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‘Every Irishman is an Arab’: James Clarence Mangan’s Eastern ‘Translations’

If the vagrant Imagination is at home anywhere, it is the East, proclaimed James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849) – even if its conception of the East is somewhat illusory, and dominated by ‘images of Genii-land’ rather than a realistic Orient.¹ Mangan – unkindly described by Valentine Cunningham as the ‘archetypical drunken-Irish poet’² – is chiefly remembered for stirring nationalist anthems like ‘Dark Rosaleen’, or his depictions of the horrors of the Great Famine. The young James Joyce described him as ‘the national poet’,³ but Mangan’s leanings were international, and his delight in the East emerged in a series of six articles on Oriental poetry, titled ‘Literæ Orientales’, published in the *Dublin University Magazine* between September 1837 and January 1846. Mangan had already published several ‘Anthologia Germanica’ articles in the same magazine, and his fascination with the East, rooted in childhood encounters with the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*, was deepened by his work on German poets including Rückert and Goethe, themselves heavily influenced by Oriental literature. In an article on ‘*Faust* and the Minor Poems of Goethe’ in March 1836, Mangan comments that Goethe, ‘skilled in the languages of the East’, had rightly avoided feeding ‘the popular appetite for those monstrous fictions with which the stores of Oriental literature abound’, suggesting Mangan’s disapproval of the typical imaginative excess of Western visions of the East.⁴ Yet Mangan himself would soon begin to exploit the popular appetite for Oriental literature in his ‘Literæ

¹ James Clarence Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, eds Jacques Chuto et al (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2002), p. 129.

² Valentine Cunningham (ed.), *The Victorians: An Anthology of Poetry & Poetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 125.

³ James Joyce, ‘James Clarence Mangan (1907)’, in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 128.

⁴ Mangan, ‘Anthologia Germanica. – No. V. Faust, and the Minor Poems of Goethe’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 94.

Orientales', and, unlike Goethe, Mangan could claim little or no knowledge of the languages of the East. The *Dublin University Magazine* limited contributors to a maximum of three original poems per issue, but there were no limits on the number of translations,⁵ so it made financial sense for the penurious Mangan to translate Persian and Turkish poems rather than submit his own original work. One friend, Charles Gavan Duffy, lamented that Mangan, 'goaded by necessity' (and a prodigious thirst) had squandered his talent by producing too many 'poetical pot-boilers (or, alas! flask-fillers)',⁶ while another, John Mitchel, reported Mangan as explaining that 'Hafiz paid better than Mangan'.⁷

The financial incentive is for several critics the most obvious and significant motivation for Mangan's writings on the East; Haideh Ghomi, for instance, says Mangan believed '(quite rightly too) that Hafez pays better than Mangan', and Hasan Javadi and John D. Yohannan also quote Mitchel to suggest that Mangan sought to trade on the name of the well-known Persian poet.⁸ The phenomenal success of Byron's Eastern poems, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, (1812-18) *The Giaour* (1813) and *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) and his countryman Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817) confirmed for Mangan the appetite for Oriental literature, as did the current vogue for Eastern travels and letters. From its foundation in 1833, the *Dublin University Magazine*, 'the supreme archive of Irish Victorian

⁵ David Lloyd, 'Translator as Refractor: Towards a Re-Reading of James Clarence Mangan as Translator', *Dispositio: American Journal of Comparative and Cultural Studies*, 7:19-21 (1982), 141-162, p. 148.

⁶ Charles Gavan Duffy, 'Personal Memories of James C. Mangan', *Dublin Review*, 142 (1908), 278-294, p. 294.

⁷ John Mitchel, 'Introduction', *Poems of James Clarence Mangan*, ed. D. J. O'Donoghue (Dublin and London: O'Donoghue & Co; A. H. Bullen, 1903), p. xliii.

⁸ Haideh Ghomi, *The Fragrance of the Rose: The Transmission of Religion, Culture, and Tradition through the Translation of Persian Poetry* (Göteborg: Department of Religious Studies, 1993), p. 53; Hasan Javadi, *Persian Literary Influence on English Literature With Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century* (Costa Mesa, Cal: Mazda Publishers, 2005), p. 69; John D. Yohannan, *Persian Poetry in England and America* (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1977), p. 64.

experience’,⁹ reflected the demand for representations of the East, publishing articles on Oriental travel and reviews of books including Robert Walsh’s ‘Turkey and Greece: the Sultan and Capo d’Istrias’ in July 1833, Lord Lindsay’s *Letters on Egypt, Edom, and the Holy Land* in November 1838, James B. Fraser’s *A Winter Journey from Constantinople to Tehran* in January 1839, Wilbraham’s *Travels in Caucasus, Georgia and Persia* in August 1839, Malcolm’s *Travels in South-Eastern Asia* in February 1840, and Colonel Dennie’s letters from the Afghan War in 1842.

Warburton’s *The Crescent and the Cross*, one of the most successful travel books of the nineteenth century,¹⁰ appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* as ‘Episodes of Eastern Travel’ in October 1843 and January 1844, and was reviewed in January 1845.

However, in spite of the fame and marketability of Hafiz, and Mangan’s claim in the first of his articles that ‘no poet has as yet made his appearance in Arabia, China, Tartary, India, or the Ottoman Empire, who has succeeded in transferring the laurel from the brows of SHEMSEDDIN MOHAMMED HAFIZ to his own’,¹¹ Mangan only translated four lines of Hafiz’s poetry in his ‘Literæ Orientales’ articles, and even these are attributed not to Hafiz but to Servi.¹² Indeed, as the editors of Mangan’s *Collected Works* note, the only poem he offers as a translation from Hafiz appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1848 as ‘An Ode of Hafiz’, and is, in fact, not a translation at all, but an original poem;¹³ when rebuked by his friend, the translator

⁹ W. J. McCormack, ‘The Intellectual Revival (1830-50)’, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol 1, eds Seamus Deane, Andrew Carpenter and Jonathan Williams (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), p. 1176.

¹⁰ Wayne E. Hall, *Dialogues in the Margin: A Study of the Dublin University Magazine* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), p. 114.

¹¹ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 140.

¹² Mangan, ‘Relic of Servi’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, eds Jacques Chuto et al (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 1996), editorial note on p. 367.

¹³ Mangan, ‘An Ode of Hafiz’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1848-1912*, eds Jacques Chuto et al (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 1999), editorial note on p. 278

John Anster, Mangan is said to have replied: ‘Ah, it is only *Half-his*’.¹⁴ This suggests that the motivation behind Mangan’s Oriental translations was not entirely mercenary; if the only incentive was financial, Mangan could easily have presented numerous translations from Hafiz. Hafiz might pay better than Mangan, but Mesihi, Nedschati, Chuffi and the other poets Mangan chose to translate instead were riskier prospects. But they offered greater licence creatively; Mangan’s early biographer, D. J.

O’Donoghue, wrote:

It is curious that he nowhere translates, or professes to translate, the famous Eastern poets. Omar, Sadi, Hafiz, to mention only three, are left severely alone. This would seem to imply that when he wished to mystify his readers – which he generally did – he found the smaller writers much more useful for the purpose.¹⁵

Lesser-known writers provided a convenient cover for the fact that many of his ‘translations’ were originals masquerading as translations. But Mangan desires to do more than simply ‘mystify his readers’; his ‘Literae Orientales’ articles and translations demonstrate the growth of an anti-imperialist – if not postcolonial – feeling in his work long before the tragedy of the Great Famine forced him into more direct confrontation with colonial authority. Mangan’s essays on and translations of Eastern poetry underline his status as a ‘minor’ writer whose radical inauthenticity and critique of canonical aesthetics, as David Lloyd argues, ‘opens out continually onto a critique of the assumptions that support the bourgeois state and legitimate its domestic and imperial hegemony’.¹⁶

Mangan’s self-association with the impostor Al Mokanna, the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan of Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*, is alluded to by the editors of the *Collected*

¹⁴ Note by the editor of the *Irishman* in ‘Sketches of Modern Irish Writers. James Clarence Mangan’, in Mangan, *Collected Works: Prose: 1840-1882*, eds Jacques Chuto et al (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2002), p. 342.

¹⁵ D. J. O’Donoghue, Preface, *Poems of James Clarence Mangan*, p. xxi.

¹⁶ David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley, LA.: University of California Press, 1987), p. 23

Works, who choose to end their General Introduction with one of the ‘translations’ from Mangan’s ‘Literæ Orientales’, attributed to the Turkish poet Lamii, emphasising both Mangan’s deliberate mystification and his compulsive hint-dropping about his practices:

Mine inkstand is the Well of NAKSHEB; – and from each
Imperishable drop I spread along the page
Another Veilèd Prophet utters mystic speech,
To be translated only by a future age.¹⁷

Lamii is one of the real poets Mangan uses to veil his fake translations; in the third article Lamii is taken over almost wholesale. Mangan had done much the same thing with his German translations; of four poems attributed to Salis in his article on ‘The Poems of Matthison [sic] and Salis’ in 1835, two are by poets other than Salis, and two are original poems by Mangan.¹⁸ Mangan also invented two German alter-egos, Drechsler and Selber (‘turner’ or ‘translator’, and ‘myself’), whose poems he ‘translated’ in his ‘Anthologia Germanica’ articles. A piece on Mangan (probably written by himself in the third person), which appeared posthumously in the *Irishman*, explains that his translations are ‘anti-plagiaristic’, ‘fathering upon other writers the offspring of his own brain’.¹⁹ The sketch states this is due to lack of confidence: ‘It is a strange fault [...] that Mangan should entertain a deep diffidence of his own capacity to amuse or attract others, by anything emanating from himself’.²⁰ But it also quotes Mangan as offering a different reason:

I *must* write in a variety of styles; and it wouldn’t do for me to don the turban, and open my poem with a *Bismillah*; when I write a poem to the Arab Mohir-Ibn-Mohir – Ibn Khalakan is the man from whom it should come; and to him I

¹⁷ Mangan, ‘A Well-Delivered Speech’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, p. 70.

¹⁸ Mangan, ‘To Childhood’, ‘The Exile’, ‘Silence’ and ‘Hope’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1818-1837*, eds Jacques Chuto et al (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 1996), editorial note on p. 404.

¹⁹ ‘Sketches of Modern Irish Writers. James Clarence Mangan’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1840-1882*, p. 224.

²⁰ ‘Sketches of Modern Irish Writers. James Clarence Mangan’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1840-1882*, p. 223.

give it. [...] When I write as a Persian, I feel as a Persian, and am transported back to the days of Diemsheed and the Genii [...].²¹

The fourth 'Literæ Orientales' article suggests this self-negation is a necessity for any translator of Oriental literature: 'He must for a season renounce his country, divest himself of his educational prejudices, forego his individuality, and become, like Alfred Tennyson, "a Mussulman true and sworn."'”²² Mangan is of course being ironic; Tennyson's speaker in 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights' self-consciously dons the turban in obvious fantasy.²³ Part of Mangan's project in 'Literæ Orientales', as in his German translations, is to engage in the contemporary debate about originality and fidelity in translation – and in poetry more generally; but in 'Literæ Orientales' this is complicated by Mangan's critique of imperialism and cultural appropriation. As Mangan was aware, few contemporary translators were interested in becoming 'a Mussulman true and sworn'; indeed, too many were derisory about not only the literature, but the entire culture. Two years before Mangan began his series, Thomas Macaulay, in his famous 'Minute on Indian Education', admitting he had 'no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic' himself, used his reading of translations and conversations with 'men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues' as evidence of European superiority: 'I have never found one among them who could deny that, a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'.²⁴ George Sale, whose translation of the *Koran* Mangan uses in his articles, wanted 'to undeceive those who, from the ignorant or unfair translations which have appeared, have entertained too favourable an opinion

²¹ 'Sketches of Modern Irish Writers. James Clarence Mangan', *Collected Works: Prose: 1840-1882*, p. 224.

²² Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. No. IV. Arabian, Persian and Turkish Poetry', *Collected Works: Prose: 1840-1882*, pp. 1-2.

²³ Alfred Tennyson, 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights', *Poems and Plays*, ed. T. Herbert Warren (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1971), pp. 9-10

²⁴ Thomas Macaulay, 'Minute on Indian Education', in Paul Keen (ed.), *Revolutions in Romantic Literature: An Anthology of Print Culture, 1780-1832* (Peterborough, ON and Plymouth: Broadview, 2004), p. 313.

of the original, and also to enable us effectually to expose the imposture [of Mohammed]'.²⁵ Robert Southey prefaces his *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) with an assertion that 'of all false religions', Hinduism is 'the most monstrous in its fables, and the most fatal in its effects',²⁶ while the notes to *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) confidently dismiss 'The little of their literature that has reached us' as 'equally worthless'. Southey scoffs at the 'barbarian scholars' who compared Ferdusi to Homer: 'To make this Iliad of the East, as they have sacrilegiously stiled it, a good poem, would be realizing the dreams of Alchemy, and transmuting lead into gold'.²⁷ Walter Savage Landor, in his notes to his hoax translations from the Arabic and Persian, written in response to a challenge from a friend, derides 'the heady spirits and high-seasoned garbage of Barbarians': 'It must surely result from the weakest or from the most perverted understanding that the *gazal* has ever been preferred to the pure and almost perfect, though utterly dissimilar, pieces of Anacreon and Tibullus'.²⁸ The Romantics may have found an imaginative landscape and new poetic vocabulary in the East, but as Yohannan argues:

There was something frankly exploitative about the way they made use of the materials of Oriental literature, something curiously analogous to the relations between England and her Asian empire. The riches of Oriental expression were gaudily displayed and frequently gilded with the colors of false imagination. It is doubtful whether any of the authors had a serious regard for the subjects they were adapting.²⁹

Mangan was able to exploit his familiarity with the *Arabian Nights'* *Entertainments* and the Oriental fictions of his contemporaries to create the appropriate atmosphere: 'To an acquaintance who objected that a particular

²⁵ George Sale, *The Koran* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1844), p. v.

²⁶ Robert Southey, *The Curse of Kehama* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1810), p. vii.

²⁷ Robert Southey, *Thalaba the Destroyer* (London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1801), p. 10.

²⁸ Walter Savage Landor, *Poems from the Arabic and Persian* (Warwick: H. Sharpe, 1800), p. 1.

²⁹ Yohannan, *Persian Poetry in England and America*, pp. 33-34.

translation was not Moorish, he replied: ‘Well, never mind, it’s *Tom Moorish*’.³⁰ He is quite capable of presenting his readers with the image of the East that he knows they want to buy – the ‘Land of Wonders’, rose and bulbul, exotic scenery, despots, battles, veiled maidens. Mangan offers glimpses of alluring Oriental women, bearing names such as Amine, Gulnare, Zelica and Leila, drawn from the heroines of Moore, Byron and the *Arabian Nights*’ *Entertainments*, who are alternately called upon to unveil or to refrain from unveiling: ‘My starlight, my moonlight, my midnight, my noonlight, / Unveil not, unveil not, or millions must pine’.³¹ For those who seek spiritual enlightenment, proverbs and epigrams abound:

The world is one Vast Caravanserai,
Where none may stay,
BUT WHERE EACH GUEST WRITES ON THE WALL THIS WORD,
O, MIGHTY LORD!³²

Many of the poems are elegiac, lamenting exile from a beloved homeland, or the decay of cities such as Palmyra, Balbec, Babylon and Persepolis: ‘Where flourished gardens then, it is true, we stray in wildernesses now; where palaces rose we find roofless walls and broken columns’.³³ Others, such as ‘The Daunishmend’s Lamentation’, ‘The Time of the Barmecides’ or ‘The Lament of Leeah Rewaan’ mourn the loss of youth and vitality. These are all major concerns of Mangan’s poetry in general – indeed the editors of the *Collected Works* suggest ‘The Lament of Leeah Rewaan’ is an ‘oriental’ version of Mangan’s purported German ‘translation’ ‘Twenty Golden Years Ago’.³⁴ Instead of rehearsing the stereotypes of cruelty and licentiousness, or the magical aspect of the ‘Land of Wonders’, the East Mangan

³⁰ Duffy, ‘Personal Memories’, p. 290.

³¹ Mangan, ‘To Mihri’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, p. 7, ll. 1-2.

³² Mangan, ‘Saying of Nedschati’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1818-1837*, p. 365.

³³ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 131.

³⁴ Mangan, *Collected Works: Poems: 1845-1847*, eds Jacques Chuto et al (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 1997), editorial note on p. 441.

presents in his ‘translations’ is distant in time – the poems he purports to translate are from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – but often realistic, familiar, and accessible, sympathetically realized and inhabited by complex emotional beings. Mangan’s interest in the East seems to accord with the strand of Orientalism Mohammed Sharaffudin identifies as an alternative to straightforward cultural exploitation: ‘namely that orientalism which, because it proved receptive to the radical energies liberated by the French Revolution, offered an effective vantage point from which to condemn the reactionary forces at home and the prevailing spirit of intolerance reflected in relations with a culture such as that of Islam’.³⁵ Indeed, Mangan identifies the French Revolution as a turning point in the representation of the East, sweeping away those he termed the ‘old Orientalists’:

Time has trodden them down, them, their works, their memory; their light [...] could burn only in an atmosphere of darkness; – directly the *Appian Way* of the human mind was upbroken by the first pickaxes and crowbars of the French Revolutionists, it died, day-extinguished, storm-destroyed. They have passed away, and bolder enquirers occupy their places.³⁶

Mangan uses ‘*Literæ Orientales*’ to challenge the ignorance, prejudice, racism and essentialism of the ‘old Orientalists’, and those who read, commented on, and indeed translated, Oriental literature with very little knowledge of the languages or cultures of the East. Mangan’s title, ‘*Literæ Orientales*’, suggests a broad correspondence between the literature of diverse nations; while these articles focus on the poetry of Persia and Turkey, elsewhere Mangan’s capacious East seems capable of accommodating swathes of geographical space from Albania to China, Siberia to India. Yet Mangan is careful to point out that ‘The Arabian, Persian and Turkish

³⁵ Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1994), p. ix.

³⁶ Mangan, ‘*Literæ Orientales*. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 133.

poetries do not constitute one literature',³⁷ and he reproves the superficiality of the Western version of the Orient, with its recurring imagery and stories: 'It is a great mistake to fancy that the Orientals know nothing about any body except Haroun Alraschid and Sinbad the sailor'.³⁸ Mangan criticises the chauvinism that prevented the 'old Orientalists' from recognising worth in the literature of the East:

They regarded the Asiatics as a subordinate and degraded caste of mortals, without troubling themselves to anatomise with too much curiousness the reasonings they had arrived at their conclusions by. [...] They tested the genius, habits, and prejudices of one continent by the genius, habits and prejudices of another; and because the two continents differed – because the moral character of Europe was reckoned austerer than that of Asia – because Asia was not Europe, the literature of Asia was pronounced unworthy of a comparison with the literature of Europe.³⁹

More than six decades before Joseph Conrad's 'And this also [...] has been one of the dark places of the earth',⁴⁰ Mangan undermines the West's self-consoling imagery of darkness and light, civilisation and savagery, with a chastening reminder of Britain's own history of subordination: 'The old Roman, as he looked with contempt on the barbarian Teuton and Briton, could scarcely have imagined a period when Germany and England would contest the victory of intellectual pre-eminence with the majestic Mistress of the World'.⁴¹ Mangan's articles are often playful, parodic and flamboyantly artificial, but they are also fiercely anti-imperialist in their examination of the politics and aesthetics of translation.

The very concept of translation of Oriental literature is bound up with conquest and commerce. Hafiz paid better than Mangan partly because of the importance of Persian literature in India, and the importance to the sahibs of the East

³⁷ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. No. IV. Arabian, Persian and Turkish Poetry', *Collected Works: Prose: 1840-1882*, p. 5.

³⁸ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article', *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 135.

³⁹ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article', *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 132.

⁴⁰ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Hampson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), p. 18.

⁴¹ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article', *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 132.

India Company of possessing at least a superficial familiarity with Indian culture. As Sir William Jones recognised, the languages and literature of the East would have continued to be despised or overlooked by the nations of Europe had it not been for the powerful incentive of commerce: ‘interest was the charm which gave to the languages of the East a real and solid importance’.⁴² Mangan recognises that translation is implicated in the colonial enterprise. Cataloguing and translating is ‘the preliminary step towards rendering available, that is, transferable into our own land’s language, all that may be really valuable in the literature of the East’.⁴³ Translation is a form of plunder:

It is our policy, roamers as we are through the Enchanted Caverns of Oriental Poetry, to commence our scheme of operations [...] by picking up from the ground a few stray jewels of slight weight and no very brilliant water, before we proceed to ransack the coffers and carry off the ponderous golden vases that lie piled about us.⁴⁴

The translator – particularly the translator of Oriental poetry – is a hawker of stolen or counterfeit goods, valuing only what he can sell to an indiscriminating audience.

Mangan exposes the essential spuriousness of the Western experience of Oriental poetry, making little effort to hide his own fakery – in fact constantly inviting discovery. In order to construct an adequate literary history of the Oriental nations, he asserts in the first article, he would have to be proficient in the languages, travel to the East to compare rare manuscripts, and spend perhaps a quarter of a century growing old over his desk, before he was ready to pronounce an authoritative opinion. ‘The work’, he announces blithely, ‘need not be more voluminous than the *Bibliothèque*

⁴² Sir William Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (London: Parbury, Allen and Co.; S. Bagster; T. Cuthell; John Richardson; Hamilton, Adams, and Co., G. B. Whittaker; Black, Young, and Young; Howell and Stewart; W. Mason; Henry Steel, 1828), p. vi.

⁴³ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 137.

⁴⁴ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 143.

Orientalis’;⁴⁵ this would be no mean feat, as d’Herbelot’s dictionary, published posthumously in 1697, was still the standard reference work on Oriental literature, and according to Said, ‘Its scope was truly epochal’.⁴⁶ Mangan pretends he has travelled to see illuminated manuscripts, quibbles with the translations of Sir William Jones and Edward Lane, yet he had little or no knowledge of Eastern tongues, and had hardly been outside Dublin, and never outside Ireland, in his life. The poems he translated were German rather than Persian or Turkish; the main source for ‘*Literæ Orientales*’ was the Austrian Joseph Von Hammer-Purgstall’s German translations of Persian and Turkish poems. Mangan did not need to hide the fact that his source material was in German; ‘relay translation’,⁴⁷ translating Oriental literature into English via French or German translations, was an entirely acceptable practice in the early nineteenth century, and some of the most successful translations of Persian poetry in this period were made by writers who did not know the language, including Emerson, Edwin Arnold, Matthew Arnold, and Louise Costello. Emerson, like Mangan, used Von Hammer-Purgstall rather than Persian originals. But by pretending to a greater familiarity with the language and manuscripts than he actually had, Mangan is clearly questioning the authority and authenticity of other translators of Oriental poetry.

In the first article, Mangan presents the translator as a flower-seller, who is ‘stifled, smothered, trampled into powder’ by the hordes of ladies and gentlemen crowding for his merchandise; however, his gaudy flowers look suspiciously ‘like ancient acquaintances’ disguised:

⁴⁵ Mangan, ‘*Literæ Orientales*. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 137.

⁴⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 64.

⁴⁷ Margaret Lesser, ‘Professionals’, in Peter France and Kenneth Haynes (eds), *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English, Vol 4: 1790-1900* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), p. 91.

Wherefore a misgiving masters us, on the sudden, that not all are exotics. The deuce a matter, nathless, good folks. We shall await with decorous gravity the decision of the horticulturalists. They know a vast deal about the matter indeed.⁴⁸

Mangan flaunts his falsity in ‘Literæ Orientales’, courting exposure, knowing that the ‘horticulturalists’ knew as little about Persian or Turkish poetry as he did. References to the Island of Quackquack, ‘so called because the fruits on the trees of the island are birds which, by an instinctive intelligence, cry out *Quack, quack*, whenever a traveller visits the place’, or the ‘fable of a cock and a bull’,⁴⁹ should have alerted even the most credulous readers, as should the translation of ‘Tracherous Black Guards’, by ‘Ali Baba, a Persian’.⁵⁰ Of his ‘translation’ ‘The Time of the Barmecides’, Mangan admits that he had already published it a few months before, ‘but in such suspicious company that it probably remained unread, except by the few – very few – persons who have always believed us too honourable to attempt imposing on or mystifying the public’, and he promises ‘that if any lady or gentleman wish to have a copy of the original – or indeed of any original of any of our oversettings – we are quite ready to come forward and treat: terms cash, except to young ladies’.⁵¹ The poem, of course, is a Mangan original. O’Donoghue claims that Mangan’s contemporaries (apart of course from experts like Anster) do not seem to have detected the invented poems.⁵² It was up to Mangan to point them out, and expose his own imposture.

For many of Mangan’s contemporaries, the primary duty of the translator was accuracy and fidelity to the original; George Moir noted in the *Edinburgh Review* in

⁴⁸ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 142.

⁴⁹ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Turkish Poetry. – Second Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, pp. 158-59.

⁵⁰ Mangan, ‘Tracherous Black Guards, by Ali Baba, a Persian’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, p. 11.

⁵¹ Mangan, ‘The Time of the Barmecides’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, editorial note, pp. 393-94.

⁵² D. J. O’Donoghue, *The Life and Writings of James Clarence Mangan* (Edinburgh, Dublin, Chicago, and Peabody, Mass: Patrick Geddes & Co.; M. H. Gill & Son; T. G. O’Donoghue; P. V. Fitzpatrick; Nugent Brothers, 1897), p. 87.

1835: ‘it seems now to be pretty generally felt that the main object of a translator should be to exhibit his author and not himself. If a work is worth translating at all it is worth translating *literally*’.⁵³ Mangan was in profound disagreement with this, openly describing his translations as ‘perversions’,⁵⁴ or ‘oversettings’, suggesting the translation superseded the original. The translation, he argues, could be a more significant work than the original text: Mangan says of Anster as a translator of Goethe: ‘He sees through his author, as through glass, but corrects all the distortions produced by the refraction of the substance through which he looks. [...] he is, in short, *the real author of “Faust”*’.⁵⁵ In ‘Anthologia Germanica’ Mangan argues that the translator cannot be held responsible for his author’s deficiencies – ‘We cannot, like the experimentalist in Gulliver, undertake to extract a greater number of sunbeams from a cucumber than it is in the habit of yielding’ – but the translator must polish and improve where he can: ‘it is our business to cast a veil over his blemishes, and bring forward nothing but his excellences, or what we presume to be such’.⁵⁶ The impostor’s veil could therefore spare the original author’s blushes as much as hide the translator’s ‘perversions’. The problem he finds with the translations of Jones and Von Hammer-Purgstall is that their ‘panegyrics on the peculiar beauty of Persian poetry’ are followed only by ‘a few starveling verses from HAFEZ and others, rather more prosaic than ordinary prose’.⁵⁷ Mangan hopes ‘to exhibit the Ottoman Muse in apparel somewhat more attractive’.⁵⁸ If the originals are lacking, the translator is

⁵³ Cited in Matthew Reynolds, ‘Principles and Norms of Translation’, *Oxford History of Literary Translation*, p. 65.

⁵⁴ Mangan, ‘[Where Art Thou, Soul of Per-version?]’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, p. 174, l.1.

⁵⁵ Mangan, ‘Sketches and Reminiscences of Irish Writers. No. III. John Anster, LL.D., Etc.’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1840-1882*, p. 201.

⁵⁶ Mangan, ‘Anthologia Germanica. – No. VII. Kerner’s Lyrical Poems’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 112.

⁵⁷ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Turkish Poetry. – Second Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 150.

⁵⁸ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Turkish Poetry. – Second Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 152.

within his rights in ‘giving them a lift and a shove’: ‘If I receive two or three dozen of sherry for a dinner-party, and by some chemical process can convert the sherry into champagne, my friends are all the merrier, and nobody is a loser’.⁵⁹ The authenticity of the text is less significant than the pleasure its transformation affords to translator and reader.

Mangan also explodes the notion that the translator is impartial and objective; the translator is much more powerful than that, choosing and discriminating, selecting certain poems, discarding others, consciously shaping the reader’s responses. In his notes to ‘Lines on the Launching of the Bashtardah’, Mangan says:

In ransacking the Divan of MOOSTAFA TCHELIBI [...] we have lighted on a few samples of very intolerable versification indeed, which we beg all our readers to read and reprobate vehemently. It is a matter pretty notorious at present, that we have our share of *l’esprit malin*; the detection of faults never failing to afford us deep gratification, while the discovery of beauties agonises us. In accordance with our sentiments we pass with contempt over the greater part of the volume before us, inlaid as it is with melodies worthy of the Nightingale himself, to grapple with the following shabby impostures – palmed upon Us for poetry – but which We thus expose publicly in our Magazine.⁶⁰

The translator is not an invisible honest broker between author and reader, and in the context of Oriental poetry this may mean reinforcing stereotypes of racial or cultural inferiority; having ransacked a culture, he has the power to distort it for his own base purposes, inviting ‘all’ his readers to denigrate a civilisation on the basis of a ‘few’ paltry poems, while deliberately ignoring those providing evidence of a threatening artistic wealth.

Mangan had stated confidently in his articles on German poetry: ‘We have never yet met with a Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch, or German line, which we found

⁵⁹ Mangan, ‘A Sixty-Drop Dose of Laudanum’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 288.

⁶⁰ Mangan, ‘Lines on the Launching of the Bashtardah’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, editorial note, p. 378

it impracticable to render by a corresponding English line'.⁶¹ The second 'Literæ Orientales' article added: 'We believe that that which is good poetry in any one of these languages may be made to appear equally as good poetry in any other of them, if the translator be possessed of skill enough to make it appear so'.⁶² However, the fourth article questions whether any European translator is capable of adequately translating an Oriental text:

we state, and we challenge the entire world of linguists and littérateurs to refute the statement, that Oriental Poetry is not fairly readable in an English translation, – that there is no practicability of idiomatically translating it with effect into our language – perhaps into any of our languages.⁶³

He denies that this has anything to do with any innate superiority in European languages: Persian is 'coeval with the earliest dawn of civilization among mankind', Arabic 'as a language, is entitled to every deference'.⁶⁴ The problem is not language but the confinements of culture; Oriental poetry is not 'fairly' readable, nor can it be translated 'with effect' into the language of a culture inclined to disparage it. The only way a European can appreciate Oriental poetry is to 'disencumber himself of all the old rags of his Europeanism and scatter them to the winds'.⁶⁵ Mangan argues that the pervading character of Oriental poetry is mysticism, and its obscurity can never be truly accepted by a European reader – particularly by the English reader:

The truth is that the Mooslem has more *faith*, humanly speaking, than the Englishman. It is an easier task to satisfy him. He reverences with deeper emotion, cherishes sympathies more comprehensive, has a roomier capacity for the reception of mysteries of all sorts. [...] He is a philosopher – not a purblind analyst of some incontrovertible axiom – not a groping investigator into

⁶¹ Mangan, 'Anthologia Germanica. – No. VIII. Schiller's Drama of Wallenstein's Camp', *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 117.

⁶² Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. Turkish Poetry. – Second Article', *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, pp. 152-53.

⁶³ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. No. IV. Arabian, Persian and Turkish Poetry', *Collected Works: Prose 1840-1882*, p. 1.

⁶⁴ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article', *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 138.

⁶⁵ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. No. IV. Arabian, Persian and Turkish Poetry', *Collected Works: Prose 1840-1882*, p. 2.

noon-day facts – but a genuine, generous, downright, unsophisticated, catholic philosopher.⁶⁶

Mangan's comparison of the 'Mooslem' and the Englishman covertly raises the question how Oriental poetry would be translated and read by an Irishman; Mangan's reference to 'Mooslems' as 'catholic' philosophers is teasingly suggestive in the (largely Protestant and Unionist) context of the *Dublin University Magazine*, and reminiscent of Abdallah's description of Papists as 'only Sunnites with a brogue' in Moore's *Intercepted Letters* (1813).⁶⁷ Mangan and Moore were working within a long tradition of associating Ireland with the East. Joseph Lennon notes that the connection between Asia and Ireland was established in ancient Greco-Roman texts 'amid connections between Ireland and all borderlands'.⁶⁸ In the fourth article, encouraging other Irishmen to come forward to second his translation efforts, Mangan refers tongue-in-cheek to the theories of Charles Vallancey, who argued that the Irish language had an Oriental origin: 'According to Vallancey every Irishman is an Arab'.⁶⁹

But the Irish were also Europeans, and many Irishmen were active participants in the subjection of the East. Joep Leerssen warns that Irish critics have tended to employ Said's theories to Ireland too partially and simplistically:

Anglo-Irish orientalism flourished against the background of a cultural self-estrangement and self-exoticization which is linked to the country's subjection by English hegemony; but on the other hand, authors like Moore, Ferguson and Yeats were comfortable middle-class or upper-middle-class members of

⁶⁶ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. No. IV. Arabian, Persian and Turkish Poetry', *Collected Works: Prose 1840-1882*, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁷ Thomas Moore, 'Letter VI. From Abdallah, in London, to Mohassan, in Ispahan', *Intercepted Letters; or, the Twopenny Post-Bag* (London: J. Carr, 1813), p. 29.

⁶⁸ Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 8.

⁶⁹ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. No. IV. Arabian, Persian and Turkish Poetry', *Collected Works: Prose: 1840-1882*, p. 7.

the literary establishment whom it would be unconvincing to cast in the role of downtrodden natives.⁷⁰

Irish Orientalists could be collusive or subversive in their imaginative appropriation of the East: 'Irish Orientalism developed both imperial and anticolonial strains, mirroring the Irish population in their participation in and resistance to the British Empire'.⁷¹ Mangan was writing for the conservative Unionist *Dublin University Magazine*; modelling itself on *Blackwood's Magazine*, it was clearly aligned with the British discourse of orientalism, and not averse to viewing the majority Catholic nationalist population, agitating in the 1830s and 1840s for a repeal of the Union, as exotic and troublesome Others. In 'Thuggee in India, and Ribandism in Ireland, compared', a long review of Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug*, published in January 1840, one of the magazine's prominent controversialists, Samuel O'Sullivan, drew grisly parallels between Thugs and Irish Ribbonmen, arguing that both were degraded and brutalised by their false religion, and both devoted to the destruction of their fellow loyal subjects.⁷² O'Sullivan's article 'Successes in the East', in January 1843, hailed England's triumphs in Afghanistan and China as major blows to both Daniel O'Connell and Young Ireland, and O'Sullivan took the opportunity to remind readers that

if there are Affghans abroad in the punishment of whose barbarous treachery we have reason to exult, *there are Affghans at home*, for whose distresses at the mischances of their defeated kindred, as they may well be called, we are bound, in common humanity, to feel a due commiseration. [...] The sudden and unhoped-for blaze of England's victories in the East, has startled into an unwary manifestation of its hidden virulence that latent treason against our

⁷⁰ Joep Leerssen, 'Irish Studies and *Orientalism*: Ireland and the Orient', in C. C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen (eds), *Oriental Prospects: Western Literature and the Lure of the East* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998), 161-173, p. 171.

⁷¹ Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*, p. 123.

⁷² [Samuel O'Sullivan], 'Thuggee in India, and Ribandism in Ireland, compared', *Dublin University Magazine*, vol. 15 (January 1840), pp. 50-65.

Protestant state, which is engrained in the hearts of a servilely popish population.⁷³

While Mangan was a Catholic, and had contributed poetry to the Young Ireland journal *The Nation* from its first number in October 1842, and so was potentially one of the ‘Irish Affghans’ O’Sullivan feared, he had yet to be radicalized when he began his Oriental translations in 1837. Duffy, co-founder and editor of *The Nation*, said that in 1840 Mangan ‘knew nothing of politics and cared nothing for them, and he averted his eyes from Irish history as from a painful and humiliating spectacle’.⁷⁴ However, ‘Literæ Orientales’ suggests a growing awareness of political injustice in Ireland and elsewhere, and of poets’ (and translators’) role in reinforcing or challenging it. In his notes to his translation of Kerimi’s ‘Justice Alone is Eternal’, in the third article in 1838, Mangan says: ‘These lines were addressed by the poet Kheremi to a corrupt and tyrannical Cadi in Constantinople, who had amassed immense riches by his private and public robberies’. The tyrant is warned:

Only those Gates which no soul nears
Except by Penance’ road and over Sorrow’s flood,
Those gates through which *thou* canst not find thy way,
Those only, *and the burning marble piers*
Of IBLIS’ halls – as they have stood
From immemorial time – shall stand for aye.

The editors of the *Collected Works* note that these lines are not in Mangan’s German source.⁷⁵ He also inserted a reference to the Liberty Trees, planted in America and France during their Revolutions, and adopted by the United Irishmen as a symbol of their revolutionary aspirations, into ‘Lament’, supposedly by Mulheed, helpfully alerting the reader: ‘Sentiments like the following are rare in Eastern poetry’:

The stately Tree of Liberty,

⁷³ [Samuel O’Sullivan], ‘Successes in the East – Affghanistan – China’, *Dublin University Magazine*, vol. 21 (January 1843), pp. 125-142, at 131.

⁷⁴ Duffy, ‘Personal Memories’, p. 286.

⁷⁵ Mangan, ‘Justice Alone is Eternal’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, p. 75, ll. 10-15; editorial note, p. 378.

Which, when the storms of tyrant Power rage,
Might yet lend shelter to the Free,
Is shrunken and decayed in *our* age!⁷⁶

Similarly, ‘The Thugs’ Ditty’, which appeared in the fifth article in 1844, Mangan notes, is ‘of questionable authenticity’ due to its ‘unoriental’ expression – ‘We tipple and smoke; we hocus and cozen, / And that sort of thing’ – and might indeed offer a satiric riposte to blood-curdling comparisons, such as O’Sullivan’s, of the Irish and the Oriental.⁷⁷ The Eastern veil may have provided him with the means of contemplating that reality from which he only apparently ‘averted his eyes’, and of inscribing it in coded form within the pages of the journal of Anglo-Irish cultural hegemony.

In her discussion of Mangan’s incorporation of an epigraph from Shelley’s *Adonais* in his early poem ‘The Dying Enthusiast to His Friend’, Fiona Stafford notes the uncanny ease with which Mangan makes the transition from Shelley’s poem to his own: ‘There is no immediate sense of disjunction, nor of the earlier poem being part of a culture fundamentally alien to that of the new composition’.⁷⁸ This is all the more remarkable in that Mangan’s poem was composed and first published without the epigraph, suggesting the Irish poet’s immersion in and internalization of English Romantic values and aesthetics at a time when other Irish writers, such as Samuel Ferguson and William Carleton, were attempting to define and promote an Irish literature not written with an English audience in mind. Yet, as Stafford suggests, Mangan’s foregrounding of *Adonais* is less an attempt by an unknown provincial poet to provide an authorising stamp for his poem, than a complex provocation. Given Shelley’s support for Catholic Emancipation and Repeal, the use of his name, even

⁷⁶ Mangan, ‘Lament’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, p. 13, ll. 9-12; editorial note, p. 367.

⁷⁷ Mangan, ‘The Thugs’ Ditty’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, p. 353, ll 3-4; editorial note p. 421.

⁷⁸ Fiona Stafford, *Starting Lines in Scottish, Irish, and English Poetry from Burns to Heaney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 147

posthumously, in a poem published in a Dublin journal colours it politically. But Stafford also intriguingly suggests that in ‘The Dying Enthusiast’ Mangan is ‘exhibit[ing] a similar kind of ventriloquism to that practised in many of his Oriental poems’,⁷⁹ in that the speaker might be imagined to be the dying Keats, pre-emptively challenging his friend’s elegy. Mangan resurrects Shelley in the epigraph, only to resurrect Keats as his speaker to object to the way the meaning of Keats’s death had been shaped. In ‘The Dying Enthusiast’, Mangan proves himself more than capable of mimicking English Romantic poetry; but ‘Literæ Orientales’, rather than employing the ‘double vision’ of mimicry, ‘which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority’,⁸⁰ offers instead a triple vision of ventriloquism, in which the Irish poet mimics not the colonial usurper but other colonised, dispossessed and denigrated denizens who have been denied the opportunity to speak.

The habit of veiling seems so persistent that Mangan continues it even when an overt comparison between the Oriental and the Irish colonized might be welcomed. In April 1846, during the first full year of the Great Famine, Mangan published what he described as a ‘particularly genuine Persian poem’ – clearly entirely original – ‘To the Ingleezee Khafir, Calling Himself Djaun Bool Djenkinzun’, in *The Nation*, one of the most vociferous critics of British government inaction in the face of starvation. The sentiments of the speaker, Meer Djafrif, for John Bull were unlikely to be disputed in this forum:

I hate thee, Djaun Bool,
Worse than Márid or Afrit,
Or corpse-eating Ghool.
I hate thee like Sin,
For thy mop-head of hair,

⁷⁹ Stafford, *Starting Lines*, p. 180.

⁸⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 126.

Thy snub nose and bald chin,
And thy turkeycock air.⁸¹

Yet the explicit analogy between Persia and Ireland is restricted to the notes and the lightly disguised name. In his notes Mangan compares the tendency of Oriental and Irish poets to introduce their own names into their poems, and explains his use of the phrase ‘Thou dog’ by the similarity between the Persian ‘Ei G[i]aour’ and ‘the Irish *A Gadar*’, meaning dog. Mangan observes that the poem uses the ancient ‘Iran’ rather than ‘Persia’; the editors of the *Collected Works* are surely right to suggest that Mangan is ‘inviting his readers to remember that, as Iran is the ancient name of Persia, so Erin is the ancient name of Ireland’.⁸² But Mangan also notes that Persia was known as ‘the Land of Djem’; knowing Mangan’s fondness for puns, it is hard to resist reading this as a pun on his own name, ‘the Land of Jim’. Perhaps significantly, one of his ‘Literæ Orientales’ translations, ‘Ghazel by Djim’, identifies this king (whose name is spelt ‘Dschem’ by Von Hammer-Purgstall and ‘Giam’ by d’Herbelot – ‘Djim’ is Mangan’s creation) as having been born in Caramania.⁸³ Caramania seems to have held a particular attraction for Mangan. In the first article he noted the ‘tendency to homonymousness’ of Oriental poets: ‘D’Herbelot has recorded no fewer than fourteen Persian writers, all of whom pass under the common cognomen of Karamani, from their province, Karaman. Here is perspicuity!’⁸⁴ Mangan, exploiting this homonymity, takes on a Caramanian identity in several of his ‘translations’. He may have been remembering Shelley’s *Alastor* (1816), in which the poet wanders

⁸¹ Mangan, ‘To the Ingleezee Khafir, Calling Himself Djaun Bool Djenkinzun’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1845-1847*, p. 159, ll. 2-8.

⁸² Mangan, ‘To the Ingleezee Khafir, Calling Himself Djaun Bool Djenkinzun’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1845-1847*, editorial note, p. 449.

⁸³ Mangan, ‘Ghazel’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1838-1844*, pp. 4, 364.

⁸⁴ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, pp. 136-37.

Another poem of 1846, ‘To the Pens of The Nation’, puns shamelessly in calling on Irish writers to praise the Sikhs in their opposition to English rule in India: ‘Sing of British overthrow – / SING A SONG OF SIKHS, PENS!’⁹¹ In ‘A Vision of Connaught in the Thirteenth Century’, published in the *Nation* in July 1846, Mangan invites several comparisons; most obviously, that between the wealth of thirteenth-century Ireland under the benevolent Cáthal Mór, and its famine-stricken state in 1846. Cáthal Mór is referred to in the poem using the oriental ‘Khan’. Mangan explains that this is: ‘Identical with the Irish *Ceann*, Head, or Chief; but I the rather gave him the Oriental title, as really fancying myself in one of the regions of Araby the Blest’. He also notes: ‘The Irish and Oriental poets both agree in attributing favorable or unfavorable weather and abundant or deficient harvests to the good or bad qualities of the reigning monarch. What the character of Cahal was will be seen below’.⁹² The implication, of course, is that the character of Victoria could be equally well judged from the present state of Ireland.

The East functions for Mangan not as an escape from reality – Ireland prior to and during the Famine – but a way of reimagining and reengaging with it. The belief that ‘the Wonderful Lamp, the dazzler of our boyhood’ is ‘still lying perdu in some corner of the Land of Wonders’ serves as a barrier against insanity:

From amid the lumber of the actual world prize is made of a safety-valve which carries off from the surface of our reveries the redundant smoke and vapour that, suffered to continue pent up within us, would suffocate every healthier volition and energy of the spirit.⁹³

It is difficult to read a poem like ‘Elegy on the Death of Sultan Suleimaun the Magnificent’, which appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1848, without

⁹¹ Mangan, ‘To the Pens of The Nation’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1845-1847*, p. 151, ll. 7-8.

⁹² Mangan, ‘A Vision of Connaught in the Thirteenth Century’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1845-1847*, editorial note, p. 455.

⁹³ Mangan, ‘Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article’, *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, pp. 129-30.

thinking of the situation in Ireland at the time Mangan wrote it; once again, Mangan attributes the poem to Lamii, but as he died before Sultan Suleimaun, it is a safe assumption that it is a Mangan original:

We who remain behind, we wither all from day to day,
Wulla-hu!
The sight hath left our eyes; our very beards show crisped and grey,
Wulla-hu!
For Plague, and Thirst, and Famine
Have come down on the land:
Each of us, black-skinned as a Brahmin,
Sits weeping; scarce a few
Take even the Koran now in hand –
Wull-wullahu! Wull-wullahu!⁹⁴

Mangan died of cholera at the age of 46 in June 1849, one of the million-and-a-half victims of the Great Famine of 1845-52. During the Famine he transformed himself into an Irish poet of great stature, and it is largely for his Famine poems that he is remembered. The last poem to be published before he died is the explicitly Irish ‘The Famine’ – no averting of the eyes is possible anymore, and the displaced and dispossessed ‘Caramanian Exile’ is replaced by ‘The Irish serf’, ‘a Being banned – / Life-exiled as none ever was before’. Yet the Eastern analogy encroaches even here:

Even as the dread Simoom of Araby
Sweeps o’er the desert through the pathless air,
So came, ’mid Ireland’s joy and revelry,
That cloud of gloom above her visions fair.⁹⁵

The affinity between the East and Ireland may be no less illusory than that between the Orient and Genii-land, but it offered Mangan the opportunity of exposing the cultural insularity and religious and racial intolerance that cankered relations between Ireland and England, Irish and Anglo-Irish, no less than between Caramania and the

⁹⁴ Mangan, ‘Elegy on the Death of the Sultan Suleimaun the Magnificent’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1848-1912*, pp. 82-3, ll. 41-50.

⁹⁵ Mangan, ‘The Famine’, *Collected Works: Poems: 1848-1912*, p. 137, ll. 15-18.

Ottoman Empire, or East and West. 'This is my own, my native land!'⁹⁶ exclaims Mangan in 'Literæ Orientales' – and sometimes it is.

⁹⁶ Mangan, 'Literæ Orientales. Persian and Turkish Poetry. – First Article', *Collected Works: Prose: 1832-1839*, p. 131.