

The Nineteenth Century Novel
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Lecture - 27

Week 7 Dickens A Tale of Two Cities Book II Chapter 13 to 15

Hello and welcome to Week 7's lectures on Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities. In this set of chapters, we will look once again at some of the romantic trajectories which are unraveling as well as finishing off simultaneously in the context of Sydney Carton and Lucie Manette, and then we will also take an analytical look at Jerry Cruncher and what he is up to as a resurrection man. So these are primarily the narrative incidents which will occupy our interest, and we might want to think about the relationship between the incidents and their symbolic and thematic meaning in the context of A Tale of Two Cities.

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Chapter 13: The Fellow of No Delicacy

- "Many a night he vaguely and unhappily wandered there, when wine had brought no transitory gladness to him; many a dreary daybreak revealed his solitary figure lingering there, and still lingering there when the first beams of the sun brought into strong relief, removed beauties of architecture in spires of churches and lofty buildings, as perhaps the quiet time brought some sense of better things, else forgotten and unattainable, into his mind."

"Restless"

*Sydney Carton
- "haunting"*



This chapter is entitled the Fellow of No Delicacy, and this chapter is a companion piece to the previous chapter in which we saw Stryver striving to marry Lucie Manette and failing in that objective of his. So this is again a companion chapter, and in this one we see Sydney Carton being referred to as the fellow of no delicacy, but in fact he is trying to be as delicate, as sophisticated as possible in his approaches to Lucie Manette.

"Many a night he vaguely and unhappily wandered there when wine had brought no transitory gladness to him; many a dreary daybreak revealed his solitary figure lingering there, and still lingering there when the first beams of the sun brought into strong relief,

removed beauties of architecture in spires of churches and lofty buildings, as perhaps the quiet time brought some sense of better things, else forgotten and unattainable, into his mind.”

This excerpt shows Sydney Carton wandering about in the environs of Lucie Manette's home. In fact, we can say that Sydney Carton is haunting the home of Lucie. And he comes to this particular neighborhood because wine does not give him any kind of rest. We can also sense that Sydney Carton is a restless figure. In fact, he literally does not sleep. He does not get any sleep in this novel until the final moment when he gives up life and sleeps forever.

So that is the status of Sydney Carton in terms of this narrative. He is constantly haunting, he is constantly wandering unhappily, and he is a solitary figure. We do not see him as a part of a family, the only pseudo family that he has is Lucie Manette's, and he visits that house only rarely, that is what the narrative tells us. So this man haunts the empty streets, and he stays overnight in the streets, and he even watches the sun rise, and how the rays of the sun, you know, falls on the spires of churches in lofty buildings, and the atmosphere is very quiet and this quietness, and the stark reality of all these architecture somehow tries to give him a clearer sense of better things, and these things remind him of forgotten and unattainable aspirations, and once again that makes him restless. So he is a spirit that does not get any peace, and he somehow migrates to Soho Square where his beloved is residing.

And Carton decides to go up to Lucie and declare his affection. So it is a very interesting romantic moment in the novel because he has no expectations of being accepted, he does not want to be successful in his courtship of Lucie Manette.

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Carton and Lucie

- "Don't be afraid to hear me. Don't shrink from anything I say. I am like one who died young. All my life might have been."
- No, Mr. Carton. I am sure that the best part of it might still be; I am sure that you might be much, much worthier of yourself."



So this is what he tells her. "Don't be afraid to hear me. Don't shrink from anything I say. I am like one who died young. All my life might have been." So this is what he has to say. It is a very interesting romantic proposal, and he says do not shrink away, just hear me out, just listen to my declaration. I am like a ghost, that is the sense of this particular statement, I am a ghost living this life. My life is something that should have been, but it is not.

And Lucie Manette is very sympathetic, and she says "No Mr. Carton, I am sure that the best part of it might still be; I am sure that you might be much, much worthier of yourself." So she intervenes and tells him that perhaps the better part of his life is still to come, and that he is capable of much better, higher things, worthier things. So she somehow tries to inspire him and this aspect of Lucie is what Carton really admires and wants to be surrounded by that kind of optimism that will lift him from his past and present which is deadening

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Mr Carton's ironic declaration

- “If it had been possible, Miss Manette, that you could have returned the love of the man you see before you—self-flung away, wasted, drunken, poor creature of misuse as you know him to be—he would have been conscious this day and hour, in spite of his happiness, that he would bring you to misery, bring you to sorrow and repentance, blight you, disgrace you, pull you down with him. I know very well that you can have no tenderness for me; I ask for none; I am even thankful that it cannot be.”

dysfunctional romantic trajectory



“If it had been possible, Miss Manette, that you could have returned the love of the man you see before you - self flung away, wasted, drunken, poor creature of misuse as he know him to be - he would have been conscious this day and hour, in spite of his happiness, that he would bring you to misery, bring you to sorrow and repentance, blight you, disgrace you, pull you down with him. I know very well that you can have no tenderness for me; I ask for none; I am even thankful that it cannot be.”

This is a very interesting romantic trajectory, which is what I mentioned when I began this lecture, because even though Mr. Carton is very much in love with Lucie Manette, he knows that he is not the right man to marry Lucie. And he tells her, even if it is possible for you to return that affection that I have for you, you will regret that returning of affection for such a man as I am.

So he says that you would throw yourself, you will lose your happiness, you will be miserable, you will be sorrowful, you will repent if you did fall in love with me and married me. He says that I will blight you, I will affect you if I did marry you, I will bring disgrace into your life, and I will destroy you with me. So this is a match that cannot happen, and it is good that it does not happen because it is not going to end very well, and he declares that I know that you do not have any tenderness for me, and in fact I do not ask for any tenderness, and I am even grateful that you cannot be affectionate towards me. So it is a very weird romantic courtship that you see here. It is a kind of a one sided declaration of love. It is a dysfunctional, romantic trajectory that we have marked out for Sydney Carton.

So even though he knows the kind of purity that is invested in Lucie Manette, he does not want to come closer and stay in it, and in fact he is not manipulating the affections, the regard that Lucie has for Sydney Carton as a friend, but he does not want to once again hide his real affection for Lucie, therefore he declares it and then also assures her that he is not the best man to be married to her. So it is a very honest declaration of love that he has for Lucie.

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Carton on Lucie and her father

- "I wish you to know that you have been the last dream of my soul. In my degradation I have not been so degraded but that the sight of you with your father, and of this home made such a home by you, has stirred old shadows that I thought had died out of me."

S. Carton
E. Darnay

*father-daughter
bond ⇒ ideal
domesticity*



And he says "I wish you to know that he have been the last dream of my soul. In my degradation I have not been so degraded, but the sight of you with your father and of this home made such a home by you, has stirred old shadows that I thought had died out of me." It is once again a declaration that not only evokes the goodness of Lucie's soul, it also evokes the perfect domesticity that she has tried to construct with her father at the center.

So he says that the sight of you with your father, he does not say it is just the sight of you that has stirred old shadows, he does not say that I am inspired by you to be a good man. He says that I am inspired by you with your father, and of this home made such a home. So the father, daughter bond embedded in a kind of an ideal domesticity, that is what becomes attractive to Sydney Carton, as it was attractive to Darnay.

Both the man are affected by Lucie Manette in terms of her regard for this patriarch Doctor Manette who is ailing, who is just recovering his original, you know, life and desires and aspirations, and the kind of home that she has formed with her father is what becomes a kind of a talisman for these men who kind of are attracted to this sacred halo which Lucie Manette has orchestrated.

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Carton rejected
Harry Furniss
1910



futility



This is the illustration of Carton leaving Lucie's presence at Soho Square. This has been done by Harry Furniss for the 1910 edition. We can see that dejected look in the way Carton hangs his head and walks with a woebegone face, and we have Lucie Manette turning away from him. It is both symbolic as well as literally a picture of dejection and futility, there is a lot of futility at work here. Life is futile for Sydney Carton, and Lucie Manette can do nothing to help him out.

So Carton is trying to get a promise out of Lucie Manette, and it is not a very complicated promise that he seeks from Lucie.

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Carton

- "Will you let me believe, when I recall this day, that the last confidence of my life was reposed in your pure and innocent breast, and that it lies there alone, and will be shared by no one?"

Recall — Dr Manette
Secrets hidden mysteries



He says that "Will you let me believe, when I recall this day, that the last confidence of my

life was reposed in your pure and innocent breast, and that it lies there alone and will be shared by no one?" So it is a very simple promise that he wants out of Lucie, he says that do not tell what I have declared to you to anyone. Not even to the ones who are closest to you, the dearest to you, and he implies Charles Darnay.

He does not want Darnay to know that he is much affected by Lucie. So that is what he seeks out of Lucie Manette, and he says that when I recall this day, I want to be aware that my confidence is lying undisturbed in your heart. Nobody is going to dig that confidence out of your heart, so that is the promise that he wants, and this idea of recalling is very interesting because we see that this is a theme that crops up time and again in a Tale of Two Cities.

Let us see who are all recalled, we have Doctor Manette who is literally recalled to life because he was buried in the Bastille for 18 years and then he was hidden away with his ex servant Defarge in his wine shop garrett. So he is recalled to life by Mr. Lorry, and then we have secrets being recalled. We have hidden mysteries that are going to be recalled, that are half recalled, and it is in this kind of context we also need to fit Carton's promise that he wants out of Lucie, that when he recalls this day at some point in the future, he wants to be sure that this will not come to light, he wants to protect the sanctity of this particular secret. So secrets, hidden mysteries are some of the thematic associations that we have in this conversation that Carton has with Lucie Manette.

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Carton's promise

- "The time will come, the time not be long in coming when new ties will be formed about you—ties that will bind you yet more tenderly and strongly to the home you so adorn—the dearest ties that will ever grace and gladden you. O Miss Manette, when the little picture of a happy father's face looks up in yours, when you see your own bright beauty springing up anew at your feet, think now and then that there is a man who would give his life, to keep a life you love beside you."



And he offers a promise, Carton offers a promise to Lucie. It is a very important promise because this is the promise that he does fulfill at the end of the novel, and let us see what that

promise is. "The time will come, the time not be long in coming when new ties will be formed about you, ties that will bind you yet more tenderly and strongly to the home you so adorn. The dearest ties that will ever grace and gladden you. O Miss Manette, when the little picture of a happy father's face looks up in yours, when you see your own bright beauty springing up anew at your feet, think now and then that there is a man who would give his life, to keep a love beside you."

This is a very important promise in the entire novel. This promise has a lot of power, in fact you can put this promise against the big epochal radical event of the French revolution on the other side. So we are pitting a promise, and individual's promise on the one side, and the power of the revolution on the other. And this promise has the power to recover Lucie and her family from the clutches of the French revolution.

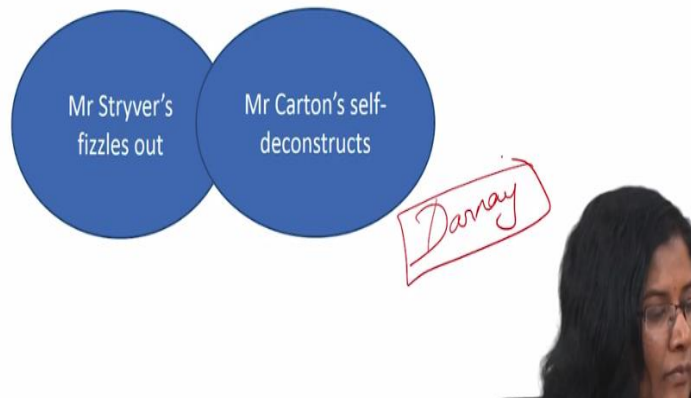
So this promise has a lot of ideological significations which I wanted to unpack and unravel and make sense of it, but literally what he says here is that you are going to have new ties, Lucie Manette is going to marry. He knows that Lucie Manette will marry Charles Darnay and this couple will have children, you know, more ties will be formed with Lucie Manette and Charles Darnay at the center of it, and he says that those ties will gladden you, will make you happy, those ties will grace this home, and he says that your husband, he does not say it directly, he implies that your husband will become a happy father.

We also have an unhappy father here, that reference is to Doctor Manette, and he is unhappy because of his past, but then a new father, a happy father will be born because of the children that Darnay will have with Lucie Manette, and he also implies that your own beauty, Lucie's beauty will be reflected in the faces of her children playing at her feet.

And despite all this picture of happiness, he says that do remember that there is this man called Carton who will give up his own life to kind of protect the life that Lucie loves, so that is his promise. He says that there is a man, remember, who would give his life to protect, to safeguard the life that you love, the life that you want to protect, and that is a promise. And I want you to connect this particular statement of Carton's with the earlier statement about the crowd that is going to come to Lucie Manette's home, and he says that I will take that crowd into my life, I will ask for no obligations, I will ask for no promises. I will just take them into mine. And this is a kind of a Christ like promise that Carton offers to Lucie.

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Courtship Plots



Now let us take sense of the courtship plots which have kind of originated with Lucie at its center. We have Mr. Stryver's courtship plot fizzling out. He sets out to declare his intentions to Lucie, but then he takes a detour, he goes to Tellson's, and then he is warned by Mr. Lorry not to go unless he has some firm knowledge that he would be accepted and then Mr. Stryver realizes that Mr. Lorry is correct, that may be Lucie will not accept him and therefore he decides not to make an offer of promise.

So that courtship plot fails, the courtship plot of Mr. Stryver does not work out in the context of romantic plot, and then we have Mr. Carton's plot fizzling out as well because Mr. Carton knows that it is not going to go anywhere, Mr. Carton knows that he will not ultimately have Lucie Manette as his wife. So Mr. Carton almost self deconstructs.

He is a man who knows that he has destroyed his life, and he continuous to destroy his life in certain aspects, and that serves both, you know, narrative purpose as well as ideological purposes. The narrator finds it easy to have Mr. Carton who does not have a domesticity, we will talk more about it in the future sessions. So at this point we need to note that the courtship plot of both Mr. Carton and Mr. Stryver fails, and Darnay is the one who will succeed with Lucie Manette.

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Chapter 14: The Honest Tradesman

- Funeral procession of Roger Cly
- "Was He a spy?" asked Mr Cruncher
- "Old Bailey spy," returned his informant. "Yaha! Tst! Yah! Old Bailey Spi-ies!"....
- "Dead as mutton," returned the other, "and can't be too dead. Have 'em out, there! Spies! Pull 'em out, there! Spies!"

IRONIC

CROWD



This chapter is titled Honest Tradesman, and like the previous chapter, this chapter's title is also very ironic because the readers will come to know, those who have read the novel completely will know, that there is nothing very honest about this tradesman that we are going to get a good picture of, and by the end of the 15th chapter we will note that there is something shady going on with regard to this particular "honest tradesman".

So this chapter begins with Jerry Cruncher and his son waiting outside Tellson's bank, and they see a funeral procession of Roger Cly. And Mr. Cruncher is interested in this crowd, in this funeral procession, and then he goes in and enquires who is the one who is dead and for whom there is a procession, and everybody starts saying that there are spies here. He is a spy, spies, spies, and then Mr. Cruncher asks was this man, was this dead man a spy?

"Old Bailey spy" returned his informant. "Yaha! Yah! Old Bailey spies!" And then "dead as a mutton" returned the other man in a crowd, "And cannot be too dead. Have them out, there! Spies! Pull them out, there! Spies!" So it is an interesting scene, because this is what we call a crowd scene. Crowd scenes in Dickens' fiction are very interesting, because you do not know how the scene is going to turn out.

This scene begins as a funeral procession with people crying that he is a spy, with the people in the crowd hating the dead man, and then suddenly they become so angered that they want to pull out the body from the coffin and, you know, and make a riot with it, and they are very destructive. So this crowd scene is very interesting because as they are trying to get the coffin out, they chase out the one mourner who is there as part of the procession.

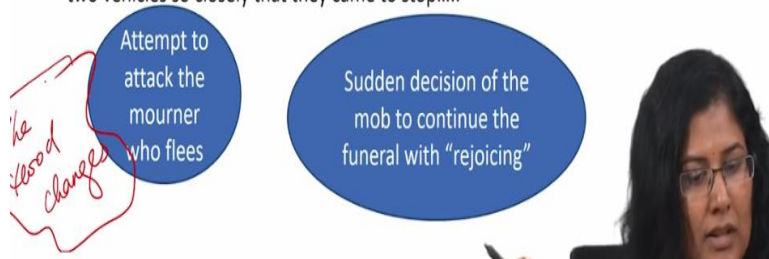
So there is one mourner for Roger Cly, and that is Roger Cly's friend, and he runs away seeing the mood of the crowd which is very destructive, which is reckless, and he is worried for his safety, so he just runs. And then what happens, strangely the crowd changes its mind. And that is what is important about the crowd scenes in Dickens, because Dickens tries to tell the readers that the crowd can be easily swayed.

There will be just one person in the crowd who will change the mood of the entire body of people, and suddenly this crowd decides that they are going to in fact take the, you know, hearse to the churchyard and then bury the coffin with a lot of song and dance, and that is what they do.

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The Spy's Funeral

- The idea was so acceptable in the prevalent absence of any idea that the crowd caught it up with eagerness, and loudly repeating the suggestion to have 'em out, and to pull 'em out, mobbed the two vehicles so closely that they came to stop.....



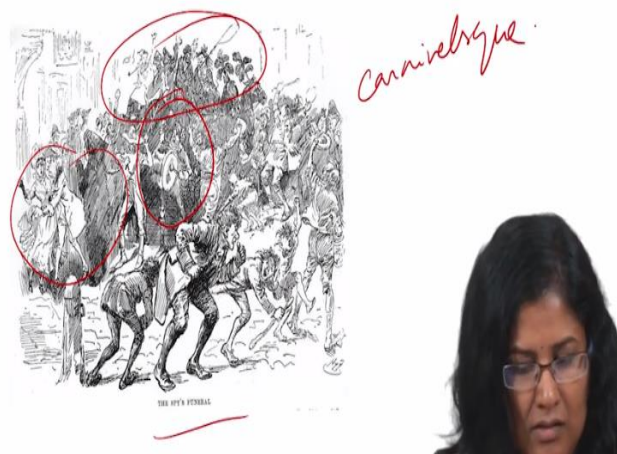
“The idea was so acceptable in the prevalent absence of any idea the crowd caught it up with eagerness, and loudly repeating the suggestion to have them out, to pull them out, mobbed the two vehicles so closely that they came to a stop.” And this is what happens, as I said, the crowd decides to destroy the procession, and they do attempt to attack the mourner who runs away fearing for his safety.

And then suddenly, as I just said now, they decide to continue with the funeral with the procession upto the churchyard with a lot of rejoicing. So the mood changes pretty quickly, and that is very significant because Dickens is trying to strike a parallel with this crowd, and make us think about the future crowd that is going to erupt on the other side of the channel which is in France.

So you can compare the crowd in Britain which changes its mind very, very quickly, and the mood of the crowd, the French revolutionary crowd, that soon loses sight of its ideal and start to slaughter, you know, willy-nilly. The crowd does not care about the innocence, all they want is vengeance, and they thirst for blood. So you can compare the crowd scenes in Britain with the crowd scenes in France.

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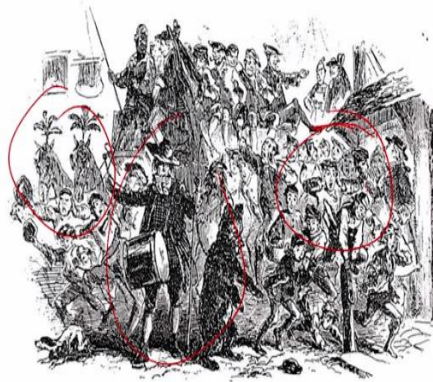
Illustration by Harry Furniss, 1910



So this is the crowd scene in which we see the procession of Roger Cly, that is what is mentioned here, the spy's funeral. You can see there is a lot of rejoicing, we have people with drums and, you know, there is a man playing a drum, there are people dancing about, and there is this horse, the horse drawn carriage which has the coffin inside, and there is a lot of you know, dance. It is almost Carnavalesque.

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Illustration by H.B.Knight, 1859



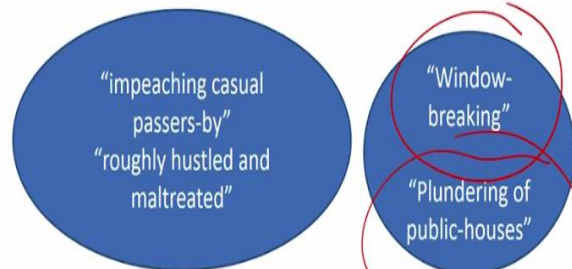
Riotous
Scene



And this is another illustration of the same crowd scene. We have the carriage, the horses here, a man with a drum, with a lot of boys enjoying themselves, people screaming. We have one boy trying to plug his ears in order to, you know, block the noise out. So again a very riotous scene.

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The Spy's Funeral



inns :



Now the crowd takes the coffin to the churchyard, and then they finish their ritual, and they start to attack the businesses in the neighborhood, they start to run riot. And they also start to impeach casual passersbys, they rough up people who are walking on the streets. So people are maltreated, hustled, and there is a general recklessness, there is a kind of violence to the way they proceed, because they are trying to wreck up all the shops.

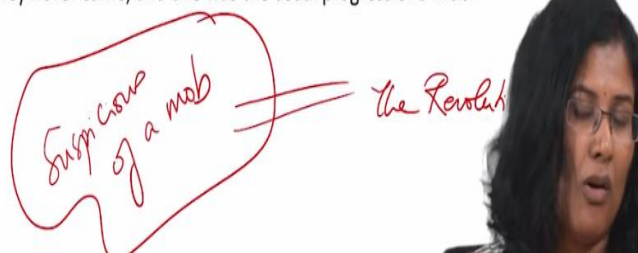
And there is a lot of window breaking as well, plundering of public houses, public houses

meaning inns, places where people stay, have a drink, and all these places are attacked. And there is suddenly a reference to a rumour that the guards are coming this way, and the crowd just disperses. So that is the way the mob proceeds in this particular scene in Britain.

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The mob

- "a rumour got about that the Guards were coming. Before this rumour, the crowd gradually melted away, and perhaps the Guards came, and perhaps they never came, and this was the usual progress of a mob."



"A rumour got about that the guards were coming. Before this rumour, the crowd gradually melted away, and perhaps the guards came, and perhaps they never came, and this was the usual progress of a mob." So a rumour is enough, a rumour is enough to make the crowd behave in radical ways, and in radically different ways too.

So if you remember the scene it begins with a procession, and then they decide to destroy the procession itself and the coffin, and then they decide to take it back to the churchyard, and then they attack the neighborhood, and then they disappear because there is a rumour that the guards are coming. So the way it changes its mood is indicative of the group mentality of the people involved in that particular action, and Dickens is always suspicious of a mob mentality.

And there is always a comparison of this kind of mob to the revolutionary crowd, which when you come to see them are also changing their mind quite swiftly.

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Jerry Cruncher



Now Jerry Cruncher has been following this mob, this crowd, which is part of a funeral procession, and on the way back Jerry calls on his medical advisor. It is a very interesting phrase, he checks in on a doctor and then he goes home. And after his dinner, Jerry asks his son to go to sleep and then he is preparing to go away somewhere, and the son wants to know where, and he says, "I am going, as your mother knows, a fishing. That is where I am going. Going fishing." And it is a very mischievous phrase.

We do not really believe that Jerry Cruncher is going to go fishing, he is going to do something else. Fishing becomes a euphemism for an activity that Jerry Cruncher does not want to talk about with his son, and Jerry Cruncher also knows that his wife knows the real nature of his job, and Young Jerry pretends to sleep, but then he follows his father. As Jerry Cruncher leaves his house he hides and starts to stalk his own father.

What does he find? He finds that his father and three others are walking towards a churchyard, and in that churchyard the three men try to unearth a coffin, and that is what young Jerry finds about his father.

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The Churchyard

- “Crouching down in a corner there, and looking in, he made out the three fishermen creeping through some rank grass! and all the gravestones in the churchyard—it was a large churchyard that they were in—looking on like ghosts in white, while the church tower itself looked on like the ghost of a monstrous giant. They did not creep far, before they stopped and stood upright. And then they began to fish.”

atmospheric
gothic
ghosts
giant

the young
Cruncher

Roger Cly



“Crouching down in a corner there and looking in, he made out the three fisherman creeping through some rank grass, and all the gravestones in the Churchyard - It was a large churchyard that they were in - looking on like ghost in white, while the church tower itself looked on like the ghost of a monstrous giant. They did not creep far before they stop and stood upright. And then they began to fish.”

So this scene is seen through the eyes of the young boy, the young Cruncher, and this man we should realize is following his father, and he finds his father and his friends getting into a churchyard and they are trying to unearth a coffin which has been recently buried, and it is very easy to guess that they are trying to unearth the recently buried Roger Cly, the spy that the crowd very riotously buried quite recently.

And it is a very interesting scene and atmospheric scene because look at the way the tombstones are described. The tombstones looked like ghost in white, and in fact the church tower itself look like the ghost of a monstrous giant, a massive structure which is threatening. So it is a very atmospheric scene, and there are gothic elements with references to ghosts and giants.

And then they began to fish, and at this point Cruncher, the young Cruncher, realizes what is the literal meaning of fishing. They are fishing for not fish, but dead bodies. So that is what his father is doing at night, and that is why his father hands are rusty, and the mystery is

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