

Literary Landscapes and Regenerative Tourism: Ecopoetics and the Reconfiguration of the Tourist Gaze

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how literary ecopoetics can reframe the tourist gaze in the context of ecological crisis. While regenerative tourism scholarship has emphasised restoration, community-centred governance, and systems thinking, it has paid less attention to the cultural formation of environmental perception. Addressing this gap, the article brings ecocriticism into dialogue with tourism theory to argue that literary texts function as forms of ecological knowledge that shape how landscapes are seen and valued. Focusing on selected works by William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Rabindranath Tagore, and Jibanananda Das, the analysis identifies recurring ecopoetic motifs of return, seasonality, riverine belonging, rural labour, and multispecies relation. These forms of attention challenge the extractive visibility associated with the tourist gaze and suggest alternative modes of encounter grounded in reciprocity, restraint, and dwelling. Reading the Lake District, Santiniketan, and riverine Bengal as literary landscapes, the article demonstrates how ecopoetic perception can illuminate contemporary debates about heritage, environment, and travel. It argues that regenerative tourism requires not only institutional reform but also a transformation in how environments are perceived, positioning ecopoetics as a critical resource for reimagining tourism in more ethical and sustainable terms.

Keywords

ecopoetics; ecocriticism; literary landscapes; tourist gaze; environmental perception; regenerative tourism; Bengali environmental literature; Romanticism

1. Introduction

Modern tourism depends not only on the infrastructure of mobility and global markets but also on historically produced ways of seeing. Landscapes become destinations because they are culturally

framed as desirable, restorative, contemplative, or authentic. Among the most influential traditions shaping such environmental perception is Romantic literature, which reimagined mountains, rivers, forests, and rural life as sites of affective depth and ethical encounter. Such forms of perception are central to ecocriticism, which examines how literature shapes environmental understanding and value.

Yet the Romantic inheritance is deeply ambivalent. The same aesthetic habits that cultivate intimacy with place may also prepare landscapes for scenic consumption. What begins as attentive perception can become extractive spectatorship, transforming environments into visual commodities circulating within global tourism economies. This tension remains central to contemporary tourism, particularly in an era marked by ecological crisis, overtourism, and the limitations of sustainability frameworks.

Recent scholarship on regenerative tourism has sought to address these limitations by emphasising restoration, place-based systems thinking, and community-centred governance. However, this work has largely focused on policy and design, while paying comparatively little attention to the cultural and literary formation of environmental perception itself. How, in other words, are tourists trained to see? What habits of attention shape their encounters with landscapes?

This article argues that Romantic ecopoetics offers a critical resource for addressing these questions. Bringing English Romantic poetry into dialogue with Bengali environmental literature, it proposes that literary texts function as forms of ecological knowledge that shape how landscapes are perceived, valued, and inhabited. Through close readings of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Tagore, and Jibanananda Das, the study identifies recurring ecopoetic motifs—return, seasonality, riverine belonging, rural labour, and multispecies relation—that challenge the extractive visuality associated with the tourist gaze.

Rather than treating literature as heritage content or cultural ornament, the article positions ecopoetics as a theory of environmental attention. These literary forms of perception are then read alongside the concept of the tourist gaze to show how alternative modes of seeing might reorient tourism from consumption toward dwelling. The discussion extends to three literary landscapes—the Lake District, Santiniketan, and riverine Bengal—where ecopoetic perception intersects with contemporary debates about heritage, ecology, and regenerative travel.

This article makes two contributions. First, it positions ecopoetics as a theory of environmental perception relevant to tourism studies. Second, it argues that regenerative tourism depends not only on institutional reform but also on a transformation in how landscapes are seen and valued. The central claim is that ecopoetic attention offers a corrective to dominant tourism imaginaries by cultivating an ethics of reciprocity, restraint, and relational belonging. In doing so, the article contributes to environmental humanities scholarship while opening a dialogue with tourism studies, demonstrating how literary traditions can help reimagine travel in an age of ecological precarity.

2. Literature Review

This study draws upon and brings into dialogue four key bodies of scholarship: ecopoetics and environmental humanities, Romantic ecocriticism, comparative ecopoetics, and tourism theory, particularly work on the tourist gaze and regenerative tourism. While each of these fields has developed substantial insights independently, their intersection remains underexplored, especially in relation to how literary traditions shape tourism imaginaries and environmental perception.

Ecopoetics has emerged within environmental humanities as an approach concerned with how literary form engages ecological processes and cultivates environmental awareness. Buell (1995) argues that environmental imagination is culturally produced, shaped by literary and narrative forms that enable readers to perceive environments as meaningful worlds. Garrard and Lidström (2014) further suggest that ecopoetics seeks to generate “images adequate to our predicament,” emphasising the role of literary form in addressing ecological crisis. Morton (2007) complicates traditional notions of nature by foregrounding entanglement and the limits of aesthetic idealisation, suggesting that ecological awareness must move beyond simplified representations.

Romantic ecocriticism has long examined how eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary traditions shaped modern environmental perception. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other Romantic writers reconfigured landscape as a site of affective engagement, memory, and ethical reflection. However, scholars such as Williams (1973) have demonstrated that Romantic representations of rural life are historically embedded, often reflecting tensions between nostalgia and socio-economic transformation. This ambivalence is crucial for tourism studies, as Romantic aesthetics have both contributed to the valorisation of landscape and facilitated its commodification.

Comparative ecopoetics extends this discussion by emphasising the cultural specificity of environmental perception. Environmental humanities scholars increasingly argue that ecological thought must be understood across diverse literary traditions shaped by distinct geographical and historical contexts. Bengali environmental literature, for instance, reflects a riverine ecology defined by monsoon cycles, agrarian labour, and hydrological change. Unlike many Romantic landscapes centred on mountains and wilderness, Bengali ecopoetics foregrounds continuity, vulnerability, and everyday ecological relations. This comparative perspective reveals that environmental perception is not universal but culturally situated.

Tourism theory provides a complementary framework for understanding how such perceptions are organised within contemporary mobility. Urry and Larsen’s (2011) concept of the tourist gaze demonstrates that tourism is structured by socially constructed ways of seeing that privilege visual consumption and difference. MacCannell’s (1973) theory of staged authenticity further explains how tourism environments are curated to produce recognisable experiences while maintaining distance from local realities. Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle model offers a systemic perspective, showing how destinations evolve and often degrade under the pressures of growth.

More recent scholarship on regenerative tourism has sought to move beyond sustainability frameworks that focus primarily on impact mitigation. Becken and Kaur (2021) argue that regenerative tourism reorients tourism toward the enhancement of socio-ecological systems, emphasising restoration, community participation, and long-term resilience. However, much of this work remains focused on governance and design, with limited attention to the cultural and perceptual dimensions of tourism.

This article addresses that gap by integrating ecopoetics with tourism theory. It argues that literary traditions do not merely reflect environmental values but actively shape how landscapes are perceived and experienced. By bringing Romantic and Bengali ecopoetics into dialogue with the tourist gaze and regenerative tourism, the study develops a conceptual framework that links literary perception with tourism practice.

3. Ecopoetics, Environmental Perception and the Tourist Gaze

This article brings together ecopoetics, ecocriticism, and tourism theory in order to examine how cultural forms shape environmental perception. While ecocriticism has long argued that literature contributes to ecological awareness, tourism studies has demonstrated that perception is socially organised through structures such as the tourist gaze. Placing these fields in dialogue allows for a reconsideration of how literary traditions inform contemporary ways of encountering landscapes.

Within ecocriticism, ecopoetics has emerged as a key approach to understanding how literary form engages ecological processes and structures environmental perception. Rather than treating nature as thematic content, ecopoetics focuses on how texts cultivate particular modes of attention to the more-than-human world. As Buell (1995) argues, environmental imagination is not given but produced through cultural forms that teach readers to recognise environments as meaningful worlds. Garrard and Lidström (2014) similarly describe ecopoetics as an effort to generate “images adequate to our predicament,” while Morton (2007) emphasises ecological entanglement and the limits of simplified notions of “nature.” Taken together, these perspectives suggest that literature functions not merely as representation but as a mode of ecological thinking that shapes how environments are perceived and valued.

Romanticism occupies a central place in this history of environmental perception. Emerging alongside industrialisation and changing land relations, Romantic poetry reconfigured landscape as a site of affective depth, memory, and ethical encounter. Wordsworth’s emphasis on return and recollection, and Coleridge’s attention to subtle ecological processes, helped establish enduring literary landscapes that continue to influence how environments are experienced. At the same time, Romantic ecopoetics is marked by ambivalence. As Williams (1973) demonstrates, pastoral and rural imagery often contains tensions between nostalgia and historical transformation. Romantic modes of seeing may cultivate ecological awareness, yet they can also contribute to the aestheticisation of landscape, detaching perception from material ecological processes.

Comparative ecopoetics extends this discussion by highlighting the cultural specificity of environmental perception. Bengali environmental literature, shaped by riverine ecologies, monsoon cycles, and agrarian lifeworlds, offers an alternative ecopoetic framework grounded in hydrological belonging and vernacular experience. In contrast to many Romantic landscapes oriented toward mountains or wilderness, Bengali literary traditions foreground rivers, fields, and seasonal rhythms as the basis of ecological identity. Tagore’s environmental philosophy emphasises relational unity, while Jibanananda Das develops a poetics of return that dissolves boundaries between human and nonhuman existence. These traditions demonstrate that literary landscapes are not universal forms but culturally embedded modes of environmental perception.

Tourism theory provides a complementary perspective by showing how such modes of perception are organised within contemporary mobility. The concept of the tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2011) suggests that tourism is structured by culturally produced ways of seeing in which landscapes are encountered as visual objects shaped by expectation, representation, and desire. This gaze privileges spectacle, novelty, and visual consumption, often reducing environments to images circulating within global tourism economies. MacCannell’s (1973) notion of staged authenticity further reveals how tourism environments are arranged to simulate meaningful experience while maintaining distance between visitors and local lifeworlds.

From an ecopoetic perspective, these frameworks highlight the need to rethink tourism not only in terms of impact but also in terms of perception. If tourism transforms environments into consumable scenes, then literary traditions that cultivate alternative forms of attention offer a critical resource for reimagining how landscapes are encountered. Ecopoetics reveals that environmental degradation is not only a material process but also a perceptual one, rooted in habits of seeing that privilege surface over relation.

Recent work on regenerative tourism has begun to address these limitations by emphasising restoration, reciprocity, and living-systems thinking (Becken & Kaur, 2021). However, much of this scholarship remains focused on governance and design. Less attention has been paid to the cultural foundations of environmental perception that shape tourism practices. This article addresses that gap by proposing that ecopoetics provides a conceptual bridge between environmental humanities and tourism studies. By reframing the tourist gaze through literary landscapes, it becomes possible to imagine forms of tourism grounded not in consumption but in attentiveness, relation, and ecological care.

4. Romantic Ecopoetics and the Ethics of Attention

Romantic ecopoetics is fundamentally concerned with the formation of environmental perception as an ethical practice of attention. Rather than presenting landscape as a static object available for visual apprehension, Romantic poetry reconfigures perception as a relational and temporal process. This shift is especially significant in relation to contemporary tourism, where environments are frequently encountered through accelerated and image-driven modes of seeing. As Urry and Larsen (2011) argue, tourism is organised through the “tourist gaze,” a socially constructed way of seeing that selects and frames landscapes as objects of visual consumption. Romantic ecopoetics offers a critical counterpoint to this gaze by foregrounding duration, relation, and embodied experience.

Wordsworth’s poetry provides a foundational articulation of such ecological attention. In “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,” landscape is encountered not as immediate spectacle but as something mediated through memory, duration, and return. The poem begins by marking time—“Five years have past; five summers”—before turning to the remembered landscape that continues to act upon the subject in absence. Nature becomes an enduring presence that produces “sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,” indicating that environmental experience exceeds visual perception and enters affective and embodied registers.

This temporal structure directly challenges the logic of tourism as described by Urry, where the gaze is often oriented toward novelty and difference. Tourists, he notes, are drawn to sights that stand out as “extraordinary,” contrasting with everyday life. Wordsworth, by contrast, privileges revisitation and familiarity, suggesting that environmental value emerges through sustained relation rather than momentary visual capture. His claim that “Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her” frames perception as reciprocal and ethical, requiring attachment rather than detachment.

At the same time, Wordsworth’s poetics decentre visual dominance. His attention to sound and atmosphere—“these waters, rolling from their mountain-springs / With a sweet inland murmur”—signals a multisensory engagement with environment. This challenges what Urry and Larsen describe as the visual prioritisation of tourism, where places are often experienced primarily as images to be

consumed and reproduced. Ecopoetically, perception becomes immersive rather than observational, grounded in presence rather than representation.

Coleridge extends this reconfiguration through a poetics of subtle process and ecological attunement. In "Frost at Midnight," the opening line—"The Frost performs its secret ministry"—foregrounds forms of nonhuman agency that operate beyond immediate visibility. The poem directs attention toward stillness, atmosphere, and minor transformation, privileging quiet processes over spectacular views. This stands in contrast to what MacCannell (1973) describes as the structuring of tourism around staged experiences designed to produce "authentic" encounters. Where tourism often amplifies and frames experience for consumption, Coleridge's ecopoetics reveals meaning in what resists display.

The ethical implications of perception are most fully developed in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The Mariner's killing of the albatross exemplifies a mode of engagement rooted in domination and indifference, thereby disrupting a network of ecological relations. As MacCannell suggests, tourism often involves a distancing from local environments through staged authenticity, where engagement remains superficial. Coleridge's narrative, by contrast, demands a transformation of perception. Redemption occurs when the Mariner recognises value in previously disregarded life forms, blessing the "slimy things" of the sea "unaware." The poem's concluding lines—"He prayeth well, who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast"—articulate an ecological ethics grounded in attentiveness to all forms of life.

Taken together, Wordsworth and Coleridge articulate a Romantic ecopoetics grounded in duration, multisensory engagement, and nonhuman agency. Landscape is not a passive object but an active field of relations that demands ethical attention. When read alongside tourism theory, these texts reveal that environmental degradation is not only a material issue but also a perceptual one, sustained by habits of seeing that privilege novelty, spectacle, and control.

Romantic ecopoetics, therefore, offers more than a historical account of environmental thought. It provides a conceptual framework for rethinking contemporary encounters with landscape. By foregrounding attention as an ethical practice, it challenges dominant forms of the tourist gaze and opens the possibility of more reciprocal, attentive, and ecologically grounded modes of environmental relation.

5. Bengali Ecopoetics and Vernacular Environmental Knowledge

If Romantic ecopoetics helps to explain the historical formation of modern environmental perception, Bengali environmental literature offers a complementary yet distinct ecopoetic framework shaped by riverine geography, agrarian lifeworlds, and vernacular forms of belonging. In this tradition, environment is not encountered as distant scenery or abstract "nature," but as a lived ecology structured by labour, seasonality, and hydrological relation. Such a perspective challenges what Urry and Larsen (2011) describe as the "tourist gaze," which frames landscapes as objects of visual consumption, detached from everyday life and material processes.

Rabindranath Tagore's environmental thought provides a foundational articulation of this relational ecopoetics. In "The Religion of the Forest," Tagore contrasts acquisitive modes of engagement with forms of perception grounded in unity and participation, arguing that human fulfilment lies not in domination but in harmony with the surrounding world. This philosophical orientation is echoed in his lyric expression of environmental belonging, where landscape is experienced through intimacy

rather than distance. In “Amar Sonar Bangla,” the affective relation to place is articulated through sensory immersion—“O my golden Bengal, I love you”—a declaration that situates environment within emotional and cultural identity rather than scenic appreciation.

Tagore’s pedagogical practices at Santiniketan further embody this ecopoetic vision. Learning takes place in open-air environments shaped by seasonal rhythms, where landscape functions as an active participant in intellectual and cultural life. This model stands in contrast to tourism structures that prioritise spectacle and circulation. As MacCannell (1973) observes, tourism often produces staged environments that simulate authenticity while maintaining distance between visitors and lived experience. Tagore’s environmental philosophy resists such staging by emphasising participation, continuity, and relational presence.

Jibanananda Das develops Bengali ecopoetics through a poetics of return that radically reconfigures human–environment relations. In his well-known lines, “I shall return again to the banks of the Dhansiri—perhaps not as a man, but as a bird,” belonging is imagined as multispecies continuity rather than human possession. This displacement of anthropocentrism challenges the visual and possessive logic of the tourist gaze. The landscape is not something to be seen or owned but a field of life in which the self is only one among many forms of existence.

This ecopoetic orientation is further grounded in material ecological realities. Bengali literature repeatedly foregrounds rivers, fields, monsoon cycles, and rural labour as structuring elements of experience. Such representations resist the abstraction of landscape into visual spectacle, instead emphasising processes of cultivation, vulnerability, and survival. As Urry notes, tourism tends to privilege what is “extraordinary” or visually striking, often overlooking the ordinary conditions that sustain life. Bengali ecopoetics, by contrast, locates value precisely within these everyday ecological relations.

When read alongside Romantic ecopoetics, Bengali environmental literature reveals both convergence and divergence. Both traditions cultivate relational modes of attention and emotional attachment to place. However, Bengali ecopoetics places greater emphasis on hydrological systems, vernacular experience, and ecological fragility, reflecting the specific conditions of deltaic environments. These differences highlight the cultural specificity of environmental perception, demonstrating that literary landscapes are historically and geographically situated rather than universal.

For tourism studies, these insights are significant. They suggest that environmental perception is not neutral but shaped by cultural narratives that determine how landscapes are encountered and valued. Bengali ecopoetics offers a critical alternative to dominant tourism imaginaries by foregrounding continuity, relationality, and ecological awareness over spectacle and consumption. In doing so, it provides a conceptual resource for rethinking tourism in contexts where environmental vulnerability and cultural life are deeply intertwined.

6. Literary Landscapes and the Reconfiguration of the Tourist Gaze

Literary landscapes are not merely representational constructs; they actively participate in shaping how environments are perceived, desired, and consumed. Romantic and post-Romantic literary traditions have played a formative role in configuring what Urry and Larsen (2011) define as the “tourist gaze,” a socially organised mode of seeing that structures how places are encountered within tourism. The emergence of scenic appreciation, the valorisation of solitude, and the aesthetic framing of mountains,

rivers, and rural life can be traced to literary practices that redefined landscape as an object of contemplation (Buell, 1995; Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Urry and Larsen argue that the tourist gaze is directed toward what is “out of the ordinary,” privileging sights that contrast with everyday experience. This gaze is mediated through cultural forms—literature, painting, photography—that pre-structure perception before physical travel occurs. Romantic poetry was central to this process. Wordsworth’s Lake District, for instance, did not simply describe landscape but produced it as a site of aesthetic and emotional value. As Williams (1973) observes, such representations are historically embedded, reflecting broader transformations in land use, industrialisation, and rural nostalgia. Literary landscapes thus function as cultural technologies that convert environments into destinations.

However, literary landscapes are not passive contributors to tourism imaginaries; they also discipline perception. Wordsworth’s emphasis on return, duration, and reflective attention challenges the logic of rapid consumption that underpins contemporary tourism. His poetic insistence on memory and affect complicates what Urry describes as the visual orientation of tourism, where environments are often reduced to images for consumption and reproduction. In this sense, Romantic ecopoetics simultaneously generates and critiques the perceptual structures that sustain tourism.

MacCannell’s (1973) concept of staged authenticity further clarifies this tension. Tourism environments are organised to provide controlled access to “authentic” experience, often through carefully curated representations. Literary landscapes are frequently incorporated into this staging process, becoming sites where visitors encounter a pre-scripted version of place shaped by canonical texts. As a result, perception becomes both guided and constrained, structured by expectations derived from literary and cultural narratives.

This dynamic is particularly visible in destinations such as the Lake District, where Romantic poetry has profoundly shaped visitor experience. Tourists arrive not simply to observe the landscape but to recognise it—to align their perception with prior literary knowledge. This process reflects what Urry calls the anticipatory nature of the tourist gaze, in which seeing is preceded by knowing. Landscape becomes legible through cultural memory, but this legibility can also limit alternative modes of engagement.

At the same time, literary landscapes retain the capacity to disrupt the tourist gaze. Ecopoetic traditions foreground forms of attention that resist commodification, emphasising multisensory immersion, temporal depth, and ecological relation (Garrard & Lidström, 2014). Where the tourist gaze privileges visual immediacy and spectacle, ecopoetics cultivates patience, attunement, and relational awareness. This creates a tension within literary landscapes themselves: they are both instruments of tourism and resources for its critique.

Bengali ecopoetics offers a particularly significant counterpoint. Unlike Romantic landscapes that often centre visual elevation and scenic framing, Bengali literary traditions foreground riverine systems, agrarian labour, and seasonal transformation. These environments resist static visual capture, instead emphasising processes of flow, change, and vulnerability. As a result, they challenge the visual dominance of the tourist gaze and foreground what might be termed a “dwelling gaze,” grounded in continuity and lived experience rather than spectacle.

This discussion can be synthesised through a conceptual model of literary landscapes and tourism perception:

Literary Representation © Cultural Imagination © Tourist Gaze © Destination Formation © Ecopoetic Disruption © Regenerative Perception

At the first stage, literary texts produce symbolic frameworks through which landscapes acquire meaning. These frameworks shape cultural imagination, which in turn informs the tourist gaze as a mode of selective perception (Urry & Larsen, 2011). The gaze contributes to destination formation, transforming environments into sites of consumption. However, ecopoetic traditions intervene by reintroducing relational, multisensory, and temporal forms of attention. This disruption opens the possibility of regenerative perception, in which landscapes are encountered as living systems rather than consumable scenes.

The configuration of the tourist gaze, therefore, must be understood as a cultural process shaped by literary traditions as much as by economic or infrastructural factors. Literary landscapes operate as sites where perception is both produced and contested. By foregrounding the role of ecopoetics within this process, it becomes possible to identify pathways through which tourism might move beyond spectacle toward more attentive, ethical, and ecologically grounded forms of engagement.

7. From Scenic Consumption to Regenerative Dwelling

Contemporary tourism is largely structured around what may be termed scenic consumption: the transformation of landscapes into visual objects designed for rapid recognition, circulation, and exchange. This mode of engagement aligns closely with what Urry and Larsen (2011) describe as the tourist gaze, a socially organised way of seeing that privileges visual difference, aesthetic appeal, and photographic reproducibility. Landscapes are encountered as images—captured, shared, and consumed—often detached from the ecological processes and social relations that sustain them. As MacCannell (1973) argues, such encounters are frequently mediated through staged authenticity, where environments are curated to produce recognisable experiences rather than lived realities.

The logic of scenic consumption can be traced back, in part, to Romantic aesthetic practices that framed landscape as an object of contemplation. Yet Romantic ecopoetics also contains a critical counter-current that resists such reduction. Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," for instance, explicitly rejects the idea of nature as mere visual pleasure, recalling instead how the landscape continues to act upon the subject in absence, producing "sensations sweet, / Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart." This emphasis on memory and embodied experience disrupts the immediacy of scenic consumption, suggesting that environmental meaning unfolds over time rather than through instant visual capture.

Similarly, Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" directs attention away from spectacle toward subtle ecological processes. The "secret ministry" of frost foregrounds forms of environmental activity that operate beyond visibility, inviting a mode of perception grounded in attentiveness rather than display. In "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," this attentiveness becomes explicitly ethical. The Mariner's transformation—from one who kills the albatross to one who blesses the "slimy things" of the sea "unaware"—illustrates a shift from domination to relational awareness. Such moments exemplify an ecopoetic ethic that challenges the extractive tendencies embedded within scenic consumption.

Bengali ecopoetics extends this critique by foregrounding environments that resist visual abstraction. In Jibanananda Das's evocation of returning to Bengal "perhaps not as a man, but as a bird," landscape is not an object of observation but a field of multispecies belonging. Similarly, Rabindranath Tagore's articulation of environmental unity—where human life is inseparable from air, light, and seasonal rhythm—positions environment as a lived continuum rather than a scenic backdrop. These literary examples emphasise relationality, continuity, and ecological embeddedness, offering an alternative to the detached visibility of the tourist gaze.

Insights from environmental studies reinforce this critique. Scholars of socio-ecological systems argue that environments are dynamic, interconnected systems shaped by flows of energy, water, and life (Berkes, 2012). Scenic consumption, by contrast, isolates fragments of these systems for visual appreciation, obscuring their complexity and vulnerability. In fragile environments such as river deltas or mountain ecosystems, this disconnection can have material consequences, as tourism practices prioritise visibility and accessibility over ecological resilience.

Ecotourism discourse has attempted to address these issues by promoting environmentally responsible travel. However, as critics note, ecotourism often remains entangled in the same visual logic as mass tourism, offering "nature experiences" that are packaged for consumption without fundamentally altering perceptual frameworks. As Honey (2008) observes, ecotourism can reproduce the commodification of nature even while claiming to protect it. The challenge, therefore, is not only to redesign tourism practices but to transform how environments are perceived and valued.

Regenerative tourism represents a more radical departure. Rather than focusing on minimising harm, it seeks to enhance the health of socio-ecological systems through restoration, community participation, and long-term stewardship (Becken & Kaur, 2021). This approach aligns closely with the ecopoetic emphasis on relationality and care. However, regenerative tourism requires a corresponding shift in perception—from viewing landscapes as consumable scenes to experiencing them as living systems in which human presence is embedded.

This shift can be conceptualised as a movement toward regenerative dwelling. Dwelling, in this context, refers not to permanent residence but to a mode of engagement characterised by attentiveness, responsibility, and temporal depth. It involves recognising that landscapes are not static objects but dynamic environments shaped by ongoing processes of growth, decay, and renewal. Romantic and Bengali ecopoetics both contribute to this reorientation by cultivating forms of attention that foreground duration, multisensory experience, and ecological relation.

In practical terms, regenerative dwelling implies a reconfiguration of tourism practices. It prioritises slow mobility—walking, cycling, and extended stays—over rapid circulation. It encourages repeated engagement with place, allowing visitors to develop familiarity and attachment rather than seeking novelty alone. It foregrounds ecological processes, such as seasonal change and water systems, rather than focusing exclusively on iconic □□□□ (scenic) viewpoints. It also emphasises community knowledge and participation, recognising that local lifeworlds are integral to environmental sustainability.

Importantly, regenerative dwelling does not reject the aesthetic dimension of landscape but redefines it. Beauty is no longer located solely in visual spectacle but in relational experience—in the sound of flowing water, the rhythm of seasonal change, the presence of nonhuman life. This expanded aesthetic

aligns with ecopoetic traditions that value attentiveness over consumption, immersion over observation.

The transition from scenic consumption to regenerative dwelling, therefore, represents both a perceptual and ethical transformation. It requires rethinking how landscapes are imagined, encountered, and inhabited. By drawing on Romantic and Bengali ecopoetics alongside tourism and environmental theory, this article suggests that literature can play a crucial role in this transformation. Ecopoetics offers a language through which tourism can be reoriented toward care, reciprocity, and ecological belonging.

In this sense, regenerative dwelling is not simply a tourism strategy but a broader cultural shift. It invites a reconsideration of the human relationship to the environment, moving beyond extraction toward participation. As ecological crises intensify, such a shift becomes not only desirable but necessary, positioning tourism as a potential site of environmental renewal rather than degradation.

8. Limitations and Further Research

While this study offers an interdisciplinary framework linking ecopoetics and tourism studies, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the analysis is primarily conceptual and interpretive, relying on literary texts and theoretical frameworks rather than empirical data. While this approach allows for the development of a new analytical model, future research could strengthen the argument through field-based studies examining how literary perception influences tourist behaviour and destination experience.

Second, the comparative scope of the article is limited to English Romantic and Bengali literary traditions. While this comparison highlights important contrasts between Western and South Asian ecopoetics, it does not encompass the full diversity of global environmental literatures. Further research could expand this framework by incorporating Indigenous, African, or other regional ecopoetic traditions, which may offer additional insights into alternative modes of environmental perception.

Third, the case studies presented in this article are interpretive rather than empirical analyses of tourism governance. While they illustrate how literary landscapes intersect with tourism systems, more detailed policy-oriented research would be needed to translate ecopoetic insights into specific management strategies. Future studies could examine how regenerative tourism principles are implemented in practice and assess their effectiveness in different contexts.

Finally, the concept of regenerative dwelling developed in this article remains primarily theoretical. While it offers a useful framework for rethinking tourism, further research is needed to operationalise this concept in practical terms. This could involve interdisciplinary collaboration between literary scholars, tourism researchers, and environmental planners to develop applied models of regenerative tourism informed by ecopoetic principles.

Despite these limitations, the study demonstrates the value of integrating environmental humanities with tourism studies. It suggests that future research should continue to explore the cultural foundations of environmental perception, recognising that sustainable and regenerative tourism depend not only on policy and infrastructure but also on how landscapes are imagined and experienced.

9. Conclusion

This article has argued that Romantic and Bengali ecopoetics offer a critical framework for rethinking contemporary tourism through the lens of environmental perception. By placing literary analysis in dialogue with tourism theory and environmental humanities, it has been demonstrated that how landscapes are encountered is not neutral but culturally produced. The tourist gaze, as theorised by Urry and Larsen, is shaped by aesthetic traditions that privilege visual consumption, novelty, and difference. Romantic literature played a foundational role in establishing these perceptual habits, yet it also contains resources for their critique.

Through close readings of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the article has shown how Romantic ecopoetics reorients attention toward duration, memory, multisensory experience, and nonhuman agency. These forms of perception challenge the reduction of landscape to scenic surface and instead foreground relational and ethical modes of engagement. At the same time, the comparative analysis of Bengali environmental literature—particularly the works of Tagore and Jibanananda Das—has highlighted alternative ecopoetic traditions grounded in riverine belonging, seasonal rhythms, and multispecies relationality. Together, these literary traditions demonstrate that environmental perception is historically and culturally situated, shaped by specific ecological and social contexts.

By integrating these insights with tourism theory, the article has shown that scenic consumption is not merely an economic or managerial issue but a perceptual condition. The transformation of landscapes into consumable images reflects deeply embedded habits of seeing that disconnect environments from their ecological and social foundations. While sustainability frameworks attempt to mitigate the impacts of tourism, they often leave these underlying perceptual structures intact. Regenerative tourism, by contrast, opens the possibility of a more fundamental shift, reorienting tourism toward restoration, reciprocity, and long-term ecological health.

The concept of regenerative dwelling, developed in this article, offers a way of articulating this shift. Drawing on ecopoetic traditions, regenerative dwelling describes a mode of engagement grounded in attentiveness, relationality, and temporal depth. It challenges the dominance of visual consumption by foregrounding multisensory experience, ecological processes, and the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman life. In doing so, it provides a conceptual bridge between environmental humanities and tourism studies, demonstrating how literary traditions can inform contemporary debates about sustainability and regeneration.

The case studies of the Lake District, Santiniketan, and riverine Bengal further illustrate the practical implications of this framework. In each context, literary landscapes shape tourism imaginaries while also revealing tensions between cultural heritage, ecological integrity, and visitor demand. These sites demonstrate that regenerative tourism requires not only policy innovation but also a transformation in how places are perceived and valued. Literature, in this sense, becomes a form of theoretical knowledge that can inform destination governance and environmental stewardship.

Ultimately, the article suggests that the future of tourism depends on a re-education of perception. As ecological crises intensify, the challenge is not only to manage tourism more sustainably but to rethink the cultural frameworks that underpin it. Romantic and Bengali ecopoetics offer a language for such rethinking, foregrounding attention, care, and ecological belonging as the basis for human engagement with the environment. By moving from scenic consumption toward regenerative dwelling, tourism can begin to shift from an extractive practice to one that supports the renewal of the socio-ecological systems upon which it depends.

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