

The Old Man in Silence: The Violence of Old Trent in *The Old Curiosity Shop*

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The Old Curiosity Shop has many puppet-like characters like Quilp, who are uproarious and personify the energy of life. Although many critics have conventionally argued the comparison between them expressed in good and evil, respectively, there is a more subtle expression of contrast in the complex characterization of Nell's grandfather. We discuss the grandfather's words and his silence which expose his violence.

While the grandfather always cares for Nell, he is scarcely a benign figure; his declared affection notwithstanding his dissatisfaction with his life leads him to torture her. The more he says that Nell is the only object of his life, the more he hurts her. His silence too is hurtful for her. On the long journey into the country, the grandfather keeps silent, although Nell barely manages to survive from one day to the next. Thus, in a way, the grandfather drives her death by his words and his silence without being aware of it.

We may therefore argue that Dickens describes this quiet violence of love as a means of expressing a subtle psychology, and in this noisy story, has tried it out as a new way of expression.