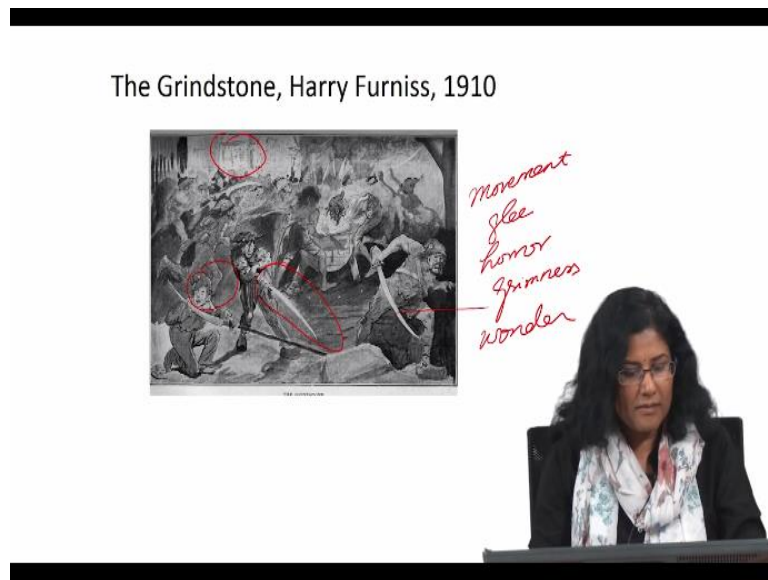


**The Nineteenth Century Novel**  
**Prof. Divya. A**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology – Madras**

**Lecture - 36**  
**Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities Book III: Chapters 2 - 3**

Hello and welcome back to Book III chapters 2 to 3. We are in the middle of a scene which is a big set piece in the second half of the novel, and that set piece is about the grindstone, which literally and symbolically captures the magnitude of the violence that the revolution is capable of, and it is also a foreshadowing of the reign of terror centered around the guillotine.

**(Refer Slide Time: 00:47)**





I am going to show you some illustrations, more illustrations about the grindstone, and this is by Harry Furniss for the 1910 edition. Look at the people who are sharpening their weapons, their swords, and as soon as they have sharpened their weapons, they are running away to commit more violence and mayhem. And look at the women too who bring more swords to the scene; it is a rapidly moving picture of a set of men and women.

And that is captured brilliantly by Harry Furniss, so motion, movement, glee, horror, grimness, all these elements are encoded, and there is also wonder, look at the representation of this young man who is kind of having a moment of wonder at the sharpness. He is checking the sharpness of the blade there, a kind of a bayonet there, and look at this man twisting his knife which is attached to his hand; it is a very gruesome weapon.

And his arm is becoming an extended weapon, so it is a fantastic illustration of the gory scene, and it is through perhaps these windows that Mr. Lorry and Dr. Manette is looking on at the scene.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:23)

"But such awful workers, and such awful work!"  
John McLenan, *Harper's Weekly* (1 October 1859)



Further illustration, this one is by John McLenan and this is for the Harper's Weekly edition that came out in America, and the title to this illustration is "But such awful workers, and such awful work." So the sharpening of the blades of weapons are represented as being work, and even though it is awful work, you know, pitiless job, it is the job alright. The faces are more clearer here, and one can see a female figure here, is this, you know, Defarge? We do not know.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:09)

Fred Barnard's Household Edition  
illustration, "The Grindstone" (1874).



Surgery




Further illustrations on the grindstone, and this is by Fred Barnard for the 1874 edition, and you know this is emphasizing the savagery that is there on the part of the crowd, and that which is underlined by the narrator in the novel. Look at the faces, they are barbaric, they are more animal-like than human, and there is a wine bottle that is being displayed over the crowd and it is a gory scene, it is a really macabre scene, one would not want to go near this crowd.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:53)

The Grindstone

- “And as the frantic wielders of these weapons snatched them from the stream of sparks and tore away into the streets, the same red hue was red in their frenzied eyes, eyes which any unbrutalised beholder would have given twenty years of his life, to petrify with a well-directed gun.”

*red haze*  
*blood thirst*  
*The Wine Shop*  
*normal human being*



“And as the frantic wielders of these weapons snatched them from the stream of sparks and tore away into the streets, the same red hue was red in their frenzied eyes, eyes which any unbrutalised beholder would have given twenty years of his life to petrify with a well-directed gun.” So the narrator also tells us that as soon as the weapons have been sharpened, as soon as the stream of sparks have come about and the weapons are sharp, they tore away, they hurry away to commit more crimes.


And the red that is there in their eyes is representing their bloodthirst. And anybody who looks at these men, any unbrutalised beholder, any normal human being would have given twenty years of his life to kill such people with a well-aimed gun. So, you know, it is better to put down these people than to let them run about in the streets and let them destroy life and property. So there is a kind of a red haze among these people, and that red haze is blood thirst.

And this blood thirst is what was indicated in the wine-shop scene quite early on when the people kind of drank the spilt wine in front of the wine shop of Defarge.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:26)

The Grindstone

- His streaming white hair, his remarkable face, and the impetuous confidence of his manner, as he put the weapons aside like water, carried him in an instant to the heart of the concourse at the stone. For a few moments there was a pause, and a hurry, and a murmur, and the unintelligible sound of his voice; and then Mr Lorry saw him, surrounded by all, and in the midst of a line of twenty men long, all linked shoulder to shoulder, and hand to shoulder, hurried out with cries of – "Live the Bastille prisoner! Help for the Bastille prisoner's kindred in La Force! Save the prisoner Evrémonte at La Force! and a thousand answering shouts."



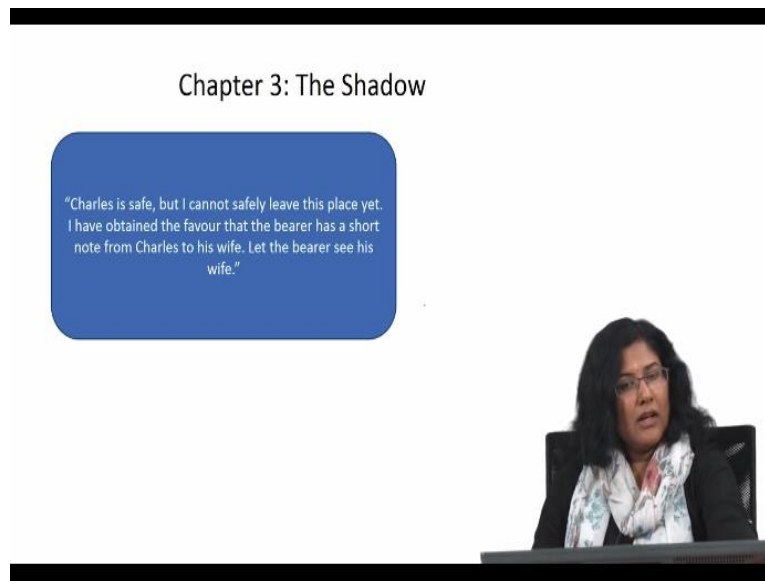
Now Dr. Manette is courageous enough to intervene, to go into the crowd that is surrounding the grindstone, and he is able to talk to these men. It is a remarkable thing that he is able to do so, but that power comes from his, you know, history as a Bastille prisoner. So how does he go to this set of men and women? The narrator says that "his streaming white hair, his remarkable face and the impetuous confidence of his manner, as he put the weapons aside like water, carried him in an instant to the heart of the concourse at the stone."

So look at the way he effortlessly goes into this crowd. He is pushing aside the weapons like water, it is as if he is wading into water, and in a minute in an instant he is at the heart of the crowd. "For a few moments there was a pause, and a hurry and a murmur, and the unintelligible sound of his voice, and then Mr. Lorry saw him surrounded by all, and in the midst of a line of twenty men long, all linked shoulder to shoulder and hand to shoulder, hurried out with cries of 'Live the Bastille prisoner! Help for the Bastille prisoner's kindred in La Force! Save the prisoner Evremonde at La Force!' and a thousand answering shouts."

So Dr. Manette, you know, comes down from the bank and he goes into the crowd and for a few minutes, he is just talking to them. And Mr. Lorry finally sees him after some time surrounded by these people who are making way for him, and they all cheering him, they are crying that you know the Bastille prisoner should live long, the Bastille prisoner's kindred, relatives should be helped and that person should be saved, the prisoner Evremonde, they do not know the gravity of the crimes that the Evremonde family has committed against the people of France.

So innocently they say save the prisoner Evremonde because he is a relative of Dr. Manette who was a Bastille prisoner, and everybody is in unison in terms of their desire to help our Dr. Manette. So we see in this scene, the height of the power of Dr. Manette among the people of France. So you know, finally he is able to reap the rewards that, you know, that has come to him so late and so after such a long and painful period, so he does get a moment of glory in the Republic of France.

**(Refer Slide Time: 08:21)**



Chapter 3 is entitled The Shadow. Again a metaphoric title. What is the shadow that is referred to will be answered at the end of chapter 3. Remember, we already saw that the Bastille is able to throw its shadow across the English Channel and onto England and onto Dr. Manette who is living a free life there. So now who is the figure or object that is throwing its shadow, is the question which will be answered shortly.

So Dr. Manette goes with the crowd, and he is able to gain entry to La Force, and he is able to send back word to Mr. Lorry that "Charles is safe, but I cannot safely leave this place yet, I have obtained the favour that the bearer has a short note from Charles to his wife. Let the bearer see his wife." So Doctor Manette has gone into the people who are, you know, in charge and he has checked the safety of Charles, and that he is able to give further information to Mr. Lorry through Defarge.

So Defarge is the one who comes back to Lorry with his wife Madame Defarge, and on the advice of Dr. Manette, he let these people see Lucie who is in a separate house quite near by the bank.


**(Refer Slide Time: 09:55)**

---

The Shadow

- Does Madame go with us? Inquired Mr Lorry, seeing that she moved as they moved.
- "Yes. That she may be able to recognize the faces and know the persons. It is for their safety."

*ironical comment*



---

And this question is asked by Mr. Lorry, “Does Madame go with us? Inquired Mr. Lorry, seeing that she moved as they moved.” So she is quietly standing there, witnessing the scene, and Defarge answers, “Yes. That she may be able to recognize the faces and know the persons. It is for their safety.” So he says that if she sees them, she will be able to remember their faces and will be able to protect them when the time comes.

Again, this is a very ironical comment because we know that Madame Defarge is not a person to be trusted with. If she remembers their faces, then we think she would use that information for committing harm rather than for protecting them.

**(Refer Slide Time: 10:48)**

---

## Lucie Manette

- “That was all the writing. It was so much, however, to her who received it, that she turned from Defarge to his wife, and kissed one of the hands that knitted. It was a passionate, loving, thankful, womanly action, but the hand made no response—dropped cold and heavy, and took to its knitting again.”

*humane action*



---

And when they see Lucie, she is given a letter. And in that letter there is a short note from Darnay asking her to stay strong and take care of herself and her, and their daughter. “And that was all the writing in the letter but it was so much, however, to her who received it, that she turned from Defarge to his wife and kissed one of the hands that knitted. It was a passionate, loving, thankful, womanly action but the hand made no response, dropped cold and heavy and took to its knitting again.”

So this is a scene where Lucie and her child and Mr. Lorry come into contact with Madame Defarge, and once Lucie gets a letter from her husband, she is full of gratitude towards the two people here. And she turns from Defarge to his wife and in gratitude she kisses one of her hands, and it was a hand that knitted, and we know what that hand knits, it knits the death knell for hundreds and hundreds of people, but Lucie is innocent of that knowledge. So her gesture is a passionate, loving, thankful, womanly action, a humane action.

But it does not evoke a response, a similar response from Madame Defarge. Her hand is cold and heavy, and it took to knitting again. She continues her action of knitting. So, you know, we see the two women come together, two very central characters, you know, in the same scene are brought about, and Dickens contrasts their differing natures here. One is full of human feeling, the other is devoid of any kind of human feeling.

**(Refer Slide Time: 12:47)**

---

## Lucie Manette

- “The shadow attendant on Madame Defarge and her party seemed to fall so threatening and dark on the child, that her mother instinctively kneeled on the ground beside her, and held her to her breast. The shadow attendant on Madame Defarge and her party seemed then to fall, threatening and dark, on both the mother and the child.”

*Lucie's child endangered by Madame knitting*



“The shadow attendant on Madame Defarge and her party seemed to fall so threatening and dark on the child, that her mother instinctively kneeled on the ground beside her and held her to her breast. The shadow attendant on Madame Defarge and her party seemed then to fall threatening and dark on both the mother and the child.”

So again a very figurative scene, we have Madame Defarge knitting quietly, silently, callously, unemotionally, and her shadow seemed to fall on the child of Lucie Manette, the little Lucie, and her mother instinctively wants to protect her child. So she kneels down and embraces her kid, and when she does that the shadow of Madame Defarge falls on both the mother and the child.

So the message that the narrator wants to communicate is the fact that both of them are endangered by Madame Defarge, both Lucie and her child are in harm's way because of Madame Defarge. So the shadow is the shadow of Madame Defarge, and Madame Defarge becomes representative of revolutionary France itself, and that unit, that regime, that state is not kind to innocents such as Lucie and her child.

**(Refer Slide Time: 14:23)**



---

## Lucie Manette

- “As a wife and mother,” cried Lucie, most earnestly, “I implore you to have pity on me and not to exercise any power that you possess, against my innocent husband, but to use it in his behalf. O sister-woman, think of me. As a wife and mother!”

*women sisters*  
*evoke pity*  
*Characteristics*  
*feature*



“As a wife and mother,’ cried Lucie most earnestly, ‘I implore you to have pity on me and not to exercise any power that you possess against my innocent husband but to use it in his behalf. O sister-woman, think of me. As a wife and mother.’” So literally Lucie is pleading to Madame Defarge to have mercy.

She says that I beg you, implore to beg, I beg you to have pity on my family, and if you have any power do not exercise that power against my innocent husband. The word innocent is important because that is the concept that Lucie has to fight for her husband, the fact that her husband is innocent and that, you know, this sister-woman Madame Defarge should be kind to them, and she says that I am a wife and a mother, so please have mercy on me.

And look at the way she addresses Madame Defarge, sister and woman, and she thinks that these two, you know, characteristics, these two features would be sufficient to evoke pity towards Lucie Manette because they have this common bond, both of them are women and both of them can be sisters, and Madame Defarge rejects this bond.

**(Refer Slide Time: 15:52)**

---

## Madame Defarge

- “The wives and mothers we have been used to see, since we were as little as this child, and much less, have not been greatly considered? We have known their husbands and fathers laid in prison and kept from them, often enough? All our lives, we have seen our sister-women suffer, in themselves and in their children, poverty, nakedness, hunger, thirst, sickness, misery, oppression and neglect of all kinds?”....
- “Judge you! Is it likely that the trouble of one wife and mother would be much to us now?”



She retorts with this set of ideas. “The wives and mothers we have been used to see since we were as little as this child, and much less, have not been greatly considered? We have known their husbands and fathers laid in prison and kept from them, often enough? All our lives, we have seen our sister-women suffer, in themselves and in their children, poverty, nakedness, hunger, thirst, sickness, misery, oppression and neglect of all kinds?”

“Judge you, is it likely to the trouble of one wife and mother would be much to us now?” So Madame Defarge holds up the entire, you know, history, the pain and oppression that these women, these sister-women have suffered for generations because of the cruelty of the aristocrats, and Madame Defarge tells Lucie that, you know, we have seen so much oppression since the time when we were younger than your child.

We have been used to seeing sister-women lose their husbands, their fathers to prisons and you know, we have enjoyed nothing but misery and oppression, we have enjoyed poverty, nakedness and hunger, thirst, sickness and all kinds of neglect. So do you think we would be worried about the trouble of one wife and mother that you are, you know.

So your suffering is not going to affect us in any way because we are used to seeing so much suffering for generations together. So it is a rhetorical question on the part of Madame Defarge, and does not elicit an answer.

**(Refer Slide Time: 17:34)**

---

## Lucie Manette

- "I am not thankless, I hope, but that dreadful woman seems to throw a shadow on me and on all my hopes." *Impact of Madame Defarge*
- "Tut, tut!...what is this despondency in the brave little breast? A shadow indeed! No substance in it, Lucie." *H.D. Shadow VS Madame's Reality*



"I am not thankless, I hope, but that dreadful woman seems to throw a shadow on me and on all my hopes." So this is Lucie Manette's words, and she says this to Mr. Lorry once Defarge and her entourage have left. And she says that I am grateful for the message that I have received from Darnay, but you know the sight of the dreadful woman who is Madame Defarge seems to throw a shadow on me and on all my hopes.

And I am kind of frightened of the impact that Madame Defarge would have on my family. And she is right to be frightened of Madame Defarge because she is indeed a dreadful woman, a woman with no pity, and she is in fact just an instrument of the Republic here, that is, you know, sacrificing innocents along with the guilty, you know, in a desire to wreak havoc and to you know enjoy vengeance.

And this is the reply of Mr. Lorry. "Tut-tut! What is this despondency in the brave little breast? A shadow indeed, no substance in it." So he is giving comfort to Lucie and suggesting that there is no, you know, basis for such a fear, there is no substance for your fear, it is just a shadow with no material dread. So the shadow is contrasted with the material reality, but we know that Madame Defarge is capable of so much, you know, trouble and harassment towards Lucie.

And that is what is going to happen as the novel winds up towards its dramatic closure, and you know, Madame Defarge becomes the French Revolution. She becomes the face and the heart and the mind of the revolution itself, and everybody else pales into insignificance in contrast to this particular dreadful woman. Thank you for watching. I will continue in the

n  
e  
x  
t

s  
e  
s  
s  
i  
o