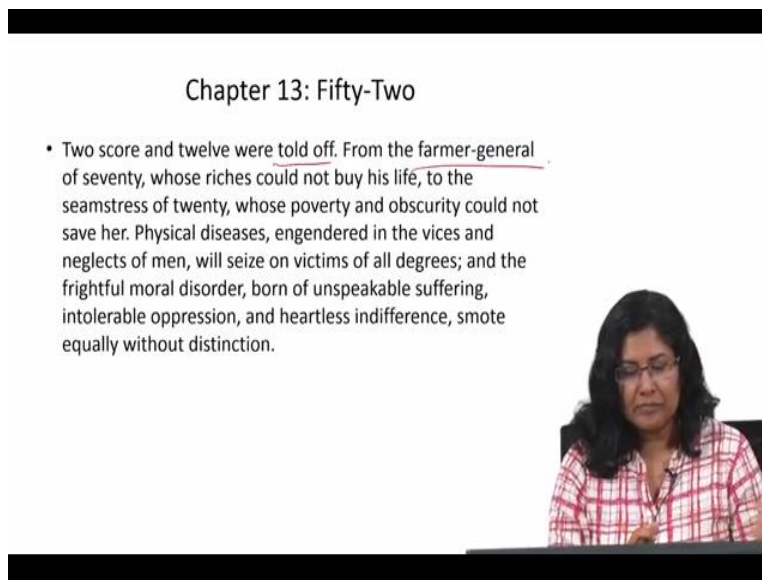


The Nineteenth Century Novel
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Lecture – 40
Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities, Book III Chapters 13

Hello and welcome back to week 9's lecture. Today we will be talking about a crucial moment in the novel when we see the domestic plot triumphing over the revolutionary plot. And Carton is the man who kind of makes this triumph happen, and let us see how exactly he goes about it. So we will be focussing just on chapter 13 for today.

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Chapter 13: Fifty-Two

- Two score and twelve were told off. From the farmer-general of seventy, whose riches could not buy his life, to the seamstress of twenty, whose poverty and obscurity could not save her. Physical diseases, engendered in the vices and neglects of men, will seize on victims of all degrees; and the frightful moral disorder, born of unspeakable suffering, intolerable oppression, and heartless indifference, smote equally without distinction.

Chapter 13 is entitled Fifty-Two. The Fifty-Two is a reference to the Fifty-Two people who will be executed by having their heads cut off by the guillotine on a big scaffold with crowds watching this spectacle. “Two score and twelve were to be told off”, being executed. “From the farmer general of seventy, whose riches could not buy his life, to the seamstress of twenty, whose poverty and obscurity could not save her. Physical disease, engendered in the vices and neglects of men, will seize on victims of all degrees, and the frightful moral disorder, born of unspeakable suffering, intolerable oppression, and heartless indifference, smote equally without distinction.”

So fifty-two people are going to be killed off by the guillotine, and the people ranged from

farmer general who collected taxes, and who was extremely rich but his riches could not buy his freedom, to a poor girl, a seamstress, the one who earns her money by labouring and by sewing. Even this young girl could not be saved. Her poverty and her obscurity could not prevent her from being guillotined, and the narrator kind of rationalizes and says that the vices and neglects of men who ruled this state early on are responsible for bringing about a state which is now full of moral disorder, and which is kind of inflicting unspeakable suffering, which is inflicting a lot of oppression and which is indifferent to the plight of the people.

And this state, this state is treating everybody equally, in the sense that it is not even discriminating between the honest and the dishonest, the innocent and the guilty. So we do get the sense that the previous regime is responsible for the monstrous setup that has come to replace it, and this monstrous setup called the Republic according to the narrator is not differentiating between a innocent, between an innocent seamstress of twenty years of age, and a farmer general who became wealthy because of his exploitative behaviour and who is very aged.

So everybody is treated in an equal fashion.

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More letters

- Darnay writes letters

To console her father, by impressing him through every tender means she could think of, with the truth that he had done nothing for which he could justly reproach himself...

"preservation of his own last grateful love and blessing, and her overcoming of her sorrow, to devote herself to their dear child, he adjured her, as they would meet in Heaven, to comfort her father."

From the prison, we get Darnay writing letters. He is writing to Doctor Manette, and he is also writing to Lucie Manette. And in this letter to Lucie, he asks her to console her father. And says that do not let your father reproach himself. "To console her father, by impressing him through

every tender means she could think of, with the truth that he had done nothing for which he could justly reproach himself."

So he says that your father should not think that he is responsible for my death. So make sure that he does not kind of find fault with himself, does not punish himself. And he also asks her to preserve his love, and remember his blessing, and to wait for him in Heaven. So he says that he should preserve my "last grateful love and blessing, and her overcoming of her sorrow, to devote herself to their dear child, he adjured her, as they would meet in Heaven, to comfort her father." So Darnay is asking Lucie to devote herself to dear little Lucie, and to meet him in Heaven so that they can comfort her father, Doctor Manette, even there.

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More letters

- Doctor Manette: "confided his wife and his child to his care"
- Mr Lorry: "explained his worldly affairs"; "grateful friendship and warm attachment"
- "He never thought of Carton. His mind was so full of the others, that he never once thought of him."

*Dr Manette
Lucie
Mr Lorry*

To doctor Manette, he asks him to look after his wife Lucie and his child. So he confides his wife and his child to his care. To Mr. Lorry, he explained his worldly affairs, and he also mentions that he is grateful for the friendship and warm attachment that they had in their day to day life prior to Darnay's imprisonment. And it is very interesting that he never thought of Carton. That is what the narrator is pointing out here.


"He never thought of Carton. His mind was so full of the others, that he never once thought of him." So he writes letters to Doctor Manette, to Lucie, to Mr. Lorry. And he did not think of Carton who is doing so much to somehow save him. I think at this point, the readers would be

kind of aware that Carton is up to something in terms of saving Darnay, because he wants to do something to help Lucie recover the life she loves.

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Darnay's preoccupations

- He had never seen the instrument that was to terminate his life. How high it was from the ground, how many steps it had, where he would be stood, how he would be touched, whether the touching hands would be dyed red, which way his face would be turned, whether he would be the first, or might be the last. he was conscious of no fear. Rather, they originated in a strange besetting desire to know that to do when the time came; a desire gigantically disproportionate to the few swift moments to which it referred...



Let us look at the preoccupations of Darnay when he is in prison. It is very interesting that he thinks about how to act when the moment comes to go up to the guillotine. So that is what he is thinking about in the prison. And this excerpt is very important in that regard, because it brings about the psyche which is preparing for death.

“He had never seen the instrument that was to terminate his life. How high it was from the ground, how many steps it had, where he would be stood, how he would be touched, whether the touching hands would be dyed red, which way his face would be turned, whether he would be the first, or might be the last. He was conscious of no fear. Rather, they originated in a strange besetting desire to know what to do when the time came, a desire gigantically disproportionate to the few swift moments to which it referred.”

It is a fantastic paragraph which captures the psyche of Charles Darnay in terms of his preparations to his final journey. And look at the way he wonders how he would be touched by the man who would lead him to the execution. And he wonders if the hands will be dyed red because of the blood that his hands would be dipped in, especially the executioner's hands.

And he is wondering which way his face will be turned, whether to the left or the right. And the funny thing is he is not frightened. Darnay is not frightened of his fate, which would be his death by execution at the guillotine. And in fact, what he is more worried about or what kind of preoccupies is this desire to know what to do when the time came to go up to the machine that will kill him.

And this is the narrator's viewpoint, which says that this man is worried about the thing in a disproportionate way, because the guillotine would kill him off very swiftly. So he, Darnay is expounding a lot of thought to an act which will be, which will occupy only a few minutes, few seconds.


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Darnay and Carton

- There was something so bright and remarkable in his look, that, for the first moment, the prisoner misdoubted him to be an apparition of his own imagining.

ghost spirit

"quite, intent upon him, with the light of smile on his features."



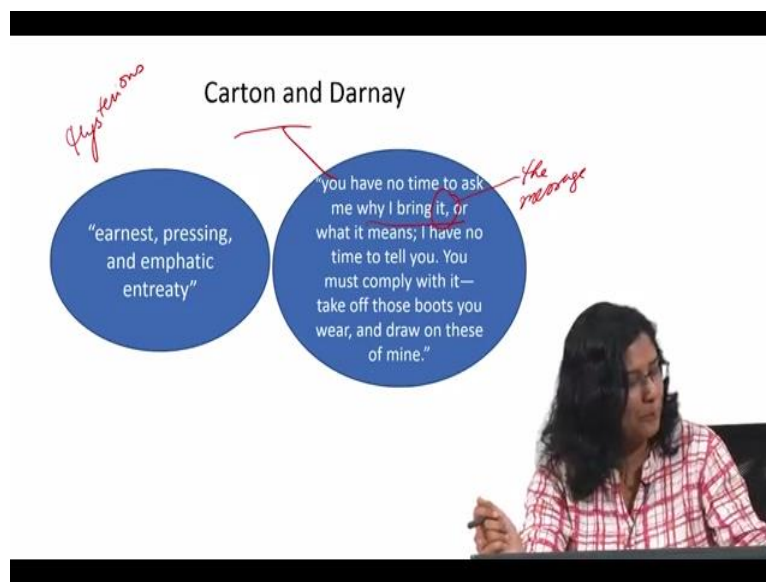
“There was something so bright and remarkable in his look, that, for the first moment, the prisoner misdoubted him to be an apparition of his own imagining.” So we have Carton arrive in the cell. Carton is come for the meeting with Darnay, and for a moment, Darnay is kind of not able to believe that this is a real human being. He thinks that he is a spirit brought about by his own fevered imagination.

He thinks that it is an apparition, ghost or spirit, not a real human being that has come to his prison. So there is something very bright about Carton, and there is something remarkable in his look. So Carton does not look in the usual fashion. Carton usually looks very indifferent, he is

slouching, he is very reckless but that is not the case here. He is very active and bright, which is probably why perhaps Darnay is not able to recognise him as a real flesh and blood human being, that is Carton.

And there is an intent look upon him as well, and there is a smile on his feature, that is also very unlike Carton because Carton does not smile a lot. In fact, he is always very despondent, sad, depressed. So here he is smiling, he is bright, he is remarkable to look at. So something is impelling him, something is driving him to be very active and energetic.

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So Darnay is surprised to see Carton, and Carton sees that he has come to deliver a message, and it is a kind of an earnest, pressing, and emphatic entreaty, kind of a request. But then he does not explain further. He does not tell what exactly the message is, what exactly the request is. He is being very mysterious.

And Carton says that, "you have no time to ask me why I bring it", it being the message, "or what it means. I have no time to tell you. You must comply with it, take off those boots you wear, and draw on these of mine." So he says do not ask me exactly what the message is, why I have brought this message to you. Just do what I say, which is this. Take off those boots and put these boots of mine. He is asking Darnay to exchange his boots with him.

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Change that coat for this of mine by A. A. Dixon

1905



Exchange
of
Identities
C.D = S.C
S.C = C.D



And this is the illustration by A. A. Dixon for the 1905 edition. And we can see that Darnay is pulling on the boots of Carton and then Carton is removing his coat to exchange it with Darnay. So we can clearly sense that Carton is going to take the place of Charles Darnay. There is going to be an exchange of identities. So Charles Darnay will become Sydney Carton, Sydney Carton will become Charles Darnay, and be in the prison and will die instead of Charles Darnay. So that is the crux on which the entire novel revolves.

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Carton and Darnay

- "It would be madness if I asked you to escape; but do I? When I ask you to pass out at that door, tell me it is madness and remain here. Change that cravat for this of mine, that coat for this of mine. While you do it, let me take this ribbon from your hair, and shake you hair like this of mine!..."
- "... with a strength both of will and action, that appeared quite supernatural, he forced all these changes upon him. The prisoner was like a young child in his hands."

power
Determined
proactive
Darnay



And Darnay is very hesitant. He is unsure about the methods of Carton, and he says that it is very foolish to think. It is almost mad to think that we can escape from this prison. And Carton says that "It would be madness if I asked you to escape, but do I?" He says that I am not asking you

escape, but just do what I have to say. When I ask you to pass out at that door, tell me it is madness and remain here. Change that cravat for this of mine, that coat for this of mine. While you do it, let me take this ribbon from your hair, shake your hair like this of mine.”

So Carton says that I am not asking you to walk out of the door. When I tell you that, tell me it is madness to escape and stay here. But do what I say, change this tie of mine for yours. And then he says put my coat on, and he is taking off the ribbon from Darnay's hair and he is shaking his hair so that hair style resembles Carton's hair style.

And he is doing all this to Darnay with a strength both of will and action. So Carton is determined. He is very proactive, and that appeared quite supernatural. In fact, he seemed as if he is a spirit rather than human being. He has a power, a special power vested in him at this moment, and he is able to force all these changes upon Darnay. “The prisoner was like a young child in his hands.” So Darnay is almost like a child in the hands of Carton, because Darnay is obliging the request, the command of Carton.

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The slide is titled "Another letter" and contains two bullet points. The first bullet point is: "If you remember," said Carton, dictating, "the words that passed between us, long ago, you will readily comprehend this when you see it. You do remember them, I know. It is not in your nature to forget them." The second bullet point is: "I am thankful that the time has come, when I can prove them. That I do so is no subject for regret or grief." There are handwritten red annotations: "I am sure he has the" above the first bullet point, "promise to being fulfilled" next to the first bullet point, and a red underline under the second bullet point. In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a small video inset showing a woman with glasses and a pink plaid shirt.

And Carton is making Darnay write a letter. Sydney Carter stands behind the chair of Darnay, and Darnay is sitting at the table, and he is writing a letter, and Sydney Carton is dictating the letter and these are the words of the letter. "If you remember," said Carton, dictating, "the words that passed between us, long ago, you will readily comprehend this when you see it. You do

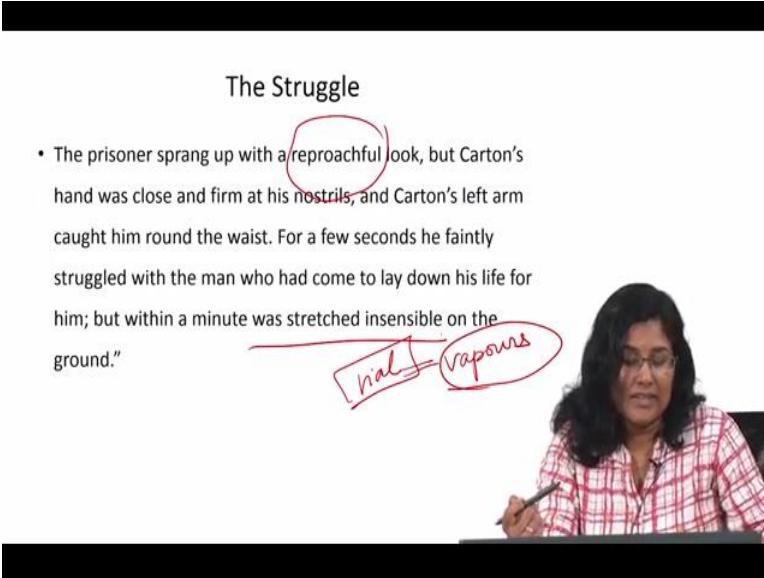
remember them, I know. It is not in your nature to forget them."

So he is addressing Lucie Manette here, and he is asking Lucie Manette in this letter to remember those words that he spoke to her when he came to declare his affection for Lucie Manette that day in Soho Square long back, a couple of years ago. And he says that when you read these words, you will remember, and you will remember because it is not in your nature to forget my words.

So he is urging Lucie to think about the promise that he made long ago, the promise that said that he would protect the life that she loved. And he says that further on in the letter, Carton says that "I am thankful that the time has come, when I can prove them." When I can fulfil my promise. "That I do so is no subject for regret or grief."

So please do not be sorry that the time has come for me to prove my promises. I have no regret and I am not sorrowful about the fact that I have to fulfil these promises. So Sydney Carton is almost blissfully, happily carrying out the promise that he makes to Lucie, that he would protect the people that she loved dearly.

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The Struggle

- The prisoner sprang up with a reproachful look, but Carton's hand was close and firm at his nostrils, and Carton's left arm caught him round the waist. For a few seconds he faintly struggled with the man who had come to lay down his life for him; but within a minute was stretched insensible on the ground.

Handwritten note: [vial] vapours

A woman with glasses and a red and white checkered shirt is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide, appearing to be presenting or writing.

So while Darnay is writing to Sydney's dictation, what Sydney does here is, he kind of brings up a vapour by his nostril. He has a vial, he has a vial in his hand, and it gives rise to certain

vapours, and he brings those vapours close to the nose of Charles Darnay. And Darnay is able to detect that something is terribly amiss and he sprang up with a reproachful look.

He looks at him accusingly, but Carton's hand was close and firm at his nostril. He is making Darnay smell from the bottle, that small bottle that he has in his hand, and "Carton's left arm caught him around the waist. For a few seconds, he faintly struggled with the man who had come to lay down his life for him. But within a minute was stretched insensible on the ground."

So Carton has a small struggle with Darnay. Darnay fights back, but then Carton is successful in making Darnay inhale the vapours which makes him unconscious. So Darnay was stretched out unconscious on the ground. So part of the agenda of Sydney Carton is fulfilled, and Darnay is ready to be taken out as Sydney Carton.

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Fifty-two

- "Mr. Carton", the Spy answered, with a timid snap of his fingers, "my hazard is not *that*, in that thick of business here, if you are true to the whole of your bargain."
- "Don't fear me. I will be true to the death."
- "You must be, Mr. Carton, if the tale of fifty-two is to be right. Being made right by you in *that dress*, I shall have no fear."

So once Darnay is unconscious, we have the spy, John Barsad come in, and John Barsad is happy that he can take out one figure out of the prison and be saved that way. So "Mr. Carton, the spy answered, with a timid snap of his fingers, my hazard is not that, in that thick of business here, if you are true to the whole of your bargain." So John Barsad is also scared about the whole project because he is worried that something will go wrong.

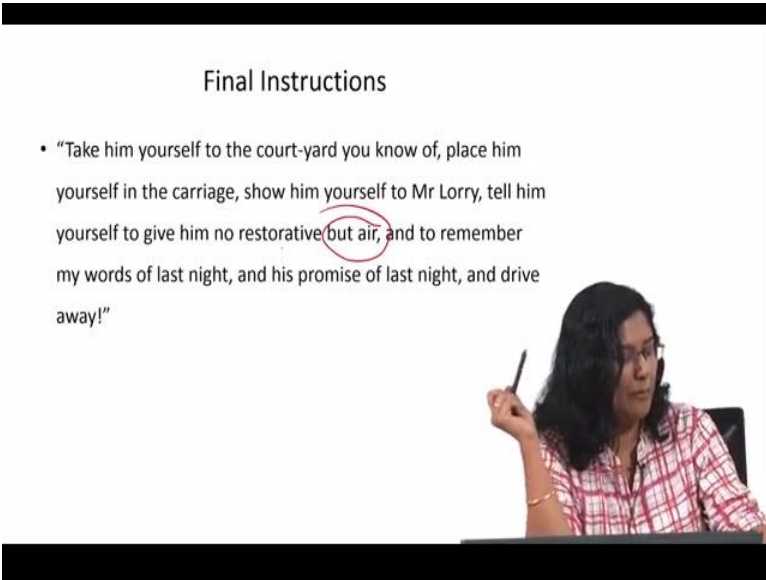
And Carton says that see, you have a man that you can take out of the prison, and the spy

answers saying that Mr. Carton, that is not the problem. I can easily take him out of the prison because if this a chaotic situation, everybody is busy, there is a lot of crowd. But, the point is, you should be true to your side of the bargain. You should not reveal your true identity; you should just quietly go unto your death.

So that is what is John Barsad asking of Mr. Carton. And Carton says that, "don't fear me. I will be true to the death." So I will be very true to my promise. So do not be frightened that I will not keep my side of the bargain. And he says that, "You must be Mr. Carton, if the tale of fifty-two is to be right." So you have to be true to your promise if we kind of need, because we need the number fifty-two to die.

So we need fifty-two people to die today, and you got to be true to your promise, "Being made right by you in that dress, I shall have no fear." Since you are looking just like Charles Darnay, I have no fear that we will have fifty-two people to execute at the guillotine. So Barsad is not very worried at this moment.

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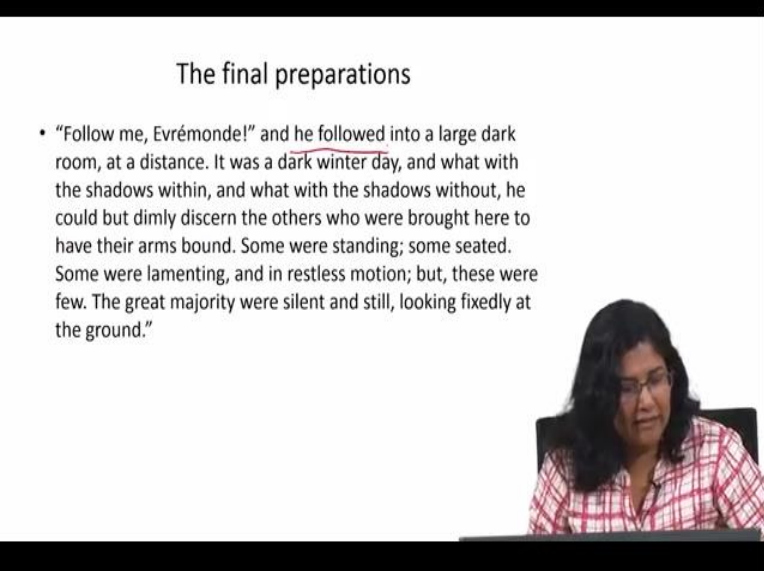


The slide is titled "Final Instructions" and contains a single bullet point with the following text: "Take him yourself to the court-yard you know of, place him yourself in the carriage, show him yourself to Mr Lorry, tell him yourself to give him no restorative but air, and to remember my words of last night, and his promise of last night, and drive away!". The words "but air" are circled in red. In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a photograph of a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a pink and white checkered shirt, holding a pen and looking towards the left.

And these are the final instructions that Sydney Carton offers to John Barsad, the spy. He says that, "Take him yourself to the court-yard you know of, place him yourself in the carriage, show him yourself to Mr. Lorry, tell him yourself to give him no restorative but air, and to remember my words of last night, and his promise of last night, and drive away." So Carton asks him to


take Darnay to Mr. Lorry, tell him to give nothing but air, tell him to give Charles Darnay nothing but air. And remind Mr. Lorry of the promise he made to Sydney Carton and ask him to drive away from Paris.

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The final preparations

- “Follow me, Evrémonde!” and he followed into a large dark room, at a distance. It was a dark winter day, and what with the shadows within, and what with the shadows without, he could but dimly discern the others who were brought here to have their arms bound. Some were standing; some seated. Some were lamenting, and in restless motion; but, these were few. The great majority were silent and still, looking fixedly at the ground.”

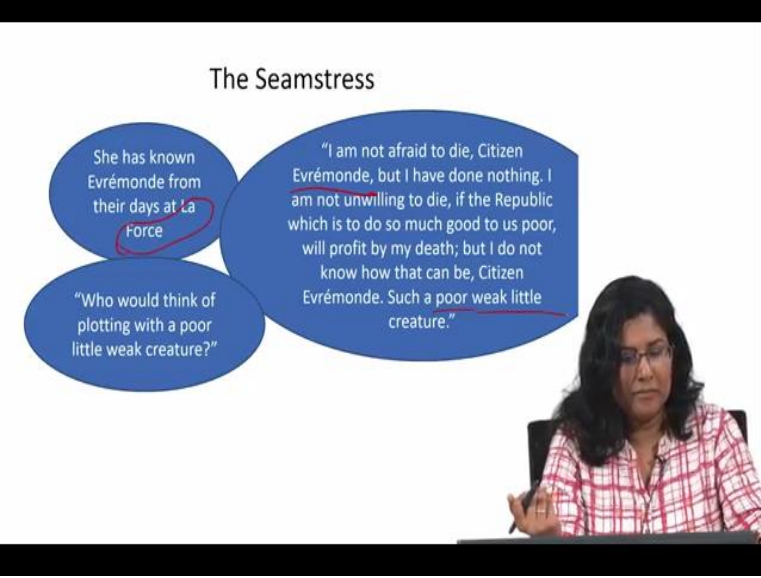


So once that is over, and once Barsad leaves with the unconscious body of Charles Darnay, Sydney Carton is all by himself, and we have a security come in, a guard comes in and he says “Follow me, Evremonde.” So he is taken to be Charles Evremonde, not Sydney Carton. The guard believes that this is Charles Darnay, and Carton followed him “into a larger room at a distance. It was a dark winter day, and what with the shadows within, and what with the shadows without, he could but dimly discern the others who were brought here to have their arms bound. Some were standing, some were seated, some were lamenting, and in restless motion, but these were few. The great majority was silent and still, looking fixedly at the ground.”

So Carton is taken to a bigger room for the purpose of getting his hands bound, and it was a dark winter's day. And there are lots of shadows in that room because there is not a lot of light in it. And he could see that there is a lot of people in the room and they were all waiting to have their hands bound. And some of them were standing, some were seated but only a few were restless, that is, the few were kind of talking to themselves, they were kind of moaning to themselves, they were lamenting, but the majority of the crowd were silent and they were looking just at the ground beneath them.

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The Seamstress



She has known Evrémonte from their days at La Force

"Who would think of plotting with a poor little weak creature?"

"I am not afraid to die, Citizen Evrémonte, but I have done nothing. I am not unwilling to die, if the Republic which is to do so much good to us poor, will profit by my death; but I do not know how that can be, Citizen Evrémonte. Such a poor weak little creature."

In this hall, there is the seamstress, the young woman who is just twenty years old and she is also going to die by the guillotine. And she has known Evremonde from their days at La Force. So she was also at the prison La Force. And she comes to talk to Charles Darnay, she does not realize that it is somebody else. And she says that I am also going to die because they think that I have plotted against the government, and she says "Who would think of plotting with a poor little weak creature?"

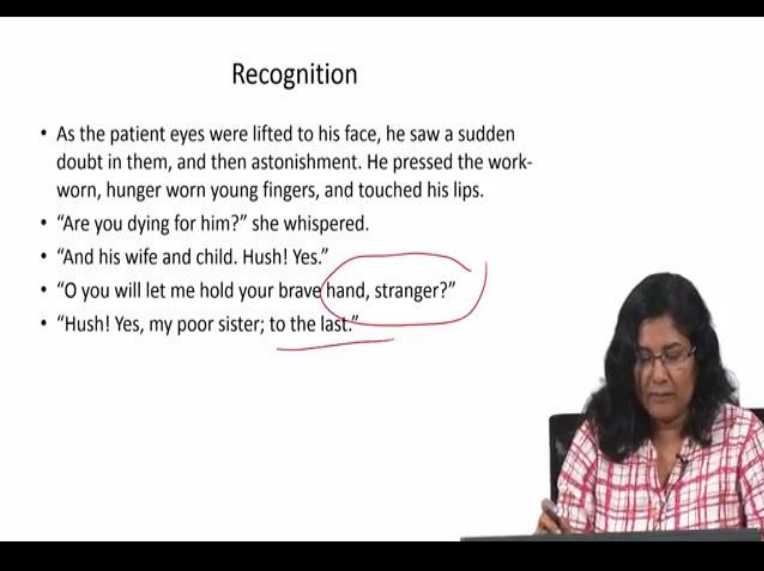
I am just a poor little weak creature. How could anybody plot with me against the government? And she further says, "I am not afraid to die, Citizen Evremonde." She thinks that it is Charles Darnay, and she says that "I have done nothing wrong. I am not unwilling to die if the Republic which is to do so much good to us poor, will profit by my death. But I do not know how that can be, Citizen Evremonde. Such a poor weak little creature."

So there is a lot of emphasis on the fact that she is poor, she is weak, she is little. So the highlight here is that the Republic is killing such innocent people too. And she says that I do not have any desire not to die, I can die, provided my death will be profitable for the Republic. But it does not look like it.

My death is not going to gain the Republic anything. And therein lies the tragedy of the

revolutionary regime, which is putting to death such innocent people too. Look at Sydney Carton. He is going to die without having done any crime against the regime. And this seamstress is also going to die. She is innocent of any plot against the government.

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The slide is titled "Recognition" and contains a bulleted list of text excerpts. A red circle highlights the phrase "O you will let me hold your brave hand, stranger?" in the third bullet point. A red line underlines the phrase "Hush! Yes, my poor sister; to the last." in the fourth bullet point. In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a small video inset showing a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a red and white plaid shirt, looking down at a device in her hands.

Recognition

- As the patient eyes were lifted to his face, he saw a sudden doubt in them, and then astonishment. He pressed the work-worn, hunger worn young fingers, and touched his lips.
- "Are you dying for him?" she whispered.
- "And his wife and child. Hush! Yes."
- "O you will let me hold your brave hand, stranger?"
- "Hush! Yes, my poor sister; to the last."

But soon, she recognizes that this is not Charles Darnay, that this is somebody else who has replaced him. "As the patient eyes were lifted to his face, he saw a sudden doubt in them, and then astonishment. He pressed the work-worn, hunger worn young fingers, and touched his lips." So he sees that this woman, this seamstress has recognized that this is not Charles Darnay.

And he presses her hands and asks her to be quite, silently. And she whispers, "are you dying for him?" "And his wife and child. Hush! Yes." Yes, I am dying for the man, his wife and his child. "O will you let me hold your brave hand, stranger?" and she asks him if he would let her hold his brave hand and he says, "Hush! Yes, my poor sister. I will hold your hand to the last minute."

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Sydney Carton and the Little Seamstress by Harry Furniss. 1910.



Shadow is depressed from its low



And this is the illustration of that particular scene. So here we have Sydney Carton and the seamstress. Here we have the rest of the crowd. Everybody is in shadow, implying everybody is somehow depressed. The spirits are low. Of course, it will be. They are going to the guillotine.

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The flight

the fleeing of the Manettes

- Houses in ^{two} ~~two~~ and threes pass by us, solitary farms, ruinous buildings, dye-works, tanneries, and the like, open country, avenues of leafless trees. The hard uneven pavement is under us, the soft deep mud is on either side. Sometimes, we strike into the skirting mud, to avoid the stones that clatter us and shake us; sometimes we stick in ruts and sloughs there. The agony of our impatience is then so great, that in our wild alarm and hurry we are for getting out and running—hiding—doing anything but stopping.



Now we come to the scene which tells us about the flight, the fleeing of the Manettes and Darnay and Mr. Lorry. So when they move quietly, quickly in their carriage, this is what the scene they see. “Houses in twos and threes pass by us, solitary farms, ruinous buildings, dye-works, tanneries, and the like, open country, avenues of leafless trees.” So as the carriage is kind of rushing across the country, this is the sight that they see, farms and buildings and dye-works, tanneries, open country, leafless trees, because this is winter remember, The trees would have

shed their leaves.

“The hard uneven pavement is under us; the soft deep mud is on either side.” So the narrator is describing the soft mud that is on either side of the road. “Sometimes, we strike into the skirting mud, to avoid the stones that clatter us and shake us.” Sometimes the carriage is kind of moving into the mud in order to prevent the stones that clatter, “Sometimes the carriage is stuck in ruts and sloughs there. The agony of our impatience is then so great, that in our wild alarm and hurry, we are forgetting out and running, hiding, doing anything but stopping.” So they are extremely worried that they will be chased and caught and taken back to the prison. So they are wildly alarmed. So they almost want to get out of the carriage and hide in the woods, but they want to do anything but stop.

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The flight

- The night comes on dark. He moves more; he is beginning to revive, and to speak intelligibly; he thinks they are still together; he asks him, by his name, what he has in his hand. O pity us, kind Heaven, and help us! Look out, look out, and see if we are pursued.
- The wind is rushing after us, and the clouds are flying after us, and the moon is plunging after us, and the whole wild night is in pursuit of us; but, so far, we are pursued by nothing else.

pursuit of the coffee Jerry Cumber

“The night comes on dark. He moves more; he is beginning to revive.” He being Charles Darnay. He is beginning to revive. He is kind of coming to consciousness, and he is trying to speak intelligibly. He thinks that they are still together. They being Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton. He asks him by his name what he has in his hand.

So he is, Darnay is still in the prison, in his mind, and he is asking Carton, what exactly he has in his hand, the vial which has those vapours that he is trying to make him unconscious. "O pity us." This is the narrator's comment. "O pity us, kind Heaven, and help us! Look out, look out,

and see if we are pursued."

So they are worried that they will be pursued. So they are trying to look out of the carriage. "The wind is rushing after us, and the clouds are flying after us, and the moon is plunging after us, and the whole wild night is in pursuit of us; but, so far, we are pursued by nothing else." So in their dread, in their alarm, in their fear, they think that everybody is chasing, the wind, the clouds, the moon and the whole night seems to be pursuing them.

And this reminds us of the pursuit of the coffin, the imaginary pursuit of the coffin and that Jerry Cruncher, the young Jerry Cruncher imagines. So this reminds of that particular scene, but then here, we have the Manettes, Doctor Manette, her daughter and little Lucie and Mr. Lorry who are fleeing the French country, and they are worried that they might be chased and caught. But so far they are not pursued by anything or anybody. Thank you for watching. I will continue in the next

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