

Nature, Season, and the Romantic Sublime in Hari Singh Gour's Poetic Landscape: Wordsworthian Inheritance, Colonial Displacement, and the Landscape of the Self in Random Rhymes

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Abstract

In this paper, the nature verse of the book *Random Rhymes* by Hari Singh Gour (1892; rpt. 2024) will be analyzed, emphasizing how eight poems — by the Cam, a memory of a May-week, twilight, winter, a memory of a winter evening, echoes through the woods, a night scene, and spring time — mediate between the conventions received by the British Romanticism and the demands of the uniqueness of a colonial subject in its positionality. With references to the theoretical perspectives of ecocriticism, postcolonial literature studies, and Romantic scholarship, the paper holds that Gour does not merely imitate the Wordsworthian-Keatsian tradition but is not completely outside of it. Rather he operates within that tradition to document modes of alienation, desire, and introspection which cannot be exactly analogized in canonical Romantic verse. The discussion is conducted using a close reading, placing each poem into its intellectual and biographical background, and relying on the works of Abrams (1971), Bate (1991), Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989), and so on. It concludes by suggesting that the landscape poetry of Gour is a small yet truly separate addition to the later nineteenth century long dialogue between British Romanticism and colonialism experience.

Keywords: Hari Singh Gour, Romantic nature poetry, sublime, ecocriticism, postcolonial poetics, Cambridge, nineteenth-century Indian writing in English

Introduction

Hari Singh Gour (1870–1949) is remembered more as a jurist, and the philanthropist-founder of Sagar University. His poetic niche in the history of the literary arts is a very silent one, the quietness of which perhaps is too great, considering the extent of what his poetry recompenses the attentive eye. Published in 1892 and republished in 2024, over a century later, his collection *Random Rhymes* collects the lyrics that he wrote in the course of his time at Cambridge and in the immediate aftermath of it (Pandey, 2024). The poems come out of particular biographical experience — a young man of central India, schooled on colonial lines, exposed to a literary culture of England that had recently canonized Wordsworth and Keats as its only nature poets. The issue that the paper is based on is a misleading one. As Gour writes of seasons, rivers,

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nights, is he ventriloquising Romantic traditions he has learned during his university days, or is it some other game?

The poems in question, i.e., *By the Cam*, *A May-Week Memory*, *Twilight*, *Winter*, *A Winter Eve*, *Echoes Through the Woods*, *A Night Scene* and *Spring Time* fall between sonnet-like and lyric ode, between iambic and more relaxed and agitated. They are all a series of seasons-long interaction with nature, spring blossom, summer recollection, fall sunset, deadness of winter, the cold vastness of the night sky. The similarity in the poems, beyond their seasonal interests, is a conflict between the assertive aesthetic inheritance and a lower undertone of displacement. The Wye is not the Cam. The Sagar is not Cambridge May Week. The spectator who was on the bank of an English river is not precisely the same object that would be on the bank of any Indian river, and the difference, as is urged in this paper, has actual impressions in the verse.

The theoretical framework is selectively pluralistic. The Romantic topographical lyric described by Abrams (1971) is the necessary background of the debts and departures of Gour which can be measured by it. The ecocritical reading of landscape in Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology* (1991) provides the perceptual and ideological perspective of landscape. The postcolonial aspect is based on the concept of place as a location of colonial struggle as introduced by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) and the theorization of mimicry and its natural remnants (1994) developed by Homi Bhabha. Combined these structures enable the paper to have two things simultaneously in view — what Gour has in common with Wordsworth and Keats and what it is in his poems that traditions fail to fully explain.

The Wordsworthian Topographical Lyric and Its Colonial Afterlives

Any serious attempt to read the nature poetry of Gour must commence with an account of the tradition which he inherits responsibly. Abrams traces the Romantic topographical lyric through the Romantic topographical lyrics written by Keats through to his odes, and in this case, the speaker is situated in front of a natural scene and the consciousness moves inwards with that scene and some sort of resolution is reached between the mind and the world (Abrams, 1971, p. 76). Nature here is the location and actor. The wind answering the poet in Coleridge's *Dejection: An Ode*, the nightingale that lures Keats away out of the weary, the fever, and the fret, the Wye valley that assures Wordsworth in the validity of restorative memory — are not the backgrounds but the addressors (Bate, 1991, p. 102).

What this tradition supposes, however, — and what has been too little commented in the conventional Romantic scholarship — is a kind of subject-landscape relationship: that of inheritance, of belonging. Wordsworth is at Tintern Abbey a man to whom England is native, and whose landscapes are indigenous to it. Spots of time which constitute the sense of self that Wordsworth experiences are based on Cumbrian hills and Cumbrian seasons. The epistemology behind it is possessive. Bate appreciates this by recognizing that despite the seeming openness of Romantic ecology to the natural world, it is likely to reproduce the cultural authority of the individual who occupies it (Bate, 1991, p. 56).

The relationship is more complex when a colonised subject writes in this tradition. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, place in postcolonial writing is never left undecided about whether to belong or not but has to be negotiated and the negotiation leaves a trace (1989, p. 9). The description of colonial mimicry by Bhabha can also be put to use here: the colonial subject writing in the literary forms of the master does it almost but not quite, and that missing space — the almost — is exactly where the most interesting textual energies are concentrated (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). The issue, when it comes to Gour, is whether these energies are reflected in the verse and where.

This complexity was sighted in an early critical sighting by the Scotsman review reprinted in the collection in the prefatory material. The reviewer admires the English of Gour and points out that he has done something unusual in writing so well in English, and a certain something of a curious Oriental solemnity in the verses devoted to Tamerlane (Gour, 1892/2024, p. 16). That expression — peculiar Oriental gravity — is a two-sided thing; approving and othering simultaneously. It records the distinction without being in a position to name it distinctly. The following paper is an effort to make a more accurate calculation.

Familiar Landscapes, Unfamiliarly Seen: “By the Cam” and “A May-Week Memory”

The two most English poems in the collection are the setting of the Cam and a May-Week Memory, both in the environment of Cambridge that Gour lived in when he was a student. Also, they are the poems that are closest to Romantic precedent in terms of surface similarity, which is why they will be a good starting point.

By the Cam (p. 29) is written in the form of a sonnet — fourteen lines, but the rhyme scheme is not strictly based on the Shakespearean or Petrarchan form, a laxity that was fond of the late nineteenth century. The landscape used in the opening of the poem is almost Keatsian:

“Through bared arms of limes restored with velvet green / And summer sunbeams slumbering over it all.” Vegetation, light, the silent river — the usual attributes of the Romantic pastoral, dealt with with real confidence. The speaker in the poem is hearing “whispering breezes breathe between,” pathetic fallacy being used with the utmost precision: weather as mood, mood as weather.

But look at what follows. The speaker does not live in her own internal world, but rather in the world of others. There is playing of children, a wedding procession and an overhead shedding of music by birds. The speaker is a spectator, who is a periphery of the scene as opposed to being engrossed in it: I felt entranced. Such ensuring, particularly, is retrospective — the sestet itself brings the entire vision back into the loss: No more, alas! the greenfinch, season fled, / No more through linden boughs the sunbeams glanc’d (p. 29). It is typical Romantic elegy, but the power of loss is quite displaced. In Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth is deprived of the sensual ecstasy of youth, but finds something more in its place. The speaker of Gour’s in *By the Cam* merely loses sight of things. The consolatory turn which the topographical lyric is traditionally supposed to provide is lacking. What occupies its position is the naked, desolated declaration of the departure.

In his work on the postcolonial elegies, Jahan Ramazani claims that such refusal of consolation is a structurally important aspect of writing done at the colonial edge: the given paradigm of loss-and-recovery fails to work when the losses in question cannot be redone through inner growth (2001, p. 25). The landscape of Cambridge is borrowed to Gour and is not native. Its seasonal beauties are available to his eye but not rooted in his history. The limes and sunbeams of the Cam can never bring about the temporal significance, which the Wye brings to Wordsworth, since they have no childhood root in the life of Gour.

There is an attempt to take the same problematic into another angle in “A May-Week Memory” (p. 31). The main character here is a woman, nameless, idealised, who is standing on the edge of a small stream, “In the midst of groups of pageant, dressed in May clothes.” The scene is clearly the Cambridge May Week festivities which is a social ritual all English, all institutional. The poem makes the woman a source of spiritual light: she illuminates her virgin light of soul / To drive all doubts that squint of suspicion, / To sooth all enmity of religious thoughts, / And turn the venom-tipped selfishness to love (p. 31). It is Keatsian idealisation — the beauty of

the natural-social world made up within one person, endowed with more or less religious qualities.

The peculiarity of the poem is in the series of abstractions, which unite around this character: “Goodness, Reason, Truth.” These are not words which Keats appeals to. They are rather of an intellectual school — Sanskrit epistemology doubtless, or the Enlightenment moral language Gour would have found in his law studies. According to the study of English education in colonial India conducted by Viswanathan, the colonial curriculum systematically pinned the literary and philosophical values onto the English culture; the colonised subject who assimilated the culture of the colonists could not always merely reproduce it without any changes by passing them through those pre-existing intellectual systems (1989, p. 167). The fact that the idealised in the figure of A May-Week Memory has come to represent abstract categories of philosophy and not the ones based on sense or feeling alone may be just such an inflection.

Seasons of Estrangement: “Winter,” “A Winter Eve,” and “Spring Time”

The three seasonal poems, Winter (p. 44), A Winter Eve (p. 47), and Ovid translation Spring Time (p. 37) are loosely triptychic, where Gour becomes most ambivalent in relation to natural time.

The beginning of Winter is a plain statement: “Winter again her mantle lowers hoary, / And morn and noon and night I see / As one dark as the future dim as transition / Of sun into night or moonlight” (p. 44). The smoothing out of morning, noon, night into a mass of darkness is impressive: the cycle of seasons, which Wordsworth and Keats rely on as a system of meaning — decay and rest, death and rebirth — here reduces to one tone. Instead of being an element of nature, “Frost” is a moral state: “Some hopes deferr’d some happiness misspent.” The rhyme pattern is sustained over the fourteen lines of the poem, but the debate within it is of a sort of forced down as opposed to solved.

The sestet turns on a typically Romantic trick, the sound of some feet in the distance, mixing with it and then running away into the distance, “Away in a sweetness like the breath / Of flowers long since, in death, have faded away” (p. 44). This last simile is of the consistency of the great negative formulations of Keats — beauty is marked by the earlier fact of its loss. Where the attitude of loss and beauty is complex in a single attitude in the poem by Keats, Ode to Autumn, the attitude of Gour seems more resigned in the closing lines. The sweetness is

associated with something that is no longer there. The solace, as such, is ex-post and extremely insignificant.

In his Bate claims that Romantic reaction to winter is never, in some respect, but reaction to the issue of continuity: how does the self hold itself together against the disintegration of natural forms (1991, p. 139)? To Wordsworth, the solution is memory and the so-called in *The Prelude* spots of time, the moment of intense experience with nature, which imprint permanent meaning into the consciousness. Winter is a piece by Gour which lacks such a deposit. There is no build up of landscape. The blackness of winter is not contrasted with the brightness of summer when they were small, since the speaker of the poem has no remembered summer in English that was her home. This is not the drawback of the poem being a poem; it is, in fact, an accurate documentation of a given state.

A Winter Eve (p. 47) is also organized in the same way but drives the pessimism to an even greater extent. The first quatrain heaps unbelievable conditions: snow, hollow winds, death-like dreariness. The sky is torn with Thunders; wailing distances mark the storm. It is the turn of the poem, in the sestet, that is seeking the comfort of the stars: “How sweet must the stars above this shine / And moon and all the heavens live undisturbed / While weep the clouds below, and winds repine” (p. 47). The conditional must is significant: the stars are not experienced as comfort, but postulated as such. The sonnet ends up with still peaceful watch the stars above and shine — not a vision but a statement. The sublimity of winter sky is pursued and grasped at an arm length.

In this case, the discussion of the Romantic sublime as both overwhelming and reconstructing the subject provided by Philip Shaw is applicable (2006, p. 3). The classical trend of the sublime is shock to mastery: the mind, which at first becomes dazed by the surpassing, finds a way out by finding the superiority of its own to the chaos of the material world. The philosophical expression of this, developed by Kant, is that the sublime certifies the superiority of reason over nature (Kant, 1790/2007, p. 121); which is what Burke had explained phenomenologically (Burke, 1757/1990, p. 57). The winter poems of Gour are trying to accomplish this movement, though they fail to do that. The stars provide the concept of peace as opposed to its content. The subject is not covered by the clouds.

Their incompleteness in itself is important. One well versed in the English literary tradition would presumably have known how to perform the Romantic consolation. Gour is quite aware

of the shape — he works the sonnet with technical facility. Not finishing the traditional arc of the sublime is not, I would say, a technical failure, but a registered one: the consolatory gesture is not quite satisfactory, as the subject who would make it is not entirely placed in the landscape out of which the consolation is meant to be drawn.

A contrast is provided by “Spring Time” in an interesting way. The poem is literally a translation of Ovid, and the concession of classical mediation makes Gour free of the demands of the first person Romantic: “’Tis now all bloom, ’tis now the youth of Time, / When swells the new bud out of the hanging veins; / And trees hath embraced round with wreathed boughs” (p. 37). Here is true freshness — there is a realness in swells the new bud that lacks some of the other poems — and the birds sporting on meadows have the same richness of specificity that Keats has. The Ovidian origin is important: Latin poetry is not imbued with the same cultural load that English Romanticism has on a colonial person. Through Ovid, Gour has less to do to establish his connection to the English landscape and the verse is less bound as such.

The Night Landscape and the Imperfect Sublime: “A Night Scene” and “Twilight”

The most ambitious efforts Gour made at the level of sublime are A Night Scene (p. 49) and Twilight (p. 56), and these are also the ones that show the most what this paper has been exploring.

The beginning of “A Night Scene” is filled with the air of quiet concern: “Hark, the warbler of the night, / There is quiet everywhere, the brooklets bound in slumber” (p. 49). The warbler — clearly the nightingale of another name of Keats — sets a Romantic mood at once. The stars shine bright with fair face of the moon, the hills are hugged with clouds with silver tassellated brim, and in the distance there is a sweet mysterious music, which is heard as far dim / through space. This is the nocturnal sublime with an art, the visual space extended to the astronomical, the auditory space to that of a single, indefinable melody, the speaker pulled out of normal consciousness and into a sort of trance in which Wordsworth speaks of in Book I of The Prelude.

The next step of the poem is silent and dramatic. It ends with the speaker looking at the moon and following the brook in sport (p. 49) after the evocation of the weirdly familiar attraction of the place — “still sweet like the catch of some tune / Beloved, heard far from our dear native wood” — gives way to it. The mention of our dear native wood is the most obvious point in these eight poems when the Indian origin comes to the surface. The music one can hear in an

English night is pleasant because it is like the one of another landscape — a native wood, which is not the wood that the speaker lives in at the moment. The analogy goes back to a different location. It is confirmed, as a sublime night of the English, that it resembles what it lacks.

The helpful one in this case is the influential account of the colonial uncanny by Vijay Mishra (1994, p. 7). In his argument, Mishra claims that landscape experience is frequently organized around the re-emerging native geography, feelings become familiar within new contexts and that this very incongruity creates a specifically colonial experience, neither that of terror, but of being out of place in the right place. This is the feeling that is approached with delicacy in “A Night Scene.” The speaker focuses his full attention upon the moon, the brook, the stars, but he is subjecting them to a gentle inflection which is neither held in by the Cambridge night nor by anything that belongs to it.

The most formally irregular poem of the group is the most emotionally bare poem, “Twilight” (p. 56). Its three stanzas allow switching between the natural and the contracted inner world of the speaker, and the distance between them expands as the poem continues. The first stanza puts the speaker in a traditional sublime scenery: grey mist, pounding waves, curled stars, clearing thunder. The orator is lying by himself: “Lying by myself alone.” The recurrence of the word alone that opens the second stanza of the poem (Alone when the night weeps tempest) transforms what could be the Romantic solitude to a closer to desolation.

It becomes the third stanza when the storm ends: the sea smiles, stars reemerge “sheener,” winds sing “joy to all.” The natural world recovers. The speaker does not: “Sing joy to all — but me!” (p. 56). This ultimate exclusion of the natural world process of consolation is, strictly speaking, a sort of anti-sublime — the subject is not re-made in the majesty of nature, he is not a part of the cycle of regeneration the landscape makes around and without him. A parallel relationship is described by Bloom, who writes about the anxieties of Romantic inheritance, and the belated poet who can no longer reach the transformative power of natural experience because he is too conscious of the literary traditions upon which such experience is now mediated (1973, p. 11). Gour, however, must suffer another late element: not literary, but also geographical and cultural. He is not left out of the delight in the landscape because he is too literary, but because he is in some ultimate way not of this.

“Echoes Through the Woods”: The Divided Self and the Limits of Pastoral

“Echoes through the Woods” (pp. 59–61) is structurally different compared with the rest seven poems in this collection. It is a conversation — a dozen numbered episodes — of two voices, one urging the rest in the woods of the present and the other urging the next to press onward to a more desirable world. It most closely resembles the pastoral convention of the Renaissance debate poem, but is based on the Romantic tradition of the interior monologue divided into antagonistic voices, and which Gour would have been familiar with, such as the one in *The Two Voices* (1842) by Tennyson.

The voice that calls the traveller to remain, is the language of rural prosperity: here the rill soft music lulls all care, / The wild winds blow forgetful dreams of fear, / Nor grudges land to render her plenteous share (p. 60). This is England — or England of the rich natural good at least as found in literature. That voice which urges the traveller forward, is of personal sorrow, of unrequited love, of a belief in a happier world to come, which youth once promised, but of which experience has taken naught: For in my youth when youth is fancy fraught, / The world to come a happier world I thought, / But now, alas! I feel it find it not” (p. 60).

This debate is not answered in the poem. It ends on the traveller’s departure: “for I must go, must go forgive!” (p. 61). The repetition — “must go, must go” — is compulsory rather than decisive. The pastoral scenery is not dismissed on intellectual principles; it is experienced to be inaccessible. The traveller is not refuting the fact that woods are pleasant. He maintains that they do not hold what he is seeking, and what he is seeking, the loved person, the better world, cannot be found in any of the landscapes provided in the poem.

When this is juxtaposed with a canonical Romantic poem of the inexplicability of pastoral — the *Ode to a Nightingale* by Keats — it becomes clear what is so unusual about the stance taken by Gour. Keats too cannot maintain the vision of the pastoral: the fancy cannot lie so well / As she is accustomed to lie, deceiving elf. But the failure of Keats is a failure within himself — the fault of imagination. The traveller of Gour is a failure since the landscape cannot do what it needs to do. The forest exists, is nice, and is just not large enough. The inadequacy is not a psychological but a geographical one: this is not a proper place.

According to Elleke Boehmer, the presence of colonial nostalgia in late nineteenth century Indian writing in English, the resultant structural feature is the inability of the colonial subject to inhabit the English literary culture in the same way that it is inhabited by its native professionals (2005, p. 41). The resultant writing is not characterized by rejection, but rather

by a sort of wistful incompleteness — an appreciation aware of itself. The best illustration in *Random Rhymes* of precisely this state is probably to be found in “Echoes Through the Woods”.

Indian Inflections: Sanskrit and the Classical Elsewhere

It is well to pause, before drawing conclusions, upon one such detail of the text, which the paper has mentioned, but not developed, and which is the passage in “A May-Week Memory” where the idealised figure becomes to represent, to the poem, Goodness, Reason, Truth (p. 31), and the similar passage in “Echoes through the Woods” where the poem recognises, through the Cambridge Review epigraph, that these represent yet another intellectual tradition.

These are little but significant instances. Not only had Gour been educated in the culture of British literature; he was also a vastly learned Sanskrit and classical Indian philosopher — his subsequent legal and philosophical works testify to this (Pandey, 2024, p. 11). The triad of Goodness, Reason, Truth finds a more or less obvious echo in Western philosophy, although it also finds a reflection in the Sanskrit *sat-chit-ananda* (being-consciousness-bliss) and the like triadic constructions of Hindu philosophy. It is impossible to learn whether this resonance was consciously aimed by Gour. What is important to the analysis at hand is that the abstraction that he appeals to when attempting to define the value of the idealised figure is not merely the beauty of Keats or the spots of time of Wordsworth, but something more philosophical and less sensual. That is another epistemological practice.

In his highly influential essay on Indian writing in English, R. Parthasarathy presents the thesis of the double bind where by to write in English was to believe in the cognitive frames that English had brought with it, however these frames were not always sufficient to the objects and experiences they engaged with (1976, p. 194). The reaction that Gour has had to this tie, in the nature poems at least, is to write in English forms, but to permit a smattering of vocabulary of another literary lineage. It is a tentative haggling — much less dramatic than, e.g., the Indo-English poetry of the mid-twentieth century, in which the clash between traditions has been made an explicit subject-matter — yet it is there.

The fact in the Cambridge Review epigraph that Gour is happiest when dealing with material connected to his own country does not in *Random Rhymes* succeed with a poem which specifically refers to India. The nearest poem that does so is the poem titled *India My Land*, which is beyond the scope of this paper that has eight poems. But the fact that India does not

feature in these nature poems may not be meaningless. The woods, rivers, skies of Cambridge are detailed; the Indian scene is hinted at, underground, only as the object, which English nature is sometimes likened to and discovered not to possess. The India in these poems is an organizing absence — the location that may be absent which determines what is possible and impossible to say about the places that exist.

Gour and the Romantic Tradition: Inheritance and Departure

Throughout the previous sections, the argument has been developing to a point that now it is possible to formulate a claim in a straightforward manner. Gour is a son of the Wordsworthian-Keatsian tradition, and the tradition is truly inherited: he treats the sonnet-form, the ode-like lyric, the nocturnal meditative poem, the translation, with the skill of one who has read a good deal and digested deeply. When the Cambridge Scotsman reviewer commended the verses he was not being patronising; they truly accomplish, here and there, what they attempt to accomplish.

But the legacy is somewhat of a wrong fit. The consolatory arc of the topographical lyric — perception to inwardness to recovery — is tried out and successful on few occasions. The shock to reconstitution transition that is attained but not achieved in the sublime. The offer of natural bounty by the pastoral as adequate compensation to individual sorrow is accepted and rejected. All these structural incompletions are related to the structural position of the colonial poet who is an outsider to an English literary tradition, who is able to admire the landscape but not to give it an autobiographical grounding and who thus has to write, as Bhabha puts it, almost, but not quite (1994, p. 89).

The reason is, that not quite is no failure. It is a type of knowledge. The partial sublime, the tentative pastoral, the comfort that does not give all the Romantic guarantee — those are sincere descriptions of how it is to be in a beautiful English landscape when you are not English. These lacunae make the poems of more interest than they would be were they merely the reproduction of the canonical Romantic modes without residue.

At this point, the argument by McGann that the Romantic ideology always obscures the historical circumstances in which its representations of nature are created (1983, p. 62) comes in a rather counterintuitive manner. The ideology strives to naturalize the relation of the poet to English landscape — make the dealings between Wordsworth and the Wye appear to be general and transcendent, instead of being historically and culturally particular. By its very

incompletions, Gour unnaturalizes this relation in his poems. They render visible, contrary to what they are likely trying to do, the reality that the Romantic relationship to English landscape is a positioned relationship, which can only be enjoyed by those people who are members of the landscape in a specific sense.

Conclusion

The eight nature poems of *Random Rhymes* are not great Romantic poems. To say so would do Gour a disservice and the tradition one, too. They are, in truth, very curious poems — technically skillful, emotionally true, and historically important in those aspects which their long oblivion has caused us to overlook.

This analysis has three inferences. To begin with, the relation of Gour to the Wordsworthian-Keatsian tradition is of profound yet unequal participation: he is quite familiar with the forms and applies them with considerable ability, but the forms do not respond to him in precisely the same ways as to the poets, to whom he is heir. Second, the pressures which explain this asymmetry are both biographical and structural: the pressures are the result of the situation of the colonial subject who is instructed in and in fact converted to a literary tradition which is not his own. Third, these strains have actual poetic effects — the unfinished sublime of “*Twilight*” and “*A Winter Eve*,” the denied pastoral of “*Echoes Through the Woods*,” the backward-looking loss of “*By the Cam*” — which form a small but significant part of what may be called the postcolonial pre-history of Indian writing in English.

The editor of the 2024 reprint Laxmi Pandey refers to her work as a sense of duty (*dāyittvapūrṭi*) to a literary heritage that has been permitted to rot (2024, p. 10). It is a touching feeling of obligation, and republication is really significant. This paper has attempted to do so, to take the process of recovery beyond the bibliographic to the critical: to not only preserve the text but to read it with the care it merits. The nature poems by Gour are not museum pieces. They are texts of speech, alive as they are, which answer questions concerning cultural belonging, aesthetic inheritance, the experience of being in a landscape which is beautiful and yet not their own, which are questions which have stayed with us very much.

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