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Ireland, India and popular nationalism in the early nineteenth century

Seán Ryder

Stephen Howe makes the provocative claim in his book *Ireland and Empire* that there was, on the whole, 'no such thing' as an Irish nationalist anticolonialism (at least until the 'superficial sloganising' of post-1960s Irish republicanism). The purpose of this chapter is to argue quite the opposite: that in fact, Irish nationalists were making extensive and coherent anticolonial and anti-imperial arguments in the 1830s and 1840s, and indeed that cross-colonial comparisons between Ireland and India featured prominently in the arguments of both pro- and anti-imperial Irish writers in the early nineteenth century. Some of the recent writings on nineteenth-century Irish orientalism have told only a partial story of Irish nationalism's representation of India and other 'oriental' cultures, largely because such readings have confined their attention to antiquarian tracts and romantic literary texts. It is not difficult to see the kind of oriental-Irish connections posited in the works of writers such as Charles Vallancey, William Betham and Lady Morgan as conservative, myth-making and often bizarre. They are in many ways symptomatic of the determined search for deep racial and cultural origins by an Anglo-Irish class in need of self-definition. There is also, in Irish orientalist studies, an understandable tendency to foreground what Joseph Lennon calls Ireland's 'liminal' condition (Lennon 168), or what Joep Leerssen calls its 'ambiguous case' (Leerssen 173) – that is, the fact that nineteenth-century Ireland occupies a curious historical position as both victim of, and participant in, imperialist expansion. This description is valid, provided it is recognised that the two imperial roles do not somehow cancel each other out. Irish participation in empire does not lessen the credibility of an Irish anti-imperial critique. There is in fact an additional story to be told, in which cross-colonial connections between India and Ireland are imagined not in terms of racial origins and linguistic fantasy, but in terms of political solidarity based on shared experiences of colonial oppression. This theme has been examined in the context of late nineteenth-century figures such as James and Margaret Cousins and Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats (see for example Lennon, *passim* and Viswanathan, *passim*),

but hardly at all in the context of the period 1803–50, where it seems to have been assumed that the Irish–Indian relations were exclusively a matter of Irish literary and antiquarian representations (although C.A. Bayly's essay 'Ireland, India and the Empire 1780–1914', gives brief attention to the political writings of Edmund Burke, Wolfe Tone and Raja Rammohun Roy).

In fact India played a significant part in Irish political discourse in the early nineteenth century. In the pages of the nationalist press in Ireland in the 1840s, for instance, there is a substantial amount of material on India and Afghanistan, in a variety of forms, including news reports, editorials, poems and book reviews. In most cases, the effect of the text is to establish the common interest of Indian, Afghan and Irish people, and to encourage feelings of sympathy and political solidarity among those engaged in resistance to British hegemony or occupation. Sometimes, the solidarity was expressed in simplistic transhistorical analogies, as in this editorial by Charles Gavan Duffy from the nationalist *Belfast Vindicator*: 'The plunderers of India were as like the plunderers of Ireland as one horse-leech is like another; and Clive and Cromwell are brothers in crime [...] Our histories are almost counterparts of each other' (Duffy 467). The context for Duffy's editorial, however, was the recent news that thousands of British soldiers and camp followers had been killed by Afghan rebels while retreating from Kabul in January 1842, news which inflamed the English press. Aware of the complicated politics of the situation, Duffy acknowledges the fact that many of these soldiers had been Irish, including the respected Antrim-born diplomat William Hay McNaghten. Yet the fact that Irish soldiers and administrators were complicit in the 'plunder of India' should not, according to Duffy, prevent Irish people from mourning them. Their nationality, if not their political role, should entitle them to the sympathy of all other Irish people: 'The destruction of our countrymen in Cabul is justly felt by every man in the British empire, and by none more keenly than by Ulstermen [...]'. This is not mere doublethink: it is a recognition of Ireland's contradictory position in the empire. Duffy here admits the problem of multiple sympathies, but rather than be immobilised by the contradiction suggests a strategy whereby moral principle and reason should be made to transcend personal or communal grief. The impulse to cry vengeance in the wake of these military and civilian deaths (as found in the conservative press) should be outweighed by the more rational recognition that the causes of the massacre have not been properly recognised:

[W]e should pause, ere we echo that wild shriek of vengeance against men who were defending their liberties against lawless aggression; nor should we visit upon a nation the unjustifiable violence of a headstrong youth, maddened by the recollection of a father's wrongs. Enough of blood has been shed in our cause

of grasping ambition, without seeking to risk the lives of our countrymen by a continuance of outrage and injustice to a brave people, who only ask the privilege of being governed by their own laws. (Duffy 467)

For Duffy, the Irish soldiers have themselves been unnecessary victims of an unjust and aggressive imperial policy.

Not all Irish nationalists were as moderate. Duffy's friend Thomas Davis, writing in the *Nation* newspaper some months later, dispenses with fine discriminations and makes a strong plea for outright support for the Afghans, partly as a critique of the reporting style of the English press, and partly because he has just received news of the British army's retaliatory destruction of Kabul:

'Tis all fine to scribble newspaper romance about imaginary sufferings and ordinary feelings, of English officers and their wives; but where was there a word of sympathy for the gallantry and patriotism of the Affghan Chief, or the piety of the Affghan son? (Davis, 'Irish Verdict against England' 137)

Davis here employs a deconstructive strategy typical of anti-imperial critique, whereby he takes the terms valorised by imperial discourse – gallantry, patriotism and piety – and bestows them perversely on the colonised native. The purpose of the reversal is partly to heroicise the Afghan insurgents, and partly to expose the fundamental hypocrisy of British imperialism. The great Victorian virtue of piety can only be associated with imperialism in the form of deep irony: 'Think, too, of England's *exporting* Christianity along with her cotton to China! Fancy the Bible, dripping with blood, and with poison concealed between its covers, presented at the point of the English bayonet to China!' (Ibid.). More radical and uncompromising than Duffy, Davis detaches Irish interests entirely from English ones, drops the pretence of the British 'we' and proposes not mere sympathy but actual identification between Ireland and other imperial victims:

Ireland has suffered defeats in China and Cabul, for England has triumphed. Let the English aristocracy, who profit by these crimes, exult; but let Irishmen rather mourn, not only in sympathy with the suffering and the injured, but mourn their misfortunes as her own. (Ibid.)

Davis was well-informed on Indian and Afghan affairs, and had published a series of five lengthy articles on Afghanistan in the *Dublin Citizen* in 1842 (see Molony 53–4). In these articles, Davis outlines the political and cultural history that entitles Afghanistan to be seen as an 'enslaved nation' with an ancient, noble past like Ireland's. Such assumptions of political solidarity were not merely to be found in the political texts and editorials of the nationalist press. There were

also literary versions in which the orient functioned not as an exotic, imaginary or cultural origin point, but as a source of shared experience in the here-and-now. In a poem such as the following, published in the *Nation* in December 1842, the rhetoric of English radicalism (the hand and tongue of tyranny) is combined with the stock imagery of Irish romanticism (the bardic harp) to imply identification between Ireland and India:

Hark! Loud above the city's hum is heard,
Stirring the troubled air, a sound that seems
A syllable of thunder's terror-word –
Cloud-echo'd prelude of prophetic themes.
Again! again! – 'tis tyranny's iron tongue,
Boasting the triumphs of its ruthless hand,
That rent the chords of peace, the lyre unstrung,
And jarred the freedom of an Indian land. . . .
(*'Lines on the Fall of Affghanistan'* 168)

The Irish anti-imperial critique derived a great deal from Edmund Burke, who had attacked the maladministration of the East India Company in the eighteenth century by appealing to ideas of natural justice and common human sympathy. Like the Young Irelanders a generation later, Burke exposed the hypocrisy and doublethink of imperial rule:

Men of respectable condition, men equal to your substantial English yeoman, are daily tied up and scourged to answer the multiplied demands of various contending and contradictory titles, all issuing from one and the same source. Tyrannous exaction brings on servile concealment; and that again calls forth tyrannous coercion [. . .] The greatest part of Asia is under Mahomedan governments. To name a Mahomedan government is to name a government by law [. . .] I must do justice to the East. I assert that their morality is equal to ours. (Burke 385–7)

Burke's Indian arguments, as Luke Gibbons has shown, connect with his arguments on behalf of Irish Catholics. Treating others as less than equal is tyranny, and tyranny breeds Jacobinism. The two groups of imperial subjects – Irish and Indian – can thus be compared on the basis that they are subjected to arbitrary rather than lawful authority – ironically, according to Burke, it is the governments of Asia who wield just authority. A later speech of Burke's, on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, eloquently describes the natural human sentiment upon which he believes patriotism is based, and which forms the justifiable basis for resistance to the imposition of arbitrary authority. It is an argument that underpins Thomas Davis's plea a generation later for sympathy for the invaded and the occupied Afghan:

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Next to the love of parents for their children, the strongest instinct, both natural and moral, that exists in man, is the love of his country: an instinct, indeed, which extends even to the brute creation. All creatures love their offspring; next to that they love their homes: they have a fondness for the place where they have been bred, for the habitations they have dwelt in, for the stalls in which they have been fed, the pastures they have browsed in, and the wilds in which they have roamed. We all know that the natal soil has a sweetness in it beyond the harmony of verse. This instinct, I say, that binds all creatures to their country, never becomes inert in us, nor ever suffers us to want a memory of it. (Burke 405)

In fact Burke's arguments were often in the minds of the Young Irelanders in the 1840s. John Mitchel, who acted as editor of the *Nation* during 1846, in the aftermath of the First Sikh War, often invoked Burke in constructing a legalistic argument against imperialism:

Lahore is now to learn the truth of Burke's memorable description of the English in India – 'There is not a *single* treaty they have ever made which they have not broken: there is not a single prince or state that ever put any trust in the Company, who is not utterly ruined; and none are in any degree secure of flourishing, but in exact proportion to their settled distrust and irreconcilable enmity to this Nation'. (Mitchel, 'The Enemy in Asia' 473)

Mitchel is especially interesting among the Young Irelanders because he tried to identify a historical process or logic that might govern the progress of imperialism: an analysis more profound than one based merely on the condemnation of acts of corruption and hypocrisy. In the editorial just cited, Mitchel goes on to suggest that European imperialism will engender its own collapse, as rival empires eventually destroy each other in a kind of global cataclysm:

Possibly in that region [India], and in no other latitude and longitude, will be felt the first shock of the universal *ebroulement* which is destined to shake the pillars of the earth, and smash to atoms in the collision those few unwieldy empires that 'do bestride the narrow world like a Colossus', swallowing up the nationhood and individual character of innumerable kindreds, and tongues, and people, (which is national death,) and crushing down, with their accursed dead weight, the healthy vital energies of mankind. (Ibid.)

In fact Mitchel is inverting the optimistic discourse of spiritual empire into a secular, anti-imperial vision of apocalypse. But his millenarian language is firmly tied to the issues of political economy. In other texts, including his *Jail Journal* (1854), written after the Famine, he frequently identifies the ferocious new form of capitalism as the real engine for

imperial conquest. His ideas are not original, but were nevertheless unusual in an Irish context in which nationalist discussions of political economy were more often focused simply upon the market relations between Britain and Ireland. His arguments mix an economic critique of *laissez-faire* with the rhetorical style of Thomas Carlyle:

The policy of British traffic in the east has always been to make low-priced counterfeits of all native manufactures – at first, of good serviceable quality, until the genuine maker was thrust out of the market, then gradually ‘pouring in’ worse and worse Manchester rubbish, so as to effectually cheat the consumer, starve the artisan, and ruin the employers [. . .] Dacca and other places in Bengal, once vast and flourishing manufacturing cities, employing many tens of thousands of Hindoo artisans, and working up the Indian cotton into those fine textures with which they supplied Europe and Asia sixty years ago, are now, for the greater part, only jungle-matted ruins, where wild beasts of the desert dwell, and jackals make the night hideous – worse, if possible, than the Liberty of Dublin. (Mitchel, *Jail Journal* 104)

Mitchel was one of the first to explicitly link Ireland’s economic fate to the economics of the new empire. For Mitchel, it had been Ireland’s fate under colonial rule that it had suffered from economic plunder, degradation and enforced stagnation. It is now Ireland’s shame that it should be participating in the systematic plunder and degradation of the rest of the world.

Mitchel’s use of sarcasm is a reminder that irony and parody were common features of the nationalist critique of empire, partly to make the message entertaining, partly to undermine the authoritative language of the state, and partly perhaps in a spirit of colonial mimicry. Thomas Davis anonymously published the following mock letter allegedly addressed from the British commander in Afghanistan, General Nott, to the Irishmen among his troops:

IRISHMEN SOLDIERS!! – Rumours of mutiny in your ranks have reached me – I at once reject them. You are ready as ever to shed your blood for England [. . .] you march to crush an audacious people who question our supremacy – deluded men, who refuse the blessings of our sway. *You* are bound to the British standard by no common ties. You can appreciate the madness of the Affghan who against it lifts his rebel flag, the insurgent green! By your gratitude for nigh seven hundred years, since sworn united allies we entered Ireland, answer ye as I say – Forward for England!’ (Davis, ‘Exclusive Intelligence!’ 9)

The use of humour was common in nationalist verse: a point sometimes lost on contemporary critics. The following poem by Irishman John Sheehan, published in *Bentley’s Miscellany* in 1846, is an especially

interesting case in this regard. In a recent anthology of imperial verse, Sheehan's poem is interpreted as a jingoistic celebration of the slaughter of the Sikhs at the battle of Sobraon in 1846 (see Brooks and Faulkner 172). But given the comic theatricality of its Irish idiom and the political background of its author, it may in fact have been read in precisely the opposite way – that is, as an anti-war statement:

[. . .] Rid the Ranee of her Punts and her Punches, boys!
 Serve them a mouthful of lead for their lunches, boys!
 Down at the river we will not stay long, my boys!
 Smash into smith'reens their fine *tête-du-pong*, my boys,
 If the powther is scarce, and the guns they won't play on it,
 Try the cowl'd steel, and push on with the bayonet!
 Once we'e safe over, we'll then have a slap at all
 Comes in our way, their cash, camels, and capital.

CHORUS

Come to the Suttlej, where loud the guns roar, my boys!
 Come ere the fun and the fighting's all o'er, my boys!
 Come where there's honour and plunder, galore, my boys!
 O! who's for a shy at the siege of Lahore, my boys?
 (Sheehan 172)

The speaker, judging by his speech, is an Irish soldier. But compared to contemporary English jingoistic verse, the poem's language is excessive and comic. The voice is like the self-consciously stage-Irish voices that litter the pages of the popular nationalist press of the period, where the apparent ignorance or buffoonery of the speaker is often a mask for subversive messages: a feigned naivety. While it is conceivable that an English reader might read this as authentic Irish speech, an Irish reader is likely to have detected the whiff of parody. This is even more plausible when considering that the poet, John Sheehan, had been editor of the scurrilous and satirical anti-tithe newspaper, *The Comet*, in Dublin in the 1830s. *The Comet's* other contributors had included James Clarence Mangan, whose contribution to anti-imperial critique in the *Nation* included a parody of the nursery rhyme 'Sing a song of sixpence' written during the 1846 Sikh War, and ending with the exhortation to Irish nationalist writers to recognise the Indian cause and 'sing a song of Sikhs, pens!' (see Lloyd for an extended discussion of Mangan's oriental 'translations'). The possibility that Sheehan's poem might indeed have been part of an anticolonial critique is further supported by the fact that anti-war poems did exist even in England in the period. The following broadside ballad from the late 1840s is roughly contemporaneous with Sheehan's poem:

[. . .] 9,000 and 800 brave Englishmen were lost,
 And 30,000 of the Sikhs, we hear their lives it cost,
 And dearly they will have to pay which grieveth them full sore,

Unto our English government for the late India war.
A freedom box of massive gold we understand will be
Presented to the officers all for their bravery,
But Soldiers that have lost their limbs which they cannot restore,
They will not be rewarded for the late India war.
The poor man for his scars, now mark what I do say,
The reward will be a wooden leg, and perhaps 6d. a day,
It has been the satisfaction of many a one before,
When they their lives did venture, like to the late India war.
(‘The Late India War’, Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads)

It is important to recognise that pro-imperialists also made use of the Ireland–India analogies. The anticolonial critique of Mitchel, Davis, Duffy and others stands in counterpoint to an alternative discourse on empire circulating in the Irish press of the 1830s and 1840s, which identified Ireland’s interests not with the fellow subjects of imperial conquest, but with the empire’s metropolitan centre. Isaac Butt, for example, the young editor of the Protestant and unionist *Dublin University Magazine* (and ironically the founder of the Home Rule movement later in the century), made a passionate plea for the civilising benefits of empire in 1834:

where can a parallel be found in the annals of the world, to match the progress of their [British merchants’] greatness? [. . .] the brightest page of this brilliant history is not that which records the achievement of battles, and kings, and principalities, laid low, but that which tells of the spreading the great truths of our religion, and the restoration of these vast dominions, from anarchy, bloodshed, and civil commotion, to order, peace, and prosperity.
(Butt 647)

Butt’s sentiments were not uncommon among Irish political commentators. Similarly, the calls for cross-colonial sympathy made by the *Nation* poets were directly opposed by texts such as the following poem by Richard Chenevix Trench, the future archbishop of Dublin. Trench reacted to the 1842 massacre of 15,000 British soldiers and camp followers on the road from Kabul by assuming an identity of interest between Ireland and England, and by making the very call for vengeance that Charles Gavan Duffy had earlier been trying to discourage:

[. . .] O England, bleeding at thy heart
For thy lost sons, a solemn part
Doth Heaven to thee assign.
High wisdom hast thou need to ask,
For vengeance is a fearful task,
And yet that task is thine . . .
(Trench 166)

And in fact Irish participation in imperial warfare was seen by some as a positive means of cementing the cultural unity of the United Kingdom: the imperial army provided an occasion for Scottish, English and Irish troops to combine as a single British identity in combat against a common foe. This sentiment can be found in the genre of militaristic ballads that circulated in England and Ireland in the 1840s and 1850s, which were much preoccupied by the Indian wars, and by the experience of the individual soldier:

[. . .] In the East – in the East, now the troops do arrive,
 With Sir Colin to lead them, they soon will contrive
 To drive out before them the treacherous band
 Of merciless Sepoys desolating the land.
 For vengeance they cry, as they rush to the field,
 There Britain's brave soldiers that never did yield,
 The Thistle, the Rose, and the Shamrock unite,
 Crying – 'the Campbells are coming', let's on to the fight.
 ('To the East', Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads)

There was even a sentimental strand of thought that was able to cast Irish Catholics, previously the victims of imperialism, as imperialist heroes – not through military action but through religious martyrdom at the hands of native Indian barbarism:

[. . .] The Reverend James Fitzgerald,
 And the Reverend John O'Hare,
 With Father Thomas Morgan,
 From the county of Kildare;
 Poor Father Smith from Dublin,
 In that very trying hour,
 They suffered death most fearful,
 In India, at Cawnpore.

The sufferings of our clergy,
 There's nothing could surpass,
 To think how they were murdered
 While celebrating mass.
 They being the Lord's anointed,
 The cursed mutineers,
 Like infuriated demons,
 They ran them through with spears [. . .]
 ('The Massacre of Four Catholic Clergymen',
 Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads)

Those Indians that Burke had carefully and pointedly referred to as 'fellow-citizens' and moral equals could also be represented as 'infuriated demons'.

There was yet a further kind of unionist, pro-imperial text that drew

upon Irish-Indian analogies, but in an entirely negative sense, equating the two cultures as fundamentally barbaric, pagan, irrational, violent and horrifying. In the winter of 1847, for example, in what proved to be the worst year of the Famine, the editor of the London *Times* could see only barbarism and violence in the starvation, food riots, landlord assassinations and rural agitation taking place in Ireland. His response is to propose violent remedies, countering Irish rural insurgency with state-sponsored terror. To justify such extreme remedies for the crimes of Irish Ribbonism, he compares Irish insurgency to Indian Thuggee, one of the most terrifying images of oriental 'otherness' available to mid-century Britain:

The Irish landlords [. . .] have not merited the sentence of indiscriminate slaughter awarded against them by irresponsible judges, who pronounce their doom in midnight conclave, and in the absence of the accused. [. . .] Imperial law in Ireland is at present scarcely ancillary to that of Ribbonism. [. . .] Behind every stone dyke skulks an associate, and in every bog is to be found a weapon which was obtained by one murder, and is to be used for another. [. . .] We have dallied and coquetted long enough with the presiding goddess of Thuggee. [. . .] there is no reason why there should not be landlord Ribbonism as well as tenant Ribbonism. (*The Times* 4)

This negative form of cross-cultural identification was found in the Irish press, too. Samuel O'Sullivan, a successor of Butt as editor of the *Dublin University Magazine*, was happy to employ the Ribbonism-Thuggee analogy in 1840, even inventing a new political term: 'Irish Thuggee':

What is ribandism [. . .] but a species of political Thuggee, in which the conspirators are of one religion, and bind themselves, by an oath of blood, to the extermination of all from whom opposition to their evil designs might be apprehended? [. . .] The system of Irish Thuggee is *political* as well as *religious*. It is by acting upon the temporal power, that it is enabled to accomplish its ecclesiastical objects. (O'Sullivan 59-60; see also Gibbons 143)

O'Sullivan's accusation that Irish Catholic insurgency embodies an evil confusion of religion and politics is in fact repeated in his arguments for Protestant proselytism in the 1830s and 1840s, and thus part of a general attack on the recalcitrant and benighted nature of Catholicism. It represents an interesting and ironic inversion of Davis's attack on the religious hypocrisy of empire cited earlier.

Finally, although the nationalist writings of Duffy, Davis and Mitchel tended to be utilitarian and pragmatic in tone, early nineteenth-century Irish nationalism's political critique was not entirely devoid of romantic orientalism. In utilising that discourse, however, it largely avoided the excessive linguistic and antiquarian claims made by the

Anglo-Irish scholars and pseudo-scholars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Instead, Irish orientalism was pressed into the service of political allegory. For example, it has long been recognised that in his hugely popular oriental poem *Lalla Rookh* (1817), Thomas Moore was making politically charged parallels between the suffering and victimisation of Irish and Asian cultures (see Lennon 156–60). In fact, Moore himself made this clear in a later preface to the poem:

[T]he thought occurred to me of founding a story on the fierce struggle so long maintained between the Ghebers, or ancient Fire-worshippers of Persia, and the haughty Moslem masters. From that moment, a new and deep interest in my whole task took possession of me. The cause of tolerance was again my inspiring theme; and the spirit that had spoken in the melodies of Ireland soon found itself at home in the East. (Moore, *Poetical Works* 42)

The 'Fire-Worshippers' section of *Lalla Rookh* tells of a young heroic rebel named Hafed, almost certainly modelled on Robert Emmet, who undertook his 1803 rebellion in the wake of the defeat of the United Irishmen, the consolidation of the power of the Protestant ascendancy, and the failure to grant Catholic emancipation after the Act of Union. Hafed and his native Iran are similarly tyrannised by an alien culture and its proselytising religion, and like the United Irishmen, take up arms only to be defeated. Moore's poem emphasises the necessity and honour of rebellion in such circumstances:

Never was Iran doom'd to bend
Beneath a yoke of deadlier weight.
Her throne had fall'n – her pride was crush'd –
Her sons were willing slaves, nor blush'd,
In their own land, – no more their own, –
To crouch beneath a stranger's throne.
Her towers, where Mithra once had burn'd,
To Moslem shrines – oh shame! – were turn'd,
Where slaves, converted by the sword,
Their mean, apostate worship pour'd,
And curs'd the faith their sires ador'd.

[. . .]

Rebellion! foul, dishonouring word,
Whose wrongful blight so oft has stain'd
The holiest cause that tongue or sword
Of mortal ever lost or gain'd.
How many a spirit, born to bless,
Hath sunk beneath that withering name,
Whom but a day's, an hour's success
Had wafted to eternal fame!

(*Lalla Rookh* ll. 52–62)

So too, Moore's invocation of Zoroastrian towers could not have failed to suggest an allegorical meaning to Irish readers. The Irish round tower had by the early nineteenth century become a symbol for Irish nationality itself, and had a further resonance as a result of the antiquarian controversies over their supposed Indian origin. The following encounter with a round tower takes place in Kashmir:

[A]t a distance stood the ruins of a strange and awful-looking tower, which seemed old enough to have been the temple of some religion no longer known, and which spoke the vice of desolation in the midst of all that bloom and loveliness[. . .] this tower might perhaps be a relic of some for those dark superstitions, which had prevailed in that country before the light of Islam dawned upon it. (Moore, *Poetical Works* 415)

It is significant that while working on *Lalla Rookh*, Moore spent some weeks at his sister's house in Tipperary, and while there wrote of the very Ribbonmen (Shanvests) that so alarmed Samuel O'Sullivan and the British authorities. What amazed Moore was not their violence or threatening character, but the fact that they move about in the open – not even bothering to 'conceal themselves behind stone dykes' – such was the local contempt for state law and extent of support among the peasantry. He jokes to his correspondent that their strange and frightening appearance offers the only prospect of the 'sublime' he is likely to encounter in an otherwise dull and boggy landscape. Moore's reference to the terrors of the sublime is ironic, unlike the manipulative invocation of the terrors of Thuggee by O'Sullivan and others. In fact Moore's refusal to demonise the peasant insurgents foreshadows his later sympathetic use of such figures in his 1824 prose work *Captain Rock* (see Moore, *Letters* 1: 438).

The politicised orientalism of Moore has one further and fascinating ramification. The international reach of Moore's nationalist verse was such that his imagery and rhetorical style were absorbed even by early nineteenth-century forms of Indian nationalism, just as they had been by nationalist movements in France, Germany, Poland and Russia. One of the most famous poems of the 'Young Bengal' cultural nationalist leader Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, who was active in Calcutta in the early 1830s, transposes Moore's Irish melodies to an Indian setting, in a way that prefigures Indian nationalism's use for Irish nationalist ideas later in the century. Derozio's 1830 poem, 'The Harp of India', has, surprisingly, all the key ingredients of a Moore's 'Irish Melody' – the broken harp, the ruined palace and the expiring minstrel – and like Moore's own work, puts them into the service of political argument:

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
Unstrung for ever, must thou there remain;
Thy music once was sweet – who hears it now?

Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?
 Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
 Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
 Like ruined monument on desert plain:
 O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
 Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,
 And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
 Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:
 Those hands are cold – but if thy notes divine
 May be by mortal wakened once again,
 Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!
 (Derozio 'The Harp of India', quoted in Madge 85)

Clearly, then, the figuration of India in Irish culture in the early nineteenth century was not exclusively a matter of racial theories, orientalist representations or romantic analogies. Instead, many Irish writers and intellectuals saw the connections between India and Ireland chiefly in terms of each country's political relation to British imperialism – a comparison that would continue to be made and extended throughout the century. Even at this early stage, India proved useful to Irish nationalism's critique of empire.

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