

As a student-scholar, I believe there is a responsibility to research and consider the cultural context of the subject one is examining to create a well-informed argument. In order to responsibly discuss a subject that is from another cultural context, research is important so that potentially false assumptions do not represent the culture being discussed. For the paper I am submitting, I conducted additional research into genre studies, folklore studies, and Japanese literary and popular culture in order to produce a theoretical yet culturally contextualized literary analysis of the Japanese horror novel *Goth*.

In my fall 2016 Literature and Writing Studies course, Studies in Horror, taught by Dr. Rebecca Lush, I was presented with a unique opportunity to examine the Japanese horror novel *Goth* by Otsuichi and consider how the novel constructs monstrous bodies. *Goth* has not gained much scholarly attention as of yet, which meant I had to work harder on developing a plan to find appropriate resources to support my analysis. In fact, my initial research on the novel uncovered only a book review in the CSUSM Library's database. Despite the lack of previous scholarship, I found the novel's portrayal of monstrous bodies compelling and worthy of scholarly attention. The first stage of my research included reviewing the traits of monstrous bodies as defined by scholars working in the Western tradition of horror.

My research began with a question: What qualities constitute a monstrous body? In my initial research, which were secondary sources provided in class, I found reoccurring themes about monstrosity. The first theme I found was that a monstrous body is an abject and impure being, which mostly came from Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An essay on Abjection* and Noël Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*. Then from Carol Clover and J. Halbertsam's work, I found a theme of monstrous characters crossing the lines of gender, thus, making a monstrous gender. Finally, after reading Jeffery Cohen's "Monster Theory," I

found that monstrosity is historically, socially, and culturally constructed. With these materials from scholars that are well-respected in their fields of study, I understood some of the main qualities that the Western horror tradition tends to find in their monsters. Yet, some of these monstrous qualities conflicted with the qualities found in the monstrous characters of *Goth*. Therefore, I realized that I had to research the cultural context of the novel to understand the construction of a monstrous body within *Goth*.

From the research that I conducted, my interpretive analysis of *Goth* explores how the text fits into wider analyses of monstrosity from Western horror tradition, and demonstrates the importance of examining non-Western texts to offer a comprehensive look at the horror genre. After reading Otsuichi's afterword of the novel, I discovered that his monstrous characters are based on Japanese folkloric monsters called *youkai* (also spelled *yokai*) but in a modern form. From the CSUSM library's database, I found only a handful of books and even fewer articles that discuss the nature and history of *youkai* as monstrous entities in Japanese folklore. However, the most helpful information came from Michael Dylan Foster's *Pandemonium and Parade*, which was found in the CSUSM library. After discovering that Michael Dylan Foster is an established professor of folklore with a special interest in Japanese folklore, I read through his other published articles and his book, *Book of the Yokai*, by using the inter-library loan system. I determined that his work would be the most helpful in understanding the historical and cultural concerns of *youkai* in Japan. Zilia Papp's book, *Traditional Monster Imagery in Manga, Anime and Japanese Cinema* and Valerie Wee's article, "Patriarchy and the Horror of the Monstrous Feminine" discuss the subject of gender in *youkai* and how it affects the contemporary retelling of *youkai* narratives. Within these sources, I found differences between the Western perspective of monstrosity and the ambiguous monstrosity that is prevalent in *youkai*. However, the themes

of monstrosity that I found in my initial research, particularly Clover's and Halberstam's ideas of monsters crossing the lines of gender to make an ambiguous monstrous gender, helped me contextualize the ambiguous constructions of monstrosity in the novel, *Goth*.

Each step of the research process allowed me to learn more about the Western horror traditions, discover Japanese folkloric traditions, and understand *youkai* entities. From the research, I created a theoretical analysis about the construction of monstrosity and desire in *Goth*, while also situating the Japanese horror novel in a larger discussion of the horror genre.