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Abstract: Animals have been a common interest in relation to human performances of all kinds, an interest that has been present starting with the oldest forms of human rituals and representations. Along with the development and diversification of performance styles and methods, people started making use of animals in order to better express themselves. Similar is the case of entertainment industry performances, where artists often choose to better express the messages they want to send through the help of animal symbols. The current paper means to analyze how animals, with a deeper focus on wild animals, are being used in Korean pop music. Animal symbols should be used with great care, since they sometimes may become confusing. For this reason, when deciding to use animal symbols in promoting entertainment products, people should first take into consideration targeted publics and the cultures they come from, and then construct the products in such a way as to not leave room for misinterpretation.

Key words: K-Pop, entertainment, music, animal symbolism, culture

1. Introduction

Animals have been a common interest in relation to human performances of all kinds, an interest that has been present starting with the oldest forms of human rituals and representations. Along with the development and diversification of performance styles and methods, people started making use of animals in order to better express themselves. Similar is the case of entertainment industry performances, where artists often choose to better express the messages they want to send through the help of animal symbols. Thanks to the different meanings one could gain by relating the message to what they know about the animal, such practices have become extremely popular nowadays.

Setting aside performances such as circus events or other animal-based moments, other types of performances as well have started using animals to express certain messages, even if the respective messages may not talk about anything related to the animal world. Thus, rather than the animals themselves, what becomes important in these cases are the symbols they express, symbols meant to reach the audience in a more subtle manner. In the case of music performances, animals have become a very comfortable and safe means of expressing a message without (directly) making any offense. In Korean pop music (K-Pop) as well this trend of using animals for performances seems to have become more and more popular recently.

The current paper means to analyze how animals, with a deeper focus on wild animals, are being used in Korean pop music. By observing the types of animals present in performances and music videos, and then relating their general symbolic meanings to the lyrics of the songs, some common tendencies are expected to occur. Also, according to how these animals are used and what messages they are meant to express, the study is also looking to determine how artists manage to connect to their publics through the help of animal symbols.

As helpful literature for the study, several articles and books on animal symbolism have been consulted and related to the current subject of interest. Other references, such as individual opinions or personal experiences have been taken into consideration as well; the later, rather than giving professional information on the topic, have focused more on cultural aspects and what symbols do people associate in regard to the discussed animals – this will be useful in better understanding how the connections between artists, their songs, and the public can be created. Since the analysis is expected to find some relations between the usage of wild animals and the meanings and effects that can be observed at a deeper level, references regarding performance studies in general have been consulted – at a first glance, issues such as liminality, dark play, simulation, ludus, and, maybe, paidia seemed to have some connections with the presence of animals in music performances, and, thus, are analyzed more in depth.

As methods used, observation and interpretation are the main choices for the current study. Of course, the analysis as a whole is dominated by a subjective tone, since symbolism aspects in general are understood differently according to one’s personality and beliefs. Cultural aspects also influenced the tone of the study, considering that impressions usually differ according to cultural background.

More specifically, a number of fifteen music videos and one separate concert performance have been analyzed individually and in comparison to each other, in
order to better determine the differences in usage and meanings – artists include Beast, Big Bang (G-Dragon, TOP), Kim Jaejoong, Mad Clown, Psy, Hyuna, Gain, Exid, Troublemaker, Orange Caramel, and 2PM. Also, aside from a visual observation of how the animals are used to transmit certain messages, a link with the lyrics of the songs was also made. The animal symbolisms mainly discussed are tigers, lions, owls, snakes, wolves, rabbits, and ravens; at a second level, meanings behind bears, monkeys, horses, zebras, deer, dogs, cats, worms, hawks, spiders, scorpions, parrots, chameleons, and hedgehogs have also been analyzed.

The findings reveal information about how artists choose to relate the messages they want to send with the performances they create in order to send those messages. Also, a more detailed analysis of how people perceive animals and what they associate them with provides a basis for better understanding the usage of animals by humans in general and, at a higher level, the differences that may appear between cultures.

2. Animals and their symbols

People and animals have been living in the same world for a very long time. It is only normal, then, that they should learn from each other. What animals learn from humans and how they perceive humankind is beyond our comprehension. On the other hand, how, us, humans, understand and relate to animals is a matter that can be observed and analyzed. The usage of animal symbols is a common practice nowadays, but, actually, its roots go way back in human history, since “the animal has long been a symbol of human psyche and culture, from fairy tales to horror films, Oedipal pets to animal phobias, scapegoating and large-group symbols, philosophy to ideology and myth”¹ (Dodds, 2012)

Animals have since become indispensable to humankind, people adopting their images under different symbolisms around the world. These differences are based on cultural traits and group-based behaviors, and can become really confusing if discussed in relation to the wrong culture. Probably the manner in which animal symbolisms were most frequently used is in the case of groups, as having specific meanings and being representative of those groups’ characteristics and beliefs. “The expression of large-group identities through animal symbolisms were most frequently used is in the case of groups, as having specific meanings and being representative of those groups’ characteristics and beliefs. “The expression of large-group identities through animal symbols is ancient and ubiquitous going back to the totemic use of animals and nature at the beginning of human history. […] Animals here function as a collective projection of human characteristics and also provide objects of collective introjective identification, as the group internalizes the characteristics of the animal in rituals such as the totem meal. […] Such animals therefore become a collective unifying symbol around which the group forms powerful bonds”. ² Animal symbolism influencing strength over human life has become so great, that people become emotionally attached to these symbols and their personalities are formed in relation to them, transmitting the same beliefs to their successors. As Dodds also states regarding this aspect, “cultural symbols are injected with fresh emotional charge with each generation, if they can succeed in retaining their social role as containers, and they also provide real-made channels for the flow of emotional meaning”³.

Animal symbols were always present in human societies, but, as societies started to develop more, their usage has become even more obvious. As Dodds well observes, “our minds, films, and artwork, are populated with flora and fauna of all kinds, some related to ‘real’ existing life forms in the external world, some more the product of fantasy and ecologies on the inner world”⁴.

In relation to how humans make use of other beings for expressing certain ideas, Kim (2006) mentioned that “people have their own cultural backgrounds and experiences in terms of visual perceptual thinking so that they could misunderstand the cultural symbols, trademarks, Brand Identities, and trade characters, especially, animal trademarks”⁵.

The usage of animals in entertainment performances of all nature (music, film, theatre etc.) is a common activity in present times, and has become an expression of ‘power’, in the sense that producers tend to choose ‘special’ animals to help transmit their message. Thus, rather than using the common domesticated animals (except for dogs, cats, and, rarely, horses), producers opt for wild animals more often, trying to give an exotic feeling to their products. A general problem occurs when using these animals in a certain culture, with certain symbolic meanings, and then releasing the final products in different cultures while neglecting the possible differences that might appear regarding those animals’ symbolisms, and also the effects they may have on how the targeted publics receive those products. As Kim well observes, “generally, multiple symbols are difficult to comprehend, because they are created by individual ideas and incorporate several mythologies and histories. […] Although the designer can depict objects effectively, the audience cannot always take the same message at the same time, because the meaning of the originality had been changed while the audience taking it. There were several possibilities of misunderstanding of the marks and characters by the receivers. They could think it in a

¹ Dodds, J., “Animal Totems and Taboos: An Ecopsychoanalytic Perspective”, PsyArt an online journal for the psychological study of the arts, 2012, p. 1

² Ibid., pp. 16-17
³ Ibid., P. 17
⁴ Ibid., p. 2
different way depended on their own perspective whether it designed right or wrong” 6. Though referring to advertising and logos, Kim’s statement cannot be closer to reality in the case of animal symbols' usage for entertainment purposes as well.

3. Animals in K-Pop performances

Similar is the situation of K-Pop (Korean pop music), where using animal symbols in music videos and, sometimes, live performances as well, has become a trend in recent years. Of course, while making use of these animal’s symbols, as we are about to see, producers tend to take into consideration these animals’ meanings in Asian culture – and, it is normal to do that, taking into account that those producers come from Asian cultures; but only to a certain extent. Problems occur when K-Pop products using animal motives are promoted in overseas, non-Asian markets; this is where the meanings can become confusing, and might also lead to the misinterpretation of the songs/performances’ messages, and even of the artists’ intentions in general.

Those possible issues represent the object of the current study. In order to see how messages can be changed because of the misuse of animal symbols, a number of fifteen music videos for hit-songs have been analyzed; also, a concert performance of a popular group has been included. The sixteen materials studied, in random order, are: “Mine” (by Kim Jaejoong of JYJ), “One of a kind” (by G-Dragon of BigBang), “Shock” – from the 1st Japan Showcase (by Beast), “Paradise Lost” (by Gain of Brown Eyed Girls), “My house” (by 2PM), “Shadow” (by Beast), “Stupid in love” (by Mad Clown), “Doom dada” – (by TOP of BigBang), “Turn it up” (by TOP of BigBang), “Without you” (by Mad Clown), “Fantastic baby” (by BigBang), “Gangnam style” (by Psy), “Trouble maker” (by Trouble Maker), “Red” (by Hyuna), “Up and down” (by EXID), and “My copycat” (by Orange Caramel). Since some of the animal symbols appear in more than one performance, the analysis was made according to animal, and, where it was the case, the different usages were compared. When observing the meaning behind each animal symbol, the lyrics were taken into consideration as well. Also, in order to better understand what problems might be caused by the misuse of symbols, two perspectives were presented (both an Asian culture-based view and a Western culture-based one).

3.1. Owl

The owl is a mysterious bird regarding its symbolism. Asian cultures do not seem to give it a special role as an animal totem. Western cultures, on the other hand, often relate it to death and bad luck, but sometimes refer to it as an expression of nature, wisdom, and insight, thus giving it a positive image. Among the performances analyzed, two used the owl with symbolic purposes. In “Mine” (by Kim Jaejoong of JYJ), it is used with its negative image; considering the general message of the lyrics, pointing to ideas such as constraint and the desire to escape, and also taking into account the usage of other animals and the general feeling given by the music video, the owl is given, here, a negative connotation, representing bad luck, a messenger of death, in this case death of the soul. In “Fantastic baby” (by BigBang), on the other hand, since the general meaning of the lyrics points towards freedom of acceptance and expression, it can be assumed that the owl is used with its positive connotation, as an expression of wisdom, nature, of love towards the real self.

3.2. Raven

Just as the owl, the raven is usually related to a negative meaning. Though, if related to the crow (since many cultures don’t really distinguish too much between their symbolisms), some may associate it with intelligence and skill. The truth is that ravens will be given a negative look most of the time. Similar are the situations in K-Pop, where the bird is related to the notion of death in the music videos for both “Mine” (by Kim Jaejoong of JYJ), and “Stupid in love” (by Mad Clown). Though the death of different aspects is presented, in the first case being the death of one’s self, of one’s soul, while in the second it’s the death of love, the general image of the raven is kept. The most significant example of this animal’s symbolism is given by its usage in the movie “The Crow” (1994), where the meaning behind it is not even subtle, the bird being the one that brings (and keeps alive) the main character, who dies in the beginning of the movie.
3.3. Snake

The snake is a complicated appearance, being given several images, depending on case. Thus, it can be seen as an expression of freedom and wisdom, it can also have a divine connotation, being related to the (medical) idea of healing, but it can also resemble death and darkness. A dark symbolism is given to the snake in both “Mine” (by Kim Jaejoong of JYJ), where it impersonates death, and restraint (though, considering how it is used in relation to the artist’s actions, it can also be an expression of protection, wisdom, and freedom), and in “Shadow” (by Beast), where it is portrayed as a creature of the shadows, cold, feared, and alone. At the same time, common meaning behind the usage of the snake is that of the temptation (related to the Original Sin mentioned in the Bible), this giving it a sexual connotation. Such is the case of “Paradise lost” (by Gain of Brown Eyed Girls), where the lyrics come to support this statement, being explicit in regard to sexuality and sin.

3.4. Wolf

The wolf’s symbolical meanings are of negative nature, related to death and evil, being considered as an expression of the Devil, of wickedness and mischief. That same meaning of mischief is used in “My house” (by 2PM), but, in this case, in relation to another strong symbol behind the wolf, that of sexual temptation. The lyrics of the song are also suggestive in this sense, the man trying to seduce the girl and bring her to an isolated environment where he could be in control and show his true skin’. The same idea of sexual temptation seems to stand behind the symbolism of the original “Little Red Riding Hood” story, which has been used as a motive on so many occasions.
3.5. Dog

The dog, though not a wild animal, can have an interesting and confusing usage as a symbol. In general, it can gain both positive and negative meanings, as guardian, loyal friend, even true love, but also as an animal of the darkness, as a messenger of death, and a guide into the afterlife. In K-Pop, its usage may also be confusing. Thus, while in “Mine” (by Kim Jaejoong of JYJ) it can be understood as both a threat and a protector, in “Turn it up” (by TOP of BigBang) it seems to be given a positive, friendly connotation. Interesting is the case of “Shadow” (by Beast), where, according to the lyrics of the song, and the exact moment and style of usage in the music video, the dog can be interpreted as both an animal of darkness, and a companion and protector at the same time, a guide and companion in the shadows.

In relation to both wolf and dog, it is important to mention that sometimes, since the usage of the wolf is not easy, people might turn to ‘scary-looking’ dogs in an attempt to portray them as wolves. This can be confusing, and it is important to pay attention to other symbols used, in order to properly understand the meaning behind the dog.

3.6. Hawk

The hawk is not a common symbol used in entertainment. Given its hunting instincts, it generally portrays a sense of power, strength, but also infinite freedom, thanks to its flying abilities. Its symbolical
usage in “Shadow” (by Beast) is a bit confusing, since the lyrics talk about love, but the animal has no direct relation to this concept. Considering its general meanings, and also the act of being set to fly by the artist, one can assume that it is used with the idea of freedom, escape from the ‘claws’ of a painful experience.

3.7. Spider

The spider represents a multitude of symbols. It is usually associated with wisdom, creativity, patience, determination, persistence, destiny, control, and even good luck, or money bringer; but it can also be given negative meanings, such as the image of one’s shadow self, predator, mischief, and curse. Spiders are mostly used in movies with their symbolic negative meanings. In case of musical performances, they are not used that often, maybe because their images do not represent something very shocking anymore, since people tend to have gotten used to them. In “Shadow” (by Beast), the spider is used with its dark connotations, that of the shadow self, representing the cursed lover who is condemned to love in vain.

3.8. Scorpion

The scorpion, like many of the animals mentioned up to now, can have both positive and negative connotations. Thus, while it can be a representation of evil, death and treachery, it is also seen as symbolizing protection, defensiveness, control, and precision. Because of the medical use of its venom, it can also gain a ‘healing’ meaning. In “Shadow” (by Beast), the scorpion is used with its dark meaning, as an animal of the shadows, but also with the protective and solitary connotations, the lover being alone in love, and having to defend himself from the continuous pain he is experiencing.

3.9. Worm

An interesting symbolism can be observed in the case of worms (which will always be used in groups, and not just one), since they can simultaneously mean both death, as decay, and life, as rebirth and renewal. They are also given evil connotations, especially in relation to religious sources, where worms were considered as a depiction of the devil. Some cultures consider worms as a sign of fertility (though it is a rare case). Still, when one sees worms, the first meaning they think of is that of death. Such is the case of “Shadow” (by Beast), where worms are used in the presence of a human skull, the meaning of death being obvious; here, it refers to the death of love.

3.10. Lion

Though it can be depicted as related to both the divine and evil, the lion is usually a symbol of strength, protection, leadership, skill, and justice. Though it is considered as a feared, ferocious, and cruel animal, at the same time it can represent the power of love, pride, wisdom, and royalty. Since it has a stronger symbolical meaning in Western cultures, its usage in Eastern representations is quite rare. Thus, when used in the performance of “Shock” in the 1st Japan Showcase of the K-Pop group Beast, it was meant to represent strength, pride, and, why not, even leadership and royalty; the purpose was to create a powerful image for the group and induce the feeling of respect. Still, important to notice is the fact that the lion was present on stage next to a tiger. This can be related to the weak symbolical meaning of the lion in Eastern cultures, as compared to the symbolical strength of the tiger.
3.11. Tiger

The equal of Western cultures’ lion symbolism stands in the tiger in Eastern cultures. It is the image of strength, authority, guardianship, and courage, but in Korean culture it is also considered as silly and humorous presence. It also is a bearer of good luck and money in Chinese culture, and a symbol of fire in India. Sometimes it can also gain the meaning of deceit, because of its colorful, striped fur, that can confuse the eye (such an image was given to the tiger in The Jungle Book, for example, where it was a deceitful, mischievous character).

In the performance of “Shock” in the 1st Japan Showcase of the group Beast, the tiger was used with the purpose of supporting the same symbolical meanings of the lion, strength, pride, leadership, and respect, but from an Eastern perspective. Similarly, in “One of a kind” (by G-Dragon of BigBang), the tiger is meant to induce the ideas of uniqueness, strength, respect, and leadership; the meaning behind the tiger used as only a cub is that of the beginning of the artist’s domination in the industry; also, at a lower level, the tiger here can be given a playful connotation. In the case of “Up and down” (by EXID), the main symbolical meaning of the tiger is meant to be a silly one; even if the animal itself is not used, the mask intends to transmit that idea; still, if analyzed at a deeper level while ‘reading between the lines’ of the lyrics, the symbols behind the tigers become those of control and mischief, the man that wants to control the woman through the power of deceit.

3.12. Bear

The general meaning behind the bear is that of ferocious strength. It is considered a vicious, murdering animal, with a lazy and greedy character. At the same time, despite its negative exterior image, the animal is considered as faithful, affectionate, and even a clumsy being; in some cultures it gains the status of sacred animal. The bear is hard to use in music performances, being a more common presence in movies and the circus. In “One of a kind” (by G-Dragon of BigBang), the bear is, again, used as a cub. It comes to complete the meaning of the tiger cub, symbolizing the artist’s growing strength; but, because of its young appearance, it can also be regarded as still innocent, playful, and cute.
3.13. Cat

Another domesticated animal that is often used in entertainment performances is the cat. The reasons behind its common usage may be related to the commonness of the animal, and the fact that it is generally calm and easy to work with. Cats are the representative of both evil and the divine, depending on culture. In Western cultures it is often depicted as evil, animals of darkness, being associated with sorcery and witchcraft (especially black cats); then, they are also seen as lazy, lecherous, and profitable. On the other hand, some cultures consider them as divine beings, worshiping them for their skills (the most famous example is their importance in the Egyptian culture). Eastern cultures tend to consider cats as a sign of luck and prosperity. In “Trouble maker” (by Trouble Maker), the cat gains a sexual symbolism, that of leading the man and playing him, just like a cat leads on the mouse.

3.14. Monkey

The monkey is a complicated animal, portraying different symbols according to culture. Thus, while in Western cultures it tends to gain negative connotations, being considered as wicked, greedy, and mischievous, in Eastern cultures it is seen as lucky, playful, loyal, entertaining, curious, amusing, a friendly and fun animal. These Eastern symbols are given to the monkey in “Turn it up” by (TOP of BigBang), “Red” (by Hyuna), and “My copycat” (by Orange Caramel); still, given its strong significance in Western cultures, the monkey can be easily interpreted as playful, but, at the same time, deceitful by foreign individuals (whether or not the producers wanted to give this message); if this should happen, the message of the songs might be seriously altered, influencing the artists’ images in a negative way. An interesting usage of the monkey (though it is used more as an ape), can be observed in “Doom dada” (by TOP of BigBang); the purpose here is to induce the idea of evolution (evolution theory). Still, no matter how it is used, monkey symbolisms can be tricky and may lead to misunderstandings according to the different cultural interpretations.
3.15. Hedgehog

Hedgehogs (and porcupines as well) are sometimes considered as wicked animals, avaricious, but are mostly interpreted in relation to their spikes, which represent danger, defense, and the impossibility of touch. With these former meanings the hedgehog has been used in “Without you” (by Mad Clown), where it symbolizes the impossibility of the two lovers to touch each other anymore (both physically and emotionally), because the love was damaged. The short appearance of the hedgehog in the music video is supported by the lyrics’ message, talking about a broken love.

3.16. Parrot

Depending on their size and on how they are used, parrots can symbolize both entrapment and freedom. Sometimes, they also gain the meaning of meaningless repetition, given their tendency to imitate sounds. In “My copycat” (by Orange Caramel), the usage of a big, wild parrot can signify freedom. But, considering the lyrics’ message, an ‘imitation’/’copying’ meaning might also be appropriate, in the sense that the relationship is lead by someone, while the other should only imitate and act according to how they are taught.

3.17. Chameleon

The chameleon is, and has always been, an expression of patience, adaptation, and observation. Similar symbolism is used in “My copycat” (by Orange Caramel), the purpose being to express the need of one to observe and adapt to the other’s style in the relationship, this being a must in order for the connection to exist. Thus, the general idea is that one will lead, while the other needs to adapt, and let themselves be lead.

3.18. Deer

Deer are the expression of innocence, beauty, softness, peace, and curiosity. They are never given negative connotations, and give the feeling of an angelic presence. Such is the case of the deer present in “Doom dada” (by TOP of BigBang), where it is used with the purpose of creating an innocent image for the artist. Taking into consideration the ‘dominance’ idea transmitted through the lyrics, one can assume that the deer’s role in this case is limited to appearance.

3.19. Horse

The horse has several symbolical meanings; it can be regarded as a guide and protector, a symbol of life and virility, sometimes being given a divined status; but it can also be depicted as a dark evil animal. Both Western and Eastern cultures seem to consider it as an expression of fertility, freedom, elegance, power, good fortune and wealth/nobility, but sometimes it can be given negative meanings as well, associating it to famine, war, death, and chaos. Eastern cultures tend to give it a sexual connotation as well. Such is the case of “Gangnam style” (by Psy), where it symbolizes a sexual act, and, if analyzed in association with the lyrics, that idea is strengthened.
3.20. Zebra

The zebra means illusion, instinct, awareness, balance, individuality, and wisdom. These symbolical meanings come as a result of its balanced, striped color, and its abilities to survive in the wild. The producers of “Doom dada” (by TOP of BigBang) make use of these meanings, which, brought together with other symbols used, have the purpose of expressing the artist’s abilities to manipulate through the help of his wisdom, and dominate without others realizing that they are being dominated.

3.21. Rabbit

The last animal to be analyzed from a symbolic perspective in relation to K-Pop performances is the rabbit. It has been left for last simply because it is too cute. Still, despite its cuteness, the images it can gain can be of both positive and negative nature. Thus, while Eastern cultures tend to associate it with longevity, strength, self-sacrifice, courage, good luck, and divinity, Western cultures see it in a darker perspective, considering it as a deceitful being, with sexual connotations, related to its fertility and reproductive capabilities. It is interesting to see how “My house” (by 2PM), though it is a Korean production (thus, from an Eastern culture), uses the rabbit in relation to its Western meanings; despite its cute appearance in the music video, its real meaning is that of a sexual nature, referring to the act itself. Just like the wolf, in the same performance, the rabbit appears as a deceitful creature meant to lead the girl into sexual intercourse.


Performances are not always meant to ‘transport’ the audiences to other worlds, but they have the purpose of providing individuals with a special place within the new world they temporarily become part of. This liminality in which people find themselves for a short while represents a temporary relief from reality (and, with it, any issues that people are confronting in their lives), and, if analyzed at a higher level, it also gives the opportunity of a future temporary escape from the world by remembering (or even watching, since the performances are permanently available thanks to new technologies and the Internet) the ‘fantasy realm’ in which they were taken for those few moments. Such performances place each individual in both a liminal situation, and a liminoid one. In the case of the liminal phenomenon, the experience is collective, since the individual is part of a group and, from the artists’ points of view, that is all that he/she can be, a part of a bigger group (because that’s how a fandom works – the artists do not know each fan individually, but see them as a whole); also, as a member of an audience, the individual will adopt a collective behavior (like supporting the artist, commenting with others on the performance etc.); thus, the individual member of the audience finds himself/herself in a liminal phase throughout the performance. On the other hand, in a private environment, the individual will abandon the liminal status and become related to the liminoid phenomenon, because, forgetting about the collective behavior, the effects of the experienced performance will arise at an individual, private (maybe even intimate, according to the attachment to the group) level; and this will affect each individual in a different manner (here it is the case of personal preferences, favorite artist/member, interpretation of the symbols and messages etc.).

These performances, related to the usage of wild animals as symbols, represent adventures for both fans and artists; for the sake of adventure (and also higher financial incomes), such acts and all the dangers they bring along are accepted as something positive. The
whole idea of these types of performances can easily be categorized as dark play, considering the danger in which the artists put themselves by performing next to the wild animals (some of which can be very dangerous), in order to tease and attract their fans, and, at a deeper level, to awaken their spirits. By the presence of such beings in environments they normally do not belong to, such performances can also be associated with the concepts of ludus, in the sense that nature’s rules are being broken through the activities conducted regarding the animals, but also paidia, since normally such performances would be considered as crazy and forbidden, but, in this case, they become a source of excitement. What happens in such performances where wild animals are put in unnatural postures is a clear imitation of a world that doesn’t really exist, a world where animals and humans can come together in the same place; but, the simple fact that the animals are being controlled in different ways (see the leashes in G-Dragon’s “One of a kind”, or the cages in Beast’s “Shock”) signifies that this world is only a make-believe place, a simulation (mimicry) of something that does not and will not be able to exist for real.

5. Conclusion

Though the general usage of animal symbols in the K-Pop performances analyzed was not wrong, and did give way to a negative influence, there were cases where, because of cultural differences, from a positive image, both the performance and the artist appeared in a negative light. As the analysis shows, animal symbols should be used with great care, since they sometimes may become confusing. For this reason, when deciding to use animal symbols in promoting entertainment products, people should first take into consideration targeted publics and the cultures they come from, and then construct the products in such a way as to not leave room for misinterpretation. For a proper promotion and understanding of entertainment products in overseas markets, a careful previous analysis of the publics’ characteristics is vital. If such an observation cannot be made, for whatever reasons, the producers and distributors should refrain from making the products available for such unknown markets; or else they might risk damaging the product’s image.

“The animal as symbol is culturally loaded and needs to be handled very cautiously, because the cultural meaning and what people actually think they mean are different”.

Animals are understood differently according to culture, but also according to one’s personality. For this reason, humans tend to use them (especially wild animals, since they seem to have a stronger impact on the public) to express certain messages; this also makes animals some sort of a ‘shield’ against possible criticism that bare words might bring if not transmitted subtly.

The final purpose of this study was to analyze the ways in which humans make use of certain animals to transmit messages to others, how these messages might be received and interpreted by the spectators, and, if it is the case, what misinterpretations can occur because of cultural differences. Also, the fact that animals are thought of differently in some cultures comparing to others, or the tendency for them to be used to express contrasting messages can be considered as signs of human error in relation to animals, how they are perceived in general, and what ideas are transmitted from generation to generation because of these symbolical meanings – all these can lead to serious after-effects in some cases, and it can also be considered as a sign of human ignorance.

6. Acknowledgements

This paper has been done under the guidance of professor Yong-Soo Kim, Mass Communication Department of Sogang University, Seoul, South Korea. The author would like to express their deepest gratitude to professor Yong-Soo Kim for the support given during the paper’s process of creation.

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