

Visuality and trauma Michael Ondaatje' "Anil's Ghost"

¹ V Pandimeena, ² J Keerthana

¹ M.A., B.ED., D.TED., Nadar Saraswathi College of Arts and Science, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India

² M.A., B.ED., Nadar Saraswathi College of Arts and Science, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Literature is a type of healing and the mirrors in life which regardless of what a person is facing daily. Piece of writing that can claim in some of artistic beauty. The writer's opinion is a way of communicate through the written words with arrogant judgment, from the Literature waterfall from long Canadian Literature river. A great literature presupposes an advanced and well integrated society, a mature body and self-conscious soul. The stirring records of explorers and pioneers by discovery and exploration, confederation agreements and purchase, the frontiers were ultimately set. Here by mixture of both frontier life and our position within the world themes are framed in the novel of Anil Ghost by Michael Ondaatje who is the most important contemporary writer and one of the country's biggest cultural exports. In Anil Ghost describes about the great historical remembrance and social contexts the major theme of Anil ghost is balance between east and west; war and its efforts; and understanding of nature and balance. Michael give us a displaying all the riches of imaginary and language and the piercing emotional truth. By political and social contexts exploring transnational identities in Anil Ghost. Michael on showing religion and philosophy representate Buddhism in Anil Ghost.

Keywords: judgment, river, Anil Ghost

Introduction

The forcefulness of evaporation is both corporeal and epistemic. The human rights organization Amnesty International expresses the inexistent as "people who have been taken into protection by managers of the national, yet whose whereabouts and fortune are hidden, and whose custody is denied" (AG-84). Fatalities of vanishing are often blocked without notice and held in top-secret conveniences; if they are killed, their losses are concealed, and their remains are often disposed of incognito. Alice Nelson describes that "from the instant of their disappearance, lost people were committed to a perverse limbo in which the state not only denied their deaths, but also tried to negate their lives by requesting that the vanished never existed" (AG-50).

In spite of the absence of documentable proof, however fatalities of vanishing "did remain to occur through the way in which other people reassembled them broadly, by effective sections that bore observer to those persons' breathes within a public" (AG-50). Dispersed overseas, outside the spread of authorized restriction, representations of the vanished grip the potential of not only countering the removal that fading efforts to convey out, but arranging global provision for the fatalities of fierce battles and inspirational partisan or lawful exploit on their behalf.

These stories are thus everything of salvage, which effort to rebuild the vanished from incomplete records as passionately material, three-dimensional persons, and planned everything of creation, which struggle to make the vanished readable as fatalities to global spectators. As Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith repeat as, stories of human privileges misuses are integrally formed by the settings of their manufacture, movement, and greeting; they invitation as to reflect how styles of movement influence upon the prospects of the teller, the construction of the section, and the style of lecture to

dissimilar types of spectators, as well as the habits in which setting of greeting straight and comprise the moral call of sections and their pleas for redress (AG-6). Ondaatje's Anil's Ghost deliver a photograph of the altering partisan and philosophy setting within which picture of vanishing have dispersed.

The United States government's fear of the rise of Communism in Latin America fueled its covert support for the coup as well as its subsequent recognition of General Augusto Pinochet's oppressive regime. Although the events in Chile are the subject of the film, it is remarkably United States centric in its treatment of them. Indeed, despite direction by Costa-Gavras, a noted international directed recognized for his political films, Missing was nevertheless produced within the context of the mainstream American movie industry.

It was released by Universal Pictures for a mainstream audience and featured prominent American actors Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek in starring roles. All of the film's major characters are American, and its central ideological debate is not over the justness of the Pinochet regime are its violent rise to power, but rather the American values of freedom, independence, and democracy, as embodied in the culture and enacted in law. In order to recover Charlie as a victim within the terms that it lays out, the film must construct him as a true, red-blooded American young man, drawing on formulas of political ideology, class, and gender to do so.

Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost* is the product of a later moment, coming on the heels of what Schaffer and Smith describe as the 'decade of human rights' during the 1990's. In a western- educated forensic pathologist, Anil who returns to her native Sri Lanka to document Human rights abuses in an uneasy collaboration with a Sri Lankan archaeologist, Sarath, her officially appointed partner in the investigation. Unlike Missing, which frames disappearance in explicitly

nationalistic terms through the defining logic of the Cold War, *Anil's Ghost* reflects a globalized moment in which people, commodities, and cultures travel freely and broadly along transnational routes of exchange.

In his context, as Pheng Cheah argues, human rights cosmopolitan fellow-feeling or frequently embraced as a means of transcending the limitations of the nation-state, "which is seen as particularistic, oppressive and even totalitarian," (AG-3). Unlike the specific, nationally-constituted United States audience that *Missing* targets, *Anil's Ghost* addresses a more broadly defined western readership that is presumably concerned about but not directly implicated in the events occurring in Sri Lanka. Ondaatje, himself a Sri Lankan expatriate living in Canada, frames the conflict as abstracted, decontextualized violence, and turns to an equally abstract and universalistic understanding of the aesthetic as a means of overcoming it.

Anil's Ghost humanizes the disappeared by transforming them into a putatively apolitical appreciation of beauty that transcends the particularities of nation, culture, and politics. In comparison with one another, *Missing* and *Anil's Ghost* embody different understandings of the transnational space within which narratives of disappearance circulate, but the representational strategies they employ to reach and move their chosen audiences testify to the inherent limits of different models of internationalism.

In depicting the events of the Chilean coup, *Missing* faces the challenge of giving a human face to the victims of a regime that received both covert support and overt recognition from the United States government. Although thousands of people were killed in the coup, the film focuses intensely and exclusively on just one victim, Charlie Horman, an American writer and journalist who was disappeared by the Chilean military. He is intently watching the scene in front of him, which is visible to the audience as a distant, distorted reflection in the glass of the car window. The tense, ominous music that plays during the scene initially contrasts with the innocuous image of children playing soccer.

They focus shifts momentarily, first to the smiling face of Charlie's friend Terry, who is also watching the game, then briefly to the children themselves, before we witness the arrival of a truck full of heavily armed soldiers. As the soldiers climb down from the truck and the children disperse. More than just creative cinematography, these inventive shot establishes a perspective emblematic of that which the film employs our focus is closely trained on Charlie, whom we are invited to read through his reaction to the scene unfolding in front of him. It is only as a consequence of our concern with Charlie that we witness the events of the coup.

Like this scene, in which the threat of violence serves primarily as an opportunity to shed light on Charlie's character through his reactions to the events he witnesses, the film as a whole functions as an extended debate over his identity and, by extension, his legibility as a victim. At the start of the film, Charlie's conservative and old fashioned father, Ed, sees his son as irresponsible and lazy, a dissolute liberal who has carelessly gotten himself into trouble in a foreign country. Ed's doubts about his son are echoed by the numerous U.S. government officials depicted in the film, who suggest both implicitly and explicitly that Charlie is radical and an agitator who deserves his fate. Indeed, at the start of the film, Ed voices many of the same beliefs that a mainstream American

audience might hold about a liberal expatriate such as Charlie. It is up to Beth, Charlie's wife, to provide Ed with a counter narrative of him as an idealist, a childlike dreamer, and a man of principle.

Beth defends the couple's decision to move to Chile and describes them as 'two normal, slightly confused people trying to be connected to the whole damn rotten enchilada' by presenting herself and her husband as idealistic, sincere young people seeking meaning in their lives, Beth refutes the suggestion that their behavior was un-American, and recasts them as engaged in a quintessentially American such for self-actualization. In addition to defending Charlie's politics or indeed, his redeeming lack there of the film also draws on familiar class and gender formulas to solidify his standing as an upright American citizen. Ed is depicted as a sober, formal, hat-wearing New York businessman who believes in the value of hard work and personal responsibility. He is disappointed and embarrassed by his son's choice to be a writer rather than pursue a more traditional career and dismayed than he sees as Charlie's dissolute and idle lifestyle.

Ed's expectations are colored by conservative formulations of upper-class masculinity, but rather than challenge such norms, the film draws on them to defend Charlie's character. Like his father, Charlie knows the meaning of hard work; he puts in eighteen hour days translating for and editing a small, independent news magazine, a fact which surprises and impresses Ed. Charlie is also a family man and he paid attention to the basics and made a life and a home for himself and his wife in Santiago that Beth remembers as one of the happiest homes they had. And although he may not share Ed's faith in 'God, Country, and Wall street,' Charlie is just as courageous and idealistic as his father. When Ed impulsively attempts to intervene in and stop a violent incident, we are reminded that is son did the same damn dump thing only weeks earlier. By revealing Charlie's embodiment of the masculine norms his father values, the film emphasizes the filial bond between them and reaffirms Charlie's status as a citizen and a patriot.

Missing successfully constructs Charlie as a victim to the extent that he can be represented as a good man and an upstanding and therefore implicitly rights-bearing United States citizen. But this logic, which allows Charlie to be humanized and reclaimed, necessarily excludes both American radicals and all Chileans from the compass of its recuperative effort. The scenes in which Ed and Beth search for Charlie in hospitals, morgues, and detention centers represent the film's most sustained engagement with the widespread violence that follows in the wake of the coup and are among the few instances where other victims are visible onscreen. In room after room of bodies, however, Charlie is the only victim who can be brought into focus as an individual. At one point, Beth finds and identifies the body of Frank Teruggi, an American expatriate who was a committed socialist. Although Beth's discovery, together with the account of Teruggi's arrest by the military, makes the Chilean government's responsibility for his death all but certain, Teruggi cannot be film's primary victim. After a brief close-up of Teruggi's body, which is marked bullet wounds, our focus returns to Ed and Beth, who insist they will not leave the morgue until they have looked at all the bodies. The camera pans away from them and reveals the magnitude of their task. In addition to the piles of anonymous bodies on the floor around them, the silhouettes of

many more, limbs askew, are visible on the other side of a translucent glass roof above them. All of the bodies must be viewed, the short suggests, before the Hormans will be convinced that Charlie's body, the one that matters, is not among them.

Teruggi is not the only victim who cannot enter into representation in the film; for if Teruggi's death serves only to advance the plot, the anonymous Chilean victims who populate the morgue in the scene are reduced to mere scenery. There are notably few Chilean characters in missing, and even fewer civilians. The one Chilean radicle they meet turns out to have gone into hiding and is later safely reunited with his pregnant wife in reality a highly unlikely scenario. The film's selective vision is most poignantly revealed in the scene in which Ed and Beth finally receive permission to search for Charlie in the National Stadium, an improvised prison camp where the military regime detained, tortured, and murdered hundred and perhaps thousands of Chilean civilians in the early days of the coup. When Ed and Beth emerge from a dark tunnel onto the sunny playing field, they are met with a shocking image. As the camera pans across the stands, viewers see they are full of prisoners whose ragged appearance and improvised shelters suggest they have been in captivity for some time. Over the loudspeaker, Beth and Ed identify themselves and address Charlie by name; Ed, lost in his own grief, recalls a cross-country road trip that he and his son took together. Standing on the playing field, they search futilely for Charlie among the crowds in the stands. Ed and Beth occupy the foreground of the scene, and their out sized grief dominates the frame, while the prisoners suffering is depicted in the background, in aggregate and in miniature. Amid the thousands of prisoners, only Ed, Beth, and the absent Charlie are legible as individuals.

The privileged status that Ed and Beth enjoy is emphasized by a Chilean colonel's introduction of them as 'American,' a reminder that their ability to speak in the stadium is entirely contingent on their status as United States citizens. The reality of this privilege is underscored by the reaction of one of the prisoners. In response to Ed's appeal, a man who appears to be about Charlie's age, and with a similar hairstyle, rushes forward, and Ed initially mistakes this prisoner for his son. Leaning on the chain link fence that separates the stands from the field, the man addresses the Hormans sarcastically in accented English. 'My father cannot come here. But how about some ice cream with dinner, Coronel Espinoza' the prisoner's statement highlights the exceptional nature of Ed's position in relation to the many Chilean families desperate for knowledge of loved ones detained in the stadium and elsewhere.

By usurping the discursive space reserved for Charlie in order to make his own impossible demands, the Chilean prisoner also highlights the Hormans and the film's selective vision. In order to become visible as an individual and legible as a victim, the man must claim the position of privilege reserved for Charlie, yet in doing so he once again becomes invisible, for the optic of the film quickly reduces him to Charlie's uncanny double. This man, too, is a victim of the regime, and has a father who is concerned about his wellbeing, but once it becomes clear that he is not Charles Horman, his personal story is of little concern to Ed and Beth and his no place in the film. The scene thus foregrounds the limitations of Missing's perspective and reminds viewers of the injustice of a

differential vision in which Charlie, always the object of our search, renders others invisible. The prisoner's outburst in the stadium is hardly necessary to the film's plot; indeed, as the Chilean writer Ariel Dorfman notes, 'the scene is touching but implausible' given the disciplinary powder of the detention center (796). By making Charlie's identity as an upstanding American citizen central to its project of recovery, Missing may succeed in making him legible as a victim to its United States audiences, but as a consequence the film cannot confer the same visibility on Chileans.

If the internationalism of Missing predicated on exceptionality understandings of American national identity, the internationalism envisioned by Anil's Ghost is grounded in a notion of supra-national aesthetic value. Set in the late 1980s or early 1990s, during one of the most intensely violent periods in Sri Lanka's civil war, Ondaatje's novel, like Missing, revolves around efforts to identify a single, individual victim. Initially, the novel presents its readers with a mystery Anil, a forensic pathologist representing an international human rights organization, and Sarath, the government archaeologist with her paired, discover a contemporary skeleton in an ancient burial site.

Knowing that the skeleton's location in a controlled archaeological site strongly implicates the government, they undertake to identify the victim, whom they nickname 'Sailor,' and to document his disappearance. As the novel progresses, however, its focus shifts from Anil's effort to identify Sailor through forensic science to the lives of the individuals that surround her, each of them has found a way to coup with the conflict that rages around them. By the end of the novel, Anil's search for truth in 'bones and sediment' has faded to the background, and the novel's shifting temporality and roving, omniscient narrative instead present readers with a collage of what Sarath describes as "character and nuance and mood" (AG- 259)

Ultimately, the silences that haunt the margins of Missing and Anil's Ghost call into question the distinct forms of internationalism on which each text is premised. The framework of American exceptionalism in Missing may serve to render Charlie legible as a victim and to condemn the United States government's involvement in the Chilean coup, but this exceptionalist logic denies the very possibility that the United States, like Chile, could be a place where rights are violated and injustices are perpetrated in the name of the national security. The universalism conceals, the forms of power and inequality that endure in both the cosmopolitan notion of shared human values and the infrastructure of international human rights law to which the novel makes recourse.

For indeed, as Cheah notes, the very concept of humanity on which both cosmopolitanism and human rights are premised is inevitably contaminated by the inhuman technologies of power at work in global capitalism (AG-11). As representation of the disappeared, both Missing and Anil's Ghost are marked by constitutive silences that underwrite the distinct forms of internationalism each text embraces. For members of the international audiences these texts address, to attend to these silences is to acknowledge complicity in their representational choices, and to recognize the limits of the internationalism they instantiate.

In the course of this dissertation, they have demonstrated that the use of visual discourse, metaphors and artistic vision in

Anil's Ghost can produce a treatment of trauma that is deeply rooted in human perception, understanding and experience allows for new way of attempting to understand trauma and new paths for empathy, and enables personal and communal regeneration. Vision becomes engaged in traumatic experience, and as such, man's dominant connection with and perception of reality is implicated, distorted and re-interpreted as well. However, the visual sense also allows for a partial rediscovery of and reconnection with the world. Psychic trauma defies understanding, and the use of visually informed devices in trauma narrative serves to explore the boundaries of comprehension while proposing alternative routes of access, knowledge and empathy. New and reinterpreted forms of testimony, communication, community and healing accompany this exploration.

References

1. primary source: Anil's Ghost by Michael Ondaatje
2. <https://canadacultureandliterature.wordpress.com/author/pacamachosands/>
3. <https://canadacultureandliterature.wordpress.com/2013/04/>