

Moral Monsters and Religious Corruption:
An Analysis of Nagabe's *The Girl From the Other Side: Siúil, a Rún* (2017)

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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Abstract

The purpose of the research presented is to examine the familial bond between Shiva and Teacher in the *The Girl From the Other Side: Siūil, a Rūn* while delving into the connection religion makes between monsters and immorality. Academic journals and books provide contexts on what defines a monster in literature, religious systems, and Japanese culture. An interview with the creator of the manga by Minako Nakamura provides insight into his intentions when designing his characters. Furthermore, the research will also primarily rely on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's monster theory and the concept of dualism for its analysis. Upon assessing these sources, it becomes clear that designated monsters are not always morally inferior. Despite the clear contrasts between light and dark throughout the manga, it subverts expectations through making monstrous Outsiders less prone to "evil actions" than devout humans following a deity of light. The paper is a useful addition to the existing discourse about literary monsters, as it examines a found family dynamic and a story in which the monsters are empathetically more human and moral than society.

Keywords: Dualism; Cohen; Monster; Religion; Morality; Nagabe

Dedication

For my best friend, Jenny Larrick, without whom I would not have been here.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

The fairy tale starts deep in the dark woods and follows a little, unafraid girl with white hair and fair skin. While the real world is clearly not black and white, *hers* is, and it is even easier to polarise everything we see around her. Fairy tales have big bad wolves in the shadows and gallant, good knights in shining armor, after all. The girl is easily recognised as a kind and innocent soul by readers who witnessed her character in the manga panels. What happens, then, when her trusted caretaker is introduced into the scene, and he has charred black skin and large, curved horns? What happens when her guardian is clearly an “Outsider” that all the devoutly religious people in the fairy tale consider less than human, and when the creature who supposedly curses all he touches subverts the expectations of a monster by protecting the little girl from those that think her purity means she should be sacrificed to their god? I have always been fascinated by the concept of morally complex monsters bonding with regular human beings which has not only compelled me to create my own stories revolving around monsters, but also to base this thesis off of one of the stories I am most fond of.

The very first lines of the text in the manga series *The Girl From the Other Side: Siúil, a Rún* warn Shiva, the little white-haired girl, to run away if she ever sees an Outsider because she will be cursed if any were to ever touch her. The curse in question leads to the victim morphing into a completely charred entity, an Outsider, over the course of several days. Over time, they lose their sense of touch, taste, and smell. Eventually, they lose their sense of self and exist as immortal beings with no memory of their past life. Some become trees in the woods. However, Shiva is quickly established as living with another character called Teacher, an Outsider himself.

He and other Outsiders are deemed monsters by the rest of humanity due to the possibility of the curse spreading via skin contact. Though Shiva (who is a human seemingly uninfected by the curse) lives with Teacher in the “Outside” where Outsiders roam freely, Teacher actively ensures Shiva’s safety by making sure she never makes physical contact with him or any other Outsider, thus preventing any possibility of her being cursed. Meanwhile, humans uninfected by the curse live in the fortified “Inside”, a walled-off kingdom. They are ruled by fear in a morally corrupt, theocratic society that would rather raze its own settlements full of healthy people than “risk” being infected by Outsiders. After a priest announces that the only way for Insiders to free themselves from being cursed is by sacrificing Shiva to their God of Light, the people of the Inside want Shiva to ultimately die. The desire of religious people to sacrifice the life of a child begs some questions: what makes a monster, and why do we associate monsters with “evil”?

In *The Girl From the Other Side*, the creator of the series, Nagabe, forms a believable religious society and a narrative that implicitly questions the readers about what is considered as monstrous from an ethical standpoint. He particularly does this through Teacher, whose real name is revealed late into the story to be Albert; perhaps unsurprisingly, the character capable of more empathy than many civilians of the Inside was once recognisably human himself. However, it is established that Teacher can not return to that state, and no humans but Shiva will ever consider him an equal again. *The Girl From the Other Side: Siiil, a Rún* as a series subverts the typical expectations its readers may expect from the visual dualism between its black-inked and bright white characters. The title of the manga pertains to one of the work’s two main characters, the little girl named Shiva, as she’s referred to by the people of the Inside (a kingdom) as “the girl from the other side”. The subtitle roughly translates to “go, my love” and may be in direct conversation with the main title, as if telling the girl from the other side to venture away to

escape her fate as a sacrifice (Simons). Since Teacher is never meant to be seen as an evil force to the readers of the manga, and the Inside wants the loss of an innocent human life such as Shiva's, the forming of Teacher and Shiva's found family can be read as a moral resistance against the corrupt norms established by the Inside.

The story explores how the "good" of society does not equate to moral goodness, as society wants to take Shiva away from her guardian. She trusts Teacher enough to eat bread he provides, and to stay with him as she awaits her auntie. For much of the early story, Shiva believed she would come back for her. Teacher likewise struggles early in the series with the fact that Shiva seemed to be abandoned in the woods by her auntie, and he goes along with Shiva's belief that her auntie would come back for her because he does not want to break the little girl's heart. Later in the story, Shiva's auntie does indeed come back under false pretenses; Shiva's auntie gives her to people in the Inside who wish to sacrifice her "for the good" of the society as a whole. Shiva is uniquely pure to the people of the Inside, who believe that she cannot be infected by Outsiders through skin contact. However, Teacher, all the other Outsiders, and even Shiva are all established as monsters to one another at different parts of the story. The moral character of each monster does not seem to play into why a party is considered a monster in the first place.

For this research, it was valuable to examine "evil" through the actions toward a child, examine Japan's history in human sacrifices and isolation (since Nagabe is Japanese and is inspired by his own culture), and examine discussion on the motivations behind the demonisation of other races by organised religions, as this could mirror how Outsiders are treated in the manga. Mainly qualitative data in the form of articles, books, and author interviews were examined to determine the theoretical framework with which to analyse questions posed about a

monster as a morally justified parental guardian, as well as the failings of a theocratic society to get to the point of encouraging the loss of innocent human life.

However, there is a clear gap in research in terms of monsters as parental guardians in a found family context. Just as well, early records of human sacrifice in Japan were written far after their referenced time periods. When addressing the subject of “good” and “evil”, it is also important to recognise that morality is not concrete, nor can it be universally and objectively measured like scientific study. However, should a base definition of “evil” be given and inspired by academic discussion in the field, then evil, or at least the “evil” that exists in what are considered immoral actions, can also be agreed upon. The Literature Review further elaborates on the many resources examined while exploring the purpose of monsters in religion and literature, as well as exploring the language used in *The Girl from the Other Side* for more depictions of dualism and moral alignments. The visual dualism in the manga’s artwork can at times be misleading between the contrasting black ink of shadows and animalistic Outsiders, and the bright white lighting of Shiva, the God of Light, and environments like that of the Inside.

Of the theoretical frameworks most relevant when examining how a found family between a little girl and a monster functions, it would be incredibly difficult to engage in discourse about what makes a literary monster without examining the works of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, who has extensively written theories on what makes somebody or something a “monster”. He, along with *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, posits the idea that monsters in literature reveal aspects of what a society fears, as well as what a society desires (Cohen 4). In *The Girl From the Other Side*, the making of monsters is for the people of the Inside to cluster better with one another and demonise the people who do not “belong” in their society, justifying the demonisation of Outsiders. However, monsters such as

Teacher and, in a way, Shiva are less liable to kill anybody than the people who pushed them to isolate themselves together in the woods.

Over time and due to a growing difference in national interests versus concepts universally considered to be right, such as protecting innocent children, or wrong, such as murdering others, moral values became muddled and skewed to favor what those in power deemed most convenient for the majority to believe. For instance, early human sacrifice in Japan was justified as bringing good fortune during such events as the construction of important structures that could otherwise fall victim to natural disasters outside human control, like bridge constructions in areas prone to massive floods (305). Similarly, people from the Inside in *The Girl From the Other Side* follow along with the head priest's verdict that a little girl should be killed to end a curse beyond their control. The universal idea of right and wrong pales in comparison to the majority's fears for themselves and their loved ones, along with their ingrained religious beliefs.

In contrast, Teacher is someone who succeeds, for the most part, in living more by the universal ideas of right and wrong. If "good" is the opposite of evil, and an "evil" action is one that causes knowing harm to another party, then the decision to look after Shiva demonstrates a "good" action (Putri et al 2). Though the regular humans in the manga deem Outsiders like Teacher as beings to be feared and avoided, treating them with immediate hostility, Teacher himself displays no ill will to other human beings. He is always seen to be attentive towards Shiva's needs and displays a lot of care for her, to the point that he puts her happiness above all else. Just as well, he is depicted as a humanoid silhouette completely enveloped in black. Though he appears human-like, he has animalistic features such as a protruding snout and goat-like horns. He has a distinct visual Otherness compared to the rest of the characters in the manga,

especially Shiva, who is depicted to have pale skin and albino hair. The only white in Teacher's design is his white eyes, which contrast with Shiva's black eyes. The visual binary and visual dualism are reinforced further by how the setting of the manga series is divided between the Inside and the Outside. However, even as binaries exist, the visual opposites of Teacher and Shiva get along well with one another and balance each other out.

Even though it can and will be argued that Teacher is morally superior to the vast majority of people from the Inside, both he and Shiva make the perfect monsters to represent what the Inside's society both fears and desires. It appears that Teacher, as a mix of distinctly inhuman features and the familiar shape and behaviors of a human, depicts what many people in the Inside fear: being cursed and cast out of society. Shiva, as a bubbly and innocent girl growing up kind and bold, depicts what many people in the Inside desire: lively children who are allowed to grow up bright and curious rather than stifled and scared. Together, Teacher and Shiva's found family is both what the Inside likely fears and desires: proof that an empathetic, loving family can survive without the stifling rule of the kingdom and its worship of the God of Light. Shiva and Teacher mainly only have each other to consistently rely on in a shared isolation from society, but while their living arrangement lasts, they manage to be far healthier than many people of the Inside. However, this is not to say that there is nobody from the Inside without compassion.

The Outsiders, particularly Teacher, can be read as the presence of the "Other" resisting the power of the Inside's kingdom along with its theocratic apparatus. However, there are exceptions to the binaries posed by deeming the Inside's society as morally reprehensible in comparison to the found family of Shiva and Teacher. The King of the Inside is also a resistor of the kingdom's established religion and desire to sacrifice Shiva after learning the truth that

Shiva's sacrifice would do no lasting good for his people. His characterisation in the manga is yet another subversion of the reader's expectations, as the King of the society would be expected to be fully aware of the lies constructed by the church in order to better control the people living within the kingdom of the Inside. Instead, he is sympathetic to Shiva and in part sacrifices himself, even as his followers believe the head priest's words over his own, in order to save her life and allow her a window to escape the Inside. Just as Shiva and Teacher do not fall under the strict definition of "monster", the King does not fall under the strict definition of what it means to be a King, or what it means to be an Insider ostracising Outsiders. He is not followed by his people and he does not seek to keep his power, so much as he seeks to do what is morally just. The kingdom's mechanisms of witch-hunting, forced exile, and ritualised execution create a culture where moral action is subsumed under obedience to religious prescription over all else. Both Teacher and the King practiced a sense of ethical autonomy despite the structure of the Inside's society, and their protection of Shiva constituted resistance to both the state and the religious apparatus of the Inside.

In this thesis, the first Analysis chapter mainly focuses on the concept of the monster, while the second mainly focuses on morality in religion and the manga overall. Through many subversions of expectations, the obvious monster in *The Girl From the Other Side* becomes a beacon of safety and a constant source of empathy, while the religion-focused society of humans in the story becomes a locus of cruelty. Teacher essentially fights to protect what the theocratic society of the Inside seeks to destroy. The found family he forms with Shiva becomes a kind of counter church to the church of the Inside, and the act of nurturing becomes a resistance to institutional violence masquerading as divine will.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

While there has been plenty of literary discussion about how many “monsters” in literature are reflections of various societies’ fears, desires, and moral boundaries, no common academic discussion about the impact of a “monster” as part of a found family, nor as a child’s guardian, appears to exist in this field. However, all found discussions agree that “monsters” are determined as such through their general otherness, straying from the traditional norms of their societies through how they look, think, and conduct their lives. The sources presented enforce the idea that the characters of Shiva and Teacher in *The Girl from the Other Side: Siúil, a Rún* are both monstrous in this sense, with Teacher being more visibly different than a traditional human being. Teacher and Shiva live in the woods in a non-traditional otherness that challenges their theocratic Inside’s belief that Shiva should be sacrificed for a greater good, and that Teacher, the only person who aims to care for the little girl, is a creature with evil intentions.

The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous explores the symbolism and significance of monsters throughout different periods of history and across various cultures. Therefore, it offers many different perspectives to consider. However, this paper will focus on how this book pushes the idea that monsters are constructed to serve ideological purposes, and more specifically, how monsters can be constructed as demonisations of other cultures, ostracising the differences between races and religions. For example, there are notable parallels between “monstrosities” and the societal view of “other” religions and races that/who lived at the same time as the dominant party of white Christians in the late Middle Ages, when the link between monstrosity and race in Medieval England was reinforced by biblical and other

theological frameworks. The theological framing permitted the integration of monstrosity into conceptions of racial difference while maintaining the Christian belief in a single human race. Similarly, the main religion that villainises the character of Teacher in *The Girl from the Other Side* justifies calling Teacher's race as unfeeling and dangerously inhuman through the narrative it tells, with the narrative reflecting the motivations of the people with the most power in the society. As this book iterates as well, medieval Christians often depicted "groups" like Jews, Muslims, Mongols, and Africans as outsiders, depicting them as monstrous, having an alien kind of otherness "...that highlighted both their physical and moral differences" (Dendle 240). Literature frequently associated skin color with moral character, such that "Blackness is a physical manifestation of a moral turn from 'pagan' sin to Christian virtue" (380). Teacher is likewise depicted as a creature with black skin, with Teacher's skin truly being an ink black, and this black juxtaposes the white of both Shiva's hair and the more traditionally accepted "white" skin color of people prescribing to the theocratic society that aims to tear apart Shiva and Teacher's found family. In fact, "Blackness" is a recurring trait throughout the first three volumes of the series, and is a concept used to demonise the entirety of the Outsiders similar to how the demonisation of black skin is used to deem entire ethnic groups morally inferior. Although Outsiders do not intend harm in their typical activities, they are deemed morally inferior and inhuman given how they look and how they functionally differ. In the manga, the contrast between black and white is quite prevalent, with "black" being used as a frequent term to describe those who lived outside the typical societal norms: "Outsiders" like Teacher.

Jeffrey Cohen's *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* likewise supports the idea that monsters represent the demonised differences between the norm and the *other*. Monsters are typically what society fears, rejects, or seeks to control. Cohen's book explains that depicting

another group as monstrous has historically justified acts of conquest, colonisation, or persecution. Some historical examples include biblical depictions of Canaanites as giants to validate a Hebrew conquest, medieval portrayals of Muslims as demonic enemies during the Crusades, and antisemitic myths about Jews that culminated in Nazi ideology (Cohen 8). With the help of this reading, it is clear that the theocratic society that marginalised Teacher and Shiva made monsters of them both as well, and in a way similar to colonising forces. Teacher is what society mainly fears and rejects, and Shiva is one whom society mainly seeks to control as she is an impressionable child. However, due to Teacher, society cannot get to her through the religious justification of wanting to sacrifice her for an alleged greater good. With the help of this reading, it can even be argued that Teacher is demonised *more* for becoming a parental guardian in a way that common moral conduct would, ironically, have been considered altruistic. As the found family between Teacher and Shiva is incredibly unorthodox as well, their survival is a resistance against their monstrous classification.

The research will also include works such as Connie L. Scarabough's article "The Disabled and the Monstrous: Examples from Medieval Spain" and David William's book *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature*, which relate how the disabled are related to the idea of the monstrous. These resources explore how monstrosities are not limited to inhuman creatures from literature and media, but also include humans who have physical handicaps and other disabilities which differentiate them from the perceived norms of society. The sources take a look at the concept of *monstrosity* through the lens of disabilities, signifying how they are correlated. The relation between monstrosity and disability can be applied to the character of Teacher as well, as Teacher is unable to feel such sensations as pain, and his physical appearance deviates from the human norm.

Exploring “Foreign Relations during the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined” by Kazui and Videen allows parallels to be drawn between Japan’s *sakoku* period and the setting of *The Girl from the Other Side*. *Sakoku* was not just a ban on foreign interaction, but a strategic, state-managed approach where isolation stabilised Japanese society just as it does in Nagabe’s world, where isolation defines boundaries between humans and monstrous Outsiders and led to a very strict social order. The social order is so strict, in fact, that at one point the people of the Inside go as far as to bar any human who once ventured to the Outside from entering their walled society again thereafter.

Other sources such as *Human Sacrifices in Japan* help contextualise the manga’s fictional religion, and how the morals of society were skewed to allow the loss of innocent human life. For instance, the practice of how Shiva was wanted as a religious sacrifice to supposedly appease a good god can be related to the sacrifices that took place during the 16th century. Purity was defined as that which was morally virtuous, and this purity was believed to keep the land clean and resource-abundant when offered in sacrifices. However, in *The Girl from the Other Side*, Shiva is considered so pure that she is monstrous: a kind of “Other” that, rather than being revered for the sacrifice most humans in the book want her to make, is antagonised and ostracised further to be considered as something that should be hunted for the benefit of all.

The theocratic society that demonises both Teacher and Shiva prioritises purity, even as it demonstrates itself as more morally questionable than the “monsters” of the story. Christian theology, however, seems to show more parallels to the society’s main religion than other concepts that consider nature to be spiritual in itself. The article “Beyond Dualism: The Sacred Value of Biological Totems in Christian Platonic Thought” explores how, in medieval times, religious thinkers rejected beliefs like totemism and animism, which saw nature and animals as

spiritually important. Influenced by Plato's dualism, they often viewed the material world as lower or sinful compared to the spiritual world. Theologians like Moltmann and Swedenborg later opposed dualism, arguing that divinity exists within all life, and that the world should be seen as interconnected rather than separated into higher and lower forms (Yan and Zhang 2). In Nagabe's manga series, "Outsider" characters with blackened skin and monstrous appearances, like Teacher, reflect the belief that there are no fundamentally lesser or greater beings. Just as well, the visual dualism of the series can largely differ from the characterisations of the characters cast in predominantly black inks or bright white lighting. Although Teacher is feared as a monster and drawn in bold black ink, he shows the love, care, and moral strength that any good, conventionally human parent would. The focus of *The Girl from the Other Side*'s story is on the found family between Shiva and Teacher, and how it becomes an act of resistance against religious and social exclusion, as the two exhibit more empathy and moral connection than the devout humans in the story who wish to kill them. As such, the very story is based in duality. Shiva and Teacher challenge the idea that alienated monsters are evil and that theocratic societies that value "purity" are necessarily good.

In "Narrative Performance in the Contemporary Monster Story", Punday portrays humans as "hopeful monsters," showing that biology, rather than personal morality, is the main motivator for action. He frames the human brain as the "real villain," and emphasises that story characters' actions are determined by biological forms. Therefore, this article encourages readers to consider monsters not as isolated entities, but as products of evolutionary, social, and narrative contexts. Contemporary fiction uses monsters to explore narrative structures, and monstrous characters can be both unifying and deconstructive, offering complex narrative layers. The juxtaposition of Teacher and Shiva's monstrous appearance and perceived purity, respectively,

and their morally commendable attributes also encourage readers of Nagabe's manga series to think critically about the world they read about over the course of 12 volumes. Even still, humans in the story are "hopeful monsters" that prioritise those who have their same biological structure as they do. They can be viewed as the true villains of the story, accentuating the point, again, that to be viewed as a monster does not equate to being morally inferior to the dominant race or religion assigning the role of "monster" in the first place. The polysemy of the term "monster", or the fact that a "monster" is defined as such through many differing definitions, is crucial to consider when looking at monsters like Teacher in caregiving, guardian roles. Just as well, the polysemy of the word "monster" better informs the "monstrous" role of Shiva and Teacher's ostracised and alienated found family overall.

Monsters are partially defined as such for the societal alienation they face, and their classification promotes further alienation. Given the separations between the Outside and the Inside, Nagabe constructs a world defined by estrangement and social division. In "'On Alienation: Two Contrasting Views'", Lamb and Lehrman distinguish between the objective, structural alienation that derives from social and institutional mechanisms separating individuals and the subjective, psychological alienation that can be considered the internalised experience of estrangement (Lamb & Lehrman 264–265). In the manga series, structures such as the rules of the Inside and the alleged, existential curse that separates humans from Outsiders are both mechanisms that produce the "objective" alienation in the narrative. Aside from this, factors such as the human Insiders' fear of being contaminated by Outsiders serve to enforce the internalised, psychological alienation in estranged, feared parties such as Teacher. Social exclusion enforces boundaries, and Pappenheim's discussion of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, found in the same article, adds further context to the social dynamics in the manga. The main human society shown

in the manga series resembles a *Gemeinschaft*, or a tightly bonded, traditional community in which membership is inherited through being born and raised within it, and where roles are largely fixed so that there is a clear sense of collective identity (261). In contrast, the Outsiders' existence embodies a *Gesellschaft*-like alienation, in which relationships are instrumental, tenuous, and defined by fear or necessity rather than any genuine social cohesion (262). The duality between the roles of the traditional humans of the Inside and the monstrous Outsiders, who are kept out of main society by walls surrounding the Inside, highlights the tension between intimate, traditional bonds and the structural separations imposed by societal and supernatural forces.

The duality between being “outside” versus “inside”, or being outside of a social group versus being within a social group, contributes, too, to the definition of a monster in *The Girl from the Other Side*. Through the web article “Uchi and Soto”, the boundary between the cursed Outsiders and the manga series' devout humans of the Inside is analogous to the *uchi-soto* distinction in Japanese social structure (Suzuki). The duality demonstrates the enforced division between *inside* and *outside*, pitting what it means to be considered “in-group”, or *uchi*, versus out-group, or *soto*, in direct conflict with each other. Teacher, though cast as an Outsider, or *soto* in direct translations, becomes part of Shiva's *uchi*, or in-group, through daily interactions as he grows to care about her like a father, and he exhibits a very human compassion that his monstrous appearance juxtaposes. The fact that Outsiders are considered the main monsters of the story further supports the notion that the definition of a “monster” is more akin to “outcast” in the story, rather than any sort of morally inferior creature. Shiva is considered a monster as well because she is not as susceptible to being “infected” like other humans are, and it makes thematic sense that she becomes a *soto* in the literal, outcast sense rather than the aesthetic sense.

Just as well, despite the visibly monstrous features of Teacher, he exhibits a relatable amount of humanity that many of the humans in the story do not.

The Girl from the Other Side has themes of gentleness, duality, and moral restraint that resist the exclusionary structures defining its theocratic world. In his interviews, Nagabe repeatedly emphasises gentleness as the core of the story's moral fabric (Nagabe). The focus on gentleness, particularly within the constraint of Outsiders like Teacher not being able to touch humans like Shiva, becomes a quiet form of resistance in a world governed by fear, segregation, and divine law. Rather than opposing violence with violence, the bond between Shiva and Teacher offers a model of moral integrity grounded in empathy, thus challenging the dogmatic binaries of purity and corruption upheld by the human society that monsterise the found family under the banner of doing what is holy and just. In his interview, Nagabe also explores how his design of Teacher was meant to resemble that of a mountain goat, and this allowed further analysis into the biblical role of goats as sacrificial offerings, as well as their affiliations to false gods and demonic imagery.

Romodanovskii's master thesis on *yōkai* draws distinctions between Western depictions of monsters and *yōkai*, where despite both entities being seen as the "other", the perception of *yōkais* are generally more ambiguous. Rather than being defined as good or evil, they are typically depicted as creatures with morality somewhere in between in both their nature and the way they operate themselves by living in places uninhabited by humans, but not quite out of reach. For example, they may exist by old bridges or on the outskirts of towns (Romodanovskii 8). Although the setting of *Girl from the Other Side* is that of a western setting, with the environment and character designs having taken inspiration from what seems to be medieval Europe, the author of the story and the language it was originally written in are both Japanese.

With how *yōkai* have been a significant part of Japanese culture and its history, it is reasonable to briefly analyse Teacher through a *yōkai* framework alongside Cohen's theses on monsters and the monstrosity. Much like *yōkais*, though Outsiders exist in the same plane as humans, they too are out of reach by occupying abandoned spaces where they would not be found immediately. Though their nature is painted as evil at first glance, they too are later seen to be just as morally ambiguous yet docile, in contrast to how they are perceived by the humans in the story. This lens further allows the interpretation that Teacher's monstrous appearance and traits are not a source of evil, and should not be used as a basis to morally define him.

"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" by Ursula Guin is a short story where all the happiness and peace in a utopian society is dependent on the suffering of one child, and it was interesting to draw comparisons between this and Nagabe's work, where people justify trying to sacrifice a little girl for the supposed greater good. "Evil Society in Ursula K. Le Guin's 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas'" was an analysis of the short story particularly examined for how it defined evil actions, and this definition partially provided the basis for how to define the actions of the Inside in turn: "The common intention of such an evil act is the belief system which justifies the harmful action in the name of 'some presumed good'" (Putri et al 3). The definition of evil, as it is referred to in this paper, is further influenced by Staub's *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, in which he calls evil any incredibly harmful act upon others (2). Through this definition, the Inside's want to sacrifice a human being, as well as the purging of its own people who may be "infected" are considered evil.

Chapter 3:

Society's Making of the Monster

Language is arbitrary, yet it is also true that words typically convey agreed-upon meanings in their given cultures. The term “monster” is very charged in Western works, for example, and the word typically has many negative connotations in day-to-day conversations (Romodanovskii 3). Monsters may be seen as such for the nature of their actions, appearances, or general living practices, with said nature being seen as fundamentally wrong by the societies that dictate they are monsters in the first place. However, works such as *The Girl from the Other Side: Siiil, a Rún*, which combines both Japanese influences and ideas from Western cultures, demonstrate how monsters are not always morally reprehensible. As readers consume this manga series, they can consider three main parties monstrous, albeit on different levels: Teacher, Shiva, and the humans who want them dead. Each party falls under a different definition of the term “monster”, and the party one considers monstrous will change depending on the lens with which they view said party.

According to Jeffrey Cohen in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, the word *monster* is derived from the word *monstrum*, which translates to “*that which reveals*” (Cohen 4). It is true that one of the commonly accepted definitions of a monster, especially in literature, is that which provides a social commentary on the parties who deem it a monster. As such, monsters reveal a grand deal about the cultural values held by whoever deems a party monstrous in the first place. As monsters are typically defined by the societies who ostracise them, however, the found family of Teacher, who is a blackened, “cursed” being with inhuman features, and Shiva, who is a girl that society declared should be sacrificed given her immunity to being infected by “Outsiders”

like Teacher, are considered to be monstrous parties by most of the characters who meet them over the course of their story; this holds true even as the people who want Shiva and Teacher dead are consistently guilty of morally reprehensible acts, acting upon fear more than reason as they raze towns full of innocent lives to allegedly prevent the spread of whatever “curse” makes Outsiders have monstrous appearances and lack many emotions. The distinctions between Outsiders are not made fully clear, though many natural Outsiders (otherwise known as Black Children) supposedly answer to a “Mother”, who seems to be a goddess of darkness who symbolises much of the natural world, as opposed to a god of light who symbolises humanity’s interests and is worshipped by the society that dehumanises both Teacher and Shiva. Despite his Outsider status, however, Teacher is shown to have many human qualities and emotions.

One of the two titular characters in *The Girl from the Other Side* is Teacher, a being who is introduced in the story as a monster who lives in the woods and raises the visibly human little girl that is Shiva. His appearance is heavily inked throughout the series. Visually speaking, Teacher is predominantly an abyssal black. Outsiders like him, who have inhuman features such as antlers or animalistic snouts, share this shading, and each is also called a “Black Child”. The manga series visually conveys dualism in how it contrasts black and white and the concept of darkness versus light in its storytelling. However, it is worth noting that Teacher is not someone who was born a “Black Child”. He used to be a human with a child and a wife, but was “cursed” to be an Outsider by a Black Child who gave him a part of itself in order to make him more whole, and before he succumbed to injuries like his family had. The Black Child is hinted to be Shiva, though the semantics of Shiva’s shift or reincarnation into a human girl are never explained; much of the series’ larger story is left rather abstract. However, even when Teacher was recognisably human, the theocratic society that alienated him as an Outsider was the same

he used to be a part of, back when soldiers killed off his village in an alleged effort to keep the curse from spreading further. The society's understanding of good and evil is very black and white, though characters like Shiva and Teacher represent a mix of humanity and Otherness.

Regardless of his monstrous appearance with long black horns, a demonic tail, and very tall frame, Teacher has strikingly white eyes with human-like black pupils. He has a house, where he cooks and cleans and dresses everyday in clothes people in the West may wear, such as black slacks and dress shoes, and white button-ups beneath long black coats. When he starts taking care of Shiva, he feeds her bread and participates in her nightly prayers. He protects Shiva from soldiers who seek to kill her, politely requesting that they leave Shiva in peace, and that they “do not seek harm upon this child [Shiva]”, even after they had shot many arrows into his back as he moved to shield the little girl. However, Teacher is aware of how much he is feared. In the same scene, he only gets the soldiers to leave after threatening to curse them to be just like he is. Throughout the series, just as well, Teacher fears his “curse”, too, and the possibility of potentially harming Shiva or dooming her to be like him. He insists that she never so much as touch his hand even after it becomes clear over the course of the story that Shiva cannot be “cursed”/infected to be an Outsider like Teacher. Just as well, in the beginning of the series, Teacher struggles with keeping a truth from Shiva: that, rather than being in his temporary care, Shiva was instead abandoned in the woods by the woman she considered her auntie. While this proves to be more complicated, Teacher's careful guardianship of Shiva, along with his internal struggles, suggests that he exhibits far too much humanity to fall into the “evil” classification of the term *monster*.

In Japan, “monsters” typically fall under the broader term of *yōkai*. However, all *yōkai* can be considered monstrous in some fashion, given that ghosts, spirits, and other supernatural

beings have qualities that make them Other (Romodanovskii 7). While Western stories may consider monsters evil, Children's stories do not always tell tales of *yōkai* being evil, and many good or neutral forces exist. Even the children's series/videogame series *Yo-kai Watch* demonstrates that some *yōkai*-based monsters can be cute and befriended, with other popular franchises such as *Pokémon* and *Digimon* taking a broader array of influences while still portraying monsters as marketable, fun, and entertaining. However, *yōkai* in Japanese folklore tend to serve the purpose of providing cautionary tales or morals for how people should live, regardless of how old they are; for example, the threat of *kappa*, or turtle-shelled water monsters, warns people to neither swim alone nor swim in stagnant waters, as *kappa* may otherwise harm them (3). The Edo period in particular shifted the view of *kappa* from malevolent beings that would kidnap children, rape women, eat human flesh, and drown both people and animals into more mischievous creatures known mainly for doing such things as looking up women's clothing or pulling horses towards the water, being reprimanded in some manner, and then offering apologies such as written oaths and bunches of fish to gain forgiveness. The apology gifts showed *kappa* occasionally being helpful to humans, and this is especially the case when they would share the recipe for their special wonder medicine said to cure any ailments, including loss of limbs (Ashkenazi 195-196). The Edo period, in which ancient Tokyo, or Edo, was declared the country's capital and a warrior clan ruled from 1603 to 1868, saw *yōkai* gain public popularity, alongside a renewed appreciation for storytelling overall (Romodanovskii 8). The fact that *yōkai* such as *kappa* became less evil and more comical over time and as people grew fonder of them also supports the idea that monsters are largely defined more by the ways they differ from the standard-looking human than the ways they choose to act towards said humans. *Yōkai* were relatable, and "As long as the monster is relatable, it does not evoke the feeling of

uncanniness and fear” (4). In order to consider monsters as evil creatures, people would have to think that monsters are beings that are “meant to be wrong, liminal, and... [evocative of] a feeling of disgust”; the popularity of *yōkai* showed that this was clearly not the case, even as public opinions swayed in support of *yōkai* stories to finding them more foolish (though notably not more disturbing) in later historical periods (22). Should Outsiders like Teacher be classified under the more general term of *yōkai*, it is perhaps easier to see how a “monster” can be a loving parental guardian rather than an evil party best left feared and alone. Familial bonds are relatable ones, and Teacher was humanised through his guardianship over Shiva.

Even when monsters are family-friendly creatures, or, at the very least, *neutral* ones, it is clear that monsters are made of parties who, while they may not be inherently harmful or evil, are noticeably Other. For example, according to Daniil Romodanovskii, the “way a viewer perceives a monstrosity of a character is related to how much ‘otherness’ they can experience towards the monster” (4). Being “Other” through this definition can mean being *outside* of the usual societal norms most people abide by. Given that *The Girl from the Other Side* is a Japanese manga, it is important to contextualise the etymology of the terms *soto*, meaning *outside* or *outside-group*, and *uchi*, meaning *inside* or *inside-group* (Suzuki). In Japan, even the language is rooted in the constant societal distinctions between these two groups, with the in-group, or *uchi*, referring to close-knit circles and the out-group, or *soto*, referring to strangers, or those who fall outside of this circle; some verb conjugations, for instance, first rely on the speaker determining if the person they are referring to is *uchi* or *soto*. The term for an Outsider, or the monstrous, blackened beings who can infect regular humans to become like them in *The Girl from the Other Side*, is likewise *soto*. The beings who fall outside of the conventional looks and emotive capacities are considered not only inhuman but also monsters to fear and kill. However, the

Insiders are always seen resorting to killing, sometimes even razing entire villages, in comparison to the often more docile Outsiders. Infecting humans to become as they are is not something that Outsiders consciously do, either; unless a human is like Shiva, who appears to be the only person immune to the Outsiders' infection, they will naturally turn into an Outsider after any contact is made with their skin. At one point, Shiva's old auntie, a woman who found her in the woods as a baby, becomes an Outsider. She, Shiva, and Teacher live peacefully together for a while after this change, given the fact that the new Outsider would never be able to safely live in the *uchi* of her old walled village again, though she gradually loses her old memories and becomes a tree in chapter 21. While the three create their own *uchi* for a time, it is clear that Outsiders are alienated much like the *soto* in Japanese society would be kept at a distance as well, and this alienation is just one consequence of being *soto* that magnifies all the aspects considered monstrous about Outsiders in the first place.

While Teacher and Shiva find a found family with each other that subverts the expectations of the society that alienated them, the base alienation they both faced was perpetuated by the existing systems of the theocratic society that estranges them and declares that both of them are better off dead. Found families can derive from being estranged from those who are meant to be one's *uchi* from the moment people are born, such as birth families and communities that the estranged may grow to fundamentally disagree with. In the manga series, rather than Shiva and Teacher being traditionally estranged from their closest family due to a difference in values, they are estranged from the closest community they live by due to the community's religious beliefs; the alienation they face can parallel the estrangement non-religious persons may face in a very devout religious community. According to the article "On Alienation: Two Contrasting Views", the psychological, or "subjective", alienation Shiva

and Teacher faced without one another is made mostly “objective”, or pushed by existing societal structures that deem the way they live is wrong in every sense (Lamb & Lehrman, 264–265). Outsiders/*Soto* like Teacher are believed to infect regular-looking human beings with the “curse” that makes them appear so monstrous. Shiva, on the other hand, is a girl who the majority of the community believes should be killed to appease a god, and for the good of the many people who fear the Outsiders. Necessity and fear somewhat promote what Lamb and Lehrman refers to as a *Gesellschaft*-like alienation, where their found family with one another is motivated in part by necessity and fear rather than trying to fit into any social norms from the *Gemeinschaft*, or close-knit, walled village that ostracises Outsiders and, given the fact that they want to kill Shiva for her very existence, a little girl (264–265). The fact that Shiva is hunted by desperate, fearful people in the walled village is one of the more obvious examples of how, when shifting the perspective in which you examine the story, the fearful religious community is far more in the moral wrong than any of the Outsiders encountered throughout the series.

Shiva, despite being portrayed as a pure-hearted, innocent human girl for much of the series, was originally a wandering Black Child who saved Teacher’s life and humanity through cursing him. The fact that they share this history in this fashion, even if neither are aware of that fact for much of the story, contributes to how well both Shiva and Teacher each blur the lines between humanity and the monstrosity of Otherness. However, Shiva also blurs the lines through the fact that she is portrayed as being pure to the point of being alien. She contrasts with Teacher and other Outsiders through her white dress and hair, along with her pale skin. Teacher calls her an Insider/*uchi* and considers her to be like the other people in the theocratic society who are very sparsely called the same. However, other people who see her either consider her to be an Outsider given the fact that they find her out in the woods, or they believe that killing her will

lead to being saved themselves. For instance, Shiva is at one point hunted by a soldier who seems to convince himself that he must kill her in order to ensure he and his family will not be cursed, even as his home is likely to be burnt to the ground under the society's usual excuse to prevent the curse of the Outsiders from spreading.

According to David Williams in his book *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature*, "The human body through its symbolic extensions as well as its physical structure, provides the most complete paradigm for order and thus for disorder that has precedence and priority in the monstrous configuration of reality" (Williams 108). Therefore, it can be said that the natural state of a healthy human body is considered the norm and is perceived as something with proper order and structure. Whatever opposes this, such as a body that does not fall into the healthy norm, is perceived as the "opposition" to the natural state and hence considered "monstrous" (Scarborough 37). Scarborough further states that "to transgress the natural boundaries of the body constituted a type of threat to Medieval notions of the body as both made in the image of God and as text in which one could read the maker's intentions" (37). Therefore, the otherness of disabled persons was perceived as monstrous, negating the fact that deformities have nothing to do with a subject's willingness to be born with such, because of the belief that humans are made with God's intentional will. Deformities were treated as sins that people were guilty of, even if they were born with such deficiencies. Just as Cohen mentioned the monstrum being "that which reveals", it was as if a person was revealing their sins by revealing their otherness (Cohen 4). Just as well, this aligns with "St. Isidore's pronouncements about defects being manifestations of divine will... that monsters are divinely caused and involve 'some fault or other in newborn creatures'" (Scarborough 37). He uses the terms *monstrum* and *portentum* interchangeably and claims that *portentums* "exist either by

virtue of some bodily size beyond the measure common among men... or else by smallness of bodily stature. .. [or] a hugeness of parts, such as misshapen heads or superfluous members." (Friedman 112). This concept once again aligns with how Teacher's actions do not determine who he is to Insiders, but people instead assess his outward appearance with malformed body parts and deem him a monster.

Belief and fear play into one another, and, despite how religions typically associate purity with moral virtue, Shiva's supposed purity led to many people in the book treating her the same alienating way they would other Outsiders. Sacrificing her was thought, by the majority of Insiders, to be the key to purifying their land and appeasing their god. While purity culture typically refers to abstinence, the Yamato Dynasty used to perform human sacrifices as a means to similarly keep nature decontaminated and ensure sturdy constructions by sacrificing individuals in areas where embankments or bridges were to be built (Tsuda 760-763). In this way, Shiva was always perceived as the sacrificial doll rather than a human being.

It was only through Shiva's association with an Outsider like Teacher, and through living outside of the typical walled society most stayed bound to, that some Insiders deemed her a monstrous Outsider, and therefore worth killing regardless of the context. Fear is the main motivator of most of the humans in the story. However the polarised view of Shiva was not always kept. For instance, the king of the Insiders showed sympathy for the little girl, and one of his guards helped Shiva escape being sacrificed during a portion of the story in which Shiva was captured and brought back to "Inside". However, the fearful majority was monstrous in the "evil" sense of the word through not only how they treated Outsiders, but how they treated one another in the face of fear, isolating their society with a surrounding wall in an attempt to keep familiar-looking humans inside, and anyone who strayed from the norms outside.

The walled society of the Insiders can be compared to the era of Japan in which it was governed by *sakoku*, or the foreign policy that dictated Japan should stay isolationist the entire duration of the Edo period (Kazui and Videen 283-284). During this time, the heightened appreciation for folktales and monsters may have stemmed from the fact that Japan was focused on its own culture, and people sought ways to be entertained (Romodanovskii 8). Just as well, and similar to the society in *The Girl From the Other Side*, the isolationism of the country helped promote a strengthened sense of national identity, which helped to keep Japan's society stable and rooted in its base values rather than affected by any such effects as Westernisation at that time. Insiders were by and large steadfast in the idea that Shiva, and Outsiders overall, should be killed; this is in no small part thanks to the long-time structure of their established religion to a god of light, and to following a religious leader who allegedly knew of the deity's will.

Around the time of the Middle Ages, religion began to move away from such schools of thought as animism and totemism, as both gave grand spiritual significance to animals and nature overall (Yan and Zhang 2). Instead, religious thinkers began to see the natural world, including human beings, as separate from the spiritual world. Dualism came into play with how everything was kept separate, and this same black-and-white contrast can be seen in *The Girl from the Other Side*. Even as both Shiva and Teacher are characters that are visually presented as opposites, the underlying story of the manga series seems to hint at a preference towards nature being a part of everything, with the belief that the physical world is less worthy of the spiritual one being a belief held by the Insiders. Just as Shiva and Teacher oppose keeping worlds separate through their experience living together as a family, the idea of dualism was later responded to with the idea that all living things have an innate divinity, and the entire world is connected rather than separated on different levels of existence. Shiva and Teacher are connected in the story as having

met in their pasts and having merged in some fashion, and it is through the fact that they are both light (Insider) and dark (Outsider) that the Outsider curse that afflicts much of the world around them does not take away from the spiritual humanity of either. Teacher maintains his parental want to take care of Shiva, and Shiva maintains the youthful innocence and compassion of a little girl.

In contrast to the idea that the monster must be Other or generally lack the typical concept of humanity in some contexts, humans themselves are called “hopeful monsters” according to the article “Narrative Performance in the Contemporary Monster Theory” (Punday 811). Like in *The Girl from the Other Side*, people’s actions can be motivated by the biology of their main physical bodies as well as the biology of their brains’ many misleading emotions, like fear, that have the brain act as the “real villain” of their stories (812). Insiders all throughout the story are slaves to their own mass fear and panic about the curse of the Outsiders, and to the point that the mob mentality leads to the deaths of many healthy, uninfected people. However, their main physical bodies do little in comparison to communicate their monstrous aspects, save for the fact that the typical human body contrasted with Teacher’s, as an Outsider, and Shiva’s, as a girl who could not be cursed. Insiders only deemed people with similar capabilities and biological forms as human; aside from this, Punday’s article posed the idea that monsters are the end result of story contexts that should not be viewed in isolation, separate from the societies that dubbed them monsters. They can provide, unify, and dismantle societal and narrative conventions (809). For example, in the manga series, Teacher was a human who was turned into a monstrous-looking Outsider while maintaining more human compassion for a little girl than the fear-ridden Insiders who aimed to kill her. Shiva was a monstrous Black Child who reincarnated to be a normal-looking human who maintained more moral understanding of right and wrong

than adults who rationalised her death would to save their own families from dying the same. Given how Insiders were very clearly in the moral wrong all throughout the story, *The Girl from the Other Side* invites readers to be critical of how they choose to define monster, and to consider the aspects of its world that determine Teacher and Shiva's found family should be ostracised and, taken to its in-world extreme, destroyed.

Chapter 4:

Religion's Ostracising of the Other

In order to assess the morality of the society in *The Girl from the Other Side*, and assert the idea that Shiva and Teacher's found family is in itself an act of social defiance and superior moral decency over the society that discriminates against them, a baseline definition of "evil" needs to be established. In the manga series, not only are Outsiders treated as lesser, monstrous beings, but the main religion of the human society that wants Shiva and Teacher dead is one that supposedly supports the sacrifice of an innocent little human girl for the sake of society as a whole, and to rid them of the "curse" of Outsiders. Similarly, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" is a short piece of fiction that depicts a place that is always happy and peaceful, but is only such a way because one lone child has to suffer in complete isolation and anguish so that all others can be happy (Guin 3). The act of sacrificing a child's life and/or happiness is naturally considered a morally reprehensible one, and even before assessing the act through the lenses of different schools of philosophical thought. The act speaks volumes about the evil of society as a whole.

Given that *The Girl from the Other Side* was originally printed in Japanese, it is worth examining the history of human sacrifice in Japan in particular. Early historical accounts show evidence of humans being sacrificed in order to bless building projects such as bridges, and to prevent natural disasters (Tsuda 761). In the manga series, sacrificing Shiva to the God of Light is thought to be the way to prevent being cursed by "evil" Outsiders. Sacrificial offerings to deities were typically expected to protect or benefit the sacrificers in a way that would increase their own chances of survival. However, the belief that sacrifices could influence events outside

of complete human control, such as natural disasters or crop harvests, may in part be to keep the general populace appeased when their leaders have no productive way to help them. For example, in the case of an account following Emperor Nintoku from 323 A.D., Japan's Mamuta River and the Kitakawa River dangerously overflowed in a way in which "the torrent was beyond the ability of the stricken populace" (760). However, the Emperor claimed to have a vision in the form of a dream, which informed him of two specific people to be sacrificed from his provinces, and in order to appease the two rivers' deities (760). Despite the fact that these two specific people did nothing notably wrong, human sacrifices were relied on to provide solutions where no truly actionable ones existed. Shiva's sacrifice, similarly, would have provided a "solution" to an issue that was well beyond the ability of people to control.

The head religious leader of the Inside convinces people that sacrificing Shiva will appease the God of Light that they worship, and this idea encourages regular people to abandon the idea that Shiva is a little girl, and that she is instead their and their loved ones' only way to salvation. She is dehumanised in a way that justifies the base evil of trying to kill her, given that her personhood is cast aside for the usefulness of her death. On the sacrifice of the child in "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", the story states "that the abuse the child had to endure is rooted in the evil nature of the society" (Putri et al. 2). Similarly, the fact that Shiva had to endure being hunted and tricked into going back to the Inside at one point in the story, then was almost sacrificed and had to escape the Inside once more, is tied to the scared and desperate evil that comes from a society that is subject to a fear-based religion. While many early religions justified human sacrifice through similar belief systems that trusted divine entities to reward such losses of life, "The common intention of such an evil act is the belief system which justifies the harmful action in the name of 'some presumed good'" (3). Belief systems go far in bringing

about the intentional suffering of an innocent, with the promised benefit of helping the society that sacrifices said innocent, and this is the case with the theocratic society that comprises the Inside. Evil, as defined by Staub in his *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, is “extreme harm” or extreme human destructiveness... like suffering, pain, or loss of life (2). All acts of human sacrifice can therefore be considered evil actions, and religion should not be considered an adequate measure of morality or moral virtue.

Religion influenced the formation of monsters just as it skewed what is “good” and what is “evil”, and to the point that basic, universally held definitions of such moral alignments require much more context and nuance when examining set systems of religious beliefs. Religion can moralise and manipulate what is factually true just as it can corrupt altruistic universal values so that universally evil actions, like the murder of an innocent through human sacrifice, are justified, while universally “good” actions, such as taking in and raising an orphaned child in the same way Teacher did in *The Girl from the Other Side*, are depicted as unnatural and harmful. In this way, a society’s set of religion-based morals can differ from the universal concepts of good and evil.

In medieval times, physical and moral differences were the focus of Christianity’s making of monsters; people of different nationalities and beliefs alike were depicted as Other, or outsiders, much like the Outsiders in the manga series (Dendle 369-370). Rather than a universal tolerance of all other human beings, medieval Christianity obsessively created many kinds of monsters through exaggerating the differences between people who fell under the “Other” classification and the Christians of late medieval England (380). In the manga series, the differences between humans and Outsiders are more fantasy-oriented, and, as a result, they are already exaggerated in a fairytale way. In medieval England, groups with different religious

beliefs, such as Muslims and Jews, and groups with physically notable racial differences, such as Mongols and Africans, were deemed morally inferior as enemies of Christian ideals. However, making monsters of those with different views and racial profiles merely justified more *evil acts*, such as bloody conquests and the colonisation of people deemed lesser or demonic. For example, in the Bible, Canaanites were depicted as giants in order to morally justify the Hebrews' conquering of them (384). Just as well, Muslims were portrayed as evil, demonic people during the medieval Crusades, and many myths were created to spread antisemitism and Nazi ideology during the times of Adolf Hitler (385). Skin color was a large focus of the creation of monsters, and the contrast of black skin versus white skin was exaggerated greatly in medieval England, as “Blackness is a physical manifestation of a moral turn from ‘pagan’ sin to Christian virtue” (380). Similarly, *The Girl from the Other Side* is a story where anything dark is demonised by the society of the Inside, while anything light is considered pure.

In the religion of the manga series, all publicly available scriptures in the Inside focus on the God of Light and the Goddess of Darkness. The God of Light is said to provide his followers in the Inside with happiness and prosperity, while the Goddess of Darkness is said to have stolen Happiness and to have played tricks on all of the God of Light's creations, which includes humans which was mentioned in the second chapter of the manga. According to the religion, it was because the Goddess of Darkness was such a mischievous trickster that the God of Light had to curse her into a monster, and her transformation prompted her to make her own punishment into a curse to spread to all of the God of Light's creations. According to the Inside's legends, Outsiders like Teacher were created when regular humans were infected with the Goddess of Darkness' curse. However, like religious systems in the real world, the narrative was skewed to justify some actions as more morally justified than others.

Much later in the manga series, it was revealed that while the God of Light created day, the Goddess of Darkness created the night. Darkness in itself was not evil, and it was instead necessary to keep the world balanced. The God of Light created the trees and mountains, while the Goddess of Darkness created the sea and soils of the world. Both the God and the Goddess used pieces of themselves to create Life as a whole, so the God of Light was a fatherly figure over all of creation, while the Goddess of Darkness was the motherly counterpart. It was revealed in chapter 42 that most of the population of the Inside is not aware of this truth, and instead believes that the Goddess of Darkness is evil just like the monstrous Outsiders. Though the head priest knew about this truth, as he had many scriptures left from numerous head priests over the span of years and years, the head priest purposefully kept the truth hidden like those before him, and continued to paint the Goddess of Darkness as evil to the people, in order to keep the people of the Inside “safe” from the Outsiders. Much like true religious leaders over the course of history, the head priest conceded to portraying the true story of the world in a way that favoured one side of a natural balance while alienating and making monsters of the Other.

In order to further analyse the church in the manga setting, Louise Althusser’s essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” was examined. An ideological state apparatus (ISA) is an apparatus where an institution uses ideology and beliefs to control people, unifying people under the same set of beliefs. A repressive state apparatus (RSA) controls people the same, but through such methods as intimidation and violent enforcement (Althusser 79-80). Religious institutions are often seen as ISA, as religions teach sets of beliefs for people to abide by regardless of the perceived social class (80). If there are beliefs to maintain and morality to uphold, then the ISA of a common denomination can help keep societal order. However, ISAs do not always reflect reality. Belief systems do not interpret social structures or reality as they are,

but instead present an imagined version of social and economic conditions to the masses so that people interpret many aspects of their lives by subjective ideals and polar extremes rather than objective facts (80). Similarly, the church in the manga presents a very dualistic view between light and dark and Insiders versus Outsiders. The church also encourages violence through the polarisation of Outsiders and darkness as both evil extremes. Though a church is supposed to be an ISA, it has subtle RSA traits where it still promotes violence and the eradication of not only blatant Outsiders, but Insiders supposedly cursed by Outsiders.

Even in the real world, people's long-held religious beliefs and values can be more believable to them than newfound truths that go against them. Despite some reluctance of soldiers to capture or kill Shiva upon seeing she was a little girl in the beginning of the manga series, people ultimately felt morally justified in pursuing her since they believed in the words of the head priest of the Inside, and they believed the God of Light was a good god who would bless them if they sacrificed Shiva. They believed the God of Light would save them from the curse, and the Goddess of Darkness, perhaps in part because this provided a way to get rid of the alleged "threat" of the Outsiders they deemed monsters. However, the truth of how the Goddess of Darkness is not evil was also revealed to one other party besides the head priest: the King of the Inside.

The King of the Inside depicts a morally conflicted character who can be compared to the people referred to by the title of "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas". In the short story, the people who live in Omelas are shown the truth of their city at a certain age: that the prosperity and happy lives of Omelas are only made possible through the suffering of a lone child constantly kept in the dark. After learning this, people can choose whether or not to leave the city for good (Guin 5). When the King is given a similar moral dilemma in the story, and

after learning the truth, he does not choose to keep the truth a secret like the head priest. The King of the Inside is considered a weak-willed king by his people because he is said to have never swung a blade to hurt someone in his life before the events of the story. When Shiva is captured, and he first goes to kill her, he asks her for her last words, and if she has any friends or family left, and she says she has no one left. She cries, and the King is depicted as crestfallen when he lifts his blade to kill her; he has a heart attack instead, and stays in a coma for three days; after this point, he loses more resolve about whether or not sacrificing Shiva is the right thing to do. He eventually follows the head priest into a secret chamber where an abandoned church stored away all the true scriptures about the God of Light and the Goddess of Darkness. When he is shown proof that Shiva's sacrifice would not truly stop any curse, and that the Goddess of Darkness is not even evil, he does what can be argued any morally upstanding person should do: he tries to tell the truth to his people and save the life of an innocent. The King makes the choice not to abide by the established system his kingdom believes in due to his own set of morals. However, his subjects do not believe him to be telling the truth when he says Shiva's sacrifice would not truly save anyone. They instead believe the head priest, who takes it upon himself to try and sacrifice Shiva instead.

Chapter 45 features the sacrificial ceremony where Shiva was expected to die. Before this point, the head priest stabbed the King of the Inside for not agreeing to go along with the evil act of sacrificing Shiva after he had learned the truth, and the head priest had left the King to die. Instead, he interrupts the sacrificial ceremony and tries to tell the people the truth of what the priest lied about. The head priest instead tells his audience that the King has gone mad, and that the act of killing a child, while universally reprehensible outside of this specific system, is the true way to salvation. Shiva, who is always depicted with white hair, skin, and clothes, is the

epitome of purity in the story, yet everyone but the King and a trusted soldier who helps her escape would rather kill this purity off in order to allegedly save themselves.

Shiva's characterisation and name both support the idea that in *The Girl from the Other Side*, she is supposed to be seen by the reader as visibly and morally pure and "good". The name "Shiva" can have many potential meanings. For example, in Sanskrit, the word "*śiva*" can mean "auspicious, propitious, gracious, benign, kind, benevolent" and "friendly" (Zimmer 124-126). As a little girl who is kind to Teacher and very outgoing even to strangers, Shiva embodies these qualities throughout the story. Just as well, with the Sanskrit root "*śarv*", the name can roughly translate to "one who can kill the forces of darkness"; this is appropriate given how her sacrifice would allegedly eliminate the curse of the Outsiders (Sharma 306). Perhaps the most obvious tell of the character's intended moral alignment is the fact that her name is considered by the *Vishnu sahasranama* to mean "The Pure One" (Chinmayananda 24). Shiva's innocence, personality, and "pure" (light) human appearance all contribute to her being a character that is depicted as someone who should be nurtured and protected, just as Teacher does in the found family he creates with her. All of this is despite the fact that both she and Teacher are the more commonly recognised monsters of the manga series' main human society; the contradiction of Shiva's moral purity and her dehumanisation by those in the Inside may also be because the concept of purity, just as the creation of monsters, can be influenced by the motivations of a country's leaders.

Isolation, the need for control, and the scarcity of resources can contribute to the concept of "purity" in a society, and not only in terms of moral virtue, but also in terms of keeping a country's sense of nationalism homogenous. Humans are a tribal species that thinks in the logic of Us versus Them; just as medieval Christianity exaggerated the differences between different races and different religions to make monsters of anyone who looked or believed "differently",

anything “Other” can be demonised as impure. Japan’s isolationist *sakoku* policy during the Edo period ensured that Japan’s identity and culture stayed “pure”, as only selective interactions with other countries were allowed, and the controlled isolation meant the isolation of society’s qualities and making them uniform (Kazui and Videen 284). Like the walled Inside in *The Girl from the Other Side*, the social and moral order, free of many outside influences, may be the kind of purity that is prioritised over the universally “good” purity of Shiva as a person. In this way, she can still be made a monster. While Shiva’s monstrous qualities are more implicit, Teacher is a blatant hybrid of what humans are familiar with and what they are anxious of becoming throughout the story: a sacrificial goat.

Goats were often depicted as sacrificial offerings early in the Old Testament of the Bible, and were particularly mentioned in the Book of Leviticus (New International Version, Leviticus 17:7). Although Shiva is the character most characters in *The Girl from the Other Side* want sacrificed, Nagabe once said in an interview that Teacher is in part based on a mountain goat (Nagabe). Following Mosaic Law, goats were sacrificed as offerings to, among other things, temporarily atone for sins before the coming of Jesus Christ, and before he could permanently die to atone for humanity’s sins at the time of the New Testament (New International Version, Ezekiel 28). In a similar way, killing Outsiders is seen as killing evil in *The Girl from the Other Side*, and they are seen as less than human the same; perhaps Shiva’s coming and desired sacrifice would be akin to permanent atonement in the eyes of humans living in the Inside. While Shiva looks human, Teacher’s goat motifs may also point to how demons in Christianity are depicted as goat-headed, and false idols were described as having goat-like qualities, such as in verse seven of Leviticus when God is said to state, “They must no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons that they have prostituted themselves with” when forbidding the sacrifice of

animals to other deities. Goats were used for meat, milk, and sacrifices in general in the Old Testament, facing the consequences of humanity's sins for merely having what could be considered demonic qualities, and for providing useful resources such as meat and milk. Teacher provides what is needed for Shiva when she stays with him, despite his appearance and how he too faces the consequences of society's evil. The fact that Teacher familiarly acts like a human, as a hybrid of monstrous goat and human, makes him the perfect monster depiction for the society of the Inside, where humans are afraid to become just as he is: a sacrifice that does no lasting good for society as a whole.

In literature, monsters are often depicted as hybrid creatures that combine familiar human qualities with the uncanny valley of creatures and concepts that are far from human (Cohen 4). Just as well, monsters often portray the anxieties of the societies that deem them monsters in the first place (7-8). Teacher's hybridisation is one of the strongest proofs that he is not a monster because he is morally inferior to the society of the Inside, but is instead the kind of monster that reminds people of the truth they refuse to fully acknowledge out of fear for what it means for their lives in the Inside: that any of them can be next to be cast aside and called an Outsider. Around six years before the events of the story take place, a cursed person appeared in the inner cities of the Inside, and as a result, thousands upon thousands of people were massacred to allegedly prevent the spread of the curse, with the event being so catastrophic that the same area, at the time the story starts in the "present", is called the "hole in the map" because it is a large blot in any map of the kingdom after the incident took place. However, it is later revealed that this event was merely to give the God of Light a body; the massive loss of human life is revealed to have been pointless, and not for the greater good whatsoever, given that the God of Light did not grant the people of the Inside anything worth all the loss of innocents. With how common it

is in the story for settlements to be torched due to fears that people are infected, it would be natural for people to worry about their homes being the next to be called an infected zone.

Just as goats can be demonised, seen as lesser, and seen as disposable, perhaps the fear in an Outsider like Teacher is the unconscious acknowledgement that anyone can be deemed cursed and lose their lives, no matter how devout they are, and no matter what precautions they try to take against the possibility of being deemed an Outsider. While Outsiders do not die in themselves, people who are thought to be *infected* certainly do. People in *The Girl from the Other Side* seem to implicitly acknowledge that virtue means very little in terms of survival; what *does* matter is ensuring that they do what they are told. The purity of being “uninfected” is maintained by the social order and religious belief system, and maintaining this kind of purity is deemed more important than the lives of innocents such as residents of the kingdom, a little girl, or a harmless outcast with monstrous qualities like Teacher.

Not only does Teacher’s design suggest he is a reminder that anyone in the Inside can die, but he and Shiva also show, through their wholesome found family in the woods, even more of the kingdom’s fears. After all, a found family in the woods may prove that life outside of the kingdom could be more fulfilling, that the “Other” can show more empathy than a next-door neighbor, and that the monstrous Outsider Teacher, alongside the pure and innocent little girl of Shiva, can live more virtuous *human* lives than anybody else in a fear-ruled world.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

The real world is far more colorful and complex than caricatures of good and evil, monster and human, or people “inside” a society and those “outside” of it. Teacher and Shiva create a found family that is likewise more complex than the viewpoints of Insiders who see, ostracise, and even hunt them in *The Girl From the Other Side: Siúil, a Rún*. Teacher is seen as a lesser, inhuman species with his goat horns and charred black skin, regardless of the fact that he is a capable caretaker to Shiva, preparing and finding her food even without a sense of taste for himself, and ensuring she is properly cared for despite the fact that he never had to take care of Shiva after she was abandoned in the woods in the first place. Shiva, on the other hand, is considered strange enough to be seen as an Outsider like Teacher by Insider soldiers who see her beyond the Inside’s walls, though she is hunted like an animal, given the fact that the Inside thinks she should be sacrificed to appease the God of Light.

However, the family these two make represents a healthy, wholesome family dynamic independent from a fearmongering society, which the main kingdom of the manga series desired in some ways and feared in others. Despite the dualism and binaries clearly depicted in the art and character designs of Nagabe’s manga series, the story is built on the subversion of expectations and the fact that characters do not stay bound to what their visual depictions may traditionally suggest about their characters’ moral alignments. Teacher is not morally lesser just because he does not look human on the outside, regardless of what the majority of Insiders believe about him and other Outsiders like him. He exhibits more compassion than most characters encountered in the manga series, and the same can be said about Shiva.

Monsters are mainly dictated by what the majority in a society deems as Other through both values and racial demographics. Religious and political motivations influence who is dehumanised and alienated from the larger part of a whole. Just as well, moral alignments have very little to do with what constitutes a monster, though monsters may be demonised and deemed morally inferior for the same reason they are established by society in the first place: to reflect the wants of those in power. In literature and general storytelling, they can provide an indirect commentary on a society's fixations, including both deep-rooted fears and wishes. Even the monsters in fairy tales and cautionary *yōkai* tales are characters that are very telling of the time periods and world cultures they are derived from, as they speak volumes about the idolised and ostracised values of their given societies.

Japan's isolationist era portrayed a lot of similarities with the Inside in *The Girl From the Other Side* as well, since Japan, while under its Sakoku system, was incredibly nationalistic and strove to keep its identity pure, or free from the majority of outside influences. Similarly, the Inside strived to keep free from Outsiders and their curse, with the kingdom being very unified beneath the same religious banner more than anything else. Both Japan during this period when its isolationist policy was in effect, and the Inside while being fixated on keeping the Outside walled out, may have had leaders who needed nations with strong national identities, especially given the fact that isolated societies like Japan and the Inside would have limited resources. The ideal of the found family living beyond the Inside's surrounding walls and, otherwise, all-encompassing influence may resemble the wants people may have had back then when living their day-to-day lives.

Teacher's wish to protect and be the caretaker of Shiva was only considered "wrong" because it conflicted with the main goal of the Inside's religion, which was to sacrifice the

innocent, young life of Shiva. Likewise, even the King of the Inside was considered in the wrong by his subjects and head priest for trying to tell his subjects the truth about the head priest's lies. For the majority of Insiders, the strength of belief superseded the universal, and perhaps what could be considered the more "common sense", moral set of right and wrong, which would dictate that the innocent should be protected rather than killed. All of this again affirms the fact that monsters are not morally inferior merely for the qualities that alienate them; in fact, the qualities that alienate them may simultaneously be the qualities that people envy about them.

In its own way, the found family dynamic that takes the spotlight in *The Girl From the Other Side* is a counter church to worship and attend to for both Teacher and Shiva. The two stay empathetically autonomous in how they live their lives throughout the story, despite being social outcasts, through having one another. It is through nurturing one another that they retain more humanity than the society that makes them monsters.

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