Volume 19 Issue 10
Originally issued as A4



Global Journal of human-social science: A
Arts & Humanities - Psychology
Volume 19 Issue 4 Version 1.0 Year 2019
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Goblin Mythology: A Brief Study of the Archetype, Tracing the Explications in English Literature

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Abstract- Folktales refer to the narrative prose literature of the oral tradition. They include various types of stories like myths, legends, parables, allegories, fairy tales, ghost stories and so on. Folktales generally have religious connotations and have mythical and imaginary elements. According to Thompson, "the teller of stories has everywhere and always found eager listeners." Goblins, the myth that originated in literature around the fourteenth century, have become one of the common characters of attraction for the writers that they survived through the fictional world over the centuries and are commonly cited figures in the contemporary works of art. This paper is a brief study on the depiction of goblins in literature. A Goblin is a mythical character that though does not exist in the real world, becomes a recurring character of the imagined real world of the authors as well as of the folktales. The fictional world regards goblins as mischievous, and demon- like and it used them as synonyms for other negative types of fairies of malicious and evil connotations. The belief in such stories was known as "nursery goblinism." The recurring nature of the myth in literature is the proved depiction of the obsession of humans towards evil and good.

Keywords: goblin, hobgoblin, archetype, myths, kobolds, folktales, nursery goblinism, asian goblin tales, and european versions.

GJHSS-A Classification: FOR Code: 200302



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Abstract- Folktales refer to the narrative prose literature of the oral tradition. They include various types of stories like myths, legends, parables, allegories, fairy tales, ghost stories and so on. Folktales generally have religious connotations and have mythical and imaginary elements. According to Thompson, "the teller of stories has everywhere and always found eager listeners." Goblins, the myth that originated in literature around the fourteenth century, have become one of the common characters of attraction for the writers that they survived through the fictional world over the centuries and are commonly cited figures in the contemporary works of art. This paper is a brief study on the depiction of goblins in literature. A Goblin is a mythical character that though does not exist in the real world, becomes a recurring character of the imagined real world of the authors as well as of the folktales. The fictional world regards goblins as mischievous, and demon- like and it used them as synonyms for other negative types of fairies of malicious and evil connotations. The belief in such stories was known as "nursery goblinism." The recurring nature of the myth in literature is the proved depiction of the obsession of humans towards evil and good.

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Introduction

Goblins play a vital role in catering the fertile imaginations of the authors in the fictional world. They can be distinguished from the supernatural ghosts. They are nasty little creatures with a human demeanor, but much smaller in size and with horrific, deformed faces. They are closely related to the helpful beings of Celtic myths. They come from the folktales of France. They are believed to have emerged from the Pyrenees Mountains of Southwestern France, the dividing mountain range between France and Spain. After leaving the mountain, they spread throughout France and multiplied over Europe. After infesting Scandinavia, they came to the British Isles. The native Celts of Britain called the invaders as *Robin Goblin*. The term *hobgoblin* derives from these invaders. The stories about these creatures spread throughout Europe. The reputation of the goblins became more sinister over the ages. Hobgoblin shortened to the goblin.

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The term goblin referred to any of the grotesque, small but friendly brownies- like creatures among the Fay. Later, it also included the sub-terrain species as well as fairies with a hurtful and malicious intent, such as the *knocker, kobold, phookas, spriggan, troll,* and *trow.* Goblins date back to the fourteenth century and probably derives from the Anglo-Norman *Gobelin*, similar to Old French *Gobelin*. History found goblins around 1195 in Ambroise of Normandy's *Guerre Sainte*, and to Medieval Latin *gobelinus* in Orderic Vitalis before 1141. They were known as Kobold in Germany. The term goblin means an ugly fairy or devil. The ancient Greek word *kobalos* signifies "rogue" or "wicked sprites invoked by rogues" and made its way into French by way of the Middle Latin transliteration *cobalus* or *covalus*, meaning "mountain sprite." Humans disliked goblins and are seldom welcomed by their kind. Fays that are ugly are generally considered to be goblins or goblin-like. They were seen as supernatural beings of small size but powerful. They usually dwelled underground in molds or dessert places. House goblins make the life of the family terrible by banging pots and pans, by digging up graves, by scattering the bones, by knocking on the doors and walls, rearranging items in the house and by tangling horse's manes and tails. Sometimes the domesticated ones were of services to man and also performed household chores.

However, a goblin is also a specific species of a fairy being in the same way the BROWNIES, CUCO, DUSH, ESPRIT FOLLET, and FIREESIN are. In British and German lore, as a species they are described as being malicious, small, swarthy thieves; they have the ability to shape shift and when doing so will typically take the form of whatever an animal best reflects its beastlike nature. Standing about a foot in height (30 centimeters), with bodies covered in a thick coat of black or grey fur, the goblin's actions can range from the mild prank to outright murderous. There were three nights of the year when goblins were most active, and those evenings were called *tier-nos yspry-dion (Bane 163)*.

The word goblin did not mean any specific type of fairy being. Writers used goblin as a generic term along with the elves and fairies. In the earlier periods, writers used goblins as synonyms for other types of fairies of malicious and evil connotations, such as Thurs

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and Shuck. In some parts of Europe, they served as household sprites. In France, goblins favored wine and pretty children. German kobolds also had the qualities of a household sprite. Their name originated from the medieval High German as a compound of *Kobe* for "house" and *hold* for "friendly" or *walten* for "to rule." Kobolds served in ships as well as houses. In the mines, they were cunning and greedy, though less clever with crafting. Goblins of Great Britain associated with the Scottish boggle, the Lancashire boggart, and the English hobgoblin. Jacob Grimm claims that the prefix "hob" reinforced the comical aspects. Writers also linked goblins to the pixie and puck. In Welsh folklore, goblin kings ruled fairy lands.

Though goblin tales are rich in European literature, Asian nations such as Japan and Korea also have fables about these creatures. Christianity played a vital role in Europe's goblin mythology, and the traditional folk religions influenced the Asian goblin tales. Korean goblin lore considered goblins as spirits of wicked people trapped in purgatory. These spirits wander the world causing hardship for people. They are known as *doggabi* or *dokkaebi,* and they are important in Korea's folktales. They roam in the night, creating mischief, reward good people and punish the evil, playing nasty tricks on them. Dokkaebi challenges wayward travelers to Korean wrestling matches, known as *ssireum*. On winning the game, the confronted individual could pass the goblin. Korean goblins generally have only a single leg, and dokkaebi tales tell that winning them can be made possible only by pushing them from the right-hand side. Most Korean goblins have frightening appearances, while other *dokkaebi* look rather cute, tall and skinny with magical mallets. These mallets can turn things into gold and to change the fortunes of people. The Korean cultural celebrations such as Yeonggam Nori remember the *dokkaebi* even today. People hold it on Jeju, a volcanic island in the southwest of the Korean Peninsula. The ceremony focuses on the exorcizing and expelling of the goblins from the peninsula. The folks designated the ritual as an Intangible Cultural Treasure in 1971. Japan also has a strong goblin folklore tradition. Japanese goblins are called *tengu*. These are believed to have come from Chinese folkloric creatures called *t'ien-kou*, meaning "celestial dog." These Chinese forest demons are believed to have arrived at Japan in the sixth and seventh centuries. Tengu lived in the mountains and took different forms. Some of the Japanese goblins appeared to be old men with long noses and were known as *konoba tengu*. They walked barefooted and people associated them with good harvests. Japanese festivals such as Shimokita Tengu Matsuri, held in Tokyo every year celebrate the tengu. It features a tengu parade and traditional drumming.

In India, a belief in demons is found to prevail all over. The ancient Hindu works put forth the proof of the prevalence of a belief in the existence of the malicious demons and the demoniacal inflictions and possessions. India hosts many legends respecting goblins and their malice. The superstition of admiring demons in varied forms and modifications is found to be productive of evil. Brahmanical myths represent the demons as the ancient enemies of the Gods. Demons war against the Gods and the myths regarded them as the inventors and patrons of bloody sacrifices. The *Pisacaprakarana* or Book of the Goblins in the Lao version begins with Gods fighting and killing the demons after the Churning of the Ocean. The Lao version of the myth of the goblins had an Indian origin. In Scots, the writers considered more than a half dozen kinds of fairies as goblins such as Gunnies and Whaups. They described the Irish Puca as a goblin. They also regarded an array of subgroups of fairies as goblins. It includes Puca, Bogies, Boggarts, Bogles, the Welsh Coblynau, Irish Clauricaun, and Dullahan, etc. Tiny goblins such as bogeys hide in dark corners and scare children. Hogboons are friendly, kind and bring lick to families. They do not like to admit their heritage. Trows are nocturnal, invisible and dwell in gold-covered, spacious homes found in the Earth. Aziza lives in anthills and silk- cotton trees of Africa and resembles hobgoblins. Though different goblins possessed different powers, they had some abilities and liabilities in common. Exposure to sunlight causes damage to them. The light of the sun negates the paralyzing effect of a goblin's bite. The goblin bite is poisonous, and a victim who dies while paralyzed from the bite becomes a Ghoul. They have their kind of language.

Goblin filled works evolved from the oral folkways to the commercial literary ways of early modern literature and theatre. This evolution evoked the self-conscious of the writers about the chimerical nature of these creatures. Greene's *News Both from Heaven and from Hell*, published in 1593, explored the mythical character of the goblin. Different exploits introduced them. He disguised himself as the mischievous sprite, caused the travelers to drink, seduced women and also assumed the mantle of each occupation to encourage vice from within. Supernatural beings such as fairies, ghosts, goblins, witches, and spirits occur in Shakespearean plays. Shakespeare introduced the machinery of goblins or spirits of earth into *The Tempest*. In *Hamlet*, the protagonist is agonized with the ghost that he exclaims, "Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd." Shakespeare's hobgoblin, Robin Goodfellow, serves as a jester of the fairy court in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The name of the goblin becomes a euphemism for the Devil. When the phase of Enlightenment hit Europe, goblins became synonymous with superstitions. Children's literature involved tales about the myth of goblins throughout the era as a caution to check on their misbehaviors. Tales told catering to this service of "pedagogy of fear" were

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called "goblin stories." The belief in such stories was known as "nursery goblinism."

A renewed explication of goblin- kind folktales began to bloom with the Antiquarian movement in Europe in the eighteenth century. Religion and people-based tales started to rise. The wake of Romanticism resulted in the repackaging of the fairy- kind as agents of a liberating imagination and served as an influence for the nineteenth century Europe fairytales and fairy fantasies. Christina Rossetti' *Goblin Market* (1862) and George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) are examples of goblin- haunted Victorian fantasies. In the poem, *Goblin Market*, the depiction of the Goblins relates them to animals with whiskers, tails, and fur. Dickens described these creatures as small with long arms and legs and with rounded bodies. In the poem, goblins have their market and a well- worn path. They are nocturnal. They appear in a fairly typical form and seem to be deceptive, malicious and grotesque in appearance. Tolkien's smaller, crooked-legged goblins shun the sun and dwell in the depths. The Warhammer fantasy united the "goblinoid races" under the name Greenskins and separated the smaller, smarter and bigger goblins into distinct races. They share a warlike tribal culture. Fantasy games such as *Magic: the Gathering* (1993) and *World of Warcraft* (2004) depicted goblins.

Contemporary fictional works also explored the myth of goblins. Goblins proliferate in works such as Maureen Doyle McQuerry's *The Peculiars* (2012), William Alexander's *Goblin Secrets* (2012), Shona Husk's "Shadowlands" series, Charles DeLindt's *Jack of Kinrowan* (1995) and Pamela Jane and Jane Manning's *Little Goblins Ten* (2011). One of the bestselling authors of the twenty-first century, J. K. Rowling also explored goblins in her series of "Harry Potter." The goblins in this series though physically resemble the goblins of folklore, are very different from the traditional ones, being similar to the depictions of Dwarves with emphasis on money and metal smithing. Critics observe Rowling's depiction of goblins is fraught with real-world racial stereotypes. A twelve- year old hedgewitch Makenna allies with an army of clever goblins in Hilari Bell's "Goblin Wood" trilogy. Goblins also appear in both Western and Eastern comic books. The appearance of the Green goblin in Marvel's *The Amazing Spider Man* (1964), is shown as the Halloween themed alter- ego of industrialist Norman Osborn. Goblins also become a part of contemporary cinema and can be cited in *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Hobbit*, Ralph Bakshi's animated *Lord of the Rings* and so on. Goblins also appear as monsters in B– horror movies such as *Troll 2* in which critics argue over the dilemma on trolls and goblins. The film *Labyrinth* depicts the story of hobgoblins.

Feministic aspects focus on the fact that goblins are generally male. Their physical descriptions reflect on the ideas closer to imps and devils than fairies. These creatures were closer to or on the border of being demonic. According to Briggs, the influence of Protestant belief edged the goblins into the category of demons, and he directly equated them with the imps from Hell. People regard imps as the synonym of goblins. They can be associated with wilder locations and with the ruins of former human habitations. Protestant influence added a darker reputation to them. The depiction of the goblins over the centuries evolved an archetype of the creature as ugly, vengeful, male demons. According to M. H. Abrams, "the term archetype denotes narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, themes, and images that recur in a wide variety of literature, as well as in myths, dreams, and even social rituals." (Abrams, 18). Writers viewed them as dangerous and to be feared. The universality of human emotions perpetrates through archetypes. The character of a goblin is highly fictional, bloomed in the fertile imagination of the writer. The fact that the myth which originated centuries ago, dating back to the fourteenth century had survived over the years to the era of modernism, symbolize the significance and the inevitability of this mythical character in literature and the human instinct to get attached and detached to the notions of evil. The attraction and desire of human beings for sensual representations made the goblins to reappear and to have survived even to the twenty-first century, unsurpassed by the rationale and romanticism.

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