

Title: Victorian Research Seminar Week 4 Outline

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## Outline Week 4

Plan: We will anchor this week in an exploration of chapter 14 (book 1). We will consider it in terms of the effects of the style of publication (ie, serialization) on the structure of the narrative (chapter, and by extension the novel), use it to examine Dickens' preparatory process, and consider the use of narrated monologues (and other styles defined by Cohn). Panning out, we will consider how the concept of "our mutual friend" stylistically, textually, and structurally informs our study. Then we will examine some other through-lines in the novel, including gender, class and literacy. [open to other people's interests here!]

### At the chapter level:

#### Chapter 14: The Bird of Prey Brought Down

- Consider the structure of this chapter – does it seem like a distinct episode?
- Think about Our Mutual Friend as a product of serialization
- Discuss Butt & Tillotson
- Cohn and the narrated monologue
- Tristan, Emma or Katie's thoughts on narration
- quoted monologue, narrated monologue, psychonarration
- what are the effects of these styles in OMF?

Father, was that you calling me? Father! I thought I heard you call me twice before! Words never to be answered, those, upon the earth-side of the grave. The wind sweeps jeeringly over Father, whips him with the frayed ends of his dress and his jagged hair, tries to turn him where he lies stark on his back, and force his face towards the rising sun, that he may be shamed the more. A lull, and the wind is secret and prying with him; lifts and lets falls a rag; hides palpitating under another rag; runs nimbly through his hair and beard. Then, in a rush, it cruelly taunts him. Father, was that you calling me? Was it you, the voiceless and the dead? Was it you, thus buffeted as you lie here in a heap? Was it you, thus baptized unto Death, with these flying impurities now flung upon your face? Why

not speak, Father? Soaking into this filthy ground as you lie here, is your own shape. Did you never see such a shape soaked into your boat? Speak, Father. Speak to us, the winds, the only listeners left you!

- P. 176 (1:14) “‘Can we get anything hot to drink?’ We could, and we did.”
- Mortimer’s dream:

As Mortimer Lightwood sat before the blazing fire, conscious of drinking brandy and water then and there in his sleep, and yet at one and the same time drinking burnt sherry at the Six Jolly Fellowships, and lying under the boat on the river shore, and sitting in the boat that Riderhood rowed, and listening to the lecture recently concluded, and having to dine in the Temple with an unknown man who described himself as M.R.F. Eugene Gaffer Harmon, and said he lived at Hailstorm, – as he passed through these curious vicissitudes of fatigue and slumber, arranged upon the scale of a dozen hours to the second, he became aware of answering aloud a communication of pressing importance that had never been made to him, and then turned it into a cough on beholding Mr. Inspector. . .

- What is the effect/function of these different instances of the merger of internal and narrative voice?
- Cohn, 117: “no matter how ‘impersonal’ the tone of the text that surrounds them, narrated monologues themselves tend to commit the narrator to attitudes of sympathy or irony”
- should we consider these narrative and perspective shifts experimental? Nascent? How do we consider it differently in the context of the birth of formal realism rather than in a modernist period, say? Should we? Are the effects the same?

Consider Dickens’ note-taking: printout of Chapter 13 and 14

- What does Dickens mark as important? How does he structure a chapter in his notes? What is his attitude towards “plotting”?
- Ask Amy for thoughts on Reader
- How is our critical understanding of OMF augmented by our understanding of Dickens’ process?
  - Cf Elson et al, talk with Rebecca[a] [relationship between how the text is composed and how we experience it] , Katie

[print Stone notes for chap 14: pg 18 and 20]

- note-taking and research
- did he do research? (did trollope?)
- what areas would need research in OMF?

### Major themes:

- Consider Dickens' unique style. Run on, lack of punctuation, lists, catalogues[b]. Katie calls this "an excess of detail"
- What would Barthes say about this?
- Compare with Trollope's style
- Sensationalism vs realism
- Names!
- Look at the Veneering's dinner party in Chapter 2:

Reflects Veneering; forty, wavy-haired, dark, tending to corpulence, sly, mysterious, filmy – a kind of sufficiently well-looking veiled-prophet, not prophesying. Reflects Mrs. Veneering; fair, aquiline-nosed and fingered, not so much light hair as she might have, gorgeous in raiment and jewels, enthusiastic, propitiatory, conscious that a corner of her husband's veil is over herself. Reflects Podsnap; prosperously feeding, two little light-colored wiry wings, one on either side of his else bald head, looking as like his hair-brushes as his hair, dissolving view of red beads on his forehead, large allowance of crumpled shirt-collar up behind..." (con't).

- Aly's thoughts on Mortimer's narration of the Harmon story
- Who is our mutual friend?
- (1:19) pg number: Boffin calls Rokesmith the mutual friend
- Might there be other mutual friends?
- Lack of central character as a structuring device
- Fragmented structure of the book
  - Related to urban setting[c]?
    - \* River as central location [Ana's close reading]
  - Elson[d], Dames, McKeown
    - \* Emma & Katie's thoughts
    - \* Consider Elson with Ramsay
- Literacy
- Wegg reading to Boffin
- The effect of literacy on Charley
- Metafictional?
- elements of the macabre/gothic
- compared to the everyday of Barchester. What does it mean that this grimy and grotesque is equally an everyday?[e]
  - Link to depth of character description

- Style of whodunit
- Agency – how is it different from Trollope
- Gender
- What different styles of femininity are depicted?
- Women as selfless/caring or “witchy”
  - Jenny[f] Wren [child as mother], Georgiana Podsnap vs Lizzie, Miss Abbey vs Bella Wilfer
- Class
- Is there truly a wide range of classes depicted?
- Emphasis on New Money
  - Veneering, Podsnap, Boffin as new money
    - \* Anomaly of the Lammles
  - Harmon as true rich man
    - \* But fortune comes from garbage

[a] Maybe we can talk about the relationship between how the text is composed and how we experience it (with text analysis like in the Elson operating in an in-between space ambiguously related to both processes)?

[b] Worth returning to the reality effect?

[c] Also related to setting (but not exactly urban): the river as a central location

[d] Could it be good to talk about the Ramsay in dialogue with the Elson?

[e] How does this relate also to depth of description of characters? (Doesn't Trollope say that Dickens's characters aren't as “realistic” as his? I might be making that up.)

[f] Why does she talk about her father as her child?