

A critical analysis of dracula



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Previous to the chapter being analysed, Dracula has warned his guest never to fall asleep anywhere in the castle other than his own room. Jonathan Harker, the protagonist, filled with anxiety and worry about the mysterious count, hangs his crucifix above his bed and sets out to explore the castle. Then the passage begins as Harker observes Dracula crawling down the wall of the castle, terrified of the 'lizard' like creature, and fearing there will be no escape. Firstly, at the outset of the passage Harker states that 'my eye was caught by something', the oddly constructed sentence, suggesting Harker's passivity and that he is the victim, especially as 'something' implies he is unsure of what the creature is, heightening the fear and tension.

This theme of passivity runs central in the passage and in the novel as a whole, perhaps having an underlying contextual message, reflecting the anxieties of the Victorian age as it was the time of the 'new woman' and furthermore a time where society was becoming increasingly aware of homosexuality. This passivity however could have multi-accentuality, also trying to eliminate the stereotypical gender role where the woman is passive. This view is reinforced later in the chapter when Harker is seduced by three dominant female vampires. The passage progresses in a typical Gothic fashion, describing the sublime setting 'the window at which I stood was tall and deep' whilst keeping Harker's vulnerability and his fear of the creature prominent, 'I drew back behind the stonework.' As the passage states that Harker did not 'see the face' this emphasises the fear of the unknown and also symbolises Dracula's regression from human to animalistic.

The fact that Harker recognises the count ' by the neck' immediately conjures imagery of biting and blood, reinforcing the reader's inference that he is a vampire. Vampirism stands as a metaphor for promiscuous sexuality, as shown later in the chapter. Both acts involve desire, penetration, the flow and exchange of bodily fluids and this repressed sexuality in the metaphor of a vampire could suggest the Victorian mans fear of women becoming too sexual. Furthermore, he mentions asides from the neck he also ' could not mistake the hands which I had had so many opportunities of studying. This implies a significant gothic theme that knowledge is power.

However this is contradicted as in the current situation, he is losing to the Count who represents an alternative reality to Harker's reason and economics based world. Dracula suggests that reality can only be accessed by a consciousness that is not restricted to the rational faculty and this can be portrayed as power as altered states of consciousness are common in the novel, and it is these states that provide a window through which it is possible to access the alternative reality of vampires and thus knowledge. Harker goes on to repeatedly claim he is ' amused' at the sight of Dracula's ' head coming out of the window', yet as he then describes himself as a ' prisoner' it can be inferred that he is just slightly deluded and longing for something to keep him occupied. There is then a stark antithesis in his emotions to ' repulsion and terror' as he sees ' the whole man slowly emerge from the window and begin to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss. The fact that Dracula was ' face down' is symbolic and relates to Harker trying to define the act as ' some weird effect of shadow' and it

insinuates that the Count has more than one personality, almost an alter-ego to the hospitable, generous man that waited on Harker when he first arrived.

It could further represent that Dracula has no fixed identity and this is reiterated by personifying him as a bat or a bird, ' his cloak spreading out around him like great wings. Harker's reaction to this supernatural sight is one of disbelief, and the short, staccato punctuation braking up his sentences emphasises this shock, ' I thought it was some trick of the moonlight, some weird effect of shadow; but I kept looking, and it could be no delusion. ' Moreover, the fact that the Count is climbing down the wall, could symbolise the progressive dissolution of boundaries which the Victorian society would depend, it is showing that times were changing from rationality to an age of emotion, creativity and imagination. It also alludes to the theme of modernity and science, relating to the context in which the novel was written as Dracula's act of almost surpassing the rules of science by crawling down the wall is metaphoric for the Victorian fears of the consequences of the advancement of modernity.

Harker has already voiced this concern earlier in the novel when he said, ' unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere i?? modernity' cannot kill. Dracula embodies the fear and threat that Victorians were so concerned about, progress. The end of the nineteenth century brought drastic developments that forced English society to question the systems of belief that had governed it for centuries. Darwin's theory of evolution, for instance, called the validity of long-held sacred religious doctrines into question. Likewise, the Industrial Revolution brought profound economic and social change to the previously agrarian England.

Consequently, Harker is a microcosm for the majority of the people, scared of change, and Dracula is change, which is why he is depicted as such a fearful character. The onomatopoeia of the word ‘grasp’ adds a sense of realism to the passage, despite the fictional situation, mounting the fear and allowing the reader to empathise with Harker as one can vividly imagine the Count. This picture of the Count is then reinforced with the simile ‘as a lizard moves along a wall’, the reptile imagery alluding to the serpent from the story in the Garden of Eden. This suggests Dracula’s slyness and once again his multi-personality as Satan also changed his form to a snake in order to trick and tempt Adam and Eve to do the sinful and forbidden. This could also therefore be interpreted as foreboding, the reader anticipating Dracula to trick Harker and lure him into a false sense of security and then bring him to his demise. The final paragraph is crammed with questions, ‘What manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of man?’ emphasising Harker’s panic and terror.

The repetition of ‘fear’ reiterates his panic, and the three single words ‘- in awful fear -’ seem trapped in between the dashes underlining Harker’s worries and how he feels ‘this horrible place overpowering (him)’ and that ‘there is no escape’. The fact that the passage ends with the statement ‘I am encompassed about with terrors that I dare not think of...

’ is significant as the ellipsis is ominous, a prolepsis implying that he may soon encounter the unimaginable terrors he is so terrified of. In conclusion, the passage is key to the novel as highlights the contextual concerns and themes such as repressed sexuality and the consequences of advancement. It could even be inferred as a demonstration of the Oedipus complex,

especially as later in the passage Harker feels strong desire toward the Count who embodies three female vampires trying to seduce him. Yet most importantly, the passage is paramount as it shows Jonathan Harker's initial terror and fear of Dracula, a father figure of potency.