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Article Review:
Riquelme's "Doubling and Repetition/Realism and Closure in *Dracula*"

Riquelme's article formally states that *Dracula* is an "antirealistic work filled with doubling and repetition" (599). The language use of these two methods distorts the readers' perception of "sanity" which alters the perception of the real world which causes in the end to question the binary oppositions that comprise the novel: life and death, female and male, superhuman/animal and human, child and adult, savage and civilized, salvation and damnation. These social hierarchical oppositions in play with doubling and repetition contradicts the norm of the privileged binaries by suggesting that the "contrasting groups...resemble each other" (560). Riquelme's concepts of doubling and repetition align with the theory of Structuralism by depicting opposites. Although binary opposites generally have one that's privileged they both work in order to explain human consciousness which comprises of wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation (Tyson 200). As far as plot and characters in *Dracula* are concerned the concept that if a human being cannot fulfill those three ideas then it will be destroyed.

However the novel *Dracula* is very much connected to Deconstruction in which doubling and repetition illustrates that language (word usage) is "wholly ideological. It consists entirely of the numerous conflicting, dynamic ideologies: beliefs and values operating at any given point in time in any given culture" (Tyson 239). Due to this fact the language of *Dracula* is untrustworthy. Nevertheless this deceit actually allows for Deconstruction to portray itself and express how the novel wants its readers to consider the ways they think their world is safe and

sane by suggesting that “the monster is not outside but within” (560) and through that perspective creates self-understanding.

Riquelme deems Stoker’s use of the concepts of doubling and repetition obscures realistic fiction writing, but are brilliant ways of testing human questioning of ourselves and our sanity. The first act of doubling Riquelme discusses is Dracula masquerading as Harker by wearing his clothing as he scales the castle walls in an obvious nonhuman capability. Due to Harker eventually imitating Dracula (in an attempt to escape) the human physical capability is tested, but as well, the mental. In a way Dracula himself initiates the belief that human capabilities without a doubt can be pushed to superhuman like features only when the levels of sanity are tested. The superhuman “monster” only appears when the state of one’s mental equilibrium is disturbed.

Furthermore in matters of Deconstructive language Riquelme states, “Because details sometimes involve multiple meanings of words or implications of references, the readers experience instances of doubling and transformation not as the characters do, but as of style and implication” (563). An example is the foreshadowing use of Harker’s predicament by the use of the repeated word *trap* in chapters two and three. At first it was meant as the word for the vehicle Harker was in, then, it was referred to mean luggage, and by chapter three it meant Harker’s imprisonment in Dracula’s castle. As well *Dracula* portrays a quick foreshadowing of the future through use of the theory of Reader-Response criticism. However this instance speaks more to the English readers of Stoker’s time when he mentions St. George’s Day and the fear that the villagers had of the night before it. Using Reader-Response the knowledgeable reader

can immediately presume that some monster will eventually need destroying as such St. George is the “patron saint of England, famous for being the slayer of a monster” (564).

Another example of reader-response Riquelme points out is the name of a very important figure, albeit savior in *Dracula*, Van Helsing. The knowledgeable reader can interpret the novel as meaning the English shall conquer the foreigners, west beats east. Riquelme points out that Helsing is actually an anagram for *English* and since he is the intelligent, wisdom filled, replacement father figure of the story his character can be symbolic to interpret as old western domination and that England (the west) cannot be destroyed. However Dracula, the vicious, Eastern foreigner is capable of upsetting the order of the west by taking out the supposed inferior link, their women.

The desecration of Lucy’s body addresses a hidden layer to this novel. From a Deconstructionist view the concept of what and how women are to be presented in public is immensely portrayed through Lucy. After she becomes a vampire the ravenous, seductive, lustful side of her becomes who she is, a sinful creature who only appears at night. Her being upsets the Victorian societal order despite the growing wave of the Age of the New Woman. The novel appears to accept the New Woman as such the character Mina portrays her instead of her counterpart Lucy who waits dutifully like a lovesick teenager for her rightful suitor. However it’s known the New Woman is her own being, she accepts her sexuality and does not hide it, nor does she seek to be married. Mina’s character dutifully spoke out how she couldn’t wait to be married to Harker and be of helpful use to him, transcribing his work. Despite being attacked by Dracula, Mina lived because she still portrayed the remnants of the old Victorian society, a woman needing a man. Lucy, Mina’s opposite, no longer needed a man despite still

desiring her husband, whom she more than likely would have killed due to her status as a newly created vampire, is viciously murdered because she was no longer the frail, fragile, innocent, girl, but a woman coming into herself and so she had to be destroyed.

In this sense Dracula, a much more powerful Eastern man could give a woman in the Victorian society freedom in the world of the Undead albeit he still had control over her. Dracula being a testament to masculinity and power (although foreign) is a mere double, a mirror to the Englishmen. This could allude to patriarchal society in England wanting equality or open sexuality for woman, but still wanting the superiority over them which is why Dracula's death was nothing compared to Lucy's. By destroying Lucy and Dracula, the men destroy the thought of equality. The readers at this point have to form their own opinion on whether Lucy's soul was saved from damnation through her violent murder, if the men are still considered sane, and the parallels to their own society.

Also in this final scene of chapter twelve Riquelme points out the repeated, reversed lines of Dr. Seward, "We thought her dying whilst she slept...And sleeping when she died." These two lines address the Structuralism binaries slept (living sleep) and died (death sleep) and the dual status of being an undead vampire, neither living nor dead. Riquelme also notes "the rhetorical figure of repetition in reversed order, *chiasmus*, comes from a Greek root meaning *cross*" (565), the religious artifact commonly the crucifix that repels Dracula which in reference although a slippery-slope could mean that any symbolism associated with him (sexuality, lust, murder, etc.) is unacceptable by God, therefore the equality of women is as well, unacceptable.

In continuance Mina as Riquelme notes becomes her own version of a mythological figure, Echo, who "creates a distinctive voice for herself by repeating...the language of others"

(570), transcribing the journals of Harker, her husband and Dr. Seward. Although Mina's double, Lucy, has been dispatched Mina becomes the forefront of the battle with Dracula. Dr. Seward described the act of Dracula forcing the struggling Mina to drink his blood from his breast as "a kitten's nose being forced into a saucer of milk" similar, though perverse to a mother getting her infant child to drink from her breast. This moment showcases the Psychoanalytic theory of the Lacanian concept of *object petit a*, the displaced unconscious desire for the idealized union of mother and infant (Tyson 32). In this scene Dracula attempts a reverse repetition he had achieved with Lucy.

Mina as an adult stood in the symbolic order, the world of reason and anything outside it is considered dangerous and must be avoided at all cost or destroyed. Dracula attempts and briefly succeeds at returning Mina to the imaginary order by biting and infecting her with his blood in which all her perception of control is tested, sending her back to the mirror stage where she as a child knows that she is her own person, but yet is directly connected to Dracula, the mother until she can break free. As long as Dracula was alive the warped fantasy of *object petit a* would have continued until Mina became an infant whose perception of the world and how to be about it is of how Dracula went about the world, a bloodsucking vampire with an indifference to the living whose conscious and unconscious is controlled by Dracula and the thirst for blood. However because she was able to come to her own defense and use the act of doubling with her attacker, Dracula by peering into his mind she and her "knights" were able to set her free. Riquelme believed Stoker didn't convey a realistic fiction story, but in a sense he did, by portraying Dracula as a parasite that is capable of compromising and destroying the very

institution of every binary that comprises the individual, societal, and natural structures of existence and he was dealt like one.

Riquelme's article was easy to follow instead of being heavily complicated in the scientific and psychological aspects of literature. It fulfilled its purpose of demonstrating the use of doubling and repetition, but it should have solely focused on those two and gave examples throughout the novel. However it gave great examples of multiple theories: structuralism, deconstruction, reader-response, and psychoanalytic. It would have been a very well-rounded article if Riquelme went in depth and analyzed each theory and not solely on deconstruction and if Riquelme wanted to he could have deconstructed Dracula himself, instead of focusing on all the other main characters, but the novel was to give insight on how Dracula affected the lives of those around him, therefore in that case the article succeeded.

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