

The Nineteenth Century Novel
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Lecture - 35
Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities Book III: Chapters 1 - 3

Hello and welcome to Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities, and we are now in Book III. The beginnings of Book III is what is going to be the subject of today's session. And if you remember the previous lecture, we were discussing how Charles Darnay is being drawn to this Loadstone Rock, to crash and collapse and be destroyed, and in this section, we will see how exactly he is progressing within France towards his destination of reaching Gabelle and getting him freed. And if he can free him, that is the big question.

So in this section, we also see the ideological coming together of the domestic plot and the historical plot.

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Book III The Track of a Storm
Chapter 1: In Secret *IR*

- "The universal watchfulness so encompassed him, that if he had been taken in a net, or were being forwarded to his destination in a cage, he could not have felt his freedom more completely gone."

Stopped ...on the highway twenty times; retarded his progress twenty times in a day...

"no hope of return...until ...declared a good citizen at Paris."

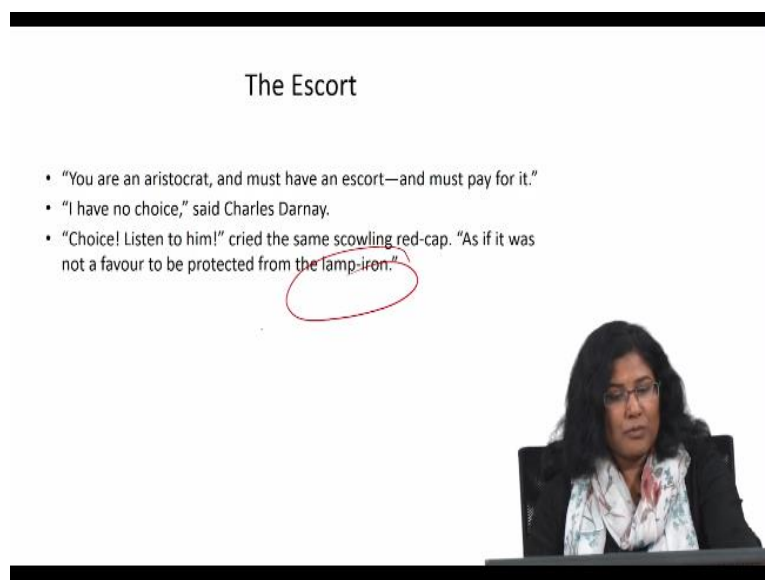
Chapter 1 of Book III is titled In Secret, and Book III itself is titled The Track of a Storm, and the storm is obviously the French Revolution. So the novel is tracking the storm, the novel is kind of constructing or tracing the way the mechanics of the revolution has come about, and how it is evolving. And Dickens metaphorically calls it, or likens it, to a storm. And early on we saw how the revolution was compared to a sea that is rising in strength and magnitude.

So we can constantly see how Dickens is associating the revolution with big natural calamities such as storms and a turbulent sea. So this is chapter 1 titled In Secret. So what is going to be secreted? And once again, thematically the idea of secrecy, mystery, you know buried secrets and all these aspects are brought forth once more in this chapter. So Darnay is in France, and he is travelling across the nation and he is heading towards Paris.

And as he is moving on the landscape of France, he realizes that he is being watched. People watch him, people are aware of him, and these people are the ones who belong to the French Republic. “The universal watchfulness so encompassed him that if he had been taken in a net or were being forwarded to his destination in a cage, he could not have felt his freedom more completely gone.”

So Darnay is literally free, he is traveling on his own, but he feels that he is already in a cage, or that he has been imprisoned already because there is so much watchfulness about him, that he no longer feels that he is at liberty. And he was stopped on the highway 20 times. His progress was retarded 20 times in a day. Look at the number of times he has been stopped on the highway and questioned. And he feels as if he is being deliberately sent from one point to another, that the Republic is kind of is the one that is pushing him towards a particular destination. And he realizes that there is no hope of return to England, to his adopted home, until he is declared a good citizen at Paris. So he has to earn the goodwill of the Republic before he can be really at free to travel back.

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The Escort

- “You are an aristocrat, and must have an escort—and must pay for it.”
- “I have no choice,” said Charles Darnay.
- “Choice! Listen to him!” cried the same scowling red-cap. “As if it was not a favour to be protected from the lamp-iron.”

Now at one point in the journey, Darnay is stopped, and he is told that he has to have an escort. That there has to be a set of security men who would accompany him in his journey. So he does not get a choice about the matter, the escort is forced on him, and this exchange kind of reveals what is happening in this context. “You are an aristocrat, and must have an escort and must pay for it.”

“I have no choice” said Charles Darnay. “Choice,! Listen to him!” cried the same scowling red-cap. “As if it was not a favour to be protected from the lamp-iron.” So it is a fantastic scene in which we can see that the power has shifted from the aristocrats to the common men who uphold the Republic, and one of the men tell him that you are an aristocrat, therefore you must be protected, and therefore there should be an escort for you and you must pay for the escort, the escort is not free, you must pay for it. And Darnay very simply says that, you know, I have no choice about the matter, so if I have to have an escort, I should have one. And they pick up on his choice of word and they say choice, look at him, listen to him, you know, he does not realize that it is a favour to be protected from the lamp-iron, from being hanged like the lamp is hung on a post.

So even he does not realize this gravity of the situation, if a wrong word here and there would put him to death, he would be hanged. So, you know, getting protection from gruesome death is a big favour to this man, and he does not realize it. So that is the attitude of the people who talk to him, and Darnay is not very aware, he does not realize the intensity of the gravity of the situation.

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"On the Way to Paris"
Harry Furniss
1910



On the Way to Paris, that is the title of this illustration, On the Way to Paris, and it is done by Harry Furniss for the 1910 edition. And look at the way he is travelling in bad weather and then there is, you know, this escort that is by his side, and these are the ragged caps, the men who are part of the Republic, and this is Darnay who is in gentleman's clothes. It is a dark, muddy, bleak scene, and the same mood is what is upholding, what is underpinning this particular illustration, the mood of bleakness, the grey symbolizes the lack of hope perhaps.

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The slide is titled "Darnay's journey" and features two blue text boxes. The left box contains the text: "banishing all emigrants, and condemning all to death who return. That is what he meant when he said your life was not your own." Below this box is the handwritten note "mastery of Liberty". The right box contains the text: "a cluster of poor cottages, not steeped in darkness, but all glittering with lights, and would find the people, in a ghostly manner in the dead of the night, circling hand in hand around a shriveled tree of liberty, or all drawn up together singing a Liberty song." A woman is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide, looking at the content.

As Darnay is journeying towards Paris, he realizes that he has broken a law. And what exactly is that law of France? The law states that the emigrants who have left France should not come back, and if they return they will be put to death. So that law is something that Darnay is not aware of, and this is what is the content of the law, which "banishes all emigrants and condemning all to death who return. That is what he meant when he said your life was not your own."

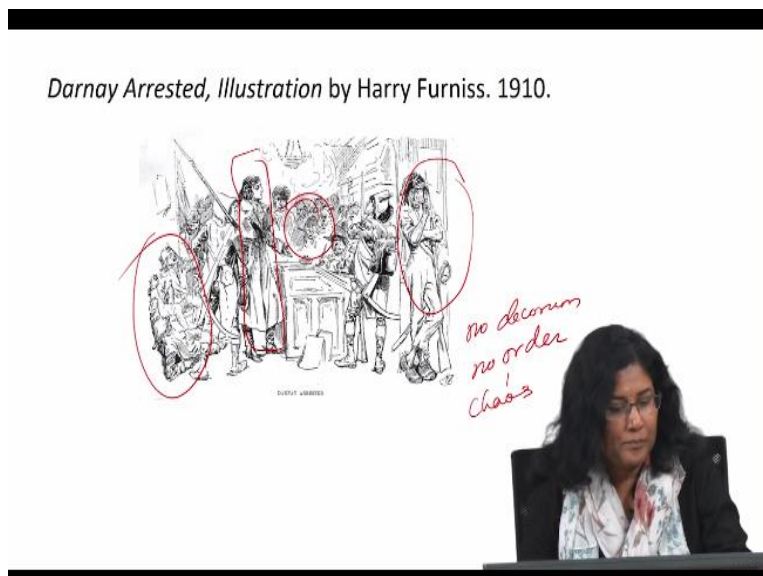
So Darnay comes to know about this through an innkeeper, the man who is in charge of an inn. He tells him that, you know, Darnay has broken this regulation of the nation and Darnay tells him that I did not know that this law existed, and he realizes that that law was passed perhaps, you know, when he had already left England. And as he is traveling, he also sees the countryside, you know which is very poor.

And, you know, he also gets a sense of how the people tried to make sense of their radically changed lives and this particular excerpt gives us a window into the manner in which the people live, and Dickens constantly tells us that, you know, life has not changed, there is still

a lot of poverty. In fact, there is poverty all around, there is dearth all around, and the people try to suppress this reality and somehow celebrate the liberty which should be, you know, understood as existing “a cluster of poor cottages, not steeped in darkness but all glittering with lights, and would find the people in a ghostly manner in the dead of the night, circling hand in hand around a shriveled tree of Liberty, or all drawn up together singing a Liberty song.”

So the people celebrate their liberty, their freedom from aristocracy, their freedom from oppression by singing these liberty songs, and they, you know, circle around a shriveled tree as they do so. So the idea of being shriveled up is something Dickens constantly weaves in his description of the world of France. We see that the hands of the people are shriveled up, you know, the countryside is shriveled up, there is hardly any vegetation and then even this tree of liberty is one that is shriveled up, there is hardly any life, real life to it. So the liberty, the understanding is that the real liberty is not what they have right now with them, it is a kind of a mockery of liberty.

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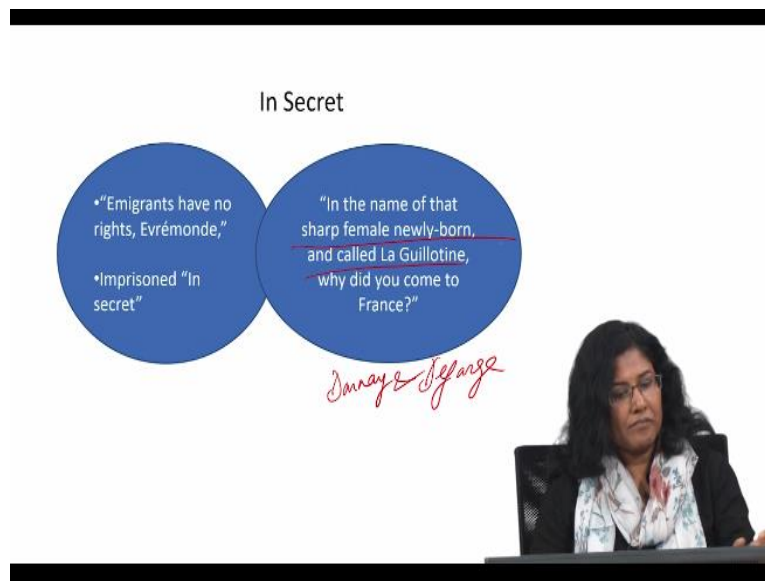


This is an illustration by Harry Furniss again for his 1910 edition of the novel, and it shows us that Darnay is arrested, Darnay is here at the center almost of this illustration, and we see that he is surrounded by this scraggly crowd, unkempt set of people. But they are very powerful and look at the attitude, they are full of bravado, and they do mock this aristocratic man called Darnay.

And they kind of enjoy the power that they have wrested from the previous regime. And you can also see that there is no decorum to the scene, we see people lying about drinking, lounging, and you know, here some of them grin at the situation, at the scene that is unfolding. So there is no order, and instead there is plenty of chaos, and Darnay is completely lost as to how to proceed.

But he knows that he is helpless, he is at the hands of these men who can turn really violent at the drop of a hat.

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So Darnay is told that he has no rights, even though he is a French citizen, the reason being he has emigrated to England. So he is thrown into prison for being an emigrant, and Darnay gets to meet Defarge. And this conversation happens between Darnay and Defarge, and Defarge asks him why “in the name of that sharp female newly-born called Guillotine, why did you come to France?” What made you come here?

He is really irritated and annoyed that this man could stupidly step on to this burning country, that is France, during the Revolutionary times, and Darnay tells him that I came to rescue a servant of his, and you know, Defarge is unable to comprehend, you know, the state of Darnay because of the trouble he is in.


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In Secret

- "I am not to be buried there, prejudged, and without any means of presenting my case?"
- "You will see. But, what then? Other people have been similarly buried in worse prisons, before now."

"But never by me, Citizen Defarge."

Defarge *Bastille*
Dr Manette.



So he tries to glean some information. Darnay tries to get some information from Defarge, but Defarge unwillingly responds to his queries. He is not very helpful, but he does talk to him and he asks him "Am I to be buried there, prejudged without any means of presenting my case?" Am I imprisoned in secret without anybody outside knowing my presence in prison? And Defarge says "You will see. But what then? Other people have been similarly buried in worse prisons, before now."

And that is the response of Defarge, and he says that, you know, why do you care so much, there have been several people before you who have been thrown into worse prisons, and he is kind of hinting at the Bastille, and we are reminded of Dr. Manette's imprisonment for 18 long years. And to this Darnay responds by saying "But never by me, Citizen Defarge." I never harmed anyone.

So Darnay kind of clings to his purity historically, culturally, and he kind of gives him the plain truth that he is innocent, that he has committed no crime, and therein lies the legitimacy of Darnay. And Defarge and people like him are unable to disassociate Darnay from his lineage.

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"Unreality of his long unreal ride"

Darnay recoils from the prisoners

"receive him, with every refinement of manner known to the time, and with all the engaging graces and courtesies of life."

La Force

chivalrous nobility fashion

When Darnay is put into La Force, that is the name of the prison, he sees a number of prisoners, and he recoils from them because he thinks that they all criminals. But surprisingly, when they see Darnay, they come to "receive him with every refinement of manner known to the time, and with all the engaging graces and courtesies of life." So they behave in a completely, you know, sophisticated manner, throwing Darnay.

He thinks that these are criminals, you know, thieves and robbers and murderers, but then they do not seem to have committed these crimes because they behave in such a chivalrous fashion. And the indication is that these are all men from the nobility, the upper classes, and these men and women have been imprisoned because of their status, the class to which they belong, which is why they are able to display all these graces and courtesies of life in such a manner towards Darnay.


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Ghosts all!

- “The ghost of beauty, the ghost of stateliness, the ghost of elegance, the ghost of pride, the ghost of frivolity, the ghost of wit, the ghost of youth, the ghost of age, all waiting their dismissal from the desolate shore, all turning on him eyes that were changed by the death they had died in coming there.”

*Not Real women
men & women
ghost*

life *prison*



The narrator describes the nature, the attitude and the behavior of the prisoners whom Darnay sees in La Force, and the narrator calls them ghosts. That is how they appear to the person who is witnessing them. So the narrator says that there is this “ghost of beauty, the ghost of stateliness, the ghost of elegance, the ghost of pride, the ghost of frivolity, the ghost of wit, the ghost of youth, the ghost of age, all waiting their dismissal from the desolate shore, all turning on him eyes that were changed by the death they had died in coming there.”

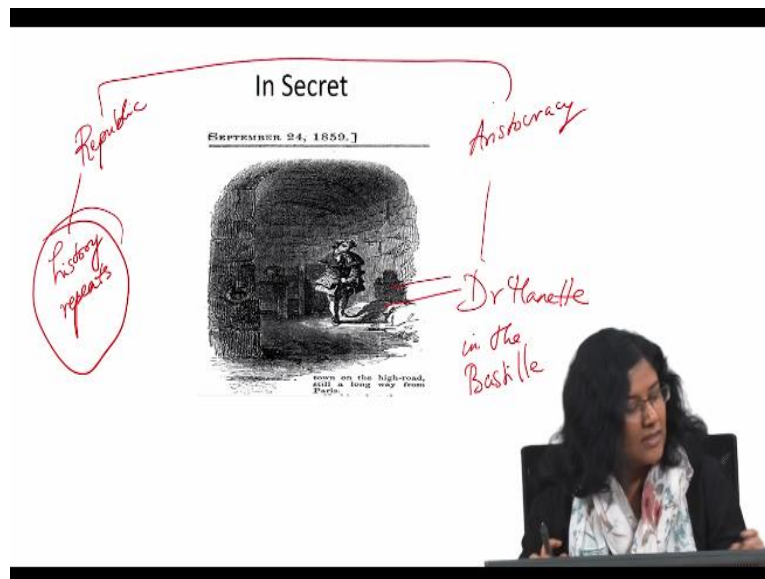
So what we have here is a bunch of people who are not real genuine people who display their individuality, but we have shadows of such people. We do not have a beautiful girl or woman here, we have a ghostly representation of beauty, we have a ghostly representation of stateliness, there is no real stateliness in the figure who is here. We have a kind of a shadow of that, a ghost of elegance.

We have a man who kind of has become a shadow of his real self, so his pride, representation rather than the reality. So people who have all these faults and flaws, and these individualities and eccentricities, kind of have become a ghost of their real selves. Not their, you know, original self is there in that prison, and they all waiting to be dismissed by death. So life itself has become a desolate shore.

The shore represents life within the prison, and they are waiting to be dismissed from this life through death. And they have all been changed; they have all been changed because of the imprisonment. They already dead when they come here, so that is also a message that this

narrative gives us. These men are not real men, but are ghosts because they already know that they are going to die soon enough from this place.

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And this is Darnay who is put in secret in La Force. So what he has read, it has happened. He did not want to be committed to prison in secret, but that is what is you know the reality for him. Because if you are in secret, nobody would know that you have been imprisoned in the first place, and there would not be any trial, there would not be any examination of your crime, and there is no hope of release either.

So he has occupied the same state that Dr Manette was in in the Bastille. So history is repeating itself, and that is again a theme of this novel. Just as Dr. Manette's wife was in agony because her husband was buried alive, Lucie Manette is going to enjoy, suffer the same pain and anxiety, because her husband is also buried alive in La Force. Whereas in the case of Dr. Manette, it was the aristocracy, here it was the Republic that has put this man to prison.

So both the aristocracy and the French Republic behave in similar ways, and they offer similar kind of agony and harm towards the innocents.

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Darnay in his prison cell

- The prisoner walked to and from in his cell, counting its measurement, and the roar of the city arose like muffled drums with a wild swell of voices added to them. "He made shoes, he made shoes Five paces by four and half."

Not
completely
lose his
sanity }

a wild roar
from the
throat of
St. Antoine



So when Darnay is thrown into prison, he realizes that, you know, he is mimicking Dr. Manette in some ways, and he also realizes that Dr. Manette was almost insane when he was thrown into prison. "The prisoner walked to and fro in his cell counting its measurement, and the roar of the city arose like muffled drums with a wild swell of voices added to them. 'He made shoes, he made shoes, five paces by four and half.'"

So Darnay instantly realizes why Dr. Manette made shoes in the prison. He made shoes because he did not want to completely lose his sanity, and Darnay also realizes that he might become another Dr. Manette. And what he does is as he walks about, he kind of counts the space that he is in, so that was the reference to five paces by four and half. So he is walking up and down, and as he walks, he is able to hear the wild swell of voices, the noise made by French Revolution outside of the prison.

If you remember when the revolution first happens, it is described as a wild roar from the throat of St. Antoine. So that metaphor is continued here, that metaphor is continued when the narrator makes a reference to the wild swelling. Again, the swelling is also evoking the image of the sea rising.

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Book III Chapter 2: The Grindstone

"on his honest and courageous face there was a deeper shade than the pendent lamp could throw, or any object in the room distortedly reflect—a shade of horror"

Mr Lorry Paris

"He occupied rooms in the Bank, in his fidelity to the House of which he had grown to be a part, like strong root-ivy."



Book III chapter 2 is entitled The Grindstone. So this is also another set piece of a scene in the novel, and once again Dickens kind of orchestrates the scene because it has a lot of theatrical effect to it, and he also exploits the metaphor that is the grindstone. So the grindstone is a huge domestic, you know, object which is used to grind stuff.

And here this grindstone is used to sharpen the weapons that these revolutionaries, that the people of France used to commit violence on the other party who could aristocrats, who could be people who had enjoyed power in the previous regime, and people whom they do not even like. So all these aspects are kind of evoked in this particular chapter. "On his honest and courageous face, there was a deeper shade than the pendant lamp could throw or any object in the room distortedly reflect, a shade of horror."

So who is the man that is being talked about here? And that is Mr. Lorry. Mr. Lorry is in Paris, he is in the French branch of Tellson's Bank, and he is horrified by the change of regime and the manner in which the regime was brought about, and you know, the shadow of the lamp on his face is also metaphorically the shadow of the revolution on his face, and he is horrified by this kind of radical shift in politics.

And he now occupies rooms in the bank, he stayed in the bank, he is not renting rooms elsewhere, he is living there for the time being, and his occupation of rooms within the bank is also an indication of his loyalty. He literally and metaphorically, you know, associated with the bank. He is like the ivy which grows on buildings. So that is what the narrator says. "He

occupied rooms in the bank, in his fidelity to the house of which he had grown to be a part like a strong root ivy.”

So he is like ,you know, a part of that institution, you cannot separate the man from the institution. He is like ivy struck, you know, stuck to a building; you cannot remove it without committing violence on either party.

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Book III Chapter 2: The Grindstone

- “Thank God...that no one near and dear to me is in this dreadful town to-night. May He have mercy on all who are in danger!”

Lucie and Dr Manette arrive

irony

And when Lorry is in his rooms in the bank, he is thinking that it is a relief that nobody who is familiar to him, nobody who is dear to him is in France. And as he is thinking these thoughts and congratulating himself, Lucie and Dr. Manette arrive. So this is the thought of Mr. Lorry. “Thank God that nobody near and dear to me is in this dreadful town tonight, may He have mercy on all who are in danger!”

So there is a lot of irony in this remark because Lucie and Dr. Manette arrive, and Mr. Lorry is shocked to see them in such a dangerous country.

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The Grindstone

- “My dear friend, I have a charmed life in this city. I have been a Bastille prisoner. There is no patriot in Paris—in Paris? In France—who, knowing me to have been a prisoner in Bastille, would touch me, except to overwhelm me with embraces, or carry me in triumph. My old pain has given me a power that has brought us through the barrier, and gained us news of Charles there, and brought us here.”



And Mr. Lorry is told by Dr. Manette that he is here because Charles Darnay has come to France to rescue a servant of his, and therefore, you know, therefore Dr. Manette and Lucie have followed Darnay here. And Mr. Lorry is frightened for the security of Dr. Manette, and he says that, he replies that, “My dear friend, I have a charmed life in this city. I have been a Bastille prisoner. There is no patriot in Paris - in Paris? In France – who, knowing me to have been a prisoner in Bastille, would touch me, except to overwhelm me with embraces, or carry me in triumph. My old pain has given me a power that has brought us through the barrier, and gained us news of Charles there, and brought us here.”

So Mr. Lorry kind of brushes aside the fear of Mr. Lorry, and Dr. Manette says that you do not have to worry, I have a charmed life in this city. And it is an interesting turn of phrase, it is, I have a mysterious, you know, power in me, and he has this power because he had been a Bastille prisoner for a very long time, and therefore people treat me with a lot of respect, so that is what Dr. Manette tells his friend Mr. Lorry. And because of my past, because of my painful past, I have been given a power right now in revolutionary France, and it is this power that has given me news of Charles who is here in prison, and it is this influence that I have with me that has brought me here to Paris. So Dr. Manette is very confident that he has a lot of influence and he gives comfort to Mr. Lorry.

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The Grindstone

- "The grindstone had a double handle, and, turning at it madly were two men, whose faces, as their long hair flapped back when the whirlings of the grindstone brought their faces up, were more horrible and cruel than the visages of the wildest savages in their most barbarous disguise. [...]"
- As these ruffians turned, their matted locks now flung forward over their eyes, now flung backward over their necks, some women held wine to their mouths that they might drink; and what with dropping blood, and what with dropping wine, and what with the stream of sparks struck out of the stone, all their wicked atmosphere seemed gore and fire.

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Savages — Maistre
↳ Symbolic — F.R.



As they are talking to one another in the bank, they hear a noise and they look through the window at a fantastical scene. And mind you, Lucie is not in the scene, Lucie has been sent away to a bedroom, and the men are by themselves and they look at a really horrific scene where the crowd, the French crowd is sharpening their weapons, their knives, swords, daggers at the grindstone, and the men are covered in blood and gore and the women feed them wine.

So it is a kind of a carnivalesque scene which hints at the violence that they have committed and also foreshadows more violence that they are going to commit. So it is a barbaric presentation of the French Revolution. So what does the grindstone look like? The grindstone had a double handle, so it has two handles and in the center is this big, flat stone which is circular in nature.

And the men keep turning the handles and, you know, the sharpened blades are kept at the edges so that they can be further sharpened. "The grindstone had a double handle, and turning at it madly were two men whose faces, as their long hair flapped back when the whirlings of the grindstone brought their faces up, were more horrible and cruel than the visages of the wildest savages in their most barbarous disguise." So the narrator says that the face of the men who were turning the handle were more barbaric than the savages in the wild jungle.

So they are the ones who are more barbaric in this particular activity, they are horrible and cruel to look at. And "as these ruffians turned, their matted locks now flung forward over their eyes, now flung backward over their necks, some women held wine to their mouths that

they might drink, and what with dropping blood, and what with dropping wine and what with the stream of sparks struck out of the stone, all their wicked atmosphere seemed gore and fire.”

So as they turned the handles there, long hair kind of flaps about their head, and the women helped them to drink wine as they move these handles, and sometimes, you know, there is blood dripping from their faces, and sometimes wine drips from their face, and you know, sparks kind of erupt from the grindstone, and it is a kind of fantastic, cruel, wicked atmosphere and it is blended with gore and fire.

So it is a macabre scene, and it is symbolic of the French Revolution itself. And the crowd, the people of France who brought about this regime change are compared to savages in their

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