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AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND LIMITS OF THE GROTESQUE IN LITERATURE, WITH EMPHASIS UPON ITS RELATION TO THE COMIC; BASED UPON A STUDY OF WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS.

A THESIS

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AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND LIMITS OF THE GROTESQUE IN LITERATURE, WITH EMPHASIS UPON ITS RELATION TO THE COMIC; BASED UPON A STUDY OF WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS.

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AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND LIMITS OF THE GROTESQUE IN LITERATURE, WITH EMPHASIS UPON ITS RELATION TO THE COMIC; BASED UPON A STUDY OF WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS.

Chapter I.

Introduction.

The word grotesque is much used but little defined. In the case of the general public it is used indiscriminately to apply to a man or a tree, to a book or an idea, a piece of music or a theory. To denote something a little out of the ordinary, something bizarre, it has only one rival, the much abused term weird. Writers on the subject of aesthetics are a little more careful, but their care seems to consist principally in avoiding the word rather than in defining it. Bernard Bosanquet, whose *History of Aesthetic* has become a standard work, devotes a large part of his discussion of aesthetic theory to the problem of ugliness and its relation to beauty. One would naturally expect to find some treatment of the grotesque. But I have been able to discover only two instances of the use of this term. In both of these cases he names the grotesque as

one of a series of conceptions usually grouped under the ugly, and both times insists that these terms should not be so placed. In one instance he names the grotesque in the company of rudeness and austerity;[1] in the other instance, in the company of the narrow, the rude, the terrible, the vicious.[2] In both places some idea is given of the general characteristics of the group - a sort of romantic distortion in the one case, and a general incongruity and unnaturalness in the other - but there is no definition of the specific terms, no differentiation between them, no hint that he considered any one of them more complex, or more in need of definition, than another. In his article on the Aesthetic Theory of Ugliness he treats the term grotesque in much the same fashion, except that here he defines the group under which he has included the grotesque, as "the partial".[3]

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(1) Bernard Bosanquet: History of Aesthetic: Chap. XII-II-iii-1.
(2) " " " " " : Chap. XIV-3-gamma-ii-b-2.
(3) Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Vol. I-no. 3. Bernard Bosanquet: Aesthetic Theory of the Ugly. p 36.

Writers upon literary criticism are also great offenders on this score. They are freer in their use of the word, and, although they may have definitely in mind what they mean by the term grotesque, they either overlook the ignorance of their readers or take advantage of it, and in either case do not stoop to definition. Both Chesterton[1] and Gissing[2], perhaps the two best known critics of the works of Charles Dickens, use this term repeatedly. They nowhere definitely limit the term, although they, to a certain extent, imply a definition.

In addition to these rather vaguely implied definitions, we have three sources from which to draw a preliminary notion of the grotesque: (1) the dictionaries; (2) discussions of the grotesque in relation to formal art; (3) the works of a very few writers in literary criticism who have defined as well as used the term in the course of their discussions.

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(1) Gilbert Chesterton: Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens.
(2) George Gissing: Charles Dickens: A Critical Study.

Upon consulting the dictionaries we find that the derivation of the word grotesque gives us little help in the way of definition. The New English Dictionary gives the following etymology of the term: "The etymological sense of grotesca would be 'painting appropriate to grottos'. The special sense is commonly explained by the statement that grotte, 'grottos', was the popular name in Rome for the chambers of ancient buildings which had been revealed by excavations, and which contained those mural paintings that were typical examples of the 'grotesque'." We find, then, no true definition in the etymology of the word. We have merely a word defined in terms of itself, and hence no definition at all. This account of the derivation of the word does something for us however; it shows us that the word, in its primary sense, referred to formal art, and leads us to expect that, in its transferred meaning, it will emphasize such qualities as are found in formal art, qualities that appeal to the eye.

The first definition given by the New English Dictionary carries out this idea that the word grotesque refers primarily to formal art: "A kind of decorative

painting or sculpture consisting of representations of portions of human and animal forms, fantastically combined and interwoven with foliage and flowers." This definition gives the application of the term, but scarcely analyzes it. The only word that helps toward an analytical definition is the word _fantastically_. But there is, of course, an implication that incongruity is the very principle of these figures that we term _grotesque_. As a secondary definition of the noun _grotesque_ the same authority gives: "A work of art in this style; in _popular language_, figures or designs characterized by comic distortion or exaggeration." The question here arises as to just what is meant by 'in popular language'. Is there an implication that the popular use is less exact, or is the general use merely contrasted with the technical? By reference to the definitions of the word _grotesque_ used as an adjective (for this use is the popular one, the use as noun being more technical) it appears that by 'popular' the non-technical is meant. The adjective _grotesque_ is defined in the following manner: "In a wider sense, characterized by distortion or unnatural combinations; fantastically extravagant, bizarre;

transferred to immaterial things, especially to literary style." And again: "Ludicrous from incongruity, fantastically absurd." These definitions carry out the implications of the definition of grotesque used as a noun. There is emphasis upon the fantastic, the incongruous, the unnatural. The idea of the entrance of the comic into the grotesque, mentioned in the popular definition of the noun grotesque, is emphasized in the definition of the adjective. It is implied, moreover, that the basic incongruity and distortion of the grotesque are the grounds for a comic effect. This would suggest a close relation between the comic and the grotesque. Nor must we fail to observe that sanction is given to the use of grotesque as designating a thing so immaterial and intangible as literary style. We wonder if this refers to the qualities of the style itself or to the author's fondness for a certain type of subject-matter, to his ability to present a certain type of character or situation. If, in the strictest sense, an author's style can be called grotesque, the term has assuredly travelled far from its first significance as applied to a type of formal art. We may conclude, then, that the grotesque involves the distorted,

the unnatural, the fantastic, the extravagant; that there is a close relation between the grotesque and the comic; that in its narrower sense at least, the term grotesque applies only to objects or images having the qualities that appeal to sight.

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language gives much the same general definitions of the adjective grotesque: "Designating or pertaining to a work or style of art characterized by fantastic exaggeration or combination, especially of human and animal figures; whimsical, extravagant, or antic in form or character; absurdly or ludicrously incongruous or awkward, as grotesque theories or manners." We have here, as in the first definition cited, a more technical and a more general meaning of the term. Under the latter Webster freely includes the use of grotesque as applying to immaterial things. Theories certainly have nothing of the formal or tangible about them. The word character is more ambiguous. If by character quality or nature is meant- then the grotesque in form would be included in the grotesque in character, although the grotesque in essence or in spirit (if there is such a thing) could also be included, so far

as the limitations of the grotesque in character are concerned. The term manners is equally ambiguous. Is it used to mean the outward acts of the body or the attitude of the mind or both? A like ambiguity prevails in the discussion of the grotesque in its relations to the ugly, the beautiful, and the comic, which follows the definition proper. "The grotesque is distinguished from the ugly in that it affords positive aesthetic satisfaction. The ugly is the antitype of the beautiful; the grotesque is the complement of physical beauty, representing in the material world a distortion of aesthetic relations or qualities similar to that of the comic in the mental world. It may not, however, appeal to the sense of humor." The first sentence is clear enough as a statement, but it certainly is not clearly amplified or explained by what follows: "A complement of physical beauty representing a distortion of aesthetic relations". The explanation is far from lucid. By complement are we to infer an added something that is to complete, or something that shows us the other side of the glass, the looking-glass writing of the beautiful, as it were? And furthermore, if we say that the material incongruity of the grotesque corresponds to the intellectual incongruity

of the comic, how can the grotesque fail at least to present the materials for the comic? Or is there here an intended differentiation between the comic and the humorous? Moreover, in the definitions given, the term _grotesque_ was by no means limited to the material; here it is made to represent the material as opposed to the mental. It is very puzzling. It forces us to put our conclusions in the form of questions: Can the term _grotesque_ apply to the immaterial? What is the relation between the grotesque and the comic? On the positive side it leaves us only a series of synonyms: the fantastic, the exaggerated, the whimsical, the extravagant, the antic, the incongruous, the awkward. One other suggestion, however, we are able to draw from this source. If we turn to the definition of the word _grotto_ we find the following definition: "an artificial recess"; and of _grotto-work_: "Artificial and ornamental rockwork in imitation of a grotto." These definitions bring to mind accounts of the artificial grots of the early eighteenth century, with their wild, fantastic, anything but natural decoration. The implication is that, if this use of the word _grotto_ has had any influence upon the use of the term _grotesque_, the

incongruity and abnormality of the grotesque is not altogether accidental, but is rather man-made, the result of caprice, not of chance.

The Century Dictionary and Encyclopedia bears out this conclusion. It gives the following definition of the adjective grotesque: "Of the fantastic character of grotto-work and its decoration; wildly formed, of irregular forms and proportions; ludicrous; antic; as the arabesques of the Renaissance, in which the figures human to the waist terminate in scrolls, leafage and the like, and are associated with animal forms and impossible flowers; hence in general, whimsical, extravagant, odd, absurdly bold." The capricious nature of the conception of the grotesque is also emphasized in the definition of the term used as a noun. The narrower definition of the term as applied to art is given first: "A capricious figure, work, or ornament; especially a variety of arabesque which as a whole has no type in nature, being a combination of the parts of animals and plants, and other incongruous elements." The more general definition of the substantive gives very wide latitude to the term: "an uncouth or ill-proportioned figure, rude and savage scenery, an inartistic, clownish, or

absurd fancy, a clumsy satire, or the like." This is the first instance in which we have the word applied to scenery. Rude and savage scenery implies, moreover, scenery in a state of nature. How are we to reconcile this idea with the one emphasized earlier - that it is the man-made object that is grotesque? It is of course very possible that nature might occasionally imitate or at least approach the effects perpetrated by man. But in such a case should we call the effect rude and savage? In the next clause we have the term grotesque applied to 'an inartistic, clownish, or absurd fancy'. This certainly cannot mean that the mere lack of artistry, of smoothness, can render anything - be it object or fancy - grotesque. And, what is more, the conception of an 'inartistic fancy' is very hard to grasp. An 'absurd fancy' is easier to realize, for in a way the 'absurd' belongs to the field of the comic, and the comic to the realm of the intellect. But, once more, we are accustomed to apply the term clownish to attributes of the body, rather than to those of the mind, as do we also the term later used as an attribute of satire - clumsy. It is only by a stretch of the imagination that we ever apply this

word to the mind, and to transfer it still farther to an abstract quality of a product of the mind seems a little far-fetched. So once more we find ourselves with no very satisfactory answer to our question as to whether the term grotesque can properly apply to the immaterial and intangible. Our authority, it is true, says a satire, a fancy, may be grotesque, but in telling us what sort of a fancy or satire may be grotesque, he uses, in the main, words which we are accustomed to apply to bodily traits.

The definitions so far have been taken from dictionaries of universal usage. There has unavoidably been some discrepancy between strict and lax usage of the term involved, between its use by the artist, by the critic, by the psychologist, and by the layman. Baldwin's Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology has a narrower field, and hence we expect a more definite limitation of the term involved. We find the definition proper of the term grotesque so very suscinct that it scarcely satisfies: "a species of the fantastic, including an element of caricature or humor, unconscious or intended." The word fantastic

we have met in every definition we have scrutinized, but this is the first mention of caricature in connection with the grotesque. This opens up the question of the distinction between caricature and the grotesque. Baldwin goes on to say that caricature "is related to those aspects of the comic in which there is a feeling of superiority, whereas the grotesque, in which there is often exaggeration, is allied to the humorous". It is implied that Mr. Baldwin wishes us to understand that the humorous is a form of the comic that supposes sympathy rather than a feeling of superiority. But if we accept any of the more elaborate definitions of the grotesque that we have just reviewed, there seems little in the grotesque to evoke sympathy. This distinction between caricature and the grotesque, therefore, we can scarcely accept as final. Mr. Baldwin does, however, make a much clearer statement of the relation between the comic and the grotesque than the one given by Webster. "The grotesque seems to stand to the formal element in the requirement for beauty much as the comic does to the material or meaning element. As the comic is the aesthetically distorted in respect to meaning,

so the grotesque is the distorted in respect to form." This does not seem to put the grotesque outside the pale of the comic, but merely to make it apply to a material embodiment of the comic idea.

The one point upon which all of these authorities agree is that the grotesque has in it an element of the fantastic. I use the word element in want of a better term, meaning that something of the nature of the latter enters into the nature of the former; and yet the two terms are not entirely synonymous. In fact most of the words given as synonyms of the grotesque express only elements of the grotesque. No one of them gives the whole nature of the latter, but each suggests one more quality or one more limitation of the term under discussion. The following table shows the qualities of the grotesque given or suggested by each of the three Dictionaries cited, and shows their correspondence and disagreement.

New English Dictionary	Webster's Unabridged.	Century.
fantastic	fantastic	fantastic
distorted	- - - - -	- - - - -
exaggerated	exaggerated	- - - - -
unnatural	- - - - -	- - - - -

extravagant	extravagant	extravagant
bizarre	- - - - - -	- - - - - -
ludicrous	ludicrous	ludicrous
incongruous	incongruous	incongruous
absurd	absurd	absurd
- - - - - -	whimsical	whimsical
- - - - - -	antic	antic
- - - - - -	awkward	- - - - - -
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	inartistic
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	wild
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	irregular
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	odd
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	clownish
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	clumsy
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	bold
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	capricious
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	uncouth
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	rude
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	savage
- - - - - -	- - - - - -	ill-proportioned

It will be seen that there is complete agreement upon but five of these elements: The fantastic, the extravagant, the incongruous, the ludicrous, and the absurd.

Two of the three include the exaggerated, the whimsical, the antic. The Century gives twelve possible qualities not included by the other two. The lack of correspondence is not, however, so great as these figures would imply, since the terms used to denote qualities of the grotesque are often very nearly synonymous with each other. For instance, the Webster has _awkward_ where the Century has _clumsy_, the New English Dictionary, _bizarre_, where the Century has _odd_, and so on in a number of cases. But so much we can conclude from this table: the leading characteristics of the _grotesque_ are the _fantastic_, the _incongruous_, the _extravagant_, and the _ludicrous_.

Turning from the dictionaries to works upon formal art, we find a profusely illustrated volume by Tindall Wildridge, entitled _The Grotesque in Church Art_. The book opens with a suggestive but not very satisfactory definition: "The grotesque is the slang of architecture." There is here implied, at least, that a certain boldness, a certain extravagance, a willingness to wander from the beaten path, is a quality of the grotesque. The account of the derivation and the more detailed definition of the

term differ very little from what the dictionaries have given us: "The term grotesque, which conveys to us an idea of humorous distortion or exaggeration, is simply grotto-esque, being literally the style of art found in the grottos or baths of the ancients.-----It (the term grotesque) has spread to everything which, combined with wit or not, provokes a smile by a real or pretended violation of Nature and Beauty."[1] Again we have an emphasis upon the close connection between the grotesque and the comic; again we find the terms distorted and exaggerated applied to the grotesque. But the last clause of Wildridge's definition seems to make the grotesque a sort of blanket term to cover the whole field of the ugly, or at least of the laughably ugly.

A very early writer upon Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art,[2] Thomas Wright by name, names once more what we are forced to decide is one of the leading characteristics of the grotesque, the unnatural combination of incongruous forms, as the

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Note.(1) Almost no discussion of the term as used in literature.
(2) Thomas Wright: A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art. [illegible].

combination of man with beast, man with plant, etc. The result of such combinations this old-time writer calls 'monsters',[1] using the word in the sense of something monstrous or unnatural. He makes no distinction between caricature and the grotesque, but so far as it is possible to see, uses the terms interchangeably. Both of these last two writers have given a more or less technical definition of the term under discussion; that is they have defined the term with reference to its use in formal art. Since we are more interested in its application to literature, let us turn next to some writers of literary criticism who have made use of the term and have explained or defined it.

Bagehot, in his Literary Studies[2] explains his understanding of the term grotesque: "It takes the type, so to say, in difficulties. It gives a representation of it in its minimum development, amid the circumstances least favorable to it, just while it is struggling with obstacles, just where it is encumbered with incongruities. It deals, to use the language of

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(1) Thomas Wright: A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art. p 153
(2) Bagehot: Literary Studies - essay on Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning; or The Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque in Art.

science, not with normal types but with abnormal specimens; to use the language of old philosophy, not with what nature is striving to be, but with what by some lapse she has happened to become".[1] We find here some corroboration of the conclusions drawn from a study of the dictionary definitions of the grotesque and from definitions given by writers on formal art. Abnormal, incongruity - these words have occurred over and over again. But this explanation of Bagehot's seems to contradict another conclusion drawn from earlier definitions; namely, that the incongruity of the grotesque was the result of something more than a mere exaggeration or under development, that the abnormality was the result of a forcible combination of incongruous types rather than a chance variation from one type. Later Bagehot himself shifts his definition to different grounds and more nearly confirms the conclusion just stated. He is discussing what he calls the grotesque character of Browning's work. "Browning", he writes, "puts together things which no one else would have put together, and produces on

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(1) Refer to (2) p 18, Vol. II - p 338.

our minds a result that no one else would have produced, or have tried to produce."[1] Here the incongruity is not accidental, but, up to a certain point, deliberate, and is of a more decided type than one produced by mere exaggeration or divergence from type.

Bagehot's definition was made for purposes of concrete application, and therefore not likely to be so thorough (though perhaps fully as clear) as a purely abstract and analytic definition or discussion. The only essay available, so far as I have been able to discover, upon the characteristics and limits of the grotesque in literature, is one by John Addington Symonds, entitled Caricature, the Fantastic, the Grotesque.[2] In this essay he begins with an analysis of caricature, goes on to the fantastic, and arrives at the grotesque as a blending of the two. For presentation in a condensed form, a reversal of this order makes the matter easier to present. "The grotesque", writes Mr. Symonds, "is a branch of the fantastic. Its specific

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(1) See note 2, p 18 - Vol. II
(2) John Addington Symonds: Essays Speculative and Suggestive.

difference lies in the fact that an element of caricature, whether deliberately intended or imported by the craftsman's spontaneity of humor, forms an ingredient of the thing produced." Caricature he defines as "a species of characterization in which the salient features of a person or object have been emphasized with the view of rendering them ridiculous.----It renders the victim ludicrous or vile by exaggerating what is defective, mean, or ignoble in his person, indicating at the same time that some corresponding flaws in his nature are revealed by them." Of the fantastic he says, "The fantastic need have no element of caricature. It invariably implies a certain exaggeration or distortion of nature; but it lacks that deliberate intention to disparage which lies at the root of caricature. What we call fantastic in art results from the exercise of the capricious fancy, playing with things which it combines into arbitrary non-existent forms."[(1)] It is clear that Mr. Symonds cannot mean that the grotesque is the result of a complete fusion of these two ingredients, as he calls them, for he says that the fantastic has the same base as caricature, but that in the former

(1) See page 20, and note.

there is a symbolic, a moral value, not present in the fantastic. He also implies that caricature has more of a comic value than does the fantastic, and he seems to rely upon the former to furnish the humor in the grotesque. Mix these two, the fantastic and caricature, and what have you but a sort of intensified caricature, a caricature with an overcharge of distortion in it? But I do not believe that this is just what Mr. Symonds meant. I think he rather mixed a part of caricature - the comic exaggeration part - with the fantastic , for in no place does he imply any spiritual or moral side in the grotesque such as he asserted belonged to the nature of caricature. Such an interpretation of the relation between the grotesque and the two closely allied qualities, the fantastic and caricature, emphasizes the external character of the grotesque - it is a thing of body, not of mind. It also emphasizes the conclusion that the incongruity of the grotesque is capricious rather than accidental.

In gathering and correlating the conclusions and suggestions arising from all the works studied,

we find that one feature of the grotesque is in every instance made very prominent - incongruity. It may seem that this fact is not of great value since all conceptions related to the comic are likely to contain this element. But the emphasis upon incongruity in the case of the grotesque leads us to expect that this quality will be either particularly marked or of a peculiar variety, or perhaps both. Moreover, all of the authorities cited either state directly or imply that the grotesque arises from some fantastic conception or capricious combination on the part of the artist, and that it is as a result of this combination that the incongruity occurs. All have given us reason to conclude that there is some close relation between the grotesque and the comic, although some of them repudiate this fact in statement. All the other elements named as entering into the grotesque either merely strengthen these conclusions or are plainly given in explanation of an inexact popular use of the word rather than of its more exact meaning.

It is in accordance with these three conclusions, then, that we must form our preliminary def-

inition: <u>the grotesque is a capricious combination of incongruous elements resulting in a comic impression.</u> The question as to whether this incongruity is always expressed in terms of form, whether it must appeal to the eye of either the body or the mind, could scarcely be answered in a definition even if there was anything like agreement upon it among the authorities consulted.

Indeed there have many questions arisen in the course of the examination of these discussions of the grotesque. They have been the stimulus for the studies and conclusions contained in the body of this paper. Perhaps in this place some formulation of these questions would not be amiss.

1. Can the term grotesque be applied to anything but the tangible and material? Does it gain its appeal through any particular sense? Can anything but a human being be grotesque? If so in what respect and with what reservations? Can a scene be grotesque? Can an animal be grotesque? Can inanimate objects be grotesque? Can an idea be grotesque?

2. Is the grotesque always ugly? In what sense ugly? Is there any form or modification of ugliness that

prevails in the grotesque?

3. What is the nature of the grotesque incongruity? Are there any specific incongruities that are particularly likely to produce a grotesque impression?

4. What is the relation of the grotesque to the comic? Is the grotesque always comic? If so is the grotesque a branch of the comic, or is the comic merely an element in the grotesque? What is the relation of the grotesque to the special forms of the comic, humor and comedy? Can we give a name to the form of humor that does appear in the grotesque?

The attempt to answer these questions has been made wholly with reference to the works of Charles Dickens. It is possible that the conclusions based on a study of his grotesques will not apply without reservation to all grotesques. But it seems probable that they will at least prove suggestive of some general qualities and limitations of the grotesque.

It has been difficult in this study to avoid the perils of too wide or too narrow a conception

of the grotesque. It was necessary, in the first place, to decide upon certain characters as grotesque. Should I rely upon my unguided impression as to which characters came under this category, what had been the profit of a preliminary definition? If, on the other hand, I kept too close to any preconceived notion of the grotesque and barred out all such characters as did not exactly conform, what chance would there be for coming to any new conclusions? I have tried to avoid both of these extremes. At first reading of the works in question I noted such characters as appeared to me grotesque, and the passages which seemed to contribute to the grotesque impression. These I tested, both as I read and as I later referred back to them, by the preliminary notion of the grotesque formed by a study of what others have had to say upon the matter. As certain qualities of the grotesque, not found in this preliminary notion, thrust themselves upon me, I added them - tentatively - to my test. In this manner the following list of grotesque characters was formed.

I. Characters consistently grotesque throughout the course of an entire novel:

Barnaby Rudge:	:	Barnaby Rudge.
		Dennis, the hangman.*
Bleak House	:	Krook.
David Copperfield	:	Uriah Heep.
		Miss Mowcher.
		Rosa Dartle. *
Dombey and Son	:	Mrs. Skewton.
		Mr. Carker, the Manager.
Great Expectations	:	Miss Havisham.
		Mr. Jaggers.
		Bently Drummle.
Little Dorrit	:	Jeremiah Flintwinch.
		Mr. Panks.
		M. Rigaud.
Martin Chuzzlewit	:	Sairy Gamp.
		Mr. Naggett.
Old Curiosity Shop	:	Quilp.
Nicholas Nickleby	:	Newman Noggs.
		Mr. Mantalini. *
Oliver Twist	:	Fagin, the Jew.

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* Some doubt as to their grotesque character.

Our Mutual Friend : Lady Tippins.

Silas Wegg. *

Jenny Wren.

Sloppy. *

Mr. Dolls.

Rogue Riderhood. *

Tale of Two Cities: Jerry Cruncher.

II. Characters who appear grotesque in from one to five passages.

Barnaby Rudge : Villain.

Hugh.

Miggs.

Grip.

Bleak House : Miss Flite.

Mr. Turveydrop.

Hortense.

Phil.

Mr. Vohles.

Judy Smallweed.

Christmas Stories: Battle of Life.

Clemency.

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* Some doubt as to their grotesque character.

Craggs.

Snitchey.

Doctor.

Christmas Carol: Scrooge.

Marley.

Marley's Ghost.

Ghost of Christmas' Past.

Chimes : Goblins in the tower.

Doctor Marigold: Doctor's father.

Haunted Man : Child of the streets.

Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings:Servant-girl.

Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy: Buffle Family.

Somebody's Luggage: character in a manuscript.

David Copperfield : Aunt Betsy Trotwood.

Clothes-dealer.

Dombey and Son : Captain Cuttle.

Doctor Blimber.

Old Mrs. Brown.

Great Expectations: Convict.

Jagger's clerks.

Mathew Pocket.

Old Gruffandgrim.

Little Dorrit : John Baptist.

Mrs. Clennam.

Martin Chuzzlewit	: Chuffy.
	Sweedlepipe.
	Tamaroo.
	Mr. Popgram.
	Colonel Diver.
Mystery of Edwin Drood	: Durdles.
	Mr. Grewgious.
Nicholas Nickleby	: Smike.
	Squeers.
	Peg Sliderskew.
Old Curiosity Shop	: Sampson Brass.
	Kit.
Hard Times	: Tom in disguise.
	Mr. Sleary.
Oliver Twist	: Bill Sikes.
	Monks.
Our Mutual Friend	: Mrs. Podsnap.
	Mr. Boffin.
	Hindoo Baby in a bottle.

Pickwick Papers : Fat Boy.

Mr. Tupman.

Jingle.

Chance Stranger.

Pantomime actor.

Old man who tells stories of the Inns.

Goblins who figure in story of Gabriel Grub.

Pictures from Italy: The Goblin - from Lyons, the Rhone, etc.

Woman in carriage - from Genoa and its Neighborhood.

Confraternita - from same.

Postilion - from Through Bologna and Ferrara.

Characters at masquerade - from Rome.

Reprinted Pieces : Man who grew a beard - from Ghost of Art.

The noble savage - from sketch of same name.

Sketches by Boz : Old Women - from A Walk in A Workhouse.

Sisters - from The Four Sisters.

Witches in Macbeth - Private Theatres.

Members of Parliament - A Parliamentary Sketch.

Customer - A Pawnbroker's Shop.

Children - A Steam Excursion.

A Tale of Two Cities: Miss Pross.

Man under the Marquis's carriage.

Unçommercial Traveller :	Dead man in Paris Morgue.
	Boy holding his breath.
	Captain Murderer.
New Uncommercial Samples:	Woman bent double.
Miscellaneous :	Giant in Master Humphrey's Clock.
	Joey Ladle in No Thoroughfare.
	Odd Girl in The Haunted House.
	Apprentice in Tom Tiddler's Ground.

Chapter II.

It will be remembered that in most of the definitions cited earlier in this paper, there was at least an implication that grotesqueness was primarily a quality of matter, and that it made its appeal through the senses, particularly through the sense of sight. An examination of the manner in which the grotesque figures of Dickens's novels are presented to us, confirms this conclusion. We find that in the large majority of the passages noted as adding something to the grotesque impression, there is some visual image either directly presented or suggested. By directly presented I mean that the author either deliberately describes the appearance of the character, or that he uses such epithets and figures of speech as cause a visual image to follow immediately in the mind of the reader. By a suggested image I mean one less quick, sure, and inevitable, or one less vivid. For instance, an epithet that gives a mental sight image may be so buried in a descriptive passage that has sound for its prevailing element , or in a passage where the character rather

than the appearance is emphasized, that the visual-image loses its force. Under suggested images are included also such visual images as are secondary to and dependent upon other sense images or upon ideas. Certain sounds, certain moods, certain passions are associated with certain poses, motions, and distortions of feature. All images of sight thus called up by association are classed as _suggested images._ In some few cases characters are given to imaginings and fancies of a grotesque nature. These fancies materially affect our estimation of the characters. The grotesqueness of the fancy is transferred to the person in whose mind it occurred. When such fancies include strong visual images they, too, are given under the character as suggested images.

Upon this basis the following table has been compiled. Not every passage relating to each character has been included in the survey summarized below: only such as in themselves give a grotesque impression of the character, or such as give elements that go to make up our final grotesque impression.

Book	Character	Number of passages cited.	Number of passages where visual image is given.	Number of passages where visual image is suggested.
Barnaby Rudge	Barnaby	13	4	5
	Dennis	17	8	0
Bleak House	Krook	14	9	0
	Grandfather Smallweed.	9	7	1
David Copperfield	Uriah Heep	26	23	0
	Miss Mowcher	10	8	0
	Rosa Dartle	8	6	0
Dombey and Son.	Mrs. Skewton	18	14	2
	Mr. Carker, the manager.	15	12	0
Great Expectations	Miss Havisham	12	9	1
	Jaggers	12	7	2
	Bently Drummle	7	4	2
Little Dorrit.	Jeremiah Flint-winch.	25	18	2
	Mr. Panks.	18	15	1
	M. Rigaud.	14	12	2
Martin Chuzzlewit	Sairy Gamp	19	13	1
	Mr. Nadgett.	5	5	0
Nicholas Nickleby.	Newman Noggs.	19	14	0
	Mr. Mantalini.	13	8	0
Old Curiosity Shop.	Quilp.	34	26	4
Oliver Twist	Fagin	17	17	0
Our Mutual Friend.	Lady Tippins	7	6	1
	Silas Wegg	15	10	3
	Jenny Wren	11	9	0
	Sloppy	12	10	0
	Mr. Dolls	11	9	1
	Rogur Riderhood	10	10	0
A Tale of Two Cities.	Jerry Cruncher	15	10	1

Of the twenty-nine characters cited, twenty-two are introduced by a description of personal appearance. Three others have some detail or suggestion of appearance given in the passage introducing them.(1) Two others are heard of before they actually come upon the scene.(2) A description of personal appearance is given soon after they enter. The remaining two are introduced by sound: that is, it is by the sound of their voices that we get our first impression of them. Of these one is described within a page of his introduction.(3) The other is left as the only instance of a grotesque character where a sound-impression is left unsupported by one of sight for some time. And this one character (Jerry Cruncher, in A Tale of Two Cities), would certainly never be classed as grotesque were it not for subsequent descriptions of personal appearance.

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(1) Mr. Carker, the Manager: Dombey and Son.
Silas Wegg: Our Mutual Friend.
Bentley Drummle: Great Expectations.
(2) Sairy Gamp: Martin Chuzzlewit.
Grandfather Smallweed: Bleak House.
(3) Barnaby Rudge: Barnaby Rudge.
Jerry Cruncher: A Tale of Two Cities.

The results of a tabulation of passages relating to minor grotesque characters confirms the importance of the visual image in the grotesque impression. Under these so-called minor characters are placed: 1. characters that appear but once or twice, and give a grotesque impression in these few appearances; 2. characters that as a rule do not impress the reader as being grotesque, but do in one or two instances give a grotesque impression. Out of eighty-four passages examined in connection with these minor characters, seventy-five involved some explicit detail of appearance, gave a direct visual image; in the case of eight some visual image was suggested. In only one case was there no visual image given, and none strongly suggested by the wording of the passage. In the case of this one character, Old Gruffandgrim in Great Expectations,[1] we have given us sound images and details of character. But as the character never appears to the reader, little stimulus is given to cause the reader to form any sort of visual image for himself. The element of sound, how-

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(1) Chap. XLVI.

ever, is strong. So we have at least a strong sense image, and one closely allied with the sense of sight. Nor is it hard to construct a picture of an old man, bedridden, troubled with gout and temper, given to domineering over his family, when we are given the poundings and roarings with which he solaces himself when his will is thwarted. The testimony given by these minor characters is, in a way, more significant than that given by the passages relating to characters more consistently grotesque. If, for instance, there are cited twenty passages in which a character appears grotesque, and twelve of them give a mental sight-image, it is of little significance that the other eight give only sound-images or indeed no images at all. The impressions of the visual images given in the other twelve cases hold over and color all the subsequent ideas of the character, especially (as I have shown is frequently the case) when a preliminary, and hence a strong, description of appearance has been given upon the introduction of the character. Since, then, the findings in respect to these minor characters have been even more unvaried than in the case of

the major grotesque characters, it seems safe to make the generalization: Without the power to call up a visual image no character in Dickens is grotesque.

This decision corroborates Mr. Symonds' conclusion in his discussion of the grotesque. He names caricature as one of the chief elements of the grotesque, and while in caricature he emphasizes humor, exaggeration, and an intent to disparage,[1] it may be taken for granted that a term so widely used in drawing and other forms of formal art, would of necessity have its main appeal through visual images. Nor should we forget that the term grotesque itself applies primarily to formal art.

It seems clear that wherever we have grotesque characters we must needs have some visual image which forms the basis of the grotesque impression. The question still remains as to whether all material things may possess this quality of grotesqueness, or whether the term can apply only

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(1) John Addington Symonds: Essays Speculative and Suggestive. [See page 20.]

to the human form. Can a scene or an atmosphere be grotesque? Only in a certain limited sense. The general character of a scene, its gloom, its horror, may affect the impression we get of characters associated with the scene, and indirectly add to the final estimate of these characters. The rag and bottle shop affects our estimate of Krook.[1] The riot scenes in Barnaby Rudge[2] affects the view we get of several of the characters. We have a strong tendency to call Mr. Venus[3] grotesque because of the influence his shop interior has upon us. In a certain sense these scenes are themselves composites of grotesques. Take, for instance, the riot scenes in Barnaby Rudge[2] and in The Tale of Two Cities.[4] We are prone to call these scenes grotesque because of the figures that flash on and off the scene, appear for a moment in the weird light and then vanish. The scene of Folly Ditch,[5] with its crazy, leaning houses has another

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(1) Bleak House - Chaps. V-XI-XXXII.
(2) Barnaby Rudge - Chaps. LV-LXV-LXVI-LXVII-LXVIII.
(3) Our Mutual Friend - Chap. VII.
(4) Chap. V.
(5) Oliver Twist - Chap. L.

sort of grotesqueness. It suggests some gathering of very filthy old cripples. This resemblance furnishes at least the humor of the passage. And when it comes to such a description as one found in The Chimes, "and a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red-eyed, stony-toed, tooth-chattering place it was to wait in",[1] it is very easy to see wherein lies the grotesque impression. It seems probable, then, that a scene can be grotesque only insofar as it helps form our estimate of a grotesque character, or insofar as it contains or suggests human beings.

In the case of inanimate objects we can make much the same conclusions. The grotesque in still life always suggests the grotesque human form. A most notable example, perhaps, is that of the death masks with which Mr. Jaggers adorned his office.[2] There are also frequent examples in Pictures from Italy of statues and paintings presenting grotesque

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(1) Christmas Stories - The Chimes - [illegible].
(2) Great Expectations - Chap. XX.

figures, although these, as intentionally imitative of the human form, are scarcely fair illustrations of the grotesque inanimate object. More typical is that of the diligence in France, whose cabriolet head was "nodding and shaking like an idiot's head." (1) So here again we have no grotesque impression except that of the human grotesque.

There are very few animals present in Dickens's novels; Grip,(2) Lady Jane,(3) Diogenes,(4) Bill Sike's Dog;(5) we can count them on the fingers of one hand. And of these the only one that gives any grotesque impression is Barnaby's raven. Lady Jane adds something to the grotesque impression of Krook, but she is too intensely in type to be grotesque. With the raven it is different. He is ugly, he is uncanny, and at the same time he is funny. I think that we can call him truly grotesque. But here again at least the humor of the impression lies in his human cunning and power of speech.

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(1). Going Through France.
(2). Barnaby Rudge.
(3). Bleak House - Krook's cat.
(4). Dombey and Son.
(5). Oliver Twist.

When we come to consider the question as to whether ideas can be grotesque we find the problem more difficult. I have noted in the works of Dickens some twenty-nine passages where there seemed to be some grotesque impression arising from an idea. But it is very hard to decide just what may be classed as an idea. Is it possible in anything but a philosophical and abstract discussion to present an idea in any sort of purity? Upon analyzing the passages classed as presenting grotesque ideas I found that most of them made some appeal to the senses, and that the majority of these appealed to us through a visual image. A large number of the cases, however, (to anticipate my argument somewhat) depend largely for their unpleasant element upon either a very slight suggestion of sense-appeal, or else upon an appreciation of an idea back of the image. This makes the grotesque effect more illusive, and at the same time brings the idea into undue prominence. We are prone to lose the image in the idea and to declare the whole thing an abstraction. I doubt, however, that we should retain the grotesque impression at all were it not for the

presence of an image. The nearest approach to a grotesque idea is that voiced by Britain in The Battle of Life: "Humanity, that's the joke".[1] It is hard to tell, however, just how much of a grotesque impression this would give were it not accompanied by a detail of Britain's chuckle as he speaks. Another instance of the same sort, but harder to explain, is the case of the horses drawing old Anthony Chuzzlewit's funeral carriage. They are represented as exulting in the downfall of their tyrant, man: "They break us, drive us, ride us; but hurrah, they die!"[2] But these are the only cases in which the idea, unaccompanied by the image, seems to be grotesque. So we may generalize that, in the majority of cases, an idea must have a concrete embodiment, a material embodiment, in order to be grotesque.

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(1). Christmas Stories: Battle of Life - Pt. I.
(2). Martin Chuzzlewit - Chap. XIX.

Chapter III.

To the element of caricature Mr. Symonds, in his analysis of the grotesque, adds that of fantasy.(1) But if he means to include all of the characteristics of the grotesque under these two heads - and apparently he does so intend - his conception of the grotesque is not broad enough to cover the grotesques of Dickens. 'Exaggeration', 'distortion', 'arbitrary non-existent forms'; none of these specifically include what would seem, from an examination of the grotesque characters used as data in Chapter II, to be an ever present element in the grotesque effects in Dickens; namely, an element of the repulsive, the horrible. Here we find ourselves coming into the field of the ugly; but mere ugliness is not enough. The ugliness must be so intense, or of such a nature, that we feel some degree of shrinking and dismay.

We have said that the grotesque is, in Dickens, invariably accompanied by some visual image.

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(1). Refer to footnote, p 39.

The element of horror or repulsiveness is usually embodied in this image - sometimes accompanied by unpleasant emotions from another source. But often this element of horror has its origin in the purely physical. This is especially true in the Sketches, where there is neither time nor occasion for giving us more than a glimpse of the person, to say nothing of giving us anything of the character's moral nature. It is here that Dickens gives us his purest grotesques. The touch must be sure - the effect gained in short space. There is here no time for building up slowly through a series of impressions. The following passage furnishes an example of one of these miniature and yet complete impressions.

"What London Peripatetic of these times has not seen a woman who has fallen forward, double, through some affection of the spine, and whose head has of late taken a turn to one side, so that it now droops over the back of one of her arms at about the wrist.----She is a rare spectacle in this neighborhood.----I received intelligent information to this effect from a dog.----He is not so much as-

tonished at the bundle, as at the circumstance that it has within itself the means of locomotion. ----After much hesitation it occurs to him that there may be a face in it somewhere.----He goes slowly up to the bundle, goes slowly around it, and coming at length upon the human countenance down there where never human countenance should be, gives a yelp of horror and flies for the East India Docks."(1) There is given here no hint of the woman's character. All of the horror comes from the physical deformity.

Physical deformity may give this element in spite of character. In such instances the repulsion, and consequently the grotesque impression, is but momentary. Two cases in which this sort of repulsion is made clear are those of Miss Mowcher in David Copperfield and the Dolls' Dressmaker in Our Mutual Friend. When we get to know these characters we lose the impression of their physical repulsiveness, just as we cease to notice the ugly features of a friend. With this change in our feel-

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(1) New Uncommercial Samples: An Amateur Beat.

ing toward the character comes a lessening and final loss of any impression of the grotesque. It may be recalled by a revival of our first impression - as when we see Miss Mowcher's umbrella breasting the storm, as it seems, unaccompanied by any human agency -,[1] or by the revelation of some new unpleasant trait - as, for instance, when Miss Wren undutifully wishes that her father's chattering teeth would fall down his throat and choke him,[2] or when she applies the plaster to Fledgeby's wounded back.[3] It is true that in both of these latter cases our sympathies are entirely with Miss Wren. As soon as our sympathies have time to become active, the grotesque impression vanishes, but it has been there in that moment of shrinking. Much the same thing occurs when Miss Pross has a "fit of the jerks". [4] We know that both the disease and its manifestation are harmless, but as before there has been that moment of shrinking and shock, and for that moment Miss Pross has appeared grotesque. Again, in the case

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(1) David Copperfield - Chap. XXXII.
(2) Our Mutual Friend - Bk. III - Chap. X.
(3) " " " Bk. IV - Chap. VIII.
(4) A Tale of Two Cities - Chap. VII.

of Captain Cuttle, we know that the old man is the best intentioned creature in the world; we admire and love him. But when he "kisses his hook to the ladies"[1] or "bites his nails"[2] we want to avert our eyes. It may be ludicrous but we wish he wouldn't do it, and for the moment we dub him grotesque.

In direct contrast to passages where the element of horror or disgust is caused by some detail of physical appearance, we have cases where we catch a glimpse of something in the character's mental make-up that indicates madness, or in his moral nature something that indicates a trace of the diabolical. These non-physical traits cause us to shrink from the character displaying them and in such cases we are very apt to call the character grotesque. In the case of Barnaby Rudge, for instance, the mad boy's wild fancies as to the spirits in the wind and the smoke, and his horror of blood, furnish one element in our impression of him.[3] Poor little Miss Flite in her "squeezed bonnet"[4]

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(1) Dombey and Son - Chap. X.
(2) " " " Chap. XV.
(3) Barnaby Rudge - Chaps. III-X-XVII.
(4) Bleak House - Chap. III.

may be droll, but it is her awful dependence upon Chancery, and the way she puts her finger to her lips and whispers, "a little-M-you know",(1) that makes her grotesque. These examples may seem to refute the first point made - that without some visual image there can be no grotesques. But it should be remembered that, although the grotesque impression must be embodied in some physical form, this visual image need not furnish every element in the grotesque impression. It is true, however, that impressions in which the element of the horrible is furnished wholly by the non-physical, are weak and depend largely upon the reader's power of imagination, upon his power to transfer, without explicit aids from the author, the mental characteristics of a character into physical expression.(2)

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(1) Refer to footnote (4) p 49 - Chap. V.
(2) I have found it hard to realize some of these characters as grotesques because of a lack of this very power of visualization. No doubt to some people there would invariably be visual images accompanying their appreciation of the moral trait. My own memory and imagination, however, is largely of the auditory type. But even to me all of these characters suggested some visual image before I allowed them to enter the class of the grotesque. They would be, doubtless, much more strongly grotesque to one who had a strong visual imagination.

A very slight amount of physical repulsiveness, however, may be greatly strengthened by the revelation of some revolting defect or tendency of character. An example of such a case is found in Sairy Gamp.[1] In spite of her snuffiness, her spirituous breath, and her umbrella we are not quite sure whether we should class her as a grotesque or not. She may be just a joke. But when we find her fingers itching to compose the limbs of a man still living,[2] and know that she is congratulating herself on what a lovely corpse he will make, our doubts flee. In the case of Mr. Nadgett,[3] also, - whom Mr. Gissing calls a "genuine grotesque"[4] - there is this same strengthening of a slight physical trait by a more intense moral one.

The strongest and most unmistakable grotesques, among the major characters at any rate, are to be found in cases in which details of physical repulsiveness are closely accompanied by corresponding

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(1) Martin Chuzzlewit.
(2) " " - Chap. XXV.
(3) " " - Chaps. XXVII-XXVIII.
(4) George Gissing: Charles Dickens: A Critical Study.

mental or moral manifestations. Perhaps the finest example is furnished by Quilp in Old Curiosity Shop; here goblin body is matched with diabolical nature. Every act, every grimace, suggests the imp, and the diabolical promptings of his spirit always find some physical manifestation. Whether he is pinching his wife, drinking boiling spirits, or goading a dog to madness by wild grimaces and taunts, we feel the fitness of physical action to moral intention. Then there is Uriah Heep,(1) whose snaky writhings suggest the slippery hypocrisy of his mind; Mr. Carker, the Manager,(2) whose shark grin and feline tread indicate the predatory nature of the man; and Mrs. Skewton,(3) whose artificial complexion suggests the emptiness of her moral nature. I can think of no more potent touch of the grotesque than Mrs. Skewton's request for rose-colored curtains.(4)

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(1) David Copperfield.
(2) Dombey and Son.
(3) " " "
(4) " " " - Chap. XXXVII.

There is the horror of the idea that this should be a woman's one thought upon what might well prove to be her death-bed, and the still greater, because more tangible, horror, of the picture suggested - this old, ghastly figure made only more ghastly by the roseate light. It is as awful, as Dickens says in another place, "as rouge upon the dead".[1]

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(1) Great Expectations - Chap. XL.

Chapter IV.

The discussion of the element of horror suggests another element that is very active in the grotesque impression. And yet it can scarcely be called 'another element', for it is a frequent cause of horror and has entered into all of the examples given in Chapter III. This element is a certain sort of incongruity. It is the incongruity between death and rose-colored curtains that gives the horror in the example cited at the end of Chapter III. Indeed, this incongruity between life and death is one of the very commonest elements in the grotesque. A dead man is not necessarily horrible, but when a live man assumes the semblance of the dead, or when a dead face shows any of the passions or pettinesses of the living, we shrink in horror. The mere word cadaverous, applied to the living, often has this effect. Dickens makes frequent use of this incongruity between the dead and the living. Uriah Heep's hand is always "skeleton"[1] or "clammy";[2] Miss Havisham

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(1) David Copperfield - Chaps. XV-XVII-LII.
(2) " " Chap. XVI.

is a combination of "wax-work and skeleton";[1] Lady Tippins is a mere combination of parchment and bones, and Dickens is fond of letting us hear them rattle.[2] Most horrible of all is the pantomime actor in The Stroller's Tale,[3] from Pickwick Papers, a case in which the incongruity is doubled by making this "spectral figure in the Dance of Death" act the buffoon for the enjoyment of the circus crowd. It was no doubt an appreciation of this very incongruity between life and death that made Pleasant Riderhood send her famous message to Mr. Venus: "I do not wish to regard myself, nor yet to be regarded, in that bony light."[4]

The effect is full as strong, although it does not occur so frequently in Dickens, when death is made to take on the appearance of life. The simplest instance that occurs to me is that of the Hindoo baby in Mr. Venus's collection, who, in spite of being preserved in alcohol and put up in a glass jar, seemed on

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(1) Great Expectations - Chap. VIII.
(2) Our Mutual Friend: Bk. I-Chap. II; Bk. III-Chap. XVII.
(3) Pickwick Papers - Chap. III.
(4) Our Mutual Friend: Bk. I - Chap. VII.

the point of turning a somersault had only the jar been large enough.[1] Perhaps the most terrible instance of this sort of incongruity is given in one of the sketches given by the Uncommercial Traveller. He is on a visit to the Paris morgue, and the object of his interest is an old man with "a tap of water turned over his gray hair, and running, drip, drip, drip, down his wretched face, until it got to the corner of his mouth, where it took a turn and made him look sly."[2] The whole picture is ugly, but it is the last touch that makes it repulsive. This same Uncommercial Traveller indulges a like grim fancy, when he tells of his visit to the churchyard that he has named St. Ghastly Grim. The stone skulls ornamenting the arch-way of the gate seem to him to "wink and grin with the pain of the spikes".[3] Again it is not the idea of death, of a skull, that troubles us, but the idea of a skull's winking, grinning, and suffering pain.

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(1) Our Mutual Friend: Bk. I-Chap. VII.

(2) The Uncommercial Traveller - Chap. VII
(3) " " " - Chap. XXI:

It will be seen that this incongruity is not of the 'small boy with the large hat' variety. It is something more vital and fundamental than that. Such incongruity between the parts of a grotesque object certainly exists, but the basis of the grotesque incongruity is something more than incongruity between parts. The grotesque incongruity is a strongly felt incongruity between two categories of existence or thought, and the effect lies not so much in the fact that two things so far asunder should be joined, as in the fact that one thing should be found in the semblance of another. In the book on church art mentioned in Chapter I [1] there were many examples of figures half man, half demon; half man, half beast. There is a shock here at seeing things joined in apparent organic unity that are not in nature so joined, and there is the still greater shock of seeing man, to whom we are accustomed to attribute certain qualities, laying them aside in favor of those of a different and lower category of existence. It may be answered that, in analysis, the incongruity of the small boy with the large hat is not different; we may say that, here

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(1) Wildridge: The Grotesque in Church Art.

too, the effect is produced by the small boy's(as a representative of youth's) assuming, in the hat, the semblance of old age. This is no doubt true; but there is a difference in the cases. In the case of the grotesque the incongruity is between more widely diverse classes, and therefore is surer and quicker in making an impression. In the second place, in the case of the grotesque, it is always the higher form that takes on the semblance of the lower. You could get a grotesque impression from the incongruity of youth and age, but to do so you must represent youth as beautiful and old age as repulsively ugly. This is made clear in the cases of incongruity between life and death. When a grotesque effect is to be gained by making life take on the appearance of death, it is the clammy skin, the rattling bones, the discolored flesh of death that are emphasized. When a like effect is to be gained by showing death in the semblance of life, we see the peace of death marred by the pain, the passion, the defects of life. And it is usually this power of the grotesque to show its object in the form of something lower and meaner, that gives it an element of

horror.

In examining the grotesque characters of Dickens, we find in addition to the incongruity between life and death, which has already been mentioned, three favorite classes of cases in which man has been made to assume the attributes of the lower order of creation. We find man assuming: 1. the likeness of an animal, usually an animal with unpleasant traits; 2. the likeness of an inanimate object; 3. the likeness of some denizen of the under world, some imp, demon, goblin, or ghoul. There is not a single consistently grotesque character in Dickens where one of these unpleasant comparisons does not enter into the grotesque effect, and often all three of them are active. Most often the presence of these lower traits is stated in so many words, usually in simile or metaphor;(1) sometimes such traits are

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(1) I think that it is by a felicitous use of epithets and figures of speech that Dickens gains his most artistic grotesque effects. Prolonged description and prolonged exposition soon grow tiresome. Dickens introduces his characters by description, but he is too wise to interrupt his story later by any repetition or elaboration. He merely refers us back by a phrase or a single word, and so keeps alive in our minds the first impression, at the same time stimulating rather than clogging our imagination.

merely suggested by some act, motion, or speech of the character. In some instances the comparison, and hence the incongruity, persists in almost every passage in which the character appears. Quilp, [1] for instance, is ever a demon. He scarcely makes a motion or speaks a word that does not show some diabolical trait. Mr. Carker, the manager, seldom appears without his 'shark-smile'[2] Jeremiah Flintwinch[3] is usually either a "crab"[3] or a "screw-machine",[4] although he is once said to "be as crafty as a jackdaw",[5] and his manner of keeping his eye on Mrs. Flintwinch certainly suggests a reptile.[6] Newman Noggs appears now as a fish,[7] now as a "scarecrow", or as a "Guy Faux laid up in winter quarters";[8] and is there not the suggestion of a machine in the cracking of his finger joints?[9]

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(1) Old Curiosity Shop.
(2) Dombey and Son - Chap. XLII.
(3) Little Dorrit: Pt. I - Chaps. III-XV.
(4) " " Pt. I - Chaps. XV-XXX. Pt. II - Chap. XXIII.
(5) " " Pt. II - Chap. XXIII.
(6) " " Pt. I - Chap. IV.
(7) Nicholas Nickleby: Chaps. XV-XL.
(8) " " Chap. XXVIII.
(9) " " Chap. IV.

This last suggestion is strengthened by the fact that the greater the need of energy on the part of Mr. Noggs, the greater the creaking. Nor must we forget M. Rigaud, whose "mustache goes up under his nose" and whose "nose comes down over his mustache"(1) in that sinister smile which gives us a perfect picture of his Satanic Majesty.

In addition to Quilp the most evidently and undeniably grotesque figures in all of Dickens' novels are: Uriah Heep,(2) Grandfather Smallweed,(3) and Jeremiah Flintwinch.(4) Of the latter I have already spoken. Out of twenty-six passages in which Uriah seems decidedly grotesque, five give an impression of death - cadaverous is the word used to describe him; we hear often of his skeleton hand;(5) we see his cheeks sucked in until they seem to meet,(6) disclosing the outlines of the skull. The absence of eyebrows adds to this impression.(7) David finds him-

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(1) Little Dorrit: Pt. I - Chaps. I-XI-XXIX-XXX.
Pt. II - Chap. XXVIII.
(2) David Copperfield.
(3) Bleak House.
(4) Little Dorrit.
(5) David Copperfield: Chap. XV-XVII-LII.
(6) " " Chap. XLII.
(7) " " Chap. XV-XXV.

self trying to wipe off the sensation left by the touch of Uriah's clammy hand.[1] Five passages suggest some comparison with an inanimate object. The most frequent of these is the likening of his eyes to suns [2] which seem to have no connection with any human activity. The contortions of his face also suggest something non-human - perhaps one of these india rubber images in which change of expression follows the tension or relaxation of the rubber. Uriah's smiles seem to have no more significance, so far as the disposition of his mind goes, than do those of the puppet referred to. Nine passages suggest the animal. In one place he is pictured as a bat[3] hovering over Mr. Wickfield; in another as a sly fox;[4] in yet another as a "malevolent baboon". [5] But most frequently he assumes the serpentine writhe of the eel or snake. Aunt Betsy Trotwood sums up very well our feeling toward Uriah when she says,

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(1) _David Copperfield_ - Chap. XV.
(2) " " - Chap. XV-XXV.
(3) " " - Chap. XXXIX.
(4) " " - Chap. XXXV.
(5) " " - Chap. XXXIX.

"If you're an eel, conduct yourself like one. If you're a man, control your limbs, sir! I am not going to be serpentined and cork-screwed out of my senses".[1]

In the case of Grandfather Smallweed, even his ancestry is given in terms of the brute creation,[2] and, although the same figure is not carried out in the case of the gentleman in question, this introduction of the father in terms of the grotesque, prepares us to receive a grotesque impression of the son. There is in the case of Smallweed, as in that of Lady Tippins,[3] an impression of having on our hands something that ought to be dead. but that still retains some of the more carnal attributes of life. Lady Tippins has her lovers, and Grandfather Smallweed his money. Out of the nine passages noted in which this latter character appears grotesque, five show him to us as no better than a thing without life. He is a "clothes bag with a black skull-cap atop",[4] and he has to depend upon his grand-

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(1) David Copperfield - Chap. XXXV.
(2) Bleak House - Chap. XXI.
(3) Our Mutual Friend.
(4) Bleak House - Chap. XXI.

daughter Judy to have his "internal feathers beaten up".[1] In yet another place we see his head "roll like a harlequins",[2] and we are ready to take literally even Phil's estimate of him, although it was meant as a metaphor - "He's a leach in his dispositions, he's a screw and a wice in his actions, a snake in his twistings, and a lobster in his claws". [3] Four passages - including the one just quoted - show him with animal attributes. He "butts"[4] Judy at her grandmother, sits "scratching his ear like a monkey",[5] and appears like "an ugly old bird of the crow species".[6]

Close association of a character with some animal and an intimation that there is more than usual sympathy between them, may give something the same effect. This is very marked in the case of Krook,[7] the rag and bottle man. He is seldom seen without his cat, and on the night when the Chancellor's mis-

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(1) Refer to note 4 p 63
(2) Bleak House - Chap. XXI.
(3) " " - Chap. XXXIV.
(4) " " - Chap. XXXIII.
(5) " " - Chap. XXVI.
(6) " " " "
(7) " " .

erable lodger dies, there is something very near akin to the cat's gleaming eye and eager claws in the way he "smacks his lips with the unction of a terrible interest".[1] In a like manner we always associate Barnaby Rudge[2] with Grip, although here there is no suggestion of any likeness between boy and bird, nor is the final grotesque effect nearly so strong.

One other instance of horror produced by the degeneracy of a human being into an inanimate object is unique enough to deserve separate mention - the spontaneous combustion of Krook, the rag and bottle man, and his transformation into that greasy, unpleasant fluid that Mr. Guppy tried in vain to wash from his hands.[3] Here again, however, it is an open question whether this final incident in Krook's career is grotesque, or represents Krook as grotesque. In the reading it certainly does not. But in retrospect it seems to merge into the general impression and to furnish certain elements - one of which, as I have just said, is horror - needed to make up the complete grotesque characterization.

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(1) Bleak House - Chap. XI.
(2) Novel of the same name.
(3) Bleak House - Chap. XXXII.

Chapter V.

We have determined, then, that the grotesques in Dickens have invariably some element of the horrible, the repulsive, or at the very least, of the distasteful; that this element is usually caused by such a highly noticeable combination of incongruous ideas. that the result is at once repugnant to us; that this incongruity usually takes the form of a comparison of man with some form of life lower physically or morally and of a resulting contrast between our normal conception of man and the form into which he is shown to have degenerated, But is this repugnant incongruity enough for the grotesque impression? If it is, we surely have in the grotesque nothing but the gruesome. This we cannot admit. What, then, is the added element that transforms the gruesome, the horrible, the repulsive, into the grotesque? Evidently it is some element that lightens the total effect, that lifts something of the oppressiveness that must accompany unalloyed horror. In the grotesques of Dickens this added element is usually some touch of the comic.

Here we come to a big question: the relation

between the grotesque and the comic. In order to come to any understanding of this relation we must first have a working conception of the comic. The two commonest theories of the laughable are the so-called "superiority" theory, and the 'incongruity' theory.[1] The first of these, as its title indicates, supposes that the comic impression and the consequent aesthetic pleasure, arises from our sense of superiority, especially of moral superiority, over the object of our laughter. The 'incongruity' theory states that our pleasure arises from an intellectual realization of an incongruity. It will be seen that these theories are not mutually exclusive. An intellectual appreciation of the incongruity involved when a man crawls on all fours like a beast, may, putting aside the chance of the element of pity entering into the impression, lead to a decided pleasure in the fact that we do not need to crawl thus on the earth or that we have too much sense to do so. We are too accustomed to seeing beasts go on all fours to give

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(1) James Sully: An Essay on Laughter.

the fact any particular thought. We are too used to the superiority to feel it. It is only when the fact of our superiority is called to our mind by the incongruity, only when it is given us to feel superiority over those we usually acknowledge our peers, that the sense of pleasure results.

Two other theories, noted by Sully in his Essay on Laughter, but little developed in the course of his discussion, are the 'relief' theory and the 'play-impulse' theory.(1) The 'relief' theory, like the 'superiority' theory, depends upon and supplements the 'incongruity' theory. In this theory, however, the incongruity is of a certain kind, what Spencer, in his essay The Physiology of Laughter(2) calls a 'descending incongruity'. "Laughter", he states tersely enough, "naturally results when consciousness is transferred from great things to small." Relief here evidently means a lessening of tension; we find that the matter is not so serious after all, and the relief is pleasurable. Schopenhauer has somewhat the same idea, only he does not insist upon the 'descend-

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(1) Refer to note on p 67
(2) Spencer: The Physiology of Laughter.

ing' character of the incongruity.[1] His notion is that any incongruity causes surprise; we see an object that seems to be one thing and yet is another. With the intellectual appreciation of the incongruity comes a loss of the astonishment or bewilderment, and we experience a certain relief.

The 'play' theory tends to explain both the origin and the appreciation of the comic incongruity. It presupposes a sort of wanton pleasure in juggling with the rightful order of things, a pleasure operating alike in the case of the juggler and the audience. Akin to this is a theory advanced by Martin in the American Journal of Psychology.[2] By a series of experiments he determined that imitation, although unconscious on the part of the spectator, entered into the appreciation of the comic object.

It is clear, then, that incongruity is the basic element in the comic. Let us see in how far the comic incongruity is found in the grotesque. We have

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(1) Schopenhauer: The World as Will and Idea. Vol. II - Chap. VIII.

(2) American Journal of Psychology, 1905 - Vol. XVI. pp. 33-118.

found that the grotesque always involved some incongruity. Is this the same, or of the same nature as the comic incongruity? Sully points out that the latter is usually what he calls 'external'. "Our mirthful gratification at exhibitions of the incongruous arises through the perception of the intrusion of something foreign into the situation."(1) This, it may easily be seen, tallies with our explanation of the incongruity that often enters into the grotesque; namely, an incongruity arising from the fact that man seems to be taking on the attributes of a lower order of existence. Sully specifically mentions human deformity as often giving rise to the comic incongruity.(2) Deformity, it has been seen, is one of the leading causes of the grotesque impression.

Bergson insists that the only true comic incongruity arises from the comparison of man with a machine. "The attributes, gestures, and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion

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(1) Refer to note p 67
(2) " " " " "

as that body reminds us of a mere machine."[1] Taking this statement in even its narrowest sense, we find that it applies to many of the characters mentioned as typical grotesques; we have Flintwinch, the "screw-machine", Mr. Panks, the "steam-tug", Mrs. Podsnap, the "rocking-horse", Miss Havisham, the "waxwork" - characters all exceedingly mechanical, to say nothing of others who occasionally suggest the machine. But when we see how elastic Mr. Bergson makes this term 'mechanical', we see that it can be stretched to cover practically all of the characters in Dickens that we have picked out as grotesque. Bergson insists that exaggeration or repetition of a quality makes the owner appear mechanical. The man of one idea is an automaton; the man who thinks only of his profession, the misanthrope, the man with a hobby of any sort, all are mere machines. When body is emphasized where defect of soul is really indicated, we again have man, the machine, not man, the only reasoning and moral animal. In short, as Bergson

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(1) Bergson: Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic. p 29.

himself sums it up, "The laughable element----consists of a certain sort of mechanical inelasticity, just where one would expect to find the wide-awake adaptability and living pliableness of a human being."[1] Under this broader conception of the term mechanical we could include Dennis,[2] the hangman, whose devotion to his profession leads him to the greatest inconsistencies in conduct; Jaggers,[3] always watching the trap he has set; and Miss Flite,[4] who has become a part of Chancery routine and cannot tear herself from its awful machinery. And when we consider that we have soul ever given in terms of body throughout the descriptions and discussions of grotesque characters in Dickens, that Uriah's[5] hypocrisy is a writhe, that Quilp's[6] demon spirit is shown in a dwarfish body and a strange capacity for making grimaces and drinking boiling spirits, that Fagin's[7] groveling spirit is indicated in his hideously polite smile, that Mrs. Skewton's[8] devotion to an artificial society is symbolized by the paint upon her face - to mention only a few of the more

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(1) Bergson: Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic. p 10.
(2) Barnaby Rudge.
(3) Great Expectations.
(4) Bleak House.
(5) David Copperfield.
(6) Old Curiosity Shop.
(7) Oliver Twist.
(8) Dombey and Son.

obvious cases - we see that most of the grotesques of Dickens have this 'mechanical' incongruity that Bergson insists is the heart of the comic.

We find apparently that the very incongruities that our earlier analysis cited as producing horror or repulsion are at least of the general kind to produce the comic impression. Are the comic and the grotesque, then, co-extensive? From one point of view, yes. In the case of Dickens's grotesques at least, the grotesque is almost invariably the comic. (1) From another point of view, no. A comic impression is not, in itself, enough to make a character grotesque.

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(1) The one exception to this rule that I have found in the works of Charles Dickens is the case of Rosa Dartle, in David Copperfield. The details that make her grotesque are undoubtedly the scar across her lip and the tigerish expression she so often assumes. But the only thing that could possibly be construed into humor is her constant "I want to know", and it is not strong enough to counterbalance the disagreeable impression created by the other details. The character has been a puzzle to me. But I felt too strongly the grotesque implications of the throbbing scar to bar her from the list of grotesques.

Take, for instance, a purely comic figure, such as the Fat Boy in Pickwick Papers. He violates all of our conceptions of a normal human being. He eats when the ordinary mortal would be crammed to bursting; he sleeps in the most impossible of positions and at the most impossible times. But, while we do not admire him, we have no particular objection to his company so long as we are not dependent upon him for service, or he upon us for food. Contrast with this character such a one as Mr. Panks,[1] in whom we find the ludicrous combined with the unpleasant, the repulsive, in a character truly grotesque. Mr. Panks is introduced as a man, but we soon find that he has full as many mechanical traits as human ones. The incongruity makes him humorous, but we discover that it also makes him slightly repulsive. There is nothing unpleasant about a steam engine when it is kept in its place, but when this incongruous combination of steam engine and man is presented to us we find ourselves under the necessity of treating it as a social equal. We are obliged to sit at the table with it, to hear it snort over its soup, to feel it blow off steam in our faces.

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(1) Little Dorrit.

It is just this bit of repulsiveness that sets off the grotesque character from one that is merely comic.

The grotesque and the comic, it seems, meet on a common ground of incongruity. Can they do the same when the discussion turns to the theory that a sense of superiority contributes to the comic impression. In the first place this sense of superiority, as has been shown, is largely dependent upon a previous realization of an incongruity in the comic object. Since the grotesque includes the comic incongruity, it seems to follow that the grotesque also arouses the comic sense of superiority. This is made more probable by the fact that the grotesque incongruity shows man in the form of some lower creation, thus inspiring in the spectator,- who, so far as his appreciation of this particular incongruity is concerned, considers himself a normal human being -, a decided sense of superiority.

The theory of comic relief stands in a peculiar relation to the grotesque. It will be seen that, from one point of view, the grotesque incongruity produces great tension because of the emotional im-

pression that results from it. On the other hand, the intellectual tension, the bewilderment is not so great as in other sorts of incongruity; the grotesque incongruity is quickly appreciated because of the contrast between the parts combined and because of the exaggeration and caprice that so often enter into the grotesque conception. Whatever relief there is, is probably, then, a relief from the emotional strain. It is also to be noted that laughter is not the only relief afforded from this strain; the tension of the grotesque impression is relieved also by the shudder of disgust. But, considering the large emotional charge contained in the grotesque impression, it is likely that the outlet is effected through comic appreciation as well as through the shrinking of repulsion, and that, were there not present a comic impression, we should have the gruesome rather than the grotesque.

This function of the comic in the grotesque, to lighten and mitigate the less pleasant element, is furthered by a sort of secondary incongruity, that arises from a light or humorous treatment of the horrible. A grotesque seems even funnier than the primary incongruity can account for.- always allowing,

of course, for the contractive force of the horror - just as a joke from the pulpit or a comic incident in church seems comic out of all proportion to its actual humorous implications. It is just this incongruity between the two elements in the grotesque that keeps the more emotional element of horror from entirely obscuring the comic part of the impression. Take, for instance, the case of Mrs. Skewton, mentioned earlier. She is a comic figure because anyone who carries on a constant masquerade is bound to be comic. But at the same time the details of the masquerade are all repulsive. She wears roses in her bonnet - and she is an old woman; here we have comedy. The roses nod as her palsied frame shakes. Here we have horror. Join the two and you have the grotesque. But it is more than likely that you would have nothing but horror did not the author's skill at phrasing show you the comic and the horrible in sharp relief,(1) and so preserve for you

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(1) Mention was made earlier of Dickens's skill in presenting, and representing, the grotesque in a single phrase or figure. Much of this skill lay in finding a phrase that brought out thoroughly the contrast between the two elements of the grotesque. The passage quoted is a case in point, as are also Fagin's "hideous smile", Miss Pocket's "Walnut-shell laugh". The descriptive phrases especially seem to bring out all there is of both humor and horror in the situation; "town-bred children with parenthetical legs", "a composite of door-mat and rhinoceros hide", "Siamese twins multiplied by two", "with no visible neck and his eyes going before him like prawns" - these are only a few of the numberless phrases that show Dickens's power of phrasing, as well as of conceiving, the grotesque.

the comic impression by a second incongruity.

The question now arises as to whether all grotesque figures present what I have termed a primary incongruity. It seems probable that, from the original application of the term in relation to formal art, the grotesque must involve such an incongruity. We are very prone,however, to class all characters about whom these two elements of horror and humor gather, as grotesque. Take the case of Rogue Riderhood. When he is brought half-drowned into the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters,[1] we shrink from the "dank carcase". There is something almost comic in the expression "a flabby lump of mortality". But when Bob, the pot-boy, tells us that the Rogue's "gills look queer", we are as much amused as horrified.[2] This is perhaps the passage that most inclines us to class Rogue Riderhood among the grotesque characters. Is it the very slight suggestion of the incongruity between man and inert matter that makes us so class him? Or that between man and fish suggested by Bob's expression? Perhaps to

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(1) Dombey and Son - Chap. XXXVII.
(2) Our Mutual Friend: Book III - Chap. II and III.

some slight degree. But I believe that we are influenced more strongly by the incongruity between the horror that the "dank carcase" inspires in us and the comic manner in which this very horrible impression is conveyed to us.

The situation is much the same in the case of Dennis, the hangman.[1] The description of Dennis is repulsive to a degree, but there is little of the grotesque in it. Then comes the comic impression afforded by the way he regards his profession. To him it means dignity, the right to ride in a carriage. To the poor wretches condemned to die it means the end. The incongruity results in a comic impression; it is based upon two views of a horrible situation. But is it a grotesque incongruity? I believe not. We are misled by the resemblance of our psychological process in this case to that occurring in the case of a grotesque impression. We are horrified while we smile, we are horrified that we smile, but after we have once smiled the humor of our own incongruous conduct keeps us smiling.

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(1) Barnaby Rudge.

We come now to the last theory of the comic -- the play-impulse theory. We find that several elements often found in the grotesque favor the conclusion that comic impression resulting from the exercise of the play-impulse, is often present in the grotesque impression. The pleasure in this sort of humor is caused by an appreciation of the author's power of imagination, and by a delight in the exercise of our own. Anything wildly exaggerated, wildly distorted, affords this sort of delight, provided it does not, to too great an extent, terrify and disgust us. If exaggeration and distortion, then, can call up the spirit of the comic, surely the grotesque, which so often contains these elements, may well do so - always keeping in mind the reservation made above. I think, however, that the more exaggerated and extravagant the conception, the less danger of the horror's killing the comic element in the impression. We look upon the whole affair as a huge joke. Indeed the difficulty in such cases is to make the horror real enough to preserve the grotesque conception. The author must take great care that what he gains by exaggeration of the incongruity he does not

lose by incredulity. Chesterton calls Quilp a mere extravagance,[1] and rather grudges him the term grotesque. But the exaggeration of the conception does not destroy the grotesque impression. By exaggerating the horror it increases the comic impression, and we have a doubly strong grotesque.

It will be seen that the analysis of the grotesque impression is a difficult one owing to the interaction of the elements upon one another. From one point of view the comic is an element in the grotesque, blends with the horror and mitigates it so that the final effect is not merely gruesome or wholly ugly. From another point of view the grotesque merely furnishes one sort of material for the comic impression, one sort of incongruity, one ground for superiority and relief; is, in fact, merely a branch of the comic. The matter is further complicated by the fact that, in the case of any given character, a series of impressions rather than a single impression is involved. A character may be wholly comic in one place and wholly horrible in another. It cannot be said, strictly speaking, that the character is grotesque in either instance, but the final impression is one of grotesqueness. The

(1) G.K.Chesterton: Appreciation and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens. p 69.

first impression, whether that of the ludicrous or that of the horrible, holds over and colors the next passage, which may be wholly lacking in the element furnished by the first. This may seem to contradict the statement that the same incongruity furnishes both elements. It must be considered, however, that our appreciation of the incongruity may not be complete with the reading of the first passage, and that the comic implications of the incongruity may strike us sooner than the horrible, or vice versa.

Some authorities are inclined to deny this intimate connection between the laughable and the grotesque. Gilbert K. Chesterton in his well-known book on Dickens, cites Barnaby Rudge as the great example of the grotesque without the comic. "Laughter", he says, "is not the object of Barnaby Rudge's oddities. His idiot costume and ugly raven are used for the purposes of the pure grotesque; solely to make a certain kind of Gothic sketch."(1) But why is the sketch of Barnaby not comic? Are there no elements of the laughable there? We should laugh at the same costume if we saw it on a circus clown. Could we get away

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(1) Gilbert K. Chesterton: Appreciation and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens. p 69.

from the horror of his wild glance, and forget the pity the author inspires in us by the manner of his description, we should undoubtedly pronounce the idiot laughable. And as for Grip - he is undoubtedly funny, and his close association with Barnaby includes him in the general impression. Our answer to Mr. Chesterton, then, is that Barnaby is grotesque only in so far as some slight element of the ludicrous is able to enter into our conception, and in so far as we are able momentarily to forget our pity[1] and assuage our horror until the humorous side of the picture becomes at least dimly felt.

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(1) Mr. Sully names disgust and pity as the two great contractives of the comic impression that arises from deformity. We have already touched upon the manner in which the first is overcome in the grotesque-comic impression. But the emotion of pity is a still greater foe to the grotesque impression. It kills not only the comic element but also the element of repulsion. In most cases Dickens has safeguarded the grotesque impression by matching ugliness of body with ugliness of moral nature. In the few cases where he has not taken this precaution, the grotesque impression is tenuous and fleeting. In the cases of Barnaby Rudge, Jenny Wren, Miss Flite, Miss Mowcher, we find it hard to retain the grotesque impression that the first sight of them aroused. Their physical limitations seem the subject for pity rather than for laughter or disgust. But there is no such hesitation on our part in the case of Quilp. Here pity is precluded by the moral disgust that strengthens the impression arising from the sight of physical infirmity.

Up to this point the words comedy and humor have been used - as indeed they are usually used by most writers on the subject - as if they were synonymous with the ludicrous.[1] If we take these terms in a narrower sense perhaps they will bear a different relation to the grotesque. Real humor, in this narrower sense, is too kindly in spirit to enter into the grotesque. In humor we must never despise, never shun that at which we laugh. We love them even while we laugh. Often we pity. Now love and pity accord ill with that essential feeling of distaste or disgust which, as we have shown, invariably accompanies the grotesque. Chesterton puts the matter epigramatically when he says, "Dickens loved all men in the world; that is he loved all the men whom he was ready to recognize as men; the rest he turned into griffins and chimeras, without any serious resemblance to humanity. If he wishes to hate a human being he adopts the simple expedient of making him an inhuman being."[2] Dickens' grotesque characters are

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(1) We must differentiate between <u>comedy</u> and the <u>comic</u>. The <u>comic</u> (the German komik) is the generic term for <u>the</u> entire field of the laughable. <u>Comedy</u> is applied only to a highly specialized form of the <u>comic</u>.

(2) Gilbert K. Chesterton: <u>Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens</u>. p 99.

these same griffins and chimeras, these inhuman beings. As to comedy, if we may accept Meredith's discussion of the subject,[1] it is something distinctly social. It is not mere hilarity. Its life is "in the idea". It provokes thought as well as laughter. It is true that some of Dickens' grotesque characters stand for ideas. Mrs. Skewton stands for a certain artificial state of society; Krook stands for Chancery; so also does mad little Miss Flite. But such characters are the exceptions. Most of Dickens' grotesque characters are too patently the work of a wanton imagination, are too extreme, too wildly exaggerated, to belong to comedy. "To love comedy, you must know the real world,"[2] says Meredith. And practically no grotesque character is an inhabitant of the real world, any more than a gargoyle has any parallel in the realm of nature.

The only grotesque impressions in which there seems to be an approach to anything like humor or comedy are those called up by Mrs. Skewton and Jenny Wren. The first of these characters, as noted before,

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(1) George Meredith: Essay on Comedy.
(2) " " " " "

is more nearly symbolic than any of the other gro-tesque characters in Dickens. Because of her significance as a representative of a social type her character is often seen in a tragic light. We feel that the horror she arouses in us comes from a realization of her character rather than from a physical shrinking from her rouged face and palsied frame, although the latter emotion is not lacking. When we dwell on the physical we have the ridiculous, the grotesque; when we dwell on the character, the idea, we have comedy. Lady Tippins is Mrs. Skewton with this inner significance of character left out, and the outer, more physical traits exaggerated. She is not a figure for comedy; she is ludicrous, horrible, farcical, grotesque. Jenny Wren is more truly humorous than any other character in Dickens. At most times we feel for her a tenderness that laughs at her sharp ways without minding them. But the times when she is humorous are not the times when she is grotesque. She is grotesque only when we dwell upon her physical infirmity, when we look at her through another's hostile eyes (as when Charlie Hexan calls her a "little antic of a child"), or when we forget our

tenderness and pity in the horror of her dreadful speeches to her father.

If the comic element in the grotesque is neither comedy nor humor, what, then, is it? Mr. Symonds, in his definition of the grotesque as a combination of fantasy and caricature,(1) suggests that the latter furnishes the comic element in the mixture. The suggestion sounds plausible. The grotesque is undoubtedly something more than a caricature, but that something more may be the horrible element rather than the comic. A caricature implies, by Mr. Symonds' definition, the exaggeration of prominent traits of a man with a view to rendering him ridiculous. The grotesque goes a step farther and renders him offensive as well. But does the caricature part of the representation contain all of the comic implications? In the case of the grotesques of Dickens it certainly does not. Withdraw the element of horror from any grotesque impression, and the comic may have a clearer field, but you will still find in the very extravagance that makes the character more than a caricature, added material for humor. Caricature may, no

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(1) John Addngton Symonds: Essays Speculative and Suggestive. Essay on Caricature, the Fantastic, the Grotesque.

doubt does, cause a part of the comic effect of the grotesque, but it is not responsible for all of it.

What then can we call the comic element in the grotesque? It is hard to find a word that fits the case. What we need is a word which shall denote in form what farce denotes in situation - a wanton juggling with things until we have a creature or a series of events such as never occurred in our law-dominated world. Lady Tippins, Jeremiah Flintwinch, Grandmother Smallweed, Quilp, Uriah Heep, they all have this touch of what, for want of a better word, we call the farcical. The death of Krook, repulsive as it is made with its details of odor and touch, has a touch of farce in it. Did anyone ever die of spontaneous combustion? The very paragraph in which Dickens gives the cause of Krook's decease has a bit of artificial bombast about it that fits well with a farcical situation.

Chapter VI.

What, then, may we conclude are the leading elements in the grotesque impression? It may be well to go back to the preliminary definition formulated in Chapter I, and to see in how far the study of the grotesques of Dickens has corroborated that definition or has enlarged and extended it. "The grotesque is a capricious combination of incongruous elements resulting in a comic impression." This was our preliminary definition. Do we find that our study has upheld it? Most notably it has. We have found that incongruity is the very basis of the grotesque effects in Dickens. In every instance we find at least one of four incongruities: (1) the incongruity between life and death; (2) the incongruity between man and an inanimate object; (3) the incongruity between man and beast; (4) the incongruity between man and demon. Is this incongruity the result of wanton caprice on the part of the writer? This question is a little harder to answer. Caprice certainly had much to do with the creation of such characters as Quilp and Uriah Heep. But someone may well ask wheth-

er. exaggeration, rather than a capricious combination of elements, is not the active force that has shaped for us these monstrosities. I think not. Exaggeration plays a part no doubt; but it cannot take us past a certain point. We may say that a man is like a beast. We may exaggerate these bestial qualities as much as we please; but we still have a man acting like a beast or looking like one. But if we go a step farther and say, "Here is an anomalous creature, half man, half beast; his man-traits belong to the man-half of him, his beast-traits to the beast-half" - we have done more than exaggerate. We have wantonly, out of our imagination, created something that does not exist. This, I believe, is what Dickens has done in his most convincing grotesques.(1)

But is this capriciously attained incongruity

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(1) This, no doubt, partially accounts for the fact that we so seldom see actual human beings whom we should call grotesque. I have no doubt that Dickens saw true grotesques moving along the streets of London. But we have not his eye, his imagination. We see the man who acts like a machine; he saw the man actually becoming one.

comic? Again the answer is affirmative. We have found that as soon as the grotesque character ceases to impress us as comic it is no longer grotesque; it has become merely gruesome, or it has, through pity, lost along with its comic impression that other element which goes to the making of Dickens' grotesque characters: namely, its repulsiveness. Moreover, the very fact of the presence of the incongruity in these grotesques might lead us to take for granted the resulting comic impression, so long as that impression was not killed by pity or distaste. And here we have worked back to the same point once more: that when the comic impression is so killed we have no longer the grotesque, but merely the pitiable or the repulsive.

By the test of the preliminary definition, then, many of the characters of Dickens are grotesque. Or, if we put it the other way, by the test of the grotesque characters of Dickens the preliminary definition at least contains no errors. But does it cover all the elements of the grotesque?

By no means.[1] What more, then, do we find?

In the first place, we find that the grotesque impression must have a concrete, a formal embodiment. The grotesque characters of Dickens invariably make their appeal by stimulating the visual imagination. These images may be aroused by actual description of the character classed as grotesque, or by mere suggestions of the bodily form. But in all cases the suggestion must be strong enough to call up some definite visual image before the grotesque impression can arise. The less strong and the less constant the visual image, the more tenuous and fleeting the grotesque impression. Why then have we made the point that, in the case of the strongest grotesques, deformity of body is reenforced by deformity of soul? If the grotesque impression depends

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(1) It is to be remembered that the generalizations here made are based entirely upon an examination of the works of one man. It may be that elements which always enter into Dickens' grotesque characters are not invariably elements in the grotesque. It seems more probable, however, that any element that is constant in one man's presentation of grotesque impressions, is a common element in the grotesque more universally considered.

upon the formal embodiment of the disagreeable and incongruous, does this added spiritual manifestation of these same elements add anything to the strength of the grotesque impression? Only, I believe, in one of the following ways can it strengthen the grotesque effect. It may suggest or make more plausible the physical defect. Certain expressions of face and certain physical qualities we are accustomed to think of in connection with certain qualities or defects of mind and character. If we have not the latter we lose the force of the former. Or the realization of spiritual defects may simply strengthen one of the emotions produced by the incongruous image, most probably the emotion of distaste or repulsion. But the most frequent use of this added spiritual defect is to preclude pity. Those merely physically deformed are more to be pitied than laughed at. But mere spiritual defects alone cannot produce the grotesque impression except when they suggest, with some force, parallel physical distortion.

Another element in the grotesque impressions of Dickens that is not mentioned specifically in the preliminary definition, is the element of repulsion or

horror. We style only those characters grotesque that affect us unpleasantly. This element of horror or repulsion arises, as we have shown, from the nature of the incongruity that produces the grotesque impression, an incongruity which always shows or suggests that a human being is degenerating, that he has bartered away, at least in part, his human nature and form for those of a lower order of existence. As soon as this element of the disagreeable is lost, the grotesque is lost; it becomes the pitiful or the purely comic.

The grotesque, it can be seen, is in constant danger from one of its two leading elements: the comic and the horrible. Should the horror overcome the laughable, we have left only the gruesome: should the laughable prevail, we have only the comic. The horror, however, is safeguarded by the nature of the grotesque incongruity, a descending incongruity that is immediately perceived and strongly felt, since it is based upon a visual image. The comic, on the other hand, also has its reenforcement in the shape of a secondary incongruity between the comic and the horrible, which are thus placed in juxtaposition by the grotesque presentation.

We may then, I believe, define the grotesque as a blending of the horrible or the repulsive with the comic. We may add that the horror is due to the realization of the distorted and unnatural character of the grotesque conception, strengthened and made emotionally effective by the visualization of a material embodiment of that conception; while the comic impression comes partly from an appreciation of the incongruity presented by this grotesque conception, and partly from what we feel is a farcical treatment of the horrible.

Chapter VII.

Not long ago I heard a charge brought against the art of Dickens on the very ground of his frequent presentation of the grotesque. That Dickens' grotesques, as grotesques, are fine, there can be little doubt. His power of maintaining the balance between laughter and horror is every whit as great as his power to maintain that between laughter and tears - a power for which he is justly celebrated. Of course there have been times when he falls from his usual high level in this respect, times when his grotesques threaten to become mere monstrosities, when his pathos threatens to become bathos. But admitting his power of presenting the grotesque, we still have the question confronting us as to whether this power is a worthy one. In other words, is the grotesque effect an aesthetic effect? Can anything that deals habitually with the unnatural, the repulsive have an aesthetic effect?

This question of the aesthetic value of the ugly has for many years been a moot point with writers upon aesthetics. It is not possible here to go into all the theories, pro and con, which have been

formulated to include or exclude from the aesthetic what is generally called the ugly. Bosanquet, with whom this problem seems to be a hobby, puts the case thus in the brief review of the History of Aesthetics which introduces his book of that name: "The sublime is followed by the analysis of the ugly, which develops into a recognized branch of aesthetic inquiry, with the result of finally establishing both the ugly and the sublime within the general frontier of beauty. The instrument by which this reconciliation is effected is the conception of the characteristic or the significant."(1) He goes on to say that the requirement that the aesthetic should give pleasure is at least partially satisfied by the enlarging of the aesthetic horizon by this broadening of the aesthetic field. In another article on this same branch of aesthetic inquiry Bosanquet asserts that the so-called ugly is to be thrust outside of the aesthetic field only when it masquerades as the beautiful; that horror is unaesthetic only when it tries to palm itself off as strength.(2)

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(1) Bernard Bosanquet: History of Aesthetics. Chap. I-III.
(2) " " The Aesthetic Theory of Ugliness (Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Vol. I-No. 3).

This attitude toward effects that were once considered ugly seems to be the one taken by almost all modern authorities upon aesthetics.

In applying this notion to the grotesque we are greatly aided by one factor in the grotesque impression; namely, the comic. The comic has long been admitted into the ranks of the aesthetic. It carries with it, as has been shown earlier, certain pleasurable emotions of superiority and relief based upon and supplementing an appreciation of an incongruity. As we have seen, these emotions are as much strenghened by the grotesque nature of the incongruity, as the resulting pleasure is curtailed by the distortion involved in this same grotesqueness. A certain amount of pleasure is sacrificed, but a corresponding amount is gained. There is no real loss.

But laying aside for a moment- if such a thing is possible - the comic effect of the grotesque, have not the assertions of Bosanquet, quoted above, admitted even the horrible into the field of the aesthetic? The condition of its admission, you will remember, was that it should not masquerade as the beautiful or the strong, with an added requirement that it must be char-

acteristic, significant. We can assert without question thatthe grotesque fulfills the first of the requirements. But how does it give to us the characteristic, the significant? In the first place, I take it that the characteristic does not mean the typical. Becuase of the danger of the confusion of these two concepts I prefer the term <u>significant</u>. Is the grotesque significant? If it is admittedly ugly, if it does not pretend to be what it is not, if it is frankly itself, how can it escape being significant? And this meaning gains entrance for the ugly into the realm of the beautiful on more than one score; it gives us pleasure by its truth (not imitative, but inherent truth), and by the power it has, through implication and contrast, to define and make clear the beautiful.

There seems to me to be yet another argument for admitting the grotesque into the field of the aesthetic. There is operative in the grotesque impression still another sort of relief than that which advances the comic effect. This relief accompanies the secondary incongruity which, we have seen, so often keeps the grotesque from becoming

purely gruesome. As in the case of any incongruity we have the momentary tension caused by the mind's effort to reconcile two incongruous concepts, followed by the relief caused by an appreciation of their irreconcilability. But when the incongruity is between the horrible and the comic, we have something stronger than this letting down of mental tension. We have a decided emotional relief as well. And just here, it seems, lies the highest claim of the grotesque to aesthetic value. As significant, as true, the horror of the grotesque must be admitted into the realm of the aesthetic. The accompanying element of the comic so mitigates the painful impression caused by the horror that we can better appreciate the latter's aesthetic value. But it is the realization that something, in itself painful, is becoming pleasurable that completes the effect. We do not despise the path through sorrow to happiness; why, then, should we look down upon the writer, who can, by inspired imagination, lead us through pain to pleasure?

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