

The Nineteenth Century Novel
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Lecture - 24
Dicken's A Tale of Two Cities Book II: Chapters 6-9

Hello and welcome to week 6's lectures. Today, we will be talking about book II, chapters 6-9.
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Chapter VI: Hundreds of People

- A quainter corner than the corner where the Doctor lived, was not to be found in London. ...
 - ...forest-trees flourished, and wild flowers grew, and the hawthorn blossomed, in the now vanished fields. As a consequence, country airs circulated in Soho with vigorous freedom...
- Symbolic values } Urban airs
 } Natural, wild
 } Country side =
 } idyllic*

We will begin with a chapter called Hundreds of People, and this is the sixth chapter of book II, and this is a very significant chapter in two senses. One is that we are given a very interesting glimpse into Lucie Manette's home, a very beautiful home in a corner of London, and secondly we are given a sense that things are not going to go very well for Lucie Manette's family at in not so distant future. So these two ideas are conveyed.

There is a foreshadowing of the revolution to come, which will have a drastic impact on Lucie Manette's family and two, what is reinforced here is that it is such a wonderful, important family in several senses, and this family is going to be in trouble. So we will look at how beautiful and significant this home is in the words of the third-person narrator here. "A quainter corner than the corner where the doctor left was not to be found in London. Forest trees flourished and wild flowers grew and the hawthorn blossomed in the now vanished fields. As a consequence, country airs circulated in Soho with vigorous freedom."

So the literal setting of the home of Doctor Manette is Soho in London, and in those days, remember this is late 18th century London that we are in, in this novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, and the narrator reminds us that forest trees flourished, wildflowers grew and hawthorn bushes bloomed in those fields which are no longer present in the time in which Dickens is writing, which is Victorian London.

So this is a past that we are looking into, and this past is beautiful in the sense that there is a lot of natural beauty, wild beauty, the word wild is literally referenced here as an adjective to the flowers there, mentioned in the excerpt, and the narrator also wants to convey the idea that this is a distinct, unique quaint place. This is not ordinary, this is something extraordinary. And the narrator also tells us that country airs circulated in Soho, not urban airs.

Not urban airs, which is foggy, which is smoky and the grounds are muddy in urban regions in Dickens' fiction usually, but that is not the case in terms of Soho square where the doctor lived. And the doctor lives in a corner in Soho. It is a place which is accessed only by this particular family. This space belongs to them uniquely. So we need to understand the setting of doctor Manette's family and the setting has symbolic values.

And these symbolic values evoke the idea of natural wild beauty, and it also has associations with the countryside, which is full of idyllic beauty. Countryside is an idyll. It is a scenic spot and which has associations of innocence and youth. So all these aspects are embedded in the setting of doctor Manette's home. And most importantly, there is vigorous freedom at this place. This home in Soho is associated with the concept of Liberty, and that Liberty will be demolished during the French Revolution in the name of Liberty.

So there is a double irony there, and Dickens is very conscious of using this phrase, I believe, in claiming that Soho is associated with energetic, proactive, deliberate enjoyment of freedom and liberty. People are able to exercise their free will in Soho, in London, in Britain, which may not be the case come the French Revolution in France and not in the distant future.

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The Soho home of the Manettes

- ...when the streets grew hot, the corner was in shadow, though not in shadow so remote but that you could see beyond it into a glare of brightness. It was a cool spot, staid but cheerful, a wonderful place for echoes, and a very harbour from the raging streets.
- There ought to have been a tranquil bark in such an anchorage, and there was.



Okay, the Soho home of the Manette's are further described in this excerpt, and the narrator says that "when the streets grew hot, the corner was in shadow, though not in shadow so remote but that you could see beyond it into a glare of brightness. It was a cool spot, staid but cheerful, a wonderful place for echoes and a very harbour from the raging streets. There ought to have been a tranquil bark in such an anchorage and there was."

Once again the description of the ambience, the atmosphere of the street in which Doctor Manette lived is given a very good portrait in this excerpt, and even when the temperature is harsher. For example, when the streets grew hot, this particular corner in Soho was in shadow. It was not affected by the harsh weathers, and this shadow is not a shadow which is depressing which is inconducive, in fact, and on the contrary, this shadow is a pleasant shadow, and it kind of safeguards the family which is at the heart of this particular corner in Soho. And the narrator says that you would be able to easily see beyond the shadow into this glare of brightness. So I would want you to compare this particular description with the illustration that we saw in our previous sessions, especially the illustration which depicts the attic of the wine shop in Saint Antoine, Paris.

And in that illustration we saw that Lucie Manette and Dr. Manette were in a sacred halo. So that similar sacred halo is evoked in this description in Soho Square where the narrator says that we

are able to see beyond the shadow into a glare of brightness, and that brightness includes the domesticity of the Manettes.

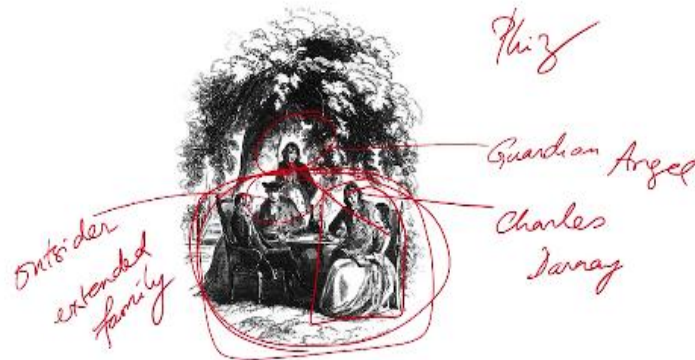
And further, the narrator says that it was a cool spot. So from the harshest traits we move on to the shadowed spot, and then we move on to a glare of brightness, almost a sacred halo, and the narrator further says that this spot, this home is a cool spot. It is very regular, it is ordinary, but it is full of cheer and it is a wonderful place for echoes. And what are the kinds of echoes that Lucie Manette is observant of, and which just further interpreted by Sydney Carton, is something that I will detail shortly.

But the point is that even though the home looks mundane, it is very cheerful and it is a wonderful place, which is full of echoes of different kinds of people and objects, and in fact it becomes a harbor, a haven from the raging streets, from the riotous the streets. And this riotous street is a direct echo or an invocation of the streets of Paris. Also we can say that this raging streets can encompass the raging streets of Britain too of England too, because we do have mob scenes even in Britain, but we are kind of inclined to bring up stark contrasts and those stark contrasts are between the quiet corner of Soho and the raging streets of Paris, which kind of culminates in the reign of terror. So the contrasts are between these two spots. And in this kind of ambience of a lot of threat and danger, this home becomes a tranquil bark.

It is like a peaceful ship in a raging storm, and this peaceful ship is called the Home of Lucie. And we need such homes, we need such tranquil barks, and it is this tranquil bark that is going to be threatened during the French Revolution when the key players in the revolutionary movement will try to attack this beautiful family, and this family will be protected by the people who are loyal to this particular family and we will see who those loyalists are shortly.

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The Frontispiece



Now this is this wonderful illustration by Hablot Browne, who is also called as Phiz, and he has represented this family of Lucie Manette. So we have Lucie here, we have the doctor there and then we have Mr. Lorry, who is key to protecting this home, and so he is given a central spot more or less in this particular illustration, and then we have Sydney Carton who is once again outside of this circle of domesticity.

Even though he is in the margins, he is a sort of a guardian angel too, who is looking over, who is looking over Lucie especially, and we have Charles Darnay here. So we can see that there is a kind of a family in the making in the relationship between Lucie Manette and Charles Darnay, and even though Sydney Carton is envious of Darnay, he is going to and he does play the part of the guardian angel, the protector whose you know, blessing is there on this entire family.

So even though the Manettes are a unit in themselves, they also admit outsiders like Mr. Lorry. So that is something we need to keep in mind. So this is an extended family based on social affinity and friendship.

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Miss Pross

- ..one of those unselfish creatures—found only among women—who will, for pure love and admiration, bind themselves willing slaves, to youth when they have lost it, to beauty that they never had, to accomplishments that they were never fortunate enough to gain, to bright hopes that never shone upon their own sombre lives.

Now we are meeting a new character called Miss Pross. This character has been introduced in the early chapters of *A Tale of Two Cities*. If you remember we see Miss Pross for the first time at the inn called George when Lucie is meeting Mr. Lorry, and Mr. Lorry offers her some sudden and surprising news and Lucie faints and then we have this fierce protector of Lucie Manette entering the room and charging everybody with different tasks and almost kind of threatening them to do their jobs.

So Miss Pross is a fierce protector of Lucie Manette. She is a chaperone. She is the maid. She is the cook of the family. She does offer a lot of services to the family, but she is also considered one of the family members. She is very close to the Manettes. So this is how the third person narrator describes Miss Pross.

“One of those unselfish creatures found only among women who will, for pure love and admiration, bind themselves willing slaves, to youth when they have lost it, to beauty that they never had, to accomplishments that they were never fortunate enough to gain, to bright hopes that never shone upon their own sombre lives.” The bottomline of this excerpt is this. Miss Pross is not the heroine of the story. She is not beautiful. She is not very accomplished.

She is not fortunate. She does not have great hopes. In fact, her life is somber. Okay, so that is the very simple interpretation that you can draw from this excerpt. She is not a central character. She is a minor character, and a minor character has all these attributes. But if you want to kind of

get a nuanced reading of Miss Pross, we need to understand that she is very unselfish. She is very selfless, and such kind of selfless figures are to be found only among the female of the species, that is the opinion of the third person narrator.

And what are the attributes of Miss Pross. She admires beauty. She admires youth. She admires an accomplished character, and these attributes are embedded in the figure of Lucie Manette and Miss Pross is almost worshipping at the altar of Lucie Manette. And even though she is not fortunate enough to have a family of her own, she is single, she is not married, she does not have a family in the sense we do not know who her parents are, and we just get some hints of her brother, and we clearly understand that she is part of a dysfunctional family, but then she has attached herself to the family of Lucie Manette and she kind of has bound herself with the fortunes of Lucie Manette.

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Miss Pross's brother

- Solomon:
- "stripped her of everything she possessed, as a stake to speculate with, and had abandoned her in her poverty evermore, with no touch of compassion."

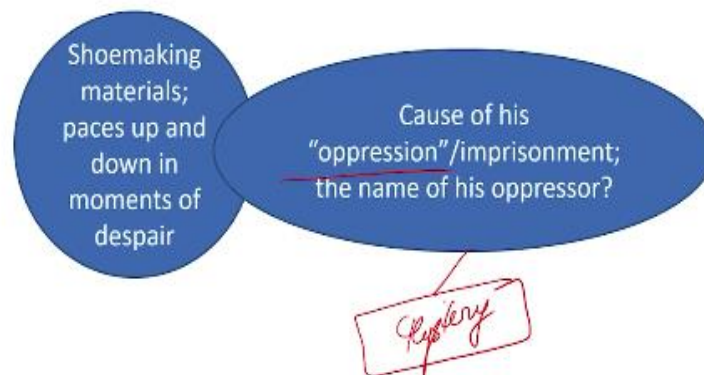
Now as I just mentioned about, we do get a sense that she has a brother who is not with her at this moment of the story, and the name of her brother is Solomon Pross. And Solomon Pross is not an admirable character. He is not a good brother, he is not a loyal brother. And according to the narrator, this brother had stripped her of everything she possessed as a stake to speculate with and had abandoned her in her poverty evermore with no touch of compassion.

So he is a scoundrel, basically. So that is what is being conveyed in this set of information that we gather. He has got a lot of money out of Miss Pross with the intention of, you know, gambling, and he loses the money, and his speculation fails, and then Miss Pross becomes extremely poor and he abandons her in her poverty and that shows a lot of lack of compassion and a cruelty on the part of Solomon. Despite this context for her brother, Miss Pross is very loyal.

She still loves her brother. She has sympathetic feelings toward him, and that surprises Mr. Lorry who knows about this background of Miss Pross and Solomon Pross. So this is the context. So apart from this relation, there is nobody for Miss Pross. We do not know who her parents are and she is a constant companion to Lucie Manette.

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Dr Manette



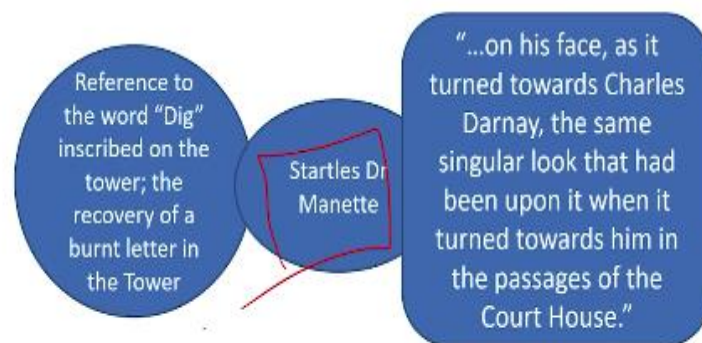
Now in the home of Doctor Manette, what is still present? The shoe making materials are very much a part of the life of Doctor Manette. So the object is still there, and this object was present in the attic of the wine-shop of the Defarges, and this object was present in the Bastille where Doctor Manette was imprisoned for 18 long years. So we have not seen Doctor Manette use the shoe-making materials as of now, when he is in London in his home, but whenever he is upset or distressed whenever he remembers his past, he paces up and down in moments of despair and nobody knows what exactly is the cause of his oppression. He does not discuss the matter with

anybody, and we do not know as of now that why exactly he was imprisoned for 18 long years in the Bastille and who exactly were his oppressors. So this continues to be a mystery.

But whenever he is depressed, whenever he has those moments of despair, he walks and Lucie Manette his daughter accompanies him as he paces up and down in his room. So we can sense that the Bastille is still a powerful force in the psychological life of Doctor Manette.

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Dr Manette and Charles Darnay



Now Charles Darnay is a frequent visitor to the family, and in one of his visits to the home of the Manettes, he recounts a narrative about his visit to the Tower of London. And in this tower, the word dig, DIG was written, scratched on to the wall of the Tower of London, and when people realized that that it was an instruction, they started to dig that spot and they realized that there was a letter which was crumbled.

So he talks about his experience of witnessing this event in the Tower of London, and once he mentions the words DIG, Doctor Manette is visibly affected. So there is a connection between digging and the recovery of something significant, especially a letter which will have ramifications on several people in the story. So as I mentioned, this narrative startles, shocks Doctor Manette, and that is visibly reflected "on his face as it turns towards Charles Darnay, the same singular look that had been upon it when it turned towards him in the passages of the courthouse."

This detail is significant. What is this detail? The look, the look of fear, apprehension, even hate or dislike on the part of Doctor Manette towards Charles Darnay is something similar to the look he shared at the court premises early on in the story. So he has a kind of a difficult relationship with Charles Darnay, the man with whom his daughter is increasingly falling in love. So that is the implication that is suggested in the excerpt.

And we wonder why exactly Doctor Manette is worried and apprehensive of Charles Darnay, and this will be revealed towards the closure of the story.

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Hundreds of People

- "I have sometimes sat alone here of an evening, listening, until I have made the echoes out to be the echoes of all the footsteps that are coming by-and-by into our lives."
- "There is a great crowd coming one day into our lives if that be so," Sydney Carton struck in, in his moody way.
- "I take them into mine!" said Carton. "I ask no questions. I make no stipulations."

Annotations on the slide:

- echoes (pointing to the first quote)
- prophetic = mysteriously uttered (pointing to the second quote)
- Surreal scene (pointing to the third quote)
- sacrifice selfless (pointing to "I take them into mine!")
- home of the Manettes (pointing to "I ask no questions. I make no stipulations.")
- crowd of people in the revolution (pointing to the entire text)

Now we come to Lucie's opinions, thoughts and emotions while she spends her life in Soho Square. And she tells her companions Sydney Carton, Charles Darnay, Dr. Manette that she has sat sometimes "alone here of an evening, listening, until I have made the echoes out to be the echoes of all the footsteps that are coming by and by into our lives." "There is a great crowd coming one day into our lives if that be so" responds Sydney Carton in his own moody way.

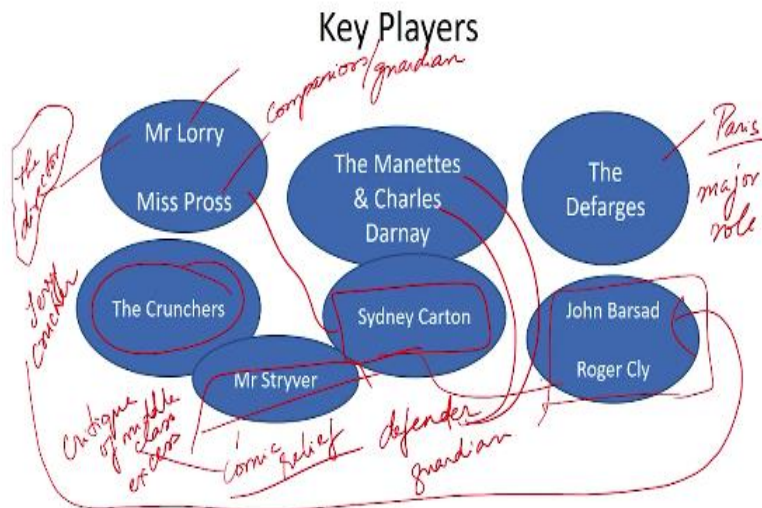
And he also says that "I take them into mine!", said Carton, "I ask no questions, I make no stipulations." So this is a very surreal scene in the story. And if you remember, the narrator talks about echoes, various echoes that are heard about the home of the Manettes. And interestingly, Lucie Manette connects these echoes to the footsteps, the sound made by feet, and she thinks that

these are the sounds of people who are going to come into our lives, that is, the lives of the Manettes and her friends.

And Sydney Carton has a very disturbing spin on the entry of those many people, and he says that they are a great crowd, and this crowd could be a reference to the crowd of the French Revolution. And he says that if there is a crowd coming into their lives, I take them into mine. This is a very prophetic phrase; almost Christ like, and he says that I have no questions to ask of you, I make no rules, no regulations.

I will just take those people into my life. So it is a very mysterious statement as well, we do not know what exactly he is referring to, but there is a sense that some sacrifice is going to be made by him. The idea of being sacrificial, the idea of being selfless is suggested in this scene too.

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Now let us take stock. Let us stop for a moment and think about the central characters in the story who are going to play a major role in resolving this narrative. So we have Mr. Lorry, Miss Pross who serve the family of the Manette's in some way. Mr. Lorry is very important in that regard because he was the one who literally recovered Doctor Manette, because he is the one who gets the information in the first place about the continuing, you know, survival of Doctor Manette.

He is the first one who gets the news that he is in the wine shop in St. Antoine, and he brings Lucie Manette to Paris, gets the father and returns back to London. So he is a central character. He is almost like the director of a stage play, so he is central in that regard. And then we have Miss Pross, the companion of Lucie Manette, who is also as I said kind of a guardian character, plays the role of a protector, and then we have the Defarges.

We have the Defarges who are in Paris, and they will come to play a major role as the novel develops. Now we need to think about Sydney Carton who also is on the side of Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross in the sense that he is going to defend the family of the Manettes, and the family of Charles Darnay and Lucie Manette. So he is a defender. He is a guardian.

And then we need to remember Mr. Stryver, Mr. Stryver is the one who helped argue favorably and who helped release Charles Darnay from that first trial scene. He is a minor character, very interesting, and offers a lot of comic relief too. And at the same time we can get a sense that Dickens is attacking the bourgeoisie, the middle class, through the representation of Mr. Stryver who embodies the excesses, the extreme characteristics of middle class ethic, and Mr. Stryver is an embodiment of that.

So we can sense that there is a critique of middle class excess in Mr. Stryver. And then we have the Crunchers, who are an interesting family, because in one sense the other family that we get to see in Britain is the family of the Crunchers. So we have the Manettes, we have the Manettes in London, and we also have the Crunchers. They are a class below, they are working class, but then they are a fully fledged family. So we have a father, mother and the son.

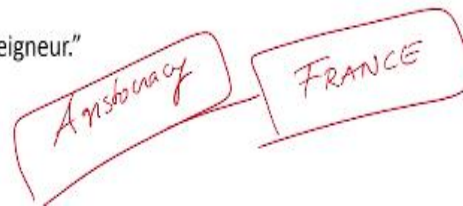
So we need to keep an eye out for the Crunchers too, because Jerry Cruncher will play a major role in offering some crucial information about John Barsad and his companion, so the Crunchers are do favorable activities, activities which will be helpful in rescuing the family of the Manettes. So that is something we need to keep in mind. And finally let me offer a quick thought on John Barsad and Roger Cly.

These are English characters, and these English characters also travel a lot between Britain and Paris, and they try to exploit the confusion, the political chaos that is there in France, especially for monetary benefit. And John Barsad, if you remember the trial scene, tried to accuse Charles Darnay of being a spy, but then we realized that he is the one who has been doing a lot of spying with the help of Roger Cly and they too will come into interesting play, in the sense that they will offer some crucial information, which will be exploited by Sydney Carton, and once again rescuing the Manette family. So these characters' lives and activities are intertwined, and we get a sense that everybody has their own place in this big machinery, which consists of the domestic and the political here.

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Chapter 7: Monseigneur In Town

- "Monseigneur had the other truly noble idea, that the world was made for them. The text of his order (altered from the original by only a pronoun, which is not much) ran: "The earth and the fulness thereof are mine, saith Monseigneur."



Now let us come to chapter 6, which is titled Monseigneur in Town. So we are in France in this particular chapter, and we do get a sense of the kind of activities the aristocracy is engaged in. So, what is the major principle which makes the aristocracy function? So that is reflected in this excerpt in connection with this particular Monseigneur.

"Monseigneur had the other truly noble idea that the world was made for them. The text of his order (altered from the original by only a pronoun, which is not much) ran: 'The earth and the fulness thereof are mine, saith Monseigneur.'" So it is very clear here. Everything on earth, its fullness, its fertility, its richness, its luxury, its fruits are claimed by the aristocracy, and it is a very interesting and ironic and disturbing play on the biblical words everything belongs to God,

that is the original idea in the Bible, but here that idea is modified and exploited by the aristocrats, the Monseigneur who says that everything is mine.

So that easily and quickly sums up the principles which inform the attitudes of the aristocracy. In other words, they are exploiting everybody else, especially the peasants. And which, you know, easily tells us that, that is possibly the reason for the French Revolution that descended on French country.

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The Marquis

- "haughty in manner....face like a mask"
- "They persisted in changing colour sometimes, and they would be occasionally dilated and contracted by something like a faint pulsation; then, they gave a look of treachery, and cruelty to the whole countenance."
- "a handsome face, and a remarkable one"

unique

What do they look like? What is the physical description of these are characters, the aristocrats? They are very haughty in manner, and they have a face like a mask. And even though this is the representation of a particular Marquis, we can easily understand that this is a representative portrait of all the aristocrats, who are generally haughty, and who do not kind of reveal what their preoccupations, proclivities are, because their faces are like masks.

"They persisted in changing color sometimes, and they would be occasionally dilated and contracted by something like a faint pulsation, then they gave a look of treachery and cruelty to whole countenance. He has a handsome face and a remarkable one." This particular excerpt is talking about a significant Marquis, who is a noble lord. He has a superior position in this hierarchy of the various classes. And his face, even though it is like a mask, his eyes are interesting because it dilates and contracts, and then contracts, and that he has a look of treachery

and he has an inclination towards cruelty, which is revealed through his countenance. And despite all this, despite this reference to cruelty, haughtiness, blankness, and the idea of treachery, he is very handsome. He has a handsome face and his face is remarkable, unique one. You know you cannot forget his face in a hurry.

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Monseigneur and his exquisite gentlemen

- The leprosy of unreality disfigured every human creature in attendance upon Monseigneur. *leprosy → lack of consciousness*
- The exquisite gentlemen of the finest breeding wore little pendent trinkets that chinked as they languidly moved; these golden fetters rang like precious little bells; and what with that ringing, and with the rustle of silk and brocade and fine linen, there was a flutter in the air that fanned Saint Antoine and his devouring hunger far away.

Now we are in a big hall. There is a kind of a party. There is a big crowd of aristocrats and this Monseigneur is surrounded by his exquisite gentlemen. And the narrator uses this moment to offer some comments about the nature of this particular group of people and their, you know, and their awareness of the reality around them. “The leprosy of unreality disfigured every human creature in attendance upon the Monseigneur.”

He says that, the narrator says that they were marked by this idea. In fact, they were completely unaware of the realities of life, and that lack of awareness is compared to leprosy. It is a very interesting figure of speech that Dickens employs to characterize the lack of consciousness on the part of the aristocrats.

“The exquisite gentlemen of the finest breeding wore little pendant trinkets that chinked as they languidly moved. These golden fetters rang like precious little bells, and what with that ringing and with that rustle of silk and brocade and fine linen, there was a flutter in the air that fanned St. Antoine and his devouring hunger far away.” Again this paragraph is rich in symbolism because

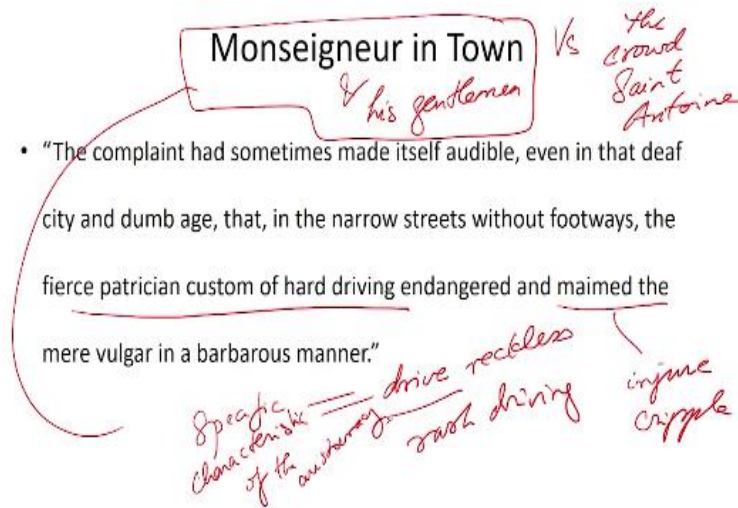
while Dickens is kind of constructing the scene, he wants the readers to be aware of quite a different scene in this particular neighborhood of St. Antoine. So this is a getting in a palatial context.

We have the Monseigneur in town. We have his group of gentlemen, the aristocrats and then we have this interesting Marquis who is very cruel, who looks like a treacherous fellow, but he is also handsome. So we have this group of people, and what do they look like? They are very well dressed, you know, they have a lot of accessories on their clothing, which makes, you know tinkling sounds, you know, the sounds come from precious little bells.

And they are covered in golden fetters symbolically, and this is the description that Dickens uses to describe the various kinds of clothing accessories. And the word fether is very interesting because fether literally means something that binds somebody, something that imprisons people. So these people have kind of imprisoned themselves with golden objects and aspects of luxury. And while they are enjoying themselves in this fashion, their, you know, activities somehow fanned the flames of hunger and resentment in St. Antoine.

So this is Paris at its richest, but there is this Paris at its poorest. And this poor sections will inevitably be resentful and they would be kind of waiting for their time, biding their time. So that is the hint that Dickens offers in this particular excerpt.

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Now, further about this Monseigneur in Town, “The complaint had sometimes made itself audible, even in that deaf city and dumb age, that in the narrow streets without footways, the fierce patrician custom of hard driving endangered and maimed the mere vulgar in a barbarous manner.” So we did see the bunch of aristocrats as part of a crowd, and that crowd is contrasted with the crowd in St. Antoine.

So this Monseigneur in Town and his gentlemen need to be contrasted with the crowd in St. Antoine. And what did the crowd do at the beginning of this novel? We saw that they very hungrily, thirstily drank the wine that was spilled from a cask on the streets of St. Antoine. So they are really, really hungry, and that hunger is reinforced by that scene, and the name of that chapter is the Wine Shop chapter, and I would like you to reread the chapter because it is very, very rich in a lot of thematic matters.

So a contrast is being struck by Dickens between the Monseigneur in Town and his crowd, and the crowd in St. Antoine. And from this group of people, he is mentioning a specific character about them, which is this fierce patrician custom of hard driving, they drive recklessly. And what do they drive? They drive horse-drawn carriages. So this is pointed out as one specific attribute which is very, very cruel towards the public because it endangers their lives.

So they maim, they injure, they cripple people by their rash driving. And this is a particular characteristic, specific characteristic of the aristocracy.

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Monseigneur in Town

Accidental death of a small child

father

"Be a brave man, Gaspard! It is better for the poor little plaything to die so, than to live. It has died in a moment without pain. Could it have lived an hour as happily."

Now Dickens has mentioned that this is a terrible character on the part of the aristocrats and gives us a specific scene to reinforce that notion, because we see that this Marquis whom we saw amongst the group, milling about in that palatial scene, this man is going back to his country.

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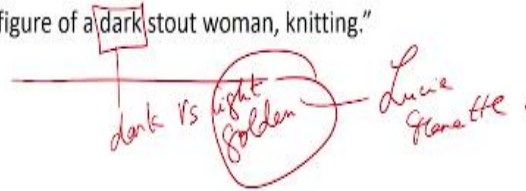
Monseigneur in Town



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Monseigneur in Town

- "He looked to the spot where Defarge the vendor of wine had stood, a moment before; but the wretched father was grovelling on his face on the pavement in that spot, and the figure that stood beside him was the figure of a dark stout woman, knitting."



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Chapter 8: Monseigneur in the country

figurative = aristocratic notion similar

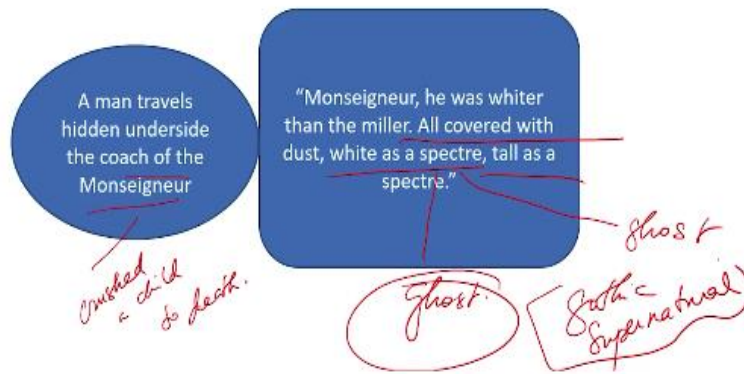
- "Expressive signs of what made them poor, were not wanting; the tax for the state, the tax for the church, the tax for the lord, tax local and tax general, were to be paid here and to be paid there, according to solemn inscription in the little village, until the wonder was, that there was any village left unswallowed."

"Life on the lowest terms
down in the little village
under the mill"

"captivity and Death in the
dominant prison on the crag"

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A mender of roads



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