

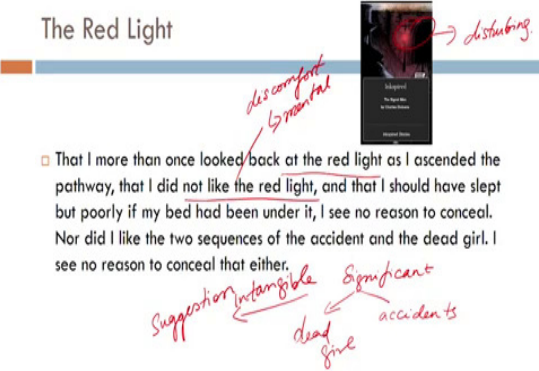
The Victorian Gothic Short Story
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Lecture - 04
Charles Dickens 'The Signal-Man'-III

Hello and welcome to this last lecture on Charles Dickens's *The Signal Man*. We will do a very close reading of the final sections of this gothic story and then, we will look at some of the major themes of the story which tell us more about the anxieties of the Victorian age.

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The Red Light





□ That I more than once looked back at the red light as I ascended the pathway, that I did not like the red light, and that I should have slept but poorly if my bed had been under it, I see no reason to conceal. Nor did I like the two sequences of the accident and the dead girl. I see no reason to conceal that either.

disturbing

discomfort
↳ mental

Suggestion interchangeable
↳
dead girl

Significant
↳
accidents



Now, if you remember, the narrator is going back home after having had a conversation with the signal man and as he is leaving, he is feeling very apprehensive. He is not comfortable and he is worried about the signal man, whom he has left back in the cabin.

As he is climbing the pathway back to the top of the cutting, he more than once looked back at the red light as he ascended the pathway. 'That I did not like the red light, and that I should have slept but poorly if my bed had been under it, I see no reason to conceal. Nor did I like the two sequences of the accident and the dead girl. I see no reason to conceal that either.'

So, very important set of statements in the entire story, I would argue, highly significant. There are two things that he is pointing out; one is that he says that he will not be comfortable, if his bed is there in that cabin of the signal man and second thing that he points out is that he is also not comfortable about the two accidents- The two accidents that happen on the line; one is the death of the girl and the other is that big accident which causes the death of several people.

So, there seems to be an implication that somehow these accidents are connected to the signal man and his setting. There is a suggestion, but it is not concretely mentioned; somehow there is an intangible connection between the setting and the signal man and these two accidents.

So, there seems to be a connection that is being made by the interpretation of the narrator and he says that he did not like the red light. The red light is causing some mental discomfort. It is an eerie light, it is a disturbing light. A constant looking at the light would cause some kind of psychological damage to the person who is looking at it.

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The status of the signal-man. *a safe person*


□ But what ran most in my thoughts was the consideration how ought I to act, having become the recipient of this disclosure? I had proved the man to be intelligent, vigilant, painstaking, and exact; but how long might he remain so, in his state of mind? Though in a subordinate position, still he held a most important trust, and would I (for instance) like to stake my own life on the chances of his continuing to execute it with precision?

duties of the job → mental distress

Questions ⇒ assumptions

Public Safety of the passengers

mental distress



‘But what ran most in my thoughts was the consideration how ought I to act having become the recipient of this disclosure. I had proved the man to be intelligent, vigilant, painstaking and exact. But how long might he remain so in his state of mind? Though, in a subordinate position still he held the most important trust and would I for instance like to stake my own life on the chances of his continuing to execute it with precision.’

So, you can see a lot of questions being asked. What is this narrator implying through his questions? The questions are leading us to make some assumptions about the state of mind of the signal man. So, he says that he has been at the receiving end of a disclosure about the appearance of specters and the narrator believes that these are probably caused by the diseased mind of the signal man. So, the implication is that the signalman is under some kind of mental distress.

So, he being the narrator he knows that this is the state of mind of this signal man. So, what should he do with this information? So, how should he act? That is what he asks. 'How ought I to act,' and he feels responsible because he has this information or disclosure about the signal man and the second point that he raises is this. This man seems to be intelligent, seems to be vigilant, seems to be painstaking in terms of the duties of his job.

But how long will he continue to be all this-- intelligent, vigilant and painstaking because he seems to be under mental duress, under mental pressure. Now, he also tells us that this man is in a subordinate position, he is just a mere signal man. But despite his position in the railway, he holds an important trust. He is responsible for the safety of the passengers.

So, even though he is holding a lower position in the railway network, he has a massive responsibility and the narrator asks himself if he would put his life in the hands of this particular man, who is in charge of the signals at this particular point in the network. So, can we trust him? So, this passage clearly states that the signal man may not be a safe person in this particular position at the signal near the tunnel.

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Planning Medical attention

□ Unable to overcome a feeling that there would be something treacherous in my communicating what he had told me to his superiors in the Company, without first being plain with himself and proposing a middle course to him, I ultimately resolved to offer to accompany him (otherwise keeping his secret for the present) to the wisest medical practitioner we could hear of in those parts, and to take his opinion.

*Solution = narrator
1) loyal
2) man of integrity
3) action → proposal
middle ground
problem-solving figure.*



Now, he has a solution- the narrator is coming up with a solution, what is that? ‘Unable to overcome a feeling that there would be something treacherous in my communicating what he had told me to his superiors in the company, without first being plain with himself in proposing a middle course to him, I ultimately resolved to offer to accompany him, otherwise keeping his secret for the present, to the wisest medical practitioner, we could hear of in those parts, and take his opinion’.

So, this is the solution that the narrator has come up with and through this passage, we can gather some attributes, characteristics, nature of this particular narrator. He seems to be very loyal and a man of integrity as well. Look at the way he feels about revealing the communication that he has received from the signal man. He says that he feels that it will not be right to go and tell the superiors about this particular man’s frame of mind.

So, he said he does not feel it to be right. Therefore, he thinks that the best way to handle the situation would be to go with him to a wise medical practitioner without going to the supervisors of this particular signal man. So, he seems to go for a middle ground. Here, the middle ground being a visit to a medical man and therefore, he thinks that it is better to keep this signal man’s secret for the present, no need to go telling everybody about the hauntings that the signal man apparently has undergone.

So, what we can also see is that this is a man of action, because he comes up with a proposal - a proposal to solve the problem. So, we see a problem solving figure here.

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Top of the deep cutting

Next evening was a lovely evening, and I walked out early to enjoy it.

The sun was not yet quite down when I traversed the field-path near the top of the deep cutting. I would extend my walk for an hour, I said to myself, half an hour on and half an hour back, and it would then be time to go to my signal-man's box.

pleasant weather & pleasant conditions
occupying himself - walking
Responsibility of the narrator
Curiosity

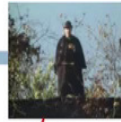


‘The next evening was a lovely evening, and I walked out early to enjoy it.’ This statement is very interesting because this is the first time in the story we get a reference to pleasant weather and pleasant conditions. For the first time, we are told about a man who was enjoying his day and that is the narrator not the signal man, we do not have a lot of descriptions about him enjoying himself. And the narrator says that ‘the sun was not yet quite down, when I traversed the field-path near the top of the deep cutting.’

So, the sun is about to set, it is not fully set yet and the narrator feels that he would extend his walk for an hour, I said to myself, half an hour on and half an hour back, and it would then be time to go to my signal man’s box. So, you can see also that this narrator is occupying himself through walking. So, he passes his time this way pleasantly before its time to go back to his signal man, somehow the signal man becomes the responsibility of the narrator and we can also see the curiosity that is there in the mind of the narrator. He is keen to get back to prolong their acquaintance and know more about the world that is associated with that point in the railway network.

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Another Appearance?



- Before pursuing my stroll, I stepped to the ^{edge} brink and mechanically looked down, from the point from which I had first seen him. I cannot describe (the thrill) that seized upon me, when, close at the mouth of the tunnel, I saw the appearance of a man, with his left sleeve across his eyes, passionately waving his right arm.

Remarkable!



Before pursuing my stroll, I stepped to the brink to the edge, and mechanically looked down-- without any conscious thought-- mechanically looked down, from the point at which I had first seen him. So, he goes back to the exact spot; that spot that he had occupied when he first saw the signal man down in the deep trench. 'I cannot describe the thrill that seized upon me, when, close at the mouth of the tunnel, I saw the appearance of a man, with his left sleeve across his eyes, passionately waving his right arm.'

This is remarkable, is not it? We had the narrator back at the same spot and now when he looks down, he is looking at a man who has his eyes covered with his left sleeve and his other arm his right arm waving passionately, right? And look at the thrill that he experiences. Is he the ghost? Is he seeing the ghost? Is the narrator seeing the ghost that the signal man talked about and that ghost is at the mouth of the tunnel at the exact same location, where the signal man thinks that all his specters were found?

So, what is this about?

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Nameless Horror?

- The nameless horror that oppressed me passed in a moment, for in a moment I saw that this appearance of a man was a man indeed, and that there was a little group of other men, standing at a short distance, to whom he seemed to be rehearsing the gesture he made. The Danger-light was not yet lighted. Against its shaft, a little low hut, entirely new to me, had been made of some wooden supports and tarpaulin. It looked no bigger than a bed.

*Not a Spectre
Just a human
being*



And then, it becomes clear who that particular figure is. 'The nameless horror that oppressed me passed in a moment. For in a moment I saw that this appearance of a man was a man indeed, and that there was a little group of other men, standing in a short distance, to whom he seemed to be rehearsing the gesture he made'.

So, this is not a spirit, absolutely not a spirit; not a spectre, just a man, a real human being and this person seems to be rehearsing the gesture, he is just acting this gesture out for the benefit of his onlookers. He is showing them something, the danger light was not yet lighted the red light was not on. Against its shaft, against its pole a low a little low hut, entirely new to me, had been made of some wooden supports and tarpaulin. It looked no bigger than a bed. There seems to be some kind of small structure near the danger light and it seems new to him, entirely new to this particular the narrator.

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Fear



- With an irresistible sense that something was wrong — with a flashing self-reproachful fear that fatal mischief had come of my leaving the man there, and causing no one to be sent to overlook or correct what he did — I descended the notched path with all the speed I could make.

Repeating the journey




With an irresistible sense that something was wrong - with a flashing self-reproachful fear that fatal mischief had come of my leaving the man there, and causing no one to be sent to overlook or correct what he did - I descended the notched path with all the speed I could make. So, the narrator at once realizes that something is terribly wrong with this scene. Something has badly gone wrong, there is some kind of indication of a tragedy and he feels responsible, he feels guilty.

The narrator feels responsible because he feels that he has not done something to intervene before this man has come to some kind of harm. He feels that he is responsible for leaving the signalman there without bringing any kind of help to him; help that would overlook or correct what he did, what the signal man did incorrectly. The narrator descends the notched path. He comes down the same path, down the cutting and with all the speed I could make.

He is kind of walking down that pathway very quickly and he is repeating the journey that he first made at the beginning of the story and at the middle of the story and this is the third time he is coming down the path and this time there is a clear sense of something having gone badly wrong with this setting near the tunnel.

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Face is...composed




- "What is the matter?" I asked the men.
- "Signal-man killed this morning, sir."
- "Not the man belonging to that box?"
- "Yes, sir."
- "Not the man I know?"
- "You will recognise him, sir, if you knew him," said the man who spoke for the others, solemnly uncovering his own head, and raising an end of the tarpaulin, "for his face is quite composed."

working class figure

Narrator belongs to the upper class gentleman

calm
Not affected the accident.



And he asks the men who are there; what is wrong? "What is the matter?" I asked the men. "Signal man killed this morning, sir." "Not the man belonging to that box?" "Yes, sir." "Not the man I know?" "You will recognize him, sir, if you knew him," said the man who spoke for the others, solemnly uncovering his own head, and raising an end of the tarpaulin, "for his face is quite composed."

So, we have the news here, this dreadful tragic news that the signal man has been killed this very morning. So, the tarpaulin that we saw referred to in the previous slide is hiding the dead body, it's covering the dead body of the signal man and one of the men there at the gathering opens that tarpaulin for the narrator to look at his face. So, those are the facts of the matter. Let us look at other things. The reference to sir here one, two, three times tells us that the narrator belongs to the upper class or the middle. He is a gentleman and the other person who is talking to him who is associated with the railway is a man who doesn't belong to the same class as this particular narrator. He is most probably a working class figure. What else is interesting? The other thing that is interesting is this, his face is quite composed, he seems to be at calm when dead. That is one interpretation, his face has not been affected by the accident.

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Tragedy

- "O, how did this happen, how did this happen?" I asked, turning from one to another as the hut closed in again.
- "He was cut down by an engine, sir. No man in England knew his work better. But somehow he was not clear of the outer rail. It was just at broad day. He had struck the light, and had the lamp in his hand. As the engine came out of the tunnel, his back was towards her, and she cut him down. That man drove her, and was showing how it happened. Show the gentleman, Tom."

↳ Narrator.



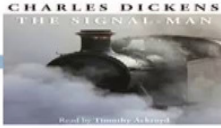
"O, how did this happen, how did this happen?" I asked, turning from one to another as the hut closed in again. "He was cut down by an engine, sir. No man in England knew his work better. But somehow he was not clear of the outer rail. It was just at broad day. He had struck the light, and had the lamp in his hand. As the engine came out of the tunnel, his back was towards her, and she cut him down. That man drove her, and was showing how it happened. Show the gentleman, Tom."

Now, this particular figure tells the narrator how exactly the accident happened and it happened in broad light, there was no darkness. In fact, this particular signal man had struck the light and he had the lamp in his hand and the engine has come out of the tunnel. It is moving down the railway track and for some reason or the other this signal man is inside the rail tracks, he is not clear of the outer rail.

So, he is in the pathway of this speeding train and his back is towards the train, not facing the train and the engine just runs him down. The train runs him down and the man points to the driver of the engine and asks him to show how exactly it happened and he once again, makes this reference to this particular word the gentleman and it indicates our narrator.

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Loud call



Social cue - working class

- The man, who wore a rough dark dress, stepped back to his former place at the mouth of the tunnel.
- "Coming round the curve in the tunnel, sir," he said, "I saw him at the end, like as if I saw him down a perspective-glass. There was no time to check speed, and I knew him to be very careful. As he didn't seem to take heed of the whistle, I shut it off when we were running down upon him, and called to him as loud as I could call."

graphic description



The man, the driver, wore a rough dark dress, stepped back to his former place at the mouth of the tunnel. So, what the driver of the train does is he goes back to his place at the mouth of the tunnel and he is wearing a rough dark dress and again a social cue that he belongs to the working classes.

He is not a gentleman like this narrator and "Coming round the curve in the tunnel, sir," he said, "I saw him at the end, like as if I saw him down a perspective-glass. There was no time to check speed, and I knew him to be very careful. As he didn't seem to take heed of the whistle, I shut it off when we were running down upon him, and called to him as loud as I could call."

So, we have a graphic description of what happened here. From the mouth of the man who was driving the train, he says that I could see the signal man as if I saw him down a telescope and there was no time to reduce the speed of the engine and he tells the narrator that the signal man is a very careful man and this point is repeatedly asserted even in the previous slide. Look at this comment, no man in England knew his work better. He is a fantastic-- the signal man is a fantastic worker, brilliant worker according to many accounts.

And it is very interesting that the signal man does not seem to listen to the whistle; the sound of the whistle that the driver makes and again. This point that he is not taking heed to the whistle is very interesting. Because if we go back to the beginning of the story,

when the narrator calls him, calls for him from the top of the cutting “Halloa, below there”, this particular man, the signal man does not look at the top of the cutting. He just looks down the rail.


And that tells us that something is really off about this particular man and now we see this kind of attitude once again, when the engine gives him the whistle to get away from that he is standing on the path of this speeding train and the driver says that ‘when I could see that he is not able to listen to the whistle, I shut it off’ and he says that ‘I called to him as loud as I could call’.

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For God's sake, clear the way!

- "What did you say?"
- "I said, 'Below there! Look out! Look out! For God's sake, clear the way!'" *Important set of words.*
- *I started. Narrator is shocked?*
- "Ah! it was a dreadful time, sir. I never left off calling to him. I put this arm before my eyes not to see, and I waved this arm to the last; but it was no use."

Remarkable coincidence *Repetition of the words*



And the narrator asks “What did you say?” and he said, ‘Below there. Look out. Look out. For God’s sake, clear the way.’ It is a very important set of words. ‘I started’. The narrator starts, the narrator is shocked; can you tell us why? I will come to that in a minute. “Ah, it was a dreadful time, sir. I never left off calling to him. I put this arm before my eyes not to see, and I waved this arm to the last; but it was no use.” It was no use. Look at the gesture, look at the utterance of this driver which is mimicking the words of the ghost according to the signal man, “Halloa, below there” that particular word “Look out, for God’s sake, clear the way” all these seemed to be the exact words that the ghost apparently, or the spectre apparently cried out to this signal man previously. So, the driver seems to repeat the same thing. It’s a very remarkable coincidence and even look at the appearance of the driver, he is kind of hiding his face

by putting his sleeve before his eyes. So that he is not going to see the signal man being killed.


So, the repetition is what perhaps killed the man, repetition of the words is responsible for the death of this particular signal man who perhaps froze because he seems to be hearing the same words that he had apparently heard from the spectre. So, lot of remarkable coincidence here.

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Coincidences

- Without prolonging the narrative to dwell on any one of its curious circumstances more than on any other, I may, in closing it, point out the coincidence that the warning of the Engine-Driver included, not only the words which the unfortunate Signal-man had repeated to me as haunting him, but also the words which I myself — not he — had attached, and that only in my own mind, to the gesticulation he had imitated.

Signal Man hallucinating!
Narrator Does Not see the Spectre
sees the actions of the Signal man who imitates the words & gestures of the Spectre



‘Without prolonging the narrative to dwell on any one of its curious circumstances more than on any other, I may, in closing, point out the coincidence that the warning of the engine driver included, not only the words which the unfortunate signal man had repeated to me as haunting him, but also the words which I myself - not he - had attached, and that only in my own mind, to the gesticulation he had imitated.’

It is very interesting, this repetition of the gesture and the words. The same words coming back again and again to haunt. The signal man thinks that this narrator is repeating the words of the spectre and the narrator himself has seen the repetition of the spectre only through the gestures of the signal man. So, we need to remember that the narrator does not see the spectre. That should be clear. The narrator does not see the spectre. The narrator only sees the actions of the signal man who seems to, who imitates or who seems to repeat the gestures and words of the spectre. So, this is very important, we need to understand that.

So, the spectre that we apparently have in the story is very very closely connected to the words and actions of the signal man. So, the question comes back time and again 'Is the signal man hallucinating?'


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Themes

- Anxiety about the technological age
- Train as a symbol of modernity
- Railways as creating unhealthy working conditions and psyche

Negative consequences of technology.

unsafe → through the accidents





Now, let us look at some of the themes that are embedded in this particular story. We can clearly see that there is a deep anxiety about the technological advancements, that have come through in this particular time period; the Victorian period sees a lot of rapid changes in technology and scientific advancements. And the train becomes a big symbol, a very shiny symbol of modernity and what is exciting in the story is this. The story shows us the railway creating unhealthy working conditions for its workers and the kind of impact it has on the psyche of the people who work on the railway.

So, we see the negative consequences of technology. So, even though it is a symbol of modernity, it is unhealthy, unsafe as well, as we have seen through the accidents; the real and the imaginary, through the accidents that happen.

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Themes

- Technology as cause of tragedy? *human*
- Electric bells, flags, telegraph, red lights – ineffective safety mechanisms? *loss of lives*
- Technology impervious to the attempt to control it? *all powerful?*
- Train: Energy, power – almost violent *immense* *accidents & death*



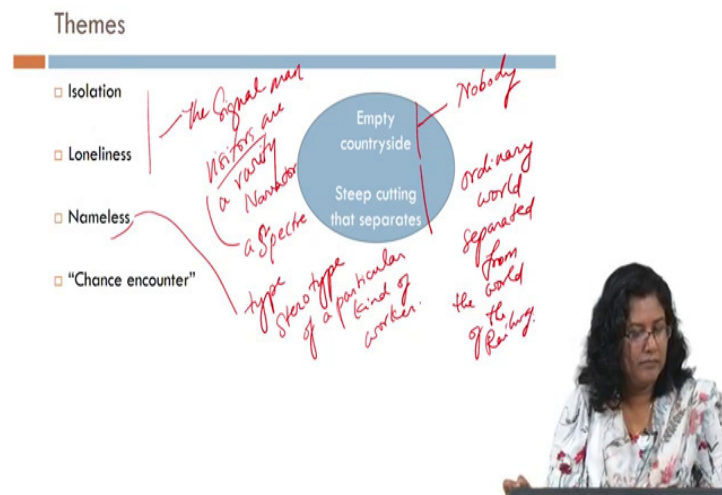
So, there seems to be an implication that technology is a cause of a human tragedy. Technology is creating loss of lives; loss of lives through accidents; loss of lives through psychological damage in the case of the signal man, who perhaps deliberately kills himself before a speeding a train.

Now, we also have other objects of technology such as electric bells, the telegraph, we have the red light and they seem to be put up there in the railway network in order to prevent accidents from happening. But they are very very ineffective. They are not effective in protecting the safety of the passengers and the people who are involved in the running of the railway.

So, the question again is ‘Is technology impervious to the attempt to control; is technology all powerful?’ Human beings have created things such as the train, but now they cannot control it, they cannot control it so that accidents do not happen. And train in this particular story embodies immense energy and power and is also associated with violence as I pointed out in relation to the accidents and the deaths that occur.

So, the train is an important character in the story which apparently is full of untamed energy.

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Further themes in the story are related to isolation and loneliness, the signal man is very very lonely. He is all by himself and visitors are a rarity. So, rare are the visitors that the signal man thinks that the narrator is a spectre. So, you can see the consequences of very bad unhygienic working conditions on the mind of the signal man and the signal man is nameless. There is no name given to him. There is a reference to a Tom, who was driving the train, even the train driver has a name given in the story, but this signal man is nameless.

So, is he representing all the nameless signal men. Is he representing a type? A stereotype of a particular kind of worker and we need to remember that even the chance encounter that happens between the signal man and the narrator is an accident. It is a harmless accident and that in itself tells us that there are hardly any such human encounters in such locales as the one we find the signal man in.

The country side is also empty, the narrator does not meet anyone during his walks. Nobody is around and the steep cutting, the deep trench separates the ordinary life, the ordinary world separated from the world of the railway.

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Themes

- Human presence—weak, scattered
- Tragedies bring people around?
- Erasure of people from the landscape



So, as I pointed out human presence is scattered; human domination of this particular landscape is weak as I pointed out earlier, it is the train that is all powerful, full of energy whereas, the human beings seem weak and fragile if you juxtapose them to this monstrous machine of the train. And what brings people together in the story is a tragedy. So, when accidents happen people gather together; otherwise, it is just the bleak landscape. The isolated landscape. And we are also able to interpret that this train and its network, transport network is kind of erasing people from this landscape and that seems to be a reality of the railway, of modernity itself.


Of course, we do have passengers on the train, but they are being speedily taken away from the landscape. They are not there, present, enjoying such landscape and being on it simply being on it is not happening anymore.

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Themes

- The spectre—mourning ✓
- The spectre—sympathetic ✓
- The Spectre—ineffectual

Figment of the signal man's imagination?
Not intervention bystander helpless just as the signal man




Now, let us look at the spectre and the spectre is an interesting character in the story even if it is a figment of the signal man's imagination. How does a signal man imagine the spectre? The signal man imagines the spectre to be mourning, it has a tragic face. The spectre has already seen a tragedy and is mourning for it, it is unable to look at it. So, the spectre is very sympathetic towards human tragedy and the spectre very importantly is also ineffectual.

It is not able to intervene; no intervention possible. It is just a helpless bystander. Just as the signal man, this is an important point. Both of them are powerless in this big machinery of modernity which is making people work mechanically and they have no big role to control the things around them.


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Themes

- Rational explanation versus faith in the supernatural — *Signal-Man*
- Sanity and insanity



Accidents and their significance: Causality — *tangible*



Now, in terms of the gothic mode, we have as I have discussed in this lecture, a rational explanation for the apparent appearance of the spectres. So, on the one hand, we have the figure of the narrator who thinks that the spectres are not real. In fact, he thinks that this man is being diseased. The signal man is going through some kind of nervous breakdown which is why he is seeing such spectres. So, we have rational explanations on one hand and the faith in the supernatural reasserted through the figure of the signal man.

So, we have two interpretations in terms of the gothic and we have sanity represented by the narrator. Sanity, common sense, rationality and we have insanity, faith in the spiritual world represented by the signal man and, but what we do have as tangible events are these accidents. So, who are responsible for such accidents; what is the causality; what are the factors which led to such accidents is a question that needs to be answered too. Is the signal man responsible? Is the society in some ways responsible because of their discovery of such things as the railway?

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Point of view

- Rational first person narrator
- Middle class? / *Upper class*
- Sympathetic and Curious
- Concerned for public safety
- Limited information

Tourist into the other world

Reality of the signal man

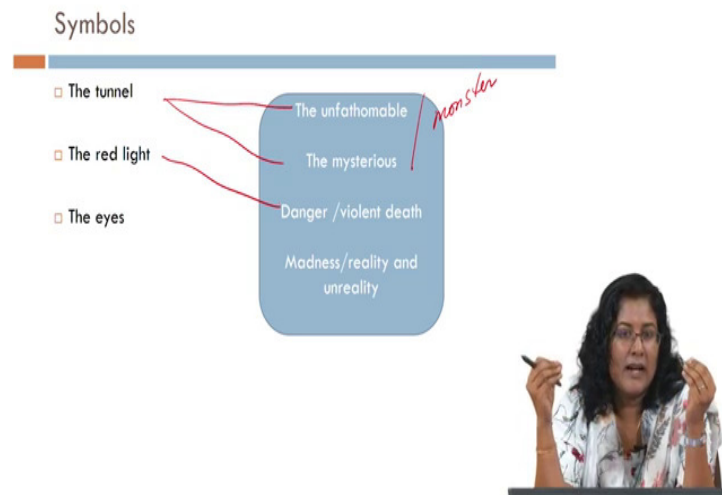
the underworld



So, in terms of point of view, we have the rational point of view of the first person narrator. We see the world through the narrator and the narrator depends on the words of the signal man to understand the workings of this particular point in the landscape. And this narrator is either upper middle class or upper class, he is a gentleman and he is very sympathetic and curious. He is worried about the public safety of the passengers, who are travelling in the train. But he has limited information about the reality of the signal man.

All he has is the information provided by the signal man about his previous life, about his current routine and about his view on the spectres. So, in some sense the first person narrator is like a tourist who has come down into this other world, the underworld of the railway and he is shocked to see the working conditions, the damp, the smelly place in which this signal man is forced to be physically present for long hours.

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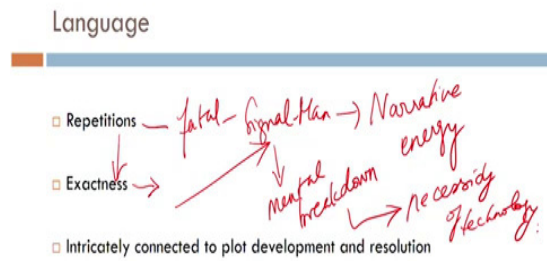


Further symbols in the story would include the tunnel. The tunnel if you remember the mouth of the tunnel is a very very interesting space. It is unfathomable. We do not know what exactly it holds. It seems to be mysterious, it seems to be like a monster in itself a monster that would come into fierce energy at particular moments in the day when the train passes by.

And we have the red light signifying danger and violent death as seen through the death of the signal man and other figures in the story like the accident and the death of the young woman. There is a focus on the eyes; eyes are prominent things in the story. If you look at the narrator, he pays attention to the eyes of the signal man, who is fixated on certain things in the story and through a kind of an observation of the eyes, we can think about related ideas of madness.

How is madness expressed through the eyes of the person and the eyes are also connected to ideas of reality and unreality. What exactly are you seeing? Are you seeing the reality or are you kind of recreating unreality through the figure of the spectres and that happens to be the case with the signal man.

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In terms of the language, there are repetitions which become fatal for the life of the signal man and the repetitions are also important because they give narrative energy to this particular story. It kind of complicates and resolves the plot and exact repetition is what is important for the purposes of the story.


And exactness is also associated with the signal man, who seems to be extremely conscientious, extremely hard working, extremely particular about doing his job perfectly. And is that exactness is the cause of his mental breakdown and is that quality of being very very particular brought upon him by the necessity of technology?

So, such repetitions and exactness and mechanical behavior are intricately connected to the plot development and resolution and are also underlying some of the important principles of modernity and technology and scientific advancement.

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The Title

- The Signal-Man
- Hybrid
- Technological Advancement—poor working conditions—lower social class



Handwritten notes:
- technology (pointing to 'The Signal-Man')
- human figure (pointing to 'The Signal-Man')
- term for job position (pointing to 'Hybrid')
- proper name → his job → Responsible for his death. (pointing to 'The Signal-Man')
- poor working conditions—lower social class (pointing to the third bullet point)



Let us look at the title. The title is very important because the title is The Signal Man and what kind of a figure is a signal man. Look at the name itself, it is a compound noun and signal is associated with technology and we have the word from this particular world associated with a human being. So, that we have a hybrid figure here. It is a hybrid term for a particular job position and it's very interesting that we do not have a proper name for the signal man instead what we have is a reference to his job and perhaps it is his job which is responsible for his death and possibly for other accidents.

So, technological advancements in this particular story is also connected with poor working conditions and it is the lowest social class, who are put in these terrible working conditions which threaten or endanger not only their lives, but also the lives of other people whose safety have been entrusted to these figures and that is something that Dickens has clearly brought forth in this particular gothic story.

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The following weeks

- Rudyard Kipling My Own True Ghost Story (1888) : Imperial Gothic
- Arthur Conan Doyle The Red-Headed League (1891): London as a gothic space
- H.G.Wells The Red Room (1896): the classic castle as gothic



Now, in the following weeks, I will talk about Kipling's My Own True Ghost Story where we have a probing of the imperial gothic. This story is set in India and there are gothic descriptions of certain settings and figures in this particular place which was ruled by the British empire. The Arthur Conan Doyle story is The Red-Headed League and we can see London as a gothic space in this particular story and we see how the villain is somehow associated with the figure or with the characteristics of the spectre and H.G. Wells's The Red Room has a classic castle as a gothic setting and once again, we have questions about the spirits. Are they really true or are the spirits a figment of the human imagination?

Thank you for watching. I will continue in the next session.