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The Female Vampire and Gothic Other in
Dracula, Hellsing, and Chibi Vampire

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Whether it is part of a mainstream book series or an obscure television show, the Gothic genre has carved a niche for itself in representation of the Other. But what is Other? In the loosest terms, it is the alternative person or persons viewed through the lens of “us versus them”, divided by a perception of socio-cultural differences. In the Gothic genre, where eeriness heightens the story and threatens to unsettle the reader, Otherness is most commonly found in the figure of the vampire.

The savagery and sexuality of the vampire is heightened by the figure’s overlap with the *unheimlich*. Sigmund Freud attempted to parse the meaning of this German word, now often translated as “the uncanny”. His struggle to pin down one exact meaning is the beginning of his analysis, gathering the properties and feelings which “arouse in us the feeling of uncanniness and then infer[ring] the unknown nature” from their commonalities (Freud 219). Life-like dolls and automatons, doppelgangers or doubles, and eerie homes are only a few of the instances examined. Freud labels the uncanny as a “class of the terrifying” where the familiar becomes frightening. In the case of the vampire, its frightening familiarity lies in the fact of its inhumanity – vampires resemble mankind, and yet are distinctly *not* man.

It is notable that, to understand what a vampire is, one must look at what it is not. Freud worked a similar method in his exploration of the *unheimlich* – by examining the term root term *heimlich*, he sought to determine that which made it ‘un’. *Heimlich* primarily means homely, as in “belonging to the house” (220) and evoking a sense of security. Yet a secondary use defines it as something concealed, a meaning that is far more in line with what ought to be its opposite.

“What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*” Freud repeats (222), noting with interest a statement by Schelling: “according to him, everything is uncanny that ought to have remained hidden and secret, and yet comes to light.”

Without a rudimentary understanding of the uncanny, comprehension of the Gothic genre is lost. Supernatural occurrences such as doppelgangers, ghosts, and the undead pepper Gothic constructions to encourage fear, while a location, such as an isolated castle, lends itself towards establishing an atmosphere that separates the characters from reality. In *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, Eve K. Sedgwick states that the self is “massively blocked off from something to which it ought normally to have access” such as knowledge, a lifestyle, or a lover (12). Thus it is easy to see where the *unheimlich* melds with Gothic fiction: that which is concealed will eventually come to light in the Gothic. Looking specifically to vampires, they are blocked off from their human self, and in the further limiting status of female vampires, the human self is gendered. Rather, for a female vampire, her separation from humanity is also a separation from traditional femininity, resulting in a reliance on her vampirism, a masculine-oriented state.

Certainly the most famous of vampire texts is the 1897 novel, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Stoker elegantly employed many of the Gothic conventions in his text, weaving an epistolary narrative rich and evocative of what Sigmund Freud specified as the *unheimlich*. Jonathan Harker, an English solicitor on the cusp of marriage, is called away to Transylvania to finalize a purchase of London property for the mysterious Count Dracula. In his journal, Harker records his own “us versus them” observations: he questions the religious superstitions of the locals, yet gladly entertains the eccentricities of his host because the count has a taste for western culture. However, Dracula’s interest in the west is predatory, not cultural: leaving Harker captive in his castle with three sultry vampiresses, the count hastens to London to feed and create a new

stronghold. Among his victims is Lucy Westenra, the best friend of Harker's fiancée Mina. The death of "sweet Lucy" prompts collaboration against Dracula's dark plot. The wizened Abraham Van Helsing leads the team of light: Arthur Holmwood, Dr. Seward, and Quincy Morris, Lucy's fiancée and former suitors respectively, flanked by the Harkers – the escaped Jonathan and newlywed Mina, Dracula's next target. Despite successfully quelling the threat within the narrative, Stoker's text kick-started a renewed fascination with the vampire figure.

From its upswing of popularity in the *fin de siècle*, this fascination continues to the present day. From television to art, there is always at least one vampire story to tell, and sometimes, unfortunately, the *same* vampire story: a dark beast of a man, content in shadow, seeking to convert the innocent – particularly the women – to his undead legion. Along the way, he exposes virtuous women to sensuous delights, takes lives to insure his own, and is ultimately thwarted in a final confrontation with "the good guys" who have religious faith at their back. Over time, more tropes develop as up-and-coming writers with a mind for the Gothic seek to add some literary spice: a supernaturally canine antagonist, an emotionally stirring backstory that creates sympathy for his turn to darkness, or a kindly human lover who tempts him back towards the light. Rarely is focus given to a female vampire, unless she seduces a main character, threatens an innocent, or gets her comeuppance at the end of a stake.

But in spite of contrived plot devices and hackneyed clichés, progress is being made. In the specific medium of *manga*, Japanese graphic novels, authors still find inventive ways to lure readers into consuming their tales about enigmatic wanderers of the night. Kouta Hirano's *Hellsing* and Yuna Kagesaki's *Chibi Vampire*¹ are notable for their female vampire protagonists. *Hellsing*'s Seras Victoria is a freshly-made vampire in what is best described as an alternate

¹ Originally published in Japan under the name *Karin*, but *Chibi Vampire* for American release. All quotes come from English translations, so *Chibi Vampire* will be used throughout. Chibi means small or short, with a connotation of cuteness.

universe of contemporary London. Over a century ago, the British monarchy and the church agreed to fund a secret organization dedicated to the eradication of supernatural threats.

Vampires and ghouls, mindless minions of the vampires, are seen as physical and spiritual risks to humanity. The Hellsing organization operates above the law to eliminate these threats, and is not opposed to using other vampires to do it. Seras is one such vampire, drafted shortly after her siring or vampiric conversion. But she soon sets herself apart with a refusal to drink blood.

Similarly, Karin Maaka also differs from her vampiric kin, but it is not by choice. *Chibi Vampire* treats vampires as another species: they marry, reproduce, and give birth just like humans. Young vampires even pass as humans; only once they reach adulthood do vampires become nocturnal and feed on blood. Despite being an adult among her species, Karin is not normal. She sleeps at night, enjoys walks in the sun, and has no desire to feed on blood. Rather, once a month she produces an excess of blood that she must give away or risk her own health. *Hellsing* and *Chibi Vampire* are not only the latest in a long line of texts which owe their existence to *Dracula*, but also a turn towards new representation of the female vampire. This turn involves the incorporation of femininity, signified by humanity, rather than the sole reliance on masculine power, denoted by vampire status and first glimpsed in *Dracula*.

In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which popularized the vampire figure and established much of its surrounding lore, Otherness is equated with deviance from sexual norms, and its eeriness is heightened by gothic conventions. The titular character, for instance, targets both men and women without bias, and shares his castle with three female vampires who are commonly referred to as his brides. These brides exhibit their own deviance from the norm when they happen upon a sleeping Jonathan Harker. The two "dark" brides of *Dracula* bear great physical resemblance to their master and in this scene are the most dynamic characters. With their "high,

aquiline noses [and] dark piercing eyes” (Stoker 38), they resemble predatory birds as they prepare to seduce and feast upon Jonathan Harker. Yet they do not strike first. Instead, they turn to their other bride-sister:

[She] was fair, as fair as can be, with great wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. . .The fair girl shook her head coquettishly, and the other two urged her on.

One said: -

‘Go on! You are the first, and we shall follow; yours is the right to begin.’ The

other added: -

‘He is young and strong; there are kisses for us all.’ (38)

Although the text is ambiguous as to what being ‘the first’ means, the reader can glean enough from the context of the situation to realize that this is an important ritual. The fair one appears shy with an underlying flirtatiousness in her gesture. She looks the most virginal, yet clearly this is some ceremonious seduction, as if that which is most pure is best suited to lead to corruption. She embodies a lustful longing for Harker, but she says nothing. She communicates solely through the language of her body – arched neck, lapping tongue – as she moves closer to her conquest.

The conquest, clearly, is Jonathan Harker. He can provide “kisses for [them] all” due to his vitality and stamina as a young man. As per the Victorian 19th century values, men like Harker are expected to engage in sex; “it is something they do and something they acquire”, while women are “construed as *being* sex” (Blank 101-2). However, Jonathan takes on the codified female role, where he is equated to ‘kisses’. These possess an obvious and distinct sexual double-meaning that includes not only implied seduction and conquest, but the very intimate exchange of a vampire bite.

It is such an exchange that simultaneously terrifies and excites Harker as the fair one reaches his neck. He dreads and yet longs for her kiss; he has never met her before, yet he knows her “in connection with some dreamy fear” (Stoker 38). Elaine Showalter suggests that the uncanny feeling of familiarity to the woman stems from her clear resemblance to Mina’s best friend Lucy (180), thus peppering the scene with a much more explicit undertone of lust *and* betrayal. The fair one manipulates Harker through her slow seduction, at first playing shy and reluctant, but as she approaches her goal, she becomes more sexual and even “lick[s] her lips like an animal” (Stoker 39). With Jonathan in the role of ‘being sex’, the fair one moves further from that expectation and into the aggressive male role of ‘acquiring’ sex. Stoker’s text suggests this is an unnatural transgression, as all the characters that have been touched by vampiredom begin to operate outside of sexual gender norms. When interrupted by Dracula, the fair one is outraged; Harker notes her “blue eyes transformed with fury, the white teeth champing with rage, and the fair cheeks blazing with passion” (39). Her true vampiric nature is at last at the forefront, her visage reflecting the lunatic inside. Due to the observations that Abraham Van Helsing makes about Dracula, it stands to reason that Stoker himself was familiar with the concept of physiognomy, an assessment of a person’s character based upon their physical appearance. The fair one’s lust to feed upon Harker and dominate him manifests in her body. Such savage behavior mirrors that observed by criminologists Lombroso and Ferrero in *The Female Offender*, particularly nymphomania:

[It] transforms the most timid girl into a shameless bacchante. She tries to attract every man she sees, displaying sometimes violence, and sometimes the most refined coquetry. She often suffers from intense thirst, a dry mouth, a fetid breath, and a tendency to bite everybody she meets. (296)

Lombroso and Ferrero observed such behavior in criminal women, and the obvious parallels in Stoker's fair one suggest that overt sexuality is a crime, at least in a social sense. Harker observes her behavior in almost clinical detail: her lapping, animalistic tongue as she yearns to taste him, the "bitter offensiveness" (Stoker 39) that pervades her hot breath on his neck, the feel of her protruding teeth as she prepares to bite him.

The fair one also operates as a foreshadowing double for Lucy, another innocent face turned erotic. Frequently praised for her beauty and sweet nature, she charms all whom she meets, particularly those of the male sex. She bemoans the trouble this causes her, when she finds herself the object of affection for three men: "I feel so miserable, though I am so happy [to be engaged] . . . Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it" (58-60). Though she exalts the special bond between husband and wife, Lucy treats marriage like an achievement, ignoring the accompanied social expectations. As a Victorian wife, her duties would lie in the private, domestic sphere, tending to the house and looking after children. But what Lucy revels in is the public sphere, the attention she garners through flirtation feeds into her own self-love. Rather than "being sex", she toes the line of gender roles by acquiring marriage proposals. She clearly desires the active power associated with masculinity, so she rebels, minutely at first, against the social constraints of her world.

Her first clear rebellion is the frankness of her thoughts in her letters with Mina. She confesses her heresies, revealing an internal struggle with otherness as a result of transitioning social values. While she plays the part of passive female, Lucy really reflects the concept of the New Woman who "rebell[ed] totally against conventional roles, challenging the boundaries between male and female" through "demands for sexual and social autonomy" (Byron 17). Lucy

claims that if she were a man, she knows what to do to make a girl love her (Stoker 59), but then quickly recants. Not only does she admit to the transgression of putting herself in a masculine role, but that her knowledge is derived from her dalliances with Dr. Seward, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincy Morris. Her recanted confession – “No I don’t, for there was Mr. Morris telling us his stories, and Arthur never told any, and yet-” is meant to qualify her thoughts, but instead reiterates her attractions to three very different men. By wishing she could marry all three, Lucy echoes the New Woman’s desire for options, for choice.

Such choice is twisted when Lucy, in fits of somnambulism, begins nightly visits with Dracula. The corrupt courting is glimpsed by Mina while searching for her friend, ultimately finding her in their favorite spot in the churchyard:

I could see Lucy half reclining with her head lying over the back of the seat...She was still asleep. Her lips were parted, and she was breathing – not softly as usual with her, but in long, heavy gasps...She pulled the collar of her nightdress close around her neck [and] there came a little shudder through her. (93-4)

The dubious circumstances between Lucy and Dracula allow for Lucy’s subconscious desire to be like a man to come to fruition. Vampirism masculinizes Lucy and immediately sexualizes her: her heavy breaths suggest a heightened state of arousal, and touching the freshly penetrated area yields orgasmic pleasure for her. Slowly, between moments of waking, Lucy becomes more like the fair bride back in Dracula’s castle. Upon her death-bed, she shifts into her vampire self, greeting Arthur and commanding in a “soft voluptuous voice” for her lover to kiss her (161). Earlier, in her truly awake state, the exact same moment occurred, only Arthur reached for a kiss, she did not ask. When Lucy dies, the vampire self that only manifested during her sleepwalking takes over. Due to her vamping while in a somnambulist trance, the undead Lucy maintains a

sweet and beautiful face while asleep in her coffin (201). Other vampires, Dr. Van Helsing alleges, would have returned to some monstrous visage, bringing her closer in nature to the brides of Dracula. And much like how the bloodlust of the three brides is only sated by feeding upon an infant, Lucy feeds off multiple children after she rises. Lucy, like the fair one, is transformed by Dracula into a perversion of her former self. By assuming masculine power and aggression through Dracula, Lucy denies her femininity, becoming a figure utterly anti-maternal.

It is the flagrant inversion of maternity that disgusts the men of Stoker's text. Jonathan Harker hastens to correct a reference to the brides of Dracula as women (54) and the lingering love Dr. Seward holds for Lucy quickly "passe[s] into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, [he] could have done it with savage delight" (211). Horrified at the nightmarish vision of their once-sweet girl, the men resolve to kill "the Thing" (216) and quell the threat of the devouring New Woman. In a gruesome and erotically-charged staking, Lucy meets her end at forceful penetration by her "husband" Arthur:

The [Thing's] body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions. . . . But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake. His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it; the sight of it gave us courage so that our voices seemed to ring through the little vault. (216)

The false Lucy's slaying resembles the onset of orgasm, while Arthur, evoking the masculine strength of the Norse god, hammers her into submission. Moved by this display, the other men raise their voices in a twisted harmony with the noise. As one, they reassert male dominance and forcibly return Lucy to traditional femininity.

Lucy was “the first” that Dracula claimed in London, followed by the “dark” Mina Murray. Lucy maintained passive femininity while personally rebelling against it, Mina, in contrast outwardly resembles the New Woman, yet she propounds the Victorian values. The independent Mina works as an assistant schoolmistress, knows typewriters and shorthand, and studies fervently. Yet despite her “man’s brain”, Mina has a “woman’s heart” motivated by the desire to be useful to her husband (Stoker 236, 55). She is the ultimate figure of devotion; she nurses Lucy and Jonathan when each struggles to recover from their events with the Count, and the three suitors of Lucy each find comfort in her warm disposition. She goes as far as to embrace Arthur and stroke his hair a child, displaying the “mother-spirit” (230) that Lucy lacked. When vamped by Dracula, she is not transformed into a lustful New Woman like Lucy. Rather, Mina “remains suspended *within* the dynamics of vampiric transfusion, neither incorporated in nor disentangled from Dracula. And in this condition, she extends to new breadths and heights an already capacious maternal sympathy” (Valente 125). Mina is doubly othered, first from her femininity and then from the imposed masculinity of Dracula. In this sense, she operates outside the expectations of both groups; what should have perverted her mother-spirit only bolsters it. The partially vamped Mina blurs the lines between distinct gender roles, taking her newfound power to bring down the one who enabled her to access it. Though the men get the credit for saving her and reinstating the status quo of masculine and feminine, Mina’s vamped capabilities of tracking Dracula are crucial to their success. Rather than depleting male strength, like Lucy or the fair one, Mina fosters it. And although she ultimately embraces the Victorian femininity as a wife and mother after Dracula’s destruction, Joseph Valente hails Mina Murray-Harker as “a symbolic figure of hybridity” (139). It is this hybridity that both Yuna Kagesaki and Kouta Hirano explore with their respective female vampires, Karin Maaka and Seras Victoria.

SERAS VICTORIA

Kouta Hirano's *Hellsing* takes a distinctly macabre route in its interpretation of Stoker's vampire figure, as death and violence surround the leading vampire Alucard and his associates of the Hellsing organization. But first the audience must acclimate to the *Hellsing* world through human subjects, the first of which is Sir Integra Fairbrook Wingates Hellsing. She is the leader of the Hellsing organization, whose foundation derives directly from the events of Stoker's *Dracula*, with some creative liberties on Hirano's part. Rather than destroying Dracula completely, Van Helsing and his compatriots simply defeated the vampire, after which he became a servant of the professor's family. Integra is the last of the Van Helsing line, and Alucard/Dracula's master ("Master of Monsters" 59). He assists her in carrying out the mission objectives of her family's institution:

We, the Royal Protestant Knights, are part of the Hellsing organization. We've been exterminating the impure living dead for centuries... We were established to destroy all inhuman entities that dared threaten this great country of ours and its teachings." ("Vampire Hunter" 11)

Hellsing is Integra's sole purpose in life. Not only is it her duty and legacy as a descendent of Abraham Van Helsing, but it is also her responsibility to her country, reinforced by the meaning of the Hellsing acronym: **H**er **R**oyal **E**ngland **L**egions of **L**egitimate **S**upernatural and **I**mmortal **N**ight **G**uard. She is, in a sense, both matriarch and patriarch of the organization. Her pure virgin blood rejuvenates Alucard after a twenty year span of starvation ("Master of Monsters" 50), and he immediately swears fealty to her, politely calling her "Miss Hellsing". However, it is only once she assumes masculinized power that he acknowledges her with the respect of an equal. Ten years after their first meeting, Integra barely resembles the helpless little girl that found a monster in her basement. Instead, she dresses for the role of cool and collected leader with men's

suits and cigars. Her official title under the British crown includes the appellation of “Sir” rather than “Dame”, and Alucard frequently calls her as “Master”. Though her blood brought him life and he swears to serve her, Alucard is not dissimilar from the rest of the world, which only values Integra when she fulfills a masculine role.

The other human subject through whom the audience understands *Hellsing* is another masculinized female, Seras Victoria. Originally a police officer with the English force known as Division 11, Seras is the only one left standing when her team investigates a string of vampiric occurrences (Hirano “Vampire Hunter” 8). Caught in the middle of a confrontation between opposing vampires, Seras ends up a human shield; Alucard shoots through her chest in order to eliminate her captor, fatally wounding the young officer. *Hellsing*’s vampire lore dictates that only virgins can survive the transition into vampirism (“Vampire Hunter” 6). With Seras’ permission, Alucard bites the young virgin’s neck, effectively making her a vampire. Seras’ double penetration (first by bullet, then by fangs) and subsequent relationship with her sire reflects an old-age custom where women were forced to marry their rapists. As stated in Hanne Blank’s *Virgin: The Untouched History*, virginity “signified a woman’s willingness to put the priorities of her family, her future husband, and her community ahead of her own desires [and indicated] her fitness to be taken into a new household and family line, and her trustworthiness” (104). Thus, in the case of Seras Victoria, while she did permit Alucard to bite her, she did not consent to being shot, as the offer of immortality was not presented until after (Hirano “Vampire Hunter” 14). He simply inquired about her sexual status and then shot her upon her positive response. Therefore Alucard, her violator, takes on a husband-like role as her master and expects her to put the needs of her new household - the Hellsing organization - before her own desires.

Putting aside the obvious plot points which tie Integra to Abraham Van Helsing and reveal Alucard as Dracula, Hirano's text resembles Stoker's in the way that it *uses* its feminine figures. As Integra is not a vampire, Alucard's respect for her convictions and calculating mind heighten his frustration towards Seras. "If you continue to act as a human, you won't get much further than that," he tells the neophyte vampire ("Master of Monster" 62). Though her master persuades her to access her supernatural senses and sleep in a coffin to stay strong, Seras refuses to drink blood. Her fear that she "may lose something forever" (85), her humanity, hinders her from being a proper vampire and leaves her in a hybrid state of being. "It's like she's half-vampire, half-human," Alucard notes, although he admires the frenzy she works up in battle. Giving in to new-found bloodlust, Seras easily and cruelly takes down a squad of ghouls. Between her immense(ly phallic) cannon gun and heightened physical strength and stamina, Seras dominates the notably all-male squad – blasting them to smithereens or crushing their skulls beneath her boot ("Sword Dancer 1" 108). Her posture mirrors that of her master, Alucard: face concealed in shadow, right foot extended, right down to mimicking his triumphant "Hah". Vampirism imbues Seras, much like Lucy and the fair bride of Dracula, with aggression that threatens the patriarchal male.

Hellsing partially attempts a reshaping of the female vampire figure. Virginity as a key component of successful vampirism and Integra as Dr. Van Helsing's descendent, commanding an organization approved by the British monarchy – all these are steps towards a more feminized, possibly even matriarchal, vampire. Yet this is not enough; Seras only consumes blood in moments of desperation. Integra orders the starving neophyte "I've cut my finger. It might get infected it. Kiss it" (Hirano "D2" 168-9). Seras complies, sucking so hungrily on her commander's finger as to invoke an image of fellatio. Even though Integra's "100% virgin

blood” rejuvenates Seras, she still exists in a strange hybrid state, significantly weaker than Alucard. It is only when she consumes the blood of a dying comrade – notably male - that Seras comes into her own. Embracing her vampire nature with the willing consumption of blood, Seras accesses a host of abilities, including a tolerance of sunlight and shadowy tendrils around her arm that she manipulates in battle. Though she is still the most light-hearted character, it is only through the adapting of the masculine and mirroring her master that Seras becomes a successful vampire. Hirano crafts a fascinating vampire world, but its ties to *Dracula* limit just how much progress it can make in regards to the masculinizing effect of vampirism.

KARIN

While Seras struggled to adjust to the vampire community, the main source of her difference stemmed from her initial refusal to drink blood. For Karin Maaka, the protagonist of *Chibi Vampire*, her difference is an undeniable fact of her biology. The middle child among a clan of vampires, Karin is the complete opposite of her family - she walks in daylight, attends school, and even sleeps at night (Kagesaki “1st Embarrassment”, “2nd Embarrassment”). She appears almost completely human, except once a month Karin lapses into a sickly state because her blood levels surge, and her best course of action is to transfer the excess blood through a vampire bite.

Karin’s transition into adulthood was signaled by a severely violent nosebleed much like the menarche or first menstruation of a human girl, a “metaphor that associates monstrous metamorphosis with teen girl coming of age - and the difficulties of negotiating this stage” (Lev 2008). One of the most prominent difficulties in this stage is the comprehension of budding sexuality. Kagesaki uses the character Karin as a tool to explore sexuality in a post-pubescent

view, where the norms of sex and adulthood are represented by Karin's more traditionally vampiric family.

Despite their nature as a solitary species, vampires in Karin's world still value the idea of family. Her parents, Henry and Calera Marker, are described as the 'perfect couple' despite their volatile and tumultuous exchanges. Henry is far more prone to emotional outbursts and self-doubt, whereas Calera has no problem asserting her dominance:

CALERA: How long have we been together?! I like my blood spicy and bitter! How can you not know what kind of blood your wife likes?!

HENRY: I'm sorry! I'll work harder! (*Sobbing as he cleans up the mess*)

CALERA: Pffft, you call yourself a man? (Kagesaki "2nd Embarrassment" 45)

Henry plays the role of dark, intimidating patriarch as needed. For the most part however, he is a doting husband and a very emotional father. Like his wife, he originally hailed from Europe, and chose to keep his original surname after immigrating to Japan. Despite the kingly connotation of his first name, Henry does not rule his home. In a swap of traditional gender roles, Henry and Calera follow a custom of dominant wives and more docile husbands. Henry's parents, Elda and James Marker, operate on a similar dynamic, though James is more skilled at diffusing his wife's rage. He willingly takes his wife's surname when they marry, and it is this surname which Karin and her siblings also carry, modified to Japanese. "It's certainly appropriate," she admits in expository monologue. "After all, the kanji for Maaka indicates a pure red color" ("2nd Embarrassment" 46). The pure red, of course, signifies the blood of her family, a bond that is reiterated by her surname. Blood is life. Blood is family. And both blood and family are precious in this vampire society, thus the emphasis on mother and wife figures. By consuming blood, vampires like the Markers achieve long life spans and the vitality to reproduce.

Karin is seen by her family as both a failure and a precious daughter who is straddling two worlds – the world of humans and light, and the world of vampires and shadow. She is not only the middle child, but she lives and operates in a confusing medium of binaries. She is a full-blooded vampire, yet she resembles an ordinary human. She is both muddled – and muddled – by the human and vampire worlds. Much like Valente surmised of Stoker’s conflict with his Anglo-Irish identity, Karin “comes to regard that element of [her] ego formation as simultaneously an object of shame and an object of desire, but an object of danger in any case, menacing the subject from within” (Valente 18). Upon her first awakening, Karin’s massive blood loss prompted her human school to call for an ambulance. Henry, in the middle of the day, flew to his daughter’s rescue and nearly killed himself in the process (Kagesaki “8th Embarrassment”). Karin’s abnormality as a vampire not only sets her apart from her kin, but she blames herself for putting them in danger. At the same time, she cannot avoid her heritage without posing a risk to the humans around her. Thus her status as a vampire becomes a dark, ignominious secret, and the yearning that accompanies her monthly blood production becomes shameful lust.

In one particular instance where Karin holds off releasing her blood, she slips further into base instincts reminiscent of sexual need. Though her original goal was to prevent her brother’s seduction of a human friend by biting the woman first, Karin fails to find her before her blood reaches a critical level. When Kenta Usui, her new-found human ally drags her away from the public to protect her secret, Karin’s thoughts fall further from reason into instinct. “Who was it I had to bite? Anyone...Anyone will do” (Kagesaki “15th Embarrassment”). While she was, in essence, ‘saving herself’ for someone particular, Karin’s bloodlust transforms her; she is overwhelmed by desire and will take anyone who can fulfill her need. The visual panel accompanying the text pushes the hidden meaning further; a flower from Karin’s hair falls to the

ground, not only evoking traditional virginal imagery, but also symbolizing her fall from innocence into sudden promiscuity.

Karin's behavior certainly parallels the animalistic kind noted by Jonathan Harker in *Dracula*. Wordlessly, she pounces upon Kenta and pins him to ground on a deserted roof, snarling and chomping her now-elongated teeth ("16th Embarrassment" 39). Like the fair one, her body communicates for her. She is ready, willing, and most of all, *forceful* in her instinctual sexuality here. Kenta cannot push her away, and part of him does not want to. But Karin regains control just before the moment of penetration, prompted by Kenta's pleading that he "didn't [want] it like this." Though he is still drawn to the notion of letting Karin bite him, Kenta expected different circumstances; planned and private circumstances rather than an impulsive tryst on the ground. With Kagesaki's teenaged target audience, the implication here is fairly obvious. Earlier chapters play with the hemo-erotic link between feeding and sexual intercourse; Karin's older brother Ren fully recognizes the similarity between sex and vampiric feeding and uses it to his advantage, often bedding his victims ("2nd Embarrassment" 49). Even Anju, barely eleven and not even an adult by vampire standards, has a swarm of innocent suitors at her elementary school. But Karin shows a certain naiveté about such matters. Her weak personal link between self-aware sexuality and vampirism results in Kagesaki turning it into comedic fodder, such as when Kenta mistakes Karin for a teenage prostitute because he saw her mouth against the neck of an older man. Here, however, the connection turns serious: with the vampire bite as a parallel to sex, the rooftop scene becomes a potential "first time" scenario with Kenta as the reluctant virgin.

When Karin finally does bite Kenta, he initiates the intimate exchange. Embarrassed by her prior behavior and fearing she will lose control again, Karin prepares to leave. However,

Kenta stops with her with a sudden hug, and the firm request that she bite him (“28th Embarrassment” 79). Aside from phonetically-rendered groans and sighs, dialogue is sparse during the exchange, forcing the audience to bear very close witness to the new level of intimacy between the two characters. Though Kagesaki returns to the slapstick comedy shortly after, the hemo-eroticism is still present when Kenta passes out from the bite and collapses on top of Karin, like an exhausted lover post-coitus. When Karin transfers blood to Kenta a second time, they establish a romantic relationship. She confesses her love for him, and surprises him with a real kiss rather than a vampiric one (“50th Embarrassment” 12). They share a heated embrace that eventually commences in another blood transfer, confirming their bond.

As Karin progresses in her relationship with Kenta, strengthening her tie to the human world, she remains blissfully unaware of the danger she faces simply for existing. A private investigation conducted by Calera yields disconcerting news for the Marker/Maaka family: “she’s what is called the fountain of Psyche, or *Pistis Sophia*. Psyche means soul... the blood that Karin releases is her life itself. To vampires struggling to reproduce, it is like a fountain of life” (“49th Embarrassment”). Henry and Calera originally concealed their daughter’s unusual condition from the vampire elders because they feared she would be reviled by their own people. The truth is much worse – Karin is not a sudden genetic anomaly, but a rare vampire produced only once every thousand years. Her existence intersects with the declining birth rate of vampires, as there have been no new births in over a decade.

Desperate to insure the survival of their species, the elder vampire families seek out the Psyche. Through the power of her blood, they can restore fertility to the vampires of Japan. Members of the Brownlick vampire family feared the Psyche was “lost” – for generations it was their duty to guard the Psyche and guarantee its bloodline for future generations, until they were

betrayed by one of their own who helped her escape. It is these possessive vampires who kidnap Karin. Although they first praise her like a goddess and call her a savior, it is evident they see her as a prize. One of her kidnappers matter-of-factly states “a psyche should feel blessed for giving *its* life” (“51st Embarrassment” 12, emphasis mine). They relegate Karin to an object, like an inheritance long overdue. Bridget Brownlick even begins bragging that she has the right to the first taste of blood, a frightening echo back to Jonathan Harker’s encounter with the fair bride of Dracula. Like him, Karin is held captive by need-driven wives, although instead of a carnal, polyamorous triad she is at the mercy of the couples who comprise the Brownlick family, led by the eager Bridget.

Like Calera and Elda Marker, Bridget exercises a matriarchal power over the Brownlicks. She is, in their hierarchy, “first”: as the last of the direct family bloodline, she has primary claim to Psyche. The rest of the family yields to her authority, fearing the temper that lurks beneath her angelic face. When one of the women questions if they ought to pity Karin, Bridget is quick in her response:

BRIDGET: Not a bit. It sounds to me like you don’t want Psyche’s blood.

UNNAMED WIFE: D-Don’t say something like that! I really want to have a child with Robert!

BRIDGET: Then stop your complaining. You’re only here because you have a blood relation to the family...Because the Psyche can only give so much blood, naturally we should be the ones to obtain it before anyone else. (“55th

Embarrassment” 30)

Blood is life, and the life that these female vampires desire is another level of power. Fertility, the ability to make life – that is where true power lies. Without it, their power wanes. Each time

the Psyche is reborn, the Brownlick family insures the continuation of the life-giving blood by forcing the Psyche to reproduce with a male of their line. After which, they drain their savior dry. They maintain their matriarchal legacy, as well as the fail-safe should fertility decline again.

Meanwhile, Kenta begins to question his sanity when he begins seeing Karin everywhere. While passed out, he encounters a dream version of Karin who claims to “know all about [him]” because she “is inside” Kenta now (“29th Embarrassment” 87). The sexual innuendo of her statement embarrasses him, and he cannot bring up the contents of his dream to the real Karin. Upon a second encounter, it is clear that this doppelganger of Karin is only her physical double, as Kenta perceives a distinctly different personality beneath whatever wears Karin’s face. It’s not the first time Kenta meets a doppelganger – Elda Marker bears a striking resemblance to her granddaughter, except for hair length and bust size (“19th Embarrassment” 28), and Yuriya Tachibana is a half-breed vampire who walks in the sun like Karin (“38th Embarrassment” 25). But this so-called ghost is something new, a being that only he can see who calls herself Sophia.

Sophia is the soul, or Psyche, in Karin’s bloodline. She has lived thousands of years, constantly reborn through the machinations of the Brownlick family. In his article on the Uncanny, Freud referred to Otto Rank’s words on the doppelganger: “the ‘double’ was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, and ‘energetic denial of the power of death’ . . . [P]robably the immortal soul was the first double of the body” (9). Sophia is the immortal soul of the first Psyche, a double that has been passed down through blood. She passes into Kenta as a result of his passionate bite-kisses with Karin, which ultimately frees her from her repetitive curse. In return, she guides Kenta and the Markers to where they rescue Karin.

Christian Gnostic texts talk of a Pistis Sophia, a maternal divinity who, separated from her heavenly kin, falls into chaos. As Raul Branco explains:

Her name is a key to her role: *Pistis* is the Greek word for "faith." Not blind faith, but faith arising from total conviction of inner knowledge. *Sophia* is Greek for "wisdom." Thus her compound name indicates the fundamental principle (faith in the Light) that enables her to undertake her mission, namely, the development of wisdom in both worlds. (144)

Pistis Sophia then, like Karin, struggles to reconcile a world of darkness and a world of light. Kagesaki avoids the common trope of Christianity and vampires over the fourteen volume series, thus this one religious reference stands out. The Gnostic Sophia is beset upon by "evil and dark villains" (145) who try to steal her light, just like Kagesaki's Sophia endures thousands of years of imprisonment and rape so that vampires can continue to reproduce. "Something different (a woman) is needed to guarantee the reproduction of the same" (McClintock 29). The feminine other known as Psyche operates, like Mina Harker, as what Valente calls a "transformative agent" (125). Her blood transforms the dying vampire race into a thriving species, making Karin the heir to a legacy of motherhood twisted by the Brownrick family for their own selfish desires. Her captors expect her to be passive and docile, a willing sacrifice to their cause. But Karin shocks them by fighting back, refusing to cooperate. Her liminality allows her to break beyond the fate presented to her. Her assertion is reclamation of her identity – not as Psyche, not as a "loser vampire", but simply as Karin.

CONCLUSION

Though the Marker/Maaka family operates under the Stoker tradition of "blood is the life" and feeds upon humans to survive, Karin does not. Her condition involves a monthly cycle of blood surges, ultimately leading to an excess of blood which she must transfer to a target. If blood is the life, then Karin is bursting with life each month. While Seras Victoria fears losing

something of herself by consuming blood, Karin is fearful because with each bite she is *giving away* part of herself. It would be easy to mistake her anxieties over blood transference as an analogy for the social anxiety related to sex and virginity loss. Instead, it is more often Kenta Usui, her love interest, who displays those worries. Karin's anxieties are wrapped up in her double otherness – separated from the human world because she is a vampire, and different in the vampire world because she produces blood rather than takes it. She faces various doubles of herself – her grandmother Elda, signifying old modes of thinking and the vampire she 'ought' to have been; Yuriya Tachibana, the half-vampire who not only reflects a lonely life divided between worlds, but also betrays Karin's secret to those who would consume her; and lastly, the Psyche or Sophia herself, a long-oppressed female spirit in Karin's bloodline who haunted Kenta by adopting his girlfriend's image. While each doppelganger presents *a* fate for Karin, she is not bound to any of them. Unlike Seras Victoria, who eventually must consume blood and lose part of herself to gain something new, Karin defies all expectation when she asserts herself, not as a vampire or a human, but as a *person* with an identity.

While Kouta Hirano's *Hellsing* series puts women in powerful roles, it does not offer any achievement of femininity, as *Chibi Vampire* does. Rather *Hellsing* functions as a stepping stone between the reasserting patriarchy of *Dracula* and the increasingly feminist matriarchy of *Chibi Vampire*. Vamped women like Lucy and the brides of Dracula illustrate the anxiety over unconventional women through overly masculine and sexual behavior. They are unnatural, they are Other. It is no wonder that the most violent deaths are reserved for Lucy and the brides of Dracula. Seras Victoria follows Integra Van Hellsing's example, sacrificing traditional femininity for the power that the masculine offers. But Karin ultimately rejects such oppositions; the navigation of her unusual vampirism leads her to the conclusion that power lies neither in the

masculine or the feminine – it lies in the *choice*. Her hybridity enables her to achieve, like Mina Harker does temporarily, a status beyond the usual gendered categories.

The female vampire figure is often perceived as uncanny simply because she is a vampire, resembling her human self while being distinctly otherwise. This is a true and incomplete observation. Vampires certainly fall into the realm of the *unheimlich*, but the female vampire has another layer of uncanniness. The precedent set by *Dracula* reflects the perceived threat of unfeminine women at the time Stoker was writing. *Chibi Vampire*, however, suggests that incorporating the masculine and feminine, as signified by the respective vampire and human worlds not only allows hybridity, but that such transgression of categories may in fact be natural. While Seras Victoria and Mina Murray-Harker were converted to hybrid states, Karin's is an extension of her genetics. In this sense, the female vampire may be on her way to becoming her own doppelganger - from masculinized to gender-ambivalent, from *unheimlich* to *heimlich*.

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