

Nature as Narrative Medium: Romanticism vs. Early Indo-Anglian Poetics

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Abstract

This research undertakes a critical analysis of the transition from a spiritual mirror of nature in Western Romanticism to a subjective space of colonial contact in the early Indo-Anglian poetic tradition. It seeks to counter the dominant view that the early Indian poetic tradition is merely derivative mimicry and argues that, in fact, poets like Henry Derozio and Toru Dutt “engage in an active grappling” with the language of the coloniser, so that by using nature as a narrative medium, the authors can reimagine the space of the natural world from a merely passive backdrop to a significant space that connects personal memory with a collective national heritage. The literature review indicates how Orientalist scholarship supplies the textual world and legendary lore necessary for this cultural revival. It also points out one important aspect of the research: the prosodic subversion achieved by Indian poets. The Indian poets use the free decasyllable to subvert the classical English iambic pentameter and incorporate Indian rhythms of life into English.

This research argues that there is a need for a renewed “Mother India” trope and the use of botanical deixis, or the naming of indigenous plants, to provide a model for “ambassadorial strategic empathy” to a global audience, and the transition from the Romantic “lark” to the imperial “drum” is discussed in the section on acoustics, where the narrative voice critiques the imperialism of the colonisers, and the research reveals that the early Indo-Anglian nature narratives are sophisticated maneuvers that provide a “renaissance of national culture” and assert the English language as a “hardy conduit” for a unique Indian modernity.

Keywords

Early indo-anglian poetics, nature as narrative medium, orientalist scholarship, prosodic subversion, strategic empathy.