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The Rooster in English and Scottish Ballads

Петух в английских
и шотландских балладах

Абстракт

В статье рассматривается значение петуха в английских и шотландских балладах, подчеркивается его роль как символа времени, бдительности и перехода от ночи к дню. Домашние куры, особенно петухи, являются неотъемлемой частью жизни человека на протяжении тысячелетий, служа практическим целям, таким как обеспечение яйцами, мясом и перьями. Эта значимость отражена в фольклоре, в котором крик петуха часто ассоциируется с рассветом и пробуждением мира. В этой статье анализируются различные культурные интерпретации петушиного крика, обращается внимание на его историческое использование в качестве хронометра до появления механических часов. Древние поэты, в том числе Лукреций и Ювенал, признавали роль петуха в обозначении раннего утра, а римские и греческие традиции придавали петуху мифологическое значение, связывая его с божествами света и бдительности. Кукареканье петуха изображается как защита от злых духов и предвестник перемен, а различные народные поверья приписывают его звуку сверхъестественные значения. В балладах кукареканье петуха часто сигнализирует

The Rooster in English
and Scottish Ballads

Abstract

The article explores the significance of the rooster in English and Scottish ballads, highlighting its role as a symbol of time, vigilance, and the transition from night to day. Domestic chickens, particularly roosters, have been integral to human life for thousands of years, serving practical purposes such as providing eggs, meat, and feathers. This importance is reflected in folklore, where the crowing of the rooster is often associated with the dawn and the awakening of the world. The article discusses various cultural interpretations of the rooster's crow, noting its historical use as a timekeeper before the advent of mechanical clocks. Ancient poets, including Lucretius and Juvenal, recognized the rooster's role in marking the early hours of the morning, while Roman and Greek traditions imbued the rooster with mythological significance, associating it with deities of light and vigilance. The crowing of the rooster is depicted as a protective force against evil spirits and a harbinger of change, with various folk beliefs attributing supernatural meanings to its calls. In ballads, the rooster's crow often signals the end of nocturnal encounters, particularly between lovers and their ghostly counterparts, emphasizing the theme of separation at dawn.

об окончании ночных встреч, особенно между влюбленными и их призрачными двойниками, подчеркивая тему разлуки на рассвете. В статье также рассматриваются конкретные баллады, такие как *Призрак милого Уильяма* и *Клерк Сондерс*, в которых крик петуха представляет собой ключевой момент, определяющий судьбу героев. Кроме того, в тексте отмечается двойная роль петуха – как хранителя времени и символа воскрешения, что связывает его с темами жизни, смерти и цикличности бытия. В заключение анализа подчеркивается постоянное присутствие петуха в фольклоре и его многогранная символика в разных культурах, иллюстрирующая его значение в человеческом опыте как маркера времени и защитника от тьмы.

Ключевые слова: английская баллада, шотландская баллада, символ, петух, английская литература

The article also examines specific ballads, such as *Sweet William's Ghost* and *Clerk Saunders*, where the rooster's crowing serves as a pivotal moment that dictates the fate of the characters involved. Furthermore, the text highlights the rooster's dual role as both a timekeeper and a symbol of resurrection, linking it to themes of life, death, and the cyclical nature of existence. The analysis concludes by underscoring the rooster's enduring presence in folklore and its multifaceted symbolism across cultures, illustrating its significance in the human experience as a marker of time and a guardian against darkness.

Key words: English ballad, Scottish ballad, symbol, rooster, English literature

Within the framework of the modern interpretation of the text as a coherent discourse reflecting the inseparable unity of all its elements, the issue of interaction between its structural components[1] becomes particularly significant and relevant for the most expressive presentation of ideas and the realization of plotlines. The value of such a fusion of constituents is clearly observable in the analysis of the image of the rooster in poetic discourse.

Domestic chickens are the most common birds on our planet and have a history spanning thousands of years. Thanks to their many practical benefits (eggs, feathers, meat), they have become indispensable domestic animals, along with cats and dogs, and a sign of the home and household. This significance is reflected, in particular, in the frequent references to the chicken and rooster in folklore. In both folk art and author's works, especially poetry, the morning rooster's singing is the most striking, due to the mythological and poetic perception of this phenomenon.

Morning and evening twilight, as well as the first rays of the sun, are greeted by a number of representatives of the animal world, each of whom does so in a certain way and at a certain time, so it is not surprising that some have even tried, like Carl Linné's flower clock, to create bird clocks based on the sound of individual

[1] Svitlana Halaur, Ruslana Shramko, and Svitlana Pedchenko, "Positional Emphasis in the Modern Literary Text," *AD ALTA* 11, no. 1 (2021): 287–292, https://doi.org/10.33543/1101287291.

bird species. In Scandinavian folklore, there are stories of bird competitions, including cuckoos, grouse and roosters, for the championship in heralding the morning. The waking up and singing of birds is generally considered a symbol of the beginning of the day. Lucretius, a Roman poet and philosopher, juxtaposes the morning and the singing of birds: "primum aurora novo cum spargit lumine terras, / et variæ volucres nemora avia pervolitantes / aëra per tenerum liquidis loca vocibus, opplent." While there was an ancient method of telling time during daylight hours by looking at the shadow of a stick in the sunlight, there was a problem of telling time at night, and so, before the invention of the clock and the sounding of the church bell at midnight, a rooster was used to help. We can understand the importance that was attached to the rooster's singing in ancient times. Apart from watching the stars and signals from the watchmen, it was the only way to tell the time at night.

Roman poets mention the rooster's cry mainly to indicate a rather early hour of the morning (*sub galli cantun, priusqum galli cantent*). Censorinus, a Roman grammarian and miscellaneous writer, connects the rooster's singing with the following segments of night time: *media nox, de media nocte, gallicinium, conticinium, ante lucem, diluculum*. And the Roman poet Juvenal speaks of *ad cantum galli secondi*. The ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as the Jews, had a name for the period of night associated with the voice of the rooster. In particular, the Romans, along with *de media nocte*, which meant 'middle of the night,' had the word *gallicinium*, which meant 'rooster's cry' and 'dawn.' They used this word to refer to the beginning of the fourth night watch. In a strange way, the domestic rooster has provided an important and gratefully acknowledged service in determining the night time since ancient times, as it crows for the first time at midnight, six o'clock in the morning for the ancient Romans, several times and in long strings. At about four o'clock in our time, or ten o'clock in the morning for the Romans, which was the time of their last night watch, the rooster crows a second time with more frequent and longer interruptions, indicating the approach of dawn, which, of course, was not the case in winter, and with the arrival of dawn a third crow is heard, which sounds relatively louder and wakes up many sleepers. Lucretius says that roosters announce the approach of the day with their singing, and call it *quin etiam gallum noctem explaudentibus alis / auroram clara consuetum voce vocare*. Plinius said of the rooster that nature created it to call mortals to work and interrupt their sleep.

Already in ancient times, the rooster became a symbol of the deity of light and the god of fire, the sun and sunrise, time, and also a symbol of vigilance and readiness for battle. Magical papyri speak of it as a chthonic sacrifice. The Romans considered the rooster to be the conqueror of night dangers and the enemy of the night, to which it was sacrificed, as Ovid notes: "Nocte deæ Nocti cristatus cæditur ales." Accordingly, the ancient Greeks dedicated roosters to Helios, Phobos, Ares and Athena, as they saw rooster crowing not only as a warning of the invasion of

daylight, but also as a happy premonition of military victory. It should be noted that success here depended largely on vigilance. The rooster accompanied the Roman troops in all their campaigns and was dedicated to the god of war, Mars. Among the Arabs, the rooster was even called *abul jaksân*, i.e. the father of vigilance. The Greeks called it a watchful harbinger of the midnight hour. In the West, the use of the rooster as a substitute for a clock was also very common. The Old German expression *dô krât der han, ez war tac* finds its equivalent in the Old French *lou gal canté, e foughé jhour*, as well as in the Old English *cokkes crewe ande hit was daie*.[2] In the Zoroastrian teachings, the rooster was dedicated to the god of light. In Greece, it was the sacred bird of the sun god Helios and called his sister, the goddess of dawn Aurora. In an ancient Greek papyrus, Helios is also mentioned together with his other sister: "While reciting the spell … make an offering of a piece of incense and 2 unblemished [gizzard stones] of a rooster, one to Helios and one to Selene."[3]

Pausanias, a Greek traveler and geographer, notes that the rooster is the sacred bird of Helios, as it announces the rising of the sun. Pythagoras believed the same, which is why he forbade eating white roosters.[4] An ancient Greek papyrus says: "… this day … speak to Helios … / on the third day, also to the moon … a solitary place, hold toward the rising sun a white rooster without blemish and twelve pinecones … Go down to a pure and consecrated place, and sacrifice a rooster."[5] The rooster's head of Abraxas, a popular entity in magic, who was recognised as a sun god and depicted on amulets as a serpentine creature in a shell and with a rooster's head, is interpreted as a symbol of the sun, a portent of the dispelling of all evil.[6] As a sun animal, the rooster had to be hot and therefore had to stimulate the sex drive, which is why Marcellus said, "Venerem concitat … item gallinaceus testis dexter in arietina pelle collo subligatus."[7] According to an ancient Greek papyrus, a rooster was among the seven living animals sacrificed to the ancient Greek god of love, Eros.[8]

[2] Eduard Haeflinger, *Tag und Nacht bei den römischen Dichtern* (Luzern: Buchdruckerei H. Keller, 1903), 109, 110; Theodor Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber* (Leipzig: H. Haessel-Verlag, 1921), 111–112; Adolf Schaefer, "Welches ist die Geisterstunde?," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Sprache*, 2nd yearbook (1889): 11; Nikolaus Schiller-Tietz, "Der Hahn als Uhr," *Arena: Oktav-Ausgabe von über Land und Meer* 3, no. 10–13 (1902): 269; Florian Schindler, "Die Fixterzeit und ihre Bedeutung zur Sonnen- und mittleren Zeit eines Ortes; über Uhren," *Schriften des Vereins zur Vorbereitung naturwissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse in Wien* 12 (1872): 172.

[3] *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 13.

[4] Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, 111.

[5] *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 35.

[6] *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation,* 331.

[7] Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer*, 111.

[8] *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 154.

At the same time, the crowing of a rooster at an unusual time meant something extraordinary for the people (rain, bad weather, fire, misfortune for the inhabitants of the house, etc.). In England, the crowing of a cock at an unusual hour sometimes was interpreted as prognosticating a change in the weather, and sometimes it was construed into a worse omen, whereas in Scotland it was regarded as an indication of coming news. In some regions of America, a rooster crowing at odd times of the night signifies death; in other locations, if it crows in the early hours of the night, it means unexpected news.[9]

Such a fatal incident with the unusual singing of roosters is depicted in one of the variants of the ballad *Sweet William's Ghost*, when Margret dies after being separated from sweet William's ghost:

> The cocks do craw, and the day does daw,
> And the wild fowl bodes on hill;
> The lassie she followed her Sweet William,
> And let the tears down fall.[10]

The cock and the oviparous hen, as birds which are as egg-yielding symbols of abundance, and which personify the sun, were and are sacred in India and in Persia, where it is considered a sacrilege to kill them. Cicero, in his *Oratio pro L. Murena*, writes that among the ancients, he who ultroneously killed a cock did not sin less than he who suffocated his own father.[11]

The rooster, along with the horse, dog, falcon and pigeon, occupies a special place in English and Scottish ballads. Its warlike nature and willingness to defeat the enemy did not go unnoticed by Sir Walter Scott. Regarding Brian Tunstall, the stainless knight, he mentions in a note: "Tunstall, perhaps, derived his epithet of undefiled from his white armour and banner, the latter bearing a white cock, about to crow, as well as from his unstained loyalty and knightly faith. His place of residence was Thurland Castle."[12]

In many cases, the crowing of a rooster is used to indicate time. Thus, Lord Erlinton's daughter in love in the ballad *Erlinton* says,

> This lady she 's lain down again,
> An she has lain till the cock crew thrice;

[9] George Frederick Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), 107.

[10] Francis James Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, eds. Helen Child Sargent and George Lyman Kittredge (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1904), 656.

[11] Angelo de Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology; or The Legends of Animals*, vol. 2 (London: Trübner and Co., 1872), 282.

[12] *The Poems and Ballads of Sir Walter Scott*, 6 vols, vol. 2, (Boston: Dana Estes and Company, 1900), 283.

She said unto her sisters baith,
Lasses, it 's time at we sond rise.[13]

Sir Walter Scott in his work *Marmion* depicts the beginning of the protagonist's day as follows:

The lark sang shrill, the cock he crew,
And loudly Marmion's bugles blew,
And with their light and lively call,
Brought groom and yoeman to the stall.[14]

The fairy-tale ballad *Young Ronald* begins with a description of the morning when the knight in love, Ronald, rides to the princess to propose to her:

When cocks did craw, and day did daw,
And mint in meadows sprang,
Young Ronald and his little wee boy
They rode the way alang.

Similarly, with the beginning of a wonderful day heralded by roosters, Ronald sets out with his men to defeat the giant and win the hand of the princess:

When cocks did craw, and day did daw,
And mint in meadows spread,
Young Ronald and his merry young men
Were ready for to ride.[15]

The beginning of the day and the singing of roosters are linked in the ballad *Hobie Noble*:

The cocks could crow, and the day
could dawn.[16]

In the Scottish ballad *The Lass of Lochroyan*, the rooster's singing heralds the onset of dawn and awakens Lord Gregory:

[13] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 15.
[14] *The Poems and Ballads of Sir Walter Scott*, 147.
[15] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 629, 631.
[16] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 466.

When the cock had crawn, and the day did dawn.
And the sun began to peep,
Then up and raise him. Lord Gregory,
And sair sair did he weep.[17]

In the ballad *Glasgerion* Glasgerion, a king's son and a harper, asks his servant to wake him up in the morning to play the harp for the princess there:

Whan day has dawen, and cocks hae crawen,
And wappit their wings sae wide.
The insidious servant promises to do so:
'Gae hame to your bed, my good master;
Ye 've waukit, I fear, oer lang;
For Ill wauken you in as good time
As ony cock i the land.

However, he did not wake the owner in time, and went there instead of Glasgerion during the morning twilight. Only after he has done his dirty deeds does he return and wake the owner up:

Won up, won up, my good master,
I fear ye sleep oer lang;
There 's nae a cock in a' the land
But has wappit his wings and crawn.[18]

When the rooster's voice is heard, lovers are about to part. A Friulian folk morning song tells this story:

The rooster is already crowing,
And the day is coming
Goodbye, my dear,
You need to sleep.
Oh, don't cry,
My dear love
Farewell, my darling
It's time to go to work.[19]

[17] Sir Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border; Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads*, vol. 2 (London: Printed by J. Ballantyne, 1802), 56.

[18] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 137–138.

[19] Emil Schatzmayr, "Villotte friulane (Friaulische Dorflieder)," *Zetschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 3 (1893): 332.

A rooster usually helps lovers if they want no one to see them together, but sometimes it does not keep its promise. Thus, in the Scottish ballad *The Grey Cock, Or, Saw You My Father?* the grey rooster was promised a reward for announcing the day in time:

> Your neck shall be like the bonny beaten gold.
> And your wings of the silver grey.

However, he sings an hour earlier, which leads to a premature divorce:

> The cock prov'd false, and untrue he was.
> For he crew an hour oer soon;
> The lassie thought it day when she sent her love away.
> And it was but a blink of the moon.[20]

In the old English ballad *The Swain's Resolve*, a girl who lets a boy in love come to her, also addresses the rooster with a request, promising a reward:

> She cries to the cock, saying, thou must not crow,
> Until that the day be worn
> And thy wings shall be made of the silvery gray,
> And thy voice of the silver horn.[21]

The abundance of such examples shows that the crowing of a rooster was not an accidental element in folklore works. This feature was inherited by later literature. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in *Emma and Eginiard* about a night meeting of lovers says:

> And there he lingered till the crowing cock,
> The Alectryon of the farmyard and the flock,
> Sang his aubade with lusty voice and clear,
> To tell the sleeping world that dawn was near.
> And then they parted; but at parting, lo![22]

By naming the rooster Alectryon, the author refers to Greek and Roman mythology, emphasizing the rooster's connection to the sun god Helios.

[20] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 551.
[21] Thomas Lyle, *Ancient Ballads and Songs* (London: Printed for L. Relfe, 1827), 143.
[22] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Aftermath* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1874), 27.

Alectryon in Greek mythology was a young soldier who was assigned by Ares, the god of war, to guard the outside of his bedroom door while the god took part in a love affair with the love goddess Aphrodite. Alectryon, however, failed at his job. He fell asleep, allowing Helios, the god of the Sun, to see the two lovers and alert Hephaestus, the husband of Aphrodite, who then caught the two lovers in the act. Enraged with Alectryon's incompetence, Ares changed him into a cock in anger. In his effort to reconcile, Alectryon never skipped on alarming people of Helios's arrival thereafter.

This legend also found its place among the Romans. Alectryon (the Greek name of the cock) was the companion and satellite of Mars. When Mars wished to spend the night with Venus during the absence of Vulcan, he placed Alectryon to watch at the door. Alectryon, however, fell asleep; and Mars, surprised by the returning husband, and full of indignation, transformed Alectryon into a rooster, in order that it might learn to be watchful; whence Decimius Magnus Ausonius, a Roman poet, speaks:

> Ter clara instantis Eoi
> Signa canit serus deprenso Marte satelles.

A similar legend exists in the Puranic literature.[23]

An important source of 'religious' ideas of primitive people was the experience of the daily change of day and night. During the night, three time periods are particularly distinguished: the middle, the beginning and the end. The midnight hour from twelve to one o'clock is mainly the time of the evil villages, but the period from eleven to twelve o'clock is hardly inferior. The closer to the middle of the night, the more dreams and predictions come true. Morning and evening, the boundaries between day and night, are interpreted differently by folk beliefs in some cases. However, there is a general consensus that the boundaries of the night are defined by sunrise and sunset, and the period between these antipodes deserves special attention in superstition, so not only the evening after sunset but also the morning before sunrise is important.[24]

From the point of view of biology and zoology, man is a daytime creature for whom night is a source of fear. Human ability to see in low light at night is unremarkable, and therefore all dangers from earthly and supernatural enemies seem much greater than during the day.[25] The human imagination inhabited

[23] de Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology; or, The Legends of Animals*, 280.

[24] Ludwig Strackerjan, *Aberglaube und Sagen aus dem Herzogtum Oldenburg*, vol. 2 (Oldenburg: Druck und Verlag von Gerhard Stalling, 1867), 20.

[25] Otto Stoll, "Zur Kenntnis des Zauberglaubens, der Volksmagie und Volksmedizin in der Schweiz," *Jahresberichte der Geographisch-Etnographischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* 9 (1908–1909), 44.

the nighttime with demons, ghosts, kobolds and similar malevolent entities. Therefore, night was the main time of activity of sinister forces that avoided light and daytime. As soon as the signs of the coming day became noticeable, they became frightened. That is why the rooster's cry, which heralded the dawn, made them disappear.[26] According to Jewish beliefs, the cry of a rooster was supposed to drive away demons.[27] In the Avesta, the crow of the cock accompanies the flight of the demons, wakens the aurora, and arouses mankind. Even the Christian poet Prudentius, who still sees a solar symbol in the Christus, compares him to the cock, also called cristiger, cristatus, cristeus, prays to Christ to chase away sleep, to break the fetters of night, to undo the old sin, and to bring the new light, after having said of the cock:

> Ferunt vagantes daemon es,
> Lætos tenebris noctium
> Gallo canente exterritos
> Sparsim timere et cedere.
> Invisa nam vicinitas
> Lucis, salutis, numinis,
> Rupto tenebrarum sinu,
> Noctis fugat sattelites.
> ... omnes credimus
> Illo quietis tempore
> Quo gallus exsultans canit
> Christum redisse ex inferis.[28]

The ability of a rooster to counteract evil magic is described in a spell from an ancient Greek papyrus.[29] The rooster is an instructive example of the development of this superstition: the belief in its magical power is primarily based on the fact that it proclaims the day and thus scares away demons. This is then confirmed and reinforced by other observations: the red colour of the rooster has been associated with fire in people's imaginations, making the rooster a symbol of flame. Meanwhile, red roosters were considered the most powerful and vigilant.

In German beliefs, the black rooster was an animal of the devil, and the devil himself could also turn into a black rooster. Jewish kabbalah believed that at the hour of death, when the soul leaves the human body to report to God, a black rooster crows three times. It was believed that the white rooster, a symbol of light

[26] Eugen Fehrle, "Der Hahn im Aberglauben," *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 16 (1912): 65.

[27] Isidor Scheftelowitz, *Das stellvertretende Huhnopfer* (Gießen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1914), 52.

[28] de Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology; or, The Legends of Animals*, 283.

[29] *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 273.

and sun, brought happiness, while the black rooster, a symbol of darkness and hell, brought misfortune. At the same time, the black cock was supposed to counteract evil according to the principle of 'similia similibus curantur.' The rooster, thanks to its vigilance, was supposed to spot every evil demon, and the rooster's courage in battle was a guarantee of its victory over the enemy.[30] One ancient Greek papyrus states: "And when you have completed the consecration properly, have a live rooster with a double comb – either white or yellow; keep away from black – and after the consecration cut the rooster open."[31]

Since many peoples believed that the rooster was a night guardian and woke the sleepers from their sleep, it also became a symbol of the resurrection of the dead. Saint Ambrose describes the cock as the resurrector of the dead at the Last Judgement.[32] He calls the rooster the herald who heralds the day (*praeco diei iam sonat*), the guardian in the deep silence of the night (*noctis profundae pervigli*), as Plinius also called it; he calls it finally, so to speak, the watch of the night (*a nocte noctem segregans*), which separates the three night times from each other, referring to the three night watches (*prima, secunda, tertia nox*), i.e. it fulfilled the role that the church bell played later in the night; his voice awakens the sleeping (*gallus iacentes excitat*), awakens the morning dawn (*hoc excitatus Lucifer*), and darkness departs from the sky (*solvit polum caligine*).[33] The Persians believed that a dog and a rooster unite their forces against daevas and sorcerers.[34]

It was the midnight hour that was most often associated with the activities of spirits and ghosts in folk beliefs. Since ancient times, the number 12 has been a lucky number. We know 12 gods, 12 acts of Hercules, 12 signs of the zodiac, 12 months, 12 apostles, and before the introduction of the metric system, a dozen was widely used as a measure of piece counts. One over twelve always brings bad luck. The thirteenth day of the calendar was considered *dies nefastus*; on 13 May, the Romans celebrated the day of ghosts. This value of the number 12 was obviously easily transferred to 12 hours, and thus the belief that evil spirits could run amok after twelve o'clock in the morning could arise. The belief in the existence of ghosts is connected with the belief that life continues after death; the dead begin a new life in the same body; however, they now belong to another world, but the first night hour after twelve, which is the transition to a new day, when the life-giving sunlight is not yet visible and everything is reborn anew, provides an opportunity for ghosts to

[30] Fehrle, "Der Hahn im Aberglauben," 73; Scheftelowitz, *Das stellvertretende Huhnopfer*, 50.

[31] *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 164.

[32] Scheftelowitz, *Das stellvertretende Huhnopfer*, 51.

[33] Guido Maria Dreves, "Des hl. Ambrosius Lied vom Hahnenschrei," *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach. Katolische Blätter* 51 (1896): 88–90.

[34] Konrad Schwenk, *Die Mythologie der Perser* (Frankfurt am Main: J. D. Saurländer's Verlag, 1855), 311.

find their former place of residence on earth to do their deeds. However, now they cannot meet even the slightest ray of sunlight, so they listen carefully to hear the rooster crowing.[35] In Shakespeare's comedy *Merry Wives of Windsor*, the time of the meeting, which is given a magical meaning, is defined as 'twixt twelve and one.'[36] The rooster crowing at midnight in *Young Benjie* is described as follows:

> About the midle o the night
> The cock began to craw;
> About the middle o the night
> The corpse began to thraw.[37]

In the Scottish ballad *Willie's Fatal Visit*, Meggie charges the cock not to crow until day, but the cock crows an hour too soon, which leads to negative consequences, as Willie meets a ghost on the way, which has not yet disappeared with the cock's singing. As a result of the encounter, the boy dies.

> The cock being fause untrue he was,
> And he crew an hour ower seen;
> They thought it was the gude day-light,
> But it was but the light o the meen.[38]

This detail is also preserved by later authors of literary ballads. In the ballad *Elver's Hoh*, written by Matthew Gregory Lewis and based on a Danish folk ballad, Sir Algamor tried not to fall under the influence of witchcraft, and therefore "glad was the knight when he heard the cock crow."[39] These features clearly have a folkloric basis.

In the Norse mythology, the rooster appears very often. Gullinkambi – the Golden Crest – is the name of the rooster that keeps watch in front of the halls of Valhalla. At the top of the Mímameiðr tree is the watchful rooster Víðofnir. Also in the house of Hel, the goddess of death, you can see a red and black rooster whose singing is as terrifying as the howl of Cerberus. The rooster was the sacred bird of Donar, which was considered the victor of all evil demons. Even with the introduction of Christianity, this bird did not lose its significance for a long time. In particular, it is

[35] Schaefer, "Welches ist die Geisterstunde?," 14.

[36] William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, with an essay on Shakespeare and Bacon by Sir Henry Irving and a biographical introduction (New York: P. F. Collier & Son Company, 1905), 74.

[37] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 183.

[38] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 561.

[39] Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Tales of Terror and Wonder* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1887), 133.

an attribute of St. Peter, and its image was placed on bell towers. As a harbinger of the day, it remained the enemy of all evil magic; the sound of its voice made devils and ghosts disappear.[40]

Such views on the crowing of the cock find their way into the literature of the Elizabethan era. This notion that evil spirits flee with the first crowing of the rooster is clearly depicted in a conversation between Horatio and Marcellus in *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* by William Shakespeare (1599–1601):

> I have heard.
> The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
> Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
> Awake the god of day; and, at his warning.
> Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air.
> The extravagant and erring spirit hies
> To his confine: and of the truth herein
> This present object made probation.
> It faded on the crowing of the cock.
> Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
> Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated.
> The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
> And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad.
> The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
> No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
> So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.[41]

Henry Bourne of Newcastle noted in his *Antiquitates Vulgares* (1725) that "it is a received tradition among the Vulgar, That at the Time of Cock-crowing, the Midnight Spirits forsake these lower Regions, and go to their proper Places. Hence it is, that in Country-Places, where the way of life requires more early Labour, they always go chearfully to Work at that Time; whereas if they are called abroad sooner, they imagine every thing they see a wandring Ghost."[42] The protective crowing of the cock was presented in the Samuel Taylor Coleridge's unfinished poem of

[40] Ambros Opitz, "Der Hahn," *Unterhaltungs-Beilage zur Freitag-Nummer der Warnsdorfer Volkszeitung vom Jahre 1886* (Warnsdorf: Redaktion, Druck und Verlag von Ambr. Opitz, 1886), 14.

[41] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Livingston Lowes (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1914), 9.

[42] John Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities: Including the Whole of Mr. Bourne's Antiquitates Vulgares, with Addenda to Every Chapter of That Work: as Also an Appendix Containing Such Articles on the Subject as Have Been Omitted by That Author* (London: Printed for Vernor, Hood and Sharpe; James Cundee; and W. Baynes, 1810), 59.

Christabel (1797–1800) as well.[43] Not only ghosts, but the Devil and all his powers of darkness, especially warlocks and witches, must disappear at Chanticleer's cheerful warning that daylight is at hand.[44]

According to the German poet and novelist Clemens Brentano, "the crowing of the rooster is to wandering spirits what the evening star is to soldiers, they must then return home." However, along with the common perception that the first cock's cry should drive away a devil or spirit, there was also a special belief among the people that demons and ghosts were informed of the arrival of morning by three (in some stories, two) differently coloured roosters, and only when the third (or second) rooster crows did the evil forces disappear. When it came to three roosters, there was always a white, a red and a black one. Sometimes, instead of black, there was a grey rooster. The sequence of colours of the roosters crowing one after the other was not constant. It happened that there were two roosters when one of the colours was missing.[45]

There were, however, ghosts that appeared in the world of the living not to disturb people, but because of special circumstances. The motive for their leaving the grave is to ask back plighted troth, to be relieved from the inconveniences caused by the excessive grief of the living, to put a stop to the abuse of children by stepmothers, to repair an injustice done in the flesh, to fulfil a promise; at the least, to announce the visitant's death.[46] It could also be caused by the excessive grief of the living for the dead, a large number of tears shed, as this disturbed the peace of the dead. This folk belief was ancient and very widespread.

Among folk and original works, there is often a ballad about how a girl was visited at night by the ghost of her dead lover, who hurried away when the crow of a cock announced the approaching dawn. In the ballad *Sweet William's Ghost*, which has several versions, a lover, usually named William or a variation of this, appears as a ghost to his love, usually Margaret or a variant. He asks her to release him from his promise to marry her. Several plot elements follow. She may insist that he actually marry her, but he says that he is dead. She may insist that he kiss her, but he says that one kiss would kill her. She may insist on some information about the afterlife, and he tells her some of it. He may tell her that his promise to marry her is a hellhound that will destroy him if she does not free him. In the end

[43] Katharine Mary Briggs, "Folklore in Nineteenth-Century English Literature," *Folklore* 83, no. 3 (1972): 197–198.

[44] Ernest Ingersoll, *Birds in Legend Fable and Folklore* (New York, London, Toronto, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras: Longmans, Green And Co., 1923), 111.

[45] Reinhold Köhler, "Der weisse, der rothe und der schwarze Hahn," *Germania* 11 (1876): 85–88.

[46] Walter Jaehde, *Religion, Schicksalsglaube, Vorahnungen, Träume, Geister und Rätsel in den englisch-schottischen Volksballaden* (Halle a. S.: Hofbuchdruckerei von C. A. Kaemmerer & Co., 1905), 48.

she always releases him from his promise, although in some versions she then dies upon his grave.

William says it is time to say goodbye as he can hear the roosters singing:

> Cocks are crowing a merry mid-lark,
> I wat the wild fule boded day;
> Gie me my faith and trouthe again,
> And let me fare me on my way.

He then draws Margaret's attention back to the roosters' singing and begs her to let him go:

> O cocks are crowing a merry midd-lark,
> A wat the wilde foule boded day;
> The psalms of Heaven will be sung.
> And ere now I 'le be misst away.

Midd-larf means here "middle-earth."[47] Among the variants contained in Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* two roosters of different colours, as a reminder of the need to separate William's ghost and Margret, are mentioned only in variants A and G:

> Then up and crew the red, red cock.
> And up then crew the gray:
> 'Tis time, tis time, my dear Margret,
> That you were going away.'
> But up then crew the milk-white cock,
> An up then crew the grey;
> Her lover vanishd in the air.
> An she gaed weepin away.[48]

Sweet William's Ghost has much in common with one of the most beautiful and celebrated of the Scandinavian ballads, *The Betrothed in the Grave*, and may well be a different development of the same story. A man dies as he is about to be married. His love grieves for him passionately. The dead hears her under the ground, comes to her bower with his coffin on his back, and knocks. She lets him in after he has

[47] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 166; Lowry Charles Wimberly, *Folklore in the English & Scottish Ballads* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 31.

[48] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 165, 167.

proved himself to be "a spirit of health" by uttering the name Jesus, combs his hair, and asks him how it is under the black earth. It is like the bliss of heaven. She can even follow him into the grave. Every time she weeps for him, his coffin is filled with lappered blood. But when she sings and is happy, his grave is all hung with rose-leaves. The revenant hears the crowing of the white, the red, and the black cock, a signal for the departure of the dead from middle-earth; he takes up his coffin and goes wearily back to the graveyard. His love follows through the mirk wood, to the churchyard and into the church. Then his yellow hair falls away, his rosy colour wanes. He bids her go home and never weep for him more. "Look up at the sky, the night is going!," and as she looks he slips into his grave. She goes sadly home, prays God that she may not live out a year and a day, falls sick, and dies within a month. The Scandinavian ballad agrees in many particulars with the conclusion of the second lay of Helgi Hundingsbani in the Elder Edda.[49] Helgi has to return to Valhalla before the rooster crows there.

It is also cited in Graves's *Irish Songs and Ballads*, as occurring "in a ballad descriptive of the visit of a lover's ghost to his betrothed," in which the woman, to protract the interview, says:

> O my pretty cock, O my handsome cock,
> I pray you do not crow before day,
> And your comb shall be made of the very beaten gold,
> And your wings of the silver so gray.[50]

The Irish work *Song of The Ghost* tells the story of a dead groom's nightly visit to his bride, who lets him in. She does not want to part with him in the morning, obviously knowing that with the crowing of the rooster, her Patrick might disappear, and so she asks both her roosters not to sing, promising a reward for this:

> Ere dawn was breaking
> She heard below
> The two cocks shaking
> Their wings to crow.
> "Oh, hush you, hush you,
> Both red and grey,
> Or you will hurry
> My love away."

[49] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 165; Wimberly, *Folklore in the English & Scottish Ballads*, 103–104.

[50] Alfred Perceval Graves, *Irish Songs and Ballads* (London: David Bogue, 1882), 249.

"Oh, hush your crowing,
Both grey and red,
Or he'll be going
To join the dead;
Oh, cease from calling
His ghost to the mould,
And I'll come crowning
Your combs with gold."[51]

In the Scottish ballad *Mary's Dream*, Mary, who has been missing her lover, finds out – when he appears to her at night – the reason why he has not returned, and his wishes:

She saw young Sandy shiv'ring stand.
With visage pale and hollow eye:
O Mary, dear! cold is my clay;
It lies beneath a stormy sea;
Far, far from thee I sleep in death;
So, Mary, weep no more for me!

As is always the case with ghosts, Sandy disappears before dawn:

O maiden, dear! thyself prepare.
We soon shall meet upon that shore,
Where love is free from doubt and care.
And thou and I shall part no more.
Loud crow'd the cock, the shadow fled;
No more of Sandy could she see;
But soft the passing spirit said.
Sweet Mary, weep no more for me![52]

Similarly, in the Irish work *Ambrose and Una*, the ghost of a knight, feeling the bride's sadness, seeks to visit her:

Now, alas! for the Lady Una,
She made such bitter moan

[51] Alfred Perceval Graves, *Irish Songs and Ballads*, 51–52.

[52] John Gilchrist, *A Collection of Ancient and Modern Scottish Ballads, Tales, and Songs*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Printed for William Blackwood, 1815), 270, 271.

That the dead Sir Ambrose heard her
From his grave in the churchyard lone.
Up rose the dead Sir Ambrose,
All in his shroud of white,
And to his true love's bower
Stole softly through the night.

After talking to the groom, Lady Una opened the door for him. He asks not to mourn him, explaining the purpose of his visit:

Whenever thy sorrow, Una,
Is soothed in sacred prayer,
Forthwith my gloomy coffin
Is rilled with roses fair.
But whenever, oh! my Una,
Thy grief is wild and loud,
Those soft and fragrant roses
Turn to tears upon my shroud.
The rooster's cry sounds like a warning of separation:
"Dost hear the red cock crowing?
I must no longer stay;
Tis the hour the churchyard claims us,
The sad hour before the day."[53]

The Danish song about Aage and Else also tells of the visit of the deceased Aage to his fiancée Else. At the same time, only the singing of a red rooster is mentioned as a warning.[54]

In a Scottish ballad *Clerk Saunders*, Clerk Saunders persuades Margaret to go to bed with him before their marriage, saying that he will let himself in and she can cover her eyes, so that she can swear that she did not let him in or see him. Her seven brothers catch them and argue over what to do, but the youngest kills Clerk without a word, and Margaret finds him dead in the morning. They bury him. His ghost appears at night at her window and tells her she must release him from his promise. She demands a kiss, but he tells her it would kill her. Moreover, it was midnight and the crowing of cocks could be heard.

[53] Graves, *Irish Songs and Ballads*, 176, 178.
[54] Wilhelm Wackernagel, *Kleinere Schriften*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1873), 416.

O cocks are crowing a merry mid night,
I wot the wild fowls are boding day;
Give me my faith and troth again.
And let me fare me on my way.
Then he draws her attention back to midnight:
O cocks are crowing a merry mid night,
I wot the wild fowl are boding day;
The psalms of heaven will soon be sung.
And I ere now will be missed away.[55]

As you can see, the ballads *Clerk Saunders* and *Sweet William's Ghost* have not only a similar plot, but also a similar ghostly anxiety associated with rooster singing, although expressed in slightly different words. In both cases, The Psalms of Heaven are mentioned, which is not a coincidence, as the rooster was associated with Christ and heaven. Wilhelm Wackernagel, a German–Swiss philologist, commenting on the names of roosters in the German song *The Wet Shroud*, notes that the first rooster is called the 'heavenly dove' because it warns the soul of the deceased and reminds them to return home, and the second is called the 'hell rooster' because its singing means that it is too late to return.[56] The Lithuanian song *Jannik Skolan* says that along with the midnight singing of the rooster, a choir of angels can be heard singing, and when it sings in the morning, all the saints sing loudly.[57]

In Lewis's ballad *Gay Gold Ring*, the ghost of Emmeline appears in Lord Elmerick's tent and asks him to give her a gold ring. The knight agrees to do so on the following condition:

Then pass by my side Three nights as my bride,
And thy guerdon the ring shall be!

The girl spends three nights in his tent when "the sand-glass told, 'twas three,"

But soon as by hers his hand was press'd,
Changed to ice was the heart in his breast;
And his limbs were fettered in frozen chains,
And turned to snow was the blood in his veins.
The cock now crows!
The damsel goes

[55] Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 37, 38.

[56] Wackernagel, *Kleinere Schriften*, 405.

[57] Adelbert Keller and Eduard von Seckendorff, *Volkslieder aus Bretagne* (Tübingen: bei Ludw. Friedr. Fues, 1841), 140.

Forth from the tent; and the blood which she froze,
Again through the veins of Lord Elmerick flows,
And again his heart with passion glows.
Donned the knight His armour bright.

Only after returning from the crusade does Lord Elmerick learn that Emmeline was given the ring by Arthur of the Bower, and that she broke her oath of allegiance and sent it with her father to Lord Elmerick. Because of this, Arthur of the Bower committed suicide, and soon after, Emmeline died from remorse. However, she had given him her oath that the ring should be on her hand the day she died, and so she appeared in Lord Elmerick's tent to return the ring to her hand. Although the girl appears to be alive, after her disappearance, signs of the world of the dead became apparent:

But when the cock crew,
And the tent smelled like a grave!
And the voice was like a dying groan,
And the bell like a passing bell![58]

Interestingly, in addition to the rooster's cry, the sound of bells is also mentioned here.

An important and prominent place among the dead, who in legends and poetry temporarily return to the world of the living at certain times of the night and then disappear, belongs to dead children and mothers. Three roosters of different colours, for example, can be seen in ancient Danish songs about a dead mother who rises from her grave at night to tell her remarried husband about her stepmother's unworthy behavior towards her children.[59] In an old Swedish ballad, a deceased mother, disturbed by the tears of her children shed over her grave, asks the angels to let her go for a while to put an end to her stepmother's abuse of her children. The angels grant her permission, but on the condition that she returns before the roosters crow. In the ancient Danish ballad *The Dead Mother*, God tells a mother who wants to visit her living children at night:

Like a rooster crowing in the morning,
'You must be in your crypt again!'
So before dawn she says:
'The rooster is crowing, the rooster is red,

[58] Lewis, *Tales of Terror and Wonder*, 175–183.
[59] Köhler, "Der weisse, der rothe und der schwarze Hahn," 88.

I must go, for I am dead!
The rooster crows, the rooster is grey,
God the Father has measured out my time accurately!
Now the cock crowing, now the cock is white,
The grass is beginning to lift up a little.[60]

The poetical works of Longfellow contain *The Mother's Ghost*, which is a slightly altered translation of the ballad mentioned above, God also indicates the time of his return:

At cock-crow thou shalt return again;
Longer thou shalt not there remain!

However, in the mother's words before returning, she mentions not the grey colour of the rooster, but black:

Now crows the cock with feathers red;
Back to the earth must all the dead.
Now crows the cock with feathers swart;
The gates of heaven fly wide apart.
Now crows the cock with feathers white;
I can abide no longer to-night.[61]

The ballad *The Wife of Usher's Well* tells the story of a woman who lost three sons at sea and is very sad about it. The woman grieves bitterly for the loss of her children, cursing the winds and sea.

She is trying to get her sons back using a spell:

I wish the wind may never cease,
Nor flashes in the flood,
Till my three sons come home to me,
In earthly flesh and blood.

When, around Martinmas, the children return to their mother, they do so as revenants, not, as she hoped, "in earthly flesh and blood," and it is a bleak affair. They wear hats made of birch. The mother expects a joyous reunion, in some versions preparing a celebratory feast for them, which, as subjects of Death, they are

[60] August Andrae, "Wiederkehr und Geisterstunde," *Beiblatt zur Anglia* 19 (1908), 75, 76.
[61] Longfellow, *Aftermath*, 103, 106.

unable to eat. They consistently remind her that they are no longer living; they are unable to sleep as well and must depart at the break of day.

In the Kirkhill version of the ballad, two roosters of different colours singing is a reminder of this:

> Up then crew the red, red cock,
> And up and crew the gray;
> The eldest to the youngest said,
> Tis time we were away.
>
> 'The cock he hadna crawd but once,
> And clappd his wings at a',
> When the youngest to the eldest said.
> Brother, we must awa.
>
> The cock doth craw, the day doth daw
> The channerin worm doth chide;
> Gin we be mist out o our place,
> A sair pain we maun bide.

The variant from Neidpath Castle mentions only one rooster without specifying its colour:

> O the young cock crew

The variant from Bridgworth mentions two roosters, but their colour is different from the variant from Kirkhill:

> There they lay; about the middle of
> the night.
> Bespeaks the youngest son:
> 'The white cock he has crowed once.
> The second has, so has the red.[62]

One should also note that the middle of the night is referred to as time of ghosts.

The cock also appears in ballads in which success can be achieved only by solving riddles. Such tales with riddles exist in Asian and European traditions, and have their representatives in popular ballads. In the ballad *The Elfen Knight*, the clever

[62] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 168–169.

girl wins thanks to her intelligence; the man imposes a series of tasks, and she succeeds by matching each one with another equally difficult. In the oldest version of the Ballad *Riddles Wisely Expounded*, the devil threatens to take the girl if she cannot respond to certain riddles. She solves them all and (at the end) calls the devil by his proper name, and is, without question, taken away. Riddles also sound in the ballad *Proud Lady Margaret* when a person who arrives in the heroine's castle tries to curb her arrogance. A cock is one of the answers to riddles in the ballad *Captain Wedderburne's Wooing*, in which a girl wins her husband with riddles.

> What bird sings first, and whereupon
> the dew down first does fa?
> The cock sings first, on the Sugar Loaf
> the dew down first does fa.

The resourceful suitor, though not as beloved a character as the clever girl, comes from an old and noble family. There are parallels to this ballad in European folk tales. The Elder Edda gives us a similar story in the poem *Alvissmal*.[63]

The Scottish ballad *Leesome Brand* shows that the rooster and the wind belong to the world of the living. In this ballad, a mother mourns the death of her son:

> My boy was scarcely ten years auld,
> Whan he went to an unco land,
> Where wind never blew, nor cocks ever crew.

The ballad that "Leesome Brand" represents has survived among the Scandinavian peoples.[64]

The Greeks believed that Hades was a dark, sad, monotonous dwelling where the day does not dawn, the rooster does not call, the nightingale does not sing, where water does not flow and grass does not grow, and where icy cold reigns.[65] In the above-mentioned song "Wet Shroud," where the title itself indicates excessive mourning of the deceased, he says that down below he cannot hear the sound of bells, birds singing, there is no wind or rain.[66]

Biblical subjects can also be seen in ballads. In the ballad *The Carnal and the Crane*, the Magi told King Herod about the birth of Christ, Herod said that if it was true, the rooster on his table would come to life and crow, and the rooster did.

[63] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 1, 3, 84, 87.

[64] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 27, 28.

[65] Bernhard Schmidt, *Das Volksleben der Neugriechen und das hellenische Alterthum*, part 1 (Leipzig: Druck und Verlag von B. G. Teubner, 1871), 240.

[66] Wackernagel, *Kleinere Schriften*, 404.

And then three fences crowed he,
In the dish where he did stand.

In the ballad *St. Stephen and Herod* the conversation takes place between Saint Stephen and King Herod, and the miracle occurs in the same way: the cock, to convince the doubters, sings "Christus natus est!" The miraculous return to life of a rooster is a common motif in European ballads. It often appears in stories where someone expresses disbelief in some miracle because it was unlikely, such as the resurrection of a cock. The legend of Stephen and Herod with the miracle of the roasted cock occurs in a number of Scandinavian ballads.[67] This apocryphal story, connected with Judas Iscariot or with the events of the Holy Week, has been found in the Greek Acta Pilati and in the Coptic frements. It is presented in the Irish medieval literature, as well as in Irish and Scottish Gaelic folklore.[68]

Thus, English and Scottish folk ballads, as well as ballads by Romantic writers, contain references to the rooster's crowing. They highlight its role as a symbol of time, vigilance, and the transition from night to day. Domestic chickens, particularly roosters, have been integral to human life for thousands of years, serving practical purposes such as providing eggs, meat, and feathers. This importance is reflected in folklore, where the crowing of the rooster is often associated with the dawn and the awakening of the world. The rooster played the role of a messenger of time, announcing the arrival of morning. The sources make it possible to trace various cultural interpretations of the rooster's crow, noting its historical use as a timekeeper before the advent of mechanical clocks. Ancient poets, including Lucretius and Juvenal, recognized the rooster's role in marking the early hours of the morning, while Roman and Greek traditions imbued the rooster with mythological significance, associating it with deities of light and vigilance. The crowing of the rooster is depicted as a protective force against evil spirits and a harbinger of change, with various folk beliefs attributing supernatural meanings to its calls. In the English and Scottish folk tradition, every unplanned rooster crowing meant something unusual, extraordinary, and often dangerous.

Another function of the rooster's singing was protective. The rooster's singing drove away the revenants and evil spirits. This is recorded among the Elizabethan poets and eighteenth-century antiquaries and finds parallels in other European nations. In numerous folk ballads, the rooster's crow often signals the end of

[67] Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 40, 100; Jaehde, *Religion, Schicksalsglaube, Vorahnungen, Träume, Geister und Rätsel in den englisch-schottischen Volksballaden*, 20; Lowry Charles Wimberly, *Death and Burial Lore in the English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1927), 84–85.

[68] John D. Seymour, "The Cock and Pot," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* L, no. 10 (1921): 147–149.

nocturnal encounters, particularly between lovers and their ghostly counterparts, emphasizing the theme of separation at dawn. In different versions of some ballads, such as *Sweet William's Ghost* and *Clerk Saunders*, the rooster's crowing serves as a pivotal moment that dictates the fate of the characters involved. In addition, the rooster's dual role as both a timekeeper and a symbol of resurrection is noticeable, linking it to themes of life, death, and the cyclical nature of existence. The analysis of ballads shows the rooster's enduring presence in folklore and its multifaceted symbolism across cultures, illustrating its significance in the human experience as a marker of time and a guardian against darkness. The British mythological beliefs consistently combined older, pagan, and newer, Christian layers.

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