

The Generation of Tragic Pleasure and the “Goblin Complex”: A Case Study of Guardian: The Lonely and Great God

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Abstract

This paper argues that the enduring “Goblin complex” generated by the Korean drama Guardian: The Lonely and Great God is rooted in the tragic pleasure that viewers obtain from the work. Through a triple nested tragic structure-the tragedy of fate in the Goryeo period, the tragedy of love in the present, and the eternal tragedy projected into the future-the drama artistically imitates serious action, shapes characters and thoughts that reveal a spirit of resistance in the face of suffering, successfully arouses pity and fear, and realizes catharsis through the characters’ sublime choices under the pressure of fate. Drawing on Aristotle’s theory of tragedy and Zhu Guangqian’s account of tragic pleasure, this study further examines how the drama strengthens tragic emotion and contributes to the pleasure of formal beauty through its objects, media, and modes of mimesis, especially by constructing aesthetic distance and designing aesthetic moments. The analysis shows that the perfect integration of content and form in Goblin produces a multilayered, intense, and lasting experience of tragic pleasure. Taken as a textual-aesthetic account rather than an empirical model of audience response, this mechanism helps illuminate how the “Goblin complex” may exceed mere nostalgia and romantic longing and sustain durable artistic appeal.

Keywords

Tragic Pleasure, Mimesis, Goblin Complex, Aesthetic Distance, Guardian: The Lonely and Great God

1. Introduction

In 2016, the South Korean cable channel tvN released the fantasy-romance televi-

sion drama *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God*, hereafter referred to as *Goblin*. For the purposes of this article, the “Goblin complex” is an analytic label for the series’ recurrent afterlife in audience culture rather than a clinical or psychometric category. It refers to publicly observable patterns such as repeated viewing; sustained affective attachment to characters, scenes, music, and quotations; and recurring fan discourse or derivative practices, including renewed circulation of iconic lines, fan edits, and location-related content.

Recent scholarship provides empirical context for these dimensions. Studies of K-drama audiences document affective involvement and transcultural identification (Ju, 2020), platform-based fan community practices (Elewa, 2022), and strong emotional appeal in American audience discourse (Park & Jo, 2024). Choe (2022) specifically analyzes *Goblin* in relation to affective interludes and iterative memory, while research on K-drama location blogging records *Goblin* as a catalyst for viral fan-produced location content (Chow & Reijnders, 2025). More broadly, streaming-audience research shows that rewatching can be pursued for familiarity, predictability, and ontological comfort (Siles et al., 2025). These studies do not prove a uniform *Goblin*-specific response, but they support treating rewatching, affective attachment, memory practices, and recurring online participation as observable dimensions of the phenomenon examined here.

The persistence of the *Goblin* complex raises a central question: why, many years after its first broadcast, can *Goblin* still arouse such strong emotional echoes and aesthetic involvement among viewers? The drama’s beautiful images, moving music, romantic plot, and nostalgic atmosphere are undoubtedly important aspects of its appeal. This paper argues, however, that the deeper psychological mechanism behind the *Goblin* complex lies in the profound and multilayered experience of tragic pleasure that the drama provides through its refined artistic construction.

This article therefore interprets the aesthetic mechanism made available by the drama’s textual and audiovisual organization; it does not empirically measure actual audience response, establish causal effects, or claim that all viewers experience tragic pleasure in the same way. Accordingly, the term “*Goblin* complex” functions as a heuristic for the observable audience practices defined above, and the analysis offers one aesthetic account of their persistence rather than a universal explanation.

Tragedy is one of the oldest and most powerful artistic forms in human culture. Its enduring charm derives from its capacity to awaken a special aesthetic emotion: in Aristotle’s terms, tragedy arouses pity and fear and thereby accomplishes catharsis. Zhu Guangqian further explains the mixed and transformative mechanism of tragic pleasure, arguing that pain may, under specific aesthetic conditions, be sublimated into positive pleasure and accompanied by the pleasure of formal beauty. Classic tragic works can therefore move audiences across time and space precisely because they contain this deep form of pleasure.

Although *Goblin* appears to wear the outer garment of fantasy romance, its inner structure is rooted in serious tragic questions. Through a triple nested tragic

structure-the transhistorical tragedy of a loyal minister falsely accused in the Goryeo period and condemned to immortality, the present-time love tragedy between the Goblin and his bride that is destined to end in sacrifice, and the future eternal tragedy implied by human reincarnation and the Goblin's endless life-the drama artistically imitates the difficulties of life, the radiance of human nature, and the sublimity of resistance. The tragic pleasure evoked by Goblin, which combines pity, fear, the sublime, and cathartic force, provides the aesthetic nourishment that allows the Goblin complex to persist. To analyze this mechanism, this paper adopts Aristotle's theory of tragedy as its basic framework and combines it with Zhu Guangqian's discussion of tragic pleasure, proceeding from two dimensions: the objects of mimesis and the modes of mimesis.

The framework is layered and functionally differentiated: Aristotle provides the structural account of tragic mimesis and catharsis (Aristotle, 1996); Zhu Guangqian clarifies the transformation of pity, fear, and pain into tragic pleasure (Zhu, 2021); Ricoeur refines the paradox of tragic fault; Williams situates tragic conflict within modern structures (Ricoeur, 2005); Bullough explains psychical distance (Bullough, 1912); Iser accounts for participatory completion of textual blanks (Iser, 1991); Langer explains audiovisual form as a symbolic "form of feeling" (Langer, 1986); and Brecht supplies only a limited comparative vocabulary for moments of reflective distancing, without implying that Goblin adopts epic theatre as a whole (Brecht, 1964).

2. Tragic Elements in Goblin: Objects of Mimesis and the Generation of Tragic Pleasure

In *Poetics*, Aristotle states that tragedy arouses pity and fear through the imitation of action and thereby brings about catharsis. Among the six elements that constitute tragedy, plot, character, and thought, as the objects of imitation, are the core sources of tragic pleasure (Aristotle, 1996). Together they present an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; they reveal the choices and moral qualities of characters under the pressure of fate; and they finally evoke a sublime experience in which pain and pleasure are mixed. Zhu Guangqian explains the nature of this mixed emotion as follows: "The pleasure peculiar to tragedy is a mixed emotion; the pain contained in pity and fear is transformed into pleasure through moderation, that is, through expression (Zhu, 2021: p. 218)." In this sense, tragic pleasure may be understood as the sum of positive pleasure within pity and fear, pleasure transformed from the painful component of pity and fear, and the pleasure of formal beauty.

Goblin constructs a triple nested tragic structure with particular care. At the levels of plot, character, and thought, it deeply imitates the difficulties of life, the brilliance of human nature, and the dignity of resistance. In doing so, it systematically arouses the above mixed emotions and establishes the content basis for its tragic pleasure.

2.1. The First Layer: A Transhistorical Tragedy of Fate-Hamartia, Resistance, and Modern Resonance

The tragic root of *Goblin* is embedded in the historical narrative of the Goryeo period. Kim Shin, a great general whose achievements have made him threatening to the throne, is destroyed because of a treacherous minister's slander and the king's suspicion. After death he is condemned to an "immortal" curse: he must watch those he loves pass away again and again, turning his "splendid" glory into an eternal punishment of "loneliness". The central action of this plot is serious, and its tragic quality does not merely lie in the surface pattern of a good person suffering.

Kim Shin's loyalty and valor are his most dazzling qualities, yet they also become the very cause of his destruction. This confirms Paul Ricoeur's explanation of tragic fault: it often derives not from a simple moral defect, but from the paradoxical unfolding of a hero's excellence in a particular situation (Ricoeur, 2005). Kim Shin's "fault" lies in the fact that his virtue inevitably brings disaster when drawn into the whirlpool of royal power and human evil. The destructive consequence produced by this reverse side of virtue arouses profound pity in the audience. Zhu notes that pity consists of two elements: love or sympathy for the object, and a sense of regret caused by that object's defect or suffering (Zhu, 2021: p. 216). Because viewers identify with and admire Kim Shin's loyal character, they feel deep sorrow that he endures the destruction of his clan and nine hundred years of loneliness precisely because of his noble qualities. This forms a mixed emotion of pity.

The curse of immortality brings not only endless loneliness but also a fear concerning the essence of existence. Kim Shin's supernatural power, the transcendent force it symbolizes, and the smallness of the individual before vast fate and historical currents all constitute sources of fear in an Aristotelian sense. When viewers project themselves into this situation, they are led to think of the fatalism that is hard to resist in real life, the merciless passage of time, and the individual's helplessness before large structures.

Yet *Goblin* is not a tragedy in the ancient Greek sense that fate is absolutely irresistible. Kim Shin's attitude toward the curse changes from resentment, to the desire for an end, and finally to the choice of resistance. His decisive actions are to forgive Wang Yeo, reborn as the Grim Reaper, the king who directly killed Kim Shin and his family in the former life, and, in the end, to sacrifice himself in order to destroy Park Joong-heon, the treacherous minister who represented the source of evil and once deluded the king into killing Kim Shin. This forgiveness and sacrifice are not compromised. They are an active severing of the chain of hatred and the highest form of resistance to the arrangement of fate. They reveal the dignity of human nature and the transcendence of the spirit.

It is precisely this spirit of resistance that transforms pure fear into a sense of the sublime. While viewers fear Kim Shin's power and the force of fate, they also identify with his courage and noble choice. Zhu offers a concise insight: "What is

crucial to tragedy is not only great suffering, but the way suffering is faced. Without resistance to disaster, there is no tragedy. What gives us pleasure is not disaster, but resistance. In every one of us there is a divine spark, which does not allow us to submit willingly to defeat, but encourages us to love adventure” (Zhu, 2021: p. 175). Kim Shin’s resistance transforms the pain contained in pity and fear into admiration for human brilliance and into spiritual encouragement, completing a key step in tragic catharsis.

At the same time, Kim Shin’s predicament of immortality moves beyond the concrete historical background of ancient court intrigue and carries a strong modern implication. Raymond Williams argues that modern tragedy centers on the deep conflict between the individual and society and on the experience of an inescapable order (Williams, 2017). Kim Shin’s eternal loneliness, his witnessing and powerlessness, and his struggle to bring his life to an end accurately echo the general experience of contemporary individuals facing complex social structures and existential dilemmas. Institutionalized constraint, loneliness, eternity-viewers’ pity and fear for Kim Shin’s fate partly come from the projection and reflection of their own conditions of existence. This allows the resonance of the transhistorical tragedy of fate to continue fermenting among contemporary audiences and becomes an important emotional basis of the Goblin complex.

2.2. The Second Layer: The Present-Time Tragedy of Love-Sacrifice, Sacredness, and the Transformation of Pain

The tragic tension of Goblin bursts forth most intensely in the present-time love story between Kim Shin and the “Goblin’s bride”, Ji Eun-tak. The central conflict of this plot revolves around the symbolic meaning of the sword. It is both the weapon that killed Kim Shin and the carrier of his immortal curse; it is also a symbol of the guilt he bears as a general who once took lives in war. Although immortality with painful memory is a punishment, the appearance of Ji Eun-tak brings youthful vitality and the freshness of love to a Goblin who has endured nine hundred years of death, hatred, and loneliness. Kim Shin therefore begins to desire companionship with the one he loves and to cherish life. Yet Ji Eun-tak’s mission is destined to lead to her lover’s end, while postponing the removal of the sword repeatedly exposes the Goblin’s bride herself to the threat of death. This creates an insoluble paradox and plants the seed of an ultimate decision that must be made.

Faced with this dilemma, the final choices of Ji Eun-tak and Kim Shin fully reveal their characters and thoughts. Ji Eun-tak is determined to sacrifice herself in order to preserve Kim Shin’s life, although she does not ultimately succeed. After Kim Shin realizes that the power of the sword is necessary to destroy Park Joong-heon completely, he chooses to let Eun-tak pull out the sword. This choice is made both to eliminate evil thoroughly and to accept fate by completing his own great ending.

This sacrificial choice for love embodies the characters’ selflessness, courage,

noble ability to transcend the limits of individual life, and belief that the value of love is higher than mere survival. It directly touches the viewer's longing for pure and extreme love, producing a strong positive pleasure. Truly sacred erotic love is closely bound to death, taboo, and nonproductive expenditure; it points toward an extreme experience of transgression and self-dissolution. The love between Kim Shin and Ji Eun-tak centers on the fate that pulling out the sword means death, and every moment of closeness touches the boundary of life. Their final sacrificial choices are a non-utilitarian expenditure directed toward self-dissolution; they elevate love to a tragic and sacred height beyond life and death. While viewers experience this extreme romance, they also deeply feel its inevitable movement toward destruction. Yet it is precisely the inevitability of that destruction, together with the characters' resolute attitude toward it, that transforms enormous pain into a shocking aesthetic pleasure mixed with awe and compassion. The outbreak of suffering here becomes expression and release. It frees the audience's accumulated emotion and, because of the sublimity of the characters' actions, allows viewers to feel an uplifting sense of life-force.

2.3. The Third Layer: The Future Eternal Tragedy-Invitational Structure and the Extension of Catharsis

The tragic vision of *Goblin* does not stop at the sacrificial ending in the present world. Within its worldview, the law that "everyone has four lives" reveals an even deeper and indissoluble tragic dimension. Even if Kim Shin meets Ji Eun-tak again after her reincarnation, she, as a human being, will eventually experience death and reincarnation once more; Kim Shin, as an immortal being, is destined to face eternal loss and separation again and again. This third layer of tragedy is not directly dramatized as a plot, but the setting itself creates a vast blank of meaning.

Wolfgang Iser's theory of the "structure of appeal" suggests that blanks in a text summon the implied reader to participate actively in the construction of meaning (Iser, 1991). The setting of future reincarnation and eternal separation is precisely such a carefully arranged blank. It offers no definite answer, but strongly invites viewers to imagine, fill in, and complete this potential tragic cycle according to their own understanding of love, life, and eternity. Through this active participation, the aesthetic experience is deepened.

The openness and incompleteness of the ending greatly extend the time and depth of tragic catharsis. Viewers no longer passively receive a clear conclusion; instead, they repeatedly rehearse and experience in their minds the potential pain of eternal separation. This continuous and internalized re-experience allows the pity, fear, and reflections on the meaning of life aroused by the first two tragic layers to echo, settle, and be sublimated again and again. It compels viewers to think, on a broader temporal scale, about ultimate questions such as immortality and finitude, love and loss, existence and nothingness. Therefore, although the third layer of tragedy is not directly represented as action, the sustained imagination and reflection it generates intensify the philosophical depth of the whole tragedy. Tragic

pleasure thus exceeds the duration of the series itself and produces a long-lasting aftertaste in the audience's mind. This is one of the deep psychological causes that makes the *Goblin* complex persistently memorable.

Through its triple nested tragic structure, *Goblin* imitates serious and complete action in its plot; creates characters who display loyalty, courage, forgiveness, selflessness, and other noble qualities in the face of immense suffering; and explores profound themes such as fate, resistance, forgiveness, sacrifice, the value of love, and the predicament of immortality. These three aspects work inseparably together. They successfully arouse multiple levels of pity and fear in viewers and, through the sublime spirit shown by characters resisting fate and embracing destiny, transform pain into positive emotional agitation and spiritual encouragement. This constitutes the positive pleasure contained in pity and fear, together with pleasure transformed from pain, in Zhu's theory of tragic pleasure. The pleasure of formal beauty will be discussed in the next section.

3. Catharsis and the Aesthetic-Empathetic Function of Art: Modes of Mimesis and the Pleasure of Formal Beauty

Aristotle's theory of tragedy holds that diction and song, as media of imitation, and spectacle, as a mode of imitation, together form the external artistic form of tragedy. Zhu emphasizes that in tragedy, "the terrible is conquered and transformed by artistic power; we are in an aesthetic state, and our pleasure is essentially aesthetic pleasure" (Zhu, 2021: p. 208). This pleasure of formal beauty is an indispensable part of tragic pleasure. *Goblin* not only establishes the content basis of tragic pleasure through its objects of imitation, but also wraps pain, sacrifice, and the impermanence of fate in a beautiful artistic form. In this way, it secures the audience's aesthetic attitude and greatly enhances the overall aesthetic pleasure, enabling viewers to immerse themselves deeply in the tragic experience.

3.1. The Construction of Aesthetic Distance

The premise of tragic pleasure is that viewers can detach themselves from practical interests and contemplate suffering in the drama with an aesthetic attitude. Edward Bullough's theory of psychical distance provides a key explanation here. Bullough argues that there must be a relationship between aesthetic subject and object that is both intimate and distanced. In creation and appreciation, the best condition is to shorten the distance as much as possible while still maintaining distance (Bullough, 1912). If the distance is too short, the subject is drawn into practical concern, such as fear for one's own death; if it is too far, emotional resonance cannot occur. *Goblin* successfully constructs this appropriate aesthetic distance through multiple strategies.

The worldview of *Goblin*, first of all, places the story in a supernatural realm different from the laws of reality. This inherent otherness inserts a buffer between the audience and the characters' tragic fate. Viewers clearly know that this is a fictional mythic world. At the same time, the rules governing this supernatural

world-such as the Grim Reaper's need to deal with the consequences and erase ordinary people's memories when the Goblin uses divine power to disrupt social order-strengthen the coherence and comprehensibility of the world. Although unfamiliar, the world is not chaotic. This helps viewers maintain an observing rather than practically involved aesthetic posture. Their curiosity is awakened and guided toward the question of how this world will develop.

Meanwhile, the workplace-like and everyday settings in *Goblin* increase the story's humor and interest, bringing it closer to the audience. The Grim Reapers must work overtime, attend social gatherings, and worry about salary deductions; Kim Shin, despite his divine power, cooks, does laundry, and bickers with his roommate in a manner full of everyday life. These modern, secular, and humorous details produce a tonal interruption within serious questions of life and death and a grand narrative of fate. Rather than constituting a full Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, which belongs to a specific theory and practice of epic theatre, the contrast performs a limited distancing function: it can briefly loosen emotional absorption and open room for reflection (Brecht, 1964). Such interruption does not destroy the tragic quality. Bullough's psychical distance secures the aesthetic attitude, while this limited reflective distancing adds a cognitive dimension to it. The experience of tragic pleasure may thereby include not only emotional release and catharsis but also reflection on existence, institutions, and fate.

The Goryeo-period costume scenes provide historical and temporal distance. The patterns of court intrigue and conflicts between loyalty and treachery conform to viewers' familiar framework for understanding historical tragedy, making its seriousness and inevitability easy to accept. The modern urban setting, by contrast, provides an entrance of intimacy. The characters' loneliness, love, and anger; familiar spaces such as schools, streets, and restaurants; and Ji Eun-tak's troubles as an ordinary young woman are closely connected with the experience of contemporary viewers. These elements shorten psychological distance and make empathy possible. The dialectical unity of a distant background and intimate emotion perfectly embodies Bullough's relation that is both close and distanced. It ensures that viewers can invest emotion deeply while retaining the necessary aesthetic contemplation.

3.2. The Creation of Aesthetic Moments

The establishment of aesthetic distance provides a safe space for the generation of tragic pleasure, while the numerous powerful "aesthetic moments" created by *Goblin* itself are the core sources of the pleasure of formal beauty. Through carefully designed audiovisual language, these moments do not merely decorate tragic content. Rather, as Susanne Langer argues, they directly create and present the "forms of feeling". For Langer, art is the creation of forms of human feeling; artistic symbols such as music and images express the inner life-logic of emotion rather than simply communicating a particular emotion itself (Langer, 1986). Through these highly formalized artistic expressions, *Goblin* transforms abstract tragic

emotions such as fate, desire, sacrifice, and eternity into directly perceptible aesthetic objects full of tension.

Recent K-drama scholarship provides a medium-specific bridge to this argument. [Choe \(2022\)](#) describes the “affective interlude” as a recurrent K-drama moment in which image, music, performance, and serial memory foreground emotion and solicit viewer feeling; notably, his discussion explicitly includes *Goblin*’s iterative memory aesthetics. [Yuan \(2023\)](#) likewise shows how contemporary South Korean television can combine melodramatic intensity with mundane everyday practices. These studies help situate *Goblin*’s aesthetic moments within K-drama poetics and melodramatic form, rather than deriving their effects solely from general aesthetic theory.

The maple forest in warm tones is often associated with encounter, tremor, and brief warmth. The motif of the “first snow” is given a special meaning: it creates a romantic atmosphere and also becomes the occasion on which Ji Eun-tak summons Kim Shin. Its pure and cold visual sensation is linked with fate and sacred moments. These scenes become direct forms of particular emotional atmospheres.

In terms of composition and camera movement, *Goblin* frequently uses eye-level and stable framing, allowing viewers to feel as if they were contemplating an artwork, thereby creating a sense of myth and solemnity. Slow motion and close-ups enlarge the intensity and details of emotion. The most representative device is the freezing of time. In the first-kiss scene in the buckwheat field, snowflakes flow upward in reverse. This technique removes a decisive instant of emotional explosion from the stream of time, freezes it, and sacralizes it. The rising snowflakes create a visualized form of feeling. Through a dynamic structure, they directly present the spread of desire and death at a threshold. The powerful impact of this aesthetic moment enables viewers, before they have time to analyze it, to directly perceive the enormous emotional tension and fatal weight carried by the audiovisual signs.

Music, too, functions as an inner form of emotion. Through melody, harmony, rhythm, and vocal performance, it weaves a sound structure that precisely corresponds to the drama’s core emotional logic. The ethereal main melody and fateful chorus progression of “Stay with Me” formally present the emotional flow of entangled destiny and irresistible attraction, along with an undertone of sorrow. The warm yet slightly melancholy strings and vocals of “Beautiful” capture and externalize the complex state in which sweet memory and the premonition of imminent loss intertwine. When viewers listen to the original soundtrack, they directly experience the life rhythm and inner movement of these formalized tragic emotions themselves. Music becomes a powerful channel connecting the audience to the emotions of the drama. The pleasure of formal beauty it brings is deeply internalized within the overall tragic experience. Even when the songs are heard outside the drama, they can awaken strong emotional memory and aesthetic enjoyment, thus sustaining the *Goblin* complex ([Figure 1](#)).



Figure 1. Stills from *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God (Goblin)*.

3.3. The Dialectical Unity of Content and Form: The Complete Experience of Tragic Pleasure

Zhu Guangqian points out that one reason we feel pleasure in tragedy is that we do not view pain and disaster in isolation from their form of expression. Only in non-artistic works, where content and form have not been fused into an inseparable whole, do we leave form aside and attend only to content; only then does the painful nature of tragic events affect us directly (Zhu, 2021: p. 215). *Goblin* is an artistic example of the high degree of unity between content and form.

The construction of aesthetic distance ensures that viewers can face the great suffering in the drama safely and thus better appreciate the aesthetic meaning of its themes. The creation of aesthetic moments wraps, transforms, and elevates pain, sacrifice, and the impermanence of fate into aesthetic objects with high visual appeal, symbolic force, and emotional impact. Kim Shin's sword in his chest and the eternal cycle of reincarnated separation are fundamental tragic contents. Through beautiful composition, poetic camera language, and music that strikes the heart, these contents can be contemplated, deeply experienced, and finally enjoyed aesthetically by the audience. Form here is not an accessory; it is the necessary condition that turns tragic content into art and makes it a qualified object of aesthetic experience.

At the same time, the profound multilayered tragic core gives soul and weight to these exquisite forms. The beauty of the buckwheat field becomes poignant because of the fate of separation; the melodies of the soundtrack strike the heart because they carry the joys and sorrows of the characters' destinies. Formal beauty without profound tragic content is empty, while tragic content without subtle artistic form can hardly produce pure aesthetic pleasure.

It is precisely this perfect fusion and mutual fulfillment of content and form that enables *Goblin* not only to arouse pity, fear, and the emotional agitation brought by their transformation, but also to contribute an extremely strong and independent pleasure of formal beauty. This pleasure derives from the audience's appreciation and enjoyment of the harmony, force, precision, and creativity of artistic signs themselves. It allows viewers to gain a high degree of aesthetic satisfaction while experiencing tragedy. The interweaving and reinforcement of these multiple pleasures is the key to the distinctive, intense, and memorable tragic ex-

perience offered by Goblin. It is also one of the core aesthetic forces through which the Goblin complex persists.

Through the joint operation of Bullough's psychical distance and the limited reflective distancing produced by tonal interruption, Goblin establishes an aesthetic space between audience and tragic content that is both safe and full of tension. Through the creation of forms of feeling in Langer's sense, the drama transforms its tragic core into powerful aesthetic signs that can be directly perceived, thereby contributing abundant formal pleasure. In the end, the dialectical unity of content and form ensures that tragic pain is conquered by artistic power. Within the interpretive scope of this article, the drama can therefore be understood as inviting viewers to enter its tragic world aesthetically, combining cathartic intensity with formal enjoyment. This constitutes the pleasure of formal beauty and, together with the mixed emotions aroused by the objects of imitation, forms a central aesthetic basis for the Goblin complex as defined here.

4. Conclusion

From the perspective of this textual analysis, the enduring charm associated with the Goblin complex can be interpreted through the way Goblin constructs an experience of tragic pleasure that is safe, profound, and highly aesthetic. This experience derives both from a modern reinterpretation of classical tragic theory and from the creative fusion and artistic presentation of multiple theoretical perspectives. Such a configuration can be understood as addressing modern aesthetic desires for sublime emotion, reflection on existence, and intense artistic enjoyment, without presuming a uniform response among all viewers.

Analyzing the mechanism of tragic pleasure in the Goblin complex not only deepens our understanding of this particular work, but also offers a case-based aesthetic perspective for discussing contemporary popular culture, the attraction of BE aesthetics, and possible mechanisms of lasting appeal. As a single-case study based primarily on textual and audiovisual analysis, however, this article does not measure actual audience responses, establish causal relationships, or generalize its findings to all viewers or all popular dramas. Future research could test and refine this interpretive account through comparative cases, interviews, surveys, or platform-based audience data. Like the Goblin's own "lonely and splendid" existence, the tragic pleasure of Goblin is the eternal beam of light through which the work travels across time, continuing to warm and move the hearts of its viewers.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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