ANIL’S GHOST: TRAUMA, TRUTH AND ARCHIVE

Sarath ~ Grove of the Ascetics
Outline

- General Introduction & Plot Summary
- Questions
- Trauma
- Truth and the possibilities of resolution: 1) rescue; 2) collecting evidence and archiving it.
- References

- British government brought in Tamil laborers and favored them, which the Sinhalese majority resented.

- Conflicts between Tamils and Sinhalese, escalating till the civil war erupted in 1983. (e.g. Black July [depicted in Funny Boy] started with the killing of 13 Sinhalese, followed by the riot in Colombo against Tamils)

- War between the government and LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers, a separatist militant organization which fought to create an independent Tamil state named Tamil Eelam in the north and the east of the island. (more here)

- Author’s note – + antigovernment insurgents in the south.

- pp. 17; 42

- [later] -- a suicide bomber's assassination of a fictional Sri Lankan president
Michael Ondaatje

- Tamil + Dutch Burgher people (Eurasian in Sri Lanka)*

- Michael Ondaatje Interview: We Can't Rely on One Voice (11:13)

- Michael Ondaatje interview on Charlie Rose (2000) (4:00, forensic, love; 7:30 self-projection; 9:45 death & conflict; Palipana; Ananda)

Image and info source
General Introduction: Central Issues

- Traumatized:
  - Anil? Her Past experience in Sri Lanka and in US
  - Anil’s Relations with Sarath and with Cullis—both as an outsider (to Sri Lanka and to a marriage)

- Truth and Evidence; Facts vs. Fiction, Power vs. Law

- Archaeology, Archive, Forensics and the Haptic Aesthetics

- “Professionals” The role of Sri Lankan “teachers” (doctor, monk, archaeologist and statue artist), historical sites and landscape

- The sensual/physical images [the haptic] & witnessing [Later]

- Destruction by the War; Life and Death
Archiving

- Archontic – it commands and keeps things
- Paradoxical – with both death drive and pleasure principle
- Both Psychic and Material; with prosthesis of the inside
- A Dynamic Structure of knowledge inscribed on both the bodies and the landscape, erased and preserved at the same time; happens where there is an originary and structural breakdown.
- Temporality: Discovering the past, understanding the future
- Improvised and Suggesting solutions to the future
Archaeology and Forensics

- Both professional pursuits arousing passion but also creating doubts (in the lab; on the field)
- Both means of constructing histories
- There is a difference between Sarath’s method and Anil’s p. 95 (habit and microscope—a hypomnesic device?)
- More later …
1) **Haptic visuality**: implies the fundamental mourning of the absent object,… where optical visuality attempts to resuscitate it and make it whole (Laura Marks qtd in Marinkova 30).

2) Seeing as an **embodied perception**—but not as obsession or possession, nor with the impartiality of detached observation or the empowered position of the all-seeing subject.

3) appreciated: *Intimacy of embodied perception, fluidity of blurred images, and the agency acquired through shared vulnerability ➔ fluid interface between author, reader and text* (Marinkova 31); dialogic relations
Discussion Questions

- **Politics & Trauma**: Where do you see influences of both colonialism and the civil war? (e.g. 12; the maps; 55-56; the hospital scene 38, on Lakma, and a truck driver)

- Trauma and **haptic embodiment/understanding of grief**: Gamini, Palipana (later) Ananda

- **Anil**:
  - How does Anil relate to Sri Lanka and her past (ghost 53 and pp. 22, 47, 67)?
  - What is Anil’s **emotional status** like as she goes back to Sri Lanka? e.g. Cullis and Leaf (63)

- **forensic and archaeology** and their connections with history, truth and power: Anil vs. SL 54-56, Palipana 102
Discussion Questions

- The other form and contexts of Truth:
  - Sri Lankan “spiritual teacher” Palipana (the monk and academic), What do you make of his forgery of history 80-84; 104-105
  - historical sites and landscape: Anil’s feelings at the Leal Hall 97; 98
  - And continuation of life after death – Palipana’s funeral 107
  - The ritual of Netra Manga 97
1. TRAUMA

and Responses
Fragments in Italics—Traumas as Wounds and Their Postcolonial Implications

- Miner's folk song
  1) Anil with forensic team in Guatemala: a woman between two bodies
  2) p. 12 Cave 14, one of the Buddhist cave temples, was desecrated.
  3) P. 31 *A government official is murdered on a train.
  4) P. 39 The National Atlas of Sri Lanka: what it includes and leaves out;
  5) pp. 41 list of people who disappeared
  6) p. 91-A day in the life of Ananda, a miner.
Anil and her Past: (Dis-)Connections

- long-distance gaze at the island, ”the island no longer held her with her past” (11)
- Anil visits Lalitha, an elderly Tamil woman she knew as a child. 22; smell 69
- Parents died of a car accident; she does not want to mention swimming; should have been a doctor (45-47)
- Self-molding and Westernized: pp. 66- her name
- Anil ill and weeping pp. 59- (Anil at the rest house: about Sarath’s wife, about Anil’s illness, dreams, talks long distance to her friend Leaf)
- Anil and her past lover: [Sarath] Cullis 35-36 (a complete stranger to him), [Grove of Ascetics]99,102
Anil -- Witnessing Injuries and Traumas

- Anil—a forensic pathologist--at work: pp. 13 - she examines victims of political violence, hands trembling when realizing how close the time of death was.
- Anil in Serath’s lab (a ship): she examines skeletons from an ancient sacred cave and finds a fragment of bone which is recent.
- a truck driver nailed to his car on their way back to Colombo
Anil vs. Sarath

- Suspicion of Sarath, Sarath as a enthusiastic archaeologist 27, 29,
- Their differences and becoming closer – pp. 44 --
- 53– Different concepts of truth
- 63-64 – “You have to trust me.”
Sarath’s and Anil’s Methods

- **Cooperation:** pp. 50 as they excavate deep in the caves at Bandarawela, Anil finds a whole skeleton which is new; they name it **Sailor**.

- **Anil’s** pp. 64- returns to Colombo and she continues to examine the skeleton.

- **Anil’s** pp. 70- gets Chitra to help find the first location of Sailor.

- **Sarath’s-- 74--** puts plastics on the skeleton and cuts off Sailor's skull. Knows that they need help.

- **meets with Palipana -- Palipana’s method:** pp. 81-83 (mixing fiction with reality, text with landscape)

- **Suggesting Ananda to help** (Netra Mangala--the ritual of painting eyes on statues).
Healing of Trauma: Palipana and Lakma

- Palipana pp. 84-
  - blind, and cared for by a young girl, Lakma, his niece (90).
  - Lakma’s journeys with P and burial ritual 104-
Cave 14 (雲岡石窟14窟)

**On the Site**

**In Tokyo National Museum**
Bandarawela

Bandarawela picture

Bandarawela Map
Historic Sites

the Lion Rock Sigiriya (錫吉里耶獅子岩)

Quadrangle, Watadage, Polonnaruwa (波隆納魯沃區)
rock graffiti in Sigiriya (pp. 81-
Sacred Quadrangle of Polonnaruwa
leaf halls(?), Anuradhapura

ISURUMUNIYA_TEMPLE

Ambalama
Ratnapura district

http://exploresrilankatours.com/gem-mining-ratnapura.html
Reference

- Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines