

JOHN LAWSON

Engraving was John Lawson's (1787–1825) trade, his work as a missionary in Calcutta was his vocation, but poetry was his 'delightful recreation', the pursuit of which sometimes occupied so much of his time that on his deathbed he 'confessed it as one of the errors for which he hoped to be forgiven' (*Bengal Obituary*, p. 218). By the time of his death at the age of thirty-eight, he had produced at least six volumes of poetry, as well as a book of hymns: his *Elegy to the Memory of Henry Martyn* was singled out by one reviewer as 'far surpassing ... the common run of Indian [ie, British Indian] effusions', and its author described as having attained 'a certain standing in public estimation as a poet' (Review, *Quarterly Oriental Magazine*, p. 90).

Lawson spent his childhood in Wiltshire, taking up an apprenticeship with a London engraver in 1803. There he joined a Baptist congregation, and eventually found employment with the Baptist Missionary Society. At this time, the East India Company's reluctance to entertain missionaries on their territory was an obstacle to the work of the society in India. Lawson's occupation enabled them to represent him as an artist, and so obtain permission for him to travel to India. He embarked with his newly wed wife Frances in 1810, travelling via north America, where their progress was delayed by the increasing hostility between Britain and the USA; they arrived in Calcutta in 1812. At the Baptist mission in Serampore, he studied Bengali and worked on the development of type for the printing of works in Bengali and Chinese: the metal type he eventually produced enabled copies of the Bible in Bengal, hitherto printed in five volumes, to be printed in one, and so circulated more easily and cheaply. In 1816 he moved to Calcutta and became co-pastor with Eustace Carey of the city's first Baptist church, and three years later headed the congregation of a second church, in Circular Road, where he was also involved in preaching to soldiers of the British forces, and in the education of Hindu children. He suffered from a disease of the liver for six weeks before it led to his death, on 22 October 1825.

Lawson's writing is represented here primarily by an extract from his long poem *Orient Harping*, a work that was produced, according to its author, in response to the 'momentous vicissitudes ... occupying the minds of all, even in

these distant parts of the earth, who could sympathise with the sorrows of mankind' (p. viii); that is, the Napoleonic wars, and in particular Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. The first two sections of Part I, 'The Prelude' and 'The Vision', contain a brief meditation on those events, following which the remainder of Part I deals with the practices and beliefs of Hinduism. Part II of the poem, according to its author, is intended to serve as a contrast to the practices of 'heathens' by 'a brief view of the nature and effects of the Christian religion' (p. ix). 'Jägānnātha', below, is the second section on Hinduism. The author's account of Hindu beliefs and practices is drawn, as the footnotes indicate, from the influential and widely-read work of his friend and missionary colleague at Serampore, William Ward. In substance, Lawson adds little to Ward's work, but his own is remarkable for the distinctive and blackly comic tone of his writing. The account of Jagannath's clumsy body with its head (or 'noddle') 'kneaded gracefully' with its torso is followed, incongruously, by the gruesome account of an old man's death. The preface explains this by reference to the necessity to avoid an unduly respectful treatment of the Hindu deities, or 'idols': instead, a 'mock dignity of diction' is used, in order to describe their 'puerile greatness' without giving them 'too much importance' (p. viii). The same tone is apparent in 'The Hindoo's Complaint', where the dying man's regret is that he had not met his death years before: 'better a babe low to lie / The grim tyger's bowels my grave'. By contrast, Lawson's final works, the sonnets depicting the landscape and environment of Calcutta published in *Miscellaneous Poems*, are written in the picturesque mode: while the 'half-burnt corpse' of 'A River Scene' may be visible through the fire on the riverside, its description does not disrupt the poem's measured lines.

Further Reading

- The Bengal Obituary* (London & Calcutta: Thacker, 1851), pp. 215–18.
- C, 'Review – An Elegy to the Memory of the Rev. Henry Martyn', *Quarterly Oriental Magazine*, 1 (March 1824), pp. 87–96.
- J. Lawson, *Woman in India, a Poem. Part I. Female Influence* (London, 1821).
- , *An Elegy to the Memory of the late Rev. Henry Martyn* (London: Francis Westley, 1823).
- J. C. Marshman, *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward* (London: Longman, 1859).
- Review, 'Orient Harping', *Oriental Magazine and Calcutta Review* (March, 1823), vol. 1, pp. 342–49.
- W. Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos*, 2nd (abridged) edn, vol. 2 (Serampore: Mission Press, 1815).
- E. S. Wenger, *The Story of the Lall Bazar Baptist Church Calcutta* (Calcutta: Edinburgh Press, 1908).

From *The Maniac, with Other Poems*, by John Lawson
(London: J. Haddon, 1810).

The Hindoo's Complaint¹

Supposed to be spoken by one left to die on the banks of the River Ganges.

I

Despairing, I languish and die!
My heart heaves a sorrowful moan;
The soft flowing Ganges rolls by,
But hears not the long, the last groan.
Oh! where shall I seek for repose?
Where find the sweet haven of rest?
Eternity soon will disclose,
The misery begun in this breast.

5

II

Bewildered and vain were my days,
On folly was founded my hope;
Now death the stern mandate obeys,
And strikes down the worm-eaten prop.
Ye hardened spectators of woe,
Who know not a sigh or a tear;
But a tear and a sigh you will know,
When lowly like me you lie here.

10

15

III

Oh! listen – the tale is for you,
My orisons daily were paid,
While yet hung the bright drops of dew,
To the sun in his glory arrayed.
Then through the deep jungle I trod,
(There sleep the huge serpents by day)
There I culled from their darkest abode
The sweet-offering flowers of the spray.

20

IV

With eager devotion, my hands 25
 Consigned the weak babe to the floods;
 I burst through humanity's bands
 To satisfy blood-thirsty gods.
 My weakness did all things for them,
 Whose power can do nothing for me; 30
 Oh! who will the hurricane stem?
 Oh! whither shall wretchedness flee?

V

My father at work in the glade,
 The trees of the Sunderbunds² felled;
 There an infant I carelessly strayed, 35
 And the parrot's gay plumage beheld.
 I saw the wild tyger asleep,
 In the shade where the rank hemlock grows;
 Had he seen me, one swift glancing leap
 Would have blasted the bud of my woes. 40

VI

But I lived – to despair and to die;
 I lived – but in madness to rave:
 Oh! better a babe low to lie,
 The grim tyger's bowels my grave.
 Then my sorrows had surely been less; 45
 But now (my heart aches at the thought)
 I go to an unknown abyss!
 I die – but my spirit will not!

From *Orient Harping: A Desultory Poem, in Two Parts*, by John
 Lawson (London: printed for Samuel Lawson, 1821).³

*From Part I*Jāgānnātha⁴

Great Jāgānnāth', square-headed deity,
 Lord of the world! I sing thy comely form.
 I yield in verse august a tribute due
 To God so worthy. Where thy temple rears

Its hallowed brickwork, sitting in thy nook, 5
 Cooped up obscure in venerable shade,
 I saw thee once, thy kindred at thy side.
 Imbedded 'twixt thy shoulders, lo! thy noddle
 Securely sits. No intervening neck
 Divides the union sweet of head and body; 10
 So dwell together, kneaded gracefully,
 Thy ample chest and portly paunch, forsooth
 A neighbourly conjunction, vast and round,
 Commodious the interior, as beseems
 The place where lie interred the immortal bones 15
 Of Krishnā. Sacred relics! urned and kept
 From mortal view; and he inquisitive
 Who squints upon them, dies for act so rash.
 Matchless divinity! the plebeian
 Bows to the dust, and trembles at thy stare 20
 Portentous, for thy terror-striking eyes
 Stretched round and wide look every way at once;
 Or here, or there, thou seest the timid sinner
 Whereat he wonders. Of thy origin
 It suits not poesy to tell, nor why 25
 Thou hast no limbs, O powerful Jāgānnāth!
 The simple bard knows better than to scoff
 Sarcastic like an infidel. Think not
 Me capable of waggish word, or chant
 Irreverential of thy pilfering freaks 30
 And after punishment with loss of arms;
 'Tis idle scandal! 'Twere no fault of thine
 If the dull statuary of heaven ne'er thought
 Of legs and arms when he first modelled thee;
 Or if he thought, left thee as thou art, 35
 A mutilated thing. Let no vain mind
 Rail at divine infirmities, and strive
 To measure aught of heaven by things on earth.
 To need such dangling down auxiliaries
 Is proof direct of our own mortal weakness, 40
 He who can do without them must be great!^a

- a “The image of this god has no legs, and only stumps of arms; the head and eyes are very large. At the festivals the Brahmuns adorn him with silver or golden hands. “Krishnu, in some period of Hindoo history, was accidentally killed by Ungudu, a hunter; who left the body to rot under the tree where it fell. Some pious person, however, collected the bones of Krishnu and placed them in a box, where they remained till Indru-dhoomnu, a king, who was performing religious austerities to obtain some favour of Vishnu, was directed by the latter to form the image of Jugunnathu, and put into its belly these bones of Krishnu, by which means he should obtain the fruit of his religious austerities. Indru-dhoomnu inquired who should make this image; and was commanded to pray to Vishnu-kurmu, the architect of the gods. He did so, and obtained his request; but

Distant at sea the weary mariner
 Beholds with joy the distant pagoda,
 The well-known mark. He steers his course afresh;
 The sails are all expanded, white and full, 45
 The burdened ship moves stately to her port
 By thee directed Jāgānnāth; not so
 Thy myriad worn out pilgrims moving slow
 Hail thy cloud-covered palace, signal to them
 Of death. 'Tis true, they fondly hope when first 50
 Their straining eyes descry the edifice
 Far in the dim horizon proudly lift
 Its tapering apex to the heavens, that bourn
 Where all would hope to rest; they smile and gird
 Anew their loins, and walk with firmer pace, 55
 Beguiled at sight so holy. Wretched men!
 Why have ye left your homes? Ye ne'er shall see
 Again the shed that gave you birth; your wives
 That cheered your youth, that sedulously culled
 The various root nutritive, and the fruit 60
 Of wholesome flavour, mingling to your taste
 The culinary store; your babes in vain
 Call on your names, and chide your long delay.
 The vulture with raw neck and fulsome croak
 Claps her smeared wing; she smells as soaring high 65
 The riotous feast, and hastens to the spoil.
 The old man faint, just turns aside to rest,
 Bethinking he will rise again refreshed;
 He rises not. Nature can bear no more,
 Exhausted. Ere the setting sun, his bones 70
 Are left to whiten where the pilgrim died.
 They crowd still onwards, heedless of the plaints
 From the wayside. No pity from his fellow

Vishnu-kurmu at the same time declared, that if any one disturbed him while preparing the image, he would leave it in an unfinished state. He then began, and in one night built a temple; but the impatient king, after waiting fifteen days, went to the spot; on which Vishnu-kurmu desisted from his work, and left the god without hands or feet. The king was very much disconcerted; but on praying to Brumha, he promised to make the image famous in its present shape." – See *Rev. W. Ward's View, &c.* vol. ii. p. 163.

"Every third year they make a new image, when a Brahmun removes the original bones of Krishnu from the belly of the old image to that of the new one. On this occasion he covers his eyes lest he should be struck dead for looking at such sacred relics. After this we may be sure the common people do not wish to see Krishnu's bones. The Raja of Burdwan expended, it is said, twelve lacks of rupees in a journey to Jagunnatha, and in bribing the Brahmuns to permit him to see those bones. For the sight of the bones he paid two lacks of rupees; but he died in six months afterwards for his temerity!" – See *Rev. W. Ward's View, &c.* vol. ii. p. 327.

(Who soon will drop and groan as he now groans)
 The dying man receives. Forsaken quite 75
 He gasping lies, far from the holy stream.
 Oh! hadst thou been at home, what pious care
 Would then have soothed thy sorrows. Sick and pale
 Thou wouldst have lain on Ganga's brink.^a Happy
 In fast approaching death, to have beheld 80
 Her waters calmly gliding, with faint hope
 And wildered expectation as she moves
 In silence to the sea, so to have slid
 Safe to eternity and blissful heaven.
 Thy friends (thou callest them so) assiduous 85
 Had then thy last sad moments kindly hastened,
 Plastering the sovereign clay o'er thy dim sight,
 And fondly teasing thee to death. Thou then
 Hadst called on merciful Rāmā, till thy tongue
 No more had struggled with its load of mud, 90
 And strangling leaves of Toolsee (sacred plant!)
 Thy throat revolting, and thy limbs convulsed.
 Thrice blessed then, the Bramhun nobly feed,
 A passport granted o'er the Hindoo Styx,^b

- a "Morning and evening the Hindoos visit and look at this river to remove the sins of the night or of the day; when sick they smear their bodies with the sediment, and remain near the river for a month perhaps. Some of course recover, and others die : a Hindoo says, that those who have a steady faith, and an unwavering mind, recover; the rest perish. The Hindoos are extremely anxious to die in sight of the Ganges, that their sins may be washed away in their last moments. A person in his last agonies is frequently dragged from his bed and friends, and carried, in the coldest or in the hottest weather, from whatever distance, to the river side; where he lies, if a poor man, without a covering, day and night till he expires. With the pains of death upon him, he is placed up to the middle in water, and drenched with it. Leaves of the toolusee plant are also put into his mouth; and his relations call upon him to repeat, and repeat for him, the names of Rama, Huree, &c. In some cases the family priest repeats some incantations, and makes an offering to Voiturunee, the river over which the soul, they say is ferried, after leaving the body. The relations of the dying man spread the sediment of the river on his forehead or breast, and afterwards with the finger write on this sediment the name of some deity. If a person should die in his house, and not by the river side, it is considered as a great misfortune, as he thereby loses the help of the goddess in his dying moments." – See *Rev. W. Ward's View, &c.* vol. ii. p. 213.
- b The dead, in going to Yumu's judgment hall, cross Voiturunee, the Indian Styx; the waters of which, like those of Phlegethon, the fourth river of hell, which the dead were obliged to cross, are said to be boiling hot." – See *Rev. W. Ward's View, &c. Introductory Remarks*, vol. ii. p. 93.
 "Having surrounded the hall of judgment with a river of boiling water, the creator ordered, that after death each one should be obliged to swim across. This, however, subjected the good to punishment, to prevent which, it was ordered that the offering of a black cow to a Bramhun should cool the river, and render the person's passage easy. I do

Whose boiling waters else had scalded thee, And sent thee back to roam the barren strand Twixt this world and the next. But now thou diest, As soon will die the unclean beast of prey Crouching impatient near thee. Without rite Or incantation, or funereal pile, Thy dust will lie with his who drinks thy blood Now rushing on thee!	95
Stretching to the sea, Whose green waves ever restless lash the shore, And breaking into tear-drop particles Weep o'er the scattered wreck of human things; The beach, a wide extended cemetery, Bares to the sun its treasures. ^a Billows roll Promiscuously o'er limbs, and curious shells, Convolved or pearly rayed, and fucus brown, And weed articulate. Perishing skulls Of goodly conformation, (where once dwelt The awful apparatus of great thought, The wild work of imagination, strong Presentiments, vain wish, and idle dreams Of chequered import,) wallow in the flood, Embossed with crowding barnacles; these repose Where nabob brains ne'er rested half so sweet. How murmurs the white surf, a swelling death-hymn Perpetual, o'er the remnants of poor man Cast out, unburnt, unburied. The gorging crow, Perched on the carrion, wearied of the feast, Sheaths his black head and clotted beak beneath His downy wing, and calmly slumbers there. The squab-dog ⁶ too, embathes his matted hide, And freakish lays aside his grisly leer; Contented for awhile, he sports in spray, Rolls in the glistening sand, and sleeps till when The well-known scream calls to the vile repast. See, yonder female, fair	100 105 110 115 120 125 130

not find that the Hindoo's have any ferryman like Charon, or boat to cross this river; though they talk of crossing it by laying hold of the tail of the black cow which they offered in order to obtain a safe passage." – See *Rev. W. Ward's View, &c.* vol. ii. p. 62.

- a "Juggernaut, 14th June. I have seen Juggernaut. The scene at Buddruck is but the vestibule to Juggernaut. No record of ancient or modern history can give, I think, an adequate idea of this valley of death. It may truly be compared with 'the valley of Hinnom.' I have also visited the sand plains by the sea, in some places whitened with the bones of the pilgrims, and another place a little way out of the town, called by the English the Golgotha, where the dead bodies are usually cast forth, and where dogs and vultures are ever seen." – See *Buchanan's Researches*.⁵

And young as yet, with children twain beside,
 Untimely hastening from this evil world!
 She might have lived, and cherished those dear babes,
 And taught their hands in various industry;
 But superstition drew her far from home 135
 To bow before a God that helps her not
 In her distress. Vain is the dying wail.
 She calls upon thy name, O Jägānnāth!
 With long, long repetition, but unheard.
 Her lips with shivering fever dried, her teeth 140
 Locked up for ever. She looks as she would speak
 To those dear parts of her own flesh and blood;
 But oh! she cannot, for the agony
 Of death is on her; that cold stroke which chills
 The last faint kindlings of conflicting thoughts 145
 Stirring in glimpses o'er the mind – they fade,
 And perish with the power to act; that stroke
 Which falls upon the frame, and nails the tongue
 In silence to the dried up roof; while yet
 The spirit has not flown, but prostrate lies 150
 In slumbering heaviness 'neath the crush of pain
 And pang of dissolution. – The time is come –
 The crisis passed – no gleam of thought remains,
 No consciousness of misery; the power
 To feel, and think, and suffer, hath gone away 155
 From that which lived but yesterday to bless
 Her crying babes, and bore the name of mother;
 Mother on earth no more! Her eyes still look
 As though she saw her children, but her soul
 Is fled. It passed away in silence, loth 160
 To trouble with one throe the exhausted frame.
 O innocent prattlers! ye have lost your all,
 Now that your mother wakes no more. Friendless,
 Ye both may roam at large the barren earth,
 And as ye can, subsist. Speechless awhile 165
 They sit, as if in anxious hope they thought
 She still would wake, and smile, and lead them forth
 From place so dreary, for the vultures here
 Expectant stretched the neck, with cruel gaze
 Waiting to assail the prey. 170

“O, sweet Gopaul!”
 Shuddering, exclaim'd the little one, “I fear
 My mother will not wake. I held this hand,
 Hoping that, when I kissed it, she would wake;
 But now 'tis cold, and see her eyes grow dim, 175
 But are not closed;” then as she spake, her heart
 Grew big with bursting sorrow. Gopaul said,

“Sweet sister, I had thought that this was death,
 It came so gently, so that when I turned
 To drive the yelling dog, she ceased to breathe. 180
 I feared to tell thee when I looked again,
 And saw that she was gone.” “Where gone?” said then
 The little child. “Is she not here, I pray,
 But very cold? Sweet mother, rise! O come!
 Anunda cries for thee!” Said Gopaul then, 185
 “Ah! she is dead! her soul is gone away
 To some far better place, I hope, than this.”
 They then hung on each other’s neck, and wept;
 So sitting down beside the corpse to watch
 The form so dear to them now stiff in death, 190
 They spake not to each other, for their woe
 Was great. – At length the elder one arose.
 “Anunda,” said he, “I will beg for thee;
 Nay, do not cry, the pilgrim will be kind,
 And spare the scanty rice. Come, let us now 195
 Do what we may to hide these poor remains.”
 Then toiled they all that day. They hove along
 Bleach’d broken bones, and looking once for all
 Upon their mother’s cheeks, they sobbed aloud,
 And raised the pile. Then hand in hand they went, 200
 Mingling amidst the crowd, and thus they sang:
 Where the unnumbered dead, in ruin lying,
 White on the thundering beach, all wan and breathless,
 ’Neath yonder bones, by these weak hands collected,
 There lies our mother! 205
 Pilgrim, pity us!

No home have we save where her head is resting^a
 The night is come, the skies are dank and windy,
 The base cur howls, harsh screams the hungry vulture
 Where lies our mother! 210
 Pilgrim, shelter us!

So may ye prosper as ye slowly journey,
 And when ye see great Jägānāth’ so holy,
 And while ye bend before him, O, remember
 We have no mother! 215
 Pilgrim, pray for us!

a “Juggernaut, 21st June. I beheld another distressing scene this morning at the place of Skulls; a poor woman lying dead, or nearly dead, and her two children by her, looking at the dogs and vultures which were near. The people passed by without noticing the children. I asked them where was their home. They said, ‘they had no home but where their mother was.’” – See *Buchanan’s Researches*.

Hinnom! thou slaughter-valley, here behold
 Thy counterpart. Not Moloch's self⁷ e'er saw
 Such carousal of death; drunk with the wine
 Of overflowing vintage, lo! he riots 220
 All wantonly. To mortal view it seems
 He throws in random rage the fatal dart
 That needs must hit. Here rolls the lewd car,
 Grinding the crashing bones, and hearts, and brains
 Of men and women. Down they fling themselves 225
 In the deep gash, and wait the heavy wheel
 Slow rolling on its thunder-bellowing axle,
 Sunk in the wounded earth. The sigh, the breath,
 The blood, and life, and soul, with spiriting rush
 Beneath the horrible load, forsake the heap 230
 Of pounded flesh, and the big roar continues
 As though no soul had passed the bounds of time,
 Nor orphans 'gan their wail, no kindly bonds
 Had been dissolved: but the mad living throng,
 Trampling by thousands o'er the dead and dying, 235
 All nerve and sinew, swelter as they tug,
 And howling, shouting, pulling, hear no groan,
 Nor feel the heaving throes of beings crushed beneath them.
 The welkin wide is troubled with long peals,
 As though dark demons strode the sultry beams 240
 And helped the discord with full screech or laugh.
 High in his regal state sits Jägānnāth,
 Calm, midst the overwhelming dissonance
 Of million voices raised in loud acclaim;
 Superior to the hurly burly laud 245
 Of frantic pilgrims, he regards them not

From *Miscellaneous Poems, Chiefly Posthumous*, by John Lawson
 (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1826).⁸

The City of Palaces⁹

O sun-bright city, opulent, and proud!
 Thy palaces uprise like fairy dream,
 Or northern snowbergs, whose tall peaks do gleam
 Refulgent when the sun without a cloud
 Lights up their silver summits, as they crowd 5
 White on the blue of heaven. Thy mid-day beam
 Illumes thy stateliness, as steeples seem
 To pierce the sky; and arches grandly bow'd,
 Bold statuary lions, column, dome

Reveal the pride of wealth. But sadly rise 10
 (The long forgotten dead t' immortalize)
 Each black mausoleum, and each solemn tomb,
 On whose aspiring points, like moveless stone
 The ancient crane doth stand, all mute, gloom-struck and lone.

A Bengal Picture

Paint now an azure sky without a cloud;
 Throw in the distance mists and jungle shade;
 Sketch tall thin trunks faint gleaming from the glade,
 And cocoa-nuts high tow'ring, plumed, and proud.
 Beneath shall be a hovel, and a crowd 5
 Of bronzed dwellers, where the thatch doth fade
 From golden yellow to each dingy grade,
 And blue smoke curls about till it doth shroud
 The idle groupe. Next on the foreground see
 Two ragged horses just released from toil, 10
 Browsing upon the fragrant straw wisps, while
 The creaking carriage waits for company.
 Now add a sunshine varnish. There – 'tis done;
 A Bengal sketch – not sooner seen than known,

A River Scene

The sky of ebony hath many a gem;
 Ten thousand orbs send down their chrystal light:
 Each has its image deep, serene, and bright,
 Down in the gliding wave, reflecting them;
 Not them alone, for where the thick crowds hem 5
 The red fire on the shore, through the dark night
 A flush of dreariest hue glares on the sight,
 Painting the polish'd water as you stem
 The tide, and wrinkled billows snatch the gleam
 That bickers from the land. There gloomy men, 10
 Black 'gainst the fire light, bend and stir it when
 The half exhausted faggots near the stream
 Reveal the half-burnt corpse; fresh fuel then
 Relumes th' ascending smoke, while prowling wild dogs scream.

Evening

The red sun hath descended to the west.
Tall trees have changed to gold their tops of green,
As the slant beamings linger o'er the scene,
And evening clouds on high suspended rest,
Dropping their beauteous forms upon the breast 5
Of the secluded mirror. There I've seen
The Bhogla^a stand upon the brink, and preen
Her white wings; then if sound or sight molest,
Skim far away to solitary shades,
In rushy beds unseen to sport, secure 10
As coming night bids cold winds fan the moor,
Bending the reeds faint whilstling thro' the glades,
As the tired washerman with burnt bare head,
Leaves the still pool to seek his peaceful shed.

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a Bhogla, – a small species of crane.

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‘W’

India: A Poem in Four Cantos (1812) was published anonymously, prefaced by an ‘Advertisement’, signed ‘H’, which describes it as having been ‘extracted from a series of Numbers of *The Oriental Star*, a *Calcutta* weekly paper of 1809’. The work is further identified by ‘H’ as the ‘long poem on Indian life and manners’ (p. v) subsequently alluded to in *Calcutta: A Poem* (p. 91). Annotations by ‘H’ recur throughout the text. The poem is further prefaced by a communication to the editor of the *Oriental Star*, stating that the ‘object of the poem is to enumerate a few of the many blessings which *Anglo-indians* enjoy in this clime; and to impress on the minds of those, who may honour my composition with a perusal, the propriety and the duty of being contented with their lot; and of being thankful in a country, which, though no true Briton can ever acknowledge it to be equal to Old England, is so highly favoured by Providence’ (p. viii). This is signed ‘W’ and dated from Calcutta, 12 July 1809. The poem is variously ascribed to William Wightman, whose name is associated with the production of Sunday-school tracts (British Library); and to Captain William Cotes of the Bengal army (Halkett and Laing).

The poem is fragmentary and episodic in form – the original newspaper publication was apparently in serial form, ‘a portion of fifty or an hundred lines, every week’ (p. vii). An account of the narrator’s unhappy voyage to India is a staple of such works; other themes of the poem include the Indian landscape, British responsibilities to the people of India, observations on the moral character and physical health of British residents in India, and the narrator’s recollections of his homeland. The extract included here is taken from the last pages of the first canto, beginning with a comparison of the climates of Britain and India; this is to the latter’s advantage, in line with the stated aims of the author. The argument, or flow of thought, then modulates into an account of the Indian woman, implicitly contrasted with the imperious British wives who are ‘*emperors* at home’, until the recital of her attributes concludes with her willingness to accompany her husband into death, burning on his funeral pyre.

Further Reading

S. Halkett and J. Laing, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature*, ed. J. Kennedy, W. A. Smith, A. F. Johnson, vol. 3 (New York: Haskell, 1971).
[W. H. Majendie], *Calcutta: A Poem* (London: J. J. Stockdale, 1811).

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From *India: A Poem. In Four Cantos* (Newcastle: S. Hodgson, 1812).

[...]

Calcutta! soft refinements loved retreat!
Where siren sloth, and active commerce meet,
Where joys to joys each happy day succeed,
While lands remote the varied luxury feed –
– How oft, the west in golden robes arrayed, 5
On thy frequented walk^a I have pensive strayed!
The fort before, a monument of power,
Formed for the dangers of the warring hour;
Behind the noble house^b where virtue lives, 10
And feels the happiness she kindly gives:
On this side zephyrs play upon the stream,
Mildly reflecting the sun's parting beam.
I turn; and yonder carriages appear,
While distant creakings grate upon the ear;
Now on the course I hail our beauteous fair, 15
Whose hearts have fluttered, or will flutter there;
The blushing virgin, and the happy wife,
Loved comfort of a tender husband's life.
Then, sitting down upon a lowly seat,
The *Hoogley* waters flowing at my feet, 20
With passions calm, unruffled, as the time,
I think of India's fruits and India's clime,
Praise Him who regulates, in certain spheres,
For tropic plains the never varying years.
Here the o'erpowering heat, the heavy rain, 25
The colder hours revolve the same again.
One year the fellow of another's found,
With Seasons *hot, wet, cold* – a constant round.
Britain! thy clime's unsteady as the waves

- a The esplanade; an avenue of trees by the river's side, leading to the fort: a walk of about 250 yards in length.
b The governour's house.

That circle thy rough isle; now madly raves 30
 Thy foaming sea, thy rocks now gently laves.
 Promiscuous rain thy fairest day invades,
 And a long Winter freezes thy green glades;
 Nips in their birth the opening buds of May,
 And o'er thy harvests bears destructive sway. 35
Here, all prepared we Summer's heats await,
 And a mild Winter's joys anticipate.
 When vertical the sun his power displays,
 Darting on indian plains his fiercest rays,
 As thro' the signs, revolving every year, 40
 He upward wheels to warm our hemisphere,
 Then anglo-indians to the shade retreat,
 And guard their health secured from raging heat;
 Then wives desire their husbands not to roam
 – And wives are even *emperors* at home – 45
 If words and tears are found of no avail,
 A kiss, the last resource, can never fail.
 By arts like these a woman gains her end,
 And to be governed man must condescend.
 Thus *Eve* to *Adam* in an evil hour 50
 Offered the fruit – he ate – she shewed her power.
 Now the dry earth is parched, now whirled around
 The sand in heaps confused starts from the ground.
 Disease, now borne on wings of burning wind,
 With fatal haste o'erwhelms the poorer kind; 55
 Who, patient still, their daily task perform
 Regardless of the heat or threatening storm:
 Despised unjustly; yet the indian poor
 Such evils, quietly resigned, endure;
 In colour differing, made of clay as we, 60
 With souls entitled^a to eternity.
 If some be found depraved amongst the race,
 Why brand the whole with undeserved disgrace?
 For, there are indians who can bravely bleed,
 Who thirst in war for honour's glorious meed; 65
 Who, noble souls possessing, generous, just,
 Rejoice to raise their brethren from the dust:
 Of purpose firm, invariably great,
 These sternly bend to the decrees of fate;
 These see, unmoved, death's terrors flame around, 70
 And hear with steady nerves the cannon's sound;

a *Entitled to eternity* is not too strong an expression: we read indeed, that “eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” *Rom.6.23*; but, the same apostle, in another place, says, that “God is the Saviour of *all* men” – the preference which in the close of the sentence is given to believers – “*especially* of those that believe” – x *Tim. 4. 10* – is not *exclusive* of the rest of mankind. H.

Behold the sword bright gleaming in the air,
And whirled in mazy rounds its vengeance dare.

The indian maiden boasts no roseate die,
No flaxen locks, no azure coloured eye, 75
No lilies shining on a blushing face,
No dazzling hand, or European grace.

Denied the glowing tints, when lovers tell
The tender tale, and swear they like her well;
Yet sparkling eyes, as black as jet, declare 80
The heart's design, and all that's beating there:

But, when obscured each liquid gem appears,
In quick succession fall the rolling tears:
Affliction presses heavy on her breast, 85
And when to tell her grief the damsel's prest,

No paleness, spreading o'er the damask cheeks,
– Mute eloquence – the kind assistance seeks;
Unskilled in shrieking and hysteric arts,
By tears she touches all congenial hearts,
That feel the sympathetic force of grief, 90
Nor coldly feel, but grant her woes relief.

Hail thou! of souls the universal tie!
Who givest a tear for tear, a sigh for sigh,
Feelest every joy that warms a kindred heart,
And, sorrowing, droopest, when others' feelings smart, 95
Makest joy more joyful, lighter every toil,
Even pain becomes less painful by thy smile,
Thou! trembling chord! that vibratest in each frame,
Soft, social bond, and *Sympathy* thy name!
Thou, greatest blessing! Effluence divine! 100
Who can thy wond'rous thrilling powers define!

The indian maid may boast a slender waist,
Altho' with cramping stays it be not laced,
A well-turned arm, an ankle small and neat,
A graceful, perfect form, a shape complete; 105
Perfect, as that which met his dazzled eyes,
When *Paris* gave to *Venus* beauty's prize:¹

Of tender heart, but with affections strong,
And to a husband solely they belong.
Faithful thro' life, in virtue she's approved, 110
Nor dead relinquishes the spouse below'd:

Ascends the pile, dreads not the crackling fires
But on a husband's corse 'midst flames expires.

Copyright

WILLIAM HENRY MAJENDIE

The anonymous publication *Calcutta: A Poem* (1811) was ascribed by its contemporary readers in India to Captain Majendie. The officer in question was William Henry Majendie (1789–1824) of the Grenadier Guards, the eldest son among thirteen children of Henry William Majendie, Bishop of Bangor, and his wife Anne Routledge. He travelled to Bengal in 1807 as aide-de-camp to General Hewett, a friend of his father's, who was commander-in-chief in India from 1807–11. He left the army on half pay in 1816. In 1820 he married Elizabeth Marsden; they had three daughters. The obituary notices give no cause for his early death.

A different author is named by T. D. Dunn, who suggests that the poem might be the work of Charles D'Oyly, on the grounds that the frontispiece of a subaltern smoking a hookah 'closely resembles' D'Oyly's illustrations. This is unlikely, however: the work was never associated with him at the time, and the existence of his wide network of social and artistic connections makes a covert authorship improbable. Moreover, the illustration in question is of relatively crude workmanship, compared to those produced by D'Oyly and his studio.

The poem is written, according to the preface, in order to 'put the world in possession of more correct ideas of Asiatic life than are generally entertained in England' (p. vi). It also argues that there should be more British cavalry and artillery forces despatched to India, to protect the 'tranquillity of the empire' and the East India Company's revenue, and to maintain the requisite vigilance in the face of danger from the indigenous population of India. 'The perfidy of native character', the author writes, 'has no other bonds to coerce its activity than ceaseless jealousy, and superior strength. The eye must mark every contortion of the serpent, and the hand be ever fixed on the sword' (pp. ix–x). The body of the work is cast in the form of a dialogue between two speakers, one a long-term resident of India, who has 'a general knowledge of local usages'; the other his 'young friend ... recently arrived from Europe' (pp. vii–viii). The opening gambit is a broad-brush condemnation of the state of poetry in India, written by 'amateurs, who 'sing unheard and wither in the East; / Their merit, rather to write long than well, / Shines in the papers, as the columns swell' (p. 10). An authorial

note exempts from these strictures a ‘long poem ... descriptive of Eastern life’ published in serial form the previous year (p. 91); title to this work is claimed on behalf of ‘W’, its pseudonymous author, by the supposed editor of *India: A Poem* when it is reissued by a Newcastle publisher in 1812. This preamble done with, the younger man complains of the tedium of Calcutta society, the necessity of studying ‘the hated language of the clime’ (p. 19), and the lack of opportunity to amass wealth in India comparable to that acquired by the British in days gone by. The elder recommends moderation, industry and patience, but at the same time he looks forward to his departure from India, and the poem concludes with his anticipation of the day when ‘Britain’s isle and British comfort’ (p. 87) will be his once more. Two extracts are included here: the first contrasts the young man’s ‘visionary image’ of India with the reality awaiting him on arrival there; the second offers a repellent account of a Calcutta dinner-table beset by insects.

The *Asiatic Journal* reviewed the poem in 1816, reprinting substantial extracts from it in the process; it was also rediscovered by the Calcutta press in the 1820s, when the *Oriental Observer* and the *Asiatic Journal* printed commendatory accounts and extracts, describing it as ‘affording a remarkably correct and happy picture of the passing scenes and feelings of an Indian life’ (*Asiatic Journal* (1828), p. 303). The London-based *Eclectic Review*, however, was of the view that only those familiar with the life of British India could derive any pleasure from a reading of the work, while it would ‘yield the stranger but little instruction or pleasure. The poem, to the English reader, is not only far less interesting than the notes; but without them scarcely a page of it is intelligible’ (p. 822).

Further Reading

Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register, 25 (March 1828), pp. 303–12.

Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany, 1 (January 1816), pp. 46–8.

Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany, 2 (November 1816), pp. 483–4.

T. D. Dunn, ‘English Verse in Old Calcutta’, *Bengal Past and Present*, vol. 24 (December 1922), pp. 53–65.

Eclectic Review, 7.ii (1811), pp. 822–8.

S. R. Tambe, *English Muse on Indian Soil: A Study of Anglo-Indian Poetry up to 1914* (Bangalore: Ultra, 1999).

From *Calcutta: A Poem* (London: J. J. Stockdale, 1811).

From Dialogue I

[...]

B. Curse on the ship in evil hour that bore
My jolted frame to India's burning shore!
An inauspicious hour, from which I date
The bitter torments of a wretched fate:
Deluded, listening to the tales they told, 5
Lands rich in mines, and rivers streaming gold;
Whence twelve short years in Luxury's lap beguiled,
Would bear me homeward, Fortune's favourite child,
To pass my days in some secure retreat,^a
Or grace the mazes of St. James's Street; 10
Even then, in fancy drawn with bays or roans,
I seized the reins, and rattled o'er the stones;
Oh! fond delusion! prospects nursed in vain,
While, dressed in Sunday trim, the tradesmen's wives
Exclaimed, "Sweet gentleman, how well he drives!" 15
Or pleased amid Arcadian¹ bowers I stood,
Where fancy waved around the towering wood:
A mansion too, some classic artist's pride,
Rose on the banks of a meandering tide,
A well-known spot, where endless feasts invite 20
The neighbouring squire to hospitable rite.
Oh! fond delusion! prospects nursed in vain,
The rude creation of a thoughtless brain!
A visionary image, formed to shun
The melting gaze of India's fervid sun! 25
Now, sad reverse! the rich delusion flies,
House, park, and carriage vanish from my eyes!
Condemned, alas! twelve tedious years to burn,
Nor dare the vast expences of return,
When all the savings of attentive care 30

a —hâc mente laborem / Sese ferre, senes ut in otia tuta recedant.²

Would scarcely buy a cabin eight feet square;
 Content in England with a single room,
 And solitary nag without a groom.
 Alas! twice ten revolving years,^a or more,
 Must prudence guide the helm and swell the store, 35
 Not one rupee in useless frolic spent,
 And steady interest at eight per cent.,
 Ere, scorched and fried from India's shores, I fly,
 And taste the sweetness of my native sky:
 Then, recompence of past laborious days, 40
 A snug estate might solace life's decays.
 Yet, ah! what spot reflection can exclude,
 Or soothe the sad emotions that intrude?
 Who then remains of all the numerous band
 That called me "friend," and grasp'd the willing hand? 45
 Perhaps in pensive silence I may tread
 The honored turf where rests a parent's head,
 Recalling to my mind, with many a sigh,
 The eager fond embrace, the last good-bye,
 Affection's warmest wishes as I sailed, 50
 The eye that uttered and the tongue that failed.

[...] Copyright
 From Dialogue II
 [...]

B. A restless group to eastern life attached
 Grumbling declares^b our happiness unmatched;
 And sulks in England, splenetic and sad,
 "Your forms are odious, and your dinners bad;
 In tropic climes we boast a better cheer, 5
 And quaff our fill of claret through the year."
 Such doleful wail the old Bengallic pours,
 A welcome fugitive from Britain's shores,
 In sad disgust returning to lament,
 How all the savings of his life were spent, 10

- a "Twenty-five years may be taken as the period in which a civil servant may regularly acquire, with proper habits of economy, an independent fortune in India." – Mar. Wellesley's Minute on the Calcutta College [10 July 1800], sec. 42 [*The Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley*, vol. 2, ed Montgomery Martin (London: W. H. Allen, 1836), p. 342].
- b The allurements which produce a sacrifice of habits, in which the hand of time has riveted us, must be powerful indeed! something beyond the vivifying freshness of the climate of England. – Friends, alas! are either not found at all, or the lapse of years has generated a mutual estrangement of pursuits and affections, where similarity of character formerly constituted the basis of intimacy.

Copyright

MARIA NUGENT

Maria Skinner (1770/1–1834) was born in New Jersey, in what was then one of the thirteen British colonies on the eastern seaboard of north America. Her family were sympathetic to the British side during the American war of independence (1775–83) – her father, Cortland Skinner, was eventually made a general in the British army – and they moved to England following the defeat of the British and the institution of the newly formed United States of America. Maria married George Nugent in 1797; and when his career in the army took him to Jamaica in 1801, she accompanied him. As wife of the Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Nugent had an unparalleled overview of colonial society in Jamaica, and used it to compile her first *Journal*. She returned to Britain in 1805, having borne two children in the meantime, and became Lady Nugent when her husband was awarded a baronetcy on his return the following year.

By the time Sir George was appointed Commander-in-Chief in India in March 1811, the Nugents had three children, and Maria was pregnant with a fourth, who was eventually born six weeks before they embarked for India in July. The children were all left behind, and Nugent's anxiety over parting with them permeates her account of the family's final days in England; she remarks of her friend Lady William Bentinck, also about to accompany her husband overseas, that 'she too regrets England, but she leaves no children behind!' (*Journal in India*, vol. 1, p. 7). Her emotions found expression in the first poem included here, the untitled lines addressed to her children.

The separation from her children made the beginning of Nugent's stay in India a difficult time: it caused what is described as a 'psychosomatic illness' (Raza, p. 180) that coloured her experience of Calcutta, where she lived for the first year. By 1812, when she accompanied Sir George on a year-long tour across the north of the country, the change of scene had inspired in her a greater interest in her travels, as is evident in the three poems responding to the sights and experiences she encountered. Her delight at the landscape and architecture of north India shines through the conventional idiom of the poetry, and her newly rediscovered personal engagement with her surroundings is apparent in the epi-

sode where she ‘past several hours at the Taaje – Wrote my name at the top of one of the minarets’ (*Journal in India*, vol. 1, p. 369).

The people of India, and in particular the Indian elite to whom Nugent was introduced through her husband, inspire a more complex response. While the ‘Lines Suggested by a Visit to the Court of Lucnow’ recognize the symbolic and political role of Saadat Ali, its ruler, her several references to him in the journal at this time indicate her ambivalence about him, and about the entire class of ‘eastern great men’ which she sees personified in him. Their ‘enjoyments and views are all temporal’, she writes, ‘they have not the slightest idea of anything intellectual; they seem truly animal’. She conceded, however, that ‘his manners are good, and he seems to have the command of countenance, and good breeding, of the most refined courtier’ (pp. 305–6). Her observation that the Company’s Resident in Lucknow, Major Baillie, might enjoy more success in dealing with Saadat if he adopted ‘a more conciliating tone, and less of an air of equality, indeed almost superiority’ (p. 306) is immediately followed by an anecdote told her by Baillie himself, of an elephant who feels himself ill-used by his keeper, and chooses his opportunity to ‘put his huge foot on the wretched man’s body, and [crush] him to death’ (p. 307).

Nugent left India with her husband in 1814, and lived the rest of her life in England. Her two Journals were privately printed by her family in 1839.

Further Reading

M. Nugent, *A Journal of a Voyage to, and Residence in, the Island of Jamaica, from 1801 to 1805* (London, 1839).

ODNB.

R. Raza, *In Their Own Words: British Women Writers and India, 1740–1857* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

From *A Journal from the Year 1811 till the Year 1815,
Including a Voyage to, and Residence in, India, with a
Tour to the North-Western Parts of the British Possessions
in that Country, under the Bengal Government*, by
Maria, Lady Nugent (London, 1839).

‘The Hour is Past – Oh Hour of Woe!’¹

The hour is past – Oh hour of woe!
Children beloved, a long adieu!
But, though to distant climes I go,
A mother’s heart remains with you.

Nor shall that heart know rest or peace,
Nor shall that heart forget its care,
Nor shall, while absent, ever cease
Thy tender mother’s fervent prayer.

And may that God who sits on high,
Who every thought and wish can see,
The secret sob, the smothered sigh,
The bitter tears oft shed for thee;

In mercy may He grant me this,
The only blessing I implore,
The dear delight, the heartfelt bliss,
To see my darling babes once more;

Once more in Westhorpe’s shades² to roam,
The dear ones sporting by my side,
And never more I’ll quit my home,
For India’s glory, India’s pride.

And oh! may he, whose manly care
Chases my grief in accents sweet,

5

10

15

20

My happiness be doomed to share,
And make that happiness complete!

Lines, Suggested by a Visit to the Court of Lucnow, in 1812³

In northern lands, where the sun's beam
Seems faintly through the clouds to gleam,
Where hoary Winter's aspect wan
Chills even the intellect of Man,
Genius in vain attempts to rise, 5
And infant Fancy breathes and dies:
But in this happier clime we view
Genius sublime and Fancy new,
The Sciences and Arts refin'd,
Ennobling while they grace mankind: 10
Yet, ah! in vain Sol's brightest rays
Might through the azure curtain blaze,
In vain might Genius rear her head,
Or Fancy weave her varied web;
In vain might Science or might Art 15
Their beneficial Views impart,
Did not a Sovereign's fostering hand
Cherish and renovate the land;
Did not his smile benignant cheer,
And bless the product of the year; 20
'Till Science, Genius, Fancy pure,
Flourish, expanded and mature. –
Thus Lucnow's Prince⁴ his influence sheds,
And happiness around him spreads,
And, by his gracious manner, shews 25
The heart from whence his bounty flows.

Lines Written on Seeing the Taaje, at Agra⁵

Here all conspires to charm the ravish'd sight,
And fill with wonder the admiring eye,
Here splendid gems and marble spotless white,
That with the sunbeam and the snow might vie,
Their various beauties so commix and blend, 5
As nature did to art her best assistance lend.

The stately rising dome, the burnish'd spire,
The casements, that their soften'd light impart,
Each in its turn, and all alike, conspire
To strike the wondering eye, and touch the heart; 10
And while, wrapt in delight, I silent gaze,
My heart to wedded love its well earn'd tribute pays.

For not alone this pile presents to me
Proportions fair of architectural pride,
In every polish'd stone and gem I see 15
All that's to love or sentiment allied;
And to the mental vision here appear,
All the affections that the feeling mind holds dear.

The basis, formed of marble white and pure,
Pourtrays the groundwork of a well-placed love, 20
Which firm through life unshaken shall endure,
Nor shall the hand of death that love remove –
For true affection, in the tender heart,
Stands unsubdued by time, or death's unerring dart.

The pale ferosah,⁶ modest azure blue, 25
Emblem of truth and love the most sincere,
The brilliant sapphire's deeper regal hue,
Tells how above all other love doth peer;
The love which, under Hymen's⁷ blest control,
Exalts the human mind, and dignifies the soul. 30

The yellow topaz speaks the anxious cares,
That ever on affection's steps attend,
And the rich diamond, as it brightly glares,
Shews the high value of a real friend:
But far beyond the brightest gems are found 35
Friendship and faithful love, in one soft union bound.

These pearls, the tears that fond affection shed
O'er the pale corse of her he loved alone,
These rubies, precious drops that heart has bled
For her alas! for ever, ever gone! – 40
And pity's eye the tribute pearl bestows,
While faintly through the heart the ruby current flows. –

But see, the emerald glads the tearful eye,
And offers balsam to the troubled breast,
Pointing to regions far beyond the sky, 45
Regions of peace, the mansions of the blest –
For Hope is e'er arrayed in brightest green,
All nature too in Hope's attire is seen! –

Sweet smiling Hope, thou soother of our cares,
 Thou first, best boon, to hapless mortals given – 50
 Thou, who, when miserable man despairs,
 Bid'st him to look for happiness in heaven –
 Whate'er of wretchedness be still my lot,
 Oh! let thy cheering ray, thy smile forsake me not!

And ye, blest pair! so fond, so true of heart, 55
 Who underneath this marble mouldering lie,
 Ye who have known the agony to part,
 Are now rewarded with eternal joy;
 So may fond love and truth for ever rest,
 And like Jehan and Taaje⁸ eternally be blest. 60

Written at Hurdwar⁹

Ah! who can wonder that the holy Seer
 Should fix the dwelling of the Godhead here,
 Where, from the stately mountain's snowy side,
 The Ganges rolls his clear majestic tide,
 And through far distant regions takes his course, 5
 With god-like bounty and with giant force;
 Whilst all around us, in the varied scene,
 The glorious attributes of God are seen?
 The mountain, fertile vales, the stream, the grove,
 Speak his High Majesty, paternal care, and love. 10

tam. Mir Sadiq, Tipu's finance minister, was killed by Mysore troops during the battle, having tried to change sides.

13. *Pournia ... Brahma's line*: Purnea, a Hindu, one of Tipu's ministers, was reputed to have refused a request of Tipu's that he should convert to Islam.
14. *Runga*: Seringapatam was named after Ranga, or the Hindu god Vishnu.
15. *Coorg ... Concan-land*: Coorg (Kodagu), Cuddapah (Kadapa) and the Konkan coastal region of Western India bordering on the state of Mysore were attacked at various times by Hyder Ali, Tipu's father, and later Tipu himself.
16. *Sri-Munt*: Shrimant was a personal name of the Sindhia clan, rulers of the Maratha state of Gwalior.
17. *Singala's region*: Sri Lanka.
18. *Crishna's*: the Hindu god Krishna.
19. *Vishnu's lotus-foot*: References to the 'lotus feet' of Vishnu and other Hindu gods and sages are common in Hindu writings and prayers.

John Lawson

1. The collection in which this poem appears was reissued after the author's death, bound together with *Miscellaneous Poems* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1826).
2. *Sunderbunds*: or Sundarbans, the vast coastal area of mangrove swamps bordering on the Bay of Bengal. It was known to the British in the nineteenth century as a location for tiger-hunting.
3. A revised edition of the poem appeared in 1822 (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press).
4. Every year, a giant statue of the Hindu god Jagannath is taken from his temple in the city of Puri and transported through the streets on a wooden chariot. Worshippers were reputed to throw themselves beneath its wheels. See Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos* (Serampore: Mission Press, 1815), vol. 2.
5. Buchanan's Researches: This quotation, and the further quotation from Buchanan's work on page 86, both appear in Ward, *A View of History*, vol. 2, p. 322. See Claudius Buchanan, *Christian Researches in Asia* (Cambridge: Deighton; London: Cadell & Davies, 1811).
6. *squab-dog*: the jackal, noted for its nocturnal cry.
7. *Hinnom ... Moloch's self*: The valley of Hinnom, to the south of Jerusalem, is referred to in the Old Testament as a valley of slaughter (Jeremiah 19), and a location where human beings were burned during the worship of Molech, or Moloch (Jeremiah 32:35). From *Miscellaneous Poems, Chiefly Posthumous* (1826).
8. This work was in press at the time of the author's death.
9. Calcutta was known as the 'city of palaces' from the first years of the nineteenth century.

'W'

1. *When Paris ... prize*: The shepherd Paris, in Greek myth, awarded a golden apple inscribed 'for the most beautiful' to the goddess Aphrodite (known to the Romans as Venus), dismissing the rival claims of Hera and Athena.

William Henry Majendie

1. *Arcadian*: From Arcadia, a region in southern Greece; the term is used to indicate idyllic pastoral surroundings.
2. *hâc ... recedant*: 'they take themselves to work with the idea that as old men they might retreat into safe leisure' (Horace *Satires* 1.i.30–1).
3. *taxes ... sky*: The tax on windows was raised several times during the eighteenth century, and was abolished only in 1851.
4. *Diripiuntque ... Immundo*: 'and ravage our feast and defile everything with filthy touch' (Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.227–8). The lines refer to the Harpies, monstrous birds with the faces of women, encountered by Aeneas during his travels.

Maria Nugent

1. These untitled lines are included in the journal entry for 27 July 1811, written on the eve of the author's departure for India. They are addressed to her children, the youngest of whom was six weeks old at the time.
2. *Westhorpe's shades*: Westhorpe House, in Buckinghamshire, was bought by the Nugents in 1809.
3. This poem is part of the journal entry for 22 October 1812, during a visit by the author and her husband, together with a large retinue, to the city of Lucknow, the capital of the wealthy and nominally independent state of Awadh.
4. *Lucnow's Prince*: Saadat Ali had been nawab of Awadh since 1798. He was compelled to make over a large part of his territories to the East India Company early in his rule, and the remainder had become, in effect, a British client state. The *ODNB* remarks that Saadat 'impressed British visitors with his administrative capacity and application'; but Nugent appears to have been primarily struck by his physical appearance, and that of his nine sons, 'all dressed in Eastern dresses, of cloth of gold, with turbans of the same; and ... all very fat' (*Journal*, vol. 1, pp. 300–1). He died of poison two years after Nugent's visit, in 1814.
5. This poem was written on 19 November 1812, following the author's visit to the Taj Mahal on the previous day. 'In spite of my high expectations, it greatly exceeded them,' she wrote (vol. 1, p. 363). The complex of buildings was ordered by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan to be constructed as a memorial to his third wife, known as Mumtaz Mahal, who died in 1631. The poem was published in the *Calcutta Journal* (21 February 1822) as 'Verses by Lady Nugent, on seeing the Tauj at Agra'.
6. *ferosah*: from Persian 'firozeh', turquoise.
7. *Hymen's*: In Greek mythology, Hymen is the god of marriage.
8. *Taaje*: 'crown or head-dress' (*OED*). The nickname 'Mumtaz Mahal', given to Arjumand Banu on her marriage to Shah Jehan, is translated as 'crown of the palace' or 'jewel of the palace'.
9. This poem is included in the journal entry for 17 January 1813. It appeared under the title 'Lines: Written by a Lady of rank, in an "Album" at Hurdwar' in the *Asiatic Journal*, 2 (November 1816), pp. 491–2; as 'Source of the Ganges', by the Lady of the Commander-in-Chief, in the *Calcutta Journal* (6 September 1821); and again as 'Lines written at the source of the Ganges, by an English Lady, in the *Oriental Herald* vol. 4 (January 1825), p. 7. Hurdwar, or Haridwar, is the location where the river Ganges leaves the Himalayas and flows across the northern plains of India.