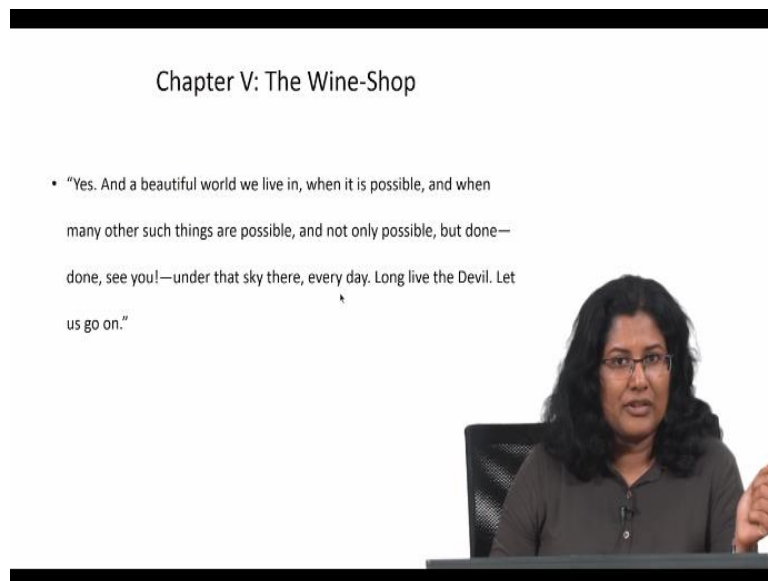


The Nineteenth-Century Novel
Prof. Divya. A
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology – Madras

Lecture - 20
Tale of Two Cities Book I: Chapters 4-6

Hello and welcome back. In this session, will look at chapters 5 and 6, we will talk about the wine-shop chapter which is symbolically rich in some of the themes that Dickens explores in Tale of Two Cities.

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Now this is the section that I would like you to look at closely and let me read this dialogue. “Yes. And a beautiful world we live in, when it is possible, and when many other such things are possible, and not only possible but done – done, see you! - under that sky there, every day. Long live the devil. Let us go on.” This is the conversation between the wine-shop owner Mr. Defarge and Mr. Lorry.

And Mr. Lorry is struck by the fact that there is so much horror in the world. There is almost an element of naivety in Mr. Lorry's thoughts here when he reflects, a lot of wonder and surprise at the way the world is. And Defarge says that evil is happening every day, things bad things are possible not only possible, it is happening, it is done, and he is dejected, he is very pessimistic and he asks to go on.

The context for this conversation is that Mr. Lorry and Miss Manette have come to the wine shop to get back Dr. Manette who is housed in an attic on top of the wine shop. And they have found Defarge, and Defarge is going to take them to the attic in order to release “free” Dr. Manette too, his relative and friend.

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Chapter V: The Wine-Shop

- “Do you make a show of Monsieur Manette?”
- “I show him, in the way you have seen, to a chosen few.”
- “Is that well?”
- “I think it is well.”
- “Who are the few? How do you choose them?”
- “I choose them as real men, of my name—Jacques is my name—to whom the sight is likely to do good. Enough; you are English; that is another thing.”

Handwritten annotations in red ink:

- Why? → doctor
- Message
- Jacques → code name
- Anger
- Do something?

What is significant about that scene is that even before Mr. Lorry and Miss Manette and Defarge go to the attic which has Dr. Manette inside, we have three other people looking at Dr. Manette through a hole in the door, and they are looking at him as a sort of a spectacle, and Mr. Lorry is not very happy at this turn of events. And it is a very interesting scene because you know if you read the narrative closely, we have doctor, we have Defarge, we have Mr. Lorry and we have Miss Manette who are being taken, who are being guided by Defarge, and they climb a kind of a winding staircase and they go to the top.

And when they go to the top, they see other people looking through a hole in the wall and they kind of look at Dr. Manette as if they are looking at some kind of animal, some kind of creature, some kind of, you know, object that is entertaining the three of them. And this makes Mr. Lorry ask him this question, “Do you make a show of Monsieur Manette?”

And he says that I show him, in the way you have seen, to a chosen few. So he says that those who are looking at that spectacle have been chosen by me, and they are the selected few and doctor and Mr. Lorry asks is that well? Is that alright? And he says *I* think it is well and there is an emphasis on this *I*, it is that emphasis is in the original too, and he says that I think it is alright and, you know, that is enough, that is sufficient, I make the decision.

And Lorry asks who are the few, how do you choose them, how do you select the people who look at Dr. Manette as if he is a creature who is entertaining them? And he says, Defarge says, "I choose them as real men of my name - Jacques is my name - to whom the sight is likely to do good. Enough, you are English, that is another thing." And when Mr. Lorry asks what is the criteria for you to decide on who is going to look at Dr. Manette, he says that the men I choose are real men, there is a lot of genuine aspect to them, they are not fake in any way, they are not superficial in any way and they have my name which is Jacques. So all of them who look at Dr. Manette are called Jacques. And Jacques is a code name to mean that they are all part of the group that wants change in France, radical change in France, all of these men want to see the revolution come and change the lives of the people.

And he says that this spectacle would do good to those who look at Dr. Manette, and he says that that is enough, you are English, you will not understand the point of my lesson that I am giving to Jacques who look at Dr. Manette. So this is an important scene in the sense that Dr. Manette is made a spectacle of to a chosen few. Why is he becoming a spectacle? What is the reason?

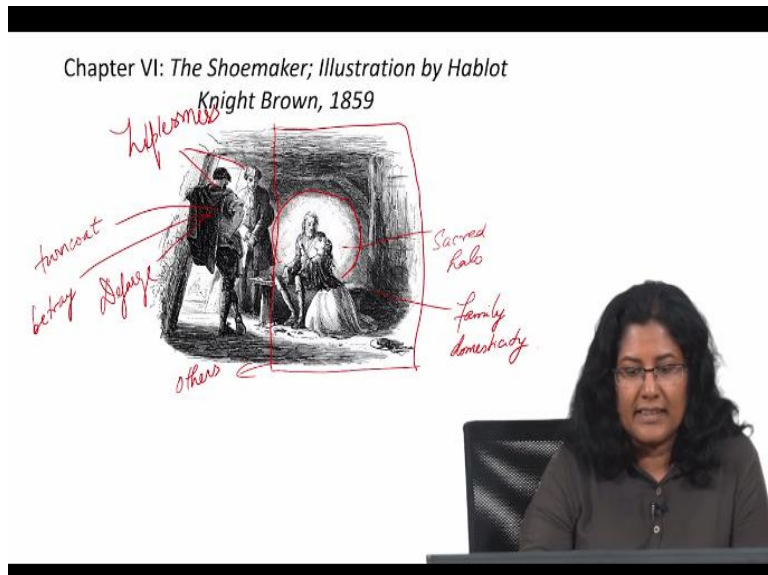
The reason is that he will offer some kind of lesson in life, lesson about society, some kind of message that will inspire the Jacques, the men who come and look at him and inspire them to do something. And what is that something? That we will come to know about it as the novel progresses. So the novel is playing upon an important idea of becoming something for somebody, you know, being a motivator for somebody.

And the other interesting point about this chapter is that we see Dr. Manette not imprisoned, he is not imprisoned in the Bastille. In fact, we never see Dr. Manette imprisoned in the Bastille, we see him imprisoned in the attic of the wine-shop. So that is also very significant. It is the Defarges who are the prisoners of Dr. Manette in some sense, even though we know that Dr. Manette has been a Bastille prisoner for about 18 years, and then he has been released and then he has been sent to Defarge who had been a servant of the family long ago.

We know all this, we know all this through, you know, bits and pieces of embedded narrative. But as the narrative unfolds, we are introduced to Dr. Manette not within the Bastille prisoner cell, not within the North Tower of the Bastille, but within the attic of the wine-shop.

So it is also important to understand that in some sense the Defarges are also prisoners of Dr. Manette.

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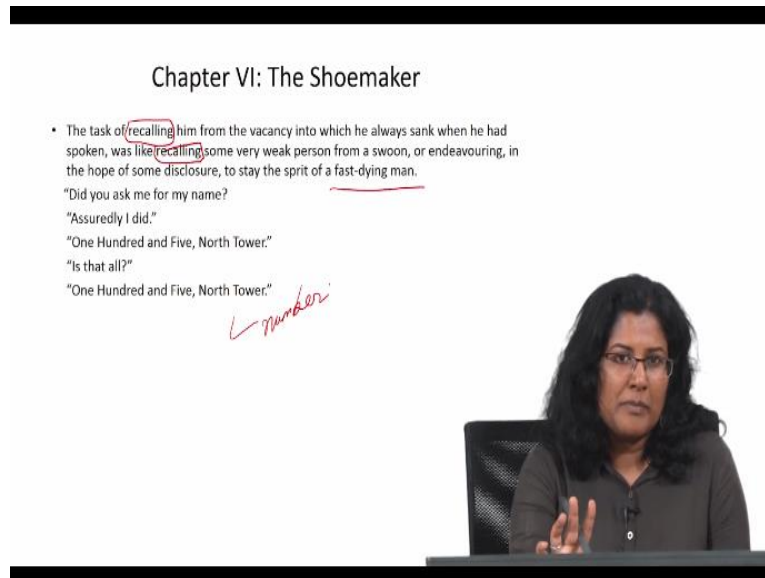
This is the illustration by Hablot Knight Brown of the scene where we see Lorry, Defarge, Manette and Miss Manette, you know, meeting one another for the first time. It is a very important illustration among all the illustrations of his for *A Tale of Two Cities*. Let us do a bit of close reading of this illustration. Look at the halo that surrounds Dr. Manette and Miss Manette. It is a sacred halo, almost.

And look at the way that Dr. Manette and Miss Manette have been divided from these two figures. So they have somehow, within that limited space and limited time, become a family, father and daughter have become a family, a kind of incipient domesticity is formed here in the scene, and that domesticity sets the others outside of that family.

And between the two of them, it is important to note that Defarge, this is Defarge, Defarge is showing his back to the reader, and we have Mr. Lorry standing obediently, loyally by the side of the family there. The fact that Defarge is showing his back also indicates that he might become a turncoat, he might turn on the doctor at some point in the story, he might betray the family in some way, he might be disloyal to Dr. Manette in some way at some point in the novel.

And the fact that Mr. Lorry has his head bowed down shows perhaps his helplessness at some points in the story, when he is unable to deliver the family to safety. So this is a picture that is symbolically rich in nature. We have incipient domesticity, we have betrayal hinted at, we have the desire to guard, and we have expression of helplessness as well in this illustration.

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Chapter VI: The Shoemaker

- The task of recalling him from the vacancy into which he always sank when he had spoken, was like recalling some very weak person from a swoon, or endeavouring, in the hope of some disclosure, to stay the spirit of a fast-dying man.

"Did you ask me for my name?"
"Assuredly I did."
"One Hundred and Five, North Tower."
"Is that all?"
"One Hundred and Five, North Tower."

number

The slide features a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark top, sitting in a black office chair and speaking. The text on the slide is a mix of black and red, with some words circled in red. A handwritten red word "number" is written below the text.

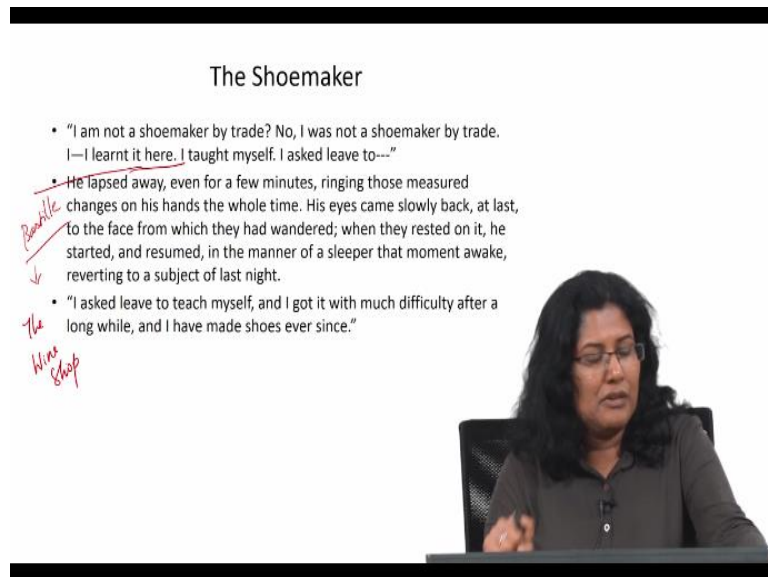
Now let us look at chapter 6, The Shoemaker. Who is the shoemaker, it is Dr. Manette who is the shoemaker. In fact, Dr. Manette occupies his time by making shoes, women's shoes, and this is the pastime of Dr. Manette when he was in the Bastille, and that is the pastime for him when he is within the attic of the wine-shop. "The task of recalling him from the vacancy into which he always sank when he had spoken was like recalling some very weak person from a swoon or endeavouring in the hope of some disclosure to stay the spirit of a fast dying man."

This section tells us that it is very difficult to recall Dr. Manette, that old man in the attic. It is very, you know, difficult to make him realize that he is not within the prison the Bastille. In fact, he is a free man who is living for a period in the wine shop. And the narrator says that recalling him, the word recall is used quite often in this chapter, recalling him, bringing him back to himself was like recalling a man who is unconscious.

And it is like recalling somebody to realize that he is not a prisoner, and it is like recalling a man who is fast dying, it is like making a man stop from dying. And he says that did you ask for my name? And he says assuredly I did. Mr. Lorry says I did. And One Hundred and Five North Tower, that is the name of the man and he says, is that all? One Hundred and Five North Tower.

So when he is asked about his name by Defarge, he says that my name is One Hundred and Five North Tower. That is the number that his cell had when Dr Manette was a prisoner within the Bastille.

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The Shoemaker

- "I am not a shoemaker by trade? No, I was not a shoemaker by trade. I— I learnt it here. I taught myself. I asked leave to—"
- He lapsed away, even for a few minutes, ringing those measured changes on his hands the whole time. His eyes came slowly back, at last, to the face from which they had wandered; when they rested on it, he started, and resumed, in the manner of a sleeper that moment awake, reverting to a subject of last night.
- "I asked leave to teach myself, and I got it with much difficulty after a long while, and I have made shoes ever since."

Bastille
↓
The Wine Shop

So he is asked if he is a shoemaker by trade and he says that no, I was not a shoemaker by trade. I learnt it here; I learnt it in the prison, in Bastille. Here is reference to the Bastille. But there is an irony here, as I mentioned before, that the Bastille is here not the actual prison but the wine shop. So the wine shop is also some sense a prison for Dr. Manette. I taught myself, I asked leave.

He says that this is a trade that I learnt by myself. I asked permission to learn it. He then lapsed away even for a few minutes ringing those measured changes on his hands the whole time. His eyes came slowly back at last to the face from which they had wandered; when they rested on it, he started and resumed in the manner of a sleeper that moment awake, reverting to a subject of last night.

So as he is talking he goes back to his earlier state of becoming oblivious to everybody who is around him. The present conversation becomes as if it is a conversation of last night. And he says again, after a while, I asked leave to teach myself, I got it with much difficulty after a long while and I have made shoes ever since. He says that it was difficult to get permission even to learn this trade, this task, but once I have got the permission, I have made shoes since then.


So we can see that this is the state of mind of a man who has suffered quite a lot in his life. It is the result of 18 long years of imprisonment. So he is completely, almost completely damaged psychologically, and he cannot believe, he does not realize that he is a free man and in fact he obsessively makes shoes, and making shoes becomes an escapism for Dr. Manette and he wants to cling to that activity, because not doing it would mean that he would realize that he is a prisoner, and that would be hellish to realize and be aware of.

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The Shoemaker

- "That he had no recollection whatever of his having been brought from his prison to that house was apparent to them. They heard him mutter, "One Hundred and Five, North Tower;" and when he looked about him, it evidently was for the strong fortress-walls which had long encompassed him. On their reaching the court-yard he instinctively altered his tread, as being in expectation of a drawbridge and when there was no drawbridge, and he saw the carriage waiting in the open street, he dropped his daughter's hand and clasped his head again."

*Wine shop = house = Defarges
Bastille - Dr. Manette / setting*



“That he had no recollection whatever of his having been brought from his prison to that house, was apparent to them.” So it is very clear that he does not realize that he has shifted from the Bastille to the wine shop. The word house is interesting in this regard because the wine shop is the house of the Defarges, and that house is also symbolically the Bastille for Dr. Manette. So there is a lot of irony in the setting which I would like you to be aware of.

“They heard him mutter, One Hundred and Five North Tower, and when he looked about him, it evidently was for the strong fortress-walls which had long encompassed him. On their reaching the court-yard, he instinctively altered his tread as being in expectation of a drawbridge and when there was no drawbridge and he saw the carriage waiting in the open street, he dropped his daughter's hand and clasped his head again.”

Now what is happening in the scene is that Mr. Lorry, Miss Manette and Defarge are bringing Dr. Manette out of the attic, and they are taking him down by the staircase and they are taking him into the court-yard. And as he is moving out of the attic and down the stairs, he is

instinctively looking for the fortress-walls, the walls of the Bastille but he is unable to find that and he becomes slightly disoriented by that fact.

And in fact, when he reaches the court ground level, he kind of changes the way he walks, he alters his tread, his footsteps, because he is anticipating a drawbridge. That drawbridge is present in front of the Bastille, not in front of the wine-shop, but in his mind Dr. Manette is still in the vicinity of the Bastille, so he is anticipating the drawbridge and when there is no drawbridge he once again becomes disoriented, because instead the drawbridge that is just a carriage waiting in the open street.

That open space itself becomes difficult for Dr. Manette to understand and make sense of, so he drops his daughter's hand and clasps his head as if he is in pain. So this shift is very difficult for Dr. Manette to undergo, and that tells us, the readers, of the psychological damage, the trauma that he has suffered because of long, hidden imprisonment. Thank you

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