers the impression that they are living in an age of progress. Rouncewell has an inventive genius, which is an important indicator of his potential to become the leader of the progressive new age.

Rouncewell's "strong Saxon face" also indicates that he is endowed with the vigorous mind and body that have been deemed essential qualities to become an explorer and "civilizer" of the world. In *A Child's History of England*, Dickens writes with a sense of pride in the superiority of the race:

> [T]he English-Saxon character . . . has been the greatest character among the nations of the earth. Wherever the descendants of the Saxon race have gone, have sailed, or otherwise made their way, even to the remotest regions of the world, they have been patient, persevering,

> never to be broken in spirit, never to be turned aside from enterprises on which they have resolved. In Europe, Asia, Africa, America, the whole world over; in the desert, in the forest, on the sea; scorched by a burning sun, or frozen by ice that never melts; the Saxon blood remains unchanged. Wheresoever that race goes, there, law, and industry, and safety for life and property, and all the great results of steady perseverance, are certain to arise. (1958: 148-149)

In this passage, the greatness of the Saxon races is considered to stem from their mobility—that is, their vitality and ability to travel, to sail, and to make their way "even to the remotest regions of the world," and to be industrious and prosper in any unhospitable environment. Roucewell's victory in the election symbolizes the dawn of the new era, when the descendants of the Saxons thrive with the power of industry and perseverance.

The threat to aristocratic society comes not only from Rouncewell but also from Esther, the illegitimate daughter of Lady Dedlock, who contributes to the fall of the Dedlocks in a different way. An illegitimate child is traditionally considered a destabilizing element with the potential to subvert the family. After her mother reveals the secret of her birth, Esther feels herself to be a dangerous figure destined to destroy the genteel family. Walking on the Ghost Walk, she thinks, "[I]t was I, who was to bring calamity upon the stately house; and that my warning feet were haunting it even then" (586). Her fear becomes a reality when she unwittingly brings calamity upon the house by driving her mother to flee from Chesney Wold. Esther's journey back from St. Albans to London, chasing after her mother who flees to find her final rest at the burial ground of her former lover, Captain Hawdon, is the symbolic event that marks the demise of the aristocratic rule. Though Rouncewell and Esther are unrelated to each other, both of them exemplify the middle-class values of diligence and self-discipline, and also of "Progress," as opposed to the aristocratic culture of "Dandyism" and "Stoppage." The first chapter of Esther's narrative is entitled "A Progress" (27) and her narrative shows the progressive process of creating a bourgeois domestic order out of chaos. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Sir Leicester Dedlock's defeat by Rouncewell in the election and the first disclosure of the secret of Esther's birth by Tulkinghorn take place in the same chapter on the same day. These two events symbolically represent the transformation from the old aristocratic to a new middle-class social order.

Bleak House ends with the foundation of the second Bleak House in Yorkshire, which was "the Workshop of the World" in the Victorian era. What Dickens would have had in mind when writing the ending of the novel was his acquaintances in Yorkshire, with whom he had kept in contact for many years. On

April 18, 1852, Dickens wrote a letter to Miss Burdett-Coutts, who at the time was involved in a project to reclaim and build working-class dwellings on the site of Nova Scotia, a squalid area in Bethnal Green (Dickens 1988: 626n), and advised her to consult several mill owners in Yorkshire on the project:

> strangest disorder, and establish an orderly system of society out of the strangest disorder—as in one case in Yorkshire, now, where a Tunnel has been making for some years. Also large iron-masters—of whom there are some notable cases—who have proceeded on the self-supporting principle, and have done wonders with their workpeople. Also other manufacturers in isolated places who have awakened to find themselves in the midst of a mass of workpeople going headlong to destruction, and have stopped the current and quite turned it by establishing decent houses, paying schools, savings banks, little libraries, &c. Several of these instances come into my mind as I write this, and I have no doubt we could get the results of such experience by merely asking for them. (Dickens 1988: 645)

Dickens found a blueprint for social change in the model mills and towns of Yorkshire,[4] wherein mill owners "establish[ed] an orderly system of society out of the strangest disorder" after successfully containing the destructive energy of "a mass of workpeople." The transformation of the landscape is brought about by the "people connected with Railways," and the construction of a tunnel leads to the improvement of the region. It is, therefore, an appropriate ending to the story that Esther and Woodcourt, the primary agents of inspection and control as well as mobility build the second Bleak House in the north country, where the entrepreneurs prosper. Jarndyce describes the north country as "a thriving place, pleasantly situated; streams and streets, town and country, mill and moor" (919). This combination of civilization and wilderness might be indicative of how the empire expanded itself by imposing the order of civilization upon new territory. The center of the "ever-widening circle" is thus situated in the new thriving middle-class industrial district, and the empire, backed by the power of industry as well as the middle-class ethics of order and discipline, has a firm footing for prosperity.

Conclusion

THIS essay examined the relationship between class and mobility and demonstrated how the "dangerous" energy of the mobile working classes is successfully contained by the group of middle-class characters, who travel into the London slums and chaotic households and reform the "savages" living there. It also demonstrated how the process of establishing middle-class hegemony is rendered

as the "progress," contrasted with the "stoppage" of the aristocracy. Carens argues that the ending suggests "less an outpost of progress than a tactical retreat to an ideal place in which the social forces which necessitate the civilizing mission 'at home' can be easily controlled" (140). As he rightly points out, the ending seems too idealistic to address the complexity of the problems of social evils presented in the novel. However, Dickens's novels always express an equivocal perspective in which optimism and pessimism are merged together. In a world that is becoming increasingly chaotic, Dickens expresses a vague hope for the reestablishment of a world order through middle-class hegemony.

◎Some parts of this essay are based on chapter 3 of my unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Representation of Empire and Class in Dickens's Novels," submitted to the University of Leeds in March 2004. We thank Editage (www.editage.jp) for proofreading the manuscript. This work was supported by a JSPS grant (no. 22K00415).

Notes

1. Moore argues Dickens's use of colonial language is akin to that of Mayhew in that it "negates attempts to romanticize an underclass dwelling in fundamentally repulsive conditions by eliding many of unpleasant traits that are the signs of its penury" (31).
2. The first mention of the novel appeared in a letter to Mary Boyle on February 21, 1851, in which Dickens wrote, "[T]he first shadows of a new story hovering in a ghostly way about me."
3. See Langland's discussion of Esther's role as a competent housekeeper (1995: 88-97).
4. Model mills in Yorkshire and Lancashire were introduced as *Household Words*. See Capper (1852: 250-253) and Dodd (1853: 499-503).

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《荒涼山莊》

遊歷「文明世界中心」的「野蠻」領域

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摘　要

本論文探討《荒涼山莊》的敘述如何運用旅行和探索「未開化」領域的形象，喚起人們對生活在其中的貧困和受壓迫的人們的恐懼和同情，並特別關注流動性和階級之間的關係。首先，我將比較亨利・梅休(Henry Mayhew)和查爾斯・狄更斯(Charles Dickens)關於倫敦黑社會之旅的新聞寫作，並檢視他們在使用語言描繪窮人時的相似之處。接下來，我將說明《荒涼山莊》中窮人的移民羣體如何構成對社會的威脅，以及中產階級的專業人士，如警長貝克特(Inspector Bucket)和愛倫・巫德寇特(Allan Woodcourt)，如何前往倫敦黑社會以遏制家中的「野人」。本節也會檢視女性版的專業管家，她在家庭領域中恢復並維持秩序。最後一節將探討小說中中產階級中另一個羣體--企業家的崛起，以及歷史的宏大敘事，即「進步」與「停滯」的對比。在整個討論過程中，本論文的重點在於中產階級霸權的建立過程如何與不同階級流動性的表現相關。

關鍵詞：《荒涼山莊》、文明使命、家園裡的「野蠻」、社會改革、
中產階級