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CHARLES DICKENS'S ANALYSIS OF THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION *IN A TALE OF TWO*
CITIES : A CRITICAL STUDY

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DEDICATION

To

My beloved daughter Merveille Founmi

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the social injustices, the suffering and exploitation of the children, the lack of education mainly among the poor and women during the French Revolution. The study of the novel. *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) is full of injustice, not necessarily directed at the source or the motives behind the original suffering. The kernel of the plot is the story of Dr Marnette and his daughter Lucie in parallel with the nature and the fate of the Evrémonde family. The story, told by one of the Jacques as an event in his own life. The death of a regicide uses much of original official report but under Dickens' spell, this is a horror story. The same report used by an historian in more recent times produces only information. Overall Dickens' sympathies are with the poorer folk but he does not show his sympathy as an excuse for their excesses. As satire opens the weaving shed: 1775 and social conditions on both sides of the channel are not encouraging for the future.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

1-1 INTRODUCTION

In the eighteen-fifties, Charles Dickens was interested in the life of children, in their upbringing, in their training, the misery and the poverty of the lower class in England, which provides a reaction on the scale of the French Revolution. Thus in a letter written in 1855, Dickens for example refers to the unrest of the time as follows:

since I believe the discontent to be so much
the worse for smouldering, instead of blazing
openly, that it is extremely like the general mind
of French before the breaking out of the first
revolution, and is in danger of being turned...
into such a devil of a conflagration as never
has been beheld ¹.

At the beginning of *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859, Dickens once again expresses his concern in social problems. The novel opens in 1775, with a comparison on England and pre-revolutionary France. While Dickens drawing parallels between the two countries he alludes to his own time:

The period was so far like the present period,
that some of its noisiest authorities
insisted on its being received, for good or for evil,
in the superlative degree of comparison only².

The rest of the book shows that Dickens regarded the condition to be an "evil" one: "since he depicts both countries as rife with poverty, injustice and violence due to the irresponsibility of the ruling elite³". As the novel unfolds,

¹ Collins, Irene. *Charles Dickens and the French Revolution*. Literature and History 1.1 (1990) P. 42

² Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two cities*, New York Bentham, 1981 P.13

³Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* New York Bentham, 1981 PP. 13-14

however, England becomes a safe haven for those escaping the violence perpetrated by the French Revolution. In this predoctoral dissertation, I am concerned with the social problems in *A Tale of Two Cities* and argue that it reflects the popular confidence in the stability of England in the eighteenth-fifties and make readers realize that the novel is essentially about the French Revolution. That is why I entitle my thesis Charles Dickens's analysis of the French Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The analysis of this topic is made through chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction to the problem. It states the objective of this research work and the importance of the theme under discussion. The second chapter concerns the literature review. It recalls the former researches about the novel. Here, we are going to deal with relationship we can see between the present work and the others.

The third chapter is the historical background. This part will try to show a figure of speech, a literary technique used by Dickens in the novel and an observation on the French Revolution.

The fourth chapter is an overview on *A Tale of Two Cities*. This part will show the social causes and the political convulsion on the French Revolution.

Then, the fifth chapter will present the French Revolution in a popular imagination as depicted by Dickens in the novel. Thus it becomes about the England and English of Dickens's time. If in the nineteenth century the novel served to affirm the stability of Britain, in this century it has been greatly influential in the formation of the popular image of the French Revolution, mainly thanks to film and television adaptations.

1-2- THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In my research work the focus is on the way Dickens captures the extremes of idealism and terror of the revolutionary period of the late 18th

century. While the horrors of the French Revolution have been eclipsed for modern readers by the world wars and genocides of the twentieth century, the terrors of the French Revolution were the horror story of Dickens's time. English society is portrayed as dangerous but not lethal. The injustice of equal treatment for unequal crimes reflects Dickens' ever-present concern with social justice, but it hardly compares with the unrest and injustices in France. *A Tale of Two Cities* is crucial for interpretation of the novel, suggesting that the opposing Cities of Paris and London constitute the true protagonists of the novel, transcending the importance of the main characters.

The French Revolution has been both enthusiastically praised and bitterly. Charles Dickens was a champion of the maltreated poor because of his terrible experience when he was forced to work in a factory as a child. His sympathies, however, lie only up to a point with the revolutionaries; he condemns the mob madness which soon sets in. So Dickens wants his readers to be careful that the same revolution that damaged France will not happen in Britain, which is shown to be nearly as unjust as France.

Then the major problem of the study is: How is this social injustice reflected in Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*?

1-3- THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The reasons accounting for the choice of this topic are: First of all, since my first year in secondary school. I have always been interested in English; not only as a language for poetry or literature but also as a medium for a life communication.

Throughout this work, my intention is to dismantle with this approach of presenting and analyzing a situation of two countries during the French Revolution as antagonists of the society established norms. In fact, it is a comparison between two cities: Paris and England in which Dickens expresses his concern in social problems especially the poor one.

Finally, to look at the popular reception of the novel from the time of its first publication in 1859 to the nineteen-nineties in order to give deeper understanding for the readers.

1-4- THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

What is significant in this project is that Dickens through his novel depicts the plight of the French peasantry demoralized by the French aristocracy in the years leading up to the revolution. The corresponding brutality is demonstrated by the revolutionaries toward the former aristocrats in the early years of the revolution. Many unflattering social parallels with life in London during the same time period. This paper will inform readers to know the social condition in eighteenth century especially during the French Revolution.

1-5- LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This research is limited to Charles Dickens work: *A Tale of Two Cities*. My concern in this research work is the social injustice during the French Revolution as depicted by Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities*. So, I do not have the pretention to cover various themes developed throughout the novel.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

The novel under study has been the concern of many researchers and scholars who dealt with the impact of the French Revolution on the society in England, especially on the lower classes.

In this chapter, I am going to emphasize the image of England during the French Revolution as seen by researchers, scholars and writers so as to state why and how my research work will contribute to existing bibliography.

Many years have now passed since a number of writers, began to transform the traditional picture of Dickens and set in motion a remarkable revival of interest in his work. Well to remark at the outset that this has been pretty much a palace revolution; to the world at large Dickens is still Mr. popular sentiments, and his novels a counpound of high-spirited caricature, rudimentary social protest.

Driven by his own experiences of childhood poverty, Dickens rallied against inequality, using his work to bring attention to what he regarded as some of the key social issues of his time: childhood poverty, rising inequality, injustice and high levels of unemployment as shown by David Hewitt in his essay: *What would Charles Dickens born 200 years ago, make of Britain's inequality in the 21st century?*; from web exclusive

The same issues still dominate the news agenda in modern day Britain. My guess is that Dickens would be surprised at today's level of inequality. Certainly, the situation has improved since the hungry forties, as the 1840s were known, when children were quite literally starving on the streets of London, or else living miserable lives in workhouses or as child prostitutes.

Today, levels of relative child poverty in England are worse than they are in every other developed country in Europe .Quite simply, even the briefest of looks at London in 2012 reveals *A Tale of Two Cities*. In this context, Alex Werner, curator of the Dickens and London exhibition at the museum of London, notes:

Unemployment benefit, old age pension,
a national health service and compulsory
education for all children would seem to
Dickens a great step forward from what
he had experienced during his lifetime
in the Victorian period⁴.

In addition, these researchers acknowledge that charities working with local communities within London. They have seen a marked rise in families, making the use of soup kitchen and food banks. However, a return to the realities of Victorian London, when Dickens and his contemporaries could not have failed to see poor children on the streets of London, is unlikely. Moreover, child- hood poverty can cause lasting damage, both to individuals and whole communities. Just a few days after his 12th birthday, with his father struggling under the weight of the family debts, Dickens was sent to work in a shoe polish factory on the banks of the Thames. ‘Living below the poverty line can trap children into a cycle of poor performance at school and reduced job prospects’, explains Sally Copley the UK head of poverty at save the children in the article *London poverty 1837: Oliver Twist El Bibliomata*. So education is the best route out, but at every stage there is a huge device between how those from poor backgrounds perform in relation to their peers. *In London poverty 2011 chris J under C C licence* he says: It is wrong That more than one child in four lives in poverty in the seventh richest country in the world.

Obstacles like high childcare costs, high energy prices and a lack of jobs that pay a living wage make it hard for parents to provide for their children as they should. In the same article, Alex Werner year argues:

⁴ London poverty 1837 ; Oliver Twist El Bibliomata under C C licence

rather than being simply an observer of London in his day, Dickens was also a campaigner for change, believing that, through his journalism, novels and stories he could be a force for good by encouraging his readers to think about those less fortunate than themselves⁵.

In some cases, he was trying to persuade government to intervene, for example in relation to poor housing, sanitation and education. In other areas he was hopeful that wealthy people would contribute generously to charities to help and alleviate the condition of the poor. However, while relying on the wealthiest few to have their own Ebenezer scrooge moment and act according to their conscience is all well and good, many campaigners believe that the government needs to take the lead. Just as the coalition government's policies are driving an ever-widening wedge between the richest and the poorest. They prime Minister to take the lead in addressing both the root causes of child poverty and the social and economic inequality that exacerbates researchers.

At the same time, In *The French Revolution and the Legacy of A Tale of Two Cities*, Irene Collins point out in 1990 :

Dickens dislikes the violence of the revolutionaries, both in its popular form (the mob) and in its institutionalized form (the terror). Unlike Carlyle, he can no longer see justice in the violence⁶.

Moreover, it's Dickens's novel, rather than Carlyle's history, which is responsible for the popular image of the French Revolution in England, not least due to the popularity of *A Tale of Two Cities* on film and television. *A Tale Two Cities* promoted the image of a stable England by using revolutionary France as a setting to highlight the contrasts between the two

⁵ London poverty 1837 ; Oliver Twist El Bibliomata under C C licence

⁶ Collins, Irene. Charles Dickens and the French Revolution . Literature and History 1.1 (1990) : 40 - 57

countries. Although Dickens seemed to believe in the twentieth-fifties, England was heading towards an uprising on the scale of the French Revolution.

Moreover, the novel doesn't record a single incident in which the French Revolution might be shown as beneficent, constructive, even as tragic as points out John Gross in his article *Dickens and the twentieth century Edition* published in 1962.

In my previous thesis on some specific aspect of the English 19th century as revealed in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist and David Copperfield* presented in 2010, I pointed out the way Charles Dickens criticizes the pauper's social condition in nineteenth century and attacks the cruelty of English cities mad of such evils as misery and all sorts of crimes and it neglect of the system of education. He was interested in the life of children, and the poor throughout the two novels.

In so doing, Charles Dickens's in his novels: *Oliver Twist; David Copperfield, A Tale of Two Cities* and in many others, stands for the cause of oppressed people. He attacked the ground of poverty and expressed his indignation to the unseemliness of various attempts at social reform before suggesting to his contemporaries the moral and psychological basis on which every act of reform should be laid.

Although *A Tale of Two Cities* today may be regarded as a highly successful of the genre of historical fiction, and was widely popular with contemporary readers, it was not particularly well received by the critics upon its publication. Then in his review on *A Tale of Two Cities* published in 1966 represented in the Dickens critics Ed Ithaca Ford George New York, sir James F. Stephen does not accept a novel as an intellectual merit, but instead ridicules it because it engages the readers' emotions rather than appeals to their sense of reason. According to him, who ascribes to the notion that there are a strict set of conversations involved in the composition of historical

fiction, what differentiates an historical novelist from a mere hack. Stephen was not alone in his criticism of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. For example, in his article *The limitation of Dickens* published in 1865, The novelist and Critic Henry James criticized Dickens for lacking the philosophical breadth of vision necessary to treat historical subjects. Dickens is qualified as a great observer and a great humourist, but he is nothing of a philosopher. Even though James appreciates Dickens's talent for careful observation and praises him for presenting effectively the context in which the events of the novel take place, he cannot find any general grasp of the historical forces at play in the French Revolution in Dickens's novel. Another noteworthy critic and novelist who has pointed out Dickens's deficiencies in technique although he does not address these deficiencies as manifest in *A Tale of Two Cities* is Huxley Aldous. In his article *the Vulgarity in little Nell* published in 1966, attacks Dickens's rampant sentimentality. He articulates the twentieth-century perspective that, Dickens tends to play upon the emotions of the reader and thereby violates the principle of sincerity. For Huxley, Dickens as the controlling voice of the novel tends to be excessively emotional. Dickens's receiving severe criticism for his novels lack of literary quality may be his lack of formal education, particularly his lacking a University background.

Although not all critics appreciated Dickens's work in his lifetime, many did. An important late nineteenth-century critic, praises Dickens's power of imagination and vividness in his works. In his article *Dickens in relation to criticism* published in 1872. George Henry Lewes praises the intensity of the novelist's writing. In the same degree of vividness are the images constructed by his mind in explanation of the voices heard or objects. For Henry, while Dickens was constructing his vivid descriptions, he managed to put himself in the shoes of the characters that he was depicting, and he regarded this as a major strength that a novelist should exhibit. In fact, Carlyle and Dickens had followed the same route in their literary careers before their

close friendship began. Both of them chose the same way to reach the books which were essential for them. On the contrary, in his article *the friendship of Dickens and Carlyle* published in 1957 by Dickensian vol.L 111, N°322, Louis Dickins underlines the importance of this intellectual friendship to both writers. Dickens followed Carlyle closely, both in the chronology of the events of the revolution and in his descriptions of the major historical events. He was selective, of course, in his portrayal of the Revolution using only those scenes that bore upon his plot. As Dickens indicates, there are some points of resemblance between The French Revolution, and *A Tale of Two Cities*, both in terms of style and Historical perspective.

The reading of these different articles shows that researchers in their majority have given a keen attention to the various aspects of social condition mainly the social injustices, the suffering and exploitation of children during the French Revolution.

These different articles make us understand that once an exploitation of poor people and injustice persist, violence and inequity will continue to flourish in England despite the overwhelming progress of a world being global, whatever their education may be.

In the next chapter, I am going to give a brief account of the French revolution in order to locate my theme in the chosen novel: *A Tale of Two Cities*.

CHAPTER THREE:

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND FOR A *TALE OF TWO CITIES.*

Born in Portsmouth on February 7, 1812, Charles Dickens was a great understanding of humanity, especially the young people. He sympathized with the poor and helpless and criticized the selfish, the greedy and the cruel. He published many novels among them, *A Tale of Two Cities*. Through this novel, Dickens decided to transplant the emotive issue of self-sacrifice on to the time period of the French Revolution, and modeled Sydney Carton after Collins hero. To ensure that his novel would be as historically accurate as possible, he pored over his friend Thomas Carlyle's classic history of the French Revolution. He also narrates aspects of a major historical event, The French Revolution which raged from 1789 to 1793, involved an overthrow of the aristocratic ruling order by the lower classes and was followed by a period of terror. The Revolution at first garnered some support among radicals in England, creating a backlash among conservatives; most notable in Edmund Burke's scathing *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

As the bloodshed became prolonged, support for the revolution waned in England and a comparable social movement started there. Dickens was also influenced by Carlyle's belief that the revolution was inspired by the centuries of cruelty and poverty the French poor had to endure at the hand of the corrupt nobility.

Then, one can not understand why I give preference to the leading writer of the elder generation whose novel has been much studied. *A Tale of Two Cities* shows relevant issues despite the length of years.

3-1- THE SYMBOLISM OF PERSONIFICATION IN A TALE OF TWO CITIES

In his novels, stories, and other works, Dickens placed great importance on the names he gave his characters. Here, I am going to talk about personification which is a figure of speech in which an animal, object, or idea is given human forms or characteristics. The thematic emphasis of this chapter is

on the irrevocable passage of time. Dickens describes Time as a "powerful enchanter" who never undoes the work he has done. The personification of time momentarily brings the reader out of the personal details of the characters in the story and back to the distant, fable-like tone of the first chapter of the novel. However, in his death, Carton gains the ability to transcend time. He is able to look into the future and see what happens to his loved ones. Carton will achieve a resurrection of sorts through the birth of Lucie and Darnay's son and grandson. Although it will be the far-reaching future, even those alive then will refer to themselves in terms of the past—they pass on the story of Carton's sacrifice. In this way, Carton lives up to his nickname of memory, becoming a tangible memory through his reborn persona. Dickens was a master of this technique and used it to help create striking descriptions or moods in his novels, mainly in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Then, he uses personification in different aspects. For example:

Sadly, sadly, The sun rose; it rose upon no Sadder
sight than the man of good abilities and good emotions,
incapable of their directed exercise, incapable of his
own help and his own happiness, sensible of the
blight on him, and resigning himself to let it eat him away⁷.

Here, Dickens uses personification like the concept of hunger who is described as staring down from the chimneys of the poor and rattling its dry bones. He also uses personification to enrich his description of a noble's castle:

In a quarter of an hour Monseigneur was ready,
and sat down alone to his sumptuous and choice
supper. His chair was opposite to the window,
and he had taken his soup, and was raising
his glass of Bordeaux to his lips, when he put it
down." What is that? "He calmly asked, looking

⁷ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York Bentham, 1981, P.4

with attention at the horizontal lines of black and stone colour⁸.

As you read, notice how personification in that passage serves several purposes. It not only helps create an eerie atmosphere, it also serves to comment on the life and moral character of the noble himself. By making the castle itself to comment on the action, Dickens does not have to express directly his own feeling about the noble.

Likewise, Carl Sandburg's in his poem "Chicago" describes the city as stormy, husky, brawling / city of the big shoulders.

Names, for Dickens were often a type of shorthand, a way of communicating essential about a character. For example, in *Hard times*, a cruel school teacher is given the name Mr. Mc Choakum child. So he wanted to make sure his readers knew his own opinion of the school master. In *Bleak House*, Lady Honoria Dedlock is a beautiful, but emotionally cold, aristocrat who keeps inside her a fatal secret. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Striver is an arrogant and ambitions lawyer working his way up the social ladder. Another example is Lucie Marnette, whose name comes from the Latin word for "light". Dickens refers to her as a bright and shining example to inspire the other character. Through the novel, we can look for the meanings of other symbolic names.

3-2- THE LITERARY DEVICE OF FORESHADOWING IN A TALE OF TWO CITIES

This part of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* contains one of the most exciting episodes in all of Dickens's novels. In this novel, let us show the use of literary device of foreshadowing in which the author uses clues to prepare readers for what will happen later in the story. Thus the novel contains much foreshadowing of future events.

⁸ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York Bentham, 1981, P.2

The hands of the man who sawed the wood left red marks on the billets; and the forehead of the woman who nursed her baby was stained with the stain of the old rag she wound about her head again. Those who had been greedy with the staves of the cask, had acquired a tigerish smear about the mouth; and one tall joker so besmirched, his head more out of a long squalid bag of a nightcap than in it, scrawled a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees-Blood⁹.

Charles Dickens, after describing hands, feet, and mouths stained red from the spilled wine, he says the time will come when the people will be stained red with another substance blood.

Through out *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens uses foreshadows to further the plot of the novel. He foreshadows the plot in a number of ways. Another example of foreshadowing in the novel is Madame Defarge's Knitting. In the novel, Madame Defarge's knitting foreshadows the upcoming revolution, in what she is knitting a register of people that she believes must be killed. Also, her knitting foreshadows the imprisonment of Charles Darnay, as well as the violence that will soon come. In addition to the foreshadowing of Madame Defarge's knitting, Charles Dickens also foreshadows the revolution through the scenes involving the Marquis and Gaspard. After the marquis carelessly kills Gaspard's child, Gaspard seeks revenge on the Maruis, by killing him. This event foreshadows the revolutions in that Gaspard, symbolizing the lower class, revolts against the Marquis, representing the upper classes. So the murder of the Maruis foreshadows the lower class revolting against the upper one.

⁹ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York Bentham, 1981, P.2

Other aspect of foreshadowing in the novel is the broken wine cask. With his depiction of a broken wine cask outside Defarge's wine shop, and with his portrayal of the passing peasants' scrambles to lap up.

The spilling wine, Dickens creates a symbol for the desperate quality of the people's hunger. This hunger is both the literal hunger for food. The French presents were starving in their poverty, and the metaphorical hunger for political freedoms. On the surface, the scene shows the peasants in their desperation to satiate the first of these hungers. But it also evokes the violent measures that the peasants take in striving to satisfy their more metaphorical cravings. For instance, the narrative directly associates the wine with blood, noting that some of the peasants have acquired "a tigerish smear about the mouth" and portraying a drunken figure scrawling the word "blood" on the wall with a wine-dipped finger.

Indeed, The blood of aristocrats later spills at the hands of a mob in these same streets. Dickens criticizes this mob mentality, which he condemns for perpetrating the very cruelty and oppression from which the revolutionaries hope to free themselves.

He approaches his historical subject with some ambivalence. While he supports the revolutionary cause, he often points to the evil of the revolutionaries themselves. He deeply sympathizes with the plight of the French peasantry and emphasizes with their need for liberation. The several chapters that deal with the Marquis successfully paint a picture of a vicious aristocracy that shamelessly exploits and oppresses the nation's poor.

Dickens's most concise and relevant view of revolution comes in the final chapter, in which he notes the slippery slope down from the oppressed to the oppressor:

"Sow of the same seed of rapacious licence
and oppression over again, and it will surely
yield the same fruit according to its Find¹⁰."

Though Dickens sees the French Revolution as a great symbol of transformation and resurrection, he emphasizes that its violent means were ultimately antithetical to its end.

3-3- HISTORICAL OBSERVATION ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

History is interesting under a two-fold aspect; it has a scientific interest, and a moral or biographic interest. A scientific, in as much as it exhibits the general laws of the moral universe acting in circumstances of complexity, and enables us to trace the connexion between great effects and their causes. A moral or biographic interest, in as much as it displays the characters and lives of human beings, and calls upon us, according to their deservings or to their fortunes, for sympathy, admiration, or censure.

Without entering at present, more than to the extent of a few words, into the scientific aspect of the history of the French Revolution, or stopping to define the place which we would assign to it as an event in universal history, we need not fear to declare utterly unqualified for estimating the French, or otherwise than as one turbulent passage in a progressive transformation embracing the whole human race. All political revolutions, not effected by foreign conquest, originate in moral revolutions. The subversion of established institutions is merely one consequence of the previous subversion of established opinions. The political revolutions of the last three centuries were but a few outward manifestations of a moral revolution, which dates from the great breaking loose of the human faculties commonly described as the revival of letters, and of which the main instrument and agent was the

¹⁰ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York Bentham, 1981, P.1

invention of printing .How much of the course of that moral revolutions. The subversion of established institutions is merely one consequence of the previous subversion of established opinions .The political revolutions of the last three centuries were but a few outward manifestations of amoral revolution, which dates from the great breaking loose of the human faculties commonly described as the ‘revival of letters’, and of which the main instrument and agent was the invention of printing. How much of the course of that moral revolution yet remains to be run, or how many political revolutions it will yet generate before it be exhausted, no one can foretell. But it must be the shallowest view of the French Revolution, which can now consider it as anything but a mere incident in a great change in man himself... In his beliefs, in his principles of conduct, and therefore in the outward arrangements of society; a change so far from being completed, that it is not yet clear, even to the more advanced spirits, to what ultimate goal it is tending.

Now if this view be just (which we must be content for the present to assume), surely for an English historian, writing at this particular time concerning the French Revolution, there was something pressing for consideration, of greater interest and importance than the degree of praise or blame due to the few individuals who, with more or less consciousness of what they were about, happened to be personally implicated in that strife of the elements.

But also, if, feeling his incapacity for treating history from the scientific point of view, an author thinks fit to confine himself to the moral aspect; surely some less commonplace moral result, some more valuable and more striking practical lesson, might admit of being drawn from this extraordinary passage of history, than merely this. That men should beware how they begin a political convulsion, because how they begin a political convulsion, because they never can tell how or when it will end; which happens to be the one

solitary general inference, the entire aggregate of the practical wisdom deduced there from in Mr. Alison's book:

Of such stuff are ordinary people's moralities composed.
Be good, be wise, always do right, take heed what you do,
for you know not what may come of it. Does Mr Alison,
or any one, really believe that any human thing, from the
fall of man to the last bankruptcy, ever went wrong for
want of such maxims as these?¹¹

3-4- REVOLUTION MARCHES ON

The backdrop of this part of *A Tale of Two Cities* is the most violent phase of the French Revolution. At that time, for many people, a powerful image of the revolution is the guillotine, used to behead thousands during the years of violence. The women first marched to the Hôtel de ville, demanding that the city officials address their concerns. They were responding to the harsh economic situations they faced, especially bread shortages. They also demanded an end to royal efforts to block the National Assembly, and for the king and his administration to move to Paris as a sign of good faith in addressing the widespread poverty.

As they didn't get satisfaction from city officials, more than 7,000 women joined the march to Versailles, bringing with them cannons and a variety of smaller weapons. Twenty thousand National Guardsmen under the command of La Fayette responded to keep order, and members of the mob stormed the palace, killing several guards. La Fayette ultimately persuaded the king to accede to the demand of the crowd that the monarchy relocate to Paris.

Although similar machines had been used before in other European countries, the guillotine was first used in France in April 1792. References to real events, most taken from the study of the French Revolution by Thomas Carlyle, give the novel its feeling of historical accuracy. During the September

¹¹ From a review of the first two volumes of Alison's history of Europe published in, August, 1833.

Massacres, which took place in 1792, a thousand aristocratic prisoners were murdered in their cells by the revolutionary mob. Dickens has the murderers meet just outside Tellson's Bank in his novel. The September 1793 to July 1794.

During this time, about 300,000 people were arrested as enemies of the revolutionary government included women, and the killing reached its zenith. The guillotine claimed 17,000 commoners and nobles, and even claimed Queen Marie-Antoinette; many other people died in prison. One of the novel's most frightening scenes is when Lucie witnesses the *carmagnole*, a war dance performed to a popular revolutionary song. Dickens also refers to the law of suspects, which permitted a committee to accuse citizens of treason against the revolutionary government.

3-5- THE PHYSICAL RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN DARNAY AND CARTON IN A TALE OF TWO CITIES

A myth is a traditional story that is told to explain natural events, human behaviour, or mysteries of the universe. Dickens explains the cause of the French Revolution with a kind of myth, a single, general universal story that stands for all the complex social, economic, political, and moral causes of the real historical event. The first and most critical coincidence in *A Tale of Two Cities* is the physical resemblance between Darnay and Carton, two men who love the same woman.

Dickens uses their physical resemblance to save Charles' life. In the beginning of the book, Sydney uses his appearance to help acquit Charles on charges of treason. After the trial, it is revealed that Carton is *environs* of Darnay because he feels that he would have been successful as Darnay if he had just a different attitude. Dickens may have used the physical resemblance to show that all Carton did need was an attitude change and he could be just like Darnay, since he already looked like him. In addition, he uses coincidence for

the resolution when Charles' life is saved at the end of the book when Carton and Darnay switch places and Sydney is executed in place of Charles. Without the coincidence of Carton and Darnay's striking resemblance, the novel wouldn't have been the same. The major coincidence and problem in the novel was the fact that the nephew of the Marquis St Evrémonte just so happened to be Charles Darnay. This becomes a problem when Charles is put up on trial for the second time and it is revealed that he is the nephew of the Marquis. As we know, Sydney comes to La Force, the prison that Darnay was in, and saves the day for Lucie and commits the ultimate sacrifice. The novel would not have had an important problem without the coincidence of Charles Darnay being the nephew of the Marquis St Evrémonte.

Finally, the deciding factor for Darnay's execution was Dr Marnette's journal that he wrote while in the Bastille. The doctor coincidentally wrote that he saw Darnay's daughter's future husband, as a boy with a member of the Evrémonte family. Later on, Marnette is thrown in prison by them. Marnette writes in his journal that he denounces the Marquis and his whole family. He never knew that his son-in-law would be the little boy in the carriage, so it is a huge coincidence. This coincidence of Marnette denouncing his own son-in-law adds a lot of suspense to the story. It has the reader on the edge of his or her seat wondering what's going to happen next.

One way to think about a coincidence is as a symbolic device. Dickens uses coincidences, even far-fetched ones, to show that all elements of society are linked, even if we are aware of the links. Dickens's coincidences reinforce his belief that all members of society, rich and poor, powerful and weak, are linked together, and may have responsibilities towards each other. So Dickens may have been urging his readers to feel responsible for the destinies of all members of society.

CHAPTER FOUR:

AN OVERVIEW ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION *IN A TALE OF TWO CITIES*

The French Revolution was a period of radical social and political upheaval in France that had a major impact on France and throughout the rest of Europe. During that time, French society underwent an epic transformation, as feudal, aristocratic and religious privileges evaporated under a sustained assault from radical left-wing political groups. Masses on the streets, and peasants in the countryside. Old ideas about tradition and hierarchy of monarchy, aristocracy, and religious authority were abruptly overthrown by new enlightenment principles of equality, citizenship and inalienable rights.

Dickens relied heavily on Thomas Carlyle's *the French Revolution* when writing *A Tale of Two Cities*, but he also assumes a certain amount of familiarity with the history of the Revolution. Because the novel is in large measure a historical novel, it is important to be aware of the background against which his characters are acting. The causes of the French Revolution, which began in 1789, are still debated by some historians.

In this twofold chapter, first of all, I am going to present the social causes and secondly the political convulsion on the French Revolution.

4-1- THE SOCIAL CAUSES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Adherents of most historical models identify many of the same features of the "ancient Regime" as being among the causes of the Revolution. Economic factors included hunger and malnutrition in the most destitute segments of the population, due to rising bread prices, after several years of poor grain harvests. Bad harvest rising food prices, and an inadequate transportation system that hindered the shipment centers contributed greatly to the destabilization of French society in the years leading up to the revolution.

Another cause was the state's effective bankruptcy due to the enormous cost of previous wars, particularly the financial strain caused by French participation in the American Revolutionary war. The social burdens caused by war included the huge war debt, made worse by the loss of France's

colonial possessions in North America and the growing commercial dominance of Great Britain. France's inefficient and antiquated financial system was unable to manage the national debt, something which was both partially caused and exacerbated by the burden of an inadequate system of taxation. more than 100,000 within their limits. These demographics had an enormous impact both inside and outside France.

In addition, the eighteenth century saw the intrusion of capitalism into everyday life. Thanks to a large expansion of overseas trade and a longer-term development of domestic trade, the money economy experienced continued growth. Although self sufficiency or local exchange remained the preponderant way of economic life, these incursions of capitalism began drawing everyone into some form of regional and even international exchange.

Amid these broad economic and population shifts, daily life in the countryside remained much the same, particularly on small family farms. Their owners and workers were known as peasants, although they differed considerably in wealth and status. A few could claim to be "living nobly", meaning they rented their land to others to work, but many were day-laborers desperate for work in exchange for a place to stay and food to eat .In the middle were others, including independent farmers, sharecroppers, and renters. Historians have estimated that in lean years 90 percent of the peasants lived at or below the subsistence level, earning only enough to feed their families. Others inhabited the countryside, most notably small numbers of noble and non-noble owners of manors, conspicuous by their dwellings, at the least. Consequently, documents on life in the countryside at this reflect the omnipresence of poverty. One of the most well-known observers of the late-eighteenth-century French countryside, the Englishman Arthur Young, considered these small farms the great weakness of French agriculture, especially when compared with the large, commercial farms he knew at home.

Others commenting on the lot of impoverished peasants before 1789 blamed the tensions between rich and poor on the country's vast social differences.

Although home to the wealthy and middling, cities tended to be even more unsavory places to live than the countryside. Exposed daily to dirty air and water, urban dwellers could expect to have a shorter life span than their country brethren. Louis-Sébastien Mercier, a writer who adored life in Paris and wrote extensively about all aspects of it, often lamented not only the poor health of city workers but also the strict conditions governing their employment. Guilds regulated almost every sector of the economy and thus limited the number who could enter a trade as an apprentice, become a journeyman, or set up a workshop and retail store as a master. With experience, a worker could theoretically move up the social hierarchy, but in practice such ascent was extremely difficult to achieve, as the limited number of masterships in any given industry tended to be passed down within a family. Thus in some trades and in some cities journeymen complained of feeling restricted and expressed greater solidarity toward their counterparts in other trades than toward their own masters.

Bread constituted the staple of most urban diets, so sharp price increases were felt quickly and were loudly protested at grain markets or at local bakers's shops. Most people directed their anger at bread suppliers rather than political authorities, although it was often the municipal and royal authorities who tried to alleviate shortages and prevent such protests. As a result, the credibility and popularity of government officials came to be linked to the functioning of the grain and bread markets.

Moreover, early modern French society was legally stratified by birth. Its three traditional divisions, or "orders", were the clergy [the First Estate], the nobility [the Second Estate], and the common people [Everyone else.. the Third Estate]. Nobles ruled over commoners, but even among commoners, specific individuals (such as officeholders) or groups (such as a particular guild

or an entire town) enjoyed privileges unavailable to outsiders. Because these privileges were passed on primarily through inheritance, they tended to constrain social mobility-although without preventing it, since they could also be bought or sold. Thus individuals and groups constantly negotiated with one another and with the crown for more and better privileges maintained a close grip on eighteenth-century imaginations, writers of the Enlightenment found them too rooted in tradition and proposed that talent supersede birth as the main determinant of social standing. Even when based on merit, they argue, social differences should not be defined by law, as they were in the old regime's orders. Traditionalists countered that a hierarchy of social orders was necessary to hold society together.

When the king called for an Estates-General in 1789, the social tensions plaguing the old regime emerged as a central issue of the Revolution. Traditionally, estates representatives had belonged to one of the three orders of society, and in principle each order had an equal voice before the king. Because nobles dominated the clergy, however, the majority of representatives actually came from the two privileged orders, even though they stood for only 5 percent of the population at most. Because each voter actually would exercise one vote in the assembly; this configuration allowed the nobility two of the three votes. The king subsequently agreed to double the size of the delegation of the Third Estate, but this move failed to appease critics of the political system. Many pamphlets appeared suggesting that representatives should vote by "head" rather than by order (meaning all representatives should vote together as a single assembly, rather than as three separate bodies representing three separate orders).

The purpose of such pamphlets was not merely to win greater representation for the Third Estate. Their authors were making the case for a new concept of society, in which commoners, especially the educated middle classes, had the same value as the other orders. Despite the social rifts

surrounding the political debate of mid-1789, most contemporaries fervently sought social unity. This suggests that social unrest may not necessarily have been the basic cause of the outbreak of the Revolution. Indeed, one wonders if the nobility's fear of losing its privileges, rather than the assertiveness of the middle classes, might have been the most important factor in the events that followed.

Far beyond the deputies' meeting hall in Versailles, another kind of social unrest was brewing in the countryside. Upon hearing about the taking of the Bastille, peasants decided they, too, could press for social change through drastic actions. In the summer of 1789 hundreds of thousands mobilized to attack lords' manors and destroy the bitter symbols of seigneurialism : Weather vanes, protective walls, and especially property deeds setting forth feudal dues that peasants were required to pay the lord. When news of this rural unrest reached the newly renamed National Assembly in Paris, its deputies, feeling pressured to stay ahead of events in the countryside, responded by announcing the "abolition of feudalism". Their decrees of 4 August represented the first step toward the destruction of the theoretical basis of old regime's system of privileges. Within the year, the assembly would do away with the whole concept of nobility, setting off a vigorous anti noble propaganda campaign in the press.

Urban workers, too, found an opportunity to express their discontent, through elections to the Estates-General. Elections were held in the form of neighborhood gatherings, at which participants collectively designated a representative and compiled "cahiers de doléance" (lists of grievances) to present to the king, who would communicate them to guide the representatives. Many of these petitions expressed opposition to the privileges of nobles and officeholders. The National Assembly decrees of August 1789 against privilege-which had been the centerpiece of the French social order-were no doubt cheered by the populace.

For all its momentousness, however, the elimination of privilege did not bring an end to the social conflicts underlying the Revolution. Instead, it marked the beginning of another system of social distinctions, set forth in a new constitution introduced by the National Assembly. The most notable of these was the distinction between "active" citizens, who were granted full rights to vote and hold office, and "passive" citizens, who were subject to the same laws but could not vote or hold office. Membership in one class or the other was determined by one's income level, gender, race, religion, and profession. With the Le Chapelier Law of 1791, the National Assembly further differentiated workers from property owners and banned worker associations as being harmful to national unity.

The National Assembly seemed unwilling to grant workers full political social participation in the new society. One reason for this reluctance was the widespread fear of further unrest. Another was the strong belief among spokespersons for the Enlightenment that only those with a propertied stake in society could be trusted to exercise reason, or to think for themselves. Furthermore, many reform-minded revolutionaries argued that economic-based "combinations" formed by workers too closely resembled corporate guilds and would impinge on the freedom of the individual.

What ever the assembly's motives, its actions were met with strong opposition. Workers were not untrustworthy or retrograde traditionalists, they retorted, but hardworking, uncomplicated, and honest citizens, unlike the effete and "feminized" rich. Calling themselves "sans-culottes" to indicate that they wore pants, not knee breeches (a symbol of luxury), they glorified direct action, strength, candor, and patriotism, ideals that radical journalists associated with artisanal work and found lacking in property ownership alone. The fact that such radicals as Elisée Loustallot, Jacques Roux, and Jacques-René Hébert were educated men who did not exactly work with their hands for a living led some to question whether their discussions of sans-culottes

expressed ideas held by workers themselves. Moreover, one may wonder whether the views associated with the sans-culottes extended much beyond Paris. All the same, the sans-culotte concept took on increasing political significance, because those in authority saw reflected in it the genuine working man. Thus the use of the sans-culotte in radical rhetoric led contemporaries to believe that rich and poor were in conflict throughout the revolution. How this perception influenced the course of revolutionary events may be seen in the case of Gracchus Babeuf. Before the Revolution, Babeuf had been an agent for seigneurial lords, but after 1789, he became increasingly attracted to the idea of social and political egalitarianism. By 1795, he was leading a conspiracy, although his goals and plans remained vague. Nevertheless, the political authorities worried about class war; they considered him a dangerous egalitarian revolutionary and arrested him. At his trial, Babeuf delivered an inspiring attack on private property and endorsed a system of property sharing that many see as a forerunner of socialism.

In rural areas cleavages were as deeply rooted as in the cities. Peasants, in their lists of grievances of 1789, expressed hostility to noble landlords; and, as noted earlier, this hostility intensified after Bastille Day. From July through September 1789, word of the National Assembly's decisions and of the popular revolts in Paris and other cities spread across the French countryside. It was also rumored that frightened nobles were sending groups of armed "brigands" to burn fields, steal crops, and attack villages in order to keep down the peasantry in this moment of crisis. Propelled by what became known as "the great fear," peasants in various regions of France took matters into their own hands, forming armed groups to defend their fields and their villages. The 4 August decrees, largely a response to this upheaval, initially quieted the countryside and soon cemented the peasants to the revolutionary cause.

Like the workers and small property owners in cities, peasants questioned the settlement reached by the National Assembly in 1791. In

contrast to Parisian artisans, however, who began pushing for a more a-reaching revolution in 1792-94, large numbers of cultivators hankered for a return to stability in their villages. But this seemed a remote possibility as the Revolution and its wars expanded.

For the peasantry, the foremost cause of instability during the Revolution was the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1790. The civil constitution, like the Revolution itself, originated in the fiscal crisis that the National Assembly inherited from the crown. Needing substantial revenues, the assembly targeted church lands, which accounted for 10 percent of all landed wealth in France. The legislature divested the church of its property and in exchange took charge of its expenses and administration. The revolutionaries, imbued with the Enlightenment's criticism of the Catholic religion, suspected bishops and archbishops of resisting all change. To ensure the loyalty of parish priests, the assembly (in whose employ the priests now found themselves) added to the Civil Constitution a requirement that all clergy swear an oath of allegiance to the nation. However, almost half refused to do so. Because most "refractory priests" (those who refused the oath) lived in the countryside, the Civil Constitution—designed to promote national unity and prevent religion from becoming a source of resistance to the Revolution—instead generated considerable resentment among the peasantry. This resentment increased with the decree of 9 March 1792, authorizing the confiscation of grain to prevent "hoarding".

Thus in both towns and countryside, it seemed that the Revolution was not producing the hoped-for results. Instead of bringing unity and a quick, political resolution to the questions of 1789, as intended by its originators, the Revolution was producing further conflicts. What had happened? Had the revolutionaries expected too much? Did the fault lie with the new political elite, because they excluded the lower classes from the optimistic prospects for change? Or did the leaders, despite their commitment to social equality,

find it impossible to avoid making private property (and the differences in wealth it necessarily generated) the cornerstone of the new society? The events of the 1790 s brought France no closer to determining how and whether social equality could be achieved through political measures. This very issue continues to vex modern society-long after the social stresses of 1789 have dissolved into the dustbin of history, indeed, it remains one of the most vibrant legacies of the French Revolution.

4-2- POLITICAL CONVULSION ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

A political convulsion is a fearful thing. Nobody can be assured beforehand what course it will take : we grant that too. What then? No one ought ever to do anything which has any tendency to bring on a convulsion: is that the principle? But there never was an attempt made to reform any abuse in Church or State, never any denunciation uttered or mention made of any political or social evil, which had not some such tendency. Whatever excites dissatisfaction with any one of the arrangements of society, brings the danger of a forcible subversion of the entire fabric so much the nearer. Does it follow that there ought to be no censure of anything which exists? Or is this abstinence, peradventure, to be observed only when the danger is considerable? But that is whenever the evil complained of is considerable; because the greater the evil, the stronger is the desire excited to be freed from it, and because the greatest evils are always those which it is most difficult to get rid of by ordinary means. It would follow, then, that mankind are at liberty to throw off small evils, but not great ones; that the most deeply-seated and fatal diseases of the social system are those which ought to be left for ever without remedy.

Men are not to make it the sole object of their political lives to avoid a revolution, no more than of their natural lives to avoid death. They are to take reasonable care to avert both those contingencies when there is a present

danger, but not to forbear the pursuit of any worthy object for fear of a mere possibility.

Unquestionably it is possible to do mischief by striving for a larger of political reform than the national mind is ripe for; and so forcing on prematurely a struggle between elements, which, by a more gradual progress, might have been brought to harmonize. And every honest and considerate person, before he engages in the career of a political reformer, will inquire whether the moral state and intellectual culture of the people are such as to render any great improvement in the management of public affairs possible. But he will inquire too, whether the people are likely ever to be made better, morally or intellectually, without a previous change in the government. If not, it may still be his duty to strive for such a change at whatever risk.

What decision a perfectly wise man, at the opening of the French Revolution, would have come to on these several points, he who knows most will be most slow to pronounce. By the Revolution, substantial good has been effected of immense value, at the cost of immediate evil of the most tremendous kind. But it is impossible, with all the light which has been, or probably ever will be, obtained on the subject, to do more than conjecture whether France could have purchased improvement cheaper; whether any course which could have averted the Revolution, would not have done so by arresting all improvement, and barbarizing down the people of France into the condition of Russian boors.

A revolution, which is so ugly a thing, certainly cannot be a very formidable thing, if all is true that Conservative writers say of it. For, according to them, it has always depended upon the will of some small number of persons, whether there should be a revolution or not. They invariably begin by assuming that great and decisive immediate improvements, with a certainty of subsequent and rapid progress, and the ultimate attainment of all practicable good, may be had by peaceable means at

the option of the leading reformers, and that to this they voluntarily prefer civil war and massacre, for the sake of marching somewhat more directly and rapidly towards their ultimate ends. Having thus made out a revolution to be so mere a bagatelle, that, except by the extreme of knavery or folly, it may always be kept at a distance; there is little difficulty in proving all revolutionary leaders knaves or fools. But unhappily theirs is no such enviable position; a far other alternative is commonly offered to them. We will hazard the assertion, that there has scarcely ever yet happened a political convulsion, originating in the desire of reform, where the choice did not, in the full persuasion of every person concerned, lie between all and nothing; where the actors in the revolution had not thorough made up their minds, that, without a revolution, the enemies of all reform would have the entire ascendancy, and that not only there would be no present improvement, but the door would for the future be shut against every endeavour towards it.

Unquestionably, such was the conviction of those who took part in the French Revolution, during its earlier stages. They did not choose the way of blood and violence in preference to the way of peace and discussion. Theirs was the cause of law and order. The States General at Versailles were a body, legally assembled, legally and constitutionally sovereign of the country, and had every right which law and opinion could bestow upon them, to do all that they did. But as soon as they did anything disagreeable to the king's courtiers (at that time they had not even begun to make any alterations in the fundamental institutions of the country), the king and his advisers took steps for appealing to the bayonet. Then, and not till then, the adverse force of an armed people stood forth in defence of the highest constituted authority...the Legislature of their country...menaced with illegal violence. The Bastille fell; the popular party became the stronger; and success, which so often is said to be a justification, has here proved the reverse: men who would have been

ranked with Hampden and Sidney if they had quietly waited to have their throats cut, passed for monsters because they had been victorious.

We have not now time nor space to discuss the quantum of the guilt which attaches, not to the authors of the Revolution, but to the various subsequent revolutionary governments, for the crimes of the Revolution. Much was done which could not have been done except by bad men. But whoever examines faithfully and diligently the records of those times... whoever can conceive the circumstances and look into the minds even of the men who planned and perpetrated those enormities, will be the more fully convinced, the more he considers the facts, that all which was done had one sole object. That object was, according to the phraseology of the time, to save the Revolution; to save it, no matter by what means; to defend it against its irreconcilable enemies, within and without; to prevent the undoing of the whole work, the restoration of all that had been demolished, and the extermination of all who had been active in demolishing; to keep down the royalists, and drive back the foreign invaders; as the means to these ends, to erect all France into a camp, subject the whole French people to the obligations and the arbitrary discipline of a besieged city, and to inflict death, or suffer it, with equal readiness... death or any other evil... for the sake of succeeding in the object.

But nothing of all this is dreamed of in Mr. Alison's philosophy: he knows not enough, either of his professed subject, or of the universal subject, the nature of man, to have got even thus far, to have made this first step towards understanding what the French Revolution was. In this he is without excuse, for had he had been even moderately read in the French literature subsequent to the Revolution, he would have found this view of the details of its history familiar to every writer and to every reader.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IN A POPULAR IMAGINATION AS DEPICTED DICKENS IN *A TALE OF TWO CITIES*

5-1- CONTEMPORARY RECEPTION OF A TALE OF TWO CITIES

A Tale of Two Cities proved a disappointment ever to critics who had received Dickens's earlier works favourably. That's why one of his friends, John Forster argued that:

There was probably never a book by a great humourist,
and an artist so prolific in the conception of character ,
with so little humour and so few rememberable figures¹²..

However, Forster praised the novel when it was first published, referring in particular to the subtlety the spirit with which a private history is associated with a most vivid expression of the days of the great French Revolution.

This comment suggests that Dickens successfully integrated fiction and history, but it is clear from what Forster says later that he prefers the fiction to the rendering of history in the novel:

But in his broadest colouring of revolutionary scenes,
while he gives life to large truths in the story of a nation,
he is working out closely and thoroughly the skillfully
designated tale of a household¹³ .

Forster's preference may be connected to the growing feeling of indifference towards the French Revolution in the eighteen-fifties. Dickens was not the first to draw attention to England's social and political problems by using the French Revolution as a point of reference. As David Lodge in 1989 explains, several Victorian writers, particularly Thomas Carlyle, had used this "rhetorical strategy" to emphasise the severity of the condition of England. And yet, such a strategy would no longer impress itself on Dickens's readers in the eighteen-fifties, because mass demonstrations and riots of on the previous decades, which were encouraged by reform movements like

¹² ¹³ Collins, philip, ed. Dickens : *The critical Heritage*. London Routledge. 1971 PP. 422 - 424

Chartism, and which worried writers like Carlyle and Dickens, had by this time become a spent force. In *Victorian People and Ideas*, Richard Altick points out that Chartism, virtually came to an end in 1848, and summarises the socio-political condition of England in the following years as follows:

As throne after throne was overturned
on the Continent, England's remained
secure ... Now, finally, even those most
fearful of a proletarian takeover began to
concede that it probably would not happen here...
The clinching proof came three years later in 1851,
when throngs of workingmen and their families,
among them many erstwhile Chartists, poured into
London to see Crystal Palace. Despite predictions of
rampant crime and disorder, nothing untoward happened;
"the people" ... proved to be orderly, sober, and
good-humoured... anything but revolution-minded¹⁴.

5-2- THE CONTRASTS BETWEEN FRANCE AND ENGLAND AS DEPICTED DICKENS IN A TALE OF TWO CITIES

What, then, could *A Tale of Two Cities* signify for Dickens's readers, if the writer's fears of a massive uprising similar to the French Revolution appeared groundless? The answer may be found by a closer look at the contrasts, and not the similarities, between France and England as they are depicted in the novel. Rather than drawing readers' attention to the current problems of the country through a comparison with the condition of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary France, these contrasts serve to reaffirm the stability of England. To illustrate:

when Lucie Marnette finds her father
Dr. Marnette in Paris after his eighteen-year
imprisonment in the Bastille, she tells
him that they will [go to England to be
at peace and at rest¹⁵.

¹⁴ Altick Richard. *Victorian people and Ideas: The compassion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature*-
New York : Norton 1973

^{15,16} Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*, New York Bentham, 1981 PP.44 - 234

Charles Darnay, while explaining his decision to renounce his title and privileges as a member of the aristocratic Evrémonde family, refers to England as his 'Refuge'. Jarvis Lorry complains about the difficulties of communication brought about by the Revolution between the London and Paris branches of Tellson's Bank:

At another time, our parcels would come
and go, as easily as in businesslike Old
England; but now, everything is stopped¹⁶.

In contrast, France becomes more and more dangerous as the novel unfolds. The acts of violence committed by the revolutionary mob are among the most memorable scenes in the novel. As an example, when the Bastille is stormed, the mob kill the governor:

Remained immovable close to him when
the long-gathering rain of stabs and blows
fell heavy; was so close to him when he
dropped dead under it, that, suddenly
animated, and Madame Defarge put her
foot upon his neck, and with her cruel knife
long ready, hewed off his head¹⁷

It may be argued that Sydney Carton's silent prophecy about the future on his way to the guillotine compensates for the negative image of revolutionary Paris and France in the novel:

I see a beautiful city and a brilliant
people rising from this abyss and
in their struggles to be truly free, in
their triumphs and defeats, through
long years to come¹⁸

¹⁷ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*, New York Bentham, 1981 P .218

¹⁸ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*, New York Bentham, 1981, P. 366

Thinks Carton to himself. And yet, his prophecy seems to be inappropriate, as the novel has never given a sense that Paris is likely to become a 'beautiful' city that ennobles or is ennobled by its people:

Carton's solemn interest in the lighted windows where the people were going to rest, forgetful through a few calm hours of the horrors surrounding them; in the towers of the churches, where no prayers were said, for the popular revulsion had even travelled that length of self-destruction from years of priestly impostors, plunderers, and profligates; in the distant burial-places, reserved, as they wrote upon the gates, for Eternal sleep; in the abounding goals; and in the streets along which the sixties rolled to a death which had become so common and material, that no sorrowful story of a haunting spirit ever arose among the people out at all the working of the guillotine...¹⁹

Nor has the novel shown any characters who may become the "brilliant people" of France who will make their country rise from "this abyss" in the future. Dr. Marnette comes closet; he has suffered the evils of both the ancient régime (a term referring to the rule and the way of life in France before the revolution) and revolutionary France, but his future is clearly with his daughter and son-in-law in England. None of them is likely to return after their escape, not only because it will be politically unwise, but also because a happy and safe future awaits them in England, as Carton prophesies:

I see the lives for which I lay down my life,
peaceful, useful, prosperous and happy in
that England which I shall see no more²⁰.

¹⁹ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*, New York Bentham, 1981, P. 366

²⁰ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*, New York Bentham, 1981, P. 308

The future awaiting the "villains of the piece", on the other hand, is death in France. In the penultimate chapter of the novel, Madame Defarge, who has been driven by a desire to see each and every descendant of the Evrémonde family executed, dies by accidentally shooting herself in a struggle with Miss Pross, Lucie's faithful maid. Although the deaths of the other "villains" are not narrated directly in the novel, Carton foresees their fate on the guillotine:

I see Barsad, and Cly, Defarge, the
Vengeance, the Juryman, the Judge,
long ranks of the new oppressors
who have risen on the destruction
of the old, perishing by this retributive
instrument [the guillotine], before it
shall cease out of its present use²¹.

It is interesting to note that Carton's list contains not only those French characters associated with the Revolution, but also two English characters, Barsad and Cly. Their careers as spies have finally brought them to Paris, where they work for the revolutionary French government. The pattern is one of poetic justice: the characters who have been depicted sympathetically will end up in England, whereas the villains, both French and English, will finally pay for their crimes on the guillotine in France.

The only character to contradict this pattern is Sydney Carton, who is executed on the guillotine in Paris. However, his death is not rendered as part of the workings of poetic justice, as in the case of the villains, but rather as a divine reward. From the moment that he decides to sacrifice himself by dying on the guillotine instead of Darnay, he repeats the lines from the Scriptures, beginning with: "I am the Resurrection and the life²²". This theme of resurrection reappears with Carton's prophecy where he envisions a son to be

²¹ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*, New York Benthams, 1981, P. 308

²² Charles, Dickens's. *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York Benthams, 1981 P.366

born to Lucie and Darnay, a son who will bear Carton's name. Thus he will symbolically be reborn through Lucie and Darnay's child. This vision serves another essential purpose, however. In the early parts of the novel, Lucie and Darnay have a son, who dies when yet a child. Why the vision of another child, and a son, apart from the continuation of the theme of resurrection? If the Darnay Carton family is to survive into the future, they need a son to bear their name. But much more importantly, this second son will be born free of the aristocratic stigma that has almost destroyed his father Darnay's life. In this way, the descendants of Lucie and Darnay will live as English citizens free of any association with France and its violent past. When viewed from this perspective, *A Tale of Two Cities* becomes a novel not about the French Revolution, but about the reaffirmation of England as a safe haven and English citizenship as something to be proud of. As Miss Pross says:

the short and the long of it is, that I am a subject of
his Most Gracious Majesty King George the Third.
She pressartsied at the name. And as such, my maxim
is, Confound their politics, Frustrate their knavish
tricks, On him our hopes we fix, God save the King²³.

5-3- VICTORIAN VIEW ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

That the English should be proud of their country and nationality, which finds its most straightforward expression in Miss Pross's words, is a message which many of Dickens's contemporaries would readily endorse. The merit of such a message becomes unquestionable when considered in relation to a historical event... The French Revolution----which is depicted as pure and simple carnage. As John Gross points out:

the novel doesn't record a single incident
in which the French revolution might be
shown as beneficent, constructive, even
as tragic..²⁴

²³ Charles, Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York Bentham, 1981 P.287

²⁴ Gross, John." *A Tale of Two Cities* ". Dickens and the Twentieth century. Ed P 191.

It is this image of the French Revolution that has influenced subsequent generations of English readers, particularly in our century. Most of book, the third which comprises the climatic episodes of Darnay's condemnation to death and Carton's execution, takes place during the Terror of 1793 – 94, the period which witnessed the most violent events of the Revolution. According to the historian Eric Hobsbawn, British people have generally tended to associate the French Revolution with the atrocities committed during the Terror only:

In Britain this was the image of the revolution that came closest to entering public consciousness, thanks to Carlyle and Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, followed by pop-literary epigones like Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* the knock of the guillotine's blades, the sans culotte women knitting impassively as they watched the counter revolutionary heads fall. Simon Schama's *Citizens*, the 1989 bestseller written for the English-language market by an expatriate British historian, suggests that this popular image is still very much alive.²⁵

5-4- DICKENS, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, AND THE LEGACY OF A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Dickens was inspired by Carlyle's the French Revolution to make its critics in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Taking Dickens's comment that he read Carlyle's history "five hundred times" as a starting point, many critics have discussed Carlyle's influence on several aspects of the novel, such as the narrative technique, the imagery associated with the Revolution, and the narration of the historical episodes. And yet, Dickens's outlook on revolutionary violence differed significantly from that of Carlyle. As Irene Collins points out:

²⁵ Gross, John. "A Tale of Two Cities". Dickens and the Twentieth century. Ed P5

Dickens dislikes the violence of the revolutionaries, both in its popular form (the mob) and in its institutionalized form (the Terror). Unlike Carlyle, he can no longer see justice in the violence²⁶.

Moreover, it is Dickens's novel, rather than Carlyle's history, which is responsible for the popular image of the French Revolution in England in our century, not least due to the popularity of *A Tale of Two Cities* on film and television. The most famous adaptation of the novel is the 1935 MGM production, directed by Jack Conway. The film capitalized particularly on scenes depicting the revolutionary mob: the film critic Derek Winnert describes it as "a wildly extravagant production" with 17000 extras in the Paris street scenes (1009). The novel was again filmed in 1958 by the British director Ralph Thomas. This production again used a "lavish staging" (Winnert 1009). The novel has proved to be a popular source for television adaptations as well: it was adapted in 1980 and 1989, the first being an ATV production directed by Jim Goddard and the latter an Anglo-French production directed by Philippe Monnier.

A Tale of Two Cities promoted the image of a stable England by using revolutionary France as a setting to highlight the contrasts between the two countries, although Dickens seemed to believe in the eighteen-fifties that England was heading towards an uprising on the scale of the French Revolution. In the twentieth century, we see the French Revolution used as a lavish setting in films and TV productions of *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Through the popular media, our century has fulfilled Dickens's intention, perhaps even more so than the previous century. What remains to readers and film/TV audiences is to decide whether this popular and picturesque means of understanding that terrible time' through *A Tale of Two*

²⁶ Collins, Irene. Charles Dickens and the French Revolution. *Litterature and History* 1.1 (1990) P.53

Cities does justice to that momentous historical phenomenon called the French Revolution.

CONCLUSION

The present Pre doctoral dissertation Thesis has set out to show how Dickens has explored human emotions and reactions that aren't specific to any one historical event.

Throughout the novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, justice was served. Their actions may have been a little severe, because of the fact that the only fair punishment at the time of the Revolution was death. The nature of Justice as exemplified in the novel shows how justice can take many forms. It can be to avenge a family member, like in the case of Madame Defarge and Gaspard, or it could be to settle the score regarding something said or done. This proves that justice has changed all the time, however, the fundamental aspects have remained the same, and the ultimate objective is to get back what you think is right and just. As Dickens wrote:

Crush humanity out of shape once more,
under similar hammers, and it will twist itself
into the same tortured forms. Sow the same
seed of rapacious license and oppression
over again, and it will surely yield the same
fruit according to its kind²⁷.

In other words, human suffering isn't simply an 18th century French problem. The novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, with all of the poverty and injustice it displays, is an exploration of conditions that will persist as long as violence and inequity continue to flourish.

Although *A Tale of Two Cities* is a major social critique, it's also an exploration of the limits of human justice. In fact, what is the theme "Justice" means exactly? Is it harming people who harm you? Or is it imprisoning people related to those people? When does Justice start becoming injustice? These are big questions. And they are still relevant today. Ask yourself if you can imagine a country in which innocent people are put in jail for political or power reasons I quote: South Africa, Nazi Germany, Libya, or about the

²⁷ Charles, Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York Bentham . P. 362

imprisonment of Japanese Americans during the 1940s, just because they happened to look like the folks the U.S. was fighting overseas. The closer we look, the more the false imprisonment such as those relating to Dr Marnette or Charles Darnay ones becomes something the we deal with in the real world, not just the fictional one.

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