ANIL'S GHOST: TRAUMAS AND RECONSTRUCTIONS
Central Issues

- Gamini’s Detachment and Reconstructions —
  - on the personal level (his wife, Sarath’s wife, his parents, Sarath)
  - on the physical level
- Sarath’s and Anil’s Reconstructions —truth and politics
  - The Roles of Truth
  - Sarath and Anil
- Ananda’s Reconstructions —artistic and the archival
  - The President’s Disappearance
  - Ananda’s Eye Ceremony
- The Novel’s Reception
Discussion Questions

- What do you think about each kind of destruction and reconstruction?
- Title, chapter titles and the italicized parts?
- What do you think about the ending? (Note esp. the two paragraphs and the last sentence.)
Anil’s Ghost

- Anil’s Ghost – Sailor, Sarath, and her past
- "Sarath"
- "Grove of Ascetics"
- "A Brother"
- "Ananda"
- "The Mouse"
- "Between Heartbeats" --Anil-Leaf + Gamini
- "The Life Wheel"
- "Distance"
Fragments in Italics—Traumatic Moments

- **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.
- 7) p. 251-53 Gamini about the death of Sarath’s wife
- 8) ? P. 258 Anil’s letter; p. 284 Sarath’s voice recording
Gamini about S’s wife’s death 251-53

Sarith about the death of his wife 278 → hiding himself in his work, in between mortality and immortality of a stone (out of an idea)

Distance between the two – like that between two races?
ONDAATJE SAYS: "I WAS THINKING WHAT DO I LIKE MOST ABOUT ANIL’S GHOST? IT WAS A SCENE WHEN GAMINI DOESN'T WANT TO EMBRACE SARATH'S WIFE BECAUSE SHE'D DISCOVER HOW THIN HE IS. FOR ME, THAT WAS A HEARTBREAKING MOMENT, LIGHT YEARS AWAY FROM THE OFFICIAL STORIES" (7). (SOURCE) TEXT: 210
Gamini’s Detachment

“Offhand hungry gaze” at Sarath’s wife (211) Vivid only with strangers (223); no home

Reasons for Gamini’s Detachment:

- **Family Relations:**
  1) Childhood loneliness a. apparent Contentment; b. ignored and lonely in a cocoon 213; 221-; 224 spinning chair, air rifle (226)
  2) Rivalry with Sarath 223-24

- **His love relations**—with S’s wife (251-53), with his wife (210) with a nurse (249)

- **His career** (Boarding school, Disorganized youth → exhilaration of work another cocoon (215))
Gamini’s Involvement

Helpful and Respected

- To nurses 212,
- with the guerillas 220
- in Northeast area 228-

- Final Communication with Sarath
  - In Anil’s mind – They are closer than they imagined 286
  - Gamini’s taking care of Sarath’s body 287- “a pieta between brothers”
Personal Traumas and Connections: Anil, Cullis and Leaf

- Cullis
  - How they know each other 262
  - Cullis as a writer 264
  - Anil does not want to be a shadow anymore 265

- Leaf
  - Their interest in knowledge 236-
  - Leaf with Altzheimer’s -- 254-
  - The letter 258
  - The phone calls 257 –another perspective
The roles of Truth – geological

- soil as a novel 190
- A monastery 190
- a walawwa (prestige place) p. 202
- Images in cases 156
Different Forms of Truth

Different forms of truth 259
- in the bones and sediment.'
- 'It’s in character and nuance and mood.'
The roles of Truth and Value

- For Sarath – pp. 261-62 the discovery of the Chinese musical instrument
- Idealism or madness in any structure of civilization
- Anil has it, too – the letter 258,
Political Truth and Value

- Truth not connected to authority: e.g. Katugala weary and tired → Where is the President “a green card-board cut-out” (293)
- The body of president Katugala not found for a long time, and “the truth slipped across the city within an hour” (295)
Artistic and Communal Reconstruction

- “Distance”
- A kind of permanence brought to “brief lives.”
  (299) A solution for “hunger.” (300)
- Art as a replacement of demonic act (304)
- Ananda’s
  - Communal and ritualistic
  - wearing Sarath’s shirt 303 – Anil too carry S’s ghost (305)
  - the mud trench like a coffin and a triage (301-)
  - Eye – seeing “all the fibers of natural history around him” (307)
The Critic’s Responses

1) failure to counter “the stereotype of the savage, violent South Asian“ … "the absence of detail in historical context… works against an informed reading, leaving just a general impression of self-destructive violence as the major thread of the novel" (Ranjini Mendis qtd in Kanaganayakam 11-12)

2) all the significant actants—Sihalese: "The JVP* … is portrayed as human; the LTTE [Tigers] in contrast, as inhuman terrorist, killers of children" (Qadri Ismail qtd in Kanaganayakam 13).

3) failing to capture the “truth of history”: “The decision to write an apolitical novel set in the tragic situation of Sri Lanka is profoundly political” (Kanishka Goonewardena qtd in Kanaganayakam 13-14)
Factors to consider

1. The novel’s historical methods (reconstruction an alternative archive for “housing” humans); via monastery, Buddha statue, human touches & professionalism.
2. the italicized parts and “truth” seen from different angles
3. The individual connections:
   - Anil (a Sinhalese and expat) and Lalitha (a Tamil)
   - Anil and Sarath, A and Gamini, A and Palipana, and Ananda; A and Sri Lanka
   - Gamini & Sarath and his wife, G. and the Tamil nurse (241; 248)
   - Palipana and Lakma …
4. Arts, Rituals and Nature: e.g. Ananda performing the Netra Mangala ceremony
Bells – From Kuo Family Temple (郭家廟 7 BC) & Zheng Yi-hou (曾乙侯 5 BC)

- 1978 discovered
- 5 musical scales

Kuo- 7BC

- Discovered in 2016

https://read01.com/06MyJ.html
The Very Large Array
Socorro, New Mexico

https://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap060514.html
Toddy Tapper (Sailor= Ruwan Kumara)

https://www.flickr.com/photos/scottzona/galleries/72157632464932556/
References