

EXCERPT FROM KIM NEWMAN'S ANNO DRACULA - ONE THOUSAND MONSTERS

A squat dwarf sat on his haunches, stunted body barely supporting a swollen head like a rotten green potato. Curly fangs stuck out of his slit-mouth. He wore a coat of woven rushes and a circular straw hat a yard across.

A white-faced, beautiful woman posed on a mat, playing a *samisen* – a long-necked musical instrument. Her kimono was decorated with a flight of cranes. She nodded with each plucked note.

A singular little fellow looked like a living folded umbrella. He had one bare, muscular, hairy human leg and a corrugated flesh cone body, sporting a single large eye and a smiling set of fleshy lips, and a topknot with a bow in it.

Whelpdale swore in astonishment.

‘These are *yōkai*,’ I said.

I’d known what to expect and was still rattled.

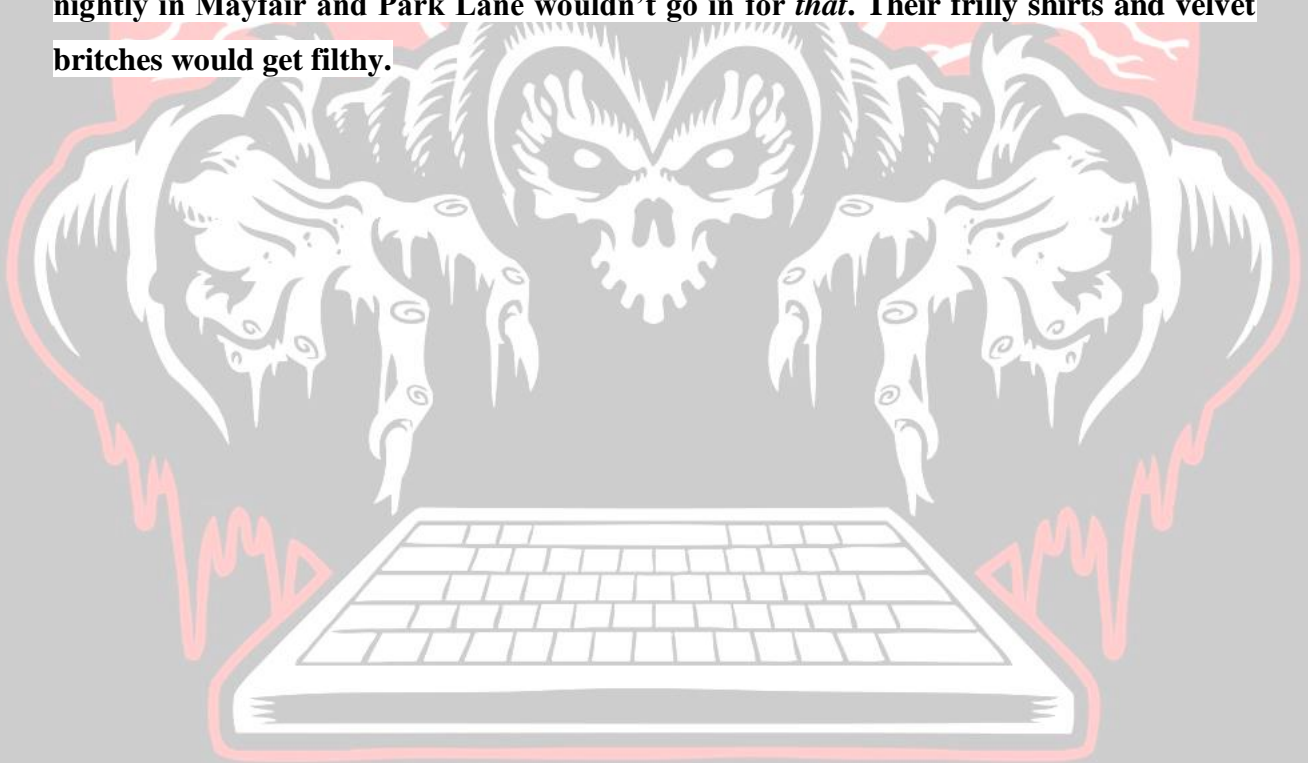
In woodcuts, the creatures look absurd and almost endearing. In the flesh, they exude *wrongness*. In the West, vampire shapeshifters are swimmers who stick close to the shore. They take on aspects of bats and wolves – or, in rarer cases, insects and reptiles – but retain basic human anatomy. They assume other forms for limited spells, often just a few minutes. With something like relief, they revert to walking on two legs and showing more skin than fur. At most, they have permanently sharper teeth.

In the East, traditions are different. Other practices, other shapes, have emerged.

Even with his bones crushed to paste, I doubt Whelpdale could turn himself inside-out like an umbrella and can’t conceive of circumstances whereby he’d *want* to.

Make no mistake: the *yōkai* of Japan are vampires, though distant cousins only to the *nosferatu* of Europe. The same goes for the *aswang* of the Philippines, the *penanggalan* of Malaya and the *pontianak* of Java. Not vampires Lord Ruthven would invite to Downing Street for a rubber of whist and a nibble on the maid... or that Prince Dracula would baptise with foeman’s blood during a Carpathian Guard initiation. Dracula’s are shadows of their sire. Yuki-Onna is a distant mother to her subjects; she encourages variety. Is it for her chilly amusement or out of cold curiosity? How much shape can a shapeshifter shift? Perhaps only lack of imagination prevents General Iorga, say, from turning himself inside out and rearranging his bones into a living writing-desk. What appears grotesque to western eyes may be decorative in the east.

Some *yōkai* vampires (*futakuchi*) have extra lamprey mouths on the backs of their heads or necks, hidden by long hair, used for feeding. Others (*krasue*) wear their lungs and entrails on the outsides of their bodies, and decorate their exposed innards with ribbons and bows. Many indulge in practices that would disgust von Orlok, the most repulsive vampire in Europe. *Jikininki* feed off carrion, skulking on battlefields to suck the spoiled blood of the slain – a practice as alien to European vampires as eating raw fish is to warm Westerners. The frog-faced pygmies of the *kappa* bloodline live in ponds, crawling out of the water to eat farmers' livers and rape their wives. They bleed horses and cows, fixing mouths over the animals' anuses while sticking tongue-tentacles into their bowels. The pale, perfume-and-powder Murgatroyds who parade their ennui nightly in Mayfair and Park Lane wouldn't go in for *that*. Their frilly shirts and velvet britches would get filthy.



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