

Animals in James Clarence Mangan's Poetry (1838-1844)

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Abstract

James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849) was one of those poets who used animal imagery in his poems in an authentic manner. Since he is frequently cited as a Romantic poet, it is possible to see nature and animal representation in his poems although his treatment of animals requires special attention for he diverts from his contemporaries in his use of animals with their rather Eastern connotations. Hence, the aim of this study is to examine James Clarence Mangan's poems written between the years of 1838 and 1844 to see how animals are represented in his poems. James Clarence Mangan's poems differ from the works of his contemporaries for many reasons mainly because his poetry treats external reality in a unique way. His treatment of animals is a case in point. In his poems, the ways he employs images or metaphors (or extended metaphors) about animals are characterized by his interest in the non-West as his animals appear with their eastern connotations as in the example of the nightingale. This paper will explore the ways Mangan departs from his contemporaries in his treatment of animals referring to specific poems.

Keywords: James Clarence Mangan, Animals, Animal Studies, Animal Imagery

Introduction

From the beginning of history, animals have always been mankind's companions. Humans and animals have always coexisted in the same environment, sharing similar concerns such as nourishment, warmth, and safety. It is no coincidence that after thousands of years of harmony, animals and humans still share parts of their lives in each other's. From the perspective of humanities, animals and their relationship with humans have a whole field of their own. First began to take hold in the 1970s, animal studies is a growing interdisciplinary field that incorporates knowledge originating from literature, sociology, religion, and philosophy among many others. This study aims to build a parallel between animal studies and the great Irish poet James Clarence Mangan's poetry. In order to conduct this study, James Clarence Mangan's selected poems between the years of 1838 and 1844 that have been analyzed by close reading have been taken into consideration. The relationship between Mangan and animals has been thoroughly viewed to conduct an in-depth analysis. Animal Studies as a literary theory has been used as a baseline to analyze the poems. To integrate Animal Studies into this study, animals have been analyzed as images, and their symbolic, or metaphorical meanings have been taken into consideration. The method of the study is that the animals that were mentioned in at least five of Mangan's poems have been analyzed to come up with a viable argument. Firstly, the selected poems of

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Mangan between the years of 1838 and 1844 are analyzed by close reading. While conducting this study Mangan's poems that have animal connotations have been taken into consideration, and among the 363 poems of Mangan's between the years of 1838 and 1844 the number of poems that mention at least one animal is 72 and the total number of animals that have been mentioned in these poems is 63. In order to keep the scope of this study to-the-point, the animals that are mentioned in more than five of Mangan's poems (snakes, serpents and reptiles; nightingales/bulbul; horses/steeds; lions) are analyzed to understand the meanings attributed to these animals. Animals mentioned in his poetry include: alligator, panther, goose, owl, jaguar, eagle, shellfish, swarm, butterfly, fox, lamb, beetle, hound, parrot, whale, mice, puppy, hen, ape, lizard, hawk, crock, pig, swine, mule, dragon, bee, fowl, wolf, monkey, raven, turkey, dog, sheep, ass, swan, seal, mole, deer, reptile, gander, mouse, nightingale, bird, serpent, snake, roe, leopard, cat, horse, fish, worm, bulbul, cow, swarm, dove, steed, cub, camel, crow and lion. In addition to this, some of his poems carry animal names as for their titles: "Make the Lion the Painter", "The Bold Dragoon", "The Eagle and the Dove", "The Fox-Chorus", "The Cat and the Looking-Glass", "The Lion's Ride".

Findings

Table 1.

Animals that have been mentioned in at least five of Mangan's poems.

Animals	Number of poems that mention these animals
Snakes, Serpents, Reptiles	12
Nightingales/Bulbul	10
Horses and Steeds	10
Lions	5

The animals mentioned in Mangan's are shown in Table 1.

Table 2.

Symbolic meanings of mentioned animals.

Animals	Symbolic Meanings
Snakes, Serpents, Reptiles	Evil
Nightingales/Bulbul	Virtue, goodness, beauty
Horses and Steeds	Travel, movement, military, might
Lions	Power, strength, majesty, fear

As for their symbolic meanings: snakes, serpents, and reptiles are highly associated with evil while nightingales/bulbul are associated with virtue, goodness and beauty and horses are associated with travel, movement, military, and might. Finally, lions are associated with power, strength, majesty, and fear.

As for the first category; snakes, serpents and reptiles' evil connotation can be seen in the poems such as "The City of the Truth", "An Incongruity", "The Hundred-Leafed Rose", and "Most Melancholic":

O, stand up! The serpent and his mates,
But not Man, were born to creep and crawl;
Reptile enters not the Holy Gates. (The City of Truth, 93-95)

In "The City of Truth", serpent and reptile are associated with evil in a Biblical sense for they cannot enter the Holy Gates. Similarly, in "An Incongruity", Mangan speaks of verses from the Koran that associate snakes with evil again:

The Koran warns thee snakes are not allowed
To loll or lie
On Eden's beds of violets and roses! (An Incongruity, 4-6)

In Judeo-Christian religious traditions, the snake earned its stereotypical image due to its depiction in the Book of Genesis where the serpent deceives Adam and Eve into the first sin. As implied in the text the snake was actually Satan in disguise. Because of their seductive image snakes are often portrayed to be sly hypnotists.

For the next category; nightingales and/or bulbul's symbolic meanings can be seen in the poems "The City of Truth", "Bamberg: The Drop-Scene", "The Kiosk of Moonstanzar-Billah" and "The Little Hut". It is an important point that Mangan differs from his contemporaries in the way he treats the East or the Non-West. Arıkan and Birlik (2018) state that "He recognizes the subjectivity and autonomy of the East in his descriptions of the East, and even goes further and glorifies it with positive descriptions and judgments..." (184). Mangan prefers to use the word "bulbul" rather than the nightingale at the cost of presenting linguistic deviation in this poem. It is also seen that they are used with their Eastern connotations to convey attributes like virtue, goodness, and beauty. While it is a bird associating sadness and death, or art coming out of suffering in Western literature, it is affiliated with the opposite qualities in Mangan's poetry. Robles (2016) explains the nightingales' symbolism in Western literature: "In the European lyric tradition, no songbird is more prominent than the nightingale. No doubt this has to do with the fact that the nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) is a beautiful singer that sings at night, as well as in the day, but it also has to do with the double symbolism of mourning and melancholia that has attached to it from antiquity." (p. 88). For example, as Mangan's contemporary, the Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge associates nightingale with melancholy:

And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,
'Most musical, most melancholy' Bird!

A melancholy Bird? O idle thought!

In nature there is nothing melancholy. (The Nightingale, 12-15)

Different from his contemporaries, Mangan associates nightingale with positive connotations:

There sweet nightingales, like living flutes

Bind the senses and the soul in thrall. (The City of Truth, 13-14)

As it is seen in the poem, Mangan attributes sweetness to nightingales. And nightingales have the ability to “bind the senses and the soul” with their songs.

And thy nightingales in cages

Warble songs of Paradise. (Bamberg: A Drop-Scene, 5-6)

In “Bamberg: A Drop-Scene”, Mangan associates with nightingales in a Biblical sense since they “warble songs of Paradise”:

The bulbul’s melody broke from the dell

A song to the rose, the Summer’s daughter! (The Kiosk of Moonstanzar-Billah, 3-4)

Finally, it is seen that Mangan prefers to use “bulbul” instead of the nightingale. In this way, he attributes an Eastern connotation to the bird. Arıkan and Birlik (2017, p. 12) state that “In Mangan's poems, the Middle Eastern names are often used in their original form, without translating them in accordance with the spelling or pronunciation of the English language... It can be said that the poet used some of these non-English words, which he wrote mainly in accordance with English grammar rules, to contribute to the sound features of the poem and in particular to form a harmony.”

Horses and steeds’ symbolic meanings can be seen in the poems “An Elegy” and “Lament for Alhama, and Death of the Moor Alfaquee”:

O, horses’ hoofs would trample down

The mount whereon the martyr-Saint

Was crucified. (An Elegy, 37-38)

In “An Elegy”, an example of ‘might’ can be seen since the “horses’ hoofs would trample down the mount”:

Off-springing from his mule with speed,

He bounded on his Arab steed. (Lament for Alhama, and Death of the Moor Alfaquee 11-12)

Horses are traditionally seen as noble creatures since humans use them for transport. And in this poem, travel and movement can be seen in the provided lines.

For the last category; lions’ symbolic meanings can be seen in the poems “The Glove”, “The Lion’s Ride”, “Make the Lion the Painter” and “The Abduction of the Lady Gertrude von Hochburg”. As an animal that has been attributed with the kingship of the

wild, the lion often represents power, strength, majesty, and fear in Mangan's poetry. In Mangan's poetry, the lion has always been spoken about with adjectives such as great, hero, and glare. Similarly, the lion of the Bible is described as fierce, roaring, vicious, and strong, and the lion of the Koran is mentioned as something to fear:

And straightway a gate is unclosed,

And sneakingly then, like a hero disposed

To turn dodger, and linger,

A lion steps out. (The Glove, 14-17)

In "The Glove", the lion is described as a majestic hero:

But, ah! Even Ritter-love may fear

To breast the lion in his lair! (The Abduction of the Lady Gertrude von Hochburg, 153-154)

In this poem, the lion is introduced as something to fear.

Apart from their symbolic representations, Mangan uses animals' names for their rhythmic qualities especially for creating rhymes. Using animal names to achieve a special rhythmic tone is most apparent in "The Fox-Chorus":

'Tis a Town's-cadger, stiff a corse,

He sits astride of a horse. (7-8)

We shall see, we shall see, for he knocks;

Rapp! Rapp! Lo, he bringeth a Fox! (19-20)

He leathers away, rub-a-dub,

And he calls the student a cub. (73-74)

Conclusion

Our analysis shows that Mangan's use of animals in his poetry is framed within stylistic rather than image-based concerns. Mangan uses animals to create a certain sound system (rhyme, rhythm, and repetition of certain sounds) for a purpose such as creating an ironic, humorous or childish mood. Similarly, in his most melodious poems, animals are used extensively as can be seen in his poem "The Fox-Chorus". Furthermore, it is understood from the symbolic meanings of animals that attributed to them that Mangan is highly inspired by the Bible and the Koran. In addition, differing from his contemporaries, Mangan attributes some animals with their Eastern connotations as in the example of the nightingale/bulbul. Although some of the animals he uses can be understood in stereotypical terms (that the snake is representative of the evil in the Biblical sense), there is originality in Mangan's use of animal imagery. Such originality can be seen in numerous poems such as in "Make the Lion the Painter" in which the lion is situated in city life rather than in nature:

However, a great Lion sauntered down the Street,
And, glancing at the Picture with an eye. (11-12)

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