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THE GROTESQUE IN DICKENS

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The Grotesque in Dickens

By C. James Morgan

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The grotesque is an important element in Dickens's vision and imagination. In creating the grotesque, Dickens uses the reciprocal metaphor, as well as the exaggeration of parts of the body, clothes, mannerisms, and habits to penetrate our familiar and habituated views of reality and to reveal imaginatively the unfamiliar. Soon, our common notions of the relationships of things break down, and we find ourselves in a distorted, unnatural, and unreal world. This unreality, though, symbolizes the color and imagination which Dickens is adding to our dull and narrow visions; he enables us to see what Axton calls "the romantic side of familiar things" and the importance of humanity in a utilitarian age.

Dickens's use of the grotesque in his novels undergoes a variety of changes. For convenience sake, and to better illustrate the developments of the grotesque, I divide the novels into three separate groups. The first group, the period of experiment, includes the novels from _Pickwick Papers_ through _Barnaby Rudge_; the second group, the period of transition, includes the novels from _Martin Chuzzlewit_ through _David Copperfield_; and the third, the period of a new vision, includes the novels from _Bleak House_ through _Edwin Drood_. Basically, I see the development of the grotesque involving a change in Dickens's conceptions of society, as well as responding to complex changes in society itself: Dickens's vision loses much of its humor in the end, yet it also reflects a definite maturity.
An incisive literary approach to Dickens is all-important for a full understanding of his works. In the past, the critics of Dickens have employed everything from the linguistic doctrine of Plato's Cratylus\(^1\) to a stringent doctrine of "psychological realism."\(^2\) His early critics viewed the Cratylean myth as a proper outline for judging the genre of realistic fiction, in which "the correct name indicates the nature of the thing."\(^3\) Sketches by Boz were, after all, "Illustrative of Every-Day Life and Every-Day People," and Dickens stated in the book's preface of 1836 that "his object has been to present little pictures of life and manners as they really are." The early critics judged the worth of Dickens's vision mainly on the accuracy with which he represented the external reality—the reality one perceives through the senses. Later critics used the criterion of "psychological realism" in making their judgments. James is a good example:

...we are convinced that it is one of the chief conditions of his genius not to see beneath the surface of things. If we might hazard a definition on his literary character, we should accordingly call him the greatest of superficial novelists. We are aware that this definition confines him to an inferior rank in the department of letters which he adorns.... For...he has created nothing but figure. He has added nothing to our understanding of human character.\(^4\)

Here we find a shift from a concentration on Dickens's accuracy
in mirroring the external reality to a criticism of his inability to explore under the surface of life: James is interested in the dissection of man's emotions, not an "Illustration" of his life and manners. Critics such as Cockshut, James, and Kingsmill look for the depth of Dickens's perception in portraying the suffering, alienated man in a cruel world.

Both the psychological realists and the adherents of the Cratylean myth, though, limit the reader's view of Dickens and do him an actual injustice. Steven Marcus begins to view Dickens more correctly in the beginning of his discussion of *Pickwick Papers*.

For the best of reasons—reasons which have everything to do with the unique regard in which modern culture holds Dostoevsky—most of us now expect that in literature the powers of mind, the powers of truth, appear exclusively in company with the powers of suffering, negation, and outrage. In contrast, *Pickwick Papers* is an imagination of life in which the powers of affirmation co-operate with the power of truth, in which the ideals of virtue and regeneration, and the idyllic representations of innocence, stability, and reconciliation transcend our most confidently prepared denials. Dostoevsky could appreciate Dickens, but our own appreciation of Dostoevsky tends to cut us off from Dickens.

Marcus's acute contrast of Dostoevsky and Dickens ironically also points out a similarity between the writers and touches upon an important aspect of Dickens's artistic vision. Both writers see the world, though not exclusively, in terms of "powers" and idealizations; their visions are extremely cosmic and often border on the allegorical: their representations "transcend our most confidently prepared denials." The Dickensian worlds, especially,
appear very much like the worlds of the early morality plays. Behind the superficial chaos of everyday life Dickens finds an ordered and recognizable conflict between good and evil. He often sees the world in simple terms of black and white: many characters are explicitly angelic or totally satanic. For example, in Oliver Twist one recognizes the common theme of the morality plays in which a natural and uncorrupted Good is confronted by Vice, e.g., Oliver meets Fagin. Dickens's vision thus lies on a plane similar to and different from Dostoevsky's: where Dostoevsky's cosmic vision is very complex and disordered, Dickens's allegorical vision is ordered and, at times, rigid.

Yet we must further point out that the interaction of Dickens's characters is much more complex than the action in the morality plays. Congruent with his allegorical vision, Dickens also sees the necessity of stressing what William Axton calls "the romantic side of familiar things" in a utilitarian age. He wishes to revivify the "colorless eye" of the common man who is gradually losing his identity and love of life, and who needs a rejuvenated vision of life in order to survive in a world in which "soulless institutions and theories, the workhouses, the law, the factory, the commercialism, Benthamism, and so on," aim at "reducing human beings to ciphers and crushing individuality." Dickens feels the central importance of humanity in the world and the need to express it.

We begin to see a central tension arising in Dickens. In his efforts to reveal the unfamiliar through the familiar, to heighten the color of the common man's eye, Dickens has to find a
balance between his allegorical and externally oriented vision and the need to express the importance of humanity in society. The two basic strands in his art are not necessarily opposites, but rather they coexist to form a sort of external-internal tension which finds its only compromise in the use of the grotesque. For Dickens, the grotesque introduces a very effective paradox: it represents internal realities with the use of external particulars. As we shall see, the technique of creating the grotesque and its concentrated concern for reality often produce broad distortions of our habituated visions: in a very important sense the grotesque results in a feeling of unreality. An in depth study of the grotesque is necessary for a full understanding of Dickens's works.

Before discussing the functions of the grotesque we must first examine Dickens's literary techniques in creating the grotesque. In other words, how does one recognize the grotesque, what literary devices compose it, and what finally are the various types of the grotesque? Dickens bases much of the concentration of detail on the metonymical process. As J. Hillis Miller explains, Dickens uses certain attributes as touchstones, or signs to decipher, in order to understand the life which lies behind and the nature of a thing. He takes a single aspect of a character and with it determines the nature of the whole. For example, we first observe the essential metonymical element of the grotesque in Sketches by Boz. In the sketch entitled "Meditations in Monmouth Street," Boz, the detached, "speculative pedestrian," relates the nature of his metonymical vision while viewing a row of clothes shops:
We love to walk among the extensive groves of the illustrious dead, and to indulge in the speculations to which they give rise; now fitting a deceased coat, then a dead pair of trousers, and anon the mortal remains of a gaudy waistcoat, upon some being of our own conjuring up, and endeavoring, from the shape and fashion of the garment itself, to bring its former owner before our mind's eye. We have gone on speculating in this way, until whole rows of coats have started from their pegs, and buttoned up, of their own accord, round the waists of imaginary wearers; lines of trousers have jumped down to meet them; waistcoats have almost burst with anxiety to put themselves on; and half an acre of shoes have suddenly found feet to fit them, and gone stumping down the street with a noise which has fairly awakened us from our pleasant reverie, and driven us slowly away, with a bewildered stare, an object of astonishment to the good people of Monmouth street, and of no slight suspicion to the policeman at the opposite corner.

The metonymy in the passage, moving from the attribute of clothes to the whole: error, obviously provides a means of creating metaphor; the personification of the inanimate provides a basis for the metaphor: "waistcoats have almost burst with anxiety to put themselves on." The important point is that the metonymical process is the "foundation and support" of the grotesque in Dickens's works: the manner in which his imagination grasps some external particular and proceeds to relate the life which lies behind lays the foundation for his formulation of the grotesque; we always observe the movement from an attribute to the whole:

There was the man's whole life written as legibly on those clothes, as if we had his autobiography engrossed on parchment before us.
The metonymic process becomes much more important in our discussion of the grotesque when Dickens narrows his focus from broad street scenes to individuals. Dickens determines the personality and nature of an individual by viewing the external appearance. Again, *Sketches by Boz* provides many examples; Boz tells the reader quite explicitly:

We needn't tell you all this, however, for if you have an atom of observation, one glance at his sleek, knowing-looking head and face--his prim white handkerchief, with the wooden tie into which it has been regularly folded for twenty years past, merging by imperceptible degrees into a small-plaited shirt-frill--and his comfortable-looking form encased in a well-brushed suit of black--would give you a better idea of his real character than a column of our poor description could convey.

("Scenes", chap.XVIII)

One discerns from Boz's description a man very conservative-minded with a concern for neatness to a high degree, and a man whose rock-like adherence to habit gives him a dull, mechanical air; and it is interesting how Dickens leads us to accept unconsciously the outrageous fact of the man wearing the same handkerchief for twenty years. We get the feeling that the man has never undressed. As we shall see, Dickens's technique of making the impossible seem possible represents an important element in his method.

Perhaps one of the more famous and comic references to the metonymical determination of the inner personality appears in the seventh sketch. Here we feel strongly the outrageous and almost impossible manner of judging the inside by the outside:
The various expressions of the human countenance afford a beautiful and interesting study; but there is something in the physiognomy of street-door knockers, almost as characteristic and nearly as infallible. Whenever we visit a man for the first time, we contemplate the features of his knocker with the greatest curiosity, for we well know, that between the man and his knocker, there will inevitably be a greater or less degree of resemblance and sympathy.

("Our Parish", chap.VII)

Boz's view of the street-door knockers exemplifies the nature of Dickens's grotesque vision. With the devout attention given to minute, particular details, Dickens's descriptions often lead to distortions of the standard proportions of things; the reader always observes the exaggeration of the familiar and begins to perceive many abnormalities in the objects of Dickens's vision. This sense of abnormality, or deviation from the norm, is an important effect of the grotesque. In a way, Dickens's grotesque vision creates an unreality much like what Swift's Gulliver experienced in the land of the Brobdingnagians, the land of the giants. We feel strongly, for instance, the sense of exaggeration in Gulliver's hilarious dalliance with the enormous Maids of Honour:

The Maids of Honour often invited Glumdalclitch [Gulliver's nurse] to their apartments, and desired she would bring me along with her, on purpose to have the pleasure of seeing and touching me. They would often strip me naked from top to toe, and lay me full length in their bosoms; wherewith I was much disgusted; because, to say the truth, a very offensive smell came from their skins .... That which
Like Swift's distortions of reality, the visions of Dickens also evoke varying responses of ludicrousness and repulsion. More importantly, though, we should note the differences between the two writers. With Swift, we are always conscious of the difference in size, and our horror is based not so much on the volume but in the facts themselves. In Dickens the deviation is quite different; there is no quantitative variance in size but rather an emphasis on commonplace observations, such as street-door knockers. Dickens's grotesque figures are based on reality, yet it is the exaggeration of the unfamiliar which creates much distortion.

Throughout Dickens's works we discover many specific types of grotesque figures. Dickens finds various ways in which to further the device of exaggeration and create a feeling of
abnormality. For instance, he very often dwells on a certain part of the body and repeats it over and over until it assumes gargantuan proportions. Or to put it another way, he narrows the focus of a particular object until it becomes the only thing the reader sees: the reader begins to identify the person with the particular detail. For example, when we think of the sinister Mr. Carker in Dombey and Son, we picture only his feline row of teeth. Or when Mrs. Gamp in Martin Chuzzlewit refers to her dead husband, she equates him with his wooden leg—they become one and the same thing:

"Mine," said Mrs. Gamp, "mine is all gone, my dear young chick. And as to husbands, there's a wooden leg gone likeways home to its account, which in its contancy of walkin' into wine vaults, and never comin' out again 'till fetched by forced, was quite as weak as flesh, if not weaker."

(chap. XL)

Or still again, every time Uriah Heep appears in David Copperfield we notice mainly his fawning, transparent hands. These interesting twists of vision only become grotesque when they distort our common view of reality: they make us feel, in a sense, the presence of an unreality, although what is simply happening is a change of focus.

We also experience the sensation of a certain balance between the real and unreal when Dickens concentrates on particular articles of clothing. For example, early in Dombey and Son the only impression Florence Dombey has of her father is that of creaking boots and a loud ticking watch; in a sort of unreal manner, the boots and the watch become the only things the
reader sees also. Similarly, in Bleak House we first meet Young Smallweed as he supports his extra large hat like a hat stand. And in Dombey and Son Captain Cuttle actually seems to turn into his ever-present hat: "Some five minutes elapsed before Captain Cuttle could summon courage to attempt his escape; for Walter waited so long at the street corner, looking back at the house, before there were any symptoms of the hard glazed hat." (chap. IX). Again, Dickens redirects our commonplace notions and exaggerates the unfamiliar in order to create the grotesque.

Perhaps the most common type of the grotesque which appears in Dickens's works entails the exaggeration of some mannerism, habit, or idiosyncrasy. Dickens often concentrates on the mannerism of a character's speech. Of course, not all exaggeration is grotesque, such as Barkus's famous line, "Barkus is willin'," or Mr. Toot's invariable injunction, "Oh, it's of no consequence, thank'ee." These lines are merely comic and in no way give a sensation of unreality. We find the grotesque, rather, in the internal dialogues of Mrs. Gamp, the mock-heroic speeches of Richard Swiveller in The Old Curiosity Shop, and the wanderings of Mrs. Nickleby. Mr. Jingle in Pickwick Papers gives one of the best examples of a grotesqueness of speech, not only because of his horrid syntax but also on account of his wild visions. Mr. Jingle has just saved Mr. Pickwick from the blows of an irate cabman and joined him (along with Tupman, Snodgrass, and Winkle) atop the coach to Rochester, when he starts up a conversation:

"Heads, heads--take care of your heads!" cried the loquacious stranger, as they came out under the low archway, which in
those days formed the entrance to the coach-yard. "Terrible place--dangerous work--other day--five children--mother--tall lady, eating sandwiches--forgot the arch--crash--knock--children look around--mother's head off--sandwich in her hand--no mouth to put it in--head of a family off--shocking, shocking...eh sir, eh!"

"I am ruminating," said Mr. Pickwick, "on the mutability of human affairs."

"...English girls not so fine as Spanish--noble creatures--hair--black eyes--lovely forms--sweet creatures--beautiful."

"You have been in Spain, sir?" inquired Mr. Tupman.

"Lived there--ages."

"Many conquests, sir?" said Tracy Tupman.

"Conquests! Thousands. Don Bolaro Fizz-gig--Grandee--only daughter--Donna Christina--splendid creature--loved me to distraction--jealous father--high-souled daughter--handsome Englishman--Donna Christina in despair--prussic acid--stomach pump in my portmanteau--operation performed--old Bolaro in ecstasies--consent to our union--join hands and flood of tears--romantic story--very."

"Is the lady in England now, sir?" inquired Mr. Tupman on whom the description of her charms had produced a powerful impression.

"Dead, sir--dead," said the stranger, applying to his right eye the brief remnant of a very old cambric handkerchief. "Never recovered the stomach pump--undermined constitution--fell a victim."

Like many characters, Mr. Jingle's identifying trait is the manner of his speech; in this case the character speaks in a succession of abrupt phrases, and he omits most articles and conjunctions. His manner is grotesque, because it produces in the reader a strong sensation of something out of the ordinary; it jolts the reader's vision into seeing the uncommon. And since the uncommon is so predominant, it also produces a feeling of unreality, as when we stand too close to a painting and distort our normal view of the whole. Besides syntax, Mr. Jingle's details, such as the sandwich in the hand with no mouth to put it in, also produce
the interesting tension between the real and seemingly unreal which constitutes the grotesque. The manner in which Mr. Jingle so casually drops his unusual facts in his light-hearted conversation gives a grotesque twist to the whole scene.

Another method of creating the grotesque occurs in what Dorothy Van Ghent terms the "reciprocal metaphor." Dickens frequently inverts the qualities of the inanimate and the animate: we find "continual broadsides" of pathetic fallacy as well as humans treated as if they were things. The result is an almost surrealistic atmosphere. Van Ghent states: "The course of things demonically possessed is to imitate the human, while the course of human possession is to imitate the inhuman. This transposition of attributes, producing a world like that of ballet, is the principle of relationship between things and people in the novels of Dickens." When Dickens reduces people to things it usually signifies a deterioration or loss of humanity, and it produces horrifying effects. In Bleak House, Grandfather Smallweed has to be puffed up repeatedly like a cushion in order to be restored to the shape of a man. Magwitch, the convict in Great Expectations, has a clockwork mechanism in his throat that clicks as if it were going to strike. We have already observed Mrs. Gamp confusing her husband with his wooden leg. And when Dickens combines these distortions of normal vision with the animation of the inanimate, his worlds become hallucinatory. In Martin Chuzzlewit, for instance, we find life in the prospect from Todgers's boarding-house.

The revolving chimney pots on one great stack of buildings seemed to be turning
gravely to each other every now and then, and whispering the result of their separate observations of what was going on below. Others, of a crooked-backed shape, appeared to be maliciously holding themselves askew, that they might shut the prospect out and baffle Todger's. The man who was mending a pen at an upper window over the way, became of paramount importance in the scene, and made a blank in it, ridiculously disproportionate in its extent, when he retired. The gambols of a piece of cloth upon the dyer's pole had far more interest for the moment than all the changing motion of the crowd. Yet even while the looker-on felt angry with himself for this, and wondered how it was, the tumult swelled into a roar; the hosts of objects seemed to thicken and expand a hundredfold; and after gazing round him, quite scared, he turned into Todger's again, much more rapidly than he came out....

(chap. ix)

The grotesque atmosphere surrounding Todger's represents very much a "world like that of ballet": it is an imagination of reality, full of an inexhaustible vivacity and vitality. In creating the grotesque, Dickens uses the reciprocal metaphor, as well as the exaggeration of parts of the body, clothes, mannerisms, and habits to penetrate our familiar and habituated views of reality and to reveal imaginatively the unfamiliar. Soon, our common notions of the relationships of things break down, and we find ourselves in a distorted, unnatural, and unreal world. This unreality, though, symbolizes the color and imagination which Dickens is adding to our dull and narrow visions; he enables us to see what Axton calls "the romantic side of familiar things" and the importance of humanity in a utilitarian age. The grotesque is obviously one of the most important elements in Dickens's literary vision, and we must, therefore, take a close look at its role in the novels.
Throughout the novels, the grotesque undergoes a variety of changes. For convenience sake, and to better illustrate the developments of the grotesque, I am dividing the novels into three separate groups. The first group, the period of experiment, includes the novels from *Pickwick Papers* through *Barnaby Rudge*; the second group, the period of transition, includes the novels from *Martin Chuzzlewit* through *David Copperfield*; and the third, the period of a new vision, includes the novels from *Bleak House* through *Edwin Drood*. Basically, I see the development of the grotesque involving a change in Dickens's conceptions of society, as well as responding to complex changes in society itself.

Dickens, of course, is writing at a time of intense industrial growth. The technology of the period rests mainly on coal, iron, and steam, which means, consequently, a surge of massive factories and industries, e.g., the metallurgical industries of Birmingham and the coal factories of the North. By 1850, England is producing five times as much coal as it was in 1815 and half the world's supply of pig-iron. The growth of the railway is also most hectic, especially in the 1840's (first appears in *Dombey and Son*, 1848); a "railway mania" possesses the industrialists of the time. As the national wealth increases, though, the working conditions are slow in improving. The New Poor Law of 1834 provides relief at home for sick and disabled people, yet the able-bodied poor have to live in workhouses under conditions designed to be "less eligible" than any encountered in paid employment. It is not until 1848 that the Public Health Act is passed (Dickens canvasses much for this measure), and only a year before does the
Factory Act limit the working hours of children. The first grants for teacher training appear in 1846. The evolution of social policies is made difficult by such problems as entrenched vested interests, a shortage of professional expertise, a rapidly rising population, and orthodox economic views which stress the need for private rather than public initiative. Accompanying the industrial changes, of course, are shifts in social values and increasing threats to the institutions of the family.

All of these problems constitute many of the basic concerns in Dickens's novels. We see the workhouses of the poor in *Oliver Twist*, a destructive educational system in *Nicholas Nickleby*, rioting crowds of the poor in *Barnaby Rudge*, infectious industries in *Old Curiosity Shop*, impotent justice in *Bleak House*, a suffocating bureaucracy in *Little Dorrit*. The novels present a vision in which materialism, bureaucracy, and industrial blight imprison men and women in worlds where there is no concern for qualitative ends, only a mechanized mode of existence. Dickens does not create this view, though, all at once, for there is a definite change in his conception of social problems, and an obvious shift in attitude. In the following discussion of the changes in the grotesque, we shall find that Dickens moves from a period where there is little attempt to excite real disapproval of social problems, to a later period where the concern for social maladies becomes effectively emphasized: the grotesque in the earlier novels stimulates strong feelings of fantasy and unreality and lessens the impact of social criticism, whereas the grotesque in the later novels becomes deeply embedded in a very real world, and itself
becomes increasingly mechanistic.

The world of *Pickwick Papers* is largely idyllic and unreal, and there seems to be a conscious effort on Dickens's part to fend off the brute reality. For example, Dickens isolates most of the book's disturbing evil in the interpolated tales: the implications of the psychological disturbances and fevered visions in "The Old Man's Tale about the Queer Client" remain separate from Mr. Pickwick's world. If anything, the tales help to deflect attention away from any suffering found in the main narrative.\(^\text{15}\) We also observe a smoothing over of any flaws in the idyllic vision when Mr. Pickwick enters the Fleet. He soon finds himself unable to endure the spectacle of suffering and wretchedness,\(^\text{16}\) so he decides to spend three months in his own room: "My head aches with these scenes, and my heart too. Henceforth I will be a prisoner in my own room" *(chap.XLV)*. Mr. Pickwick remains undefeated by the institution; he suffers no spiritual senescence or agonizing feelings of guilt.

The brightness of Mr. Pickwick's world, though, dispels any uneasiness which occasionally arises from hints of a darker world.\(^\text{17}\) Besides the idyllic scenes at Dingley Dell, Mr. Pickwick himself contributes greatly to the book's brightness. G.K Chesterton described his appeal: "Dickens went into the Pickwick Club to scoff, and Dickens remains to pray." Before his experience in the Fleet and in the trial, Mr. Pickwick relates to life through his notebook, through theory, and through observation.\(^\text{18}\) He delivers bombastic speeches, is an antiquarian who interposes "too much 'learning' between himself and the object to be able to
decipher the engraving "Bill Stumps his Mark," and transfers into his notebook the fictions of a coachman upon his horse. Marcus recognizes the brightness which Mr. Pickwick generates in his world and the manner in which it smooths over any disturbing evils.

**Pickwick Papers** is Dickens's one novel in which wickedness, though it exists, is not a threat. The unfortunate and the deprived who pass briefly, almost furtively, through its pages have only to catch a glimpse of Pickwick in order to be renewed.

Dickens's view of the world in **Pickwick Papers** is essentially "harmonious," where we may successfully combat adversities with simple good will and philanthropy and depend upon a character's innate goodness.

The grotesque in **Pickwick Papers** adds demonstrably to the sensation of brightness, and it also creates a fantastical atmosphere. We sense the unreal in Dickens's exaggeration of unfamiliar notions, which gives us an unnatural and distorted comprehension of many characters. For example, we observe old Mrs. Wardle's fantastic facility in becoming deaf when she feels like it, Job Trotter's amazing skills in producing tears, the Fat Boy's lethargy, The Bagman's one "very bright black eye," and the intemperate Mr. Stiggins and his incessant demonstrations for repentance. Dickens distorts these characters to an extent that they transcend any harmfulness or threat in which they might be involved: their unreality erases any demands which a tangential reality might make upon them. In a sense, they are timeless.

One of the best examples of the grotesque occurs in the
character of Tony Weller, Sam's father. One recognizes Tony by his oyster-like "power:o' suction"; he is a complement to the benevolent Mr. Pickwick in his excess of receptivity, yet Dickens describes him grotesquely. He emphasizes Tony's receptivity to such an extent that it becomes unreal, grotesquely unnatural. Tony actually begins to acquire the attributes of a storeroom or warehouse.

...Mr. Weller gave his body a sudden wrench to one side, and, by a dexterous twist, contrived to get his right hand into a most capacious pocket, from whence, after a great deal of panting and exertion, he extricated a pocket-book of the large octavo size, fastened by a huge leathern strap. From this ledger he drew forth a couple of whip lashes, three or four buckles, a little sample-bag of corn, and finally a small roll of very dirty bank-notes: from which he selected the required amount, which he handed over to Sam.

In a way, Tony's grotesque unreality provides a point from which the reader may view the world from the outside and laugh. Tony is at times pursued by women and the law, yet he always maintains his "bouyant and corklike manner" and "retreats always deeper into his burrow of coachman's coats and into dissociation and absent-mindedness." With Tony, as well as with his son, Sam, the reader feels safe: their characters evoke purely comic reactions and transcend any threats of a darker world. When Dickens describes them with grotesque distortions, he makes them unreal and removes them from the demands of the real world and demands of time. This casualness and security in an unreality enables them easily to face the fact of death:

"...well, gov'ner, ve must all come to it,
one day or another."
"So we must, Sammy," said Mr. Weller the elder.
"There's a Providence in it all," said Sam.
"O' course there is," replied his father with a nod of grave approval. "Wot 'ud become of the undertakers without it, Sammy?"

The world of Oliver Twist is a much darker world than the world of Mr. Pickwick: we find Oliver in the workhouses and in the slums of London where thieves and prostitutes thrive. Criminals meet violent ends by the hangman, Sykes, and through transportation. Yet Dickens concentrates the evil not so much in the broad, social maladies as he does in the grotesque character of Fagin. Fagin, much like Richard III, symbolizes an incorrigible evil: "His lips are often discoloured and disfigured with marks of teeth; for he has desperate fits, and sometimes even bites his hands and covers them with wounds ...."; ". . . every evil thought and blackest purpose lay working at his heart "(chap.XXV). Fagin is a Gothic devil figure with red hair and fangs, and Dickens often associates him with snakes, vampires, and eaters of carrion.

It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendering in the slime and darkness through which he moved; crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.

Fagin is a very real threat in Oliver's world, but what about the world of the reader? We observe horrible poverty, robbery, and murder throughout the book, yet Fagin's mysterious Gothic grotesqueness
seems to encase everything in an atmosphere of fantasy; the grotesque exaggeration of Fagin's evil beyond natural limits—equating him with snakes, vampires, and eaters of carrion—engenders in the novel an aura of unreality. Reading about Fagin's world is much like watching a Walt Disney fantasy: there always is a conscious separation between the unreal worlds of Disney and Fagin and the real world of the spectator. The element of distance between the real and the unreal, which the grotesque produces in Oliver Twist, provides the reader, as well as Dickens, a protection against the lingering threats of a dark world.

We find other grotesque figures in Oliver Twist which, unlike Fagin, are very comic. Characters such as the Artful Dodger, Mr. Bumble, and Charley Bates (sometimes referred to as Master Bates) are full of peculiarities and foibles which give them a warmth and color. Like Tony Weller, the characters, in a sense, transcend the moral rigors of the book, and they provide a point from which the reader can view the world of the novel and laugh: again, the grotesque exaggeration of their peculiarities creates a separation between real and unreal worlds.

Perhaps the best example of the comic grotesque is the Artful Dodger. I quote at length in order to emphasize the absurdities of his dress, manner, and speech.

The boy...was...one of the queerest looking boys that Oliver had ever seen. He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age; with rather bow-legs, and little, sharp ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the
Though the Artful Dodger lives in Fagin's den, profits from the pickpocketing business, and even lures Oliver into Fagin's grasp, his grotesque incongruities give him an appeal: he is so old yet so young, so tall yet so short, such a gentleman yet such a boy. His appeal has nothing to do with his being "good" or "bad," for like Tony Weller he seems to exist more in a fictive world than in a real world and is, therefore, not subject to rigorous moral demands. In a sense, the Dodger gives Dickens an opportunity to lessen the threat and horror of the slums of London. Dickens can create a sort of cushion between himself and the real world, and thus he never fully faces all of its horrible social implications. The
Dodger acts as a qualifier and softener of grim reality. The dark, threatening world of *Oliver Twist* is undoubtedly tangible and real, e.g., Sykes and Monks; yet the comic grotesque, as well as the Gothic and demonic grotesque of Fagin, provides an unreal atmosphere in which the reader can find a manner of distancing himself.

In *Nicholas Nickleby* the comic and demonic grotesque also provides the means of distancing the reader from the threats of the real world. As in *Oliver Twist*, the evil remains concentrated in certain characters—Ralph Nickleby and Mr. Squeers; and in Squeers's case the evil remains primarily motiveless. Squeers is also the demonic grotesque character, in many ways similar to Fagin, while Mr. Nickleby is a very selfish, amoral businessman. The main representatives of the comic grotesque appear in the Crummles' acting troupe. Besides the demonic and comic grotesque, though, Dickens also presents certain grotesque characters who suggest a growing sense of rigidity in life, and others who represent the victims of evil. Mrs Nickleby and Tim Linkwater, for example, suggest a paralysis in their worlds, and Smike, as well as the other members of Dotheboy's Hall, reflect grotesquely the effects of horrible social maladies. As we shall see, the various functions of the grotesque demonstrate Dickens's changing interests and the sense of experimentation which permeates the first group of novels.

The demonic grotesqueness of Mr. Squeers is not quite as fantastical as Fagin's grotesqueness: Dickens never equates him with snakes or vampires but rather stresses his repulsive ugliness
and ruthless tyranny. Squeers's character exudes disorder. He is overly violent in his application of the rod and takes a sinister delight in seeing his pupils suffer: one of his main occupations is to contrive reasons for punishment. At other times, he literally breeds sickness among his pupils and then overcharges the parents for doctors' bills. He states with much pride in his cunning mind,

...Why, when Mrs. Squeers was brought to bed with little Wackford here, we ran the whooping-cough through half-a-dozen boys, and charged her expenses among 'em, monthly nurse included.

(chap.XXXIV)

We also get a sense of Squeers's ugliness in Dickens's description of his malicious eye.

Mr. Squeers's appearance was not prepossessing. He had but one eye, and the popular prejudice runs in favor of two. The eye he had was unquestionably useful, but decidedly not ornamental: being of a greenish grey, and in shape resembling the fan-light of a street door. The blank side of his face was much wrinkled and puckered up, which gave him a sinister appearance, especially when he smiled, at which times his expression bordered closely on the villainous.

(chap.IV)

Squeers is undoubtedly physically repulsive, yet the facetiousness of the passage adds a comic element to his grotesqueness which was absent in the Gothic grotesqueness of Fagin. The reader cannot help but be amused when Dickens refers to the correct number of eyes in terms of a "popular prejudice," or when he compares Squeers's eye to the "fan-light of a street-door." Instead,
then, of creating a sense of unreality in the demonic grotesque: with Gothic and fantastical description, as he does with Fagin, Dickens, in the case of Squeers, is producing an unreal and absurd situation by fusing comic and demonic grotesque characteristics. He extends Squeers's repulsiveness and moral decrepitude to absurd lengths: running the "whooping-cough through half-a-dozen boys" is, of course, horrible, yet in the absurd context of Squeers's world it is also very funny.

Mrs. Squeers, a parallel to Mrs. Mann though of fuller characterization, also injects elements of absurdity into Squeers's world which give it a comical tinge. Phiz's illustration entitled "The Internal Economy of Dotheboy's Hall" is a good example. Mrs. Squeers, dressed in a night jacket and night cap with an antiquated beaver bonnet to top it, is ladling the pupils "treacle," a foul-tasting appetite depressant.

Mrs. Squeers stood at one of the desks, presiding over an immense basin of brimstone and treacle, of which delirious compound she administered a large installment to each boy in succession: using for the purpose a common wooden spoon, which might have been originally manufactured for some gigantic top, and which widened every young gentleman's mouth considerably: they being all obliged, under heavy corporal penalties, to take in the whole bowl at a gasp.

(chap. VIII)

In Phiz's picture the boys' faces begin to look like a conglomeration of gargoyles, not only expressing horror and fear at their treatment, but also, inseparably, a comical absurdity much like the characters in Our Gang having to take castor oil. Though
evil exists in Squeers's world, the grotesque incongruities and absurdities create a humorous and unreal world at which we can safely laugh.

We also find other functions and effects of the grotesque throughout the novel. The bright world in Nicholas Nickleby is a little less absolute than the bright world in Oliver Twist. Nicholas, the Cheeryble brothers, Kate, Frank Cheeryble, Madeline Bray, are all of a world of determined virtue and unlimited charity. They represent the same extremes and ideals of goodness which we find in the Maylies and Mr. Brownlow. In the book's realm of goodness, though, we also find virtuous characters who are affected by a sort of grotesque paralysis. These characters are something new in Dickens's work and suggest perhaps a broadening perception of the effects of social evils; we shall see this more demonstrably in the later novels. The best example of a grotesque rigidity in life is Mrs. Nickleby. One of the most absurd and frustrating elements in Nicholas Nickleby is Mrs. Nickleby's manner of speaking. In her disjointed and fantastical utterances, "she has no sense of and no respect for the world of fact and is utterly prodigal to it." Her foolish daydreams and ambitions generate an appeal much like Tony Weller's appeal, yet we do not laugh as heartily at Mrs. Nickleby as we do at Tony, for there seems to be something wrong in her rigidity of discourse, almost as if a disease had affected her faculties. When she speaks, her mind wanders at the slightest thought which raises associations of the past, and she thus is constantly going in the opposite direction from which she intends.
One example of many occurs when she is commenting on her daughter Kate.

"She always was clever," said poor Mrs. Nickleby, brightening up, "always from a baby. I recollect when she was only two years and a half old, that a gentleman who used to visit very much at our home--Mr. Watkins, you know, Kate, my dear, that your poor papa went ball for, who afterwards ran away to the United States, and sent us a pair of snow shoes, with such an affectionate letter that it made your poor dear father cry for a week. You remember the letter? In which he said that he was very sorry he couldn't repay the fifty pounds just then, because his capital was all out at interest, and he was very busy making his fortune, but that he didn't forget you were his god-daughter, and he should take it very unkind if we didn't buy you silver coral and put it down to his old account? Dear me, yes, my dear how stupid you are! and spoke so affectionately of the old port wine that he used to drink a bottle and a half of every time he came. You must remember, Kate?"

(chap. XVIII)

Mrs. Nickleby starts with the subject of Kate's cleverness yet ends by finding her "stupid"; and she continues the description of Mr. Watkins' letter, by the way, for the next two paragraphs. Her rigid ludicrousness does not offer the viewpoint we had with Tony Weller, where we could stand back safely and laugh at the world; Mrs. Nickleby seems rather to cut down the distance between the bright and dark worlds, not because she is evil, but because her absurdity suggests a threat to an ordered and sane world.

We also observe a growing sense of rigidity in life in the comic grotesqueness of the Crummles. The members of the Crummles' acting troupe function in the same manner as the Artful
Dodger and Charley Bates in Oliver Twist: they provide a distancing device and separation between real and unreal worlds. Like the Dodger, their grotesque peculiarities and incongruities establish an appeal which transcends any moral judgments. They also serve as a literal distancing device, for Nicholas and Smike join them in the country to escape the problems of the city.

At the same time, though, the Crummles increasingly confuse the roles they play on the stage and the roles they fill in real life. And their inability to distinguish between the different realities of the two roles leads to a mechanized and dehumanized way of living. For example, when Nicholas and Smike take leave of the acting company, Mr. Crummles exclaims, "Farewell, my noble, my lionhearted boy!" and Dickens continues,

In fact, Mr. Crummles, who could never lose any opportunity for professional display, had turned out for the express purpose of taking a public farewell of Nicholas; and to render it the more imposing, he was now, to that young gentleman's most profound annoyance, inflicting upon him a rapid succession of stage embraces, which, as everybody knows, are performed by the embracer's laying his or her chin on the shoulder of the object of affection, and looking over it. This Mr. Crummles did in the highest style of melodrama, pouring forth at the same time all the most dismal forms of farewell he could think of, out of the stock pieces. Nor was this all, for the elder Master Crummles was going through a similar ceremony with Smike; while Master Percy Crummles, with a very little second-hand combat cloak, worn theatrically over his left shoulder, stood by, in the attitude of an attendant officer, waiting to convey the two victims to the scaffold.

(chap.XXX)

The Crummles stock ceremony is undoubtedly comical, but not
purely so. For this mechanized adherence to theatrical roles diminishes any sense of sincerity and genuine love they may feel for Nicholas and Smike. Their feelings remain empty and dead, and for Dickens they represent the bare beginnings of an important threatening theme in his later works, the theme of death-in-life.

The theme of death-in-life also appears in Dickens's description of the pupils in Dotheboy's Hall. We have already observed how Phiz's illustration of Mrs. Squeers administering treacle to the boys pointed up the absurd and gargoyle-like atmosphere of the scene; the absurdity tended to distance the reader from the horror of the situation. Dickens's accompanying grotesque description, though, emphasizes the unnaturalness of the boys' condition rather than the absurdity. And consequently Dickens creates a tension between the distancing effects of the illustration's comic absurdities and the threats of suffering and disorder which the unnatural description raises in the reader's eyes. The reader begins to sense a narrowing of the gap between the unreal and real worlds and a decrease in his feelings of security. Dickens describes the boys:

Pale and haggard faces, lank and bony figures, children with the countenances of old men, deformities with irons upon their limbs, boys of stunted growth, and others whose long meagre legs would hardly bear their stooping bodies, all crowded on the view together; there were the bleared eye, the hare-lip, the crooked foot, and every ugliness or distortion that told of unnatural aversion conceived by parents for their offspring, or of young lives which, from the earliest dawn of infancy, had been one horrible endurance of cruelty and neglect. (chap.VIII)
The grotesque description emphasizes not only the corruption in Squeers's world but also points to the social problem of the diseased family. At the bottom of much of the suffering in the book are the problems of the abandoned child, the greedy parents, and the unwanted family. The grotesque unnaturalness of the pupils foreshadows the dominant theme in the later novels of the corrupted family (we shall see this theme especially in *Bleak House*), and it also reflects what Northrup Frye sees as Dickens's main hope: the reconstitution of society on the basis of the family.23

*Nicholas Nickleby* is in many ways an autonomous conglomeration of grotesque characters; the grotesques have not yet jelled into a smooth system of relationships. In Squeers we find the demonic grotesque merging with the comic grotesque; in Mrs. Nickleby and Mr. Crummles the comic transforms into a sense of rigidity in life; and in the pupils of Dotheboy's Hall the grotesque works to create an interesting tension between comic absurdity and threat. These various types of grotesques help to demonstrate the experimental nature of the early novels; the manner in which Dickens is attempting to evoke certain responses in the reader and trying to express important themes, such as rigidity and death-in-life.

The grotesque in *The Old Curiosity Shop* also reflects the theme of death-in-life and a corruption of the forces of life. Dickens's description of Smike's approaching death in *Nicholas Nickleby* helps to give a sense of what is happening in *The Old Curiosity Shop*: 
There is a dread disease which so prepares its victim, as it were, for death; which so refuses it of its grosser aspect, and throws around familiar looks, unearthly indications of the coming change; a dread disease, in which the solemn struggle between soul and body is so gradual, quiet, and solemn, and the result so sure, that day by day, and grain by grain, the mortal part wastes and withers away, so that the spirit grows light and sanguine with its lightening load, and, feeling immortality at hand, deems it but a new term of mortal life; a disease in which death and life are so strangely blended, that death takes the glow and hue of life, and life the gaunt and grisly form of death....

(chap. XLIX)

The unnatural commingling of death and life in Sikes's sickness constitutes the nature of many of the grotesque characters in The Old Curiosity Shop. Quilp, for instance, "personifies the energy of life conceived as a perverse and destructive element," and Little Nell represents the strong desire for inertia and peace in death. The relation of these various forces does not cleanly mesh and at times lacks a pure logicality. Yet we must explore the relation of Quilp and Nell, as well as other characters, to better understand the function of the grotesque and Dickens's major concerns in The Old Curiosity Shop.

We immediately run into difficulty when we refer to Little Nell as grotesque. Nell is the incarnation of purity, blessedness, devotion; Dickens refers to her often as angelic and immaculate, and, of course, her famous death scene emphasizes sentimentally her incorruptible goodness. There is a grotesque side to Nell, though, which I think symbolizes a perverse longing for inertia and detachment from a vital life. Unlike Oliver Twist,
where the idyll celebrates "recaptured joy and companionship,"
Nell's existence in the latter parts of the book is charged with
a "desire to disengage itself from energy"; she seeks solitude,
rest, and ultimately death. For instance, her travels seem to
include "every churchyard in which some mute inglorious Milton
lies buried, and she never fails to take her morning stroll within
the precincts of one of them."

She felt a curious kind of pleasure in
lingering among these houses of the dead,
and read the inscriptions on the tombs
of the good people...passing on from one
to the other with increasing interest.

And she finally settles in a town where the chief occupation is
grave digging and where one of her main pleasures is visiting
the tombs in the church.

...here were the rotten beam, the sinking
arch, the sapped and mouldering wall, the
lowly trench of earth, the stately tomb on
which no epitaph remained,—all,—marble,
stone, iron, wood, and dust, one common
monument of ruin.

...The child sat down, in this old, si-
lent place, among the stark figures on the
tombs—they made it more quiet there, than
elsewhere, to her fancy—and gazing round
with a feeling of awe, tempered with a calm
delight, felt that now she was happy, and
at rest.

In Little Nell we find the same strange commingling of death
and life which Dickens hints at in his description of Smike's
disease. The force is so strong throughout the book, though,
that we also begin to sense Dickens's own preoccupation with
death and the macabre. And this observation immediately raises
the question of--whether Dickens deliberately creates a grotesqueness in Nell, or whether Nell is a reflection of Dickens's own grotesqueness. To the present-day reader Nell contains a "spiritual necrophelia" which destroys the ideality of the idyllic situation, and which, in a sense, makes the idyll an impossibility: the sexton constantly insists on speaking of living things and of forces which rejuvenate life, yet Nell still moves slowly and undivertingly toward the grave. On the other hand, the illustration of Nell peacefully lying on her deathbed and the very last illustration of a flight of angels carrying her upward suggest that Dickens sees nothing unnatural or disturbing about Nell's grotesque qualities: in the plates she remains the epitome of blessedness and incorruptibility. We almost feel as if Nell's preoccupation with death arose from Dickens's unconscious delight in the macabre. In any case, Nell is undoubtedly the representative of a strong grotesque force in the novel, which, to our minds at least, suggests a very unnatural commingling of life and death.

Nell is running from forces which also contain a strange mixture of death and life. The character of Quilp personifies and embodies the destructively energetic force in the novel: he represents a vitality in life which works toward the destruction of life. Like Fagin his evil is motiveless and incorrigible and at the same time much more actively sadistic: he takes a grim pleasure in destroying society and moral order. He hates Kit and his mother simply because they are virtuous, and he seeks to destroy Nell and her grandfather in a Richard III manner.
As Kit and Tom Scott wrestle on the ground,

...the dwarf flourished his cudgel, and dancing round the combatants and treading upon them and skipping over them, in a kind of frenzy, laid about him, now on one and now on the other, in a most desperate manner, always aiming at their heads....

"I'll beat you to a pulp, you dogs.... I'll bruise you till you're copper-coloured, I'll break your faces till you haven't a profile between you, I will."

(chap. V)

Quilp feeds himself on hard eggs, shell and all, "devoured gigantic prawns with the heads and tails on, chewed tabacco and water cresses at the same time and with extraordinary greediness, drank boiling tea without winking, bit his fork and spoon till they bent again." (chap. V) We also observe Quilp's energy in another form when Nell and her grandfather encounter the monstrous iron mill on their journey. The energy of the mill, like that of Quilp, seems to emanate from under the ground, as if from Hell. The two travelers are seeking shelter from the rain in a darkened doorway; then "a black figure,... miserably clad and begrimed with smoke," emerges from a "dark recess" and leads them toward a "lurid glare hanging in the dark sky."

In a large and lofty building, supported by pillars of iron, with great black apertures in the upper walls, open to the external air; echoing to the roof with the beating of hammers and roar of furnaces, mingled with the hissing of red-hot metal plunged in water, and a hundred strange unearthly noises never heard elsewhere; in this gloomy place, moving like demons among the flame and smoke, dimly and fitfully seen, flushed and tormented by the
burning fires, and wielding great weapons, a faulty blow from any one of which must have crushed some workman's skull, a number of men laboured like giants. Others reposing on heaps of coals or ashes, with their faces turned to the black vault above, slept or rested from their toil. Others again, opening the white-hot furnace-doors, cast fuel on the flames, which came rushing and roaring forth to meet it, and licked it up like oil. Others drew forth, with clashing noise, upon the ground, great sheets of glowing steel, emitting an insupportable heat, and a dull deep light like that which reddens in the eyes of savage beasts.

(chap.XLV.)

Here we find the energy of death and destruction, and yet it is an energy which gives Quilp his vitality in life. It is one of the strongest forces in the book, and as Marcus states, "Nell's utter alienation from it drains her of the power to survive; for to allow Nell any trace of that energy would for Dickens have been tantamount to polluting her."29 And yet, though Nell flees from the predominant active energy of death, she also acquires consequently a passive acceptance of death. It is the main paradox of the book:

That part of the self which affirms society, or social ideals, is sacrificed in order to preserve its sanctity from that other part which comes into existence through violation—through dwarfishness and hatred in this base—and wills violation in return.

Although the mixtures of death and life occupy much of The Old Curiosity Shop, they do not totally dominate it. One important subplot in the novel, the relationship of Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, represents the grotesque as a distancing
device which we find often in the early novels. Dick is a sort of super mock-heroic figure who possesses both mythic and transcendent qualities. In the dungeon of Brass's establishment, the dark region of death, lives the young orphan, the imprisoned princess whom Dick rescues and redeems in life. He views her as truly enchanted:

"...surrounded by mysteries, ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with her own name (which is less remarkable), and taking a limited view of society through keyholes of doors—can these things be her destiny, or has some unknown person started an opposition to the decrees of fate? It is a most inscrutable and unmitigated staggerer."

(chap.LVIII)

And Dick himself, while imprisoned in the confines of Brass's office, shows a remarkable endurance and spirit. For instance, he makes a forceful impression on the sexless Sally Brass:

It was on this lady...that Mr. Swiveller burst in full freshness as something new and hitherto undreamed of, lighting up the office with scraps of song and merriment, conjuring with inkstands and boxes of wafers, catching three oranges in one hand, balancing stock upon his chin and penknives on his nose, and constantly performing a hundred other feats with equal ingenuity....

(chap.XXXXVI)

Swiveller demonstrates well the interesting relation between the real and the unreal which constitutes the essence of the grotesque. He is, obviously, a mythic and heroic figure: he saves the mysterious Marchioness from the confines of Brass's dungeon. At the same time, though, his comic, mock-heroic actions have a reliance
on reality: we observe Swiveller "conjuring with inkstands and boxes of wafers," items of everyday use. Swiveller's presence in both the mythic and everyday worlds emphasizes the distortion and disproportion of things which characterize the grotesque.

Swiveller is also very comic and, in contrast to Quilp and Nell, a life-generating force. He relieves the reader from the tedium of the book's dealings with death, and his unreality provides an escape from the novel's horror: in the end he inherits an annuity, weds the Marchioness, whom he renames Sophronia Sphynx, and moves to a little cottage in Hampshire, which has in its garden a smoking-box, "the envy of the civilised world." The comic grotesqueness of Swiveller's world distinctly opposes the unnatural grotesqueness of Quilp's and Nell's worlds, yet all of the worlds establish an aura of unreality throughout the book. The Old Curiosity Shop is, in a sense, a highly fictive world full of ogres, angels, and mythic heroes and quite distant from the real world of the reader.

The main action of The Old Curiosity Shop remains largely on the level of characters. Because of the book's allegorical nature, the characters tend to embody the evil or good forces in the work: Quilp's actively destructive evil reflects the horrors of the iron mill and the maladies of industrialism. In Barnaby Rudge, on the other hand, Dickens attempts very awkwardly to lessen the allegorical dominance of The Old Curiosity Shop and Oliver Twist and to consider the whole experience of action, characters as well as certain important social forces. To achieve this change Dickens bases Barnaby Rudge on the Gordon
Riots of 1780: the main theme of the book is the irrational surge of the London mobs, which were theoretically anti-Catholic, yet actually in protest against horrid social conditions.

Dickens, of course, has been gradually working toward this change of concern and technique throughout the early novels. Pickwick Papers had its mobs in the Eatonswill election scenes, and in Oliver Twist Dickens reveals his obsession with the pounding fury of the violent mob which hunts Sykes, the murderer of Nancy:

> On pressed the people from the front—on, on, on, in a struggling current of angry faces....

> ...The Stream abruptly turned,...each man crushing and striving with his neighbor.... The cries and shrieks of those who were pressed almost to suffocation, or trampled down and trodden under foot in the confusion, were dreadful...

(chap. L)

Even the good gentleman on horseback is swept up by the crowd and made a part of its relentless and irrational movements. These moments of mob violence represent moments when Dickens has retreated from the fictive worlds of Mr. Pickwick and Fagin and indulged in the reality of a great social threat. Yet these moments are short-lived, almost as if Dickens feared in some way the true horrors of a bare reality: from the fury of Chapter L Dickens immediately moves into the idyllic peacefulness of the Maylie family. Only in Barnaby Rudge does Dickens maintain the force of the mob throughout the entire book and, consequently, demonstrate his important changing concerns.

The only problem with the book is that it is disjointed.
Not only do we find the main plot of Lord George Gordon and his rioters, but we also find numerous subplots which Dickens fails to mesh smoothly into a well unified whole: Joe Willet, John Willet, and Solomon Daisy; Barnaby Rudge, Mrs. Rudge, and Mr. Rudge; Simon Tappertit and the "Prentice Knights"; the Vardens and the Haredales; Hugh. The grotesque characters in Barnaby Rudge remain, in a sense, scattered, and only tentatively are they connected with the book's main themes. We must, therefore, explore the grotesque characters as they exist in and of themselves, separate from any major thematic concerns which sometimes blind us when we consider the essential qualities of the grotesque. And we will find, I think, that the grotesque is undergoing a few major developments which reflect Dickens's changing concerns and his changing mode of writing.

First of all, one major change in the grotesque is the absence of a purely evil grotesque figure. We find no fantastical beast such as Fagin or Quilp; no one character embodies the irrational force of evil which existed earlier. For example, Dennis the hangman's violence is full of malignity, yet he is caught up in a form of punishment and retribution which society sanctions; and Hugh, though fierce and ruthless, is more exhilarating than repulsive as he charges through the rioting crowds on his enormous horse while they set fire to Newgate prison. At other times in the book, Barnaby's pet raven, Grip, seems to possess a Poe-like threat of lurking evil, yet its absurdity soon carries it undeniably into the realm of the comic. The bird declares:

"Halloa, halloa, halloa! What's the
matter here! Keep up your spirits. Never say die. Bow wow wow. I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil. Hurrah!" And then, as if exulting in his infernal character, he began to whistle.

...the bird, balancing himself on tiptoe, as it were, and moving his body up and down in a sort of grave dance, rejoined, "I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil," and flapped his wings against his sides as if he were bursting with laughter. Barnaby clapped his hands, and fairly rolled upon the ground in an ecstasy of delight.

(chap.VI)

Many characters contain a potential for the evil grotesque, yet it is never realized. Also, since the book is disjointed by the scattering of characters, any potential evil figures are in no manner central to the book's main action.

The underlying force of evil materializes in the novel in the form of the riots and supplies the source of action in a social movement. The descriptions of the riots are very similar, as we mentioned earlier, to the mob scenes in *Oliver Twist* and also to the descriptions of the iron mills in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. We feel the same horrible and irrational movements of disorder.

...in half an hour, or less, as though the setting in of night had been their preconcerted signal, the rioters having previously, in small parties, prevented the lighting of the street lamps, rose like a great sea; and that in so many places at once, and with such inconceivable fury, that those who had the direction of the troops knew not, at first, where to turn or what to do. One after another, new fires blazed up in every quarter of the town, as though it were the intention of the insurgents to wrap the city in a circle of flames, which, contrasting by degrees, should burn the whole
to ashes; the crowd swarmed and roared in every street; and none but the rioters and soldiers being out of doors, it seemed to the latter as if all London were arrayed against them, and they stood alone against the town.

...The shouts of the rabble, the shrieks of women, the cries of the wounded, and the constant firing, formed a deafening and an awful accompaniment to the sights which every corner presented.

This is pure Pandemonium; and it resembles closely the destructive vitality of life we associated so closely with Quilp. The change from pure evil embodied in a grotesque character to its materialization in a great social force marks a significant change in Dickens's viewpoint in the novels, as well as the reader's viewpoint. Fagin and Quilp were, in a sense, distancing devices; because of their fantastical natures and their close association with the allegorical mode, they tended to lessen the harshness of the reality of evil. They existed in a world which we could stand outside of and view from afar, an imaginative world. In Barnaby Rudge, though, there are times when we cannot separate ourselves; there is no evil grotesque character to act as a cushion against reality, for in the novel the vital and destructive force of evil includes the whole of society: the real world, the world in which we live. And corresponding with this shift in viewpoint is also a necessary narrowing of the influence and function of the grotesque.

The grotesque in Barnaby Rudge deals primarily with the problems of rigidity and torpor. The best example, of course, is John Willet, landlord of the famous Maypole Inn. John is a
figure completely devoid of energy. We see him daily sitting in his customary chair, dozing with his eyes open and smoking simultaneously, drinking his ale, carrying on his evening conversation of silence with his friends, Phil Parkes and Solomon Daisy, and wallowing in his rotundity. John's inordinate languidness establishes his grotesque absurdity: he is as sleepy as Tony Weller's pockets were capacious, and both exist in a realm of comic unreality. John's concretized lethargy is also a denial of time and, consequently, a denial of his son's manhood. He has a tyrannical, almost petrified, hold over his establishment and forbids his son his natural freedom. John insists on calling Joe "young boy," and in denying his natural life processes drives Joe away in rebellion to join the army. John Willet embodies the death-in-life rigidity which we found in Mrs. Nickleby, and he reflects, in a way, a growing sense of spiritual disease.

In the grotesque characterization of John Willet, we find the beginnings of the reciprocal metaphor. The reciprocal metaphor, as we stated earlier, involves the reciprocal transference of qualities between the animate and the inanimate: while characters become increasingly mechanistic, inanimate objects or nature become anthropomorphic. The first paragraph of chapter X clearly juxtaposes the animate and the nonhuman and exemplifies neatly the beginnings of the reciprocal metaphor:

It was on one of those mornings, common in early spring, when the year, fickle and changeable in its youth like all other created things, is undecided whether to step backward into winter or forward into summer, and in its uncertainty
inclines now to the one and now to the other, and now to both at once--wooing summer in the sunshine, and lingering still with winter in the shade--it was, in short, one of those mornings, when it is hot and cold, wet and dry, bright and lowering, sad and cheerful, withering and genial, in the compass of one short hour, that old John Willet, who was dropping asleep over the copper boiler, was roused by the sound of a horse's feet, and glancing out at window, beheld a traveler of goodly promise, checking his bridle at the Maypole door.

In this passage nature has become personified--"fickle," "young," "undecided," "wooing," "lingering," "cheerful," "genial"--and it contrasts greatly with John's unrelenting lethargy. Dickens uses the contrast to heighten Willet's grotesque rigidity and to suggest certain observations about the disorientation of man and his world. Things begin to appear topsy-turvy, out of joint, and incongruous. When Dickens later carries the reciprocal metaphor to further extremes the world becomes almost surrealistic. Again, we find in the reciprocal metaphor a way of separating the reader from reality; it acts as a very effective device for creating the grotesque.

Another development of the grotesque in Barnaby Rudge is the introduction of the grotesque half-wit. Barnaby is in many ways like Smike. They are both victims of injustice--Smike through Mr. Squeers and Dotheboy's Hall and Barnaby through the desertion of his father, who tainted his birth with a double murder--and their victimization is the cause of their idiocy. Barnaby is a much more grotesque character than Smike because Dickens portrays him very imaginatively. Smike's half-wittedness is
very melodramatic, and his character, consequently, remains empty and vapid: his futile love for Kate and his deathbed scene are highly sentimental. Barnaby, on the other hand, possesses an imaginative vitality: we observe him in his wild dreams, in his strange array of clothes, in his highly ornamented hat, and with his mysterious raven (see illustrations in chapters VIII and XVII). He also demonstrates his wild energy in his speech. In the following passage, for example, his vitality of mind clearly contrasts with the mechanistic lethargy of John Willet. Barnaby, John, and Mr. Chester are standing at a window in the Maypole Inn, and Barnaby makes an observation.

"Look down there," he said softly; "do you mark how they whisper in each other's ears; then dance and leap, to make believe they are in sport? Do you see how they stop for a moment, when they think there is no one looking, and mutter among themselves again; and then how they roll and gambol, delighted with the mischief they've been plotting...?"

"They are only clothes," returned the guest, "such as we wear; hanging on those lines to dry, fluttering in the wind."

"Clothes!" echoed Barnaby.... "Ha ha! Why, how much better to be silly, than as wise as you! You don't see shadowy people there, like those that live in sleep--not you. Nor eyes in knotted panes of glass, swift ghosts when it blows hard...--not you! I lead a merrier life than you, with all your cleverness. You're the dull men. We're the bright ones. Ha ha! I'll not change--with you, clever as you are--not I."

"...He wants imagination," said Mr. Willet, very slowly, and after a long silence.

Though he is rather explicit, Dickens is using the grotesque here to set up two opposing forces in life: rigidity versus flexibility, lethargy versus vitality. These forces contribute
greatly to the conflicts of the inciting action in the book: we observe the separation of Joe and his father, and Barnaby's wild dreams establish the book's mystery. At the same time, though, we must remember that the conflicting forces of rigidity and flexibility exist in very grotesque characters and are therefore unreal. While the descriptions of the irrational mobs suggest a darkness and threat of reality in the world of *Barnaby Rudge*—an alternative to the purely evil grotesque and a significant development in itself—the world remains predominately grotesque. There is always a sense of distance existing between the world of the book and the world of the reader, and we always feel a measure of security when we read of dark threats and social malice.

Dickens's works which range from *Sketches by Boz* through *Barnaby Rudge* represent a period of experimentation in the use of the grotesque. Dickens uses the grotesque in a variety of functions: as forces of evil, victims of evil, comic characters, dehumanized characters, death-like characters, and deranged characters. And because most of the main characters in the novels possess grotesque characteristics, Dickens succeeds in creating highly fictive worlds which many times border on fantasy and fairy tale. Characters such as Quilp, Squeers, or Barnaby's crow are characters we might find in "The Wizard of Oz," "Alice in Wonderland," or a Walt Disney fantasy. For example, we could very easily recast Quilp as the "wicked witch of the West" and Little Nell as the innocent Dorothy. In fact, Little Nell's and Dorothy's travels are extremely similar in the various confrontations with grotesque characters along the way: Dorothy meets the
straw man, the tin man, and the lion, while Nell encounters Punch, the midgets, and Jarley's waxworks. And these grotesque figures act as a distancing device which separates, like a cushion of safety, the real worlds of the reader from the worlds of Dickens's vision. Though Dickens deals with many social problems, such as the horrors of the industrial town, he still encases them in a fictive shell: the worlds of the early novels are worlds of a well-formulated unreality.

In a discussion of Dickens's second group of novels, which range from Martin Chuzzlewit through David Copperfield, we notice a very important shift in Dickens use of the grotesque. The grotesques of the middle period no longer fully dominate the novels, and we observe, though lightly, the gradual transition from a vision full of fantasy to a vision facing reality. The transition is by no means complete throughout the period, for we always find an undercurrent of the grotesque in many of the subplots of the novels. Yet we also definitely find a levelling off and gradual decrease in the effectiveness of the grotesque as a protective shell: we slowly inch closer to a confrontation with reality.

The first novel of the middle period, Martin Chuzzlewit, features one of the most well-known of Dickens's grotesque characters, Mrs. Gamp. Mrs. Gamp is an odious, drunken, and avaricious sick nurse, who resides in the filthy upstairs apartment of a bird fancier. In her initial description we observe her repulsiveness:

She was a fat old woman, this Mrs. Gamp, with a husky voice and a moist eye, which she had a remarkable power of turning up, and only showing the white of it. Having
very little neck, it cost her some trouble to look over herself, if one may say so, at those to whom she talked.... The face of Mrs. Gamp—the nose in particular—was somewhat red and swollen, and it was difficult to enjoy her society without becoming conscious of a smell of spirits.

Not only is Mrs. Gamp physically repulsive, but she is also criminally incompetent. In one instance John Westlock employs her to attend a very sick and bedridden friend during the night. But instead of offering comfort to the invalid, Mrs. Gamp treats him as an already dead piece of matter.

By degrees, a horrible remembrance of one branch of her calling took possession of the woman; and stooping down, she pinned his wandering arms against his sides, to see how he would look if laid out as a dead man. Hideous as it may appear, her fingers itched to compose his limbs in that last marble attitude. "Ah!" said Mrs. Gamp, walking away from the bed, "he'd make a lovely corpse."

The repulsive side of Mrs. Gamp represents a criticism of nursing conditions and a socially ineffective system of services. If we were to meet Mrs. Gamp in a real situation, or just on the street, we would see her as a repugnant social threat.

On the other hand, though, the reader will not and cannot totally reject Mrs. Gamp. Her humorous ways of speaking, her blunt mannerisms, and her inordinate gluttony raise her out of a realm of value judgments into the unreality of the grotesque disproportion of things. Clayborough states that it is the fictitious Mrs. Gamp which we "warm to." For example, Mrs. Gamp's famous
oration on one's responsibility with fate clearly illustrates her fictitious aspect and quells any latent satirical thrusts.

"...As a good friend of mine has frequent made remark to me, which her name my love is Harris, Mrs. Harris through the square and up the steps a-turnin' round by the tobacker shop, 'Oh, Sairey, Sairey, little do we know what lays afore us!' 'Mrs. Harris, ma'am,' I says, 'not much it's true, but more than you suppose. Our calcitations, ma'am,' I says, 'respectin' what the number of a family will be, comes most times within one, and oftener than you would suppose, exact.' 'Sairey,' says Mrs. Harris, in a awful way, 'Tell me what is my individgale number.' 'No, Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'excuse me, if you please. My own,' I says, 'has fallen out of three-pair backs, and had damp door-steps settled on their lungs, and one was turned up smilin' in a bedstead, unbeknown. Therefore, ma'am,' I says, 'seek not to participate, but take 'em as they come and as they go.' Mine," said Mrs. Gamp, "mine is all gone, my dear young chick. And as to husbands, there's a wooden leg gone like-ways home to its account, which in its constancy of walkin' into wine vaults, and never comin' out again 'till fetched by force, was quite as weak as flesh, if not weaker."

(chap.XL)

Mrs. Gamp's constant reference to the imaginary Mrs. Harris and her superb use of the internal dialogue give her an aura of appeal. She attains an unreal capacity which stills all questionings and puts all general values out of account. Cockshut states, though rather excessively, that we must "accept Mrs. Gamp as a preternatural reality, freed from mortality and from the limitations of time and space." Like many of the grotesque characters which we have previously discussed, Mrs. Gamp exists in a world of unreal proportions in which her unreality lessens the impact of any tendencies toward pure satire: her role as a distancing
device postpones any confrontation the reader might normally have with the many threatening implications of her social activities. Unlike a Hogarth drawing which is a copy of life in the strictest sense of the word and with which no one could spend hours leisure, Dickens's portrait of Mrs. Gamp contains an added dimension of appeal and attractiveness which is based primarily on the fact that reader remains safe from reality: Mrs. Gamp is, in a sense, like a threatening lion behind bars.

Mrs. Gamp is by far the most noticeable and obtrusive grotesque character in Martin Chuzzlewit, but more importantly she is not really one of the main characters. She does not enter significantly into the main plot action but exists, rather, in numerous subplots: she attends to the funereal preparations of Anthony Chuzzlewit and to the sickbed of John Westlock's friend, yet she does not figure into the main action of young Martin's journey or the world of Pecksniff. She maintains an undercurrent of humor throughout the novel which surfaces sporadically, but which is by no means a dominate force. Mrs. Gamp helps to exemplify Dickens's stress and use of the grotesque. Unlike the dominate grotesques which we find in Fagin, Quilp, or Barnaby, the grotesque characters in Martin Chuzzlewit begin to fall behind the main scenes of action. The novel is beginning to lose its fairy-tale-like nature, fantasy is becoming less dominate, and the protective shell of unreality is gradually eroding away.

We also find in Martin Chuzzlewit the character of Mr. Pecksniff, who represents the grotesque in transition. Pecksniff seems to waver throughout the novel between fantastical and satiric
tendencies. At times he possesses some of the appeal and humor of Mrs. Gamp. For instance, he tells Young Martin,

There are a cart-load of loose bricks, and a score or two of old flower-pots, in the back-yard. If you could pile them up, my dear Martin, into any form which would remind me on my return, say of St. Peter's in Rome, or the Mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople, it would be at once improving to you and agreeable to my feelings.

(chap. VI)

If we take into consideration Pecksniff's difference in education, his imaginative visions, almost to the point of ludicrousness, reflect the whimsical humor of Mrs. Gamp. Most of the time, though, Mr. Pecksniff's role becomes so acidic and pointed that he no longer remains funny but is irritating. The dominating hypocritical side of Mr. Pecksniff punches holes through the protective shell of the fantastical grotesque, and the reader no longer feels safe.

"You will excuse Tom Pinch's want of polish, Martin," said Mr. Pecksniff with a smile of patronage and pity.... "He means well."
"He is a very good fellow, sir."
"Oh, yes," said Mr. Pecksniff. "Yes. Thomas Pinch means well. He is very grateful. I have never regretted having befriended Thomas Pinch."

(chap. V)

Pecksniff's condescending air is not clouded by any fantastical tendencies; we may sometimes laugh at Pecksniff, yet we never feel quite happy about it. Cockshut labels the highly satiric and serious side of Pecksniff as "negative humour" which opposes the "positive humour" of Mrs. Gamp. The fact that Mr. Pecksniff wavers
precariously between the "positive" and "negative" moods, and also
the fact that he is a central character in the novel, again in-
dicates the important shift which is occurring in Dickens's middle
period. Dickens is gradually moving away from the fairy-tale en-
vvironments of the early works and slowly confronting social rea-
A lities.

The "negative" and "positive" humor which Pecksniff
embodies tends to polarize in the general plot action of the re-
main ing novels of the middle period. In Dombey and Son the
humorous and fantasy world of Cap'n Cuttle and Solomon Gills lies
opposed the threatening world of Mr. Carker. In Cap'n Cuttle's
world the grotesque description is very strong. For instance,
Cap'n Cuttle seems somehow organically connected to his glazed
hat and hook.

The Captain was one of those timber-
looking men, suits of oak as well as
hearts, whom it is almost impossible for
the liveliest imagination to separate
from any part of their dress, however
insignificant. Accordingly, when Walter
knocked at the door, and the Captain
instantly poked his head out of one of
his front windows, and hailed him, with
the hard glazed hat already on it, and
the shirt-collar like a sail, and the
wide suit of blue, all standing as usual,
Walter was as fully persuaded that he was
always in that state, as if the Captain
had been a bird and those had been his
feathers.

(chap. IX)

Dickens also equates Cuttle's close friend and advisor, Mr.
Bunby, with a miscellany of nautical equipment: his large head
is a bulkhead, his revolving eye is a lighthouse, and his hair is
oakum which also "inclined towards all four quarters of the compass."
Both Cap'n Cuttle and Mr. Bunsby remind us of characters such as Mr. Weller, the Artful Dodger, Newman Noggs, Fagin, and Quilp, because the nature of their descriptions creates a world of unreality. We see in the Cap'n and Bunsby an exaggeration of an unfamiliar view of things and a distortion of our usual perceptions. They represent, like all grotesques, the important distancing device.

On the opposite pole from Cap'n Cuttle, though, we find less grotesqueness and a much stronger threat of reality in the character of Mr. Carker. Carker, besides Mr. Dombey, is one of the chief evil elements in novel, yet unlike Fagin or Quilp, he possesses only slight grotesque characteristics. For instance, we notice consistently his feline tendencies and his broad, unnerving, and unnatural set of teeth. What we see mostly in Mr. Carker, though, is a very selfish and greedy businessman. He does not reside in a hellish den of thieves or a fantasy hut but keeps, rather, a very realistic office, a very realistic home, and a very realistic relationship with his peers. His deception of Mr. Dombey and his rejection of his brother are believable events and thus offer a great threat to the complacency and safety of the reader.

Carker's world counteracts the fantasy world of Cap'n Cuttle and, in a way, tends to overshadow it. Carker constitutes much of the general plot line of the novel: he causes the downfall of Mr. Dombey's business and he elopes with Dombey's wife. Cap'n Cuttle's world, though, seems to exist in the background, like Mrs. Gamp's world did. It provides a place of relief to which the reader and Dickens can constantly return, a sort of fairy land where
we can forget, for a while, any real social problems and trust in a happy ending. Dickens is apparently caught between his dual vision of the world: he may remain, at times, in the grotesque world of Cap'n Cuttle, yet he must also carry Carker's actions to their logical consequences. He cannot always resort to the protective devices of the grotesque description, but must account for reality in all of its horror. Granted, the following passage which describes Carker's suicide is slightly melodramatic, yet it is relatively much more realistic and logical than Dickens's earlier description of the death of Quilp. Carker's death under the wheels of the violent train reminds us strongly of the threatening mill which Nell passed on her journey.

He heard a shout--another--saw the face change from its vindictive passion to a faint sickness and terror--knew in a moment that the rush was come--uttered a shriek--looked around--saw the red eyes, bleared and dim, in the daylight, close upon him--was beaten down, caught up, and whirled away upon a jagged mill, that spun him round and round, and struck him limb from limb, and licked his stream of life up with its fiery heat, and cast his mutilated fragments in the air.

When the traveller, who had been recognized, recovered from swoon, he saw them bringing from a distance something covered, that lay heavy and still, upon a board, between four men, and saw that others drove some dogs away that sniffed upon the road, and soaked his blood up, with a train of ashes.

(chap.LV)

We feel a horror in the incessant rush of the train and also in Dickens's poignant image of the dogs sniffing upon the road, which gives a very impersonal sense to the scene; man becomes
very insignificant when he confronts the relentless mass of the train, and his spilled blood can be casually soaked up by sparsely sprinkled ashes. Dickens portrays Carker in the context of a real society: he is a cruel and deceiving man who flees from his guilt and out of fear of Dombey; his death is a logical consequence of his disoriented rage, around which there is no mist or fog of grotesque description but a believable reality.

The symbolic demise of what we have been conveniently calling the fantastical grotesque occurs in *David Copperfield*. Mr. Wilkins Micawber's departure from the social and financial obligations of the real world of London marks the end of Dickens's reliance on the grotesque as a protective device against the demands of reality. Grotesque characters undoubtedly exist in the later works, but they are in many ways tainted, as we shall see, and they lack the constant sense of appeal which we find in Mr. Micawber. Micawber is a thriving unreality: his extravagant use of language and total disregard of the discrepancy between his monetary desires and what his pocket contains give him an appeal such as we found in Mrs. Gamp and Cap'n Cuttle. The unreality of his nature transcends any moral judgments which we normally would apply to an unfrugal character; the humor in his family life and his mock-heroic tendencies lift him out of the categorical judgments of the real world and make him totally acceptable—almost. One instance of Mr. Micawber's appealing humor occurs in his first meeting with David Copperfield. His hilariously lofty rhetoric obviously serves as a model for the familiar routines of W.C. Fields.
"My address," said Mr. Micawber, "is Windsor Terrace, City Road. In short," said Mr. Micawber, with the same genteel air, and in another burst of confidence--"I live there."

...Under the impression," said Mr. Micawber, "that your peregrinations in this metropolis have not as yet been extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in the direction of the City Road--in short," said Mr. Micawber, in another burst of confidence, "that you might lose yourself--I shall be happy to call this evening, and instal you in the knowledge of the nearest way."

(chap.XI)

In many ways the world of Micawber reminds us of the festive world of Falstaff. Micawber's lack of success in his pecuniary exploits and his frequent trips to debtors' prison possess the same innocent absence of threat which we find in Falstaff's participation in the Gadshill robbery. Both Micawber and Falstaff provide a suspension of reality in their actions; their ineptitudes create parodies of their situations and establish an objectivity from which we may step back and laugh freely. Again, the distancing device thrives vigorously.

Despite the appeal of the unreality in Micawber's and Falstaff's worlds, though, Dickens and Shakespeare soon discover that their characters cannot exist truthfully and responsibly in a real world. Of course, both characters possess elements of humanity which are essential to the maintenance of peace and the respect of one's peers. Yet both characters also practice a negligence and indifference toward law which Dickens and Shakespeare realize cannot exist in an ordered social context. Consequently,
when Hal finally becomes King Henry V, he must reject Falstaff's pleas for friendship and acceptance and banish him from society.

I know thee not, old man, fall to thy prayers. How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester! I have long dreamt of such a kind of man, So surfeit-swell'd, so old, and so profane; But being awak'd, I do despise my dream.... When thou dost hear I am as I have been, Approach me.... Till then I banish thee, on pain of death.

(2 Henry IV, V, 5, lines 47-63)

And in the same sense, Mr. Micawber must finally realize that his nature can never be successful or acceptable in the real world of London, and that he must finally move to a distant land.

"...My dear Mr. Copperfield, Mr. Micawber's is not a common case. Mr. Micawber is going to a distant country expressly in order that he may be fully understood and appreciated for the first time. I wish Mr. Micawber to take his stand upon that vessel's prow, and firmly say, 'This country I am come to conquer! Have you honours? Have you riches? Have you posts of profitable pecuniary emolument? Let them be brought forward. They are mine!' "

(chap.LVII)

Mr. Micawber is indeed successful in his new world, yet it is a distant fairy tale world which is literally separate from the real world of London; we never actually see his new home, we only read his informative letters which he sends to David. The departure of Mr. Micawber symbolizes the end of the fantastical grotesque and its use as a successful distancising device. Dickens is finally coming face to face with reality, and, as we shall see, these important changes in the grotesque which appear in the last group of novels represent in Dickens a maturity of vision.
In our discussion of the changing grotesque in the transitional middle period, we have not sufficiently explored the essence of the new grotesque. We know that the early grotesque provided a protective device against the threats of society and actually gave us an easy method of escape. We also know that the new uses of the grotesque are set against the "background of a whole society"; we have said that Dickens is in some way beginning to "face reality." But just what does this new setting mean? What actual relationship does the new grotesque have with reality? And how can Dickens use his same tools and techniques of grotesque description to produce a different reaction in the reader? Simply, what is the function of the new grotesque? In order to understand the essence of the new grotesque, we must take a close look at the novels of the late period.

The grotesque in the novels of the late period, which range from Bleak House through Edwin Drood, has developed into a complex literary device of various uses. The characters of Pecksniff, Carker, and Heep in the middle period only give us a slight notion of its changing complexities. Perhaps the best way to approach the new grotesque is to look at the drastic change of tone which has occurred throughout the novels. We previously observed how Dickens enveloped his early novels in a sort of light, fairy tale-like feeling. We often sensed a non-threatening cinematic sparkle and misty other-worldliness running through the lives of his characters. Even in the darkest recesses of evil, such as Fagin's den, there was a tone of a-distant unreality. Or, for instance, observe how the opening paragraph of
Nicholas Nickleby prepared us for a half-serious and humorous melodrama.

There once lived, in a sequestered part of the county of Devonshire, one Mr. Godfrey Nickleby: a worthy gentleman, who, taking it into his head rather late in life that he must get married, and not being young enough or rich enough to aspire to the hand of a lady of fortune, had wedded an old flame out of mere attachment, who in her turn had taken him for the same reason. Thus two people who cannot afford to play cards for money, sometimes sit down to a quiet game for love.

The tone in this passage is simple, light, and harmless. When we read the novels of the late period, though, we notice a drastic shift in the tone of the works. With the opening paragraph of Nicholas Nickleby still in mind, observe the opening paragraphs of Bleak House and the dark, suffocating pervasiveness of the mud and fog.

London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes--gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun.

...Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foothold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if this day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest. Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where
it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollution of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their words; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

The tone here has obviously become very dark, serious, and threatening. And we find the same feeling in the opening lines of Hard Times with Gradgrind's impetuous insistence on "Facts," in Little Dorrit with the excellent descriptions of the pervasively blazing sun and accompanying aridity, in Our Mutual Friend with the dirtiness and slime of the river, and in Edwin Drood with the wild dreams of the man in the opium den. What makes these passages different from the earlier lighter novels is Dickens's important use of symbolism. Though the symbolism, in a sense, acts as an alternative to the grotesque--it provides a measure of distance between the actual reality and the images which the reader sees--the symbols of mud, fog, facts, light, the river, and dreams, also portray the essential qualities of reality. Dickens is no longer developing unreal fantasy worlds, but he is reversing his vision and delving into the fundamental aspects of society.

For Dickens's purpose is quite unashamedly to force his readers into an unprotected
awareness of the age in which they live, to present them with issues which, as they read, will more and more impinge upon their consciousnesses. Fiction is not to be an escape or a refuge. 35

Dickens's symbols do not protect the reader from reality, but they bring him close to the many consequences of social deprivation: the fog suggests suffocation and confusion; the glaring light suggests an arid emptiness and sterility; the "facts" suggest an unimaginativeness; the mud and slime suggest the secret underworld of crime and misery. (The illustrations of the late period have also become much darker and serious in tone than the earlier bright illustrations.) The symbolism of the late period gives the novels a serious tonal dimension of great depth: a depth of complexity and threat which marks one of the most important changes in Dickens's vision as a novelist.

The changes in the grotesque parallel the changes of tone and vision. In the novels of the late period we notice two important shifts which have occurred in Dickens's representation of the grotesque. First of all, the once easily acceptable and very fictive characters become tainted in their grotesqueness. Instead of presenting a protective unreality, they begin to present a reality taken to its logical consequences: they portray various maladies of a problematic society. (Carker and Pecksniff foreshadowed this shift.) Secondly, we find a structural dualism in the novels, where Dickens wavers between grotesque and non-grotesque description. In *Bleak House*, for instance, Dickens uses the device of the double narrator, and we observe characters who fill two roles in two different worlds. We shall begin with
Bleak House in our discussion of the two major shifts of the grotesque and the changing complexities of the novels of the late period.

The best example in Bleak House of the tainted grotesque is the character of Harold Skimpole. Skimpole parallels Micawber in many ways: he has no sense of financial values, is a leech, and speaks with a flourishing tongue. Dickens seems to try very hard to make him acceptable like Micawber: he attempts to give him the same fantastical aura of humor and distance from reality. And Skimpole does succeed in winning Mr. Jarndyce's acceptance. We observe, for example, Skimpole's Micawber-like humor in his declaration to the world:

"Go your several ways in peace! Wear red coats, blue coats, lawn sleeves, put pens behind your ears, wear aprons; go after glory, loiness, commerce, trade, any object you prefer; only--let Harold Skimpole live."

(chap.VI)

Yet Skimpole's humor and constant disregard of responsibility soon acquire an oppressiveness which pollutes any place it might occupy in the real world. Skimpole begins to look like a Falstaff which Hal did not banish. No matter how hard Dickens tries to make him acceptable, the reader and Esther view him as detrimental to an ordered society, an agonizing sore which never goes away.

"It's only you, the generous creatures, whom I envy," said Mr. Skimpole addressing us, his new friends, in an impersonal manner. "I envy you your power of doing what you do. It is what I should revel in, myself. I don't feel
any vulgar gratitude to you. I almost feel as if you ought to be grateful to me, for giving you the opportunity of enjoying the luxury of generosity. I know you like it. For anything I can tell, I may have come into the world expressly for the purpose of increasing your stock of happiness. I may have been born to be a benefactor to you, by sometimes giving you an opportunity of assisting me in my little perplexities. Why should I regret my incapacity for details and worldly affairs, when it leads to such pleasant consequences? I don't regret it therefore.

(chap.VI)

Skimpole's inordinate selfishness seems, at first, exaggeration to the point of unreality and therefore humorous. Yet there is threatening undercurrent in his disregard for people which lessons the gap between the real world and Skimpole. Skimpole is in the midst of a world of fog-like confusion, where justice is impotent, where people wander aimlessly, where the polluted poor perish unregarded by the wealthy, where families collapse: England is literally a land of orphans. In such a world Skimpole's humor does not fit but becomes a real burden to society, because it sustains the sicknesses which already exist. Therefore, we do not find Skimpole as attractive as we did Mrs. Gamp, for example. His grotesque description seems to have lost its power in distancing us from reality, and we feel a definite threat.

Similar tainted grotesque characters appear throughout the novels of the late period. In *Hard Times*, for instance, we find Mr. Bounderby constantly vaunting himself a self-made man. At times there seems to be a grotesque aura of fairy tale about him, as when Stephen Blackpool decides to visit Bounderby's home:
he "turned about, and betook himself as in duty bound to the red brick castle of the giant Bounderby." Yet Bounderby has a threatening "down-to-earth materialistic attitude which determines his ill-treatment of Stephen (as well as the rest of the workers), his relations with Mrs. Sparsit, and his lies. In Our Mutual Friend we always find a fairy tale atmosphere clinging to the character and occupation of Boffin, the Golden Dustman. When we first hear of the dust heaps which Boffin inherits, Dickens suggests a strong sense of other-worldliness. Lightwood tells the Veneerings:

He grew rich as a Dust Contractor, and lived in a hollow in a hilly country entirely composed of Dust. On his own small estate the growling old vagabond threw up his own mountain range, like an old volcano, and its geological formation was dust. (chap.II)

The aura of the fairy tale world does not last long, though, for there begins to appear a growing symbolic connection between money and dirt. Cockshut states that we see more clearly as the novel progresses "the grimy realities of Victorian commerce." And in the last chapter of Book I ("A Dismal Swamp") Dickens draws a connection between the mounds and "primeval slime," and he thus suggests the sources of a Victorian fortune.

And now, in the blooming summer days, behold Mr. and Mrs. Boffin established in the eminently aristocratic family mansion, and behold all manner of crawling, creeping, fluttering, and buzzing creatures, attracted by the gold dust of the Golden Dustman. (chap.XVII)

Though the aura of the fairy tale exists, the grotesque description
is much less potent as a distancing device than it was earlier. The "crawling, creeping...creatures" are viciously selfish humans who represent the essential proponents of the Victorian commerce; they bring into question the values of many basic elements of Dickens society, as well as creating a serious threat to its order and peace.

One of the better examples of the tainted grotesque characters occurs in the Barnacle family of Little Dorrit. They are, first of all, brilliantly and absurdly funny. For instance, when Arthur Clenman first attempts to see Mr. Tite Barnacle at the Circumlocution Office, he meets, instead, the colloquially speaking Barnacle Junior, whom we begin to identify as an eyeglass. Because of the "flat orbits to his eyes, and such limp little eyelids," his eyeglass has an incessant way of slipping out while he speaks.

"Oh, I say, Look here! My father's not in the way, and won't be in the way to-day," said Barnacle Junior. "Is there anything I can do?"

(Click! Eye-glass down. Barnacle Junior quite frightened and feeling all round himself, but not able to find it.)

"You are very good," said Arthur Clenman. "I wish however to see Mr. Barnacle."

"...But I say. Look here! Is this public business?" asked Barnacle Junior.

(Click! Eye-glass down again. Barnacle Junior in that state of search after it, that Mr. Clenman felt it useless to reply at present)

"Is it," said Barnacle Junior, taking heed of his visitor's brown face, "anything about--Tonnage--or that sort of thing?"

(Pausing for a reply, he opened his right eye with his hand, and stuck his glass in it, in that inflammatory manner that his eye began watering dreadfully.

(chap.X)
Barnacle Junior then proceeds to become increasingly obstinate, for he creates difficulties concerning the techniques of obtaining forms in order to apply for an appointment. But he concludes by kindly directing Clenman to his father's home, where one might think he would exclude business. Barnacle Junior's absurd mannerisms with his eyeglass and the apparent gaps in his logic give him a lovable mannerism such as we found in the Artful Dodger and Cap'n Cuttle. He initially impresses us as sort of unreal and harmless.

The "lovable absurdity" of the Barnacles, though, can have consequences that are both "harsh and irrevocable." The Barnacles represent the energy behind the Circumlocution office, the confusing bureaucratic machinery which reminds us strongly of Chancery in Bleak House. Like Chancery, the Circumlocution Office constitutes one of the main elements in Dickens's social criticism: it helps to shape the atmosphere of the novel into a fog-like confinement and substantiate the recurring idea of "no escape." When we first encounter the Circumlocution Office, we begin to sense the serious and far-reaching consequences of its existence.

Whatever was required to be done, the Circumlocution Office was beforehand with all the public departments in the art of perceiving—how not to do it. ...It was this spirit of national efficiency in the Circumlocution Office that had gradually led to its having something to do with everything. Mechanics, natural philosophers, soldiers, sailors, petitioners, memorialists, people with grievances, people who wanted to prevent grievances, people who wanted to redress grievances, jobbing people, jobbed people, people who couldn't get rewarded for merit, and people who couldn't get punished
for demerit, were all indiscriminately tucked up under the foolscap paper of the Circumlocution Office.

...Numbers of people were lost in the Circumlocution Office.

(chap.X)

The Circumlocution Office is as impersonal as the violent train which killed Carker, and it is threatening because it constitutes one of the fundamental elements upon which society is built. Unlike Quilp, Squeers, or Fagin, who occupy small worlds of their own, the Barnacles affect everyone. The brilliant list above implies that the Barnacles determine the quality of society’s educational, legislative, and judicial systems, as well as its morale. Dickens sometimes describes the influence of the Barnacles in shaded disease imagery, as when he broadens their influence to include the whole world. In the following passage the name Barnacle means what it implies:

...wherever there was a square yard of ground in British occupation under the sun or moon, with a public post upon it, sticking to that post was a Barnacle.

...the Barnacles were all over the world, in every direction—despatch boxing the compass.

(chap.XXXIV)

The pervasive cling of the Barnacles counteracts any "lovable absurdity" which we occasionally feel in their presence. We mainly have misgivings about their existence because they are rooted in reality. Where the early novels were worlds mostly fantastical with only occasional glimpses of a horrible reality, here, in the late novels, we find a very real world with occasional excesses of grotesque description.
The tainted grotesque is very closely related to Dickens's use of a structural dualism in his portrayal of the grotesque. Dickens seems to waver between grotesque and non-grotesque description, which we saw foreshadowed in Pecksniff. But the alternating descriptions occur not just in individual characters but also in the novels' overall structure: the real world begins to stand on its own, full of its social problems and complexities, while the grotesque world parallels it. Of course the division is never clean: we often find the inevitable grotesque description jutting forth into the real world, and real social problems threading through the actions of the grotesques. The characters of the late novels move from one realm to the other, independently: at times we feel very far from the demands of reality, while at other times we find ourselves in the midst of real social issues.

We mentioned earlier how Dickens constructs a dual vision in *Bleak House* by incorporating two narrators: Esther and an omniscient narrator. He interestingly develops the novel in such a way as to give the reader two descriptive versions of the same person. When the omniscient narrator narrates, the descriptions tend to be very elaborate and ornamented with the absurdities of his (Dickens's) imaginative eye. Esther's narration, on the other hand, lacks Dickens' usual pervasive exaggeration and is plain, to the point, and matter of fact. In a way, Esther functions as "a brake, controlling the runaway tendency of Dickens's imagination." Esther sees things clearly: she quickly comprehends Skimpole's worthlessness, Richard's desires, the cruelty of Mrs. Jellyby, and the suffering of the brickmakers. And only rarely do we see the
Dickens's "fantastication" break through the insipid prose style, as when Turveydrop bows to her, she could "almost believe I saw the crease come into the whites of his eyes." (chap.XIV). Though Esther fails as a character--she is constantly hinting to us how good she is--she illustrates a very important development in Dickens's style: he seems to be exploring ways to get around his runaway imagination in order to face more clearly the demands of reality.

Dickens fails in his attempt to construct a logical dualism in *Hard Times*. We first notice the tension in the book's dualism between fact and fancy when Sissy Jupe falters in defining a horse, and also when Mr. Gradgrind stumbles upon a group of children peeping through a fence into the fantasy world of Sleary's Circus.

...what did he then behold but his own metallurgical Louisa peeping with all her might through a hole in a deal board, and his own mathematical Thomas abasing himself on the ground to catch but a hoof of the graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower-act! (bk.I, chap.III)

Mr. Gradgrind represents the dry, dehumanized world of "Fact" and envisions the function of education as the implantation of bare, useless trivia, which is totally devoid of any depth of imagination. When his students, for instance, hear of a cow, they associate it not with the one which swallowed Tom Thumb, but with a "graminivorous ruminating quadruped with several stomachs." Sleary's Circus, on the other hand, represents the world of energetic imagination, and here, consequently, we find the majority of
Dickens's highly imaginative prose: the subject and style coincide in order to produce a world of fantasy. Mr. Sleary himself is an excellent example of the type of world in which he lives. He speaks with a concretized lisp and remains in a sort of nebulous state; neither sober nor drunk: "Thquire! ...Your servant! Thith ith a bad pie the of bithnith, thith ith. You've heard of my clown and hith dog being thuppothed to have morrithed?"(bk.I,chap.VI) The world of Sleary's Circus contains an imaginativeness which is typical of Dickens's grotesque description: it is a distancing device which separates the reader and certain characters apart from the world of reality and "fact" which Gradgrind represents.

The dualism begins to break down, though, when Dickens spoils the "factual" side of Gradgrind. In his efforts to portray the mere "factual" reality of Gradgrind's world, he carries his descriptions to such an extreme that the reality soon becomes an unreality, or better yet, it becomes too real. He exaggerates the realism to the point where it becomes grotesque, and he creates inadvertently another distancing element. The dry "factual" reality of Gradgrind's world, which is supposed to counteract the imaginativeness of Sleary's Circus, unfortunately complements it, and defeats the purpose of the dualism in the first place: to portray the tension between "fact" and fancy. We observe Dickens's exuberant imagination intruding into the world of "fact" from the very first page, when he introduces Mr. Gradgrind:

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscor ing every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was
helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had its eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set.... The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely ware-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders--nay, his very neckcloth trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was--all helped the emphasis.

Dickens's imagination obviously chafes at having to describe a figure plainly and matter-of-factly. He controls himself when he describes the speaker's mouth and voice, yet when he arrives at the bald head we immediately see the distortions and unnaturalness of grotesque description: he likens the head to a "plantation of firs" and a "plum pie." He also emphasizes the squareness to such an extent that Mr. Gradgrind appears as a gigantic block of granite or statue. Dickens cannot adhere to the dry realism which the nature of Gradgrind's world calls for, and he is thus unsuccessful in creating a logical dualism; in a sense, the two worlds in the novel complement one another, for they each arouse sensations of fantasy and unreality.

One of the more successful dualisms occurs in Great Expectations. We observe it, for instance, in the life of Mr. Wemmick, Mr. Jaggers' clerk. Wemmick actually lives in two entirely separate worlds: the world of the business office and
the world of home. When he is at the office, Wemmick carries out his duties in a regular fashion and with a regular obedience to Mr. Jagger's demands. His home, though, is just the opposite of normalcy. For in his free time, Mr. Wemmick has turned his small cottage into a mock castle: he has installed a four-feet-long drawbridge, a flagstaff with a real flag, a small cannon protected from the rain by an umbrella, provisions of food, arboreal retreats with fountains, and a fake battery mounted with guns. Wemmick prizes the fantasy existence of his home and refuses demonstrably to intermix it with his life in the business world.

No; the office is one thing, and private life is another. When I go into the office, I leave the Castle behind me, and when I come into the Castle, I leave the office behind me. If it's not in any way disagreeable to you, you'll oblige me by doing the same. I don't wish it professionally spoken about.

(chap.XXV)

And we find the same dualism between Miss Havisham's sitting room and the chamber of the gruesome feast. The whole of Satis House has an atmosphere of fairy tale about it: it is a timeless world, struck still one morning at twenty minutes to nine. Yet Dickens concentrates most of the actual grotesque description in the dark room of the wedding feast. Here, among the dank cobwebs and the mice-infected cake, Pip seems like a small child trapped in a witch's house as he guides Miss Havisham around in her wheelchair. In the sitting room, on the other hand, Miss Havisham demonstrates a very real obsession with
revenge. She questions Pip vindictively:

"What do I touch?"
"Your heart."
"Broken!"

(chap. VIII)

She sets a malign trap for Pip by cultivating an indifference toward men in the beautiful Estella; she moulds many of Pip's values and the directions he will take in his future, and worst of all she builds in him many damaging and empty "expectations." The structural dualism in the worlds of Miss Havisham and Mr. Wemmick illustrate the decreased effectiveness of the grotesque as a distancing device. We no longer feel safe from the temporal and threatening real world of the novels, because we must face the complicities of Jagger's office and Miss Havisham's psychological corruption. This world instills in us a much greater fear of ourselves and society than did ever the fantasy worlds of Pagin, Quilp, and Squeers.

Dickens's last and, in many ways, his darkest novel, Edwin Drood, combines the tainted grotesque and the structural dualism in the character of John Jasper. Jasper is very similar to a Jekyll and Hyde figure. We observe a mingling of fantasy and reality as he moves back and forth between the respectable public self of Cloisterham and the exotic private self of the Limehouse den, between the states of rationality and the states of opium-fed dreams. In the first chapter, for instance, Jasper slowly wakes in the close, smoke-filled opium den and gazes, still dreaming, out of the window:

...How can the ancient English tower be here! ...What is the spike that intervenes, and who has set it up? Maybe it is set up by the Sultan's orders for the
impaling of a horde of Turkish robbers, one by one. It is so, for cymbals clash and the Sultan goes by to his palace in long procession. Ten thousand scimitars flash in the sunlight, and thrice ten thousand dancing-girls strew flowers.

He then pays his money and proceeds quickly to his place as choirmaster in Cloisterham cathedral: "The choir are getting on their sullied white robes, in a hurry, when he arrives among them, gets on his own robe, and falls into the procession filing into service."

Initially, Jasper's movements between fantasy and reality appear as a parallel to Mr. Wemmick's definite separation of his mock castle and Jagger's office. But the grotesque fantasy of the opium den is essentially much different than the grotesque which we have seen before, and it creates, I think, the novel's heavy tone of darkness. Dickens is not actually using the grotesque description as a literary device in order to distance the reader from reality, for the fantastical nature of Jasper's dreams are derived from a self-inflicted corruption of the mind. His dreams are, in a sense, an extension of his psychological state of madness. Jasper's passion in his evil designs is foreshadowed by Bradley Headstone in Our Mutual Friend. The following passage illustrates the self-induced torment which both men experience, though in different ways:

The state of the man was murderous, and he knew it. More; he irritated it, with a kind of perverse pleasure akin to that which a sick man sometimes has in irritating a wound upon his body. Tied
up all day with his disciplined show upon him, subdued to the performance of his routine of educational tricks, encircled by a gabbling crowd, he broke loose at night like an ill-tamed wild animal.

(chap. XLIV)

The grotesque nature of the opium den and Jasper's dreams reflect the reality of his irritating madness. The grotesque, thus, no longer functions to soften the threats of evil but has dramatically reversed itself into an agonizing purveyor of the dangers of reality. The sensation is quite distant from the fairy tale worlds of Fagin's den and Quilp's hut, and it demonstrates Dickens's mature darkness of vision.

The developments of the grotesque throughout Dickens's novels are very similar to major changes in British literature of the nineteenth century. Dickens's early use of the grotesque is closely connected to Carlyle's use of clothes in Sartor Resartus and also Browning's device of the dramatic monologue. In each case the authors attempted to delay, in a sense, a direct confrontation with stark reality. The speaker in "My Last Duchess," for instance, has an appeal despite his hypocrisy and smugness. Characters tend to be highly fictive; their fantastical descriptions give them a sense of unreality. The very intense industrial growth and "advances" of the British society, though, brought great changes in authors' visions. The new important role of the train in society, which Dickens introduces in Dombey and Son, influenced a rising concern in the literary world about the danger of impersonal and uncontrollable forces subjugating
men and women to colorless, unimaginative, and dehumanized beings. Writers saw the necessity of a new response to the demands of reality, and they thus further developed the device of symbolism in order to better portray the essential qualities of reality. Hardy is probably the best example of this new outlook: all of his works contain an extraordinary amount of pathetic fallacy, e.g., the opening paragraphs of Return of the Native and the descriptions of Egdon Heath. The gradual movement from a heavy reliance on the grotesque to an important use of symbolism was long and involved many writers in the nineteenth century. Much of Dickens's greatness lies in the fact that he was the one literary figure who incorporated all of these changes. He was the leading social critic of his time, and his keen imaginative eye responded to the harrowing changes. The gradual decrease of the grotesque as a distancing device, and its final reversal in Edwin Drood to an exemplar of social evils, meant a loss of humor and deep darkness of vision in Dickens; at the same time it meant a sympathetic and responsible examination of reality and a distinct maturity.
Footnotes


3 Miller, p. 89.


6 Clayborough, p. 208 n.


8 Clayborough, p. 221.

9 Miller, p. 97.

10 Miller, p. 97.


13 Van Ghent, p. 28.


16 Marcus, p. 47.


18 Manning, p. 42.

19 Manning, p. 42.

20 Marcus, p. 51.

21 Marcus, p. 36.

24 Marcus, p. 152.

25 Marcus, p. 142.

26 Marcus, p. 142.

27 Marcus, p. 146.

28 Marcus, p. 146.

29 Marcus, p. 157.

30 Marcus, pp. 157-158.

31 Clayborough, p. 218.

32 Cockshut, p. 21.

33 Cockshut, pp. 17-18.

34 Cockshut, p. 104.

35 Lucas, p. 203.


37 Cockshut, p. 180.

38 Cockshut, p. 149.

39 Cockshut, p. 149.


Bibliography


