

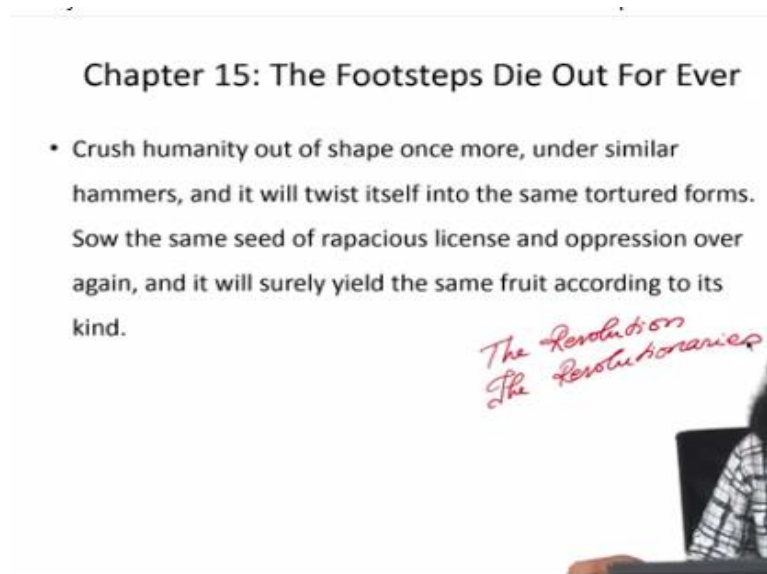
The Nineteenth Century Novel
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Lecture – 42
Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities, Book III, Chapters 15

Hello and welcome back to week 9's lecture, this will be the last session for week 9, and with this session we will be completing a Tale of Two Cities. So we are looking at chapter 15 and how the footsteps are kind of fading away from this revolutionary country, and how the footsteps are dying away from the life of the key family. So, with the kind of fading away of the sound of the revolution from the family, there is also a sense that Dickens is bringing this revolutionary chapter into closure.

So, if you look at the final, you know, part of the narrative of this particular fiction, he talks about how the revolution has, you know, subsided, how it has faded away and how a new country is born after this radical era. So that is how the scene is changed in this novel.

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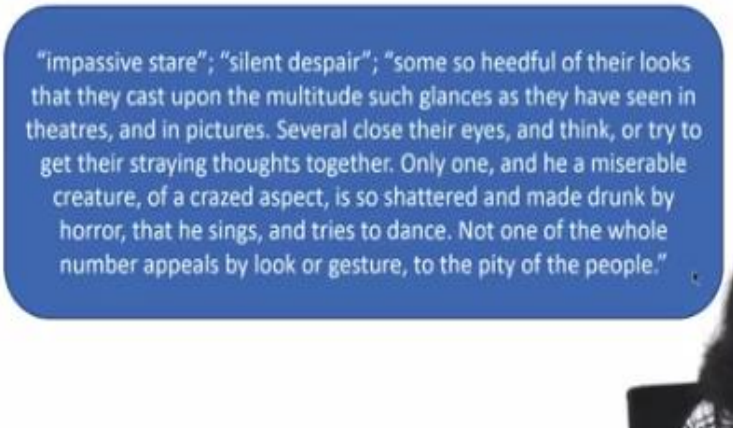
The footsteps die out forever. As I said, the footsteps fade out forever. So what are the footsteps signifying here; the footsteps are signifying the revolution, the footsteps are signifying the revolutionaries, the footsteps are signifying those people who have tried to damage the family of Lucie Manette. And the narrator says that, “Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seed of rapacious license and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to

its kind.” So the message of this narrative is that what you sow, you will reap. What you do to humanity, you will see the effect of your actions in that humanity, in the psyche of the humanity. So if the revolution is horrible, then the people who have managed the country before the onset of the Revolution are responsible for the way the revolution has turned out.

So, if the people are bloodthirsty in this new regime, then the people who manage the country and the people before are responsible for bringing out this bloodthirst in the psyche of the people.

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Riders in the tumbrels



“impassive stare”; “silent despair”; “some so heedful of their looks that they cast upon the multitude such glances as they have seen in theatres, and in pictures. Several close their eyes, and think, or try to get their straying thoughts together. Only one, and he a miserable creature, of a crazed aspect, is so shattered and made drunk by horror, that he sings, and tries to dance. Not one of the whole number appeals by look or gesture, to the pity of the people.”

Now, in this chapter we are shown how the prisoners travel in the tumbrels, those wooden carts which move towards the guillotine. And there are a lot of “impassive stares, silent despairs, some so heedful of their looks that they cast upon the multitude such glances as they have seen in theatres and in pictures. Several close their eyes and think, or try to get their straying thoughts together. Only one, and he had a miserable creature, of a crazed aspect, is so shattered and made drunk by horror that he sings and tries to dance. Not one of the whole number appeals by look or gesture to the pity of the people.”

So, even though they are travelling; a big crowd is travelling in a tumbrel, in a set of tumbrels towards the guillotine, they are not demanding pity of the people, they are not asking for any kind of sympathy. And except for one person who is crazed, who is like a lunatic, the rest are all silent. Some of them close their eyes, they try to collect their thoughts together, and it is a picture of silent despair, and people are indifferent, the prisoners are indifferent, most of them.

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The curiosity

- The leading curiosity is, to know which ^{is he} he stands at the back of the tumbrel with his head bent down, to converse with a mere girl who sits on the side of the cart, and holds his hand. He has no curiosity or care for the scene about him, and always speaks to the girl. Here and there in the long street of St. Honoré, cries are raised against him. If they move him at all, it is only to a quiet smile, as he shakes his hair a little more loosely about his face. He cannot easily touch his face, his arms being bound.



And the crowd which is watching the movement of the tumbrels, the passage of the tumbrels towards the guillotine is interested in one figure, and that figure is Evremonde, Charles Darnay Evremonde. The leading curiosity is to know which is he, who is the man who is going to be executed for his crimes against the peasant family of which Madame Defarge was a part.

“He stands at the back of the tumbrel with his head bent down to converse with a mere girl who sits on the side of the cart, and holds his hand.” So the man that they are interested in that, the crowd is interested in, is at the back of the cart and he is with a little girl who is a seamstress. If you remember from the previous session, so we also know that this is not Charles Darnay, but is Sydney Carton pretending to be Charles Darnay Evremonde.

“He has no curiosity or care for the scene about him and always speaks to the girl.” He does not look at the prisoners but talks to the girl who is next to him. “Here and there in the long street of St. Honore, cries are raised against him. If they move him at all, it is only to a quiet smile as he shakes his hair a little more loosely about his face. He cannot easily touch his face, his arms being bound.”

So, he only smiles quietly, if people shout against him. And when he hears such cries, he just shakes his head a little bit, so that the hair kind of falls on his face and hides his face further. He is afraid of being found out, and he does not want that to happen, and he cannot touch his face because his arms are tied up at the back.

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"The Third Tumbrel", Fred Barnard, 1870s



S.C = C.D
Seamstress

And this is the illustration there. This is Sydney Carton who pretends to be Charles Darnay, and we have the seamstress here. And Fred Barnard shows us how the people are shouting against him, are full of resentment towards this man because they think that he is the one who harmed the peasant family so much.

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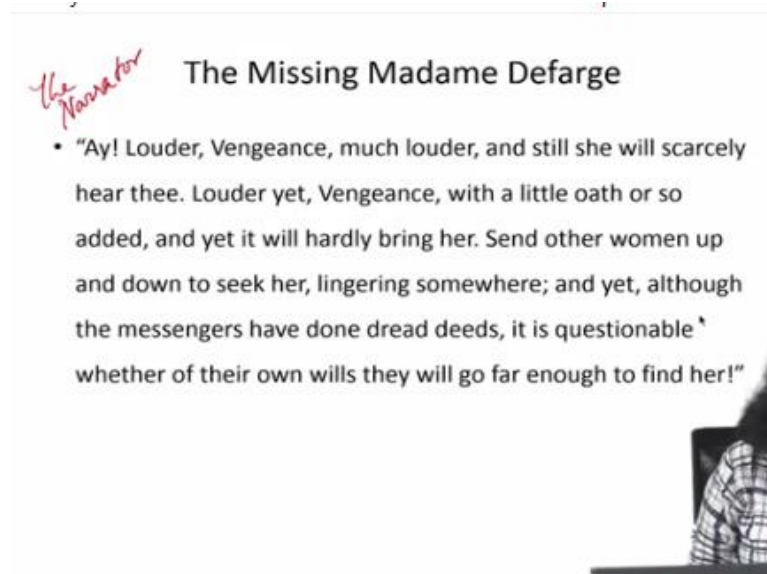
Forfeit

- The man cries, "Down Evrémonde! To the Guillotine all aristocrats! Down Evrémonde!"
- "Hush, hush!" the Spy entreats him, timidly.
- "And why not, citizen?"
- "He is going to forfeit: it will be paid in five minutes more. Let him be at peace."

The man cries, so there is a member of the crowd who cries "Down Evremonde! To the guillotine all aristocrats! Down Evremonde!" "Hush, hush!" the spy entreats him timidly. "And why not citizen?" "He is going to forfeit, it will be paid in five minutes more. Let him be at peace." So it is very interesting to note that John Barsad is there in the crowd, and he is watching Sydney Carton move towards the guillotine.

And while he is witnessing one of the man says that, you know, cries that down Evremonde, down Evremonde, to the guillotine all the aristocrats. And the spy, John Barsad asks him to be silent, and the citizen is curious as to know why, he because the citizen is surprised, and John Barsad said that he is going to forfeit his life, he is going to die, and his death will be paid in five minutes. His forfeit will be paid in five minutes more, so let him die at peace, let him be at peace.

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The Narrator The Missing Madame Defarge

- "Ay! Louder, Vengeance, much louder, and still she will scarcely hear thee. Louder yet, Vengeance, with a little oath or so added, and yet it will hardly bring her. Send other women up and down to seek her, lingering somewhere; and yet, although the messengers have done dread deeds, it is questionable whether of their own wills they will go far enough to find her!"

Vengeance, the friend of Madame Defarge, the companion of Madame Defarge could not find her. She is waiting for Madame Defarge to come to her usual spot, pick up her knitting and watch the spectacle, and she starts to cry out Madame Defarge's name hoping that she will hear her and come to her spot. And the narrator says that, this is the narrator, says that "Ay! Louder, Vengeance, much louder and still she was scarcely hear thee. Louder yet, Vengeance, with a little oath or so added, and yet it will it will hardly bring her. Send other women up and down to seek her, lingering somewhere, and yet, although the messengers have done dread deeds, it is questionable whether of their own wills they will go far enough to find her!"

So the narrator very ironically says that why do not you send some women after her to find out where she is and bring her back, and even if such messengers go, they will not go far enough. Even if those messengers have done terrible deeds, they will not go far enough to find out the location of Madame Defarge and bring her back, because they are terrified of her one thing, and they do not want to go the extra mile to get back someone who is horrible.

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The Guillotine

- The ministers of Sainte Guillotine are robed and ready. Crash!—A head is held up, and the knitting-women who scarcely lifted their eyes to look at it a moment ago when it could think and speak, count One.
- The Second tumbrel empties and moves on; the third comes up. Rash! —And the knitting-women, faltering or pausing in their work, count Two.
- The supposed Evrémonde descends, and the seamstress is lifted out next after him.



The ministers of Sainte Guillotine are robed and ready. Crash! A head is held up, and the knitting women who scarcely lifted their eyes to look at it a moment ago when it could think and speak, count One.” So everybody has arrived at the guillotine, the prisoners are one by one getting out of the scaffold, and the ministers, the people who are in charge of the execution are ready for their job and the knitting women count the first head.

They count one as the guillotine chops of the head. The second tumbrel, the second tumbrel being the second cart which is full of prisoners, empties its cargo of life and blood, full of live human beings. It drops them at the guillotine and they are killed there, and the second tumbrel moves on. “The third comes up. Rash! And the knitting women, faltering or pausing in their work, count Two.” So the knitting women; women who look like Madame Defarge, who take up the job of Madame Defarge, they keep counting the number of dead people.

And the supposed Evremonde descends, and the seamstress is lifted up next after him. So it is their turn, Sydney Carton’s death and the seamstress' death is going to happen.

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"The two stand in the fast-thinning throng of victims" John McLenan, 1859



So, this is the illustration of the seamstress and Sydney Carton who pretends to be Darnay. So she is going to go first, and then followed by Sydney Carton, or Darnay as the people would know him.

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Carton

- She goes next before him—is gone; the knitting women count Twenty-Two.
- "I am the Resurrection and the Life, said the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."
- The murmuring of many voices, the upturning of many faces, the pressing on of many footsteps in the outskirts of the crowd, so that it swells forward in a mass, like one great heave of water, all flashes away. Twenty-Three.

“Or you to me’, says Sydney Carton. ‘Keep your eyes upon me, dear child, and mind no other object’ ‘I mind nothing while I hold your hand. I shall mind nothing when I let it go if they are rapid.’ ‘They will be rapid, fear not!’” So she is kind of saying that if they are quick; if they are quick in killing me, I will not be frightened. And he promises that they will be quick, and he says just keep your eyes on me, and look at no other object, and it will be over soon.

And she goes next before him and is gone, the knitting women count Twenty Two. So she is the twenty second prisoner to die, and the next is Sydney Carton, and he is also dead pretty quickly.

In fact, we do not have the narrator, you know, describe the execution. And suddenly we have the narrator saying that “I am the resurrection and the Life, said the Lord: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet he shall live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

So, the words of the Bible is brought up again as Sydney Carton dies, he is the 23rd person to die. So his death is compared to Christ's duties in life, and Christ's words to the people. “The murmuring of many voices, the upturning of many faces, the pressing on of many footsteps in the outskirts of the crowd, so that it swells forward in a mass, like one great heave of water, all flashes away. Twenty-Three.”

So, the entire crowd is kind of, you know, looking up at the man who is dying next, and it is like a surge, it is like a big heave of a wave in the ocean, and it all flashes, it dies down with the death of Sydney Carton who had died as Charles Darnay in order to protect the husband of the woman he loved.

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And once Sydney Carton is dead as Charles Darnay, he is like a ghost-like figure. So we have a ghost of, we have the ghost of Sydney Carton talk about the lives of Lucie Manette, her family after his death. And he says that I hold a special place in their hearts. “I see that I hold a sanctuary in their hearts, and in the hearts of the descendants, generations hence. I see her, an old woman, weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see her and her husband, their course done, lying side by side in their last earthly bed, and I know that each was not more honoured and held sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both.”

So, he says that I was more treasured in the soul of Lucie and her husband, than they were treasured in each other souls. So he has a special place, a sanctuary in their hearts, and even after she has grown old, Lucie Manette would weep for Sydney Carton on the anniversary of his death.

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Cartons

- "I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning his way up in that path of life which was once was mine. I see him winning it so well, that my name was made illustrious there by the light of his, I see the blots I threw upon it, faded away. I see him, foremost of just judges and honoured men, bringing a boy of my name, with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place—then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement—and I hear him tell the child my story, with a tender and a faltering voice.



So, he is completely woven into their lives and deaths. "I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man winning his way up in that path of life which was once mine." So Sydney Carton is the name which is given to a male child of Lucie and her husband. So Sydney; this Sydney is a man who is extremely successful and he is also a barrister. Sydney Carton says that I see this boy who is named after me "winning it so well that my name was made illustrious there by the light of his."

So, he has brought greater glory to me. "I see the blots I threw upon it, faded away. I see him, foremost of just judges and honoured men, bringing a boy of my name, with the forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place - then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement - and I hear him tell the child my story with a tender and a faltering voice." So we see Sydney's name being passed on from one generation to another.

Lucie's son is named as Sydney and Sydney's son is also named as Sydney, and you know, Lucie's boy Sydney becomes a famous judge, and all the blots that Sydney Carton threw upon his career and upon his life is completely removed by the activities of the next Sydney. And this child, Sydney's son is brought back to Paris, and during that time Paris is no longer within the

clutches of the French Revolution, it is back to normal, it is a beautiful city, and there is no disfigurement.

And disfigurement indirectly refers to the revolutionary period. So there is no disfigurement, stain on this country. And this child; Sydney's child is told the story, my story, in a tender and faltering, in a moving voice.

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A Far Better Rest

- "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

And this is the final lines of the novel, and this is, you know, spoken by the ghost-like figure which is Sydney Carton and he says that "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done, it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known." So, he says that my sacrifice, my giving my life to protect Lucie Manette's husband is the best thing I have ever done, and you know, my death is the best rest that I can get, and I have never known such rest. So death is seen as rest for this restless figure that Sydney Carton in this novel.

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Critical Comments

- E. M. Forster suggests in *Aspects of the Novel*, *A Tale of Two Cities* equals history plus Dickens.
- "I hope," he wrote enthusiastically to a French actor-friend on the 15th of October, 1859, "it is the best story I have written."

historical
domestic plot.

So, final words on the novel, and I have a couple of critical comments here. Especially, E. M. Forster who says that, in his *Aspects of the Novel*, that a *Tale of Two Cities* equals history plus Dickens. So we have an historical plot, which Dickens draws from Carlyle's *French Revolution* written in the 1830's, and we do have the domestic plot which is Dickens' own imagination. And in Dickens his own words, "It is the best story I have ever written", and he says this on the

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