

## Author in Transition and Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities

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### Abstract

A multidimensional and universal scope and a specific colonial period co-exist and cooperate to make Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities a peculiar product of human imagination. The novel has clear political views (Li, 2013). At the same time, the imaginative world created foregrounds contemporary England through the portrayal of London (Brown, 1970). This paper traces Dickens' power as a writer who exploits his imagination to influence the imagination of generations of readers.

**Keywords:** multidimensional, world, readers, portrayal

### 1. Introduction

The novel covers approximately eighteen years from 1775-1793. Dickens masterfully weaves the plot to hold the story together over such a long period. (Glancy, 1991). Darney is arrested and imprisoned, largely due to the efforts of the revolutionary Defarges, Mme Defarge has Darnay re-arrested and plots to kill Lucie and her daughter as well. Thus the characters are linked to give unity to the plot. The garret room that housed Dr. Manette is repeatedly seen in the book; Sydney Carton saves Darnay two different times; most importantly, the theme of resurrection is repeatedly seen with the

rescue from the death of Dr. Manette, Darnay, and others. Such repetitions marvelously stitch the complicated plot into a whole fabric.

In this way, the plot of A Tale of Two Cities has come full circle.

### 2. Representation of Revolution

Charles Dickens's novel A Tale of Two Cities has a strong historical connotation. It is set in London and Paris before and during the French revolution. Dickens's source is undoubtedly Thomas Carlyle's monumental work: The French Revolution (Watt, 1957). However, Dickens views the upheaval in his way as his use of the opening line suggests that it was "the best of times as well as the worst of time." Dickens's vision of the revolution encompasses aristocratic exploitation and neglect of the poor, public bloodshed, and private vengeance.

As a follower of Carlyle's view, Dickens holds the French aristocrats primarily responsible for precipitating the upheaval. Dickens draws the reader's attention to the terrible situation of the French urban poor in the novel. He describes St Antoine as a place where "hunger was prevalent everywhere." The suffering of the poor is related to the exploitativeness of the aristocracy in the novel. Thus while the inhabitants of St Antoine fight with each other to lap up the red wine spilled on the street, one of the

great lords in power at the court drinks his evening chocolate with the help of four men. This luxurious lifestyle of the noble lords is shown to be sustained directly by exploitation.

Aristocratic oppression in *A Tale of Two Cities* directly fuels revolutionary fires. Thus, the contempt and arrogance with which Monsieur Evermonde treats the parents of the child whose death he has caused sparks the first act of extreme violence. The Monsieur's rape of Mme Defarge's sister creates in her that hatred of the aristocracy that functions as the most frightening aspect of the novel.

However, while highlighting the causes, Dickens does not justify the revolution. The novel shows how the revolution incorporates the worst feature of what it seeks to overthrow. Dickens uses the imagery of blood-drinking devouring to suggest this. In Dickens's description, the blood becomes the staple diet of La Guillotine, where people are brought to slake her devouring thirst. This conception of the revolution as an orgy of bloodletting projects it as a nightmare.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens also associates the revolution with a complete breakdown of order. This is manifest in the functioning of the revolutionary courts. Dickens describes the jury that tries Darany as "the falcons were trying the honest men." In this situation, it is unsurprising that the jury is tricked into convicting Darany by Dr. Menet's testimony.

Despite holding the aristocrats responsible, Dickens sees the revolution leading directly to the reign of terror.

### 3. Imagination and History

The reality-fantasy mix runs through all of Dickens's works. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the plot seems to bring the reader merely a straightforward story of adventure, danger, and suspense with a certain amount of commentary, characterization, and atmosphere added. But without violating 'reality,' Dickens has managed to give everything, including the plot, a coloring of fantasy. The basic details of the whole novel are the French Revolution itself. Dickens places a group of characters at the center of these events in France. But their roles are more those of victims than agents. However, Dickens also places side by side the agents of the revolution, the leaders, and the participants as in the character of the Defarges.

Thus, the fictional characters' lives get attached to the representative of the revolution. To integrate the two narrative lines of the novel, Dickens makes Dr. Menette's family arrive in Paris in the Year of Terror, 1792. This Dickens places the fictional characters amidst an upheaval. Thus, Dickens can provide an alternative to oppression and an upheaval political saga. This alternative is to be found in the example of human decency and human brotherhood that the family narrative offers. Therefore, Dickens suggests that Darany's acute conscience, Dr. Menette's integrity, Lucie's domestic steadfastness, Carton's heroic sacrifice, and Mr. Lorry's and Miss Pross's loyalty would have prevented the revolution.

Though Dickens brings together a family saga with a historical upheaval, in

the end, his focus shifts to the sacrifice made by Sidney Carton; thus, in the end, the revolution only serves as a backdrop to the story of the chief characters with all the elements of suspense and thrill as Charles Darany's family escapes to England. Though the thesis of the novel is that revolution can also happen in England, in the end, *A Tale of Two Cities* remains a fictional tale of a family.

#### **4. The author in action**

The double theme has an obvious attraction for a writer preoccupied with disguises, rival impulses, and hidden affinities. Doubling of one kind or another recurs throughout Dickens's novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. These two cities of London and Paris stand for the worlds of England and France and impose a parallelism pattern on Dickens's novel.

In the story, the two cities or the two worlds represent respectively political stability and revolution.

In addition to this, Dickens uses other doubling techniques. Dr. Manette's recall to life foretells the flight from Paris and the rescue of Charles Darany towards the end. Darany's trial in London foreshadows the two in Paris. The first book ends with Dr. Manette's release from prison and the second book begins with Darany's journey that will lead him to jail. Also, there is a comparison between the mob of London and the mob of Paris. In this way, Dickens uses doubling as an essential feature in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

#### **5. Sacrifice and Resurrection**

Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* was influenced by the play *The Frozen Deep* by his friend Wilkie Collins (Johnson, 1969).

However, there are other reasons to be considered so.

Though before Lucie weds Darnay, Carton professes his love to her, he persists in seeing himself as essentially worthless. This scene marks a vital transition for Carton and lays the foundation for his supreme sacrifice at the novel's end. Sydney's final sacrifice is a carefully reasoned act. This sacrifice satisfies all the criteria by which heroic act

ions are judged to qualify for the highest honors.

Thus Carton's story of a wasted life and redemption symbolize Dickens's thematic interpretation of the French Revolution. For this, he remains the center of attraction in the novel.

#### **6. Women and their role**

One of the aspects readers most commonly overlook when studying *A Tale of Two Cities* is the centrality of women in the story. In the character of Madame Defarge, he presents his version of an individual who embodies the very antithesis of 19th-century feminine ideals. In Madame Defarge, Dickens offers the nature of a woman of the type, as he puts it, "such as the world would do well never to breed again.

#### **7. Conclusion**

Lucie and Madame Defarge drive the action in their respective spheres of influence. As the "golden thread" that binds the lives of Doctor Manette, Mr. Lorry, Darnay, and Carton together, Lucie is a passive character who influences others through who she is rather than by what she does.

On the other hand, Madame Defarge stands at the center of the revolutionary activity in

Paris as an active agent of change, even when she is just sitting in the wine shop and knitting her death register. Madame Defarge instigates hatred and violence, exemplified by her leadership in the mob scenes and how The Vengeance and Jacques Three feed off her desire to exterminate the Evrémone line. Her patient ruthlessness helps support her husband when he doubts the revolution. In the end, however, her passion for revenge becomes something Monsieur Defarge reacts against as he recognizes that the killing must end somewhere. Thus, Dickens makes one of the women characters represent a family saga and the other a revolution.

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