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CHARLES DICKENS' FRENCH REVOLUTION: WAS IT THE BEST OF TIMES OR WAS IT THE WORST OF TIMES?

by

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ABSTRACT

This study reveals the political views of Charles Dickens in A Tale of Two Cities. Dickens traces the events prior to the French Revolution beginning in 1775 and ends the novel a few years short of the revolution in 1793. Dickens views the events that led up to the French Revolution as worth examining because of his conviction that history can teach valuable lessons. Dickens wrote this historical novel to warn his contemporaries to proceed carefully as Britain worked to alleviate the pejorative affects wrought from advancing industrialization.

INTRODUCTION

Many great authors write about their environment, and Charles Dickens proved no exception. He spent much of his career focusing on the social plagues of his day: Oliver Twist (1837-38) attacked the slum conditions and workhouses; Nicholas Nickleby (1838-39) exposed the plight of forgotten, discarded children; and Hard Times (1854) portrayed an industrial town as a social prison. Yet one critic found A Tale of Two Cities (1859) as perhaps "the least Dickensian of all the novels Dickens ever wrote" (Wagenknect 9). Dickens' historical novel may seem misleading because for the first time he abandoned the present for the past. Recognizing history's ability to reveal both causes and effects, Dickens correlated England's social problems with those of eighteenth century France. Consequently, Dickens hoped to caution his contemporaries to proceed carefully as Britain worked to diminish the negative effects of advancing industrialization.

A Tale of Two Cities begins in 1775, well before the Revolution of 1789, so Dickens may chronicle events that led to the upheaval. He identifies problems of hunger, poverty, and crime that plagued the lower class French. The novel concludes in 1793 before the end of the Revolution in 1799. Here, Dickens chooses to remain focused on the perils of revolution. Dickens asserts that the Revolution did not benefit France by implying that the French merely traded one set of problems for another. The new order, established by

the French lower class, ruled with violence--not unlike the aristocrats who ruled before. All of this left France in chaos and ruin. To understand why Dickens chose revolutionary France as the setting, his characters revealed his political views. Dickens' treatment of the living conditions leading into the Revolution drew parallels between those found in eighteenth century France and those of nineteenth century England. He gave voice to those views through his character's experience with democracy, justice and the negative effects of governmental abuses and inefficiencies. Further, Dickens analyzed the new order's slogan of liberty, equality, and fraternity to determine whether or not they achieved their objectives. Finally Dickens proposed through his characters, solutions to society's ills.

Dickens used a variety of sources: Thomas Carlyle's French Revolution (1896) helped Dickens to develop his own ideas concerning revolutionary France (Goldberg 101); Jean Jacques-Rousseau's Confessions (1743-44) enlightened him about the corrupt nature of institutions; Mercier's Tableau de Paris (1782-88) provided descriptions about aristocratic decadence (Glancey 35). Dickens' inspiration for writing A Tale of Two Cities came also from the play in which he once acted called The Frozen Deep (Woodcock 11).

Long before revolution, economic distress, social unrest, a corrupt court, and an inept parliament proved too much for the impetuous, inexperienced Louis XVI who failed ultimately to thwart the crisis (Lefebvre 116-17).

Nineteenth century England also experienced socio-economic problems but due to advancing industrialization. Although the source of England's social problems may have differed from those of France, the impact of these problems yet fell on the common people. In England, men, women, and children worked long hours for meager wages in squalid and often dangerous conditions. Advancing industrialism brought economic difficulties, social upheavals, and governmental inefficacy. From 1851 to 1861 more than five-hundred working-class revolts erupted across Europe. And reforms came slowly since trade unions and social legislation to help the working class did not begin to surface until 1880. In addition, industrialism created schisms between social classes: the capitalist entrepreneurs and the working-class. Dickens' perception of the social problems had been voiced earlier by Victorian statesman Benjamin Disraeli "as two nations: the nation of the poor and the nation of the rich'" (Fiero 5:67).

Dickens reiterates these concerns in his earlier novels. Hard Times (1854) focuses on the conflict between the advocates of the successful material prosperity and those who felt it came from the exploitation of man. Dickens reflects the views of those who believed prosperity came at the cost of spiritual and aesthetic values. Dickens' Stephen Blackpool, an honest, hard-working power-loom weaver symbolizes the victims of industry. And Josiah Bounderby, the wealthy middle-aged factory owner represents the arrogant, self-made man (Dickens' Hard Times 83& 102).

Likewise, eighteenth century France experienced exhibited divisions between the French aristocracy and the common people. The aristocracy with its power and prestige enjoyed the privilege of paying no taxes while the common people paid all taxes. The aristocracy saw their exemption from paying taxes as their inherent right, so they refused to relinquish their privilege. Consequently, Jacques Necker, minister of Finance, advised the king to return to French rule called "estates" or legal status groups. These represented the clergy, the nobility, and the middle class. But the common people continued to lack the privilege of voting on or voicing their opinions about problems that deeply affected them, such as insufficient food, jobs, and money. So they too revolted increasing the incidences of burning and rioting. Consequently, on June 17, 1789, the third estate lost patience and repudiated its old name and declared itself the National Assembly. Thereafter, poor parish priests and nobles were invited to join (Palmer 52-56).

King Louis' failure to acknowledge the National Assembly resulted in their rebellion (Palmer 55-56). Subsequently the Assembly agreed to disband until they forged a constitution. In 1789, the first major revolt of the common people occurred when they stormed the Bastille, producing riots that accelerated to violent forms of retaliation. This outbreak of violence culminated in the period known as the "Reign of Terror" (1793-94) where approximately 17,000 executions occurred through various

revolutionary tribunals and "about 20,000 more may have died 'unofficially'" (Palmer 114-15).

Others shared Dickens' concern for England's troubles and recognized that the nation needed immediate solutions. Consequently, a plethora of theories came into being. Traditional conservatives found answers in the maintenance of order based on the family structure and a belief in God. Liberals proposed enlightenment theories holding that science and reason could free man from all superstition and become the basis for all human conduct. They proposed the implementation of enlightened legal systems and constitutional guarantees, and equality based on the equal distribution of material wealth (Fiero 5:68). In 1832, British liberal Jeremy Bentham developed the idea of utilitarianism (a system Dickens derided in Hard Times) proposing the "greatest happiness for the greatest number of people'" (qtd. Fiero 5:68).

Meanwhile, others forged their own meaning of revolution. German theorist Karl Marx and journalist Freidrich Engels introduced The Communist Manifesto (1848) that called for radical socialism with violent revolution to destroy the old order to hasten the arrival of the new. The Manifesto led to Marx's celebrated Das Kapital (1868) which criticized free enterprise and outlined a program to perfect the state. Utopian socialist, Pierre Joseph Proudhon visualized a society independent of state control. The extreme anarchists desired complete elimination of the law and the state (Fiero 68).

While fears persisted in Europe, Dickens experienced some of the realities stemming from the advance of industry. When only fourteen years old, Dickens' parents forced him to quit school for a time to work at Warren's blacking factory. Dickens' parents kept this incident secret from his siblings and everyone else. In fact, Dickens' father forged the commencement dates at a new school that Charles attended, so that the absence would not be recorded. However, records show that the Dickens' family did not experience a financial crisis during the period in which young Charles went to work, which puzzles scholars. Nevertheless, Dickens rarely failed to mention this injustice in his novels (Allen 103).

Dickens' perception of the conditions found in eighteenth France and nineteenth century England exhibit similarities. When hard times occur, they inevitably fall on the lower classes. For nineteenth century England, industrialism became tantamount to misery in the lives of commoners. English peasants saw industry affect their ability to support their families in the country. Many English left for urban areas with the hope of finding work, but found that city life brought "critical life situations--illnesses, unemployment, injury, housing shortages..." (Mintz 88). When men, women, and children did find work, they toiled from morning till night. Children experienced work weeks as long as sixty hours that earned them as little as thirty cents (Fremantle 28-29). Earning money for even basic necessities became difficult, many families had to scrimp on food (Mintz 88). French commoners perhaps

experienced greater deprivation: food shortages and the lack of resources created feelings of despair in the people. Dickens says that the old regime despoiled the once abundant countryside.

> Hunger was pushed out the tall houses, in the wretched clothing that hung upon poles and lines; Hunger was patched into them with straw and rag and wood and paper; Hunger was repeated in every fragment of the small modicum of firewood that the man sawed off Hunger stared down from the smokeless chimneys, and started up from the filthy street that had no offal, among its refuse, of anything to eat.[1]

Dickens describes the grim conditions that plague agriculture in France: "patches of poor rye where corn should have been, patches of poor peas and beans, patches of most coarse vegetable substitutes for wheat...."[2] Agricultural turmoil hampered the nation's ability to sustain itself, but agricultural fluctuations facilitated the decline of King Louis XVI (Lefebvre 117). Nineteenth century England experienced also agricultural distress due to industrialism, which changed the way that the English lived and worked. Often large tracts of farmland would be bought up by entrepenuers, sometimes leaving peasants homeless and unemployed. When entrepenuers did hire farm laborers, under them workers experienced slave-like treatment (Fiero 5:67).

Dickens says that in addition to agricultural

difficulties, French peasants paid all taxes: "the tax for the state, the tax for the church, the tax for the lord, tax local and tax general..."[3] The peasants may have been bound by law to pay taxes, but most lacked resources. Consequently, public officials evicted peasants from their homes, leaving the Farmer-General a wealthy man. He possessed thirty horses in stables, twenty-four male domestics, and six ladies in waiting.[4] Similarly, nineteenth century factory-owners and entrepreneurs grew wealthy at the expense of the common people; the working-class received little income in return for their hard labor (Fiero 5:66).

Chapter Five marks the lapse of five years, and the turmoil accelerates within France. When a cask of wine breaks in the street, starving peasants run wildly to retain the lost wine. Men and women "dipped in the puddles with little mugs of mutilated earthenware, or even with handkerchiefs from women's heads which were squeezed dry into infants' mouths..."[5] They searched desperately for anything edible; they shredded "spare onions and the like for supper, while many were at the fountain, washing leaves, and grasses, and any such small yielding of the earth that could be eaten."[6] And "few children were to be seen...," a result of widespread famine. "Death" seems to be the only remedy to ease the pain of these people.[7]

Book One says that in 1775, the old regime rules. Both kings and queens go unnamed by Dickens and his refusal to name them signifies their unworthiness to sit upon the

throne. Their physical features, such as "large jaws" depict the destructive nature of these kings. Dickens says that the French King swallowed an entire nation.[8] Charles Darnay, nephew to the king, reveals that France has become "a crumbling tower of waste, mismanagement, extortion, debt, mortgage, oppression, hunger, nakedness, and suffering.'"[9] By engaging in abuses a king breaches the terms of his divine right (Diderot 8). Dickens asserts that under divine right, a king must answer to a higher power and rule accordingly; the kings of England and France must seek the common good for their nation and its people. Consequently, Dickens does not disparage monarchial rule, but the abusive and corrupt actions of these leaders. For instance, Dickens reveals the impudence of the French king when he shows that he places himself above all, misinterpreting scripture. "The earth and the fullness thereof are mine, saith Monseigneur...'"[10]

Eighteenth century philosophes warned about the possibility of abuse since kings too have mortal natures. Diderot's Political Writings in the section "Observations sur le Nakaz" describe a bad king as "someone who has a personal interest separate from that of his people" (161). For example, Dickens says that among the French regime's pursuits, they worked to attain pleasure and fancy: "Dress was the one unfailing talisman and charm used for keeping all things in their places."[11] Everybody prepares themselves to be ready at all times as if for a fancy ball.

Such frizzling and powdering and sticking up of

> hair, such delicate complexions artificially preserved and mended, ... and such delicate honour to the sense of smell, would surely keep anything going, forever and ever.[12]

The court's emphasis on materialism becomes an obsession. Aristocratic women put fashion before raising their children, surrendering that task to peasant women.[13] Dickens calls this state of mind "the leprosy of unreality" that "disfigures every human creature in attendance upon Monseigneur."[14] This artificiality permeates the aristocracy and separates them from the horrors that exist on their periphery.

The callous nature of the aristocracy evokes a monster-like image.[15] Their self-indulgence acts as a mask, blinding them from dismal conditions. Consequently, the regime fails to act to quell the crisis. Chris Baldick's In Frankenstein's Shadow, alludes to this monster citing Thomas Paine's Rights of Man (1791) which identifies the aristocracy as the monster and parent of the Revolution (Baldick 23). But the comparison of monster to the Revolution came first from Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790) (16). The "monster image is a powerful means of organizing, understanding, and at the same time preserving the chaotic and confused nature of the revolutionary events in Burke's accounts" (18). Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft's Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution (1794) "traces the causes of the Revolution to the negligence of the

decadent and over-refined French court" (Baldick 23). Likewise, due to their inaction, Dickens sums up the entire regime as a "stony business altogether."[16]

The king's callous nature can also be seen when he interacts with the peasant people. When the king enters the countryside in his speeding carriage, he hits and kills a child.[17] The king shows no remorse when he discovers his carriage caused the child's death, and he blames the people for the accident. He says: "you people cannot take care of yourselves and your children....How do I know what injury you have done my horses.'"[18] Thereafter, the king tosses a gold coin to compensate for the loss while Ernest Defarge catches it, but he throws angrily the coin back at the king. This return of the coin causes the king to retaliate: "You dogs! ...I would ride over any of you very willingly, and exterminate you from the earth. If I knew which rascal threw at the carriage....'"[19]

Corruption took on other forms within the old regime. Anyone who knew the Monseigneur or had any connections with the state made vast fortunes.[20] Consequently, the king's courtiers acted as sycophants, doing all as instructed and without question. Dickens says:

> Then, what submission, what cringing and fawning, what servility, what abject humiliation! As to bowing down in body and spirit, nothing in the way was left for Heaven - which may have been one among other reasons why the worshippers of Monseigneur never troubled it.[21]

In addition to the corruption found within the French court, incompetence abounds. Dickens says:

> Military officers destitute of military knowledge; naval officers with no idea of a ship; civil officers without a notion of affairs; brazen ecclesiastics, of the worst world worldly, ... all totally unfit for their several callings, all lying horribly in pretending to belong to them, but nearly or remotely of the order of Monseigneur.[22]

Even though Dickens disapproves of the kings of England and France, he does not oppose kingship or the idea of divine right. Dickens believes that the aristocracy should govern because he thinks that the elite and erudite have the special knowledge and capabilities needed to remedy society's ills (Shaw 119). But Dickens cannot support the elite if they sink to committing abuses; when Dickens exposes corruption he seems to imply that bad kings be dethroned so that good kings can replace them.

Dickens charged also English Parliament with inefficiencies. When Dickens learned that it took Parliament almost fifty years to enact the much needed Factory Act (1833) aimed to improve factory and mining conditions (Shaw 47), Dickens compared England's condition to the "general mind of France before the breaking out of the first Revolution'" (Johnson 1:481). Further, Dickens charged Parliament with responsibility for the "brutal workings of an economic system that condemned the masses of

people to ignorance, suffering, and squalor" (Johnson 2:858). And George Bernard Shaw's Shaw on Dickens mentions Dickens' disillusion with Parliament.

> The House of Commons, working on the Party system is an extraordinarily efficient device for dissipating all our reforming energy and ability in party debate when anything urgently needs to be done, finding out 'how not to do it' (47).

Dickens could not stand idle. He formed an Administrative Reform Association to remedy the inadequacies of government institutions. But charges of class antagonism caused the failure of the Association (Johnson 2:845).

Prior to Dickens' disillusionment with Parliament, he considered entering the political arena. Young Dickens worked first as a reporter for the House of Commons where he got the idea to write an article (under the pseudonym "B") to support a bill that proposed to abolish the forced labor of women and children (under thirteen) from working in collieries (Kaplan 145). Here, Dickens experienced a moment of shared success when the bill passed through Parliament.

Dickens addresses the problem of materialism not only within the French aristocracy, but within nineteenth century England. "Her sister of the shield and trident, rolled with exceeding smoothness down hill, making paper money and spending it."[23] Materialism concerns Dickens because he thinks it brings about a lack of order with its trifling view of man (House 138). Likewise, Humphry House's The Dickens' World points to this mania of modern life and

criticizes England for its materialism: "Practically the whole country was money-mad" (138). Chapter Two mentions that robberies became commonplace, leaving people unable to leave town without first locking up their possessions in rented warehouses.[24] In an effort to deter crime, severe penalties became used widely.

> The hangman was reported ever busy and ever worse than useless, was in constant requisition; now, stringing up long rows of miscellaneous criminals; now, hanging a house breaker on Saturday who had been taken on Tuesday; now, burning people in the hand at Newgate by the dozen,....today, taking the life of an atrocious murderer, and to-morrow of a wretched pilferer who had robbed a farmer's boy of sixpence.[25]

Hangings "did the least good in the way of prevention - it might almost have been worth remarking that the fact was clearly the reverse..."[26] Tellson's Bank had the unusual duty of imposing daily penalties. Those who participated in any sort of crime involving the Bank, such forgery, bad notes, and opening letters would face death as their punishment.[27] Here, Tellson's represents the darker side of materialism because their judgement demeans humanity. Likewise, Jerry Cruncher, an English porter for Tellson's, imitates their example. He supports the exploits of the Bank and profits by working nightly as a body snatcher. Jerry anticipates each hanging.

> The tainted crowd, dispersed up and down this

> hideous scene of action....For people then paid to see the play at the Old Bailey, just as they paid to see the play in Bedlam - only the former entertainment was much the dearer.[28]

Also, Jerry symbolizes the blood-thirsty nature of the crowd. Dickens believes public displays of violence undermine the well-being of society and cause public servants to become tyrants (Magnet 158). Here, Dickens suggests that man reaps what he sows.

Again, the blood-thirsty nature of people comes to focus with the trial of the aristocrat, Charles Darnay. In Chapter Three, Darnay stands before the English tribunal accused of treason. Dickens says that the jury typically imagines the indicted already "hanged, beheaded, and quartered..."[29] Soon after, the attorney-general announces prematurely that Darnay has for many years practiced treason.[30] Dickens reveals that the pursuit of justice becomes lost since the English courts aimed instead at speed and efficiency. Dickens says:

> ...the jury, being a loyal jury (as he knew they were), and being a responsible jury (as they knew they were), must positively find the prisoner Guilty, and make an end of him, whether they liked it or not.[31]

Someone accused of a crime had little chance of a fair trial.[32] Dickens reiterates perhaps the lack of justice sought on his behalf. When as a child, Dickens' welfare came second to a nation that viewed productivity as supreme.

Similarly, the tribunal neglects the welfare of the accused when they render all guilty verdicts. Here, the court's time-saving efforts can be likened to the well-oiled machines of industry.

Justice does triumph, but only by accident. In Chapter Three, Lucie Manette, a French aristocrat who resides in England, makes an impassioned plea on behalf of Darnay. She tells the jury that Darnay helped to rescue her long imprisoned father from the Bastille. Consequently, Lucie evokes emotion in the jury. They change the verdict from guilty and acquit Darnay. Here Dickens reveals that the jury fails to base their decision on truth. Prior to Lucie's testimony, the jury knew already that the witnesses could not identify positively Darnay as spy, since his lawyer, Stryver, shows the jury that Darnay resembles his assistant, Sydney Carton.[33] However the English resent the French regime, so the jury would have gladly condemned this Frenchman to death. Almost immediately the jury and its onlookers regret the decision to release Darnay. Dickens says: a "loud buzz swept into the street as if the baffled blue-flies were dispersing in search of other carrion."[34]

While the pursuit for justice becomes obfuscated in the courts, the desire for justice grows stronger for the common people of France. Crane Brinton's Anatomy of a Revolution explains that revolution "cannot do without the word justice and all the sentiments it arouses" (36). The need for justice becomes understood when Dickens describes vividly the plight of these people. "The cloud settled over Saint

Antoine emitting darkness and despair."[35] The peasants "had undergone a terrible grinding and re-grinding in the mill. The mill ground young people old, and the children grew old before their time."[36]

Doctor Manette experienced also great injustice when he became a prisoner of the Bastille for eighteen years. His crime amounted to no more than being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Dickens asserts that Doctor Manette, while in prison, experienced tormenting isolation under the "Separate System" (Glancy 87). Book One says that Mr. Lorry, an employee of Tellson's, "travels to dig someone [Dr. Manette] out of a grave."[37] Mr. Lorry discovers that Manette resembles a man who had been buried alive. Dickens says that he represents a shell of a man who "so entirely lost the life and resonance of the human voice, that it affected the senses like a once beautiful colour faded away into a poor weak stain."[38] While in prison, Doctor Manette experienced no human contact, and he only cobbled shoes during those eighteen years. Consequently, the doctor struggles to keep himself from reverting to his old habit whenever tensions become too great. Dickens says:

> ...[cobbling shoes] relieved his pain so much, by substituting the perplexity of the brain, and by substituting, as he became more practised, the ingenuity of the hands, for the ingenuity of the mental torture; that he has never been able to bear the thought of putting it quite out of reach.[39]

Dickens disparages the Separate System particularly

after his observance of it in America on March 10, 1842. This experience inspired Dickens to create the character, Doctor Manette (Glancy 87). Dickens travelled to learn more about this notable Separate System since England sought an alternative to their Silent System. The latter required that prisoners work and eat together without speaking (Glancy 87). Dickens, aghast, saw that the Separate System required that men must live in total isolation and wear garb which covered their faces (Collins 121).

Dickens reveals also his views about capital punishment. Earlier he deprecated the base activities of the Englishman, Jerry Cruncher. And Dickens contended that capital punishment does not deter crime. In England's *Daily News*, Dickens wrote polemics that provided "psychological insight, emotional appeal, statistics, and pertinent references to the literature on the subject..." (Collins 227). Dickens attended a few public hangings which helped to substantiate his opposition to capital punishment. One in particular left Dickens stunned. In Switzerland the first husband-wife execution drew as many as thirty-thousand people (Collins 235). Here Dickens observed firsthand a festival-like atmosphere where a bacchanalian crowd displayed little concern for the fate of these prisoners.

Nevertheless, before and during the Revolution, hangings prevail as the means for attaining justice. The common people experience much injustice, so their desire grows increasingly for the wrongs of the monarchy to be made right. Crane Brinton's Anatomy of a Revolution says that

those who choose revolt must appear to have been wronged and experience some sort of "moral transfiguration" (36). When Dickens illustrates the wrongs done to the peasants and the immorality of these, the peasants seem justified in taking action to save themselves. But their anger towards the aristocracy transforms into a "whirlpool of boiling water."[40] Where "every human drop in the caldron had a tendency to be sucked towards the vortex where Defarge himself, already begrimed with gunpowder and sweat, issued orders, issued arms..."[41] Subsequently the people rally together, "all armed alike in hunger and revenge."[42] After the storming of the Bastille, the new Republic declares their goals: liberty, equality, and fraternity, but Dickens undermines their slogan with the addition of "Death;"[43] the peasants decree that death will come to those who do not belong to the new order. Dickens' addition of death foreshadows also the bloody events that occur during the "Reign of Terror"(Baumgarten 12:166).

Rousseau's Social Contract (1762) introduces first the principles of "liberte, egalite, and fraternite" proposing the ideal of civil society as one democratic in structure, where sovereignty resides with the people (49-50). But Crane Brinton's Anatomy of a Revolution implies that these principles may be inferior because they resemble "worldly issues" in comparison to the English who choose instead to fight for religious principles and ideals (132). Georges Lefebvre's French Revolution defends the French people because he says that liberty and equality possess

irresistible charm; the people imagine their futures as being free and equal.

> They imagined that their existence would improve, that their children, if not they themselves, would live in more favourable circumstances; they even hoped that other peoples will live so, and all, becoming free and equal, would be forever reconciled (Lefebvre 149).

Dickens wants the French people freed from oppression, but he believes that limits must exist because they encourage an orderly society. Edward Wagenknect, in his introduction to A Tale of Two Cities describes Dickens as "almost a fanatic on the necessity of maintaining order at any cost" (11). Dickens thought perhaps that if people want to be happy, they must abide by some restrictions. Miss Pross in A Tale, confirms Dickens' view. She says to Doctor Manette: 'For gracious sake, don't talk about Liberty: we have quite enough of that...'"[44] Likewise, Dickens describes the effects of the Revolution.

> All the air around was so thick and dark, the people were so passionately revengeful and fitful, the innocent were so constantly put to death on vague suspicion and black malice...[45]

The English felt also the effects of the Revolution since French emigrants feared that they too could be extradited by the new order. Along with their fears, the English Miss Pross, who later defeats the evil Madame Defarge, declares her disapproval towards the French revolutionaries:

"Confound their politics, Frustrate their knavish tricks, On him our hopes we fix, God save the King!'".[46] Miss Pross calls on the king of England to provide hope and to offer an asylum from what she declares to be nonsense.

But liberty possesses much appeal for the French common people because they think that liberty will bring them happiness. Daniel Ritchie's forward to Edmund Burke's Further Reflections on the Revolution in France defines two types of liberty: revolutionary and practical. The patriots choose the former in which the "citizens" eschew societal conventions because they believe that liberty exists outside of civilization. While practical liberty comes through education and a natural aristocracy where gentlemen adhere to the conventions of society: the social, economic, religious, and political institutions. These areas allow men to enjoy liberty by showing reverence for God, respect for ancients, and respect for parents. Consequently, the family works as a sort of microcosm in which men learn responsibility to others (ix). In addition, the eighteenth century philosophes describe a third type of liberty called "public freedom":

> ...a tangible, worldly, reality, something created by men to be enjoyed by men rather than a gift or a capacity, it was the man-made public space or market-place which antiquity had known as the area where freedom appears and becomes visible to all (Arendt 120-21).

The French peasants choose to obtain liberty through

revolutionary measures. Dickens asserts that they kill, pillage, and plunder all "For the love of Liberty.'"[47] But their desire for liberty becomes obfuscated when their thirst for revenge turns unquenchable. Eventually, the use of the guillotine becomes more frequent: "the ground it was most polluted, were a rotten red."[48] Fear prevails and paranoia begins to permeate the minds of the people, particularly since the revolutionaries passed "a law of Suspected."[49] This allowed for the arrest of all former noblemen and anyone suspected of royalist sympathies. Dickens says that this law "struck away all security for liberty or life, and delivered over any good and innocent person to any bad and guilty one..."[50] Meanwhile the patriots implement curfews at every town-gate.

> They stopped all comers and goers, cross-questioned them inspected their papers, looked for their names in lists of their own, turned them back or sent them on ... as their capricious judgement or fancy deemed best.[51]

The patriots came to suspect one another of thwarting their own freedom.

Dickens implies that liberty cannot exist without leaders who strive to seek the common good and maintain an orderly society. Like Dickens, Alex de Tocqueville travelled to America to observe democracy. His Democracy in America (1835) describes the difficulties that occurred when men sought to attain political liberty. Political liberty "is more easily lost; to neglect to hold it fast, is to

allow it to escape" (364). Liberty sometimes summons evils immediately; these "are apparent to all, and all are more or less affected by them" (364). Similarly, during the French Revolution, the citizen patriots experienced evils. For instance, as sleep became a rarity "many wild changes became observable on familiar things...."[52] The patriots could be seen gathered together "in a ghostly manner in the dead of the night, circling hand in hand round a shrivelled tree of Liberty."[53]

Dickens contends that the Revolution did not produce liberty for the common people, rather chaos and fear. de Tocqueville says that the advantages from political freedom take time, leaving men to strive instead for equality because its effects can be experienced frequently and more easily (365). In an attempt to attain equality, men abolish laws, change habits, and abandon manners (364). Similarly, Dickens' American trip allowed him to observe firsthand the effects of equality. Dickens saw men eschew traditions, prayers, ceremonies, and all matters of etiquette. Here, he concluded that men resembled savages because they abandoned the very things that give meaning and texture to life (Magnet 185). In France, the revolutionaries aimed to dismantle all representations of the old regime. The patriots decreed to shed the aristocracy and confiscated their property.[54] Ostensibly, the patriots hoped to make things equal by taking from the rich and giving to the poor.

The revolutionaries hope also to attain fraternity.

When the common people declare their slogan, liberty equality, and fraternity, they see themselves united in their fight to establish the new order. But Dickens says that they attack their own: "numbers of women lashed into blind frenzy whirled about, striking and tearing at their own friends until they dropped into a passionate swoon..."[55] While the patriots harm their allies, they choose also to follow blindly Madame Defarge who becomes their leader. She excites especially the common women to action, provoking them to anger and violence. Meanwhile, the people choose a second leader "a rather plump wife of a starved grocer, and the mother of two children withal, this lieutenant had already earned the complimentary name The Vengeance.[56] Together they lead the search, so the revolutionaries can repay the evil committed by wretched, old Foulon. After finding him, the people at Defarge's command "set his head and heart on Pikes, and carried the three spoils of the day in Wolf-procession through the streets."[57] The new Republic finds unity through only their violent actions, but they fail to find human fellowship.

The revolutionaries want to establish the new order as a democracy. But Dickens reveals that the new order remained an anarchy because they did all things according to their caprices and desires, leaving chaos to rule. Dickens says:

> There was little or no order of procedure, ensuring to any accused person any reasonable hearing. There could have been no such

> Revolution, if all laws, forms, and ceremonies, had not first been so monstrously abused, that the suicidal vengeance of the Revolution was to scatter them all to the winds.[58]

The people perhaps at times convene in a democratic manner, since they vote to pass laws, such as the law of Suspects.[59] But like the old regime, the patriots lack responsibility and abuse their positions of authority. Dickens says that "at every jury man's vote, there was a roar. Another and another. Roar and Roar."[60] The patriots relish their seats as judges and jurors, causing the prisons to over-flow. But they remedy the situation with the use of "La Guillotine": the ... "best cure for headache, it [guillotine] infallibly prevented the hair from turning grey, it parted a peculiar delicacy to the complexion, it was the National Razor which shaved close...."[61] Rather than a democracy, the patriots activities "reflected the evils of government tyranny, the retaliation of slaves" (Baldick 22).

Dickens communicated his mistrust for democracy when he said that he had no faith in the people ruling within parliamentary government (Goldberg 143). George Bernard Shaw says that Dickens "gives no more quarter to Democracy than Ruskin" (119). John Ruskin, a contemporary of Dickens (G.B. Shaw calls Ruskin a Communist), leveled blows against English modern society declaring the nation in a diseased and horrible state (119). Likewise, Dickens recognized the crisis that plagued nineteenth century England, but he could not lend his support to any organization that he thought

might lead to mob violence; Dickens refused even to support the Chartist movement (House 179). Dickens could not succumb to the idea of the people gaining power.

In Barnaby Rudge(1841), Dickens focuses on the fury of the mob with the Gordon Riots. These riots depict "an attack on civilization itself and as a momentary, epidemic reversion of men to their precivilized character" (Magnet 105). Dickens' belief about the mob relates to his dislike for democracy. Rousseau's Social Contract names democracy as the least stable form of government being subject to many changes and risks of civil war (65). Others shared a dislike of democracy. Aristotle, in The Politics says democracy tends to degenerate into anarchy (Rubin 51). And Thomas Hobbes, in Leviathan (1651), says that he prefers a monarchy to democracy (143-44). He believes that men must relinquish authority to a ruler because men possess a brutish, war-like nature (129).

In A Tale Dickens portrays the caprices of the mob in three distinct scenes. Book Two refers to the mob as a "sea of violence." In this instance the mob slaughters the prisoners at LaForce: Madame Defarge, armed to kill, leads the way while uttering frightful screams, "and The Vengeance flinging her arms about her head like all the forty Furies at once, was tearing from house to house, rousing the women."[62] The second mob scene portrays the release of prisoners from the Bastille, and the capriciousness of Madame Defarge shows when she releases a prisoner "as a cat might have done to a mouse...."[63] In the third mob scene,

Dickens shows the epitome of mob activity when a very large crowd gathers around Darnay to congratulate him on his acquittal. Dickens says: Darnay realizes the irony of his situation, because these same people that gather to celebrate his death now gather to celebrate his vindication.

> No sooner was the acquittal pronounced, than tears were shed as freely as blood at another time, and such fraternal embraces were bestowed upon the prisoner by as many of both sexes as could rush at him, ... the very same people ... would have rushed at him with the very same intensity, to rend him to pieces and strew him over the street.[64]

Dickens recognizes the unpredictability of the mob and likens its nature to barbarism. Dickens says that the mob reminds him of "wildest savages in their most barbarous disguise."[65] Dickens describes the mob as "ruffians,"[66] and he compares their activities to "butchery."[67] Dickens asserts that mob activities accomplish little good for the well being of society.

In Chapter Fifteen, Dickens illustrates the lack of conviction exhibited by a mob participant. Dickens calls him the "mender of roads". The mender of roads encounters Madame Defarge and her husband, Ernest, while he observes the procession of the King and Queen through the countryside. He shouts. "Long live the King, Long live the Queen, Long live everybody and everything!"[68] The Defarges see that he will be an effective leader since he conjures up

false emotions in himself and in others. Madame Defarge says: "you would shout and shed tears for anything, if it made a show and a noise...'";[69] Yes! replies the mender of roads. And she exclaims that you could 'make these fools believe that it will last for ever. Then, they are the nearer ended.'"[70] Dickens reveals that demagogues rely on rhetoric to encourage the folly of the people.

In writing a revolutionary tale, some claim Dickens may be a revolutionary. T.A. Jackson's Charles Dickens: The Progress of a Radical (1937) makes this assertion. Jackson concludes this simply because Dickens supports change in his novels. But Edward Wagenknect's Dickens and the Scandalmongers calls Jackson's claim an absurdity (110-11). Dickens recognizes that serious problems exist in society, but he does not advocate revolutionary measures. Bernard Shaw's Shaw on Dickens defines a revolutionary as someone who sees the social order as "transitory, mistaken, objectionable, and pathological: a social disease to be cured, not endured" (48). Shaw describes a bourgeois as someone who tolerates the existing social order; he sees the order as permanent and natural and thinks that society may need only occasional reforms (48). Perhaps Dickens falls somewhere in between since he cannot tolerate the violence of revolution or live with continual abuses within society. He seems to desire constructive reforms. Not unlike England's Fabian Society which worked to implement solutions to what they considered grew from capitalist industrialism. They fought for equal opportunity so that all could

experience freedom (Fremantle 244). But their methods brought results slowly: almost forty years lapsed before they saw acceptance of their Labor policies that encompassed new theories for public ownership, social welfare, and political reforms (240-44). Again, Dickens defies revolutionary thinking when he communicates a warning to his contemporaries to act carefully as Britain looks for solutions to problems. Dickens wants resolution, not revolution. He says:

> Crush humanity out of shape one more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured form. Sow the same seed of rapacious licence and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind.[71]

Dickens' answer for England may be found within his characters. Lucie and Doctor Manette both experienced injustice. The doctor became imprisoned wrongly for a period of eighteen years, and this left Lucie alienated from her father. Neither sought justice; rather, they chose to enjoy their remaining years together. Lucie and her father seem to espouse the New Testament scripture: turn the other cheek when evil is done unto you. Likewise, Charles Darnay embodies virtuous characteristics. Before the outbreak, Darnay abandons the comforts of being the king's nephew when he leaves France to live and work in England, independent of the old regime. Darnay refuses to become a party to the abuses the king imposes upon the peasant people.

In the midst of Revolution, Darnay resolves to return to France to rescue the imprisoned Gabelle, his former servant.[72] As a returning emigrant, Darnay realizes that he will face grave danger, yet he cannot ignore the plea of an innocent, just man.[73] Dickens portrays Darnay as willing also to sacrifice his own needs for the benefit of others.

Sydney Carton at first glance seems to lack the noble characteristics found in Darnay. Dickens describes Carton as one of "the idlest and most unpromising of men..."[74] Carton tells Lucie that he is a man who died young.[75] He wasted much of his life destroying himself with alcohol. After Lucie and Carton cultivate a friendship, he becomes convicted about his wasted life. He says: "I have had unformed ideas of striving afresh, beginning anew, shaking off sloth and sensuality, and fighting out the abandoned fight.'"[76] His encounter with Lucie allows Carton to witness unconditional love and acceptance. Lucie's love seems contagious because Carton reciprocates her love by sacrificing his life for Lucie's husband, Darnay. With the aid of Miss Pross's brother, Solomon, Carton masquerades as the ill-fated prisoner, while Darnay exits the prison pretending to be Carton.[77]

Lucie's character embodies perfection, and her life has a profound impact on almost every character she encounters. Dickens uses the metaphor of a golden thread to illustrate Lucie's strength.

> She was the golden thread that united him [her father] to a Past beyond his mercy, and to a

> Present beyond his misery: and the sound of her voice, the light of her face, the touch of her hand, had a strong beneficial influence with him almost always.[78]

Lucie helps to restore her father to health. After his release from prison, Manette struggles to function. But Lucie's patience and love brought Doctor Manette hope. Lucie affects changes also in Charles Darnay, Mr. Lorry, and Miss Pross. Prior to Darnay's encounter with Lucie, she pleads with the courts to spare Darnay's life because he helped to rescue her father from the Bastille. And Mr. Lorry, a once callous man of business, becomes transformed when Lucie accepts him into her family. Mr. Lorry never before knew family or friends, just a life filled with business. He says: "We men of business, who serve a House, are not our own masters. We have to think of the House more than ourselves.'"[79] But after becoming a part of the Manette family, Mr. Lorry puts aside business for the needs of his family, and he thanks "his bachelor stars for having lighted him in his declining years to a Home."[80] Also, Miss Pross, an Englishwoman and servant to Lucie, devotes her entire life to her. She seems to love Lucie like a daughter. In fact, Doctor Manette says that Miss Pross spoils Lucie[81] Similarly, Lucie reciprocates her affection; she does not treat Miss Pross as servant, but more like the mother she lost long ago. Sometimes Miss Pross would fall ill, and Lucie only could comfort her. Doctor Manette defined her disorder as "the fit of the jerks.'"[82]

Miss Pross ultimately must defend Lucie's life against the evil Madame Defarge, leader of the Terror. When Dickens pits Miss Pross against Madame Defarge, they become symbols: England versus France. But with a closer look, there perhaps lies something deeper. Miss Pross fights on behalf of Lucie, an aristocrat, and Madame Defarge represents the spirit of the mob. When the fight ends, Dickens makes Miss Pross the victor. In saving Lucie, who reflects moral excellence and noble characteristics, Dickens reiterates his point that the aristocracy should rule because they have the special knowledge needed. But the aristocracy must uphold these standards and act responsibly, striving to protect the welfare of the people.

It seems that Madame Defarge's experience, strength, and fierce emotion will overpower easily the inexperienced and gentle Miss Pross. But here Dickens makes another point that one must be motivated by love not hate. Miss Pross, surrogate mother to Lucie, acts to protect a woman she loves: her actions being motivated by reason. And Madame Defarge, leader of the mob, attacks Miss Pross with the motivation of rage. When Defarge dies, the spirit of rage subsides in which Dickens implies the end of Revolution. Dickens says:

> It was in vain for Madame Defarge to struggle and to strike Miss Pross, with the vigorous tenacity of love, always so much stronger than hate, clasped her tight, and even lifted her from the floor in the struggle that they had....I am

stronger than you, I bless Heaven for it.[83]

In addition to Dickens' acknowledgment of the power of love, Chapter Fifteen refers to the biblical truth that men reap what they sow. Dickens says: "Sow the same seed of rapacious licence and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind."[84] Here Dickens says that the Revolution came in response to the cruelty and carelessness of the nobility; their harsh actions brought harsher reactions. In contrast, Dickens shows that rewards come from doing good. Lucie embodies good, so she receives her reward: the preservation of her husband, Darnay. Dickens seems to believe ardently in this agrarian metaphor since he used it in Christmas Carol (1843) and Hard Times (1854) (Baldick 94).

In contrast to Dickens, Carlyle's French Revolution uses the sowing-reaping metaphor, to illustrate an authoritative image of poetic justice, not its spiritual aspects (Baldick 94). Carlyle conveys the hopeless, pessimistic, and Brueghel-like view of the world when he speaks of the "natural side of human nature, the bestial, cannibalistic side, the side prone to force and violence" (Timko 12:188).

But Dickens' vision embraces the possibility that good exists in all men and that when love evinces itself through the actions of others positive change can result. Sydney Carton represents this evolution. Carton repents and abandons his old life to strive for the better purpose. Joseph Gold's Charles Dickens: Radical-Moralist claims that

Dickens' beliefs come from a moralist point of view: the belief in the reconciliation of humanity that "what we do and what we are matters and can be changed" (6). Dickens does not propose necessarily that all must sacrifice their lives like Sydney Carton, but that all men can contribute positively to society in a variety of ways.

Sydney Carton symbolizes the key battle: the conquest over self. One must choose good and allow evil to wane. Dickens shows this with Carton's conversion. Subsequently, Carton chooses to offer his life in place of Darnay. Here, Carton's actions reflect the true act of fraternity: man loving and giving to another unconditionally. The practice of fraternity unites humanity. Carton says:

> I see the lives for which I lay down my life, peaceful, useful, prosperous and happy, in that England which I shall see no more. I see Her with a child upon her bosom, who bears my name. I see her father, aged and bent, but otherwise restored, and faithful to all men in his healing office, and at peace. I see the good old man, so long their friend, in ten years' time enriching them with all he has, and passing tranquilly to his reward.[85]

For the first time Carton finds contentment with himself even in the face of death. His final remarks confirm that victory can be found in virtue. "It [to die for another] is a far, far, better thing that I do, than I have ever done' it is a far, far, better rest that I go than I have ever known.'"[86] Here too Dickens implies that Carton's sacrifice

represents a microcosm of the greater sacrifice when Christ died for all.

A Tale of Two Cities conveys both a warning and a solution for England. Dickens concludes that the French Revolution was the worst of times, thus, prompting Dickens to propose that positive, constructive measures must be taken to correct abuses in an effort to preserve society. Dickens believes in the maintenance of an orderly society and allowing the virtuous to rule as the determinants for a good society. Above all Dickens believes that through proper influence, men can change for the better. Whatever the form of government, responsibility exists with everyone to learn from those who do good and strive to conduct themselves in all matters, with moral integrity.

NOTES

[1] Charles Dickens A Tale of Two Cities, ed. George Woodcock (London: Penguin. 1970), 61.

[2] Ibid.,143.

[3] Ibid.,144.

[4] Ibid.,135.

[5] Ibid.,59-60.

[6] Ibid.,144.

[7] Ibid.,144.

[8] Ibid.,135.

[9] Ibid.,155.

[10] Ibid.,135.

[11] Ibid.,138.

[12] Ibid.,137.

[13] Ibid.,37.

[14] Ibid.,137.

[15] Ibid.,148.

[16] Ibid.,149.

[17] Ibid.,144.

[18] Ibid.,141.

[19] Ibid.,142.

[20] Ibid.,136.

[21] Ibid.,136.

[22] Ibid.,36.

[23] Ibid.,37.

[24] Ibid.,37.

[25] Ibid.,37.

[53] Ibid.,278.

[54] Ibid.,271.

[55] Ibid.,252.

[56] Ibid.,251.

[57] Ibid.,254.

[58] Ibid.,344.

[59] Ibid.,302.

[60] Ibid.,362.

[61] Ibid.,302.

[62] Ibid.,252.

[63] Ibid.,254.

[64] Ibid.,314.

[65] Ibid.,291.

[66] Ibid.,269.

[67] Ibid.,203.

[68] Ibid.,291.

[69] Ibid.,204.

[70] Ibid.,204.

[71] Ibid.,399.

[72] Ibid.,272.

[73] Ibid.,272.

[74] Ibid.,117.

[75] Ibid.,117.

[76] Ibid.,181.

[77] Ibid.,380-82.

[78] Ibid.,110.

[79] Ibid.,113.

[26] Ibid.,84.

[27] Ibid.,84.

[28] Ibid.,91.

[29] Ibid.,93.

[30] Ibid.,95.

[31] Ibid.,97.

[32] Ibid.,95.

[33] Ibid.,105.

[34] Ibid.,109.

[35] Ibid.,61.

[36] Ibid.,61.

[37] Ibid.,46.

[38] Ibid.,70.

[39] Ibid.,234.

[40] Ibid.,244.

[41] Ibid.,244.

[42] Ibid.,245.

[43] Ibid.,275.

[44] Ibid.,318.

[45] Ibid.,316.

[46] Ibid.,312.

[47] Ibid.,284.

[48] Ibid.,302.

[49] Ibid.,302.

[50] Ibid.,302.

[51] Ibid.,275.

[52] Ibid.,378.

[80] Ibid.,129.

[81] Ibid.,130.

[82] Ibid.,130.

[83] Ibid.,397.

[84] Ibid.,399.

[85] Ibid.,404.

[86] Ibid.,404.

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