
The Portrayal of the French Revolution in Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*

Isra Hasan Jassim

M.A. of English Literature

College of Arts

University of Baghdad

ABSTRACT

Literature is the record by which human feelings, political incidents, geographical sites, and historical events are preserved. Thus, readers may resort to a book written by a historian as well as a historical novel in order to gain more knowledge about history. Despite the fact that many novels incorporate a sense of history, historical novels are read for their themes, settings, and historical events. Such novels represent societies in the past and make use of history to juxtapose factual and fictional characters in a historical situation.

What chiefly distinguishes history are the revolutions that break out and lead to change such as the French Revolution. The French Revolution was an inspiring, unimaginable, horrific, appalling, and threatening event that took the world largely by surprise. Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) is a novel that is set in France and England. Its characters, plot, and events belong to the period of the French Revolution.

The aim of this study is to explore the British portrayal of the French Revolution in Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. It also discusses the author's portrayal of the Revolution, its causes, and its consequences.

The Subjective Portrayal of the French Revolution by a British Novelist: A Study in Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*

The French Revolution: Causes and Consequences

Charles Dickens chose the French Revolution as the background for his novel, because the Victorians were fascinated by the French Revolution. Besides, the political unrest was one of the reasons why Dickens was attracted to the French Revolution.¹ The French Revolution was an inspiring horrific event that affected armies, governments, and ordinary citizens with whom readers can identify. It

extended for many years, but the main events of the French Revolution occurred between 1789, the storming of the Bastille prison in Paris and 1793, the execution of king Louis XVI.² The past of Paris is similar to the present in London. Besides, what happened yesterday may occur today in Britain:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, 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 only.(*ATTC*, p.1)³

The opening lines in the text are perfectly used by the novelist to foreshadow tension. In addition, the antitheses enumerated prepare the reader to the discrepancy between the principles of the French Revolution and what actually happened during the revolution: wisdom and folly, light and darkness, heaven and hell, and everything and nothing. These antitheses represent the disharmony of the world which is also the disharmony between the lower class and the ruling class, who could not realize what was about to happen.⁴ Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) is a novel which adopts The French Revolution as a historical background. Dickens's novel is a vision that examines the disharmony that was dominant at that time.⁵

The opening chapters of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* show that many factors contributed to the break out of the French Revolution. one of which is the feudal system of the French society. The church and the aristocracy (the first two estates) gained valuable privileges and exemptions from taxation, while the rest of the nation (the Third Estate) was burdened with taxes and financial obligations. Additionally , there was Letter de Cachet, a law in which nobility could imprison anyone of the commons without any proof against him.⁶ France was a leading power in the eighteenth-century especially at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Thus, it was “the best of

times” for many in France. Nevertheless, it was “the worst of times” for many as a result of the feudal system. The king, the clergy (or First Estate) , and the aristocracy (the second Estate) had the supreme power in the kingdom. The rest of the population which included peasants, middle class businessmen, and bourgeoisie, were the Third Estate, ⁷

Furthermore, the other reasons that led to the break out of the French Revolution, were economic. Successive wars led to a huge national debt as well as bankruptcy due to the extravagance of the court and the exemption of the church and the nobility from paying taxes. The disastrous harvest in 1788, followed by a severely cold winter led to a serious bread shortage that caused misery and hunger to the commons. When the Third Estate asked that the three estates meet together to discuss the conditions of the kingdom, the king refused their request. ⁸ Hunger is described minutely in the novel:

[Hunger] was prevalent everywhere. Hunger was pushed out of 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. Hunger was the inscription on the baker's shelves, written in every small loaf of his scanty stock of bad bread; at the sausage-shop, in every dead-dog preparation that was offered for sale. Hunger rattled its dry bones among the roasting chestnuts in the turned cylinder; Hunger was shred into atomics in every farthing porringer of husky chips of potato, fried with some reluctant drops of oil. (*ATTC*, p.39)

Hunger was present and evident in France. Hunger was a monster feeding on people’s lives. There was a shortage in every type of food and the poor could not afford even bad bread.

After the king’s execution, the French Revolution moved into its most horrific stage, the Reign of Terror. Maximilien Robespierre, a leading figure in the French Revolution, and other extremists controlled the government. They searched out any supposed enemies including nobility and even commoners such as the seamstress in A

Tale of Two Cities, who was sent to the guillotine with the protagonist at the end of *A Tale of Two Cities*.⁹ When she was accused of plots, she exclaimed: "Who would think of plotting with a poor little weak creature like me?" Moreover, she wondered what would the death of a "weak little creature" like herself do any good to the Republic: "I am not afraid to die, ...but I have done nothing. I am not unwilling to die, if the Republic which is to do so much good to us poor, will profit by my death; but I do not know how that can be." (*ATTC*, p.497)

The "Law of Suspects," (1793) created a climate of fear and suspicion as it gave a broad definition of "enemy." No one could be trusted and spies were everywhere. An aspect of the Revolution that was central to Dickens's portrayal of events. The Reign of Terror caused the loss of thousands of lives between September 1793 and July 1794 when Robespierre and his associates were guillotined in their turn. *A Tale of Two Cities* concludes during this horrific period.¹⁰ Dickens describes the Law of the Suspects in the novel, the revolutionary committees, and the innocent people in prisons:

A revolutionary tribunal in the capital, and forty or fifty thousand revolutionary committees all over the land; a law of the Suspected, which struck away all security for liberty or life, and delivered over any good and innocent person to any bad and guilty one; prisons gorged with people who had committed no offence, and could obtain no hearing; these things became the established order and nature of appointed things, and seemed to be ancient usage before they were many weeks old. Above all, one hideous figure grew as familiar as if it had been before the general gaze from the foundations of the world--the figure of the sharp female called La Guillotine. (*ATTC*, p.381)

The Role of History in *A Tale of Two Cities*

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, history is examined by placing fictional characters in a given historical context.¹¹ Besides, history is a fertile field where evil resides in the individual. This negative link between history and the inner side of the human being provides the basis upon which each character is tested. Thus, the characters' ability to resist the temptation of destruction and wickedness is examined.¹² Dickens provides a great actuality for his fiction as he includes real events

during the French Revolution. The reader is invited to question the historical events and to meditate the attitude of the characters.¹³

Dickens also refers to a famous prison in France, the Bastille, in order to verify his version of the French Revolution. The plural form of “Bastille” is a term that was originally applied to a number of towers built during the Hundred Year’s War in Southern France in the Middle Ages. The singular form of the word described the royal fortress with eight towers built between 1356 and 1382 at the gate to the Northwestern part of Paris. Later, the Bastille became a prison which was beyond the rules of justice. It embodied domination and oppression at that time. Spies, rebels, Protestants, and rebellious aristocrats were imprisoned in the Bastille. The Bastille was known for its dark dungeons, bad conditions, and torture chambers.¹⁴ When a prisoner was released, he was asked by a stranger: “Buried how long?” to which the prisoner replied: “Almost eighteen years.” whoever was imprisoned there was doomed to be buried alive. But if s/he is released, s/he is “recalled to life.” (*ATTC*, P.51)

The word Bastille was used to refer to a fortress in Paris, but it developed later into a symbol. It symbolized prisons and the political regimes that kept such prisons. The Bastille stands for imprisonment, abuse, and a despotic reign of injustice. Moreover, it became to stand for freedom and revolution since 14 July 1789.¹⁵ The Bastille was taken on 14 July 1789. The attack on the Bastille is an event in which the great names of the Revolution did not take part. The people, “le peuple,” or “la Nation” were the major participants in the storming of the Bastille.¹⁶ The storming of the Bastille is one of the four great symbols of the French Revolution, namely, the Declaration of Rights, the slogan “Liberte, Egalite, and Fraternite,” and the French national anthem, “the Marseillaise,” which was composed in 1792.¹⁷

Dickens claimed various sources to record historical facts in his novel. One of which is *The French Revolution*¹⁸ (1837) by Thomas Carlyle, a prominent historian and social commentator.¹⁹ Carlyle depended on literally hundreds of eye-witness accounts about France before and during the Revolution. Other sources mentioned by Dickens are the famous French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and a Parisian writer, Louis Sebastien Mercier (1740-1814), both of whom are well-known commentators on pre-Revolutionary France. In addition, Dickens read one of Carlyle’s

sources: *Travels in France during the years 1787, 1788, and 1789*), a popular book by Arthur Young (1741-1820), an English agricultural theorist and clergyman. Dickens depended on eye-witness accounts in *The French Revolution* in depicting the historical episodes in the novel.²⁰

The Two Cities: London versus Paris

During most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Paris and London were the most crowded cities of the world. Paris and London were similar in some aspects: the leadership was chiefly held by the old aristocracy; merchants were increasing in number and importance as well as wage earners, craftsmen, tradesmen, and the poor were increasing in number. Thus, each city had its underclass, as cities have always had.²¹ As compared to Paris, London had a large port, a large population, and an affluent commercial class. Wage earners in London were more independent than wage earners in Paris. London was largely self governing.²²

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens had shown to middle-class readers areas of London which they had never seen.²³ There is a description of everyday life in London in 1775:

prisoners in London gaols fought battles with their turnkeys, and the majesty of the law fired blunderbusses in among them, loaded with rounds of shot and ball; thieves snipped off diamond crosses from the necks of noble lords at Court drawing-rooms; musketeers went into St. Giles's, to search for contraband goods, and the mob fired on the musketeers, and the musketeers fired on the mob, and nobody thought any of these occurrences much out of the common way. In the midst of them, the hangman, ever busy and ever worse than useless, was in constant requisition; now, stringing up long rows of miscellaneous criminals; now, hanging a housebreaker on Saturday who had been taken on Tuesday; now, burning people in the hand at Newgate by the dozen, and now burning pamphlets at the door of Westminster Hall; to-day, taking the life of an atrocious murderer, and to-morrow of a wretched pilferer who had robbed a farmer's boy of sixpence. All these things, and a thousand like them, came to pass in and close upon the dear old year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. (*ATTC*, p.4)

Paris, which is the greatest city of France, was not the seat of the government. That was at Versailles, where King Louis XIV built his great palace. France was fractured after centuries of disputes between the monarchy who controlled the kingdom and the rising merchant class who resisted the king's authority.²⁴ Details from everyday life in Paris are mentioned in *A Tale of Two Cities*:

It is likely enough that in the rough outhouses of some tillers of the heavy lands adjacent to Paris, there were sheltered from the weather that every day, rude carts, bespattered with rustic mire, snuffed about by pigs, and roosted in by poultry, which the Farmer, Death, had already set apart to be his tumbrils of the Revolution. (ATTC, p.3)

A Tale of Two Cities revolves around Paris and London; two similar and diverse capitals. Dickens makes use of this similarity/diversity in creating a plot in which the characters move between England and France.²⁵ The two cities had much in common:

There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever. (ATTC, p.1)

According to Dickens's comparison, the two cities are almost similar in political regimes. Both of which have kings, queens, and lords. Furthermore, in both cities, it seems that things will never change.

The Industrial Revolution improved the lives of the British people. Besides, political reform was progressing, but the living conditions of the urban poor were as miserable as those suffered by the peasants and workers of Pre-Revolutionary France. Lower classes suffered from disease, hunger, overcrowding, and long hours of work. The ruling class made little effort to improve their conditions.²⁶ In England, there was no order and thieves were ready to rob people's possessions:

In England, there was scarcely an amount of order and protection to justify much national boasting. Daring

burglaries by armed men, and highway robberies, took place in the capital itself every night; families were publicly cautioned not to go out of town without removing their furniture to upholsterers' warehouses for security; the highwayman in the dark was a City tradesman in the light. (ATTC, p.3)

There was a resemblance between the members of the *ancient regime* in France and the ruling classes of nineteenth-century England. Dickens was concerned with revealing the arrogance and the indifference to the sufferings of the lower class that marked the aristocracy of France in 1780 and England in 1850.²⁷

Charles Dickens: A Social Reformer in England and France

The similarity between the two cities are not only political and economic. There is a likeness in the way the poor lived and thought. Dickens envisions the situation in England by recalling what happened in France.

In 1855, Dickens wrote that the lack of protest among the working class following the collapse of the Chartist movement²⁸ in 1848 was a dangerous sign. He states:

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 France before the breaking out of the first Revolution, and is in danger of being turned by any one of a thousand incidents – a bad harvest – the last straw too much of aristocratic insolence or incapacity – a defeat abroad – a mere chance at home – into such a Devil of conflagration as has never been beheld since.²⁹

Dickens lists the causes of the Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities* because nothing was done to bread shortage, disease, and inadequate housing in the kingdom. He had an admiration for the French crowd as they claimed their rights, but he also had fear that their English counterparts might descend to violence and chaos.³⁰ Furthermore, Dickens analyzes a complex and a confusing social situation by presenting a fictional criticism of society. He observes the consequences of social diseases and human dilemma.³¹

Dickens's novel acknowledges the socio-economic causes of the Revolution. In the impoverished streets of Paris, cold , dirt, sickness, ignorance, and want are crucial factors in agitating the mob.

These soci-economic factors are mentioned to act as a cause for the resentment and a justification for the terror.³² Injustice begets injustice as what happened in France. The Revolution was the product of years of injustice, but it also led to injustice.³³ Dreams of liberty and freedom were shattered by the revolution that called for these principles earlier. People were killed and shot instead of being liberated:

So much more wicked and distracted had the Revolution grown in that December month, that the rivers of the South were encumbered with the bodies of the violently drowned by night, and prisoners were shot in lines and squares under the southern wintry sun. (*ATTC*, p.383)

In writing this novel, Dickens expressed his fears about the possibility of a violent revolution at his own times.³⁴ His novel conveyed a warning to England that economic and political persecution results in the tyranny of the mob.³⁵ Dickens's aim is to argue that injustice, suffering, and cruelty were the main causes of the crowd's transformation into tyrants. He reminds his readers that the atrocities practiced by the revolutionaries in the Reign of Terror are the result of this long period of persecution and neglect.³⁶ He believes that "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." (*ATTC*, p.441) Such unhealthy circumstances will surely produce unhealthy personalities. Dickens inserts Madame Defarge : a character whose personality was affected by the poor circumstances.

Madame Defarge is a French woman who keeps a wine shop with her husband. The hatred for the aristocracy is exemplified in this character. The aristocratic regime tortured and killed members of her family.³⁷ She is victimized by her own consuming passion for revenge.³⁸

Mme Defarge's personality is the outcome of evil circumstances. Dickens believes that hatred devastates the human's soul. She is referred to as "tigress" as she dehumanized herself and lost any pity inside her soul. She cannot differentiate between the innocent and the guilty. She wants to avenge for herself and her sister.³⁹ Dickens analyses her character by giving the reader a glimpse about her childhood:

There were many women at that time, upon whom the time laid a dreadfully disfiguring hand; but, there was not one among them more to be dreaded than this ruthless woman... imbued from her childhood with a brooding sense of wrong, and inveterate hatred of a class, opportunity had developed her into a tigress. She was absolutely without pity. If she had ever had the virtue in her, it had quite gone out of her. (ATTC,p.383)

The Defarges are urged by hatred. Mme. Defrage is a chilling character, she was educated to take her revenge.⁴⁰ Her sister was abused by two members of the aristocracy. She is a woman transformed to a cruel creature. She is a prototype who would be repeated if there are similar terrible circumstances. Dickens diagnoses the disease and its causes:

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 licence and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind (ATTC, p.520)

If people are crushed, they will revolt violently. But these lines also imply that with intelligence and good will, social problems can be solved.⁴¹

The British National Identity in Revolutionary France

British texts considered the French Revolution a chaotic event since the order of the family was destroyed by a savage crowd under the instruction of cruel philosophers. Dickens depicts the revolution from another perspective. Dickens introduces self-sacrifice and family feelings which are represented by Sydney Carton's substitution of himself for his love rival creating an icon of British national identity against the cruelty of the French.⁴²

Sydney Carton is an Englishman and a legal assistant to a successful London lawyer. He led a wasted life and was a damaged man as he could not win the heart of the woman he loved.⁴³ He was not born noble but became so by merits alone. He is a protector more than a lover ensuring the safety of his beloved.⁴⁴ Carton is an example of the redemption of society. Carton redeems his life by presenting it as a sacrifice at the end of the novel. He sacrifices his life for his friend and for the woman loved by him and his friend.⁴⁵

The final paragraphs of *A Tale of Two Cities* are predictive in the sense that they show Carton's vision of the future when he was about to be executed.⁴⁶ Dickens uses Carton's character to arouse pity for the victims of the revolution. There is this reminder that evil doers will be punished. Besides, the reader will be struck by Carton's ability to imagine a great future for the nation that is about to execute him.⁴⁷

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, before it shall cease out of its present use. 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 long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out. (*ATTC*, p.527)

As Carton's speech proceeds through four more paragraphs, his vision transforms from a utopian view of France in the future to a series of pictures of the ones who are the reason of this sacrifice. He sees people blessing him for what he has done. Finally, he sees himself becoming a legend.⁴⁸

I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning his way up in that path of life which once was mine, I see him winning it so well, that my name is made illustrious there by the light of his. I see the blots I threw upon it, faded away. I see him, foremost of just judges and honoured men, bringing a boy of my name, with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place—then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement—and I hear him tell the child my story, with a tender and a faltering voice. It is a far, far better things that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known. (*ATTC*, p.528)

The end of the novel is not tragic because the protagonist is not a tragic hero. He does not die for having a tragic flaw. On the contrary, this Englishman dies because he is willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of others. In addition, he is capable of envisioning a hopeful future for France and French people.

CONCLUSION :

Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* is a novel where objective observations remind the reader of actual events, such as the laws enacted, the oppression practiced over the lower class, and the storming of the Bastille. Nevertheless, Dickens presents his subjective vision of the revolution when he digs deep into the human psyche of his characters. He depicts a panoramic view in which the characters involved are people like his readers. People who have been oppressed by the monarchy and the revolution itself. They are poor, buried alive, and oppressed.

Being written by a British novelist, *A Tale of Two Cities* contains British places, such as London. It also contains English characters, such as Sydney Carton: the British protagonist who sacrifices his life in France for the sake of his beloved and the man who wants to marry her creating a British national identity.

Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* reveals the other side of the French revolution. The French Revolution was known for the tyranny of its leaders and the bloodlust of the mob. But here Dickens shows that commoners are also victims of the revolution and the circumstances that led to the Revolution are the same circumstances found in England. Consequently, what happened in France is a warning to the ruling class in England because the lower class in England was as angry as the crowd in France. Moreover, Dickens's spirit of reform is obvious in this novel as he explores the relation between the individual and the society. In addition, he diagnoses the reasons that led to the revolution. Thus, the novel is not a mere collection of facts. On the contrary, it is a combination of fact and fiction where reality and feelings are intermingled to present a timeless story.

NOTES :

¹Harold Bloom, *Bloom's Guides: Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), p. 16.

² Ruth Glancy, ed. *Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities: a Sourcebook* (New York : Routledge, 2006), p. 8.

³ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. , 1999), p. 1 . All subsequent references to the novel are taken from this edition.

⁴Marroni, p.57.

⁵ Francesco Marroni, *Victorian Disharmonies: A Reconsideration of Nineteenth-Century English Fiction* (Massachusetts: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp., 2010) , p.52.

⁶ George Newlin, *Understanding A Tale of Two Cities* (Connecticut : Greenwood Press, 1998), p.12.

⁷ Glancy, p.8.

⁸Ibid., p.9.

⁹ Ibid, p.11.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Andrew Sanders, *The Victorian Historical Novel 1840-1880* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1993), p.88.

¹² Marroni, p.55.

¹³ Sanders, p.88.

¹⁴ Hans-Jurgen Lusebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom* (London: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 6

¹⁵ Ibid , p.4.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.241.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *The French Revolution* (1837) is a historical narrative by the Scottish essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle. It includes three volumes titled: “The Bastille,” “The Constitution,” and “The Guillotine,” covering the events from 1774 to 1795. For more information, see Encyclopedia Britannica s.v. The French Revolution <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-French-Revolution-by-Carlyle>. Accessed on 8 September, 2017.

¹⁹ Bloom, p.16.

²⁰ Glancy, p.12.

²¹ Newlin, p.97.

²² Ibid, pp.97-98.

²³ Kate Mitchell and Nicola Parsons, *Reading Historical Fiction: The Remembered Past* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 176.

²⁴ Newlin, p.98.

²⁵ Marroni, p.55.

²⁶ Glancy, p.13.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ The Chartist movement is a British movement that called for parliamentary reform. It was named after the People's Charter which is a bill drafted by the London radical William Lovett in May 1838. The bill contained many demands that were chiefly concerned with parliamentary representation and elections in Britain. This movement protested against the injustices of the industrial and political order in Britain. For more information, see Encyclopedia Britannica s.v. "Chartism". <https://www.britannica.com/event/Chartism-British-history>. Accessed on 8 September, 2017.

²⁹ Cited in Glancy, p.13.

³⁰ Glancy, p.14.

³¹ Sanders, p.87.

³² Mitchell, p.179.

³³ Sanders, p.93.

³⁴ Mitchell, pp.185-86.

³⁵ Bloom, p.7.

³⁶ Sanders, p.93.

³⁷ Bloom , p.19.

³⁸ Ibid., p.8.

³⁹ Sanders, p.94.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Harry E. Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), p.92.

Shaw, p.92.

⁴² Mitchell, p.178.

⁴³ Bloom, p.18.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.15.

⁴⁵ Sanders, 93.

⁴⁶ Shaw, p.95.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.96.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

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- 9- Newlin, George. *Understanding A Tale of Two Cities*. Connecticut : Greenwood Press, 1998.
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- 11- Shaw, Harry E. *The Forms of Historical Fiction*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1983.

تصوير الثورة الفرنسية
في رواية قصة مدينتين لتشارلز ديكنز

إسراء حسن جاسم
(ماجستير أدب انجليزي)
جامعة بغداد – كلية الاداب

المستخلص

الأدب هو السجل الذي تحفظ فيه مشاعر الإنسان والأحداث السياسية والمواقع الجغرافية والأحداث التاريخية. لذا قد يلجأ القارئ الى رواية تاريخية أو الى كتاب ألفه مؤرخ كي يكتسب المزيد من المعرفة عن التاريخ. بالرغم من ان الكثير من الروايات تتضمن بعض الأحداث التاريخية الا أن الروايات التاريخية تُقرأ لموضوعاتها وأحداثها التاريخية وتمثل هذه الروايات المجتمعات في الماضي وتمزج بين الشخصيات التاريخية والقصصية في فترة معينة من التاريخ.

تعد الثورات التي تندلع وتؤدي الى التغيير من أهم ما يميز التاريخ , فالثورة الفرنسية على سبيل المثال هي حدث ملهم ومروع ومثير للتهديد وغير قابل للتصديق إذ أذهلت هذه الثورة العالم بشكل واسع. تدور أحداث رواية (قصة مدينتين) لتشارلز ديكنز في فرنسا وانكلترا وتمثل الثورة الفرنسية موقعا لأحداث وحبكة و شخصيات هذه الرواية. إن هدف هذه الدراسة هو بحث التصوير البريطاني للثورة الفرنسية في رواية (قصة مدينتين) لتشارلز ديكنز, وتهدف أيضا الى مناقشة وتصوير المؤلف للثورة الفرنسية وأسبابها و نتائجها.