Illness and Aging in *Martin Chuzzlewit*

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"Wishin you lots of sickness, my darlin creetur. . . and may our next meetin' be at a large family's, where they all takes it reg'lar, one from another, turn and turn about, and has it business-like." [1] These ominous and heartless words sound all the more striking because they are uttered by a nurse, Mrs. Gamp, whose purpose should be to reduce the number of the sick people in the world. We actually find that her wish is granted: throughout the whole course of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, there are more number of illness, invalids, and scenes of nursing than, perhaps, in any other works by the author. The opening action of the text, for instance, shows us the Pecksniff sisters "tending Mr. Pecksniff's wounds in the back parlour." (p. 12) Old Martin Chuzzlewit, too, is introduced to us, "by reason of his sudden illness," at the Blue Dragon, where we see his companion Mary "tending. . . the sick gentleman." (p. 29) Moreover, old Anthony Chuzzlewit with a gouty foot is attacked by a fit and loses his life. There is another sick man staying at the Bull, who later turns out to be a surgeon named Lewsome, looked after by Mrs. Gamp and her friend Mrs. Prig.

It is true that Dickens's "main object" in writing *Martin Chuzzlewit* is, as he writes in the "Preface" to the cheap edition, "to show how Selfishness propagates itself." (p. xlii) We cannot, however, talk about this novel without mentioning the issue of illness. It is not only because Mrs. Gamp is, to be sure, one of the most memorable Dickensian characters with peculiar appearance and ways of speech but

because even the American chapters, which are notorious for their improvisation, culminate in the scene of the hero's illness.

In considering the matter of illness in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in addition, we cannot overlook the issue of aging and the elderly, for the author clearly utilizes, in this novel, "the long-held associations between old age and illness, disability, disengagement and decline." [2] The novel presents the elderly, as well as the sick, who need to be attended to by a nurse or by people around them. Moreover, it is pointed out that one of the problems gerontologists in the past faced is "how to determine the differences between the diseases of old age and diseases in old age," that is, how to distinguish the effects of the "pathological process stemming from pervasive cell degeneration" from "the symptom of diseases unrelated to the aging process." [3] The indistinguishableness between the two is seen in the fact that, asked by Jonas Chuzzlewit after his father Anthony's death, the nurse, Mrs.Gamp, takes care of the aged clerk Chuffey as well, though he is not particularly sick.

The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to analyze the various dimentions of illness and aging in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and see how they cause the disorder not only of the physical system but of the social system. As a closely related matter, the issue of nursing will be introduced to develop the discussion. We will begin by focusing on the striking yet attractive character mentioned above : Mrs. Gamp. Her significance, however, lies more in her presence as the representation of the issue of ruling power and inverted values than in her attraction as a vivid comic character always carrying an umbrella. And then, the notorious American chapters will be discussed briefly, together with their background, because, in spite of the criticism on the improvised American part, the recent studies have suggested "the significance of empire and foreign experiences for him [Dickens] and his characters." [4] Lastly, we will turn our eye to the problem of subverted positions, values and power in wider terms.

I

While Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) has contributed much to bestow certain positive images to the occupation of a sick nurse, Mrs. Gamp has done the total opposite. One of the distinctive singularities this "fat old woman" "with a husky voice and a moist eye" has can be seen in the statement that it is "impossible to enjoy her company without becoming conscious of a smell of spirits." (p. 299) Nightingale herself mentions the name of this notorious drunken nurse in the supplementary chapter of her *Notes on Nursing*. (1860) Although drinking to mitigate the tiredness from the hard labour was common among the working-class nurses, Mrs. Gamp is a deviator from the norm in variety of ways and, because of her deviation, throws some light on the issues of inverted values and reversal of positions, which are also related with the problem of authority and power.

One of the characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Tom Pinch, who works for Mr. Pecksniff, once says to his sister :

> "you women. . . are so kind, and in your kindness have such nice perception; you know so well how to be affectionate and full of solicitude without appearing to be; your gentleness of feeling is like your touch: so light and easy, that the one enables you to deal with wounds of the mind as tenderly as the other enables you to deal with wounds of the body." (p. 656)

These words, introducing an aspect of the ideal "womanly" nature of the time, correspond with the famous axiom "every woman is a nurse," which Florence Nightingale mentions in the Preface to her *Notes on Nursing*. Mrs. Gamp's behaviour we witness, therefore, does not conform to the norm either as a woman or as a nurse.

Mrs. Gamp openly admits that she is "but a poor woman, and that the money is a [sic] object," (p. 386) and eagerly undertakes various kinds of jobs, "setting aside her natural predilections as a woman." (p. 300) When taking care of Chuffey, the old clerk at Anthony Chuzzlewit's, her touch is far from being gentle or tender as might be hoped; not only does she "defy him with many. . . ironical remarks," but she takes him "by the collar of his coat" and gives him "some dozen or two of hearty shakes backward and forward in his chair" until he becomes "rather black in the face." (pp. 668-9) There is another poor victim, Lewsome, to whom she gives medicine "by the simple process of clutching his windpipe to make him gasp, and immediately pouring it down his throat." (p. 392)

Her colleague Mrs. Betsey Prig, who looks after Lewsome in shifts with Mrs. Gamp, is as far away from "womanly" ideal as Mrs. Gamp. She is "of the Gamp build, but not so fat" and has a voice "deeper and more like a man's" than the voice of Mrs. Gamp. (p. 389) Her feature "like a man's" is emphasized also by her beard. It impresses a barber so much that he cannot even move from the spot "in admiration of her beard," all the more because a young man has annoyed him, earlier on the day, by asking him to shave his chin "as smooth as a new-laid egg." (pp. 436-7) Mrs. Prig, too, treats the patient in quite a rough manner. When she is dressing Lewsome for going out, she seizes "the patient by the chin" and rasps his head with a hair-brush "of the hardest kind" until his eyelids become "red with the friction." (p. 441) Mrs. Gamp is also at the scene and helps Mrs. Prig adjust his shirt collar so that the starched point should hurt his eyes.

Mrs. Gamp's rough treatment of her patients shows how far removed her touch is from "light and easy" touch Tom Pinch speaks of. Needless to say, Mrs. Gamp, as a comic character, is caricatured in terms of her lack of femininity, and there is no knowing where it derives from. It may be that her nature has made her what she is. Or, the fact that she is a widow earning her own living has brought about or added to the loss of her womanly characteristics. There is, in contrast, a widow in the novel

who has not lost her femininity at all; Mrs. Lupin of the Blue Dragon is "just what a landlady should be: broad, buxom, comfortable, and good-looking. . . and is in full bloom." (p. 28) Mrs. Lupin represents womanly features in her "accurate notes and observation. . . only woman can take of woman," as well as in her appearance. It seems, therefore, Mrs. Gamp's lack of femininity cannot be attributed solely to her being a widow.

Another possible reason, then, might be her being an "old" woman. Though the landlady Mrs. Lupin is "not exactly what the world calls young," she is not yet old either, because she still has "jet black hair." (p. 28) There is no reference to their exact ages, but it is obvious that Mrs. Gamp is far more aged than Mrs. Lupin. It has been pointed out, in relation with *male* characters in literature, that we can witness "the feminizing effects of old age" :

> Often, after a male character has accepted the status of being old, he finds that status involves if not an outright loss of sexual identity then a lapse into a state akin to helpless femininity. [5]

If old age brings about loss or decrease in gender characteristics, Mrs. Gamp might have undergone the process, as it were, of "masculinization" in the course of her long life.

In connection with Mrs. Gamp's deviation from the norm of her gender and occupation, we should note that the act of nursing itself can disturb the order in the society and cause the reversal of positions:

> Reversals of class positions (old-style nurses [such as Mrs. Gamp] "ruling" their middle- and upper-class patients; new-style nurses [such as Nightingale]tending the sick poor)and gender roles(military nurses saving the soldiers; the supine, sickly male patient and the

> powerful, healthy female nurse) inform the anxieties and charisma surrounding the mid-Victorian nurse. [6]

As we have witnessed, the "old woman," Mrs. Gamp takes care of the "young gentleman," Lewsome at his sickbed. This male patient cannot protest against the maltreatment of the two female nurses. Moreover, the characters in the novel admit, while talking about Chuffey, that Mrs. Gamp is the person who has "most influence with him" and has "control of him." (p. 701)

The influence Mrs. Gamp has over her patient corresponds with a critic's reference to "carceral or disciplinary aspects of old-style nursing," which "connect up with images of guarding and watching." [7] This connection brings to our mind yet another dimention of reversal: the need of a patient to be watched by a nurse deprives the nurse of her freedom. The night Mrs. Gamp spends at Lewsome's bedside is a restless one because of the talk and shriek of the feverish patient. The sound from his mouth makes the nurse jump up in terror, though she has been asleep. Mrs. Gamp, however, has to attend him until morning, whatever incovenience she might suffer. What we see here is the reversal of ruling power between the patient and the nurse.

Her tendency to exert power over the sick holds true for her relationship even with her friend. Mrs. Gamp assumes "an air of . . . patronage and importance" before her partner Mrs. Prig, and says that Betsey Prig "is always to be trusted, under me, and will be guided as I could desire." (pp. 710-711) Her intention of putting her companion "under" her control triggers the burst of Mrs. Prig's sharp, acid and offensive nature. Mrs. Prig behaves so insolently and maliciously as to deny the existence of Mrs. Gamp's imaginary companion, Mrs. Harris. This, of course, is such a fatal psychological blow on Mrs. Gamp, who has depended on the words of praise and commendation uttered (as she believes) by Mrs. Harris, that she ends up by breaking up with her real-life partner Mrs. Prig. Because of this torture inflicted by Mrs. Prig, Mrs. Gamp cannot but drink and sleep "in acuteness of her com-

miseration for Betsey's patients." (p. 715) Her superiority over Mrs. Prig is totally denied, and her lamentation makes her identifed with a patient in a most poignant manner.

II.

The American chapters in *Martin Chuzzlewit* have often been criticized as one of Dickens's early improvisations, for it is well known that he did not mean to include his American experiences when he started writing *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Regardless of the reasons the American episodes were introduced into the novel, "the American chapters are less fortuitously connected with the interests of the novel than they at first appear" ; they function, in fact, as something more than "an original representation of modern society, and of the kind of self" in modern world. [8] The following part will clarify how the "improvised" American chapters are closely related with the above-mentioned issues of illness and subversion of relative positions.

Charles Dickens first visited the United States in 1842, when he was 29. He traveled around the country for about 5 months, even visiting some cities in Canada. After coming home, he published *American Notes for General Circulation*, based on his experiences during the tour. As for the next publication *Martin Chuzzlewit*, it was the decrease in the sales that led the author to send the hero Martin away to America. His decision has been attacked, just as his change of plans on writing *The Old Curiosity Shop* has been. In the latter case, Dickens chose to focus his story on the heroine Little Nell, when the monthly sales went down from some 70,000 to 50,000 copies. It was natural for him to be alarmed to know that the monthly sale of *Martin Chuzzlewit* became only 20,000 copies.

One of the critics emphasizes the significance of the American part in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, especially the opening episode set in the ship from England to America, as the revision of the earlier writings of the impression on the new country. [9] Though

America was not, at the time of Dickens's life, one of the British colonies like Australia or India, yet it was not a complete foreign country as Italy, which the author visited later in his life, was. Its position, as an ex-colony, was somewhere between the two, and it was the time when America, as a newly-born independent country, was most interested in its own evaluation by other countries, especially by England. [10] It is, therefore, not pointless to discuss, even briefly, the significance of the American chapters in this novel.

First of all, needless to say, there is the theme of the contrast between the "Old" world and "New" world, which is related with the conflict between "Old" Martin and his grandson "Young" Martin. Tracing the hero's adventure in America with his companion Mark Tapley, we find Young Martin's manifold experiences culminate in his purchase of land in the Valley of Eden. We witness "Young" Martin from the "old" world, who wants to be free from the influence of "Old" Martin, taken in and made to suffer by the shrewdness in the "Young" country.

The dubious trading of the Eden Land Company, of course, is said to be based on the trouble many contemporary English investors were involved in. The model of the Valley of Eden, Cairo, which Dickens passed by on his way to and from St. Louis, was a place "vaunted in England as a mine of Golden Hope, and speculated in," though it turned out to be "a hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchre, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise: a place without one single quality, in earth or air or water, to commend it," as Dickens describes. [11]

Eden episode is noteworthy not only as an instance of the author's criticism against the money-centered society or as an effective representation of "Young" Martin's frustration. Its significance can be traced also in illness suffered by young Martin, and later by Mark Tapley. As young Martin's severe illness is the author's creation which is not the part based on Dickens's personal experience during his tour, it will be necessary to pay special attention to its meaning. Moreover, we might emphasize its significance, because "I [i] llness in Dickens's fiction is the sine qua

non both of restored or reconstructed identity, and of narrative sturucture and closure." [12] It is actually the "pestilential air" in Eden, "a hard school to learn so hard a lesson in," that convinces the hero that "selfishness was [is] in his breast, and must be rooted out." (p. 493) Only after his illness does young Martin sincerely regret his past self. We witness the selfishness in his breast beginning to melt away when he makes a discovery about the diamond ring he has got from his betrothed, Mary. It is a ring Mary bought with all her money and gave him before he left England, in case he might need extra money in America. Martin, however, believes that the ring is a gift from old Martin to Mary. As he does not know Mary's care and love towards him hidden in the ring, he casually receives it, and even sells it when he becomes short of money.

The scene of young Martin's illness in Eden assumes yet more importance when we notice that it offers various sorts of deviation and reversal. First of all, at the time of Martin's illness, a "male" servant Mark Tapley has to nurse him, because there is nobody else around there to take care of the sick man. That is, the rule of gender roles is disturbed here. Moreover, the master-servant relationship becomes insecure, too. For, as a nurse, Mark the servant has some kind of influence over his master, just as Mrs. Gamp does over her patient. When Martin recovers, Mark, in turn, is infected by the illness, which reverses their positions as a patient and nurse. This time, the master, who is also a male, has to tend his sick servant, breaking the rules of social position. American episodes, thus, present the insecurity of gender roles and master-servant relationship, in addition to the conflict between the "Old" and the "New."

III.

So far, we have seen how illness and aging can be a factor to turn over the relationships among people focusing on Mrs. Gamp and the American chapters. We

will now shift our attention to the families of Jonas Chuzzlewit and Pecksniff, each of which includes the aged, so that we will be able to discuss how the rule of power in human relations is presented there.

Let us first look at the case of Jonas Chuzzlewit, the cruellest tyrant in this novel, brought to ruin in the end. Jonas, a cousin of the Pecksniffs, has "profited by the precept and example of the father," Anthony Chuzzlewit, who is characterized by his wariness and cunning. (p. 53) The parent-child relationship between them, however, is extraordinary not only in that he makes "coarse allusions" to his father, but in that Anthony shows pleasure with his son as if to say, "This is the heir of my bringing-up. Sly, cunning, and covetous. . . it has been the great end and aim of my life." (p. 173) In spite of their similarity, or maybe because of the similarity, Jonas never seems to be fond of his aged father, and the father has lost control over his son; their positions are totally inverted because of Anthony's elderliness. The shrewd son so much wants old Anthony to make over the property that he even plans to poison his father, though Anthony's death turns out to have been a natural death.

The authority of Jonas in his household is exercised over others as well as over his aged father and the father's old clerk Chuffey. It is seen also in the man-woman relationship. When Jonas first proposes marriage to Mercy, she pushes him off and even gives him "more than one sounding slap upon his outstretched face," (p. 320) declaring that she might hate and tease him all her life. After their engagement, the lively girl enjoys herself by "thousand little trials of Mr Jonas's obedience," and believes that she makes "a perfect slave of the creature." (p. 376) At this point, she denies Jonas the right to "dictate to" her and threatens him saying, "it [their wedding] shall never be at all, if you don't do everything I order." (p. 380) Jonas, however, pays her off after the marriage as he has predicted. When married to the cruel man, Mercy, who, as a single girl, made "a conquest" of Jonas and also of another young gentleman Moddle, becomes so unlike her old self and often goes to Mrs. Todgers, only to cry without a word. Jonas who is "greedy of power" and "as much a tyrant

as any laurelled conqueror on record" shows his wife "who's master, and who's slave." (p. 433)

Thus, it seems that Jonas has become the man of utmost power and authority in the house. The circumstance surrounding the death of Anthony, however, is one of the scenes in the novel that foreground the moment when those who have been regarded and controlled as weak inferior beings can turn into threat for the dominators. First of all, it is the old clerk Chuffey's strange behaviour that throws the shadow of suspicion about the death of his master, Anthony Chuzzlewit. The clerk is not physically sick in particular, except for his palsied arm, but needs tending because of his senile deterioration. Jonas has regarded him as an "old madman" (p. 730) and has treated him as an incompetent. Sometime after the funeral, however, Chuffey suddenly insists, in the face of the tea guests, that there is someone dead or dying upstairs and cannot be pleased until he makes sure that his master's bedroom is empty. His uneasiness and his repeated mention of the phrase "foul play" together with the name of Jonas, despite the old clerk's senile incoherence, make those around him feel that there might have been something unnatural about Anthony's death, and that Jonas might have been related to it. (p. 667)

Old Chuffey, who has kept silent since Anthony's death out of his loyalty to his master, is actually the most important witness of the circumustances of Anthony's death. Moreover, the once sick and weak patient Lewsome, who has been treated ill by the nurses, confesses, soon after this incident, that he gave poisonous drugs to Jonas shortly before the death of Anthony Chuzzlewit. By the words of both Chuffey and Lewsome, Jonas is accused of parricide. Ironically enough, the death of Anthony Chuzzlewit was a natural death: Jonas is accused of the murder which he did not put into practice but just planned and prepared for.

Though it ended in a mere attempt, Jonas's guilt leads him to another crime: this time a real murder. He has to kill Montague Tigg, because Tigg uses Jonas's guilty secret as the material for involving the youth deeper into the trading of Anglo-Bengal-

ee. Old Chuffey becomes threat again in relation to this murder. Jonas, in addition to his original cruelty to Chuffey, has to keep "a jealous watch on Chuffey," ever since he murdered Montague Tigg (p. 729), because he is afraid that the old man might cause the revelation of his murder. The revelator of his crime is the very man he murdered; every action of Jonas has been secretly watched by a private detective Mr. Nadgett, who was hired by Tigg while he was still alive. Thus the man who has most liked to dominate others is forced to commit suicide by the united power of the weak —— the sick, the aged and even the dead.

Parent-child relationship at the Pecksniff's, on the other hand, seems to have no problem at the start, though there is no mother in the family. The father, who is "blessed in his children" (p. 317) has named the "prudent" elder daughter Charity and the "child-like" younger, Mercy. As is often the case with a family without mother, the elder sister is in charge of "domestic details," (p. 318) in which the younger is not interested. Although the sisters present total contrast in their dispositions, they seem to share their father's view of the world, and the family behaves as a unity. When, for instance, Mr Pecksniff expresses his disappointment in his employee Mr Pinch because Mr Pinch shows friendship towards the rebellious apprentice John Westlock, the daughters both support their father by neglecting him. Mr Pinch comes into their room to find "the young ladies" "as intent upon the fire as their father" and "neither of the three taking any notice of him." (p. 18)

The Pecksniffs's attitude towards Thomas Pinch is clearly represented in Mr Pecksniff's speech at the time of their visit to Ruth Pinch, Tom's sister. On meeting Ruth at the house where she works, Mr Pecksniff introduces himself as "the benefactor of your race, the patron of your house; the preserver of your brother." (p. 131) His patronizing manner, perhaps, causes his daughters to regard Mr Pinch with contempt. The disappointment and indignation the sisters feel when they find Ruth far prettier than they have imagined prove that the girl's appearance threaten their sense of superiority. Their father, too, loses his face and his hope to make

acquaintance with the proprietor of the house, when he is told to go off the grass in return for his salutation.

The harmony in the family is broken when Jonas Chuzzlewit makes proposal to Mercy Pecksniff in front of her sister. It sows jealousy and hatred in Charity's breast and the house becomes a "divided house," though the father tries hard "to keep the peace between his daughters," and "to maintain a reasonable show of affection and unity in his household" in the presense of old Martin Chuzzlewit. (p. 368) From then on, the elder sister is "in flat rebellion" and makes "fierce war against her dear papa." (p. 445) When Charity declares to leave home to go and stay at Mrs. Todgers's, the father pretends to grieve his daughter's parting from him. Actually she is a good riddance for him, because he has been thinking about marrying Mary Graham. The discord in the Pecksniff's becomes apparent by Charity's departure, and the sisters ceases to be "a part of Pecksniff." (p. 459) The days are gone when the two daughters listened "with becoming reverence [to] these moral precepts from the lips of their father, and signified their acquiescence in the same, by smile." (p. 114)

Just as Jonas's relationship with his father centres round his expectations and calculation, so is his relationship with his father-in-law, Mr Pecksniff, focused on the issue of money. Both Jonas Chuzzlewit and Mr Pecksniff are concerned with the matter of property; Mr Pecksniff counts on it that Jonas, as an heir of old Anthony, will be rich, and a great catch, while the would-be son-in-law discusses the sum of dowry, still wearing a black crepe band on his hat after his father's funeral. In the end, Jonas even ruins his father-in-law by co-operating with Montague Tigg, involving Pecksniff in the risky investment on a dubious company, Anglo-Bengalee. The relationship of Jonas with both his own father and his father-in-law is thus distorted and inverted in that it is the son rather than the parents who exerts his power over the others.

The circumustances concerning Mercy's marriage present another reversal of positions: the relationship between the Pecksniff sisters. At first, they are in harmony

with each other just as they are fond of their father; we witness "each loved and loving one sympathising with, and devoted to, and leaning on. . . the other." (p. 13) But when Jonas proposes Mercy "the triumph of a sister" (p. 321) as their father calls it, changes their relationship completely. They become "so utterly discordant and conflicting," and the chosen one, in addition, rankles her disappointed sister Charity "with all the glory of her conquest." (p. 368) The wedding of the merry girl, however, causes another change between the sisters: Mercy's husband Jonas treats his wife so cruelly that the revengeful elder sister grasps "with eager delight at any opportunity of reproaching her sister. . . in *her* far deeper misery." (p. 549) Charity, who is now engaged with a young gentleman at Todgers's, enjoys the reversal of their positions. She introduces her fiance Moddle to Tom Pinch "with evident pride," while her younger sister leads a sorrowful life. Her position as a conqueror, however, does not last long; on the day of her own marrige, Moddle betrays her by not appearing, sending her a letter that tells he is still in love with her sister Mercy.

Mr. Pecksniff's household presents, in addition, another drastic and significant change in human relationship, that is, the mater-servant relationship. Thomas Pinch, who has admired his master from the bottom of his heart suffers serious disillusion when he knows the truth about his master. Mr. Pecksniff, who has been interested in Mary Graham, an attendant to Old Martin and also the fiancée of Young Martin, proposes her. He cunningly threatens her saying that her refusal might cause misfortune on her dear Young Martin. When Tom Pinch is told by Mary that his master is "T[t]he falsest, craftiest, meanest, cruellest, most sordid, most shameless" man, he feels that "T[t]he star of his whole life from his boyhood had become, in a moment, putrid vapour. . . . From the lofty height on which poor Tom had placed his idol it was tumbled down headlong. . ." (p. 466) Not only has Mr. Pecksniff lost his authority over Tom; for Tom, his master has "gone out of the world" —— he has "never existed."

There is another person in Mr. Pecksniff's house who is in as inferior a position as Tom Pinch, that is, old Martin Chuzzlewit. Mr. Pecksniff invites this old relative of his to stay at his house together with the companion Mary. Old Martin has shown "process of decay" and has become "less keen of sight" "deaf sometimes" "profoundly taciturn for days together", "softened down into a dull indifference," while Mr Pecksniff tries "to wall up the old gentleman. . . for his own use," making him "an instrument in his hands," and wishes "to establish an ascendancy over him." (p. 450) Old Martin's senility and weakness, however, have been all pretense, while he has planned to turn the tables some day. It is old Martin Chuzzlewit himself who urges Chuffey to declare the truth about his brother Anthony's death, which was mentioned above. It is the moment in which the inspiration of the truth seems "to change the dotards into strong men." (p. 736)

Old Martin does much behind his pretense of senility. It is he who secretly offers a job to Tom Pinch, when Tom leaves his master's house after the serious disillusion. The old man, moreover, acts as a secret benefactor also for his grandson, young Martin, who has "had a natural desire to run as directly counter to all his [Old Martin's] opinions as" he could. (p. 95) The hero young Martin, who lost his parents when he was very young, talks of filial sentiments towards parents: "it's all very right and proper to be fond of parents when we have them, and to bear them in remembrance after they're dead, if you have ever known anything of them. But as I never did know anything about mine personally,. . . I can't expect to be very sentimental about'em. And I am not : that's the truth." (p. 92) He, however, admits that he used to be "really attached to" his guardian, that is his grandfather old Martin. Young Martin, at first, torelated his guardian who required "respect, and submission, and self-denial" of the grandson. The grandfather and the grandson became separated when young Martin refused to follow his gurdian's hope in the matter of marriage.

Young Martin learns, in the end, that his grandfather also has hoped for the marriage of young Martin and Mary Graham; old Martin was offended only because

the grandson got engaged without his permission, neglecting the old man's plans for the future. He has hoped to provide them with fortunes, "establishing a claim on their affection and regard. . . which should surround his old age with means of happiness." (p. 759) Finding out that his grandfather has cared for him ever since they separated, young Martin reconciles with the old man after a long period of discord. Soon after this, on the same day, the old man has to "play the part of a father" again; the father of Tom's sister Ruth, who is going to marry John Westlock.

Far from being a helpless senile, old Martin has planned and carried out much more than even a young man might do. He, on top of everything, pays back Mr. Pecksniff for his ill treatment by striking him down upon the ground, "with his burning indignation crowded into one vehement burst, and flashing out of every line and wrinkle in his face." (p. 754) It is the moment when the aged regains the power he used to possess, and when the master of the Pecksniffs, who has already been forsaken by his daughters and by Tom Pinch, finally loses his authority and position, just as the tyrant Jonas Chuzzlewit has tumbled down from the height of ruling power.

As we have seen so far, the issue of illness and aging in *Martin Chuzzlewit* suggests the disturbance or confusion in manifold values, social system and relations among people. It has been pointed out that a Victorian jurist Sir William Blackstone, in his *Commentaries*, discusses "domestic relations with the idea that the 'three great relations in private life' are those of '*master and servant*', ''*husband and wife*,' and '*parent and child.*'" He also argues that the relations of power are indisputable. [13] As it is, Mrs. Gamp as a nurse, the American chapters and the household of Jonas and of Mr. Pecksniff have shown that they are disputable. There is always the possibility of the values inverted and the positions reversed —— the weak dominating over the strong; the inferior influencing the superior.

This novel can be regarded as an appropriate precursor of his next novel *Dombey and Son*, which "in the domestic and psychological sphere, imaginatively discloses

the rule of power we see in the public and political sphere of colonialist politics." [14] While the Old World tended to turn its eye to the New World, young Dickens did not forget to watch his own country in the Old World, finding out the illness it was suffering from and inherent inconsistency its society was filled with.

Notes :

1 Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit ed. Michael Slater (London: Everyman, 1994), p. 443. Further references to this novel appear in the text.

2 Mike Featherstone and MikeHepworth, "Images of Positive Aging" in *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Andrew Wernick (London : Routledge, 1995), p. 31.

3 Stephen Katz, *Disciplining Old Age: The Formation of Gerontological Knowledge* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 86.

4 Leon Litvack, "Dickens, Australia and Magwitch : Part I —— The Colonial Context" in *The Dickensian* (No. 447 Vol. 95 Part 1, 1999), p. 26.

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