
Disrupting Colonial Views: Savvy Nabobs, Oriental Dreams. Colonial Appropriations in J.C. Mangan's "An Extraordinary Adventure in the Shades" and "The Thirty Flasks"

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Abstract. Irish Gothic fiction in the nineteenth century experiences a significant yet progressive change – a move from the more brutal, physical threat present in the early forms of the genre to that of a subtle, psychological menace. Read in postcolonial terms, this signifies a change in the presence and perception of the colonized other, who now is presented as a mental danger; thus, vampires, werewolves and other physically threatening beings are left in the vault while, simultaneously, a new form of threat emerges in the shape of beings whose physical presence is conspicuously less hostile but whose psychological sphere threatens to engulf the troubled Anglo-Irish elite. The narratives of J.C. Mangan are paradigmatic of this change in so far as they already present the characteristics which later writers of the genre were to deploy. As this paper shows, by appropriating and abrogating the colonial gaze and utilizing British/Anglo-Irish perceptions of the East, J.C. Mangan manages to unveil the fact that, ultimately, Anglo-Irish fears of the Catholic other are, in fact, a product of their own paranoia, therefore, debasing their claim to both land and their appropriation of Irish identity.

Key Words. Postcolonialism, J.C. Mangan, Irish Literature, Nineteenth-century Literature, Gothic, Anglo-Irish Ascendancy.

Resumen. En el siglo XIX, la narrativa gótica irlandesa experimenta un cambio significativo a la vez que progresivo, en el que los elementos ficcionales de carácter brutal y físico presentes en los primeros ejemplos del género se transforman en una serie de amenazas de carácter más psicológico y sutil. Leído en términos poscoloniales, esto significa un cambio en la percepción del otro colonizado, cuya presencia ahora es más mental que física; así, los vampiros y otros entes físicamente amenazantes se esconden en sus cuevas mientras que, de manera paralela, emerge un nuevo peligro cuya presencia es conspicuamente menos hostil pero cuya esfera psicológica amaga con absorber a la preocupada élite anglo-irlandesa. Las narrativas de J.C. Mangan son paradigmáticas de este cambio ya que poseen las características que autores

postreros del género acabarán por emplear. El presente artículo demuestra cómo mediante la apropiación y abrogación de la observación colonial y la utilización de las percepciones anglo-irlandesas/británicas del oriente, J.C. Mangan consigue desvelar el hecho de que los miedos que dicha clase despliega del otro católico son producto de su propia paranoia, desmontando así su reclamo sobre la tierra e identidad irlandesas.

Palabras clave. Poscolonialismo, J.C. Mangan, literatura irlandesa, literatura del s. XIX, gótico, ascendencia anglo-irlandesa.

There is a significant change in Irish Gothic fiction in the nineteenth century in relation to previous Irish Gothic fictions – the move from a “physical” terror to a more “psychological” one, a well-known hallmark of the fictions of such Gothic writers as J.S. Le Fanu and Bram Stoker. As Jorge (2019) shows, the importance of the self in postcolonial literature and its implications for Irish literature, both to contest the image forged by the colonizers and to help create a national self-image, is paramount. This relationship of the self and the land is pervaded by a sense of instability, of insecurity caused by the colonial situation that provokes a displacement of the self.

Images of the other as threatening or subservient are commonplace in colonialist literature (Boehmer 73); whether enveloped in an aura of allure or of omnipotent and destructive power, characters embodying the colonized other have been continually drafted to present a disfigured image of such peoples to justify the colonizer self via the rhetoric of reversed mirroring images, by which the self is the direct opposite of the other; at the core of such misrepresentations was, of course, a justification of the empire and the civilizing mission. The writings of James Clarence Mangan display a concern with such misrepresentations and constitute an attempt at redressing a disfigured, misinformed image of the colonial other.

The present paper analyses how the relationship colonized-colonizer is manifested in the short narratives of J. C. Mangan, and how the characters in them present subvert the well-established notion of both colonial and postcolonial literatures in which the protagonist stands for either the idealized colonizer spreading civilization or the subversive colonized subject fighting for freedom, while the antagonist encodes the direct opposite idea. The particularities of the Irish context, both in ethnographic and literary terms, complicate easy, clear-cut classifications, both in social terms and in literary ones, perhaps because Irish Gothic writings are “marked by an ambivalent dialogue between Catholophobia and Catholophilia, ‘progressivism’ and nostalgia, the future and the past, English rationalism and Irish atavism” (Killeen 204). In the end, Irish writers “had to speak from the patriarchal and imperialist ideology that they lived in and by which they were appropriated” (Daniels 14). The present analysis updates and contextualizes the traditional tenets of postcolonial literature by questioning their applicability in the context of the nineteenth-century short narratives epitomized by James Clarence Mangan.

Representations of the other as the reversed opposing image of the colonizer are widespread in colonialist literature. In his study on the birth of literatures in conflict, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine*, Cleary asserts that “metropolitan European modernisation was conceived in terms whereby supposedly ‘backward’ regions – such as the Celtic peripheries ... – were assimilated into supposedly more dynamic and advanced imperial heartlands” (55). It is this very same colonial encounter which provokes the appearance of the conflict between the self and the other, causing feelings of anxiety about the present and the future in the self which manifest themselves in a growing sense of frustrated ambition to improve its situation by obtaining the object of desire. Though this is not necessarily a material one, the relationship of the self and the object of desire is

always one of possession, that is to say that “[T]he pattern of all relationships in the Gothic fantasy ... operates on the dynamic of sadomasochism” (Day 19). The colonized self, possessed by the colonizers, tries in turn to possess its object of desire; this possessor/possessed relationship is a replication of the relationship that operates between the colonized subject and the colonizer. It is then that the encounter with the other takes place. As Boehmer puts it, in postcolonial literature “[th]e concept of the other ... signifies that which is unfamiliar and extraneous to a dominant subjectivity, the opposite or negative against which an authority is defined” (Boehmer 21). It is through this conflicting encounter that the colonial situation is explored. In Ireland, this conflict self-vs-other was realized in the otherness of Irish Catholicism, possessing “an ineradicable ethnic component, being perceived as immersed in superstition, savagery, and the general credulousness associated with primitive cultures or ‘doomed races’” (Gibbons 13). It is precisely here where the fictions of J.C. Mangan play a leading role as literature of retrieval for, in reversing colonial constructions of the other, they constitute an attempt to lead to an “exorcism of restrictive and repressed histories and imaginative versions, and to a construction of a new set of relationships” (Wisker 155). In this sense, many scholars have remarked the imprint of the postcolonial concept of hybridity, a combination “of European as well as indigenous traditions as a positive advantage which allows their writers and critics to understand and critique the West as both insiders and outsiders” (Innes 12); this element would allow postcolonial writers to criticize the colonizer without rejecting the legacy of colonization. In the Irish case, this would manifest itself in the breakage of the opposing dichotomy Catholic-Protestant or Anglo-Irish-Gaelic, arguing in favour of the blending of both the Anglo-Irish and the Catholic Irish, “attempting to dissolve altogether that opposition between dominating invader and dominated native” (Murphy 81). However, to be able to accurately interpret this colonial encounter, one should pay attention to the many nuances present in Irish Gothic literature, a complicated field in itself due to its manifold literary manifestations and to the long presence of the colonizers on the island. As Flannery asserts, “[a] range of internal factors complicates readings of colonial occupation, in which notions of language, nationality, ethnicity, faith, class, and gender were drastically affected” (19). One must, therefore, analyse the different layers and aspects which make up Irish Gothic literature if deeper, more nuanced and complete interpretations are to be gathered.

The analysis will, thus, focus on two of J.C. Mangan’s short narratives, “An Extraordinary Adventure in the Shades” and “The Thirty Flasks”, which will be used as exemplars of J.C. Mangan’s application of postcolonial techniques to subvert colonial readings of the other. The first part of the analysis will unveil how the Dublin writer subverts and abrogates colonialist literary depictions of the other by presenting these as misinformed, delusional interpretations as observed in “An Extraordinary Adventure in the Shades”. The second part of the analysis, centred in “The Thirty Flasks”, shows how colonialist tools can be deployed to counteract colonizing attempts and misrepresentations of colonized peoples. J.C. Mangan’s story utilizes the concept of the *colonial gaze*, as established by Boehmer, to its own advantage, turning upon itself the reversed mirror which the colonizers deployed to demean colonized peoples and proving that such readings of colonial subjects were, indeed, the sole creation of the metropolis.

J.C. Mangan’s stories are multi-layered and offer innumerable readings. There is, however, in all his stories the presence of a foreign other, characteristic not only of a colonized mind but also very present in Gothic fiction. Its manifestation is multifarious and complex, sometimes resisting an easy interpretation, and ranging from the menacing to the expiatory. The most prominent, however, is the idea of the other as evil, as a threat, and it is best personified in the character of the sorcerer Maugraby, who features in three of his stories, “An Extraordinary Adventure in the Shades”, “The Thirty Flasks” and “The Threefold Prediction”, though in this last one it is just nominally. This is not by chance; Maugraby is the epitome of

the idea of the East, appealing and threatening at the same time, which can be seen in the fact that when the narrator speaks of him, both fear and awe are manifest: “Lord of this earth is Maugraby: – his breath exhales pestilence, – his hand lavishes treasures! He possesses invisibility, ubiquity, tact, genius, wealth exhaustless, power undreamed of! Such is Maugraby: such is he on whom I gaze” (Mangan 22).

As can be seen in this brief description, Maugraby is capable of inspiring both fear – “exhales pestilence” – and admiration – “lavishes treasures” –; he is even believed to have the merit to write in the London *Times*, referred to as the Thunderer. This perception of the other as both feared and admired at the same time owes a great deal to colonial literature. It is important to remark, however, that the construction of the other by the self is an ambivalent process. In a colonial context, the other is defined as radically different from the self, and yet at the same time, the other has to retain some characteristics of the self so that this can retain control over the other, what Homi Bhabha terms “repetition and displacement” (Ashcroft, *The Empire Writes Back* 103). Boehmer also expounds on this ambivalence inherent to the colonizing process:

So, while the Empire could signify far realms of possibility, fantasy, and wish-fulfilment where identities and fortunes might be transformed, the colonies were also places of banishment, unlawful practice, oppression, and social disgrace, dark lands where worthy citizens might not wish to stray. (Boehmer 26)

Boehmer is also quick to point out the process of “repetition and displacement”. On discussing the development of the concept of the other in imperial times, she asserts that such a concept is not simply a negative term set in opposition to the colonizer’s own image. Further from that, it is a complex process, which represents an undifferentiated negative, and which depended largely on the context and the imperial situation. Within this category, there were cultures which were perceived to be closer to the European self than others (Boehmer 78-79). This is, of course, the case with the Irish, as Gibbons states, “religious bigotry and racial pathology intersected in the demonization of the Irish and the Celt, the simianized underclass that threatened the white, Caucasian race from within” (Gibbons 38).

Precisely because the other is almost all-encompassing, its representation in Mangan’s writings is also convoluted. The other can be both a source of relief and a cause for destruction – sometimes both simultaneously. Thus, the relationship of characters with location is ambiguous, rather tense at times. Many of them do not belong in the place they inhabit, as is the case with the Mogul (Maugraby), “a certain uncertain old East Indian snudge” (Mangan 181) in “The Thirty Flasks”; others, like Basil in the same story, are on the verge of being dispossessed of their worldly goods, “As for my property, Steinhart and Groll will come down like wolves upon the Konigsmark chateau – and this house, of course, with all its rights, members, and appurtenances, as the lawyers say, goes to Elsberg” (Mangan 179); and yet others are doomed to be eternally wandering the earth like Braunbrock in “The Man in the Cloak”, looking for “a victim – a substitute – even as the Man in the Cloak had discovered *him*. Month after month he prosecuted his search wherever he thought it likely to be successful. He traversed Spain, Italy, Holland, England, and France” (Mangan 260). This figure of the East as threatening is perhaps best appreciated in “An Extraordinary Adventures in the Shades”, in which Maugraby’s nose is perceived by the narrator as the worst of threats:

But experience alone could testify to the absolute amount of injury that would be inflicted through the agency of this mountainous feature. Extending itself from College Green though Dame-street, Westmoreland-street and Grafton-street, it would, by regular degrees, occupy every square foot of vacant space in this might metropolis. Then would ensue the prostration of commerce, the reign of universal terror, the precipitated departure of the citizens of all ranks

into the interior – and Dublin would, in its melancholy destiny, be assimilated by the historian of a future age, with Persepolis, Palmyra, and Nineveh! (Mangan 22-23)

This story – Mangan’s first – already explores this confrontation of the self and the other. The story – in an overall jocose tone – is told from a first-person point of view and narrates the encounter of the narrator – whom we finally identify as Clarence – with the Oriental necromancer Maugraby at the Shades Tavern, near College Green, where Clarence had an appointment with an acquaintance. As soon as Clarence arrives, he starts drinking compulsively and his attention is arrested by a particular man sitting nearby whom he mistakes for Dr. Bowring and then identifies as Maugraby. While Clarence continues indulging in spirits, Maugraby starts to alter his physical form, threatening to destroy not only the tavern but the whole of Dublin. The story is brought to a climax when Clarence believes himself to be confronting the necromancer and finally passes out, reportedly due to his overindulgence in alcohol. On waking up, Clarence finds himself in bed assisted by Dr. Stokes, who informs him that there had been no sign of the necromancer, and that the supposed necromancer had been none other than Brasspen, of the *Comet* club.

Although there is no explicit presentation of the narrator other than his name – which is found almost by chance –, there are several facts that identify him with the educated middle classes. First of all, he arranges an appointment in “College-green, at the Shades Tavern – a classic spot, known to a few select persons about town” (Mangan 14). This is an obvious reference to the Anglo-Irish higher classes, College Green being the epitome of the Anglo-Irish power in the country, since it gathered the place of highest education in Ireland at that time – Trinity College – and the seat of the former Irish parliament. This reference is not gratuitous, for an immediate – if less apparent – parallelism has been established. The Houses of Parliament of the Anglo-Irish were located in College Green, where Ireland possessed a bicameral legislature and was *de facto* independent from Britain; however, behind the “splendid Italianate parliament house” (Jackson 6), Britain still exerted its influence, so much so that “the Irish political system in the 1790s was affected by British influence at almost every level” (Jackson 8). Furthermore, the kind of language the narrator uses – ornate, reflexive, full of foreign expression – can hardly be identified with that of the lower, illiterate classes, “I was, however, determined to institute an examination into it *stückweise*, as they say in Vienna” (Mangan 15). This is linked to his chosen topic for his soliloquy, wondering whether the stranger he is observing is not Dr. Bowring, a well-known translator and founder of Utilitarianism, and questioning himself as to whether he should approach him “in the majestic cadences of the Spanish” (Mangan 19). There is little, if any, doubt about the social class Clarence belongs to.

Even though “An Extraordinary Adventure in the Shades” is Mangan’s first story, it already contains all the elements he was to bring to perfection in his later stories. As has been commented, it is the ambiguous relation of the self and the land caused by the colonial situation in Ireland which brings the characters to a state of near destitution, which, in turn, provokes the encounter with the other. It is true that such a state is not overtly explored in the story; however, Clarence indulges considerably in the drinking of spirits to the point of passing out. Further, the Shades Tavern is classified as a “classic spot” (Mangan 14), where port wine is served and where one could expect to meet Dr. Bowring, “one of the leading genii of modern Europe” (Mangan 18). Passing out in such a place can hardly be considered as proper behaviour. Thus, it would not be too farfetched to assert that Clarence the narrator is on the verge of social destitution, even if this is presented in a mocking form. It is precisely when he is in this stage that the supernatural encounter takes place.

The other is presented in this story as a fearful, invasive force, “Maugraby, the celebrated oriental necromancer, whose dreaded name the romances of my childhood had rendered familiar to me, and who had lately arrived in Dublin for the purpose of consummating some hell-born deed of darkness” (Mangan 20). It is remarkable, though, that the unknown

person whom Clarence mistakenly identifies with Maugraby is perceived as threatening since he was present prior to Clarence appearance:

Suddenly I heard someone cough slightly. ... Seated at an opposite table, I beheld a gentleman of tall stature and commanding aspect, striking, indeed to a degree, in his physiognomy. ... How was it that I had hitherto neglected to notice this man? (Mangan 14-15).

In fact, the transformation this unidentified individual experiences in Clarence's mind – ranging from an unidentified person to Dr. Bowring to become later on Maugraby – can perfectly be compared to the perception of native peoples by colonizers. When arriving at what they would term new lands – “the start of a new history”, as Boehmer puts it (Boehmer 24) –, colonizers viewed native peoples with curiosity; as the scavenging for lands and raw materials commenced, this curiosity was transformed into vigilant observance and then – if the natives opposed resistance – into open fear, which, in turn, proved a further argument for the conquering and civilizing mission. As Boehmer explicates, “Stereotypes of the other as indolent maligners, shirkers, good-for-nothings, layabouts, debased versions of the pastoral idler, were the stock-in-trade of colonialist writing. In contrast, the white man represented himself as the archetypal worker and provident profit-maker” (Boehmer 38). Understood this way, Mangan's presentation of the self undermines this interpretation of the colonized Other; the image offered through the prism of the self turns out to be a delusion caused by severe indulgence in alcohol, and the threatening Maugraby is none other than Brasspen, an equal to Clarence in dignity and social status. Thus, Mangan fights back the image of the colonized other as an evil being threatening to bring the collapse of civilization. What he offers is actually a reversal of roles, in which the colonial gaze is shown to be product and reflection of its own character while the colonized other is just the receptor of this abusive gaze. Mangan is, in fact, ridiculing the colonial enterprise, which – like Gothic literature – “is obsessed with *invisible* adversaries, and fantasies of corruption, infiltration, and pollution from within” (Gibbons 38). As Gibbons asserts, during much of the Nineteenth century, the British were worried about the collapse of civilization which could stem from having intermingled with the peripheral Celts. However, as Mangan's burlesque piece proves, their demons are their own creation, product of colonial overindulgence.

This argument is further reinforced by the fact that the self remains deluded to the end of the story. During all the narration, Clarence is unable to realize his own misperceptions are the product of severe alcoholic indulgence and chooses to attribute them to both supernatural agency – in the shape of Maugraby – and to his high intellect:

Hastily to discuss the remainder of my wine, to order a fresh bottle, and to drink six or eight glasses in rapid succession, was the operation of a few minutes. ... I felt renovated, created anew: ... I stood out, in front of the universe, a visible and tangible Intellect ... (Mangan 20)

Even when he is brought home by his friend, Dr. Stokes, who assures him that there was no Maugraby to be seen and, therefore, no supernatural agency, Clarence chooses to ignore this and closes the narration of his adventure by referring to the mysterious supernatural powers the world is enveloped in: “*Tout est mystère dans ce monde-ci*, I thought; *je ne sais trop qu'en croire*” (Mangan 24). This has a curious interpretation from a postcolonial point of view.

Despite the fact that everything in the story points to the assumption that the narrator's supernatural encounter with Maugraby is the product of an alcoholic delusion and can, therefore, being explicated in rational terms, there is the possibility – however unlikely and

bombastic – of believing the narrator’s rendering of the story, and to this possibility the narrator holds fast. This act of faith, a self-imposed delusion is necessary for the narrator’s self-esteem, and it is paralleled in the building of the Empire. In the same way that the narrator chooses not to question the nature of the supernatural encounter because that would imply questioning his own nature, so the British Empire chose not to question the nature of its purpose. The idea of the empire was unquestionable, supported by self-obsession, bombast, and mere self-conviction: “It was possible to justify the Empire because it was self-evidently responsible, above blame, just – and it was just, it could be claimed, because it was British” (Boehmer 41). Questioning the Empire would have implied questioning the civilizing mission on which it was supposedly based, and this could have translated into inquiries into the malpractices the aura of the Empire shaded. Similarly, Clarence’s acceptance of his delusion would imply a questioning of his own self and facing his social downgrading. Thus, it was preferable to adapt and adopt the myth of the other as a menacing force, even if that implied surrounding it with a magical aura.

Mangan, however, is going to delve even further in his abrogation by replicating the *colonial gaze*, understood as “the curious scrutiny of the colonized by the colonizers” (Boehmer 68) and through which the former becomes an “*object of study*” (Boehmer 69) of the latter. This distancing of the colonized subject in pseudoscientific terms is a further instance of the otherizing process to which native peoples are subjected. It is curious that the self employs the colonial gaze here; this is, however, a pivotal element in J.C. Mangan’s abrogation technique. In his stories, the self represents the Irish middle and higher classes, which were to a large extent integrated by the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy, themselves representatives of settler communities – “It was in settler societies, and prototypically in nineteenth-century Ireland, therefore, that the first distinct phase of colonial national consciousness in the Empire at large can be said to have begun” (Boehmer 107). Caught up between two worlds – England and Ireland –, their allegiances to one or the other varied from time to time, and depended on the particular circumstances. Weary of England, the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy was also afraid of the native Irish Catholics, whom they perceived as a threat to their world. The Anglo-Irish parliament, largely dependent on England, tended to the exclusion and marginalization of the Catholic population in stronger terms than the English parliament would have done, to the extent that many Protestants “opposed the inclusion of the Catholic descendants of the Gaels in the nation and supported the continuance of ... the ‘penal laws’” (Murphy 13). Nevertheless, Mangan’s representation of the other will show how this scrutiny is ultimately incorrect. “The Thirty Flasks” is a good example of this appropriation and abrogation of the colonial other.

The story relates the misfortunes of Basil Rosenwald, an upper-class gentleman from Saxony. Early in the story, the reader is informed that he is very near to becoming destitute, a state which is not caused by any alien forces but by his own addiction to gambling: “Last night in my madness I rushed from the *rouge et noir* room to the *roulette* table ... and in twenty minutes, without well knowing how, I found that I had parted with notes for four thousand florins!” (Mangan 179). As can be appreciated, Basil is not ready to acknowledge his own part in his misfortunes, choosing to blame his friend Heinrick for them. In his despair, he seeks the help of a magician, “a certain uncertain old East Indian snudge” (Mangan 181), whom his friend – really the East Indian’s accomplice – has recommended. Basil meets the Nabob, who is ready to give him the necessary money to re-establish him to upper-class society on condition that he swallows a number of magic flasks. These, the Nabob informs him, will reduce his inches while transferring them to the Nabob. Basil accepts the compact, assuming that the Nabob is some sort of lunatic: “A man that fills other people’s purses with ducats, and their stomachs with brandy, and all for nothing! Why, he must be mad! Perhaps overtaken by remorse for some crime: they do ugly things in the East. Perhaps only eccentric” (Mangan 182). However, the compact turns out to be true, and – in a paradoxical reversion of the colonized-colonizer

relationship – as Basil’s richness recovers, his inches diminish to the point that there is just one inch left before the compact is irreversible. The story’s climax is brought about by the introduction of the character of Slickwitz, who saves Basil by transferring him the money his recently deceased uncle has left him.

This brief summary suffices to show the parallelism that can be established between the character of Basil and that of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy landlords. Like the Anglo-Irish, Basil lives on inherited property; not having to work, he is ready to indulge in the pleasures of life and, like the Anglo-Irish landlords, live off “their rents, hunting, breeding horses, attending race meetings, ... and dispensing lavish hospitality” (Somerset Fry 171). Just as the Anglo-Irish landlords did, Basil exploits his inheritance without thinking of the consequences of his exploitations: as long as he can continue living his idle life, he is untroubled.

Most tellingly, perhaps, is the fact that the figure of the Nabob seems to embody all the racial prejudices raised against the Oriental other, reminiscing British (and Anglo-Irish) stereotyped treatment of the Gaelic Irish during much of the colonial process. The figure of the other – be it Irish or Indian – seems to amalgamate all the negative features into one single, undistinguishable unit, which would, of course, be the mirror opposite of the colonizer’s self-perception. In “The Life of the Irish Soldier in India”, Bubb recalls how the British depicted their Irish fighting bodies by describing “so-called Irish traits: drunkenness, cheek, religiosity, an innate comedy and a rapid change from ferocious battle-cries to sentimental tears” (779). Further still, as Anne Jamison points out, Basil can be unquestionably linked to the logic of “the century in which [he] lives, with all its scientific progress and exaltation of reason” (169), while the Nabob belongs unequivocally to the sphere of superstition and magic and “the necromantic art of speaking with the dead” (Jamison 172). Here again is the dichotomy of reversed mirroring images by which the colonized is everything the colonizer is not: Basil, the Anglo-Irish, stands for logic while the Nabob, the Gaelic Catholic, represents the darker side of the mind, the occult, the unfathomable.

After his first meeting with the Nabob, and when still in debt, he feels restored and has breakfast consisting of “one colossal roll and butter, two hen eggs, three slices of Westphalia ham, and four cups of Arabian coffee” while he ponders whether he should “despatch [Aurelia] a succession of billet-doux, say forty-eight in twenty-four hours” (Mangan 200), which is certainly not the most adequate behaviour for a man highly in debt. When short of ready cash, and in his blind ambition to support his lifestyle, he borrows from money-lenders, to whom he is forced to pay back:

“Take a chair, Mr. Grabb,” said Basil. He went to a press, unlocked it, and took out the money-bag he had received the preceding day.

“Eight hundred and – a – ” he said, looking at Grabb, inquiringly.

“*Vierzig*, Forty,” said Grabb, in a soft voice, and with an expressive twinkle of one eye. (Mangan 201)

Basil is unable to manage his own property and inheritance. It is only when he receives aid from the foreign other in the form of an uncle “who spent a great part of his life in the east” (Mangan 236) that he finally manages to get back on his feet. Mangan is pointing at the seeming inability of the Irish ruling classes to govern their own affairs as had happened with the Irish parliament, an inability which had translating into the disappearance of Ireland’s governing institutions.

The focus of the present paper, however, is on how the other is presented, which in the writings of J.C. Mangan corresponds with that of colonialist literature, at least superficially. Since the Dublin poet is appropriating the image of the other, this has to bear some resemblance to the original in order to be recognized. Thus, the image of the Nabob/Maugraby is presented under a stereotypical light. At first, the Nabob is shown as what can be expected from a rich East-Indian:

No! Surely he had never before looked upon such a melancholy caricature on the human form. A rich dress, a profuse abundance of rings, chains, and jewellery, and a countenance in which aristocratic pride seemed struggling with the consciousness of personal meanness ... He was lame, crooked, and shrunken in his limbs. A few straggling hairs still adhered to his head, but his teeth had all abandoned their posts, and the jaws in consequences having collapsed, he presented at thirty-one the appearance of a man somewhere between fifty and sixty. His eyes were small and spiritless, and his complexion had that sallow, doubtful hue which habits of intemperance are so apt to superinduce in the countenance of a man of naturally feeble constitution. His stature could not have exceeded three feet and a half; – and as he walked into the room, leaning upon an ebony stick and stooping somewhat, he seemed a thing almost too dwarfish and insignificant to be entitled to the epithet of human. (Mangan 183-184)

Although it may seem like an odd combination, this image of the East-Indian actually manages to portray the two most common images associated with the East, signifying at the same time “far realms of possibility, fantasy, and wish-fulfilment ... and places of banishment, unlawful practice, oppression, and social disgrace” (Boehmer 26). The Nabob is perceived as both rich – and thus presumably powerful – and frail at the same time, personifying the idea of the foreign other whose richness must be taken away to be administered by the empire. Driven by self-interest, the East-Indian himself promotes this image of the “exotic”: “Egypt and India familiarize men with many wonders that you in these humdrum countries little wot of. Yes, I studied magic for ten years. My art profited me: I acquired rank, riches, respectability. But I paid for these advantages an awful price!” (Mangan 185). As the story progresses, the Nabob is revealed as evil, threatening to destroy Basil by acquiring all his inches, thus reducing him to a caricature of a human being. Finally, the East-Indian is revealed to be none other than Maugraby, “the magician of the eight and forty-gated Domdaniel” (Mangan 235), thus revealing the other to be a source of evil, “a site of insensible monstrosity: populated by disloyal servants” (Wright 24). So far, everything in the narrative reflects the mainstreams of colonial discourse, reproducing colonizers’ ideas of the “exotic”, the “other, foreign, a place of unrealisable desire to *become* other, to be ‘beside oneself’” (Punter 106). Maugraby thus personifies the Anglo-Irish (and British) worst fears, that of the enemy within. Like Stoker’s Dracula, he has trespassed the limits of his East-Indian home and penetrated the kernel of civilized society, becoming “a potential source of terror, which is all the more insidious for presenting itself as normal, or availing of the achievements of western society – freedom, market relations, mobility, education, technology” (Gibbons 83-84). The Nabob is fearsome not only for his supernatural powers, but also because he escapes the boundaries of rationality.

This surface image is, however, challenged by the very same text. Like colonialist discourse – and it could be argued like the Anglo-Irish themselves –, the text seems to be blaming the East-Indian for Basil’s misfortunes. However, a deeper reading will render a very different approach. In fact, the main character in the story has just himself to blame, for the hardships he has to endure stem from his wrongdoings and mismanagements, which began before the action in the narrative takes place. Thus, at the very beginning of the story, the reader is informed that Basil is next to bankrupt: “Cash I have next to none” (Mangan 179). Basil is a gambler, who – like the Anglo-Irish – lives on inherited property. Despite being conscious of this, Basil tries to displace his guilt towards others, first blaming his friend Heinrick, and then blaming the Nabob and accusing him of cheating. To these accusations, the Nabob replies: “Yet, what right, I repeat, have you to complain? You have not been choused out of a single rap. The twenty-two thousand ducats which were yours by the virtue of the flasks, have been fairly won

form you” (Mangan 233-234). This assertion is, as a matter of fact, correct, for in the reality of the narrative the Nabob does not cheat Basil. In fact, much the opposite – he tries, time and again, to make sure the terms of the compact between them are clearly stated and understood:

Now, mark and ponder: *Every time that you drain one of these black flasks you lose an inch of your stature, and I gain it.* This is not all you appearance otherwise becomes altered for the worse; and, in short, by the time you have drained the thirtieth flask you will have sunk down to my height, and present precisely such a spectacle to the eyes of all who see you as I do now, while I, on the other hand, shall be in possession of all your present advantages of feature and figure. You understand me definitely and clearly? (Emphasis in the original) (Mangan 191)

As if this soliloquy was not enough, a few lines later, the Nabob reasserts himself, “‘My flasks are my bonds,’ said the East-Indian, in the same quiet tone. ‘But you agree voluntarily to my proposal? You will have the ducats at the price I have stated?’” (Mangan 191). As can be seen, the East-Indian is not cheating Basil; rather, much the opposite. Basil’s problem is one of disbelief. His perception of the Nabob is, no doubt, a reflection of the perception of the other by the colonizer – an inferior being, childish, and as such void of respectability, his utterances a mere reflection of his child-like mind-set, and it “thus duplicates the infantilization of the colonized” (Wright 121). Basil does not believe the Nabob’s assertions any more than he would those of an imaginative child, “‘Really, my worthy Sir’ said Basil, still laughing, ‘your solemnity would impose on the devil himself. I do understand you – and I am willing to go any length to countenance your joke. I trust you will not find me ungrateful’” (Mangan 191)

Not only does the Nabob prove his warnings were true, but he also reflects the image of the Empire on Basil, “Doubtless you have a high opinion of the fidelity and extent of your own perceptive powers, your judgement, understanding, and so forth; and you laugh at every body not endowed with a sufficiency of reason to counterpoise and curb the vagaries of his imagination?” (Mangan 207). Malignant and cruel as Maugraby/the Nabob might seem at first, a careful reading unveils Basil’s paradox of accepting a compact and then protesting against terms he himself accepts knowingly. Likewise, much as the Anglo-Irish protested – and feared – against a Catholic upheaval, in the end, and through their many impositions on the Catholic Irish, they were paving the way for the many revolts and protests which would eventually ensue.

There is, however, a much clearer vindication of the figure of the other in the story. Towards the end, when the story reaches its climax, Basil and the Nabob have reached an impasse, for just as the Nabob reminds him: “‘Until you have lost the last, the *thirtieth* inch, your identity remains in *status quo*. Retain that inch, and you are still you and I am still I’” (Mangan 234). Thus, in a paradoxical misrepresentation of the colonizing enterprise – in which the colonized other was voided of richness which were transferred to the metropolis –, Basil is destitute – he can retain his inch and forever look like a dwarfish version of his old self, or have another flask and lose his soul to the command of the Nabob. Not surprisingly, the resolution of this conflict comes from the East, for as Slickwitz informs Basil, his uncle “has recently died in Aleppo, and has left you heir to all his immense property” (Mangan 236). Through this inheritance, Basil is able to regain his inches, and recover his lost fortune and property, thus also regaining his social status. The ending of the story sees Basil restored to social and economic grace: “As for Basil and Aurelia they have been now for some years married; and their union has been blessed with a large family of small children, who bid all the singular beauty and plural virtues of their estimable parents. ... Their dwelling, we should not omit mentioning, is a romantic chateau in the Konigsmark suburb of the town” (Mangan 238).

As can be seen, the influence of the East provides the resolution of a conflict between the West and the East, complicating the traditional schema usually ascribed to postcolonial

writings. Once the former has entered the Gothic world to find riches, there can be no unilateral solution, for that would end up in destitution. The only solution possible is a mutual alliance and understanding, a blending or combination of both East and West, closely resembling what in *Postcolonial Studies* Ashcroft terms “abrogation” or “the rejection by post-colonial writers of a normative concept of ‘correct’ or ‘standard’” language productions (3). Predating Ashcroft’s definition, the writings of J. C. Mangan deploy the concept and apply it to subvert the standards set in colonialist fiction by which “any conflict which emerged would always in the first place have to do with the colonizer, with his attempt to shape his world in his image” (Boehmer 63). Thus, in the same way characters in Mangan’s writings are entrapped in between two worlds and the narrative is unable to offer a synthesised, culturally homogeneous alternative, having to resort to cultural blending and appropriation to unravel the plot and provide a satisfactory dénouement, so the Anglo-Irish found themselves caught in between the impossibility of eliminating their Catholic counterparts or embracing their Irishness. J.C. Mangan’s answer anticipates the postcolonial concept of hybridity, seeing this combination European and Oriental – or Gaelic Catholic and Anglo-Irish Protestant – as the solution to the convoluted historical narrative in which both communities were endlessly entrapped. J.C. Mangan’s narratives prove the feebleness of colonialist discourses and how, in the end, not only do reversed mirror images not solve the colonial conundrum, but they also create monsters of the mind, which are, ultimately, more a product of colonizers’ anxieties, fears and delusions than faithful representations of the colonized other. In their appropriation and abrogation of colonial literature standards, J.C. Mangan’s short stories promote the union and synthesis of both Catholic and Protestant cultural elements to provide a resolution to the conflict – both literary and cultural – thus fostering a new feeling of national Irish identity; a hybridity which later Irish writers would develop and deploy to create a new Irish literature.

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