



Romanticism on the Net

Romantic Cemetery: Kolkata’s South Park Street Cemetery and Its Romantic Connections

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Abstract

The South Park Street Cemetery in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) is a popular tourist destination that houses the tombs of many key European figures from the period of East India Company rule. Some of these figures influenced British Romanticism in ways that were overt; others in ways that were less direct. In postcolonial India, however, although British Romanticism is still an important part of school and university curricula, the cemetery and the cultural history it contains are often forgotten. Of course, even the very existence of such colonial cemeteries has been under threat until recently, and the South Park Street Cemetery has lost its entire northern section. In a postcolonial India in which cemeteries have historically been under threat as vestiges of colonial rule that need to be erased and are neglected within classrooms where Romanticism is studied, it is important to highlight how they function as “contact zones” (Pratt). The cemetery serves as a physical index—and a reminder for mainstream research on Romanticism—of both the influence that Britain had on colonial India and India’s influence on British Romantic literature and culture. This article aims to (re)view Romanticism from this bipartite perspective and to explore how it is intertwined with the lesser-known stories that emerge from researching a colonial cemetery.

Biographical Note

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He has been a board member of the Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) and a founder-member of DiGRA India and DHARTI, the Digital Humanities group in India. Souvik was named a DiGRA Distinguished Scholar in 2019. He is also an affiliated senior research fellow at the Centre of Excellence, Game Studies at Tampere University.

His other interests are in Digital Humanities and his databases on the [Dutch Cemetery at Chinsurah](#), the [Scottish Cemetery in Kolkata](#) and the nineteenth-century Bengali industrialist,

[Muty Lall Seal](#) are all available open access. This article is the result of his research on colonial cemeteries in Bengal.

1. In studies of Romanticism's Indian connections, colonial cemeteries are rarely, if ever, featured. Although neglected by colonial administrators and the successive governments of independent India, cemeteries are key to unearthing a wealth of historical data, some of it related not just to colonialism but also to British Romanticism and its global impact. Romanticism's larger Indian connections are, of course, much better known today as they have been explored by scholars including Tim Fulford, Michael Franklin (*"Orientalist Jones"* and *Romantic Representations*), Daniel O'Quinn, Amit Ray, David Worrall, and Daniel E. White. White has concentrated on Calcutta in particular. Here, I take a still tighter focus—on Calcutta's South Park Street Cemetery. Adapting Mary Louise Pratt's concept, I frame the cemetery as a "contact zone," revealing the imperial impact of Romantic-era Britain on colonial India and vice versa. Pratt's concept draws on the notion of transculturation elaborated by the Latin American anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, who describes a simultaneous and tripartite process of acculturation, deculturation, and neoculturation. For Ortiz, transculturation is a bipartite process involving both the coloniser and the colonised. Pratt calls the locales of this process contact zone—"social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe" (5). Viewing the colonial cemetery as a contact zone enables a fresh look at the cemetery's role in colonial and postcolonial India and offers a

way to understand how key and marginal figures of Romanticism connected to the larger European colonial expansion around the world.

The South Park Street Cemetery in Kolkata: An Ambivalent Heritage

2. In viewing the South Park Street Cemetery (SPSC) as a contact zone, both its recent and colonial histories need to be considered. It can be argued that in colonial times, cemeteries in India existed as ambivalent spaces inspiring a mix of disregard and awe. Elizabeth Buettner writes that H. E. Busteed and H. E. A. Cotton, historians of old Calcutta writing in the early 1900s, noted, “cemeteries containing ‘little cared for’ monuments to ‘forgotten sahibs,’ where ‘tombs of men of real distinction’ were ‘allowed to decay till they dropped’” (13); they concluded that “the memorials of the dead of a previous generation have but little chance of being looked after by those succeeding” (12).¹ On the other hand, eminent British Raj writers such as Rudyard Kipling were dismissive of the historical importance of the cemetery: “Men were rich in those days and could afford to put a hundred cubic feet of masonry into the grave of even so humble a person as ‘Jno. Clements, Captain of the Country Service, 1820’” (88). As it transpired, after Indian independence, “the British government withdrew all funding for the maintenance of civilian cemeteries outside Britain”; both the North and South Park Street Cemeteries were initially slated for leveling and replacement by a “Garden of Remembrance” (Ghosh).
3. Notwithstanding Kipling’s disdain and post-independence academic neglect, the SPSC was never entirely overlooked. There were efforts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

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centuries, by British officials, journalists, and academics, to create comprehensive lists of the graves in the cemeteries and to contribute to their regular upkeep.² After 1947, organisations such as the British Association of Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA) and Families in British India Society (FIBIS) continued these efforts.

4. Post-independence Indians had a different set of attitudes. Ashish Chadha, in a compelling early study, commented, “Today, the [South] Park Street cemetery sporadically features in the imagination of the people of Calcutta as a space where the masters of a bygone era are buried. In a postcolonial nation, the colonial masters do not have any place; they are the dead who must be removed from the sight of the living” (345). Whereas colonial statuary is either removed or retained and resignified, the colonial cemetery is a colonial heritage that is “allowed to wither away, for it does not fit either of these categories and must be relegated to an ambivalent space, where in postcolonial India it can neither be appropriated nor destroyed” (349). This statement, while penetrating about the ambivalence of the cemetery space, has not been wholly borne out. While the SPSC had been largely left derelict for years, three other cemeteries situated on what was formerly called Burial Ground Road were razed and built over in 1973 by the real estate wing of the Paul Foundation.³ The sprawling North Park Street Cemetery, which contained the tombs of William Dalrymple’s “White Mughal,” James Achilles Kirkpatrick, and Richmond Thackeray, father of William Makepeace Thackeray, was not as lucky as its neighbour across the road. Save for one tomb that remains, the whole area of the North Park Street Cemetery and Johann Kiernander’s Mission Cemetery are now the compound of the Assembly of God Church and Mercy Hospital. The French cemetery, just a stone’s throw

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away, has given way to the Apeejay School. Why these cemeteries had to go is still a controversial question; the capitalist agenda of the real estate industry swallowed several, yet there has been a resurgence of interest in the last decade in those that remain—not least in the SPSC. Universities and private organisations such as the BACSA have been working to digitise records including the names of the interred. Popular travel blogs and heritage research groups on social media as well as the local media frequently discuss the cemetery. The eminent film director Satyajit Ray wrote a detective story based in the cemetery, *Gorosthane Shabdhan*, or *The Secret of the Cemetery*, which was adapted into a film by his son, Sandip Ray. Cemetery walks are now popular in Kolkata; and, after a long ban, photography is allowed inside the SPSC for a fee. Today, the cemetery is protected as a Grade I heritage site by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. These events seem to bear out Buettner’s claim that “[c]emeteries serve as a barometer signalling how both ex-colonisers and the ex-colonised have assessed colonial spaces, artifacts, and empire more generally after decolonization” (5). Apparently, the SPSC exists as a contact zone from which multiple narratives emerge.

5. The colonial cemetery as a contact zone is increasingly being explored by academic researchers as well as by individuals and institutions in Kolkata. Remarking on the historical archaeological trend of studying colonial cemeteries in North America, Chadha says, “The tombs of the deceased act as a metonymy, then transfix the memory of the dead in the ontology of materiality” (357). Following Chadha, this article views the cemetery as a material storehouse of memories, narratives, and meanings. As Arjun Appadurai argues in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspectives*, “[W]e have to follow

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the things themselves for the meanings of things are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories” (5). The meanings of the tombs in the SPSC have shifted, and as Appadurai says, they are multiple rather than unique. It is in this light that the tomb of “Jno. Clements, Captain of the Country Service” has gained renewed importance, *pace* Kipling.

Death in the Colonies: Contemporary Romantic Connections to the Park Street Cemeteries

6. The construal of the cemetery as an ambivalent contact zone and archive of material memories is not new. Even closer to the time of the Romantics, the early colonial cemeteries received substantial attention. P. Thankappan Nair in his *Calcutta Tercentenary Bibliography*, lists at least three publications that date back to the Romantic era. *The Bengal Obituary*, published in 1850 by the undertakers and monumental masons, Holmes and Co., is by far the best known; the more contemporary publications are M. DeRozario’s *Complete Monumental Register*, published in 1815, and John Hawkesworth’s *Asiaticus: In Two Parts*, from 1803. While the latter contains full epitaphs, the *Bengal Obituary* also includes brief obituaries of some of those buried in the SPSC.

7. Contemporary visitors such as the author and scientist Maria Graham, who wrote of her Indian experiences in her *Journal of a Residence in India*, commented dramatically as she passed the graveyard on October 30, 1810:

There are many acres covered so thick with columns, urns, and obelisks, that there scarcely seems to be room for another; it is like a city of the dead; it extends on

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both sides of the road, and you see nothing beyond it; and the greater number of those buried here are under twenty-and-five years of age! It is a painful reflection but one that forces itself on the mind, to consider the number of young men cut off in the first two or three years residence in this climate. (141)

8. Graham might as well have included women in her reflection, given the large number of young women buried in SPSC; she herself was under twenty-five when she visited Calcutta.⁴ Sophia Goldborne, the fictional heroine of Phoebe Gibbs's *Hartly House, Calcutta*, was equally awestruck by the cemetery: "Obelisks, pagodas, etc. are erected at great expense; and the whole spot is surrounded by as well-turned a walk as those you traverse in Kensington gardens, ornamented with a double row of aromatic trees. . . . Not old Windsor Churchyard with all its cypress and yews is in the least degree comparable" (105). Gibbs's description of the SPSC as a necropolis is poignant and grand; none of Kipling's disdain is visible here. As Gibbs writes at the beginning of her novel, and Sophia echoes, "the eastern world is, as you pronounce it, the grave of thousands" (1).
9. For historian David Arnold, "Romanticism was central to this evolving perception of India's deathscapes" (344). To British visitors steeped in Romantic literature, the Indian cemeteries confirmed a melancholy about early death that they brought with them to the subcontinent. "Rather than avoid any mention of cemeteries, writers seemed actually to regard it as part of their responsibility to report on them and thereby reflect on what British rule and residence in so foreign a place entailed" (342). He describes Emma Roberts as "something of a connoisseur of graveyards (devoting an entire chapter of her book to

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‘cemeteries and funeral obsequies’), despite her desire to encourage tourists to quit the spas of Europe and visit the sights of India” (342). To Roberts’s deep and melancholic account of death, the colonial cemeteries—especially the newly conceptualised garden-cemeteries such as those in Park Street—contributed importantly by creating a grand site of memorialisation where global, local, and transcultural memories coexist.

10. As the cemeteries developed, they became in effect, contact zones between colonists’ imported culture of death, grief, and mourning and the landscape, culture, and architecture that they found, and adapted, or thought appropriate to the “Oriental” colony. In the SPSC, as the imperial ambitions of Company officials soared, classical structures such as the one Kipling comments on mingled with pyramids such as that marking the grave of the orientalist scholar Sir William Jones (fig. 5). A forest of obelisks, pyramids, pillars, classical rotundas, and urns amazed, and continues to amaze, visitors. In this respect, the Park Street graveyards actually anticipated the establishment of new garden cemeteries on the outskirts of European cities, such as Highgate Cemetery outside London. These were planned, in Thomas W. Laqueur’s words, like “English park[s] . . . not . . . churchyard[s]”: “all manner of alien structures could be built over people who would never have made it past a watchful clergy” (266). Robert Travers remarks, “the founding of the new burial ground beyond the town of Calcutta pre-dated by some decades the founding of new extra mural cemeteries in France and Britain,” and he attributes the ease with which this cultural shift was effected to the fact that “Europeans in other parts of India had [already] emulated Muslim practice in locating burial grounds outside urban centres,” a phenomenon indicating that cross-cultural contact in the cemetery-space, even in its early days,

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constituted “a significant re-configuration of the community of the British dead”—in Calcutta and then at home (112).

Romantic References in the South Park Street Cemetery



Fig. 1. The tomb of Rose Whitworth Aylmer, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.

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11. The Romantic cemetery in colonial India is of interest as a contact zone not only in its architectural transculturations but also, as Graham and Gibbs both indicate, in the reconfigurations of memory that the space makes possible. As such, on revisiting the cemetery after over two centuries, scholars of Romanticism may explore the complex narratives that the tombs can reveal in present-day contexts of contact and transculturation.
12. The visitor to the cemetery may not be aware of the many Romantic connections, both direct and indirect, that are to be discovered even during a casual stroll through the cemetery. One of the most visited tombs in the cemetery, Rose Aylmer's (fig.1), did not originally bear the verses that Walter Savage Landor famously composed for her. The epitaph reads,

‘AH, WHAT AVAILS THE SCEPTERED RACE,
AH, WHAT THE FORM DIVINE!
WHAT EVERY VIRTUE, EVERY GRACE!
ROSE AYLNER, ALL WERE THINE.

ROSE AYLNER, WHEN THESE WAKEFUL EYES
MAY WEEP, BUT NEVER SEE,
A NIGHT OF MEMORIES AND OF SIGHS,
I CONSECRATE TO THEE.’

LANDOR

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13. Landor's poem, connecting the idea of empire with his romantic memory of Aylmer, was possibly added during the restoration of the grave (fig. 2). Aylmer seems to have lent Landor a book that inspired him to write *Gebir*, published in 1798, which in turn influenced Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Landor had stayed with the Aylmer family in Pembrokeshire in 1797. As Karen Stapley recounts, the seventeen-year-old Rose, the only daughter of Sir Henry Aylmer and his wife Catherine Whitworth, enjoyed walking in the Welsh hills with the "young aspiring poet." The following year, "Rose was sent to India to join her aunt Lady Russell," the wife of Sir Henry Russell, Chief Justice of the Calcutta Supreme Court, after whom Russell Street in Kolkata is named. The decision was likely motivated by the family's wish to remove her from "this unsuitable suitor. It was in Calcutta that she tragically died two years later" (Stapley).

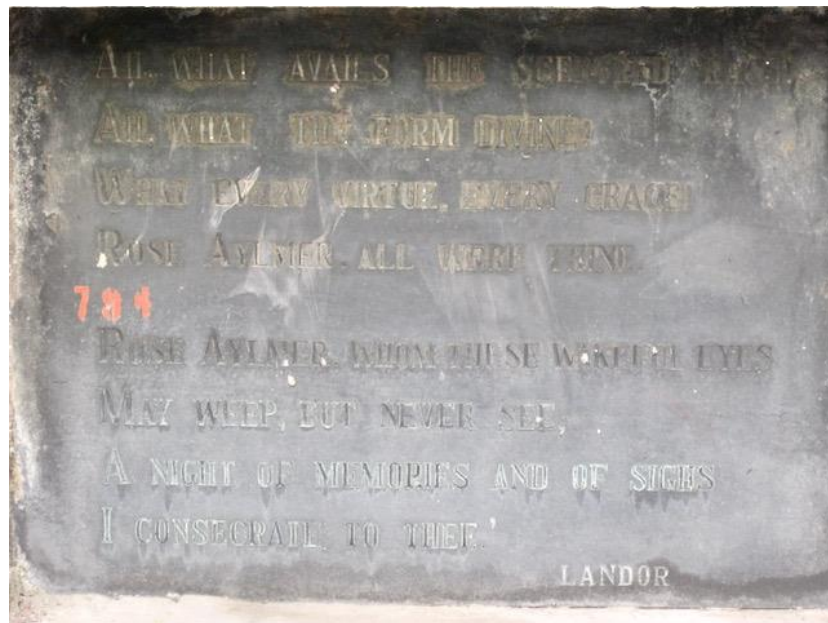


Fig. 2. Landor's poem on Rose Whitworth Aylmer, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.

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14. According to local legend, Rose Aylmer “expired from eating too many pineapples,” which were believed at the time, along with other fresh fruits, to be a means of contracting cholera. Indeed, Stapley reports, “many towns banned the sale of such fruits during outbreaks as a way of trying to stop the illness from spreading.” Pineapples were also rumoured, in the eighteenth century, to cause miscarriages, a myth that today has been disproved. What Aylmer’s association with pineapples is and where the legend began are both unknown, but even recently a journalist approached this author to ask about “Lady Pineapple,” an unfortunate moniker for the woman. Perhaps Aylmer’s tomb keeps the legend alive—it is a pedestal tomb featuring a tall conical structure with the top cut off into a frustum (probably indicating a life cut short). Quite uniquely among the extant graves in the cemetery, the cone is covered with ridges that give the impression of a wrapping of folded cloth or a seashell (shells are common symbols in Christian funerary architecture). A later addition to the grave, verses from Landor’s poem can be seen below the original epitaph. The tomb is a palimpsest of interpersonal contact, literary history, and local memory, a contact zone materialised.

15. While Aylmer’s tomb provides perhaps as direct a connection to British Romantic poetry as one could think of, many others, with less direct connections, also reveal the transculturated character of Romanticism. Of these, just four figures, all quite disparate, will be discussed in detail.

16. It is impossible to talk about Romanticism in India without referring to Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, the Indian contemporary of P. B. Shelley and Lord Byron (by whom he was

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influenced) and Robert Southey (whom he later criticised). Derozio was often called “The Indian Keats” (Chander). The son of Indo-Portuguese Francis Derozio, an office worker in Kolkata, and the English woman Sophia Johnson Derozio, Derozio is associated with the famed Young Bengal movement; his poem, “To India – My Native Land,” which has been anthologised extensively, is regularly taught in Indian schools and universities.

17. Rosinka Chaudhuri identifies Derozio as one of the major influences in the creation of the public sphere in India in the first phase of British imperialism. She concludes that Derozio “lived a life that was at the crux of one of the most creative and revolutionary eras of Indian modernity, contributing to the incipient Indian nation a new sense of the literary, the revolutionary, the philosophical and the cultural’ (885). While he determined the future shape of Indian literature, she argues, he also “reinforce[d] the benefits of mutual interaction”—Europeans with Indians—in his poems, by, for example, quoting “Burns’s famous lines, ‘When man to man the world o’er, / Shall brothers be and a’ that’” (862). Similarly, Chander reads Derozio “as an interlocutor, one who defines himself through his poetic allegiances and his subtle opposition to other possible affiliations.” He argues that Derozio’s “use of familiar tropes and established forms, proclaims his identity as a Romantic poet, like those he admired, while his revisions of these tropes and forms distinguish him from other producers in a field that places supreme value on originality” (Chander). Zak Sitter, while thinking through the teaching of Romanticism in India, observes that Derozio, “who could adopt the orientalist clichés of a Byron or a Moore in a poem like ‘Song of the Hindustanee Minstrel’ . . . also produced poetry whose relation to both ‘East’ and ‘West’ is more complex, such as the sonnet ‘The Harp of India’”

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(paragraph 9). For these reasons, Sitter urges the teaching of comparative Romanticisms instead of the application of the main premises of British Romanticism in global contexts. As Daniel E. White also observes, the “‘citational’ qualities of Derozio’s poetry can be read as part of a significant and largely unacknowledged contribution to Romantic culture” (102).

18. The same spirit of transculturation that pervades Derozio’s poetry pervades his grave, which is perhaps one of the most eclectic in the cemetery (although that honour usually belongs to “Hindoo” Stuart’s tomb, which will be discussed shortly). The grave stands out among the obelisks and mausoleums because of the bust of Derozio recently added to the original ledger tombstone, which figures the “FOUNDER OF THE . . . INDIAN RENAISSANCE” and “FIRST OF THE PATRIOT POETS” with a book beside his breast (fig. 3). Its physical proximity to the tomb of William Mackay, captain of the wrecked East India Company ship the *Juno*, also highlights the transcultural nature of Romantic poetics.

19. Writing as “Juvenis” in his Byronic *Don Juanics*, Derozio makes Don Juan visit Kolkata: “Juan cried ‘Coach!’ but an uncouth machine / On four men’s shoulders borne, was brought—a litter / That Momus in his mirth, called ‘Palankeen’, / Though the Bengallee thinks ‘Palkee’ much fitter” (Derozio 37–38). One is unsure whether Derozio knew the real-life connection of Byron’s *Don Juan* with Kolkata. The shipwreck in the Second Canto of Byron’s poem was partially based on the terrible misfortune that befell Captain Mackay’s *Juno*. As Michael Titlestad points out, “[Byron’s] portrait of the two fathers [in

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Don Juan] not only transforms into poetry the sequence of details from [Captain William] Mackay's narrative, it also reiterates its moral logic" (50).



Fig. 3. The grave of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata. The bust is a later addition.

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20. Captain Mackay's tall monument (fig. 4), situated on the "Derozio Way" of the cemetery, is an obelisk with a sepulchral base featuring an anchor and coil motif on two faces. The original epitaph read,

This Marble would express,
the Affections of Relations and esteem of Friends,
for him whose characteristics
were unaffected worth and manly Fortitude,
in how eminent a degree,
He possessed the latter quality,
his interesting Narrative
of the Ship-wreck of the Juno,
will testify to future times. (Derozario 73–74)

The epitaph is now lost, and although a small plaque with Mackay's dates (giving the wrong birth year) has been placed on the tomb, there is no way that the casual visitor would be able to discern its Byronic connection. As Titlestad also observes, "[I]t is impossible to establish whether Derozio knew that he was to be buried close to the original author of a centrepiece in Byron's poem, which he would emulate" (50), but both Derozio's poem and Mackay's memorial remain two neglected but important paratexts of *Don Juan* with Kolkata connections.



Fig. 4. The tomb of Captain William Mackay, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.



Fig. 5. The tomb of Sir William Jones, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.

21. From Mackay's obelisk, William Jones's towering pyramid tomb is easy to spot (fig. 5). The tallest in the cemetery, Jones's tomb features the spades and urn symbol on every side, a tablet carrying his original epitaph, and a later plaque added by the Asiatic Society that he founded. As the compiler of the *Complete Monumental Register* notes, "An Epitaph, in many Instances, may be denominated a Biographical Sketch of the deceased's Life; since

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it often records their many Virtues and amiable Qualities, the last Tributes of Love and Respect, we can pay to a departed Friend. A Record of this kind may also frequently be found of Importance as a Reference in Cases where more immediate Information as to the Date and Place of the Demise is not obtainable” (Derozario, Introduction). William Jones, however, needs no such introduction here. In his biography, *“Orientalist Jones”*: *Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746–1794*, Michael Franklin explains that “Jones had helped introduce a brief period of sympathetic and syncretic admiration for India, between the acquisitiveness of the Clive generation and the utter contempt for Indian culture later displayed by Mill and Macaulay” (340). Jones’s significant influence on Romanticism, which has been explored in what is, by now, a large body of research, is well indicated by Franklin, who writes that the poet-linguist provided “fascinating materials and formative models for the orientalizing of Landor, Coleridge, Southey, Byron, Shelley, and Moore, their Romantic subjectivity underpinned by footnoted Orientalist objectivity” (78). James Watt’s hearing of an echo of the “Hymn to Ganga” in Coleridge’s description of Alph the sacred river in “Kubla Khan” is just one example among many.

22. Jones remains an extremely important interstitial cultural figure who connects the English Romantics with Indian philosophy and mythology in important ways that define their writing. Nevertheless, he is still not considered worthy of inclusion in most canonical syllabi of Romantic literature—even in Indian academic contexts, where his contributions need to be recognised urgently. In 2011, Franklin observed that the earlier neglect of Jones was beginning to be remedied—for example, by Jerome McGann’s selecting of “‘A Hymn to Narayena’ as the opening text of his *New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse*” (233).

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One only needs to look at his tomb, however, to gauge the contemporary stature of Jones, which has lasted many generations. The career of “Oriental Jones” represents Romanticism’s cross-cultural interactions and reflects other stories that the cemetery has to tell.



Fig. 6. The tomb of “Hindoo Stuart,” South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.

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23. Any comment on the orientalist⁵ connections of Romanticism cannot be complete without mentioning “MAJOR GENERAL CHARES STUART / (KNOWN AS HINDOO STUART) / 1758-1 – 4-1828 / QUARTER MASTER OF THE 1ST BENGAL / EUROPEAN REGIMENT & LATER COMMANDER / THE 10TH ANDIS REGIMENT,” as his epitaph declares. When Travers commented that the Park Street cemeteries were able to get away with much architectural liberty, he probably had Stuart’s tomb in mind. Shaped like a Hindu temple, Stuart’s tomb (fig. 6) is one of the most unusual Christian tombs ever and a very obvious instance of tomb architecture as a contact zone. Some of the carvings on the tomb are those of Hindu religious symbols, although the lotus that used to adorn the top of the front arch is no longer present (figs. 7–8). Strangely, the *Bengal Obituary* does not include Stuart’s in its list of tombs although, of course, in later research on the East India Company, Stuart figures importantly as one of the key orientalists of the period. He was a well-known opponent of missionary activity, and his collection of Hindu statuary still enriches the collection of the British Museum. As William Dalrymple comments, the “strange Irishman who, in the 1780s, travelled to India while still in his teens” had soon after his arrival

adopted the practice—which he continued to his death—of walking every morning from his house to bathe in and worship the Ganges, according to Hindu custom. “Incredible as it may sound,” wrote one horrified officer, “there is at this moment a British general in the Company’s service, who observes all the customs of the Hindoos, makes offerings at their temples, carries about their idols with him, and is accompanied by fakirs who dress his food. He is not treated as a madman, but

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would not perhaps be misplaced if he had his idols, fakirs, bedas, and shasters, in some corner of Bedlam, removed from its more rational and unfortunate inmates.”

Stuart appears to have worshipped as well as admired the statues he collected. Certainly, he is known to have commissioned and built an entire Hindu temple at Saugor, and he wrote an anonymous pamphlet called *The Vindications of the Hindoos* in which he tried to discourage European missionaries from attempting conversion, arguing that “on the enlarged principles of moral reasoning, Hinduism little needs the meliorating hand of Christianity to render its votaries a sufficiently correct and moral people for all the useful purposes of a civilised society.”

24. Stuart remains an intriguing figure—a different kind of orientalist from William Jones and James Prinsep (who learned Persian and Islamic culture before they were exposed to Hindu culture) in that he actually practised the Hindu religion and performed its rituals. He embodies the Romantic ideal of connecting with the East; his *Vindication of the Hindoos*, published in London in 1808, was read in Britain, and his collection of antiquities, which he made available for public viewing at his home museum in Kolkata, was sent home after his death. It was auctioned by Christie’s in 1829 and 1830, and owned by a private collector until 1872, when it was purchased for Britain by the British Museum.



Fig. 7. The tomb of “Hindoo Stuart,” detail, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.



Fig. 8. The tomb of “Hindoo Stuart,” front arch, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.

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25. The fact that Stuart agreed to Anglican last rites (rather than cremation) and burial in the South Park Street Cemetery, despite professing to be a Hindu, is also, arguably, another instance of transculturation. Stuart regarded Krishna as not very different from Christ, and his choices are reputedly the outcome of such beliefs. The Hindu-temple-like tomb with its tantric symbols in the East India Company Christian cemetery points toward a very obvious slippage of the binary of coloniser/colonised; ultimately, the separation of the two different domains is offset by a third space that makes the relation between the two ambivalent, characterised by what the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha refers to as “hybridity.” Not just Stuart’s uniquely designed tomb but the entire cemetery itself is a locale of the hybrid: in Bhabha’s words, “a willingness to descend into that alien territory . . . may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity” (38). It is such a visit into a so-called alien space, for both the formerly colonised and the erstwhile colonisers, that prompts rethinking of those who are buried in the cemetery and their cultural legacies.

26. Some of these figures are quite well known to people interested in the history of the East India Company or even of Kolkata, but their significance to Romantic culture has been largely neglected in the teaching of and research on canonical Romanticism. Having worked in both British and Indian universities, I have found the absence of figures such as Jones and Derozio from Romanticism courses remarkable. As Sitter argued in a 2000 article,

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[I]f students of Romantic-era Britain are to understand the literature, culture, and politics of the period, they must become to some extent students of the India of that era as well; they will need to grasp at least the outlines of the relationship that would so crucially mold the literatures and histories of both nations—and the development of literature in English around the world—in the centuries to follow. (paragraph 1)

While current research continues to make important transcultural connections, and pedagogy continues to catch up, the lag is nonetheless significant. In India, for example, the common syllabus (see, for example, the English Honours' syllabi under the Choice-based Common Syllabus) that has been introduced recently for all undergraduate courses in English literature does not include among its compulsory reading any Romantic text that has an overt relation to India (30% of the syllabus can, of course, be tweaked by the universities themselves).⁶ Research on these texts would contribute to the rising trend of decolonising the syllabus that is now current in the UK and the US. While editorial decisions of anthologists such as McGann as well as ongoing research on India by other scholars have offered diverse perspectives on Romanticism, what is urgently required is the examination of Romantic locales and lives outside Europe that (re)form our conceptions of Romanticism by revealing its transcultural conditions.



Fig. 9. The tomb of George Bogle, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.

27. One of the graves that is regularly ignored by the cemetery visitor is that of George Bogle (fig. 9). In 1774, Bogle became the first Englishman to reach Tibet and meet the Panchen Lama at Tashilumpo, having braved the cold and had numerous adventures (fig. 10).

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Shortly thereafter, Warren Hastings, the East India Company's governor-general, sent another embassy to congratulate the Panchen Lama on his reincarnation in 1782. Samuel Turner, who undertook the journey, wrote a full account that was published in 1800. In an 1816 letter to John Rickman, Robert Southey discussed having read Turner's account and compared the Tibetan Lama to the Egyptian god Apis, who was reincarnated as a black bull. Whether Southey came across Bogle in his reading on Tibet awaits discovery, but there is little doubt that the latter opened the gates to the Romantics' engagement with Tibet. Bogle himself managed to secure trading rights and, in return, he kept his promise of establishing a Buddhist temple near the River Ganges (which still exists as Bhot Bagan in Howrah near Kolkata). Bogle was depicted in his Tibetan robes in a rather striking painting by Tilly Kettle called [*The Teshu Lama \(d 1780\) Giving Audience*](#) (c. 1775).



Fig. 10. Epitaph of George Bogle, "Late Ambassador to Tibet," South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.

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28. A random survey of the cemetery would draw attention to figures such as William Warden.

Warden's epitaph reads,

Here are deposited the remains of
CAPTAIN WILLIAM WARDEN
Who died in Command of H.M.S. Rattlesnake
In the Bay of Bengal on the 5.th June 1807
Aged 28 Years
—————
To commemorate the private worth and
Professional merits of this promising Officer
This Monument
Is erected by his Commander in Chief
As a tribute of regard to his Memory. (fig. 11)

29. Anyone who has read C. E. Forester's *Hornblower* novels would know of the ship *Indefatigable* (or the "Indy"), commanded by Captain Sir Edward Pellew and on which Horatio Hornblower, Forester's fictional naval hero, served. Hornblower's adventures take place during the Napoleonic Wars and are a testimony to his creator's interest in the Romantic period. The real Admiral Pellew, later the 1st Viscount of Exmouth, was Warden's captain and later commander-in-chief. In *Hornblower's Historical Shipmates: The Young Gentlemen of Pellew's Indefatigable*, Heather Noel-Smith and Lorna M. Campbell describe the achievements of Warden thus:

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Warden left the *Culloden* in September 1806 when he was promoted to acting commander of the 16-gun sloop *Rattlesnake*, which had previously been briefly commanded by Pellew's sixteen-year-old son Fleetwood. Early in January the following year, the *Rattlesnake* was involved in a controversial engagement when Warden encountered the 16-gun French privateer *Les Deux Sœurs* off the island of Cheduba in the Bay of Bengal. A tense standoff ensued until the privateer ran aground and became disabled. The crew abandoned the ship leaving the captain and second lieutenant aboard, at which point the *Rattlesnake*'s boat crew boarded and destroyed the privateer. The French seamen were recovered from Cheduba and, together with their captain, De Jean Hilaire, transported to Kedgerree as prisoners of war. (164)

This historical incident recalls maritime stories of the Romantic period, such as the novels of Captain Marryat, that fictionalised the spectacular naval engagements of the likes of Horatio Nelson and Thomas Cochrane. It also reads as if it comes straight out of a Hornblower novel. Published between 1937 and 1967, and televised from 1998 to 2003, the Hornblower stories have contributed to a popular conception of the Romantic Age as defined by British naval supremacy during the threat of Napoleonic invasion. They were themselves an influence on Patrick O'Brien's Master and Commander maritime novels (1969-2000). In a sense, then, Romanticism's depiction in popular culture is also connected to the stories that the cemetery can tell.



Fig. 11. The tomb of William Warden, South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata.

Concluding Remarks: Romantic Recovery Research, Digital Databases, and Revisiting South Park Street Cemetery

30. In his conversations with this author, historian of Romantic-era literature John Goodridge often mentioned his “recovery research” into the long-neglected writings of Robert Bloomfield, Thomas Chatterton, Stephen Duck, and the Nottingham poet Henry Kirke White, some of whom feature in the [Labouring-Class Poets Online](#) database. In the introduction to this database, Goodridge notes that his objective is “to discover and recover what we regard as an important and extensive tradition that has been hidden or marginalised, and we have purposely cast our nets wide in order to get a full picture of what exists and what may prove relevant.” This article has ventured to cast the net beyond British labouring-class culture as far as the colonial cemetery, and by so doing to illustrate how an imperial contact zone unsettles and complicates traditional accounts of Romanticism.

31. The present moment is a promising one for recovery research into colonial sites and contexts. The digital archive, with its metadata-based search algorithms, is able to establish connections far quicker than was previously possible; it identifies links within and between texts and archives that are often not immediately obvious. The archives of the Dutch cemetery in Chinsurah and the Scottish Cemetery in Kolkata, which are both available as open-access digital resources, facilitate such research. The lack of a digital archive for the SPSC (as for Kolkata’s now destroyed other colonial cemeteries) does not make recovery research any less important—only more time-consuming. Its development, however, could

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serve to reveal obscure points of contact and enable a more rigorous study of the contact zone.

32. Before a digital database exists, however, students and researchers can (re)visit the cemetery in person and look with the enquiring lens that I have modelled here. The cemetery is a unique site combining the material cultures of Britain with that of India (Stuart's tomb is a literal example of this) that has the potential to enable a richer understanding of how Romanticism developed in the metropole with roots in the colonies. While the preservation of the cemetery as a material and literal contact zone is an urgent concern, the digitisation of records would extend the exploration of potential connections to researchers around the globe. The linkages that emerge, both obvious and not-so-obvious, need to be viewed with their Indian contexts in mind so that students of Romanticism are able to bring to their reading of Byron, the supposedly "British" or "European" poet, the colonial and postcolonial pre-texts, contexts and post-texts of *Don Juan* in Kolkata.

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Notes

¹ In a similar vein, Barbara Groseclose has reported the neglect of British statues in colonial times, noting a garbage heap surrounding Lord Cornwallis’s statue in Bombay in the 1900s (24).

² British officials include Elliot Walter Madge and George O’Connell; journalists include Henri Hosten, S.J, and others writing for *Bengal, Past and Present*; academics include Wilson (1896).

³ As the Paul Foundation claims, the land was taken “on lease for social causes—schools, art gallery, and so on. If the buildings generate revenue on their own, social work can go on unimpeded” (qtd. in Mitra).

⁴ Indeed Graham, who features as one of Pratt's models for her representation of colonial Chile as a contact zone (157), may as well have represented the SPSC as such a space.

⁵ *Orientalism*, here, is used in the sense of scholarship that was concerned with studying Eastern, for example Indian, Chinese, and Japanese, texts and cultures. This is to distinguish it from the later, albeit related, usage by Edward Said wherein Orientalism (capitalized) is a construction by Europeans of the cultures east of Europe.

⁶ One exception perhaps is Derozio's "To India, My Native Land," which is included under Indian writing in English but it can be argued that it is not taught with its link to British Romanticism in mind.