



---

# **Trolls: From Mythology and Folklore to the Internet**

**Maria Zarenti<sup>a++\*</sup> and Georgios Katsadoros<sup>a#</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> *Department of Primary Education, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, Greece.*

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

## **Article Information**

### **Open Peer Review History:**

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/99384>

**Review Article**

**Received: 01/03/2023**

**Accepted: 01/05/2023**

**Published: 12/05/2023**

---

## **ABSTRACT**

Trolls as creatures are widely known from folklore and mythology. On the other hand, online trolls have become famous through the internet.

This article aims to highlight how from the trolls of mythology and folklore, we have moved to online trolls and the so-called practice of trolling. Through bibliographic and network research, it is realized that the development of the internet marks a new era, where almost all aspects of our lives are affected by it and now it is considered one of the biggest cultural phenomena of the time. Nevertheless, cyberspace presents quite often infringing elements and practices. This article is based on the secondary qualitative data. Some of them are the well-known internet trolls and the practice of trolling by trolls on unsuspecting internet users. So, the mythological and folklore troll creature has turned into an internet troll, i.e., a malicious cyberspace user.

This article shows how the trolls of mythology and folklore are related to modern internet trolls.

*Keywords: Trolls; trolling; folklore; internet; mythology.*

---

<sup>++</sup> *Ph.D. Candidate;*

<sup>#</sup> *Associate Professor;*

<sup>\*</sup>*Corresponding author: E-mail: mariazarenti@hotmail.com;*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The spread of the internet and the subsequent development of social media brought about the phenomenon of online trolling and the appearance of trolls. On the internet, the word troll is attributed to a person who interferes in the discussion of an online community and publishes comments with the aim of provoking strong emotional reactions [4,11]. This particular phenomenon is presented in various social media, although the origin of the word 'trolling' refers to the mythology and folklore of many Scandinavian countries and is connected to many aspects of folk culture, such as legends, fairy tales, satire, tricksters.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This paper consists part of a wider research concerning the origins of the troll figure and its modern aspect, especially on the internet. Bibliographic review was initially conducted in mainly Norse mythology and folklore and the variations of trolls in the Nordic countries. Additionally, the trickster archetype was explored as well as its connection to trolls. Cyber ethnography was then utilized to study the presence and behavior of online trolls and the act of cyber trolling nowadays, including aspects such as forms of trolling, motivations and identity of modern trolls, anonymity and digital identities. Finally, potential correlations of the phenomenon of trolling with folklore were investigated, namely with aspects of folk culture like humor, satire, comedy, tricksters, funny stories or jokes and memes.

## 3. THE TERM "TROLL" IN SCANDINAVIAN FOLKLORE

The term "troll" in the Norwegian and Swedish languages and "trolde" in Danish is a name for various types of supernatural beings in Norse folklore: they resemble humans and in the collections of poetic tales - Eddas (1220), they are referred to as monsters with many heads. Later, trolls became characters in fairy tales, legends and ballads. In particular, they are actively involved in many fairy tales and collections of Norwegian stories by the authors Asbjørnsen and Moes (1844). Of course, trolls, like a large number of different mythological creatures of Norse folklore, have become known mainly through contemporary genres of culture and fantasy (TV, cinema and online games) [42].

The word troll can also be used as a general term for any magical or supernatural being in more recent centuries, but mainly as a term the giant of Norwegian legends with a notable violent, destructive and ferocious character [7,17].

## 4. ORIGINS AND MEANINGS OF THE WORD "TROLL"

As for the etymology of the word troll, it derives from the Old Norse nouns "troll" and "tröll" (i.e. satan, demon, werewolf, jötun) and "troll" (fiend) in Middle High German (1200-1500 CE). According to philologist Vladimir Orel, the word is probably a loan word from the Old Norse language that developed from the Proto-Germanic neuter noun "trullan" (giant, devil, demon, werewolf). Additionally, the Old Norse verb 'trylla' (to charm, to troll) and the German verb 'trüllen' 'flutter' (to stir) developed from the German verb 'trulljanan' (to charm, to troll), a derivative of "trullan" [45]. In the Swedish language, such beings are often called "jätte" (giants), a word related to the Norwegian "jötun". According to another version, the origin of the word "troll" is probably connected with the Swedish words "trolla" and "trollkonst" which mean magic and its practice [42].

"Troll" as a term is of unknown origin and is not related to Indo-European languages or to West or East Germanic. It occurs in northern European countries, such as in Denmark, where it is recorded as trolfolk (troll-folk), bjergtrolde or bjergfolk, in Iceland as jotunn, risi or thun (male trolls) and gygur or skessa (female trolls), in Norway as jötunar/jötun, trolfolk (troll-folk and tusser), in Germany as troll and trolle and in Sweden as trollkoner (Sampson, 2015) and jätte (MacCulloch, 1930) [38].

In all Scandinavian languages, the troll is considered a supernatural being and a member of a family or group known for its magical powers, so its name several times connotes a wizard or magic both literally and figuratively (such as magic that offers poetry or music). In fact, the word troll may have been used by the pagans of Norway (in the Orkney and Shetland Islands) as a collective term for supernatural beings to be respected and better avoided than worshipped. John Arnott MacCulloch, one of Scotland's leading scholars, has also drawn a connection between the ancient Norse 'vættir' spirits of mythology and trolls, suggesting that

both concepts may refer to the spirits of the dead [38].

Names of land or sea animals are also associated with the word "troll" to emphasize the magical nature of the beasts to which the word refers. In addition, the term can denote terrible diseases or a dangerous, unwilling, rebellious and terrifying creature, a person of unusual skill, an ugly woman or a woman of bewitching beauty, a beautiful object, a place from which there is no escape, superhuman strength, etc. [45].

The term "troll" is also found in names of the geophysical environment, as a name of a prehistoric stone tomb, an upright stone or even a cavity in a rock. In particular, nowadays the word troll is used in Scandinavia for names of mountains. According to legend, Sweden's high mountain ranges and its boulder-strewn countryside herald the presence of troll creatures [45].

In addition, there are many places in Norway that include the term in their name, such as Trolld-Tindterne (Troll Peaks, because of the huge rocky cliffs), Trollstigen mountain pass and the famous Trolltunga rock formation (Troll's Tongue) [42]. Finally, a Norwegian research station in Antarctica (which includes a ground station that tracks polar orbiting satellites), is called "Troll" because of the rugged mountains that stand around this place like a troll [38].

Lindow, while stating that the etymology of the word "troll" remains uncertain, defines the trolls of later Swedish folklore as "beings of nature" and "creatures of questionable intent, otherworldly, equivalent to the fairies of Anglo-Celtic lore, who appear in various migratory legends [38].

## 5. VARIATIONS OF TROLLS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

According to Stattin, scholars are still trying to give various definitions of the term "troll". In Finland, especially in the provinces of Nyland (Uusimaa), South western Finland and Ostrobothnia, as well as in the Åland Islands, i.e. the Finnish areas inhabited by Swedish-speaking inhabitants, a troll is considered a supernatural creature associated mainly with hills and rocks in the forest, usually solitary, but which may sometimes live with others of its kind [5].

In Iceland, trolls are generally considered to be giants. Many Icelandic myths refer to the fate of giants who were "captured" by the dawn and turned to stone, so many rocks in Iceland bear names reminiscent of trolls, who are generally considered silly in oral tradition, since their strength compensates for their lack of brains [51].

Hartmann, who distinguishes between the Eastern (Danish and Swedish) and the Western Scandinavian (Norwegian) perception of trolls, characterizes Norwegian trolls as solitary beings, large in size and very ugly. The trolls of eastern Scandinavia (Denmark and southern Sweden) are considered social beings corresponding to the huldrefolk of Norwegian folk tradition. In the case of Denmark, of course, the term 'told' (equivalent to 'troll') is rarely used, preferring the term 'bjæbergfolk' which characterizes a class of beings somewhere between the Norwegian huldrefolk and the Swedish vättar [24].

Hartmann likens the trolls of southern Sweden to those of the Danish tradition and identifies them with the vättar. The trolls of western Sweden combine features of the eastern and western Scandinavian conceptions of these beings, although they also retain several features of the Norwegian trolls. Hartmann describes the trolls of central Sweden as creatures largely corresponding to the Danish bjærgfolk and Norwegian huldrefolk, as well as the beings called vättar in Swedish folklore, mentioned above, who were considered more peaceful and benevolent, as opposed to the Norwegian trolls who appeared more ferocious and aggressive [5].

It seems that the term "troll" takes on various meanings in Sweden (including Swedish-speaking Finland), Denmark and Norway.

## 6. THE MYTH OF TROLLS IN THE MYTHOLOGY AND FOLK TALES OF THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES

The evolution of the term "troll" in both mythology and folktales as a recognizable species is somehow confusing. Originally, the word 'trolleri' was used to describe all kinds of creatures who drew their magic from nature and used it to harm people. It took hundreds of years for the name to narrow down to the creatures we recognize today as trolls. Indeed, the contrast between the two types of trolls that we still recognize today (one giant and aggressive and the other small, cute

and mischievous) is a testament to the diversity of these creatures in the old sources [3].

Although the peoples of Scandinavia are heterogeneous, their oral tradition, as well as their material life and lifestyle, exhibits several common characteristics. In particular, in Scandinavian folklore traditions, there are some similarities that are mainly elements of the mythology of the Norse, which overcame the various Christian concepts in all the peoples of Scandinavia. In fact, in fairy tales and legends about trolls, the plot often features a clever and courageous man facing a troll. Later Norse but still early Christian legends of saints include stories of a virtuous man who tricks a giant troll into building a church [42].

In folktales, the activities of Swedish and Danish trolls range from the merely annoying (such as breaking into people's households on Christmas Eve) to the threatening (cradle-changing babies, a legend known as changeling (baby-changing or kidnapping), where trolls take peoples' babies and leave their own) and identify with many of the activities attributed to the Swedish *jätte* (e.g., kidnapping and hatred of Christianity) [54].

Hartmann (1936) believes that some of the Norse legends of changeling and abduction of adults derive from lived emotional experiences and, therefore, demonstrate elements of realism, whereas troll tales consist purely fictional stories. However, in both of these cases of legends and folk conception, trolls share some common characteristics, e.g., their enormous size, their preference for living in the mountains and their hostility to humans [24].

Finally, stories about trolls are also found outside of Scandinavia. In particular, trolls appear in Shetland and Orkney narratives, where they are referred to as "trows", which in Orkney and Shetland folklore are small, ugly and shy nocturnal creatures, like the trolls of Norse legends, with which trows share many similarities [54].

## **7. WHAT WE DEFINE TODAY AS TROLL AND TROLLING**

In the age of the internet, we go from the troll creature of folklore and tradition, so to speak, to the cyber troll user and trolling, i.e., the act of internet trolling. There are various hypothetical theories about the occasion, place and time when the word "troll" was first used in the

language of the internet. Specifically, as a word it first appeared in many unselected Bleach Brave Souls (BBS) and UseNet accounts from the early 1980s or a little earlier [16, 37]. The modern use of the term, however, first appeared on the internet in the late 1980s [58]. Despite its common use, however, it took at least another decade for the term to be officially recorded, with the best-known reference coming from an online discussion in 1991 [50]. Additionally, one of the first recorded attempts to define an internet troll occurs in the mid-1990s, with the release of the book *Netlingo* (netlingo.com), where one can find the following definition: "Internet trolls are people who post nasty things to strangers on the internet. They "fish" for the trust of others and, once they have it, they take advantage of it." [30]. Finally, an interpretation of the term "troll" as an online term also exists in Wikipedia since 1999 [34].

As for the characteristics of the Internet troll, it is worth noting that, just as the troll of Norse mythology is a supernatural being that lives in isolated rocks, in mountains or in caves, under bridges, in small families and rarely helps people, respectively many users of the internet often describe the troll as a mythical creature (in the sense of anonymity) that hides under (procedural) 'bridges', waiting for an opportunity to 'pounce' on unsuspecting users. With this definition, it captures the comparison and juxtaposition of the troll of tradition with the troll in the world of the modern era, that is, the world of the internet [25].

According to the online Cambridge dictionary (2020), an internet troll is considered a person who does "trolling", an English word which refers to dragging the bait through the water, according to the technique of tuna fishing and swordfish, similar to trolling (dictionary.cambridge.org). According to Shah (2004), although the term "trolling" has its origin in the fishing sector, it is used in exactly the same way on the internet, as it captures the "unfolding" of contradictions that takes place during trolling. With this definition in mind, it is clear that baiting consists a form of provoking any emotional reaction in individuals. In this sense, the troll may be subtly or overtly offensive during a conversation [6,14] or may seek to engage others in a pointless conversation [25].

In internet slang, the word troll or better "internet troll" is used for a person who aims to sow discord in a group or community (e.g., on a forum

or blog) by posting caustic, inflammatory or off-topic posts comments [12]. This act is done deliberately by the person/troll, with the intention of evoking strong emotional reactions among the members of a group, as he invades their discussion and conversation, thus disrupting the normal flow of the conversation for no particular reason, simply for his own amusement. There is even a very famous image about trolls, which are widely circulated on the internet, called "trollface" or "Mr. Troll" [48].

Early trolling was relatively harmless, taking place within small Usenet newsgroups. Trolls used a "pseudo-naive" tactic, asking dumb questions and seeing who takes the bait [19]. According to Bishop, trolling was originally thought of as "the act of posting a message in a discussion group that apparently exaggerates about some issue" (1995), [8]: 1) and Tepper (1997) explains how trolling can define group membership, i.e., those who "take the bait" of the troll mark the novice user out of the group, while in-group members will recognize the troll and can even make fun of it [65]. Donath (1999) and Dahlberg (2001) offer another view claiming that trolling is a one-sided game of deception played against unsuspecting users who assume that the troll is sincere, when this is not the case, as the troll tries to pass off as a legitimate participant who shares the common interests and concerns of the community [19]. Donath (1999) and Dahlberg (2001) further argue that trolling is a one-sided game of deception played unwittingly on victims. Specifically, the troll poses as an honest participant and, once accepted, sets out to cause as much disruption as possible, while trying to hide his true intentions [19].

As Watts (2003) mentions, "politeness is a vanishing term today as it was in the past and probably will be in the future" and inevitably, the growing interest in areas dominated by rudeness has caused a dramatic increase in similar terms, such as 'indecency', 'insult', 'conflict' and 'meanness'; therefore (rudeness) is a characteristic associated and quite related to trolling [26, 49].

Baker (2001) and Cox (2006) describe trolling as posting inflammatory comments with the intention of provoking other internet users into conflict [6, 14]. Naraine (2007) adds to the list of characteristics of trolling "ridiculous rants, stupid threads, personal insults and abusive language" [47] and challenging others to disrupt the group for one's own amusement. According to Hardaker

(2013), trolling involves deliberately attacking other users online and specifically competing with other users, but usually for fun. She defines troll as "a user who, using Computer-Mediated Communications (CMC), constructs his identity by deceiving that he sincerely wishes to be a member of the group, but whose real intention(s) is/are to cause disruption or heighten conflict for their own amusement" [22, 23]. Also, in the above definition it is clarified that computer-based communication is used to create a context that activates or antagonizes conflict.

In modern times and in scientific literature, information on the identity of internet trolls is limited and mainly deals with their gender, while many of them are based on unverified assumptions. Studies also on the identity of online trolls do not offer a global scope, but only investigate certain cultural and online spaces, so the results apply only to certain geographical areas. It is often also stated, that trolls are mostly men because men have historically been more involved in negative online behavior. The age of onset of trolling is usually placed in adolescence, a period of a person's life characterized by emotional upheaval, during which individuals often find an outlet online [31].

It seems that the motivations of trolls' presence in public (scientific, social, political, etc.) dialogue are the need for visibility, boredom and entertainment. Attention has often been considered as one of the main reasons for trolling by media and academic studies. Herring et al. (2002) also consider control over others and a sense of superiority from manipulating them as a primary motivation for trolling [25]. The most common factor for an internet user to start trolling is a natural tendency of people to engage with others, to comment on them and the fascination that this behavior exerts. Most trolls also like to prank in real life, harass online, enjoy chatting and arguing online, and consider websites and humor related to trolling fascinating. The reasons that trigger someone to start trolling are not the same as those that lead them to the specific act afterwards [31].

Studies on motivation can also be related to studies on negative personality traits of trolls, especially sadism and psychopathy [10, 61]. Research by Buckels et al., (2014), which thoroughly examined the personality profiles of online trolls, conclude that trolls exhibit high levels of traits such as narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy and a sadistic personality [10].

Trolling is nowadays quite wide spread and takes on various forms. In related literature there are several forms of trolling, and even subcategories of them. Generally speaking, they have all been given negative characterizations [8]. Those that appear frequently are: flaming trolling [1, 18, 21, 22, 29, 41, 44, 64], spam trolling [22, 60], social and political trolling [57], gender trolling [39], Facebook trolling [15, 32, 52], organized trolling [27], RIP trolling [52], Wikipedia trolling [63], kudos trolling [9], meme trolling [36], doppelganger trolling [32] etc.

The aforementioned categories of trolling are associated with a specific topic or a specific platform, making them more easily distinguishable from others. Although some categorization has been attempted, there are no general categories on which all researchers can agree or follow. Trolls seem to employ multiple strategies, which also applies to relative works.

## 8. TRICKSTERS AND TROLLING

The act of trolling dates back to the age-old practice of teasing, tricking, trickery. Nowadays, it signifies the transformation of the monstrous troll of legends into the internet troll, but also an introduction of a new term into our daily communication.

First of all, it should be mentioned that the term of the perpetrator has a double meaning: on the one hand it denotes the "intelligent hero", but on the other it has the meaning of "selfish-buffoon" [13]. Tricksters themselves are complex and contradictory and move between opposing elements, such as "piety and blasphemy, life and death, culture and nature, order and chaos, fertility and impotence" [28]. It could also be said that the trickster represents the ancient, archaic level of consciousness, the 'animal' part of man prone to uncontrollable impulses, libido, gluttony and physical abuse [35]. The basic characteristics of the trickster are imitation, deception, humor, parody, ridicule, violation of social and natural rules and taboos, profanity, entertainment, disguise, and transformation. The trickster is generally considered to be resourceful and his tricks, with the primary goal of deception, are important to the shaping of the world, as they promote a change in the rules for the benefit of humanity [28, 66].

Therefore, the trolls of folklore and tradition as well as the modern ones are connected to the trickster archetype [66]. Trolls, like detractors, are characterized by humor, satire, teasing, mockery,

farce, satire, and mockery. Of course, just like the actions of trolls, so too those of internet trolls, often cause harmful actions for their victims [20,62]. Trolls of folklore and tradition mainly caused physical harm to their victims, while modern trolls mainly provoke strong emotional reactions (through the publication of scathing comments), which in many cases do not exclude the subsequent physical harm of their online targets.

## 9. FOLKLORE AND TROLLING

Most trolls, as already mentioned, like to play pranks or harass and enjoy chatting and arguing online. It has even been reported by Jussinoja that boredom and frustration experienced by a person are considered to be driving factors in trolling, therefore, many users find trolling websites and the humor associated with it exciting [31].

Based on the above, the association of trolling with humor is obvious, which, as trolls say, stems from the so-called "lulz". Also, trolling includes elements that resemble satire, mockery, pranking, teasing and parody. In addition, memes are an excellent tool for trolls to humor. Finally, there is an association of popular culture and specifically of silly stories or jokes with trolling and memes.

Humor, in its basic sense, is a special form of human communication, aiming to cause laughter. It is difficult to give a definition for humor that perfectly describes the phenomenon including all of its aspects. In fact, as mentioned by Samson, Huber and Ruch (2013) [56], it is a general term that includes various phenomena related to laughter and which perform different functions. Therefore, there is a lack of a universal definition that includes every facet of the phenomenon, as well as a lack of a common tool or measuring instrument that can cover all aspects of humor [40, 55].

Accordingly, in online space and especially as far as trolling is concerned, most trolls like to prank, harass, discuss and argue online. It has been reported that the driving factors for trolling are many, such as boredom, frustration, escape from everyday life, etc., as well as humor and fun that trolls enjoy from trolling. In fact, several internet users consider trolling to be fun/humorous and for this reason they decided to try it as a practice [31].

Satire attempts to ridicule some concept or person. The one who exercises it considers that the concept or person deserves such treatment for its own improvement. It is exercised through practices such as parody, exaggeration, comparison, analogy and irony. The satirist turns against human behavior, both individually and collectively. His words can criticize and embellish both human flaws and society's bad writings, while they often criticize outdated situations, ideas or perceptions that have the effect of keeping man and his society captive [2].

Similar to satire, trolling attempts to mock some concept or person that the troll is trying to troll. Furthermore, it also involves criticism or commentary in various forms. It is directed against human behavior, both at the individual and collective level (online communities or fora, media). It criticizes and embellishes both human flaws as well as negative traits of society, while often cauterizing situations, ideas or perceptions. That is, trolling, like satire, is based on the irony of the troll with the main purpose of entertaining him or of what is called in the trolling world "lulz" [43].

The term "comedy" describes any work that aims to entertain through a humorous theme, and parody is the action or result of parodying people, things or situations in a way that causes laughter. Comedy is presented in many forms, such as theater, which began through the ancient theater, television and stand-up comedy [59]. The influence of comedy can be significant on a social level. For example, the democracy of ancient Athens was strengthened through comedy plays that aimed to satirize negative elements of the community [46].

Similarly, comedy trolling aims to make fun of public or non-state figures, various things or situations of everyday life in a way that causes laughter. Every day on various websites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), one can come across incidents of trolling that adorn everyday life, as well as persons and situations.

Modern teasing, pranks, mockery and even satire that take place and are disseminated and spread through cyberspace users often manifest through memes. Trolls utilize memes and anime references by recycling cultural products (such as language, religion, ideologies and beliefs, morals and customs, institutions and laws, arts, technological achievements, media production,

scientific knowledge, ceremonies and rituals) for their purposes [53]. The result is that memes created and reinforced by trolls have now become mainstream and are nowadays part of normal online interactions [36].

In the modern era, folk culture and tradition are transmitted and developed through the printed word as well as modern means of communication, such as the internet. Through virtual identities, internet users, using their real data or falsifying them, construct digital personas – avatars, i.e., characters, and chat with friends or even strangers on the world wide web. Virtual identities and anonymity, as mentioned above, are also main characteristics of trolling [33].

As folk literature genres, lighthearted stories or jokes, according to Dimitrios Loukatos, are the so-called anecdotes or laughable jokes or pranks that satirize or mock manners, professions, characters or even intellectual imperfections. Jokes could also include witticisms, especially if they are not long. In describing the above, some of their traits can also be applied to trolling: First, a funny mood, where even a sad topic can be given in a humorous way. Second, brevity and compact speech. Third, a verbal and semantic independence, as they can function e.g., as slogans on walls, without needing further explanations for the receiver to understand their message, as long as he shares a common frame of cultural references with the creator [33].

According to Katsadoros et al. (2016), these genres of folk literature continue to spread thanks to the world wide web. A user, usually anonymous or pseudonymous, posts or regurgitates something, which in turn at a given time and condition resonates with a group, whose members have the option of ignoring it, registering it, promoting it or even reforming it. At this point, we can find many similarities in the creation of memes, which are either ideas or "inside" jokes that are spread even in real life via the internet [33].

Of course, the meaning of the term "trolling" often oscillates between good humor, satire, comedy, prank, teasing, and abusive language, posting caustic, inflammatory, or off-topic comments. Modern teasing, pranks, mockery and even satire that manifest and spread in the online world through cyberspace users are created and circulated through memes. Trolls use memes and cartoon references in their trolling, reusing cultural objects for their purposes [53]. As

Avdikos mentions, the fluidity of boundaries consists a main feature of folk or popular culture [33], a fact that is in absolute agreement with the so-called trolling.

## 10. CONCLUSION

The troll of Scandinavian stories and folklore is a creature of various characteristics, depending on its country of origin. The development of technology and specifically the internet has resulted in the troll, the ugly creature of Norse stories, turning into a delinquent internet user. Therefore, the ugly appearance of the creature now becomes 'ugly' online behavior. The categories that exist for trolling are several and related to their online behavior. Finally, modern trolls and trolling have been associated with elements of folk or popular culture such as humor, satire, comedy, tricksters, funny stories or jokes and memes.

Undoubtedly, modern internet trolls are closely related to trolls of mythology and folklore. Nevertheless, it seems that their 'ugliness', as stated above, turned from their initially wicked appearance and behavior to the corresponding attitude of malevolent internet users. It is obvious that the figure of modern trolls derives from a gathering of many traits from mythology and folklore, such as their hideous appearance and manners, combined with elements of the trickster archetype and of fishing practices as well, to form a new creature: one that constantly lurks for unsuspecting victims to exploit.

Further research could exploit the potential relationship of trolling with contemporary folklore and the contribution of social networks to the phenomenon's spread, as the formation of modern or digital speech is based on traditional creative structures. Furthermore, the term "troll" seems to be present even in everyday, not essentially digital, communication; therefore, the way digital practices become a part of 'real' life could be further explored.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## REFERENCES

1. Abril EP. Unmasking trolls: Political discussion on Twitter during the

parliamentary election in Catalonia. *Trípodos*. 2016;(39):53-69.

2. Acritopoulos, A. The modern fairy tale of Eug. Triviza: Fiction and discourse. Texts on the research, theory, criticism and teaching of Children's Literature. Greek; 2007.
3. Ancient Origins. Outlaws, trolls and berserkers: Meet the hero-monsters of The Icelandic sagas. Ancient Origins. 2005. Accessed 9 June 2020. Available: <https://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends-europe/outlaws-trolls-and-berserkers-meet-hero-monsters-icelandic-sagas-004312>
4. Anonymous. Διακωμύδηση. Greek – Language. Accessed 15 July 2020. Available: [https://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern\\_greek/tools/lexica/triantafyllides/search.html?lq=%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%89%CE%BC%CF%8E%CE%B4%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7&dq=](https://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/tools/lexica/triantafyllides/search.html?lq=%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%89%CE%BC%CF%8E%CE%B4%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7&dq=)
5. Asplund Ingemark C. The genre of trolls: the case of a Finland-Swedish folk belief tradition. 2005.
6. Baker P. Moral panic and alternative identity construction in Usenet. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 2001;7(1):JCMC711.
7. Bann, L. In: Jeffrey Andrew. *Monsters Are the Most Interesting People: Introduction to the Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock. 2014;1–7.
8. Bishop J. Scope and limitations in the government of wales act 2006 for tackling internet abuses in the form of 'flame trolling'. *Statute Law Review*. 2012; 33(2):207-16.
9. Bishop J. The art of trolling law enforcement: a review and model for implementing 'flame trolling' legislation enacted in Great Britain (1981–2012). *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*. 2013;27(3):301-18.
10. Buckels EE, Trapnell PD, Paulhus DL. Trolls just want to have fun. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 2014;67:97-102.
11. Cambria E, Chandra P, Sharma A, Hussain A. Do not feel the trolls. ISWC, Shanghai; 2010.



12. Cambridge University Dictionary. (n.d.). Trolling. In Cambridge Dictionary. Accessed 10 February 2020. Available:<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/trolling>
13. Carroll MP. The trickster as selfish-buffoon and culture hero. *Ethos*. 1984;12(2): 105-31.
14. Cox, A. M. Making mischief on the web. *Time*Dec; 2006. Accessed 26 February 2020. Available: Available:<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1570701,00.html>.
15. Craker N, March E. The dark side of Facebook®: The Dark Tetrad, negative social potency, and trolling behaviours. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 2016;102:79-84.
16. Culpeper J. *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge University Press; 2011.
17. Dahlberg L. Computer-mediated communication and the public sphere: A critical analysis. *Journal of Computer-mediated communication*. 2001; 7(1): JCMC714.
18. De Seta G. FCJ-167 Spraying, fishing, looking for trouble: The Chinese Internet and a critical perspective on the concept of trolling. *The Fibreculture Journal*;2013 (2013: Trolls and The Negative Space of the Internet).
19. Donath J. Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community. In: *Communities in Cyberspace*, edited by Marc Smith and Peter Kollock. London, Routledge Press;1999.
20. Gašparovičová, A. Crossing the Boundaries: The Missing Role of the Trickster as the Messenger of Gods in Native American Myths. [Bachelor's Diploma Thesis, Masaryk University Faculty of Arts]. *Cyberculture*. 2017;13:44-70.
21. Golf-Papez M, Veer E. Don't feed the trolling: rethinking how online trolling is being defined and combated. *Journal of Marketing Management*. 2017;33(15-16): 336-54.
22. Hardaker C. Trolling in asynchronous computer-mediated communication: From user discussions to academic definitions. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture*. 2010;6(2),215–242.
23. Hardaker C. "Uh.... not to be nitpicky, but... the past tense of drag is dragged, not drug": An overview of trolling strategies. *Journal of language aggression and conflict*. 2013;1(1):58-86.
24. Hartmann E. *Die Troll vorstellungen in den Sagen und Märchen der skandinavischen Völker*. Tübinger germanistische Arbeiten. 1936;23. German.
25. Herring S, Job-Sluder K, Scheckler R, Barab S. Searching for safety online: Managing" trolling" in a feminist forum. *The information society*. 2002;18(5): 371-84.
26. Hetcher SA. *Norms in a wired world*. Cambridge University Press;2004.
27. Higgin T. FCJ-159/b/lack up: What trolls can teach us about race. *The Fibreculture Journal*; 2013(22 2013: Trolls and The Negative Space of the Internet).
28. Hynes WJ. Mapping the characteristics of mythic tricksters: A heuristic guide. *Mythical trickster figures: Contours, contexts, and criticisms*. 1993:33-45.
29. Jane EA. Flaming? What flaming? The pitfalls and potentials of researching online hostility. *Ethics and Information Technology*. 2015;17(1):65-87.
30. Jansen & James. *Troll. Netlingo*. 2002. Accessed 15 February 2020. Available:<https://www.netlingo.com/word/troll.php>.
31. Jussinoja, T. *Life-cycle of internet trolls*. University of Jyväskylä Faculty of Information Technology: 2018.
32. Karppi T. FCJ-166 'Change name to No One. Like people's status' Facebook Trolling and Managing Online Personas. *The Fibreculture Journal*. 2013 (22 2013: Trolls and The Negative Space of the Internet).
33. Katsadoros, G., Fyntrili, E., Stylianou, M. Folk literature and social networking: Proverbs and witticisms on Facebook and Twitter. *Greek*. 2016;21,476-489.
34. Krappitz S. *Troll Culture*. Stuttgart; 2013.
35. Koupatadze, G. *Odysseus as Trickster. An Interpretation Based on Carl Gustav Jung's Archetypal Psychoanalytical Theory*. [Master of Liberal Arts] Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies MLAP 34200. 2014.

36. Leaver T. Olympic trolls: Mainstream memes and digital discord. *Fibreculture Journal*. 2013;1(22):216-33.
37. Lewis DM. Arguing in English and French asynchronous online discussion. *Journal of pragmatics*. 2005;37(11):1801-18.
38. Lindow J. *Trolls: An unnatural history*. Reaktion Books; 2014.
39. Mantilla K. Gender trolling: Misogyny adapts to new media. *Feminist Studies*. 2013;39(2):563-70.
40. Martin RA, Ford T. *The psychology of humor: An integrative approach*. Academic press; 2018.
41. McCosker A. Trolling as provocation: YouTube's agonistic publics. *Convergence*. 2014; 20(2): 201-17.
42. McKay, A. (2018). *The Mythology of Norwegian Trolls*. 2013. Accessed 09 June 2020. Available:<https://www.lifeinnorway.net/norwegian-trolls/>.
43. Merritt E. *An analysis of the discourse of Internet trolling: A case study of Reddit.com* (Doctoral dissertation).
44. Milner RM. Hacking the Social: Internet Memes, Identity Antagonism, and the Logic of Lulz. *The Fibreculture Journal*, 2013;22:62–103.
45. Motz L. Trolls and Aesir: lexical evidence concerning north-germanic faith. *Indogermanische Forschungen*. 1984;89:179.
46. Μρομπολα, Κ. Η πολιτική κωμωδία μετά τον Αριστοφάνη. (2021). Greek.
47. Naraine, (2007). *The 10 biggest web annoyances*. PCWorld. Accessed 12 March 2020. Available:<https://www.pcworld.com/article/138872/article.html>
48. Netfocus. Τι σημαίνει Τρολ (troll);. Netfocus. 2017. Accessed 16 February 2020. Available: <https://www.netfocus.gr/web/ti-simainei-trol/>.Greek.
49. Opp KD. The evolutionary emergence of norms. *British Journal of Social Psychology*. 1982; 21(2):139-49.
50. Oxford Learners Dictionaries. Troll. In: *oxford learners dictionaries*. (n.d.). Accessed 17 February 2020. Available: [https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/troll\\_1?q=troll](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/troll_1?q=troll).
51. Pétursdóttir, Ó. Of Changelings, Elves, Dragons, Giants, Merfolks...Scandinavian studies, Oral Literature.
52. Phillips W. LOLing at tragedy: Facebook trolls, memorial pages and resistance to grief online. *First Monday*; 2011.
53. Phillips W. The house that fox built: Anonymous, spectacle, and cycles of amplification. *Television & New Media*. 2013;14(6):494-509.
54. Rosenberg BA, Brown ME, Brown ME, Hale P, Sitarski K, editors. *Encyclopedia of Folklore and Literature*. Abc-Clio Incorporated; 1998.
55. Ruch W, Raskin V. *Psychology of humor*. Mouton de Gruyter; 2008.
56. Samson AC, Huber O, Ruch W. Seven decades after Hans Asperger's observations: A comprehensive study of humor in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Humor*. 2013; 26(3):441-60.
57. Sanfilippo M, Yang S, Fichman P. *Managing online trolling: From deviant to social and political trolls*. 2017.
58. Schwartz, M. Malwebolence: The Trolls among Us. *New York Times*. 2008. Accessed 8 February 2021. Available:<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/magazine/03trolls-t.html>
59. Scopeteas, I. Η Κωμωδία.2016. Greek.
60. Sear T, Jensen M. Russian trolls targeted Australian voters on Twitter via# auspol and# MH17. *The Conversation*. 2018;22.
61. Sest N, March E. Constructing the cyber-troll: Psychopathy, sadism, and empathy. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 2017;119:69-72.
62. Shah S. The internet is Jain: how gunsingin' techno libertarianism leads to lotus petals. *proceedings of New Forms Festival, Technography, Vancouver, BC*; 2004.
63. Shachaf P, Hara N. Beyond vandalism: Wikipedia trolls. *Journal of Information Science*. 2010; 36(3):357-70.
64. Shepherd T, Harvey A, Jordan T, Srauy S, Miltner K. *Histories of hating. Social Media+ Society*. 2015;1(2): 2056305115603997.

65. Tepper M. Usenet communities and the cultural politics of information. In *Internet Culture*. 2013:39-54.
66. Young-Eisendrath P, Dawson T, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*. Cambridge University Press; 2008.

---

© 2023 Zarenti and Katsadoros; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

*Peer-review history:*  
*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:*  
<https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/99384>