

The article is well-written, clearly outlined and much informative regarding the novel it analyses and its historical-cultural context. The article is very interesting and offers insights in a less-explored aspect inside the framework of Hindi literature dealing with issues related to the Adivasis of the Jharkhand area (i.e. uranium extraction, nuclear power, the slow effects of uranium excavation on the local population, etc.). Thus, the article gives a valuable contribution to the study of Hindi/Indian literature and also to the field of ecocriticism more in general.

This being said, it feels that the novel emerges out of the blue considering the great bulk of fictional literature produced in the area around themes of exploitation of natural resources – even mining alone (be it carbon, bauxite, copper, etc.) is a huge topic in Adivasi literature of the Jharkhand area – and the academic attention that it has started to gain in recent years. The article would certainly improve if the authors could briefly mention that the novel is part of a broader horizon where similar themes and yet others have been since long elaborated in fictional literature, particularly in Hindi.

In addition to this I have two major comments of general kind that encapsulates also some more specific ones, and a third minor comment.

1) I find the theoretical background and concepts derived from postcolonial, decolonial and indigenous studies to which the authors anchor their analysis problematic. The authors are aware of the risk of inverted-orientalism as they make it clear (line 128), but I wonder whether they have reflected on the possibility of their theoretical framework being itself a vehicle of inverted- or reversed orientalism. In particular, I think of the concept of *transculturality/transculturation*, the adjective “onto-cultural” and the contradiction these two concepts build. I will start with the latter. The authors seem to adhere to the idea developed in the last twenty years or so that cultures form different ontologies, i.e. not only different worldviews but different *worlds* or *realities* tout court (something also suggested by the choice of using the expression “Adivasi lifeworlds”), rather than different *views* on a shared world/reality. Yet, even where differences are largest, say for example the different level of technology (note that the ontological turn arose especially regarding indigenous, technologically less advanced societies), the separation between these “worlds” proves to be dramatically thinner. People borne in villages with iron-age technology are easily absorbed into highly technological societies. It literally takes one generation. Let’s not forget that once upon a time India itself was the non-materialistic, technologically less advanced party compared to the West. Then, at the same time Italy gave birth to Enrico Fermi, India got Homi Bhabha. But the same can be expanded to any cultural trait. As some have argued (see debate in Carrithers 2010), ontology seems to be just a bombastic word for culture in the best case, an unwarranted sophisticated term that glamorises cultural difference in the worse. I ask to myself; would anyone speak of Italian ontology and lifeworlds?

Take the spiritualisation of uranium. This is certainly a very interesting aspect that the novel, and later the article, brings up. Yet, even that does not seem that ontologically foreign to me when I think that some people in the advanced West genuinely believe that the earth is flat and that the

sea hides monsters with human faces after seeing some fake pictures on social media. In my village, years ago an old man told me that the “change in the weather” (read climate change) is a divine punishment. There you go: a catholic, Western spiritualisation of climate change (the list of examples I could give is very long). This tells me that the Levi-Strauss was right: the “savage mind” is not the ontology of some specific communities but the state of human mind in a very general sense that transcends this or that culture. Thus, also Jambeera’s careless attitude towards the pernicious dust covering his uniform is not ontologically different from that with which in Italy in the past century the employees of Eternit worked with asbestos without protections. Just unawareness about the risks.

Further, if cultures are so different as to make up separate ontologies, how can they change, influence and assimilate each other with such ease? Thus, I come to *transculturation*. The authors defines it as “the cultural and material strategies of selecting, reshaping, and resignifying modern forms that cannot be reduced to simple assimilation or hybridity (141, 142)”, which is further refined following Diana Taylor according to whom transculturation “affects the entire culture; it involves the shifting of socio-political, not just aesthetic, borders; it modifies collective and individual identity; it changes discourse, both verbal and symbolic” (Taylor, 1991, p. 61)”. In the face of ontologies! Then, the authors do admit that this allegedly ontological difference is so frail that it can be completely bypassed. But apart from that, fine, there are different degrees to which one culture can be influenced by another one. Nothing strange, nothing new. I am not sure whether this sophistication really adds anything or if instead it becomes problematic due to the scaffold built around it. Why would transculturation be better than assimilation? To call “hybrid” the result of the encounter between two cultural traits (say a type of architecture) could also work as long as the word hybrid is used in a simple down-to-earth manner to describe the mixture of traits taken from different cultures. However, it became problematic precisely in the moment Homi Bhabha (the other one) made an effort to make it a highly sophisticated term that creates more problems than it solves.

Building on Denny and Cooke, the authors state that “Transcultural ecocriticism, in particular, promises to offer ‘a radical, decolonial theorization, where Western modes of conquest, categorization and extraction are checked in order to embrace a multi-vocal array of complex expressions’ (Denney & Cooke, 2021)”. How does transcultural ecocriticism offer that? You could perfectly speak of the exploitation of Adivasis without invoking transculturation (or rather without invoking the scaffold build on the word).

But what I grapple even more with is what the authors call a “radical, decolonial theorization”, where modes of conquest, categorization and extraction are defined as Western. I must believe that the authors mean that in onto-cultural terms rather than in the literal sense as the UCIL is not a Western corporation. What I will never understand about decolonial/postcolonial theory, and therefore about the stance of the authors of the present article, is how “modes of X” can be seen intrinsically pertaining to a specific culture while evidently being cross-cultural. The exploitation of others’ people land and resources is a perfect example. How is UCIL’s doing in Jharkhand

Western? Or Indian for that matter? It is the mode of conquest made possible by highly developed technologies and state formations put against parties much weaker in that regard, just like the mode of conquest of European colonialism in the past centuries. In the present historical moment where China is buying Africa and South America in exchange of peanuts, Russia is pursuing a colonial war and so is Israel, how can one speak of “Western” modes of conquest?

2) I come to my second point: ecology. I find weak and also contradictory to the awareness about the risk of inverted orientalism those instances where the article is rather celebrative (instead of analytic) of the stance of the novel, which ends shaping a quite romanticised view of the relationship between Adivasis and nature.

This much emerges now and then and culminates in the ending lines (657-664): “Adivasi bodies in *Marang Goda* are placed as potential agents of redemption, resilience, and justice at planetary material-temporal scales. In a letter addressed to activist friends in Japan and the world at large, Sagen invokes his (Adivasi) belief ‘to stop the annihilation of the whole living world, this earth, that let the dangerous snake in the form of uranium lie in its hole’ (Maji, 2012, p. 193). In the face of the deepening ecological crises in the 21st century, the Adivasi everyday lifeworlds of *Marang Goda* emerge as sites of indigenous cosmopolitics offering ‘new forms of minority rights and forms of ecological citizenship that are global and even planetary’ (John, 2020, p. 97). The Adivasi mode of co-existing with ecology, in Sagen’s words, ‘can save this earth and all the creatures’.”

There is a lot of literature that has problematised and also debunked the view regarding indigenous communities and their relationship with nature, something that the article does not discuss while instead it limits itself to present, and align itself with, the line traced by the novel.

But can’t it be that the “delicate assemblage of nature, humans, social interactions, beliefs, rituals, customs, magic, animals, and other non-humans, in their intricately entangled collective existence” contains a stereotyped view on Adivasis’ relationship with nature? Can’t it be that the “physical and metaphorical tandem” forged by hunter-gatherers leaving in the forest is derived by a romantic view? I struggle to see such a tandem, unless in this tandem you also include being trumped by elephants, amusing yourself watching cockfights, etc. But if we can accept that that makes a tandem, why then can’t extracting uranium from the earth to produce energy and heat for households be regarded as being conceptually similar, and thus also making a tandem with nature? After all, what in the context of Adivasis creates havoc, displaces and kills people is the unregulated and careless approach to uranium extraction and worker’s safety rather than nuclear power per se (which remains one of the cleanest forms of energy production). Thus, while the authors are certainly right in pointing out how the uranium extraction continues a policy of exploitation and the injustices of the UCIL, the question is whether this can automatically turn into an argument against nuclear power. The novel seems to suggest so. But is Sagen’s call a globally feasible solution or just a hyper idealistic and not very pragmatic vision around nuclear power? Whatever your position on nuclear power, this should be discussed in the article.

This approach becomes even more evident with the link the novel makes with Fukushima. Here, again, the view of the novel is taken up in the article without any problematization. The authors urge to “to think speculatively together with the author about the futures and predicaments of *Marang Goda/Jadugoda*, place, ecology, humans and non-humans, their affective intimacies, and emergent nuclear futures” but they do not produce any speculation, and, specifically, they do not speculate over whether or not the two realities (the Indian and Japanese) can be effectively compared. At present, one gets the impression that the authors of the article are suggesting an obvious, perfectly correct connection there and some self-evident truth in the novel that does not need to be investigated. Also, very important, is Sagen’s position really that of the Adivasis or is the author of the novel projecting her own position on nuclear power on the Adivasis? Of course, Adivasis will be against their own exploitation but not necessarily against nuclear power in general. Thus, the connection between Adivasis and being anti- nuclear power should be problematized.

The passage at the lines 572-585 is very interesting. But 1) one could also say that those dreams, those alternative modes of perception are a narrative strategy employed by the author to build on the stereotype of Adivasis being one with nature and 2) I don’t quite understand the last line of the paragraph, “Such ‘change of directionality’ effected through transculturation ‘could help in thinking and moving beyond dichotomies, politically and ethically’ (Mignolo & Schiwy, 2002, p. 252)”. Which dichotomies? How does what was said earlier help move beyond them politically and ethically?

Still on the relationship with nature, the authors speak of “relational terms on which Ho Adivasis engage with animals” particularly regarding the sendra hunt (lines 295-300). It should be acknowledged how Adivasis have been great hunters and for centuries have been hunting down large predators contributing to their extinction in some areas (see Greenough 2001: 153–158). That is also part of the tandem.

To summarise the last comment, what I would expect from the authors is a more detailed analyses of the dialectic between the ideological stance of the novel and pre-existing image of the Adivasis as ecological noble savages.

Small comment: “non-human communities” and “fellow non-human”. Do these make sense?

3) Last point: on the “obliteration of identities under a homogenizing global market-economy”. That was the prediction that proved to be wrong; globalisation produced the exact opposite, namely the explosion of identities, because what became globalised was the tendency to stress difference and locality. In Eriksen formulation; “groups may actually become culturally more similar at the same time that boundaries are strengthened” (Eriksen 1993: 45, see also Friedman 1990 and Poppi 1997).

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