

GROTESQUE COMPONENTS IN CHARLES DICKENS' *TO BE TAKEN WITH A GRAIN OF SALT* AND MARY ELIZABETH BRADDON'S *EVELINE'S VISITANT*

Suhair Fuaad Hajo

Department of English, College of Languages and Human Sciences
University of Garmian, Iraq
E-mail: suhair.fuaad@garmian.edu.krd

Received: 2023-04-16

Accepted: 2023-06-08

Published: 2023-06-30

Abstract

This paper attempts to define the grotesque and its primary literary features before examining the grotesque components in two Victorian authors' works with the goal of separating their approaches to the grotesque based on gender. The most well-known novelist of the Victorian era, Charles Dickens will be one of the authors covered in this paper through his story *To be Taken with a Grain of Salt*, and the other one is Mary Elizabeth Braddon's story *Eveline's Visitant*. Dickens and Braddon particularly make use of the grotesque elements to convey their ideas and ideals through satire, comedy, tragedy, suspense, and a sense of fear, gloom, and obscurity. The research results show that both tales can be regarded as significant Victorian grotesque literature since they share, in various ways, elements of the grotesque notion. The real meaning of the grotesque is only exposed by itself-contradictory nature with the opposite, which is in this sense the ideal. Both stories are based on the main contrast between the spiritual and material worlds. They attempt to persuade us that there is yet another mysterious force that, despite the efforts to conceal it in the physical world, it exposes human wrongdoing. Thus, abnormal human beings, ghostly figures, and terrifying events will be detected through which grotesque elements are found.

Keywords: *ghost; grotesque; satire; story; suspense; Victorian literature*

1. Introduction

Fascinating and rousing the reader's emotional appeal in many subject matters have made fiction popular among readers all over the world. A ghost that has a punishing purpose has truly been presented in various literary texts by eminent authors, although currently this conviction is not extensively a received ideology. Grotesque is one of the distinguished genres in Victorian literature. It demonstrates the Victorians' fascination with the supernatural, revolting against the impressive growth of industrialization and the mysterious spheres of progressing technology. Generally speaking, the term 'grotesque' means the intrusion of a strange, unusual, and terrifying object, whether human or animal, into the usual context of life. In fact, individuals avoid looking at figures with such shapes since they induce anxiety and throbbing. Yet, we are excited to read, experience, and feel the artistic

pleasure of the attractive ugliness of a grotesque story. It can be called attractive ugliness because it disputes our standards and beliefs about the appropriate order with inharmonious elements by compelling us to discover what is beyond the capacity of human explanation.

In this study, the researcher explains the grotesque and its main characteristics in literature, then this study is to examine the elements of the grotesque in two Victorian writers' stories, aiming at the same time to differentiate between their treatments of the grotesque according to their genders. One of the authors that will be dealt with in this paper is Charles Dickens, the most prominent writer of the Victorian era. Frequently, there has been a great tendency to define most of his works as grotesque texts due to the familiar features they share. In this context, the other writer is Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835–1915), whose literary works remained relatively unknown and undiscovered for nearly a century.

Dickens's story intended to explore in this essay is *To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt* (1865/1911). It is about a man who is selected as a foreman for jury duty. Frequently, he meets the murdered man's ghost on different occasions, watching the progress of the trial until his murderer is declared guilty, then he disappears. The other story is Mary E. Braddon's *Eveline's Visitant* (1867/1998). It goes around the story of Hector, who kills his cousin, André, in a duel over a woman. André vows to avenge, haunt, and disturb his killer in his dearest moments. Hector ignores the threat, and he marries a beautiful young woman who changes his miserable life. Shockingly, André's ghost carries out his oath and haunts her until she dies.

Both selected stories involve the appearance of a ghost seeking revenge for its death. However, while the ghost in Dickens's tale is not harmful and seeks justice, the ghost in Mary E. Braddon's fiction might be seen as destructive; it leads to *Eveline's death*. The particular stories allow the grotesque to figure notably.

2. Literature Review

The term grotesque has been a central feature of some well-known Victorian writers' works. It is not necessary to investigate far into the matter to locate the chief influences of Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* (1963/1981) and Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1962/2009). In fact, these works in one way or another tried to dramatize the apprehension within the notion of how the grotesque can be a combination of structure and tragedy. Kayser, after delineating the objectively deductive and definable factors in the grotesque, concludes that the grotesque is *An Attempt to Invoke and Subdue the Demonic Aspects of the World* (qtd. in Steig, 1962: 168) The real effect of the grotesque is "a secret liberation. The darkness has been sighted, the ominous powers discovered, and the incomprehensible forces challenged" (ibid. 168). Thus, the writer of the grotesque encapsulates the world at a time when the encircling reality has begun to break up. It might be viewed as a transitional instant that can be associated with the qualities of vision.

Delbaere-Garant (1995) states that grotesque elements are used to exaggerate and alter reality to be more convincing. Besides, it describes any kind of "hyperbolic distortion" that forms a sense of peculiarity through the confusion of the interpenetration of dissimilar spheres (249–263). Apparently, it depends upon the writer's beliefs as well as the reader's approach to the work. For instance, for some people with a certain religious belief, this distortion of the actual realm of the universe might not be well accepted, so it is a problematic matter that needs to be taken into consideration. Bakhtin (2009) emphasizes that debasing an object does not necessarily mean simply hurling it into nothingness, which

is complete obliteration, but rather hurling it along to a creature of a minor level. Bakhtin (2009) provides us with a further insightful explanation of his principle by stating that the dreadful conditions subordinate and reason the "high, spiritual, ideal, abstract"; it is a shift to the secular realm, which is the region of earth and body in their permanent union. He goes on to declare that the grotesque reproduces a phenomenon in transformation that he describes as an unfinished metamorphosis of death and birth, growth, and becoming (qtd. in Cai, 2004, 17). Consequently, if the spirit of the dead returns or appears, it can be considered a transformation and, at the same time, a degradation of the person's reality. Particularly, the ghosts of some murdered characters in the story match the earlier explanation of unfinished metamorphosis.

Steig (1969:169) illustrates Kayser's grotesque as being characterized by the strange interweave, particularly in the overstated or unusual portrayal of natural humanistic qualities. Meaning that the author is deliberately distorting the ordinary and accepted features of the characters in order to go with his intended message. Naturally, human qualities encapsulate mental (psychological) and physical characteristics. Cuddon (1998) defines the grotesque as "the ridiculous, bizarre, extravagant, freakish, and unnatural; aberrations from the desirable norms of harmony, balance, and proportion." (367) From his point of view, writers utilize the grotesque for comical and satirical functions. He adds that its factors can be found in "caricature, parody, satire, invective, burlesque, black comedy, the macabre, and what is known as the theater of the absurd" (368).

Perhaps some democratic organizations, such as freedom of speech and publishing, had, in some way, power over the grotesque. Hollington (1984) explains Bakhtin's articulation of the grotesque as "ambivalent and contradictory... ugly, monstrous, hideous from the point of view of 'classic' aesthetics, that is, the aesthetics of the ready-made and the completed" (5). Hence, the strange quality of the grotesque, as some critics think, is the source of the distortion of the art form of the literary work. Others, on the other hand, relate the bizarre combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar to a formal linguistic device. For instance, Thomson in *The Grotesque* (1972) asserts that the role of the grotesque in the text is based on tension. Illustrating that, it is a fusion of horrifying and humorous, pleasure and revulsion, laughter and shock, delight, and revulsion, all at the same time. Since the reader's responses show a significant discrepancy: some experience it as amusement, while others consider it to be disgusting and abnormal, he affirms that the grotesque is "the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response" (22–24). That means the unsettled conflict in form and meaning between, for instance, material and supernatural, gaiety and pity, reason and folly, ugliness, and beauty, and the animal and the divine. Almost all of these kinds of oppositions in the text develop a sort of tension and conflict along the story and simultaneously create complexity around the work that is not always solved. Moreover, it is not a condition for readers to have the same manner of responding to the grotesque form in the same work; what is comic for some may be sympathy for others and vice versa.

Thomson breaks up the effect and function of using the grotesque in literary works as aggressiveness, alienation, psychological tension, insolvability, and playfulness. He points out that since the grotesque creates an unexpected shock for readers, it employs violence as a weapon and is notably found in satire and parody. Alienation happens when the normal suddenly becomes immoral. The psychological effect is the doubt readers have about their feelings towards the grotesque, whether laughter, fear, or scarring. As a result, readers get confused about the mood of the story—whether it is comic or horror—and this creates

tension. While playfulness refers to certain stories in which the grotesque is for entertainment purposes only, like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (58–65),

Therefore, based on the previous definitions, grotesque might simply be defined as the combination of conventionalized structured form, thought, and character in literature aware of the uncanny and bizarre on the one hand and the humorous and disgusting on the other. Hence, to understand the grotesque more precisely, it is significant to examine its elements in some Victorian writers' stories; *To be Taken with a Grain of Salt* (1865/1911) and *Eveline's Visitant* (1867/1998) were chosen as two examples of grotesque fiction.

3. Research Method

The preparation of this paper has entailed close reading and in-depth analysis of the selected novels to by Dickens's *To be Taken with a Grain of Salt* (1865/1911) and Braddon's *Eveline's Visitant* (1867/1998). The essay is a qualitative one regarding the meaning of grotesque and its application in the novels. However, the two writers have been chosen for the discussion as they are prominent in the grotesque stories. Both stories, in different ways, share features of the grotesque, and both can be categorized as meaningful Victorian grotesque texts. In general, they intend to convince us there is one more unfamiliar and obscure power that uncovers human misdeeds even though they try to hide them in the physical world.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Abnormal Human Beings

In both stories, the writers introduce different kinds of characters that can be categorized as either abnormal humans or ghosts. Physical and mental deformities are two types of abnormal human behaviour. Nettles (1974) proves that in grotesque fiction, abnormal characters are of two sorts: physical and mental. In both cases, they provoke either sympathy, disgust, or both. He emphatically asserts that the character who only arouses disgust is mostly a villain (148).

Like his other fiction, Dickens presents in *To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt* (1865/1911) all the previously mentioned variety of characters, each of whom matches a specific goal in his story. For instance, he describes the murderer as having an "evil countenance" (298), while the murdered man is 'young' and his face is not "drained of blood" (296). In most of his accounts, the physical descriptions are the outward indications of the character's spiritual meanings. Braddon as well describes the killer in her story *Eveline's Visitant* (1867/1998) as being ugly and dreadful with a "dark visage and stern of manner" (119), which no one likes to be with, whereas her victim is young, handsome, and has a "womanish face" (117). In both stories, the killers are demeaned with inhuman features since their actions are far from humane and extremely cruel. For that reason, the victims' observations refer to a state, whatever their deeds, of blamelessness. Thus, the grotesque in Dickens and Braddon's story partly echoes through the distasteful remarks of the antagonists' evilness; moreover, the disgusting qualities of the murderers in the stories fit them into the grotesque characters.

Noticeably, in the stories, the narrators declare the characters' problematic mental states, which resulted in their loneliness. Dickens's protagonist admits, "I was not well...feeling jaded, having a depressing sense upon me of a monotonous life, and being 'slightly dyspeptic'. I am assured by my renowned doctor that my real state of health at that time justifies no stronger description" (287). The narrator himself has a peculiar supernatural

kind of power; he is the only person who sees the ghost visibly and understands its gestures, which distinguishes him from the rest. He becomes alienated from his surroundings in the sense that he has not shared his strange familiarity with the ghost with anybody. In Braddon's story, the killer, Hector, is a former soldier, and he admits that killing became something ordinary to him since he ended the lives of many people in the war. In addition, Hector's psychological problem has its roots in his early childhood, when his mother ignored him and did not show him any "look of affection; further, no woman had ever loved him (119). Therefore, he has grown detestable to himself and his fellow individuals, especially his cousin André, whom he consequently kills. The characters' mindsets reveal a lot about the grotesque personalities in the stories.

Dickens (1911) does not bring to a close any accounts of the murderer's life; therefore, it is not easy to wrap up any expectations about his psychological state or his motive behind the murder. Hence, we can assume that Dickens's motive for doing so is to keep as much distance from the criminal as possible to avoid sympathy. Braddon, on the other hand, in one way or another justifies Hector's deed by depicting his physical ugliness and psychological complexes. Accordingly, the reader feels empathy for him, but it is the kind that is covered with disgust. Nevertheless, the grotesque features of the characters in the stories ground their alienation from society and normal life in general.

4.2 Ghostly Figures

The other element of the grotesque found in Dickens and Braddon's selected stories is the appearance of ghosts. Novak (1979) asserts that the reproduction of ghosts from the dead is one of the powerful elements of the grotesque (50). Both stories involve the subject of a murdered man's spirit coming to the material world for revenge, yet each writer deals with it differently.

In *To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt* (1865/1911), the ghost is harmless and merely asks for justice for his murder. It appears to the narrator on different occasions and in different places outside and inside the house. The scene of the ghost's appearance, depending on the earlier definitions, adds a sense of fantasy to the plot, for it compels the seer and makes him have difficulty escaping because he partly wants to do so. The narrator follows the ghost without any fear; "With no longer pause than was made by my crossing the bedroom, I opened the dressing-room door and looked in" (288). Until the end of the story, he is the only one who perceives it as reality.

On the contrary, the ghost in *Eveline's Visitant* (1867/1998) seeks revenge in harmful ways. "He will not let me be at peace," she said. "He comes between us, Hector. He is standing between us now" (124). Although it does not attack the victim, Eveline, physically, it leads to her death in addition to making her fall in love with him. "I found myself thinking of him and watching for his coming; life seemed dreary and desolate without him" (124). It haunts and places itself between Eveline and her husband, Hector. The ghost, which is in this context the unknown force, emerges upon the familiar world and rouses the fear that is alienating it from her. She gradually loses her physical beauty and becomes isolated; Eveline becomes compulsive toward the intruder and partially accepts his presence, but only as a lover. Falling in love with a ghost is an abnormal affair, which by itself has a grotesque quality.

Noticeably, Braddon paves the way for the emergence of André's ghost; for evident moments before his death, André threatens Hector that he will haunt him and stand in the way of his happiness (117–118). Thus, readers will accept this manifestation as part of their

world or the world that the author introduces in the fiction. Dickens, on the other hand, engages the reader in the world of the grotesque in different manners. First, he creates the atmosphere, which will be dealt with later. Secondly, he describes the ghost as having a human quality by having "the color of impure wax" (Henderson, 2009, 287). Thirdly, he is not as sinister as other ghosts; he is rational and looking for impartiality, revealing defects in the defence's argument, and keeping an eye on his court's records to be sure the killer is proven guilty. That shows Dickens's ability in combining the two worlds: the supernatural and the real, in his work. The appearance of the ghost makes the grotesque very powerful in Dickens and Braddon's stories. They present the supernatural in such a realistic way that they convince the reader that the grotesque world is real and part of our world.

4.3 Sinister Atmosphere

Much of the grotesque can be revealed from the atmosphere of the work. It is one of the tools of creating the world in fiction and at the same time helps in stirring reader's feelings. Timm (1972: 79) states, "The appropriate background for a grotesque work is one of darkness and obscurity, suggesting something ominous or sinister beneath a brighter and rationally organized world." For that reason, light, shadow, colour and sound with their differences or concurrences increase and step up readers grasp to the grounded mood of the story.

Dickens skilfully wraps up together strange elements in order to create the suitable atmosphere for initiating the supernatural realm in his story. He describes the surrounding as "It was a bright autumn morning, and the street was sparkling and cheerful. The wind was high. As I looked out, it brought down from the Park a quantity of fallen leaves, which a gust took, and whirled into a spiral pillar" (286). Likewise, he repeatedly uses certain ominous terms and phrases. These employ to enforce a sense of horror and sinister, for instance night, dark, and black beside loud sound. In this fashion, Dickens is able to compel his reader to follow anxiously the sequences of the story.

Similarly, in *Eveline's Visitant* (1867/1998), the author generates a grotesque environment by describing the setting. The place Eveline fascinated and used to walk off, where the ghost first appears is portrayed as "some old neglected rock-work that forms a kind of cavern" (121). The above spot through its oldness, neglected with caves illustrates a dominant feature of grotesque since it creates a sense of lifelessness and alarm. It can be assumed that Braddon through this atmosphere intends to reflect Eveline's psychological state. Braddon, like Dickens, employs some words and phrases to strengthen the sense of depressed, shady and dreary in the story, such as the recurrence of dismal, gloomy, melancholy, sadness, dark, blood and death. Thus, the background and setting of the story by different means unveil the grotesqueness of story.

4.4 Terrifying Events

Grotesque writings mostly deal with some sort of event that attaches horrors and terrors to the text. In this essay, I will handle the two more popular ones found in *To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt* and *Eveline's Visitant*. The grotesque events that are found in the selected stories are supernatural events like visions or unexplained supernatural manifestations and violent events like quarrels, murder, and other bloody scenes. As said by Timm (1972), the supernatural event demonstrates itself in a grotesque narrative like "a world-vision", however of a different type. It is the sort of world in which the usual, ordinary principles and associations among things turn out to be undermined by the illogical and the

bizarre. He emphasized a significant distinction between fairy tales and fantasy with the grotesque. Along with him, the two formers are in an invented world by the author, and the reader is conscious of it from the early beginning of the tale, while the grotesque writer depicts it as "a man's world, from which he suddenly becomes estranged" (79).

In Dickens's story, many strange events qualify the work as grotesque, but the most noteworthy one is the one that the narrator experiences after reading about the murder in the newspaper. He explains that something unordinary happened to him:

I was aware of a flash, rush, flow—I do not know what to call it; no word I can find is satisfactorily descriptive—in which I seemed to see that bedroom passing through my room like a picture impossibly painted on a running river. Though almost instantaneous in its passing, it was clear; so clear that I distinctly, and with a sense of relief, observed the absence of the dead body from the bed (Dickens, 1865/1911, 285).

As a great author, Dickens here creates the grotesque by capturing the world at an instance when the immediate reality has started to collapse and become just like a dream but in our day-to-day reality. On another occasion, he introduces a strange and sinister realm in which the surroundings change abruptly to obscure. That happens when the church clocks strike, and exactly at that moment, he is discovering a mysterious difficulty in counting his jurymen colleagues, which always makes them "one too many" (Dickens, 1865/1911, 295). This incident foreshadows the ghostly coming of the murdered man to court. Although the man was killed, Dickens does not provide us with any description of the violent act except on one occasion during the trial, when it is assumed that the murdered man was slaughtered. It means that there was a violent event before the narration started, but the effect is still there, which forms a grotesque image.

While Braddon in *Eveline's Visitant* does not introduce a strong supernatural event like that created by Dickens, some extraordinary happenings have a grotesque effect. For instance, while he was dying, André declared that he does not believe in death as the end of man's ability to walk around or come back, besides the fact that he made a vow to have revenge for ending his life at such an early age. To the reader's shock, his ghost comes back and seeks to avenge him. Since it is thorny and disbelief-inspiring, Braddon introduces the returned figure wearing the same clothes he was wearing at the time of the duel and in the picture hanging in his library. Therefore, the two worlds, after and before André's transformation into an undetectable being, are yoked yet distinct. In another instance, Braddon used a grotesque facet to reduce Eveline to a lifeless being by linking her features to André's dead ones. For instance, Hector described his cousin's look when he is dying as first becoming crimson because of the scar and then becoming pale and lifeless. In an astonishing turn of events, he notices all these disturbing changes in his wife's face. "To my wonderment, her pale face became a sudden crimson, and from crimson, it changed to pale again in a breath" (122). In a glimpse, Braddon can depart from the natural order of human beings to turn out to be a strange, ominous, living, yet lifeless thing estranged from existence, and then bring her back into normality again. Thus, the scene becomes like a vision for Hector, but he experiences it in reality, which is the world of the story rather than in an invented fancy world. Although the grotesque nature of the scene might not be so obvious to some readers, its obscurity puts it in the grotesque category.

The violent death in *Eveline's Visitant* is described in detail, so it increases the reader's terror and disgust, besides the shock. Hector fights with André, his cousin,

outwardly over a woman. Hector brutally strikes him and wounds him mortally. To a certain degree, the main motive behind Hector's action reveals itself later in the story when he, on more than one occasion, declares that André was handsome, young, rich, and a women's attractor. Such a kind of aggression, which in Hector's case was both physical and mental (jealousy), can be considered a grotesque act as far as an abnormality is concerned. Hector, the psychologically unbalanced man blinded by jealousy, fell to the lowest possible stage of losing humanity by committing the murder act.

Both the extraordinary and the vicious events reinforce the story's mood of terror and fantasy. Creatively, each writer of the stories can produce these elements and convince readers of their presence.

4.5 Dark Humour

One of the main characteristics of grotesque work is the uncovered humour. Thomson (1972) insists that the text cannot be considered grotesque if it lacks a comic element, though sometimes the humour might be doubtful and refuted by rational afterthought. He adds that the main purpose of this comic factor is to subdue and allay the anxiety, fear, and tension of the grotesque (50–53).

In *To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt* (1865/1911), Dickens's comic element, although by no means obvious, can be considered a sort of dark humour to the point of the grotesque. For example, during the trial in court, it is suggested that the departed could have committed suicide by cutting his own throat. Only then does the ghost start:

with its throat in the dreadful condition referred to (this it had concealed before), stood at the speaker's elbow, motioning across and across its windpipe, now with the right hand, now with the left, vigorously suggesting to the speaker himself the impossibility of such a wound having been self-inflicted by either hand. (Dickens, 1865/1911, 297-298)

This situation, if it is imagined well, is a peculiar fusion of the comic and the scary, which Dickens is skilled at. The author here writes as if he asks us to laugh at the ghost he wants us to have sympathy for. In one more incident, Dickens introduces a comical scene with a different purpose: when a witness woman assigns childish innocence features to the criminal. Immediately, the figure identifies the criminal's "evil countenance with an extended arm and an outstretched finger" (298). Depending on an earlier definition of the grotesque, our sense of the humorous arises at a moment when the ghost suddenly changes from pathetic to funny. Dickens tries to convince and confront us more cunningly, but the figure of the ghost by itself is disgusting nonetheless, an overly exaggerated shape that creates a very nauseating feeling. To discover what can make up the amusement and produce the revulsion in Dickens's story, one needs to dig deep and focus.

In *Eveline's Visitant* (1867/1998), the comic is more hideous in action but seems to be in speech instead; this kind of humour does not seem only ridiculous but rouses anger and disdain. When Eveline informs her husband, Hector, about the strange figure she meets every day, he smiles and says the person "is only a phantasm of your romantic brain" (121). Feeling his ridiculous attitude, she goes into silence, along with apparent physical and spiritual decline. Noticing this, he asks her about "her mysterious cavalier of the wood" (122). Since the writer, Mary E. Braddon, is a female writer, her presentation of the comic element is distinct from the former, Charles Dickens. For the first passage, readers might laugh, but a doubtful one that is mixed with nervousness and doubtful about whether it is

comic or serious, exist or madness. However, on the second occasion, after being familiar with the ghost's existence and Eveline's state, it provokes the reader's annoyance or anger toward Hector and sympathy for Eveline, yet simultaneously. Hector is coolly mocking her while she is dying from fear, or maybe love, or even some spiritual problems that are still ambiguous and will lead to her death. To all intents and purposes, in both cases, it shows Hector's sense of superiority by fooling his wife and denying what she thinks. Therefore, Braddon skilfully mediated her message to us by allying anger and hatred with humour.

4.6 Conflicts of the incompatibles and the writer's purpose

The real meaning of the grotesque is only exposed by its self-contradictory nature with the opposite, which is in this sense the ideal. Both stories are based on the main contrast between the spiritual and material worlds. The writer's intention is revealed when the tension is analyzed. In Victorian society, according to Smajic (2003), the growth of the new technologies of forensic science and methods of surveillance reinforced the culture's belief in the legibility of visual signifiers, which was rooted in Victorian detective fiction. The detective fictions, besides some other discourses on vision, were influential ideological means in the creation and propagation of particular beliefs, facts, and realities (1109).

As a result, Dickens, as a social Victorian writer, provides a radically different perspective than Braddon. Dickens gives the impression that there is confusion between the instinctive belief in what the narrator sees and the worrying fact that vision is commonly defective and undependable. He brings the supernatural realm into view. Knowing that the English justice system would likely mess up the case and let the murderer go free, he mostly yearns for exposing that the supernatural and extraneous are the only means for keeping justice in an English court. Thus, *To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt* shows the other part of reality or the material world, which is the spiritual realm, which is considered the opposite but, as it proved, is complementary and gives a sense of wholeness to life. Moreover, since Dickens wrote a collection of supernatural and ghost stories nearly every Christmas, it can be said that, by utilizing grotesque elements, he partly intended to entertain his readers. Likewise, Braddon's *Evelin's Visitant* is based on the tension between the supernatural and material worlds. She generates the juxtaposition in her story through the coincident existence of the mysterious and material realms of the visible and invisible. The traditional outlook was that a ghost appeared because of a wrong committed in the past. Accordingly, Braddon's ghost is a real spirit. Henderson (2009) argues that the Victorian dogma of femininity was that the wife has to offer moral influence over her husband, and the conventional ideologies of masculinity were that the husband is supposed to provide security for his household (66). Therefore, as a Victorian female writer, Braddon can challenge the traditional Victorian view of women as angels in the home and men as superior figures. She depicts Eveline as the Victorian ideal woman by provoking others' affections as well as arousing others' kindness towards Hector. Hence, Hector confirms his responsibility as a husband by surrounding Eveline with high walls. The moat is ten feet wide and always full of water, and the gates are kept locked day and night by old Massou" (122), like a castle with many servants to protect her. He secures her physically in the material world, unaware that there is another hidden power in the world, a supernatural power that is difficult to control by a human being. Braddon (1998) shows how a female's innocence supplies a man's redemption while a man's past sin is the source of a woman's damnation; Eveline changed her husband's life to better form by making the villagers reform their past attitude towards him, while in return his past crime led to her death. Through grotesque

elements, she can prove that there is no real closure, shield, or ultimate encapsulation of a secret.

5. Conclusion

Consistent with what has been done, it is obvious that the grotesque factors are notably employed by Dickens and Braddon to create a sense of terror, gloom, obscurity, satire, comics, tragedy, and suspense simultaneously to illustrate their concepts and beliefs. Dickens's story is nimbler than Braddon's, and he displays various grotesque features. In addition, the ghost in his story is calm and kind, more to the point that it does not intend to hurt but seeks justice; though it affects the narrator, it becomes alien and does not desire to share the experience with others. Dickens's sense of humour goes parallel with the experiences of fear and terror in the story; it lessens the reader's anxiety. The story has a resolution; the figure disappears when the criminal is proven guilty and justice is established. The underlying message of *To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt* is that it is not always adequate to depend only on the material side to maintain fairness. Even though there are developmental techniques and technology in all the spheres of life, maybe the need to explore the obscure sphere is significant to accomplish wholeness.

In Braddon's *Eveline's Visitant*, from the early beginning, it gives the reader the impression of gloominess and violence. It seems darker than *To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt*; however, she creates many rooms for grotesque elements in her story. The supernatural figure in her story is haunting, intending harm and disturbance. She explores man's dark side, for example, in Hector's jealousy and meanness and André's weakness. By combining the bizarre and unusual with the familiar in the story, she can strengthen her points. As a female writer, she employs grotesque features to demonstrate the fact and the limitation of Victorian traditional ideologies about gender roles. Eveline, due to her husband's past wrongs, deviated from the ideal image her husband and society put up for her; she fell in love with André's ghost. Hector, on the other hand, fails to protect his wife as he should, according to Victorian beliefs about husbands. The tragic death of Eveline is a very powerful grotesque element in the story; it arouses the reader's fear and sympathy at the same time. Therefore, both stories, in different ways, share features of the grotesque, and both can be categorized as meaningful Victorian grotesque texts. In general, they intend to convince us there is one more unfamiliar and obscure power that uncovers human misdeeds, even though they try to hide them in the physical world.

References

- Bakhtin, M. (2009). *Rabelais and his world*. Trans. Indiana University Press.
- Braddon, M. E. (1998). *Eveline's visitant*. In H. D. Jump, & H. D. Jump (Ed.), *Nineteenth-century Short Stories by Women: A Routledge Anthology* (pp. 117-125). Routledge.
- Cai, D. M. (2004). McDonald's: Grotesque method and the metamorphosis of the three sphere McDonald's, McDonaldland, and McDonaldization. *Metamorphosis Journal* 3(1), 15-33.
- Cuddon, J. A. (1998). *The penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. Blackwcll Publishcrs.
- Delbaere-Garant, J. (1995). Variations on Magical Realism. In L. P. Faris (Ed.), *Magical Realism Theory, History, Community* (pp. 249-263). Duke U.P.
- Dickens, C. (1911). *To be taken with a grain of salt*. In A. L. Gowans, & A. L. Gowans (Eds.), *The Twelve Best Tales by English Writers* (pp. 281-302). Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

- Henderson, K. L. (2009). *Making room: British women writers, social change, and the short story, 1850--1940*. IProQuest LLC.
- Hollington, M. (1984). *Dickens and the grotesque*. Croom Helm.
- Kayser, W. J. (1981). *The grotesque in art and literature* (Morningside edition ed.). (U. Weisstein, Trans.) Columbia University Press.
- Nettles, E. (1974). The grotesque in Conrad's fiction. *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 29(2), 144-163.
- Novak, M. E. (1979). Gothic fiction and the grotesque. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 13(1), 50-67.
- Smajic, S. (2003). The trouble with ghost-seeing: vision, ideology, and genre in the Victorian ghost story. *ELH*, 70(4), 1107-1135.
- Steig, M. (1962). The grotesque and the aesthetic response in Shakespeare, Dickens, and Günter grass. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 6(2), 167-181.
- Thomson, P. (1972). *The grotesque*. Arrowsmith.
- Thomson, P. (1972). *The grotesque: The critical idiom*. Methuen.
- Timm, J. T. (1972). A study of the grotesque in Cesário Verde's 'Sentimento dum ocidental'. *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 9(2), 78-86.