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THE HUMAN BODY AS A TEXT IN CHARLES DICKENS'S *A TALE OF TWO CITIES*

CHARLES DICKENS'IN *İKİ ŞEHRİN HİKAYESİ* ESERİNDE İNSAN BEDENİNİN METİN OLARAK İNCELENMESİ

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ABSTRACT

Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* portrays a social panorama of the French Revolution in the context of the human body as a canvas for the era's political and psychological struggles. In this panorama, characters' actions and experiences inscribe bodies as texts of power dynamics, and the narrative reveals how the human body embodies themes of suffering, resilience, and transformation. Accordingly, the novel engages with the representation of the human body as an agent that both acts and is acted on. The body serves not only as a site of personal struggle but also as a powerful symbol of collective identity and social unrest. By analyzing key moments in the text, this study scrutinizes how Dickens uses bodily imagery to illustrate the interplay between individual agency and body politics as societal forces, and how he conditions the human body as a critical lens which reflects the political discourse and emotional atmosphere of the era in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Accordingly, the paper will focus on the human body not as an isolated entity but as a social and political construct by employing a theoretical framework that blends phenomenology, critical body theory, and Foucauldian perspectives on body and power.

Keywords: Charles Dickens**,** *A Tale of Two Cities*, body politics, human body as a text.

ÖZET

Charles Dickens'ın *İki Şehrin Hikayesi* adlı eseri, Fransız Devrimi'nin toplumsal panoramasını, dönemin politik ve psikolojik mücadelelerini anlatan bir tuval olarak insan bedeni bağlamında tasvir eder. Bu tasvirde, karakterlerin eylemleri ve deneyimleri bedenleri güç dinamiklerinin metinleri olarak işlerken, anlatı insan bedeninin acı, dayanıklılık ve dönüşüm temalarını nasıl somutlaştırdığını ortaya koymaktadır. Buna bağlı olarak, roman insan bedeninin hem eylemde bulunan hem de eylemde bulunulan bir etken olarak temsil edilmesiyle ilgilenmektedir. Beden yalnızca kişisel mücadele alanı olarak değil, aynı zamanda kolektif kimliğin ve toplumsal huzursuzluğun güçlü bir sembolünü de ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, metindeki önemli anları analiz ederek, Charles Dickens'ın *İki Şehrin Hikayesi* eserinde bireylerin eylemlerindeki bireysel yetkinlikleri ile toplumsal güçleri oluşturan beden politikaları arasındaki etkileşimi tasvir etmek için bedensel imgeleri nasıl kullandığını ve insan bedenini dönemin politik söylemini ve duygusal atmosferini yansıtan eleştirel bir mercek olarak nasıl konumlandırdığını incelemektedir. Buna göre, makale fenomenoloji, eleştirel beden teorisi ve beden ve iktidara ilişkin Foucaultcu bakış açılarını harmanlayan teorik bir çerçeve kullanarak insan bedenini izole bir varlık olarak değil, toplumsal ve politik bir yapı olarak odağına almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Charles Dickens, *İki Şehrin Hikayesi*, beden politikaları, metin olarak insan bedeni.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), set in London and Paris during the political climate of the French Revolution, is a tale of the human body as a topos, a location of body politics as well as the politics of the body that are inscribed with the social, political, and private spheres of the characters. Although London and Paris are places of setting that juxtapose social order and social upheaval, it is the human body and its representations in different hierarchies that ground the text of the novel. In this manner, the human body becomes the text of the narration, which begins with the return of bodies to life, and ends with the destruction of bodies by death. Bodies as texts of life and death embody a metaphorical representation of the duality and duplicity of the period, epitomized by Dickens's famous phrase "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times […]" (Dickens (1994, p. 18). Regarding the human body as a topos, a location of body politics, and the politics of body inscribed with the regulation of the characters' social and private spheres, the novel invites a reading of diverse images of body as a text. This text manifests the exertion of hegemonic powers over individual bodies, as seen in the monarch's body and its influence on his subjects, the bodies of revolutionaries, women's bodies, and the bodies sacrificed and displayed – a backdrop against which Dickens critiqued the French Revolution. Furthermore, the human body as a private entity within an individual's personal sphere transcends into a public realm that embodies the political arena of power structures. Thus, this paper aims to analyze how individual bodies reflect the political climate in Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* by focusing on the relationships between the body and power, as well as between the body and society. The analysis will employ a theoretical framework that blends phenomenology, critical body theory, and Foucauldian perspectives on body and power. By examining how the novel portrays bodies as sites of power, resistance, and control, the paper will explore how the regulation of the body intersects with the socio-political dynamics of the time. By drawing particularly on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, and contemporary scholars such as Gail Weiss and Bryan Turner. This approach will focus on the body not as an isolated entity but as a social and political construct, where bodies are continually shaped by and contribute to the power relations that structure society. The body, in this analysis, is a dynamic text—a site of inscription where power, politics, and identity are written, and rewritten.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty states that "[t]he body is the vehicle of being in the world and, for a living being, having a body means being united with a definite milieu, merging with certain projects, and being perpetually engaged therein." (Merleau-Ponty & Landes, 2012, p. 84). Merleau-Ponty clarifies "being embodied" by equating it to "being in this world" that is maintained by "have[ing] 'sense organs,' a 'body,' and 'psychical functions'" (84). This concept of embodiment fashioning an individual as an entity that "become[s] the place where a multitude of 'causalities' intertwine" (84). Accordingly, the idea that the way individuals are "in" the world provides a lens through which we can examine how characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* are positioned within their social and political contexts. Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the body condition the body as a compound entity made of certain situations of the environment which produce factors that have influence on one's development. Merleau-Ponty states that "Insofar as I inhabit a 'physical world,' where consistent 'stimuli' and typical situations are discovered – and not merely the historical world in which situations are never comparable – my life is made up of rhythms that do not have their reason in what I have chosen to be, but rather have their condition in the banal milieu that surrounds me" (84). In this context, the body occupies a central location upon which the rhythms of life have power. These rhythms

are the compositions of social, political, and cultural power structures. In this vein, the body becomes a location for discourses conveyed through the texts of these power structures. Similarly, Gail Weiss's notion that the "body is discursively constructed" (2003, p. 26) aligns with a view of the body as a text—a site where personal and collective narratives are inscribed. Weiss emphasizes that "the body is discursively constructed" by which "the body serves as a narrative horizon for all texts, and, in particular, for all of the stories that we tell about (and which are indistinguishable from) ourselves" (2003, p. 26). Accordingly, embedded in everything, "there is no escaping the body" (Kelly & Mücke, 1994, p. 1), the "causality" of which is "socially transformed" (Mills, 2011, p. 590). The human body in Dickens's novel becomes a metaphorical text that is written upon by some forces such as political ideology, social expectations and restrictions situating it beyond being a biological entity.

The body as an intersection of various discourses leads to the idea of "[t]he imbrications of body and world", which signifies that "the body encompasses communities (social and political bodies), territories (geographical) bodies, and historical texts and ideas (a body of literature, a body of work) […]" (Cohen & Weiss, 2003, p. 4). According to Weiss, "embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasize that the experience of being embodied is never private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies" (1999, p. 5). Likewise, Bryan Turner emphasizes the interconnectedness between the body and society as follows: "The external world, including human body, is not a given, but an [sic] historical reality constantly mediated by human labour and interpreted through human culture" (2008, p. 34). According to Turner the body is not a fixed entity but one that is constantly mediated through cultural and social texts. This observation helps to situate the characters' bodies within the historical forces at play in the novel. The transformation of the bodies of the French aristocracy, for example, from symbols of power to victims of violence, highlights the relationship between body, culture, and historical change.

Society's preoccupation with the body, as Mills states, locates the body in an "interact[tion] with the body politic" (2011, p. 590), indicating that "[i]t is not merely that our somatic experience takes place within a body located *in* a polity but that the experience *itself* is political" (2011, p. 590). At this point, Brown and Gershon's insights into the difference between the politics of body and body politics should be considered. Brown and Gershon assert that "[t]he politics of the body, different from the body politic, argues that the body itself is politically inscribed and is shaped by practices of containment and control" (2017, p. 1). The difference is that "[t]he theme of body politics directs our attention to how bodies are included or excluded in the polity" (2017, p. 2), engaging questions on governments' involvement in the regulation of bodies and the fabric of power relations as an outcome of these regulations. Delving into various points of body politics, Gatens focuses on how the corporeality of the human body functions as a model or a metaphor for the body politics. He draws attention to Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, which addresses body functions as a metaphor for the political government presenting "a detailed correspondence between the parts and functions of the human body and the parts and functions of the political body" (1995, p. 21). Gatens concentrates on the anthropomorphic quality of the conception of body politics, in which 'anthropos' stands for the universal body represented by the masculine body. He states that "[m]an is the model and it is his body which is taken for the human body; his reason which is taken for Reason; his morality which is formalized into a system of ethics" (1995, p. 24). The male body as the representative of the universal body raises questions about the embodiments of different bodies in terms of representation of male and female bodies. Since the male body has a given agency in determination of the universal model,

the female body is left to its destiny in this universal model; a model that functions as a melting pot that produces commonality for everyone, and a criterion determining role models. In this model, body politics seek out male perspectives when constructing its policies. Accordingly, the embodiment of bodies within the body politics reveals power relationships denoting agency and passivity of bodies. Bodies are "significant players in games of power" (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 20), but some bodies are more significant than others. In this respect, it is important to understand whose bodies are managing power over other bodies, categorizing and classifying them in games of power. The concept of the body as a site of power is central to Michel Foucault's theories on the body politic and the exercise of power through discipline . Stating that "nothing is more material, physical, corporal than the exercise of power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 58), Foucault highlights the central role of power in shaping human bodies, acts, and behaviors as he states that "[t]he archaeology of the human sciences has to be established through studying the mechanisms of power which have invested human bodies, acts and forms of behaviour" (1980, p. 60). Foucault argues that power is something that circulates through society, and acts upon the human body by regulating, controlling and categorizing it. Analysing the correlation between the social body and the economic changes of the eighteenth century, Foucault contends that "the phenomenon of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals" (p.55). He focuses on how the "circulation of effects of power" (p.151) operates "through progressively finer channels, gaining access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily actions" (p.151-152). Moreover, in *Discipline and Punish*, he outlines how the shift from sovereign power (where rulers exercised power through direct violence and spectacle) to disciplinary power (where control was exercised through surveillance, categorization, and normalization) fundamentally transformed society. By examining how *A Tale of Two Cities* portrays bodies as sites of power, resistance, and control, the paper will explore how the regulation of the body intersects with the socio-political dynamics of the time exemplified by the display of royal authority as a way of asserting control over the bodies of the subjects, and the bodies of revolutionaries as both the instruments and the casualties of political upheaval.

2. DISCUSSION

Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* depicts a panorama of the French Revolution by structuring its narration through the interplay of personal and social elements. This interplay is mainly presented through power relations activated and justified by the maintenance of the human body, which creates a situation in which bodies matter throughout the novel. Through a manifestation of characters' bodily experiences in private and public realms, the novel offers a reading of the human body building up a setting for the events in the novel. The narrative is therefore based on how the human body is positioned in society, which shapes the course of the subjects' fates. As Shilling emphasizes "[t]he positioning of the body in society, in short, can either enhance or dangerously diminish the capacities of the embodied subject and the cultural milieu they inhabit" (2004, p. 41). In this respect, the human body in the narration is both a conditioning in society underpinning different fates for lower and upper class bodies and a decisive factor in the route of body politics demarcating power relations.

In *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800*, Antoine de Baecque delves into definitions of the body which create a plethora of interpretations on the "theological, political, social, metaphysical, physical, chemical, medical, literary, juridical, architectural, military, handicraft, and anatomical meanings of the word" (1997, p. 3) at the end of the French

ancient regime. Focusing on the metaphors of the body, de Beacque manifests how the body constructs and fashions body politics while simultaneously becoming a topos for political, social, and cultural systems in the18th century France. He states that

The language of the end of the eighteenth century seems stretched between different acceptations of this word that can, by itself, describe each individual of the kingdom, physically, medically, from head to foot; unite the many communities, all these people, these tradesmen, these merchants, these administrators for whom it is allowed, by letters of patent duly registered, to assemble and 'form a corporate body'; or, finally to take on the French system in its entirety, a political, religious, monarchic model of organization of the state and society. (1997, p. 3)

Additionally, de Baecque suggests that "the metaphor of the body tells the condition of one political system, its death, and then the birth of another" (p. 4). In this way, the body serves as a narrative symbol for the historical development of political systems and the issues they address. It becomes a token of the past, the present, and the future. In a similar vein, *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens invokes bodily analogies against the backdrop of the French Revolution. The emphasis on the corporeality of the characters, and their bodies as representations of social and political situations prompt forms of power. The manifestation of power paradigms through the human body begins with the depictions of the king and queen of England and France, respectively, who have "a large jaw" and "a plain face" as the actors of body politics in the novel. The image of a large jaw constructs an imagery of a powerful king who, like a lion with a large jaw, could 'crush' and 'eat' his subjects easily while the queen with a plain face may be accounted as simplicity, even indifference toward issues and subjects, which is contrary to the king's powerful condition in society. The depiction of the king within an animalistic feature harboring animalistic appetite, having a large jaw with the potential of devouring anything, reveals layers of power not only in monarchs' relation to their subjects, but also in monarchical system of government in which the queen, appearing in a state of plainness, signifies nothingness while the king is given the upper hand. Within this framework of power, next to the sovereign is Christian pastors in France: France, depicted as a female entity "under the guidance of her Christian pastors" (Dickens, 1994, p. 14), "entertained herself, besides, with such humane achievements as sentencing a youth to have his hands cut off, his tongue torn out with pincers, and his body burned alive, because he had not kneeled down in the rain to do honour to a dirty procession of monks which passed within his view, at a distance of some fifty or sixty yards" (p. 14). Clergy connected with the State, representing the connection between religious authority and aristocratic power, plays a crucial role in maintaining the system that subjugates the peasantry, and it serves as one of the instruments of social control in the novel. The Church is closely allied with the aristocracy, and serves as a legitimizing force for the oppression of the peasant class. The peasants, who are depicted as impoverished and subjugated, are often taught to be passive and accept their fate as part of a divine plan. Religious leaders and church officials are "[…] brazen ecclesiastics, of the worst world worldly, with sensual eyes, loose tongues, and looser lives; all totally unfit for their several callings, all lying horribly in pretending to belong to them […]"(Dickens, 1994, p. 111). Members of the clergy are depicted as morally corrupt and hypocritical. They are involved in worldly matters such as materialism and sensual pleasure rather than spiritual duties. Their "loose tongues" also imply that they speak inappropriately, and lack self-restraint in speech. Their bodies contribute to the abuse of power leading corruption in society, which later on leads to rejection of religion and the Cross.

Supported by the Church, King settles his power easily. King's immediate image of a powerful jaw poses threats of death and pain in the lives of common people, which contributes to the narration which is carried out by the imagery of death and life breaching the borders of one another throughout the novel. Corporeality participating in power relations also relates itself to the politics of alive and dead bodies as entities regulated by social, cultural, political, and religious politics. Images of death and pain on the basis of their semiotic meaning follow images of life and resilience in embodiment represented by human bodies in the novel. Dr. Manette's body, which is "RECALLED TO LIFE"(Dickens, 1994, p. 19) after being "buried alive for eighteen years" (p. 25), is a site of life and death regulated by political processes. Dr. Manette, a French physician and father of Lucie Manette, is one of the many whose corporeality depicts a nation's path. Having seen the last moments of a peasant girl raped by Marquis and later revealed in the novel to be the sister of Madame Defarge, Dr. Manette was locked up in the Bastille prison for eighteen years until his release. The return to life of Dr. Manette, whose body was imprisoned and tortured for years, reflects both a literal and metaphorical revival. The way in which his body is "re-embodied" within the social order speaks to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body as an intersection of past experiences, current social realities, and future possibilities.

Dr. Manette's corporeality has a crucial role in the plot that leads to the destiny of Charles Darnay, the husband of Lucie Manette; and Sydney Carton, a young barrister who loves Lucie and saves Darnay from execution by replacing him. Dr. Manette's eyes and hands, in particular, serve as the foundation for his influential existence in the story. His eyes, which bore witness to the pain of another bodily existence, that is, Madame Defarge's sister's body, actually witnessed the truth of contemporary history. Milena Marinkova stresses in her examination of witness writing that "Bearing witness to unwitnessed stories and unacknowledged witnesses becomes an interlinear historiographic act […]" (2009, p. 110). The agony of a peasent girl's raped body represents the agony of lower class bodies which are "plundr[ed]", "outrag[ed]", "beat[en]" and "kill[ed]" by nobles (Dickens, 1994, p. 318). When Dr. Manette is taken by Marquis and his brother to cure the girl who "was a woman of great beauty, and young" (p. 315), he sees that " [h]er hair was torn and ragged, and her arms were bound to her sides with sashes and handkerchiefs" (p. 315), and "in her restless strivings she had turned over on her face on the edge of the bed, had drawn the end of the scarf into her mouth, and was in danger of suffocation" (p. 315). Although Dr. Manette did not witness the act of rape and violence, he witnessed that violence was presdent on her body, and her body tells a story that only this peasant girl, her brother, Marquis, and his brother know about.

Used and usurped by Marquis and his descendants, the bodies of common people become a reconfiguration of "often-abstracted political processes into a form that is literally seen and felt in the realities of the flesh" (Cameron, Dickson, & Smith, 2016, p. 3). Realities of the flesh in the bodies of the young woman and her brother represent the body, to use Wendy Harcourt's discourse of "feminist understanding of bodies", as "a place for political mobilization interconnected with other sites of resistance and political action" (2009, p. 23). Harcourt notes that "bodies are not external to political processes but firmly enmeshed in them, even if they are not necessarily the defining site for action. The lived experience of the body, the identity and definitions attached to bodies, inform and are connected to all political struggles" (p. 23). The body of the young peasant woman and that of her brother who is about to die from a sword wound by Marquis's brother are sites of social textures and horizons "from which social agents and objects, social institutions and social structures emerge configured in ever-changing patterns of relations" (Laclou quoted in Coupland and Gwyn, p.14). As part of political struggle,

common people's bodies are fabrics of social realities in which nobles are "superior beings" while laboring bodies are "common dogs" that, as the brother states, are

" taxed by him without mercy, obliged to work for him without pay, obliged to grind our corn at his mill, obliged to feed scores of his tame birds on our wretched crops, and forbidden for our lives to keep a single tame bird of our own, pillaged and plundered to that degree that when we chanced to have a bit of meat, we ate it in fear, with the door barred and the shutters closed, that his people should not see it and take it from us— I say, we were so robbed, and hunted, and were made so poor, that our father told us it was a dreadful thing to bring a child into the world, and that what we should most pray for, was, that our women might be barren and our miserable race die out!" (Dickens, 1994, pp. 318-319)

As the speech above indicates, bodies are signifiers of power relations and social inequalities. The regulation of bodies is related to power relations that determine who acts, and who is acted on, and that represent reconfigurations of historical moments in which "[t]he perpetration of statesanctioned gender violence is one example of how political processes are often experienced in highly embodied ways" (Cameron et al., 2016, p. 3). Monseigneur, "one of the great lords in power at the Court" (Dickens, 1994, p. 109) is depicted as an absolute ruler whose body is both a literal and symbolic representation of power. He "could swallow a great many things with ease" (p. 109) as he is about to eat his chocolate in his room, and similarly, he "was by some few sullen minds supposed to be rather rapidly swallowing France" (p. 109). This act of "swallowing" demonstrated in the form of the abuse of, to use Foucault's term, "docile bodies" is performed to establish and solidify the supreme power of the sovereign. Defining the relationship between power and punishment, Foucault focuses on the punishment entailing a spectacle that reinforced the power of the sovereign. He states that "It was the effect, in the rites of punishment, of a certain mechanism of power: of a power that not only did not hesitate to exert itself directly on bodies, but was exalted and strengthened by its visible manifestations; [...]; of a power for which disobedience was an act of hostility, the first sign of rebellion, [...]; of a power that was recharged in the ritual display of its reality as 'super-power'" (Foucault, 1979, p. 57) In *A Tale of Two Cities*, sovereign power, which first represented by Monarch and later by Revolutionaries, is exercised through violence and visible force. Though not in the form of a punishment of a criminal, Monsieur the Marquis's carriage causes the death of a poor child. Marquis is indifferent to the situation despite the agony of the child's father, and throws a gold coin as a token for the compensation. When the coin was thrown back to him, as an act of response to his inhumanity, Marquis threatens the poor public, and uses the dead child's situation as a means of making an example of rebellious ones: "I would ride over any of you very willingly, and exterminate you from the earth. If I knew which rascal threw at the carriage, and if that brigand were sufficiently near it, he should be crushed under the wheels" (Dickens, 1994, p. 117).

Power fully invested in the control and manipulation of bodies results in the embodiment of violence through which bodies have become instruments of legitimizing absolute power. Marquis's sovereign power is also displayed through his meting out punishment to Dr. Manette. Dr. Manette's eyes witnessing the embodiment of violence in the victim girl's body do not have the power of a medical gaze that has control and authority over it. Rather, it was disabled by the absolute power of Marquis, and rendered to a disempowering gesture that would lead Manette to prison for eighteen years. Marquis warns Dr. Manette: "The things that you see here are things to be seen, and not spoken of" (Dickens, 1994, p. 321). Dr. Manette's witnessing poses a threat to Marquis's absolute power. If rape is known, he loses his power and becomes 'castrated'. Things

that have been observed by a critical gaze, but that cannot be spoken of, were written by Manette after the first ten years of his prisonment. His eyes and hands partake in the formation of his destiny. His destiny, which was led to the darkness of the La Bastille prison through his eyes, has defeated its hapless fate through his hands. Manette's hands as the conveyor of truth in his witness writing empower him in the face of Marquis's absolute power, and also in the face of absolute wrath of the revolutionalists. Dr. Manette's body in general and his hands in particular are means of resisting the wrongdoings of Marquis and his descendants, as he notes: "I write with so much difficulty, the cold is so severe, I am so fearful of being detected and consigned to an underground cell and total darkness, that I must abridge this narrative. There is no confusion or failure in my memory; it can recall, and could detail, every word that was ever spoken between me and those brothers" (Dickens, 1994, p. 322). His hands enable him shape his personal history, and his words in the letter form a documentation of history that enables the reinvention of truth. Dr. Manette, who is imprisoned in the Bastille for eighteen years, can be seen as a Christ-like figure, enduring suffering for the greater good. Moreover, his eventual "resurrection" is not just a personal salvation but a collective reckoning with injustice.

The embodiment of violence in the form of rape and harassment in one body in particular symbolically represents social exploitation maintained by the violence against bodies of lower class people in general. Yet, power operating on bodies is counterattacked by bodies in turn. As Foucault states "Suddenly, what had made power strong becomes used to attack it. Power, after investing itself in the body, finds itself exposed to a counterattack in that same body" (1980, p. 56). Vulnerable "common bodies" that make the sovereign the most powerful employ resilience and resistance against the same absolute power. As Marquis asserts "What strength there is in these common bodies!" (Dickens, 1994, p. 321). These common bodies the children of whom "had ancient faces and grave voices" were embodiments of "Hunger" (Dickens, 1994, p. 38) and "Want" (p. 39). When a wine cask dropped and broke in the street of Saint Antoine, these common bodies, men and women, those "cadaverous faces" (p. 37) kneeling down, sipping the streams of wine, and licking it, were like zombies brought back to life with blood-like wine resurrecting them. The scenery has both cannibalistic and animalistic aspects attributed to ravished people of St. Antoine:

The wine was red wine, and had stained the ground of the narrow street in the suburb of Saint Antoine, in Paris, where it was spilled. It had stained many hands, too, and many faces, and many naked feet, and many wooden shoes. The hands of the man who sawed the wood, left red marks on the billets; and the forehead of the woman who nursed her baby, was stained with the stain of the old rag she wound about her head again. Those who had been greedy with the staves of the cask, had acquired a tigerish smear about the mouth; and one tall joker so besmirched, his head more out of a long squalid bag of a nightcap than in it, scrawled upon a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees–BLOOD. (pp. 37-38)

Jules Law indicates that "intertwining metaphorics of blood and wine" (2010, p. 7) foreshadows "the Dionysian violence of Terror" from which Revolutionists' wrath and vengeance rise. Wine has rejuvenated these people by awakening them from their dormant, powerless position and granting them a presence and resurrection:

A shrill sound of laughter and of amused voices–voices of men, women, and children–resounded in the street while this wine game lasted. There was little roughness in the sport, and much playfulness. There was a special companionship in it, an observable inclination on the part of every one to join some other one, which led, especially among the luckier or lighter-hearted, to

frolicsome embraces, drinking of healths, shaking of hands, and even joining of hands and dancing, a dozen together. (p. 37)

This companionship of poor common bodies produced by the union of "the part of every one" joining some with another one, joining of hands and dancing together is an earlier reflection of a new body of people with new body politics that will form Parisian mob revolting against absolute power in a hysterical manner later in the novel. People are ascribed to a Bakhtinian carnivalesque laughter that "is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding" (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 11-12). Peter Stallybrass comments on Bakhtin's carnival laughter, stating, "Fundamental to the corporeal, collective nature of carnival laughter is what Bakhtin terms 'grotesque realism'. Grotesque realism uses the material body – flesh conceptualized as corpulant excess – to represent cosmic, social, topographical and linguistic elements of the world" (1986, pp. 8-9). The crowd depicted solely in body parts and bodily manners conjuring up a new entity signals "a particularly rich crop of discursive chimeras" (Gomel, 1996, p. 59). This new chimerical entity composed of every person from the oppressed section of society, joining hands and dancing at the spill of wine will be reformed again, yet this time in a frenzied mood and "summoned to rise against the tyrants of the earth, rose from all the varying soils of France" (Dickens, 1994, p. 270). In a zombie-like manner, once 'dead' but brought back to life by the sense of blood-thirsty revenge, rising from the soils of France, the crowd become the embodiment of the "regeneration of the human race" after "the king was tried, doomed, and beheaded" (p. 270), and "the National Razor" "La Guillotine" sheared off so many heads (p. 271). Their laughter and dance for the spilled wine in the early pages of the novel have been configured into an occult-like manner in which people "were dancing like five thousand demons" (p. 275). Hands striking at one another and clutching at one another's heads, bodies spinning, mouths screaming present an "establishment of a kind that resembles the carnivalesque attitudes" (Tysdahl, 1998, p. 112). The crowd singing Carmagnole, the Revolution song, and dancing wildly made it so beyond reason that

No fight could have been half so terrible as this dance. It was so emphatically a fallen sport–a something, once innocent, delivered over to all devilry–a healthy pastime changed into a means of angering the blood, bewildering the senses, and steeling the heart. Such grace as was visible in it, made it the uglier, showing how warped and perverted all things good by nature were become. (Dickens, 1994, p. 276)

The notion of a 'dead' nation reviving wildly makes the human body in *A Tale of Two Cities* the embodiment of a political climate in which death and resurrection are juxtaposed. Grounded on the regulation of the appearance and disappearance of the human body, the novel represents how the revolution locates itself in the bodies of individuals. Singular bodies and bodies in mass are the texts of this narrative. In *Rabelais and His World,* Mikhail Bakhtin refers to the notion of "travesty" as an essential element of the folk festival or "the feast of fools" (1984, p.81) elected as "ephemeral kings and queens" (p. 81) which signals the mock of absolute power. Bakhtin, relating the situation to the idea of death and rebirth, emphasizes that "the ritual of the feast tended to project the play of time itself, which kills and gives birth at the same time, recasting the old into the new, allowing nothing to perpetuate itself" (1984, p.82). Beginning with the "resurrection" of Dr. Manette, and developing its course through the recreation of a public and a political sphere, the novel employs the configurations of life, death, and regeneration in physical, cultural, and social sense embodied in the human body. Monarchical oppression and violence on common bodies exterminated by common bodies in mass avenging, yet again by violence.

Madame Defarge, wife of Monsieur Defarge, the owner of the wine shop, is a leading figure in the Revolution who has become the embodiment of violence against which she fights. As the "political icon" (Lewis, 2006, p. 31) of the Revolution, she is, as stated by Linda Lewis, not only "a soldier and terrorist" but also "a would-be politician" (p. 32). As a leader of Revolutionaries, Madame Defarge is depicted as "a stout woman", "with a watchful eye", and "a large hand heavily ringed, a steady face, strong features, and great composure of manner." (Dickens, 1994, p. 40). She is "[o]f a strong and fearless character, of shrewd sense and readiness, of great determination, of that kind of beauty which not only seems to impart to its possessor firmness and animosity" (p. 353). With "an inveterate hatred of a class, opportunity had developed her into a tigress. She was absolutely without pity" (pp. 353-354). Her unscrupulous character is conditioned in her corporeal existence which has an uncontrollable animalistic nature. Depictions of her particular body parts scaffold her merciless character, by which she is "both eroticized and condemned" (Lamb, 1996, p. 232):

Such a heart Madame Defarge carried under her rough robe. Carelessly worn, it was a becoming robe enough, in a certain weird way, and her dark hair looked rich under her coarse red cap. Lying hidden in her bosom, was a loaded pistol. Lying hidden at her waist, was a sharpened dagger. Thus accoutred, and walking with the confident tread of such a character, and with the supple freedom of a woman who had habitually walked in her girlhood, bare-foot and bare-legged, on the brown sea-sand, Madame Defarge took her way along the streets. (Dickens, 1994, p. 354)

Madame Defarge's body parts such as her dark hair, bosom, heart under her robe, and bare feet and legs contribute to her imagery in a sexual femininity with which the Revolution is associated. This femininity is supported with military aspects, which decenters her from accustomed gender roles. It is more obvious during the raid in which revolutionaries headed to Hotel de Ville for the governor. Madame Defarge is one of the leaders of the mass the followers of which are associated with "[h]eadlong, mad, and dangerous footsteps to force their way into anybody's life, footsteps not easily made clean again if once stained red […]" (213). She addresses women at the raid, and says "What! We can kill as well as the men when the place is taken!" (215). All women are "armed alike in hunger and revenge" (215). Revolutionaries' politics of revenge have been put into effect with their special consideration of the body parts of their enemies as targets. The crowd of St. Antoine who had drunk the spilled wine on the streets now needed another fluid to feed their hunger. The human body has become the food of the Revolution to feed its hunger. Madame Defarge's body avenges injustice against her sister's body and other impoverished bodies. She is so determined that she does not hesitate even a moment in mutilating the governor's dead body: "[…] she put her foot upon his neck, and with her cruel knife – long ready – hewed off his head" (218). Linda Lewis explains the beheading of the governor by Freud's equation between decapitation and castration, and states that " the allegory is plain: women, if given the power, will castrate the very civic state that in public art had been personified by the icon of a grand, serene female" (2006, p. 42).

Madame Defarge's hands and eyes are the means of this power, which give her the ability to control people and events around her. Her knitting, maintained by hands, is threads of Fate that register names for "extermination" (174) "in her own stitches and her own symbols" (174). Madame Defarge represents the Moirai, the Fates, who are personified by three sisters, in ancient Greek mythology who spin the thread of life and destiny. Her own stitches and symbols determine the life course of people whose heads are the 'food' of La Guillotine. All women are

her sisters of Moirai: "All the women knitted. They knitted worthless things; but, the mechanical work was a mechanical substitute for eating and drinking; the hands moved for the jaws and the digestive apparatus: if the bony fingers had been still, the stomachs would have been more famine-pinched" (186). Knitting feeds the digestive apparatus, and these women ceaselessly knit even when they watch and count "dropping heads" (187). Knitting also evokes the story of Philomela in Greek mythology, who narrates her rape by Tereus by weaving a tapestry. Raped and her tongue mutilated by Tereus to silence her and make her unable to narrate what happened, Philomela weaves a tapestry depicting the rape scene. In a similar manner, Madame Defarge's knitting registers the names to be executed and related to the nobility and also to Marquis, who is responsible for the rape of Madame Defarege's sister. Madame Defarge's knitting hands are means of her revenge for her sister's rape.

Madame Defarge's and Doctor Manette's hands are major instruments of the Revolution's trajectory. While Madame Defarge's hands form stitches that threaten lives of others, Doctor Manette's hands, in his witness writing, save his life and empower him. Moreover, his hands enable him to resist his memory of violence and endure his devastated life. By means of his hands' craft of making shoes after his release from prison, Doctor Manette manages to repress harsh realities in his mind after his traumatic experience of prison life. Dr. Manette's body is the embodiment of political texts containing past, present and future. His body is in alignment with what Foucault expresses in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History": "The body manifests the stigmata of past experience and also gives rise to desires, failings, and errors. These elements may join in a body where they achieve a sudden expression, but as often, their encounter is an engagement in which they efface each other, where the body becomes the pretext of their insurmountable conflict" (Foucault & Bouchard, 1977, p. 148). As an all-knowing subject, the presence of Dr. Manette's body, which is both a marker of the past and a 'pretext' of the future, has been absenced like a ghost and silenced, which is also implied in Lucy's response when she is informed that her father has been found alive: "I am going to see his Ghost! It will be his Ghost–not him!" (Dickens, 1994, p. 34). Doctor Manette's body defined in terms of absence in the early pages of the novel has been replaced by prisoners' bodies to be executed which are "[g]hosts all" (p. 254). When Charles Darnay, husband of Lucy Manette, was taken to prison for being the nephew of Marquis, he "seemed to stand in a company of the dead" (p. 254). The dichotomy between the presence and absence of bodies upon which the Revolution sets its power is one of the major dynamics of the novel. Common bodies, which also include prisoners' bodies, are like ghosts whose existence has been encoded in a recognized absence in body politics. Prisoners' bodies, which already seem like a company of the dead and are to be executed by the new body of the nation, that is people, have been inscribed in a dichotomy embellished with power relations. Punishment was a spectacle that reinforced the power of the sovereign. Public executions, tortures, and other violent forms of punishment were used not only as a means of retribution but also to reaffirm the ruler's absolute authority. Foucault's theory of the prison is closely tied to his broader analysis of disciplinary power. Foucault states that the emergence of the modern prison, which is after the Revolution, is a new mode of social control based on disciplinary gaze leading prisoners to self-discipline by means of surveillance rather than displays of punishment. (Foucault, 1979). However, the new social order maintained by the new body of society in the novel, that is the oppressed public of Revolutionaries, neither conforms to a more systematic ways of controlling prisoners, ways remote from arbitrary violence nor aligns with the ideas of "liberty, equality and fraternity" forming the rationale behind the Revolution. Rather, it becomes a new era in which "the Republic of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death,

declared for victory or death against the world in arms" (Dickens, 1994, p. 270). This new body which had been oppressed by the sovereign monarch and conditioned within its absence, has become the new sovereign and the new oppressor: "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"(p. 271).

Conditioned in the dichotomy of presence and absence, Revolutionary bodies that form a new body of the nation solidify their corporeality in the form of mass. Revolutionary bodies which are "very numerous and very loud" (p.213), and which form "a forest of naked arms" (p.213) and an "ocean of faces" (p.219) that are "hardened in the furnaces of suffering until the touch of pity could make no mark on them" (p.219) are depicted like an embodiment of a new entity, a new body composed of bodies. These bodies are like "[t]he remorseless sea of turbulently swaying shapes" (p.219) united in one form – the crowd. In his study of the essence of crowds during the French Revolution, Stefan Jonsson states that "democracy became an issue at this time because innumerable people asserted their presence in society" (2006, p. 51). Jonsonn emphasizes that innumerable people "become linked to other terms ('mob, 'crowd,' 'populace,' 'foule') to the effect that it evoked all the dangers that intruded upon the social order" (p. 51). In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the crowd presents a freakish embodiment of revenge that is distant from logic and reason, and is lost under the burden of social injustice. Social injustice creates misery, setting the novel on a background of misery. Misery, which clusters great unhappiness, forms the representation of the French people. As in Jonsonn's analysis of the French Revolution, misery as a word, misère in French, "was used as an umbrella term for all the symptoms of the material and mental destitution suffered by the Paris majority: crime, poverty, unemployment, homelessness, hunger, suicide, infanticide, prostitution, alcoholism, illiteracy, and all other conceivable evils and misfortunes"(2006, p. 53). Apart from the association between masses and violence and criminality, Jonsson also indicates that "the mass appears as numbers" (p. 49). In *A Tale of Two Cities*, masses of people are defined with terms of numbers: hundreds of people as the embodiment of the new sovereignty determine the lives of hundreds of prisoners. Numerous "defenceless prisoners of both sexes and all ages had been killed by the populace" (Dickens, 1994, p. 267). In their execution, they are not announced by their names, but are referred to as numbers, an act underpinning the denial and erasure of their identities and their existence as individuals. In this context, when Sidney Carton, the desperate lawyer who secretly loves Lucy Manette, sacrificed his life by replacing Charles Darnay at La Force prison and was executed, he was enumerated and called twenty-three as his head fell from La Guillotine. His execution, like all other executions, was watched by a mass of Revolutionaries as spectators.

The act of watching maintains a sense of both monitoring and voyeurism in the novel. In this respect, the function of the eye as a part of the human body constructs the political motivation for the text, which ranges from witnessing and monitoring to voyeurism. Watching executions maintains a resonance for voyeurism in the novel. Doctor Manette's witnessing, which bore him misery at the beginning of the novel, has been replaced by public voyeurism in which people watch executions with pleasure and interest. Human bodies falling from La Guillotine are watched with voyeuristic pleasure and thrill of the Revolutionaries. In addition to maintaining practice of viewing, the eye also serves for observation and monitoring. Bodies are monitored carefully to discover their true nature in their relation with the Revolutionaries. Lucie Manette has been monitored by a wood-sawyer during her walks around the prison to show her love and

support to Charles Darnay. Bodies observing other bodies set the patterns of the novel as can be seen in Madame Defarge's investigation of the wood-sawyer:

'Touching those signals, little citizen,' said Madame Defarge, sternly, 'that she made to the prisoners; you are ready to bear witness to them this very day?'

'Ay, ay, why not!' cried the sawyer. 'every day, in all weathers, from two to four, always signaling, sometimes with the little one, sometimes without. I know what I know. I have seen with my eyes.' (Dickens, 1994, pp. 351-352)

Lucie Manette was seen, well-observed and monitored, and implicitly threatened by the wood-sawyer again within the terms of seeing: "See my saw! I call it my Little Guillotine. La, la, la; La, la, la! And off his head comes!"(Dickens, 1994, p. 274). He goes on making a cabaret act of execution for Lucie: "I call myself the Samson of the firewood guillotine. See here again! Loo, loo, loo; Loo, loo, loo! And off *her* head comes! Now, a child. Tickle, tickle; Pickle pickle! And off its *head* comes. All the family!" (p. 274). The function of the eye as an observer, seer, or watcher of faces and bodies sets the political motivation for the text. This can also be seen in Madame Defarge's plots, even against Doctor Manette: "'I have observed his face!' repeated madame, contemptuously and angrily. 'Yes. I have observed his face. I have observed his face to be not the face of a true friend of the Republic. Let him take care of his face!'" (p. 333). The course of characters' destinies is determined and controlled by the function of the eye.

The eyes, in particular, and the bodies, in general are associated with the setting of the novel. Events take place not only in physical environments such as streets and prisons, but also in human bodies as a reflection of body politics. Bodies are punished, fought for, exchanged, and executed, all of which maintain the course of events throughout the novel. Thus, bodies do play significantly determinant role in the destinies of other bodies in the novel. The effect of corporeality operates significantly, which can even be validated in the fight between Miss Pross and Madame Defarge: "The two hands of Madame Defarge buffeted and tore her face; but Miss Pross, with her head down, held her round the waist, and clung to her with more than the hold of a drowning woman" (p. 360). Miss Pross kills Madame Defarge, and Defarge's dead body is no longer a threat. Dead bodies determine the future of other bodies. This is the same case for Sidney Carton, who sacrifices his body to be executed in place of Charles Darnay. Carton's self-sacrifice could define him a Christ-like figure, enduring suffering for the greater good of the public. He is likened to Christ with his reference to the passage of resurrection in the Bible passing through his mind before his execution: "'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die'" (Dickens, 1994, p. 366). The execution of Carton's body will enable the Manette family to live prosperously. His dead body will bring Manettes back to their life in England, so Carton's death is Manettes' resurrection.

3. CONCLUSION

Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* is a narration on the human body affecting and being affected by body politics. Bodies burdened with insecurity, injustice, discrimination, intolerance, abuse, and violence accompany the events in the novel. Characters' bodily experiences determine the course of events, and represent power relations. Varying from bodies 'resurrected' to bodies sacrificed and executed, human bodies embody a topos, a location where political texts intertwine and determine the narration. In this respect, the human body occupies a central stimulus; it acts as an agent that directly influences and displays practices of power and

control as manifested in the novel. On a personal level, the novel portrays bodies as sites of suffering and resistance, especially in the case of the poor and oppressed. On a societal level, bodies represent the power dynamics between the aristocracy, the revolutionary masses, and the state. The aristocratic bodies, symbolized by characters like Monsieur the Marquis, are marked by privilege, corruption, and detachment from the suffering of others. In contrast, the bodies of the poor and oppressed, such as those of the peasants and working-class characters are depicted as vulnerable, tortured, and fragile. The bodies of the starving, and the imprisoned live under the constant threat of violence, poverty, and injustice. In addition, the theme of the resurrection of the body**,** both literally and metaphorically, signals norms of justice and injustice. Dr. Manette's recovery from his years of imprisonment is a powerful example of how the body can be reborn from the trauma of the past, and how it is related to the idea of justice and injustice. Similarly, Sydney Carton's sacrificial death is a metaphysical resurrection, in which his body is offered for the greater good. Accordingly, the human body serves as a text for political, social, and cultural mechanisms in Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* which is fundamentally a narrative of bodily politics, where the human body reflects the struggles for justice**,** power, and moral integrity.

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Destek ve Teşekkür: Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum ya da kuruluştan destek alınmamıştır.

Etik Kurul İzni: Etik kurul izni gerektirmeyen bir çalışma türüdür.