

Engaged Buddhism and Literature: The Art for Peace in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*

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ABSTRACT

Little attention has been paid to the significant connection of engaged Buddhism to Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000). This author argues that Ondaatje takes advantage of A. T. Ariyaratne's Sarvodaya Movement to ground his solution to the Sri Lankan ethnic war. The solution starts with self-awakening and ends in all-awakening. Self-awakening involves the ability to go beyond representation, to recognize the interdependence of living beings, and to forgive the enemy. Ondaatje thereby aims to deal with war at its source: the hierarchical demarcation and the accumulation of mutual hatred. Because capitalism and central government, an inheritance from the Western colonization, contribute to the war, all-awakening begins a social reform that has power not on the top in the social hierarchy, but at the bottom, and that works from the bottom up to create an anti-capitalist society of traditional value system. This progress from self-awakening to all-awakening and the reform of society from the bottom up form the Sarvodaya Movement's political agenda, too. Ondaatje's special contribution lies in making Buddhist understanding artistically accessible at a time when the traditional Buddhism in Sri Lanka has become a slogan for collective identity. Also, by turning all the main characters into artificers, by compressing in Anil's ghost individuals' sufferings and sacrifices that stem from a national past, Ondaatje demonstrates how literature can effectively supplement an earthly peace movement with imaginary creation.

KEY WORDS

Sarvodaya, self-awakening, all-awakening, forgiveness
interdependence



Most critics of Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* concern themselves with the issues of justice, identity, and truth. Other critics, such as Geetha Ganapathy-Doré, treat the question of art. It is therefore surprising that, when dealing with an author who was born in Sri Lanka and whose relatives have been there for several generations, critics should approach his work about Sri Lanka predominantly from a Western point of view. Further, one cannot but wonder whether or not a writer as sensitive to postcolonial issues as Ondaatje would approach a country that has been under Western rule and influence for hundreds of years and offer his answer to the ethnic war there from a predominantly Western point of view. John Breslin notes that Ondaatje has done much research before writing this peace book (26). It is my belief that, in writing *Anil's Ghost*, Ondaatje could not but see that Sri Lanka is a religious country and might very well have availed himself of A. T. Ariyaratne's famous Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement as a general model to ground his answer to the ethnic war. To read *Anil's Ghost* with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in mind not only enables a better grasp of Ondaatje's specific answer to the war but also sheds light on the power of literature as a supplement to Buddhist teachings.

In the following I first examine the cause of the Sri Lankan civil war and Ondaatje's understanding of it. Then I argue that Ondaatje's answer to the Sri Lankan civil war starts with self-awakening and ends in all-awakening. Self-awakening involves the ability to go beyond representation, to recognize the interdependence of living beings, and to forgive the enemy. All-awakening begins a social reform that has power not on the top in the social hierarchy, but at the bottom, and that works from the bottom up to create an anti-capitalist society of

traditional values. This progress from self-awakening to all-awakening and the reform of society from the bottom up basically reflects the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement's political agenda, too. Ondaatje's special contribution lies in making Buddhist understanding artistically accessible at a time when the traditional Buddhism in Sri Lanka has become a slogan for collective identity. Also, by turning all the main characters into artificers, by compressing in Anil's ghost individuals' sufferings and sacrifices that stem from a national past, Ondaatje demonstrates how literature can effectively combine an earthly peace movement with imaginary creation.

I. Cause of the Sri Lankan Civil War and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

At the first sight, Ondaatje's confrontation with the Sri Lankan civil war between the majority Buddhists Sinhala and the minority Tamils, mostly Hindus, can appear as a lack of sufficient concern for the political problem. According to Marlene Goldman, Kanishka Goonewardena complains that *Anil's Ghost* seems to be "about people dragging a constant flow of dead bodies out of a river that has no hint of what's happening upstream" (28). It is true that Ondaatje offers little portrayal of the ethnic conflicts. However, this apparent lack of political concern does not necessarily mean that Ondaatje misses the point in his answer to the war.

Before the publication of *Anil's Ghost* in 2000, Ondaatje's view of the Sri Lankan ethnic division already foreshadows of historians' concern's about the roots of the war. In his *Running in the Family* (1982) he expresses his dissatisfaction with ethnic division. He says, "Everyone [in Ceylon] was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back many generations" (41). Historians' view of the war is centered on the constructedness of ethnic division. Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam points out that in Sri Lanka opposing parties use history selectively and treat the constructed history as rationale to justify their opposition (120). Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah observes that the Sinhala and the

Tamils have not always been antagonistic. From the thirteenth century to the time of British colonization, “a social separation and a distancing, rather than a steady symbiotic interaction, better characterizes the state of coexistence between Tamil and Sinhala political formations inside the island” (Tambiah 138). British colonization greatly contributed to the ethnic demarcation because it appointed representatives of the Sri Lanka on a communal basis (Nissan and Stirrat 30–32). Jonathan Spencer claims that “By the handover of power in 1948 a tradition of regional Tamil opposition to the dictates of Colombo was firmly established” (9). Lastly, in recent years, and particularly since 1977, ethnic violence can be directly related to the dismal performance of the Sri Lankan economy over the last thirty years (Nissan and Stirrat 39).

If politicians aggravate ethnic demarcation to divert attention from poor economic performance, and if ethnic demarcation leads to unfair distribution of resources, which further leads to ethnic conflict, it comes as no surprise that Ondaatje, as a poet and novelist who “has, in fact, been described as a writer fascinated with borders” (Hutcheon 81), would have demarcation and the history of antagonism as his main target.

One can infer two more causes for this war from the first one. One is a side-product of the war. The Sri-Lankan civil war had lasted for decades by the time Ondaatje decided to deal with it. It is therefore reasonable for him to have sought to solve the accumulation of hatred among the warring parties.

The ultimate cause, as one can infer from Sri Lanka’s poor economic performance and politicians’ subsequent manipulation of ethnic issue, is capitalism. As Ariyaratne observes, Sri Lankan capitalism, inherited from the Western rule, only makes the society poorer and unstable (“Sarvodaya Shramadana’s Approach to Peacebuilding” 75, 77). That is how Ondaatje sees it in *Anil’s Ghost* as well. He says that the Sri Lankan civil war “was a Hundred Years’ War with modern weaponry, and backers on the sidelines in safe countries, a war sponsored by gun- and drug-runners. It became evident that political enemies were secretly joined in financial arms deals. ‘*The reason for war was war*’” (43).

Now I want to bring the reader's attention to the religious condition in Sri Lanka before further examination because three fourths of the Sri Lankan population profess themselves to be Buddhists, and, as I mentioned at the beginning, Ondaatje's solution to the war resonates with the teachings and practices of Ariyaratne's Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. It is true that during the civil war traditional Buddhism in Sri Lanka has become a slogan for collective identity and, hence, differs very much from its past when it valued peace and was not burdened by identity issues (Tambiah, *Sri Lanka* 57–64). Still, Ariyaratne's Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement differs from traditional Buddhism. Further, Ariyaratne was the winner of the 1992 Niwano Peace Prize, the 1996 winner of Gandhi Peace Prize, and, for the Sri Lankan people, one of the most prestigious successors to President Jayawardene in 1980s (Bond, *Buddhism at Work* 31, 88). It is therefore highly unlikely that Ondaatje should ignore him.

Ariyaratne started the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in 1958 as part of the Buddhist revival (Bond, "A. T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka" 121), and it began to have peace as its major concern from July 1983 when the Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts became more radical (Bond, *Buddhism at Work* 30). As this movement stems from the Buddhist spirit and aims to embrace all religions, even those "Tamils who have worked with Sarvodaya have not regarded it as a Sinhala Buddhist organization, but as a Sri Lankan organization although some Tamils outside of the Movement have perceived Sarvodaya as Buddhist" (Bond, *Buddhism at Work* 30–31). Ariyaratne is against capitalism, and he works for a peace that starts from the self-awakening of individuals and ends in all-awakening (Ariyaratne, "Sarvodaya Shramadana's Approach to Peacebuilding" 75, 77). Further, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement trains village people and organizes them so that villages can have their banks and can develop their own agriculture and industries. Thus, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement works for a social reform and for a democracy of participation through a bottom up movement with villages as the smallest power units (Ariyaratne, "Sarvodaya Shramadana's Approach to Peacebuilding" 72–74).

II. Demarcation and Familial War

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement starts its work of social reform with self-awakening because a new society needs a sound spiritual infra-structure. It gets its inspiration for self-awakening from Buddhist thought. For Ariyaratne, “there are three principles of reality Buddha wants us to realize by ourselves” (*Buddhism and Sarvodaya* 5): the principle of change, the principle of suffering, and the principle of egolessness. With regard to the third principle, “[t]he deceptive notion of I, me, and mine or ego is at the root cause of anger, hatred and greed. This erroneous belief in a permanent unchanging personality arising from the ‘Ego’ or ‘I’ factor Lord Buddha dismissed as false” (*Buddhism and Sarvodaya* 6). If for Ariyaratne, identity is the source of violence, Ondaatje begins his examination of the cause of war with the formation of identity in the family and shows the consequent familial war in which the contrast between Anil Tissera and her brother, and that between Sarath Diyasena and his brother Gamini, parallel the contrast between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese majority.

The familial wars in *Anil's Ghost* can be traced to a person's reliance on territorial representation that is connected to social privileges and to a person's inborn fear of chaos. In Anil's case, at the beginning of the story, she returns to her motherland, Sri Lanka, as a forensic archeologist working for an international human rights organization. We soon learn that, more than fifteen years ago, when she was a child in Ceylon, she began her struggle for “her brother's unused second name” because she “had been given two entirely inappropriate names” (67). She desired her brother's name for “its slim, stripped-down quality, its feminine air, even though it was considered a male name” (68). Her brother wanted to keep the name because “[t]wo names gave him more authority, and a second name suggested perhaps an alternative side to his nature” (67). Ondaatje compares Anil's struggle to possess a desirable name to a war: because of her persistence in asking for the name, her parents finally “threw their hands up,” and “the siblings worked out a trade between them”

(67–68).

While the war between a brother and a sister can result from the struggle for desirable representations, the war between brothers can stem from hierarchical representation, too. Gamini wages a war with his brother, Sarath, because in his childhood he was eclipsed by his elder brother in the family and could claim little to his name. “Sarath, for his parents, was the boy who walked the heavens. The three of them laughed and argued during dinner while Gamini watched their style and manner” (222–23). In his childhood, Gamini “remained invisible, even to himself, seldom looking into mirrors save when dressed in costumes” (223). If his invisibility at home leads to his becoming a secret in his family, Gamini would later be shocked to learn that his eclipse by his “benign brother” leads to his “unlearned vengeance” (223). A scene in his childhood demonstrates that Gamini’s invisibility and vengeance lead to war: Gamini approached his aunt and her friends secretly with an air gun. He had prepared to shoot out a light near them, but, after some misfires, his aunt looked up and saw him with an air rifle, aiming at them (226).

III. Artificers’ Lessons on Going beyond Representation

Confronting the problem of identity, a Buddhist may suggest the practice of mindfulness, which, for Padmasiri de Silva, is “the most effective way of realizing the relational and constructed nature of ourselves” (34). Ondaatje does not have his characters practicing meditations of all kinds as Maxine Hong Kingston does in her *The Fifth Book of Peace*. Yet it is noteworthy that the two major initiations exerted on Anil and Sarath both come from artistic figures related to Buddhism. One of them is the archaeologist and epigraphist, Palipana, who is a nationalist Buddhist, and who, according to Erangee Kaushalya Kumarage, is the “ultimate artificer” because he, like a novelist, sees the whole of history through fragments of evidence (151). The other is Ananda Udugama, an artificer—in Buddhism Ananda being one of Buddha’s disciples. I believe that Ondaatje’s replacement of Buddhist instructors with these artificers comes from the practical

considerations of the composition of the Sri Lankan population.

Admittedly, three-fourths of the Sri Lankan population is Buddhist; their understanding of Buddhism is, however, usually superficial (Copleston 273). Further, as a measure against capitalism, Ariyaratne rebuilds villages and asks villages “to start their own agricultural, agro-industrial, and other income-generating projects and enterprises and also create service opportunities for the village youth” (“Sarvodaya Shramadana’s Approach to Peacebuilding” 73–74). Since craftsmen play a significant role in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, and since most professed Buddhists in Sri Lanka are not very interested in studying the religion, by having his initiators craftsmen related to Buddhism, Ondaatje can take advantage of the Buddhist halo and the importance of craftsmen in re-building Sri Lanka. What remains for him to do is to prove that all craftsmen can be as wise as Buddha.

The importance of craftsmen, or artificers, in Ondaatje’s peace book is evident from his presentation of the main characters. As Kumarage has pointed out, all the main characters in *Anil’s Ghost* are artistic craftsmen because, like a novelist, they are all involved in making a whole out of fragments. Anil and Ananda are “artisans and artificers” because they try to reconstruct the identity of the skeleton nicknamed Sailor by Anil so that they can prove the government’s involvement in murdering its people (Kumarage 162–64). Sarath dreams of re-creating “a city from fragments of existing evidence found in literature of the period” (Kumarage 154). Anil’s American lover, Cullis Wright, is a writer who compares himself to a tinker (152). Finally, Gamini the surgeon puts a body back together (Kumarage 139). Based on Kumarage’s logic, we can infer that, if anyone working for the re-membering of Sri Lanka can be an artificer, or a potential Buddha, then each one of the Sri Lankan people can achieve the self-awakening of Ondaatje’s characters. This possibility of self-awakening for each person makes Ondaatje’s peace project more feasible than one that sticks to the connection between awakening and Buddhism. It also does not contradict with the Sarvodaya Shramadan Movement since this movement is not ostensibly Buddhist.

Thus Ondaatje's analysis of the problem of going beyond representation represents a significant artistic supplement to Buddhist teachings. *Anil's Ghost* clearly shows that human beings are trapped in a predicament. On the one hand, human beings are "full of anarchy" and would "take [their] clothes off because [they] shouldn't take [their] clothes off" (138). On the other hand, a person needs a sense of safety. In the amygdala section, we learn that "[d]uring autopsies [Anil's] secret habit of detour is to look for the amygdala, this nerve bundle which houses fear—so it governs everything. How we behave and make decisions, how we seek out safe marriages, how we build houses that we make secure" (135). This predicament reminds one of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari say in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* about territorializing refrain. A child in the dark sings a song to find "a calming and stabilizing [. . .] center in the heart of chaos" (311). In addition to the territorializing refrain, there also comes the moment when one launches out of the territory "to join with the World, or meld with it" (311). Thus one not only finds the sense of safety by territorializing the world but also seeks to break out of suffocation from the enclosed space by opening a crack in the territory. So in *Anil's Ghost* a solution to the problem of war would depend on a balance between the need for territorializing representation and the need for the life force to break out of bondage.

Ondaatje meets this question of balance with the interactions among the main characters in this novel. Through their interactions, characters learn to go beyond representation in their understanding of reality. Through their understanding of reality, characters learn to see the interdependence of people. When characters see the necessary co-existence of themselves with and the continuance of their existence in other living beings, they overcome their obsession with identity. Thus Anil changes through her interactions with Palipana and Ananda.

Palipana exerts his influence on Anil when the latter and Sarath come to the Grove of Ascetics with the hope that Palipana, Sarath's former teacher, may help them identify Sailor. As a famous nationalist Buddhist whose name once appeared in the Sinhala encyclopaedia, Palipana lost his reputation when historians began to seriously question

“his publication of a series of interpretations of rock graffiti” (81). Palipana came “across an illegal story, one banned by kings and state, in the interlinear texts” (105), and his interpretations explained “the political tides and royal eddies of the island in the sixth century” (81). Since the earliest reference to the term, Sinhala appears “in one of the graffiti at Sigiri which have been assigned by Paranavitana to a period extending from the eighth to the tenth century AD” (Gunawardana 47), Palipana’s discovery predates the Sinhala history and can either support or endanger the foundation of that history. The trouble is that Palipana “could not prove he was right” (83), even though people could not prove his theories to be wrong. And the reason for his inability to prove himself is that Palipana has gone beyond representation in his perception of reality.

Kumarage cites Gamage’s comment on the scandal of the Sri Lankan archaeologist, Senarat Paranavitane, as a support to explain Palipana’s scandal. Gamage claims that “as in the case of all historical fiction, there is a kernel of fact and this kernel gets embellished and sharply focused as the fertile imagination of the novelist gives life to it” (qtd. in Kumarage 151). Kumarage explains that Palipana was able to see the whole story because he had grasped the context. However, he offers no explanation on how Palipana can sincerely believe his own fiction. Palipana’s discovery would remain a guesswork if he built the rest of the story because he was able to see the rest after he had grasped the context. If we turn to Deleuze and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we can better clarify Gamage’s comment and see how Palipana does not lie to himself when he believes in the validity of his own discovery.

Deleuze argues in *Difference and Repetition (DR)* that the real consists of the virtual and the actual. “Every object is double [. . .] one being a virtual image and the other an actual image” (*DR* 209). “Intensity is the form of difference in so far as this is the reason of the sensible. Every intensity is differential, by itself a difference” (*DR* 222). Actualization consists of transforming the virtual through the intermediary intensities and consequent sensations into the realm of the actual, that is, the realm of measurement, form, quality, and representation.

The example Deleuze cites to illustrate how one approaches the virtual is relevant to our examination. He says, "To learn is to enter into the universal of the relations which constitute the Idea [a changing centerless organization of differences], and into their corresponding singularities" (*DR* 165). That is, one tries to grasp the virtual that generates its different versions in different place and time. In learning to swim, one does not just imitate the actual gesture of the master. One tries to grasp the right feeling so that one can swim with gestures very much different from the master's. To grasp the virtual that actualizes into different versions in different place and time enables one to create the new.

Merleau-Ponty's remark is also relevant here. He argues that representation is imposed. A blind man who has never seen the world and has newly gained his sight through operation would be at a loss at what to see because he would use his gaze as if it were a hand and try to feel color until he has learned "what it is to see" (223). One can gather that, as perception of objects through the eye is determined by a fore-knowledge of what it is to see, tactile experience of the world depends on a fore-knowledge of what it is to feel, since tactile experience of objects is from part to part, mediated by time, which results in a certain "blurring" between parts in the simultaneous presentation of the perceived whole that consists of the parts (Merleau-Ponty 224). This imposition of representation on one's visual or tactile approach to the world opens the possibility for a different understanding of reality when one is suddenly forced to renounce one's habitual way of approaching reality.

With Merleau-Ponty's observation, it becomes significant that Palipana began to perceive reality differently when he was losing his eyesight. As Sarath tells Anil, "[i]n the last years of partial sight, [Palipana] thought he finally saw the half-perceived interlinear texts" (191). Palipana traced with his fingers the letters on the rock, and he felt the quality and temperature of the rock. "[H]e approached every problem with many hands. He was more likely to work beside a stonemason or listen to a dhobi woman washing clothes at a newly discovered rock pool than with a professor from the University of

Peradeniya" (82). If using "many hands" enables Palipana to perceive reality differently, in his working beside a stonemason or a dhobi woman, Palipana learns by imitating the producers of the runes so that he might approach the virtual coexisting with the actual runes. Instead of relying on represented facts by conversing with a professor, Palipana sees to the workers so that he might learn to grasp the circumstances for the coming into existence of the runes and the relationship between the production process and the resulting runes. In this going from the represented fact to its virtual side Palipana begins to perceive the eclipsed reality.

The fact that Palipana goes beyond representation in his perception of reality is not lost to Anil, who is initially limited by representable facts. When she first arrives in Sri Lanka as a forensic archeologist working for a human rights organization to investigate the war, her habitual reliance on represented facts stands between her and the reality of life around her: "She never usually translated the time of a death into personal time, but she was still working out what hour it was in London, in San Diego" (13). Antoinette Burton notes that, after Sarath excavated bones, including Sailor's, and left them in the laboratory, Anil names the other reconstructed bodies of bones Tinker, Tailor and Soldier, to evoke "the famous 1975 John Le Carré thriller *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*" (44). This evocation indicates Anil's imposition of a theatrical plot onto the four skeletons, her reduction of them to representable characters and her detachment from their life" (Burton 13). But what may happen to Anil when she is in the Grove of Ascetics where she lives with the legendary Palipana, and where civilization and society seem unreal?

A good example of Anil's change in the Grove of Ascetics appears in her awareness of her animality. In other words, she leaves behind her habitual way of perceiving reality. In the Grove of Ascetics, "[i]t felt to Anil as if her pulse had fallen asleep, that she was moving like the slowest animal in the world through grass" (97). Watching Palipana, she "imagined he could hear the one bird in the forest distance. She imagined [. . .]. She was sure he could hear all that [. . .]. And all the while the blunt eyes looked out, piercing whatever caught

them” (87). If she can be personally sure of the correctness of her imagination, and if she believes in Palipana’s ability to see without eyes, she is not limited by representable facts in her perception of reality.

Another important case of going beyond representation is Gamini’s change. He takes a route different from Anil’s to learn to go beyond representation, but his initiation also comes through artistic experience. The most important initiator in his case is Skanda, another surgeon. Gamini learns to perceive reality differently through a copy of Jung with readers’ writings in the margins and Skanda’s talk, both of which are much cherished by him (231). Remembering how in Palipana’s case a renunciation of one’s habitual way of perceiving reality enables one to go beyond representation, we can see how Skanda’s talk helps Gamini. Skanda says, “The important thing is to be able to live in a place or a situation where you must use your sixth sense all the time” (231). The emphasis on the sixth sense also implies that what one perceives can only be fragments, and that one has to figure out the whole, like a novelist. Gamini has understood Skanda’s talk: there is “a sentence he became excessively fond of: *In diagnosing a vascular injury, a high index of suspicion is necessary*” (118). Indeed, when Gamini is forced by the hospital to take a leave and returns home to find his house occupied by a family, his reaction to the occupants proves that he is no longer limited by representation in his understanding of reality. He does not bother to claim his right as the legal owner of the house. He was not interested in the house: he wants “a home-cooked meal” (216). In leaving the house to those who keep it up better than he has, he demonstrates that representation should come retrospectively to designate the role that human beings or things play. A true home is one that plays the role of home. A “home-cooked meal” better conveys the sense of home than an empty building.

IV. Ananda’s Lesson on Interdependence

The fact that Gamini shares his house with strangers corresponds to a significant theme in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. For

Ariyaratne, Sarvodaya “means the well-being of all or the awakening of all. *Shramadana* means the gifting or the voluntary sharing of one’s labor and resources for the awakening of oneself and others” (“Sarvodaya Shramadana’s Approach to Peacebuilding” 70). According to Bond, “Ariyaratne wrote that the only means to peace is the dispelling of the view of ‘I and mine’ or the shedding of ‘self’ and the realization of the true doctrines of the interconnection between all animal species and the unity of all humanity” (*Buddhism at Work* 42). To achieve self-awakening, one must not only be able to see the insufficiency of representation to present reality but also the merger and co-existence of one’s being with others. This elimination of the boundary between self and other, or the recognition of interdependence, is the first lesson Anil and Sarath learn through Ananda’s reconstruction of Sailor’s head, the second being about forgiveness

Ananda’s reconstruction of Sailor’s head begins with the search for its identity and ends in the production of a communal, or interdependent, body. This result has to do with his method of reconstruction as well as with his sorrow for his wife, Sirissa, who was killed and lost in the civil war. Before he starts to reconstruct Sailor’s head, Ananda visits the village in the neighborhood of which Sailor was supposed to live. “He wanted to discover what the people drank here, whether there was a specific diet that would puff up cheeks more than usual, whether lips would be fuller than in Batticaloa. Also the varieties of hairstyle, the quality of eyesight. Did they walk or cycle” (167). In other words, as Palipana talks to a stonemason or to a dhobi woman in order to approach the ancient artisans who produced the rock graffiti, Ananda wants to grasp the genesis principle that can enable him to reconstruct Sailor’s physiognomy. Such a method, as it takes into consideration all the village people, already presumes a collective contribution to the formation of Sailor’s reconstructed head.

Because of Ananda’s sorrow, the reconstruction of Sailor’s head also condenses in itself a wide range of time. This merger of Sailor with Sirissa and her world appears in the way Ananda perceives Sailor’s skull. He carries the skull in his arms as if it were alive (170). The serene expression in the reconstructed head comes into being because

Ananda mixes his recollection of the past and his hope for the future into the head. When he sings or gets drunk during his work, it is likely that he sees Sirissa in the head under reconstruction and that this Sirissa belongs to the time when they were happy together. His drunkenness may come from his reluctance to let her go after he has found her. As Deleuze observes, a drunkard wants to bring a selected past to the present and hold that past tightly by making himself drunk and concentrating on that past. Because his drunkenness will later blur his retrieved past, the drunkard has to drink more and renew the effort to grasp that past (*The Logic of Sense* 158–60). The elusiveness of the recollected past explains why Ananda breaks apart his reconstruction time and time again. However, since Ananda finally calls a stop to his reconstruction, there ought to be a progression in his destruction and reconstruction of the head. The irony is that he does not stop his work because he has successfully made an exact copy of his wife. He stops because he has finally lost her.

What Deleuze says about the “transcendent exercise” of faculties can illuminate this point: “Each faculty must be borne to the extreme point of its dissolution [. . .]” (*DR* 143). Then each faculty discovers what it alone may grasp and what it grasps is pure differences that are not covered or mediated by representation (*DR* 142). In other words, one approaches the virtual when one is able to exercise faculties to their limits. Could it be that, his periodic drunkenness aside, in his relentless efforts to retrieve his elusive wife, in his constant destruction and reconstruction of the head, Ananda finally sees beyond her and hence loses her? One cannot believe that Ananda would have tried to commit suicide if he had been able to preserve his wife through the reconstruction.

The comment offered by Sarath when he sees the final reconstructed work gives a more immediate support to the argument above about the merger. Sarath lets Anil know that the trouble with the reconstruction is that the facial expression is too peaceful and that the expression is “what [Ananda] wants of the dead” (184). This head cannot represent anyone, because “this head was not just how someone possibly looked, it was a specific person. It revealed a distinct

personality, as real as the head of Sarath" (184).

Ananda's reconstruction of Sailor's head would probably have been of little use for Anil and Sarath's education, were it not for his attempted suicide. His attempt at suicide offers him another unintended lesson on the interdependence of Sarath and Anil, and the act has far-reaching consequences because it integrates them into the common people. Deleuze is helpful here:

A disreputable man [. . .] is found as he lies dying. Suddenly, those taking care of him manifest an eagerness, respect, even love, for his slightest sign of life. Everybody bustles about to save him, to the point where [. . .] this wicked man himself senses something soft and sweet penetrating him. But to the degree that he comes back to life, his saviors turn colder, and he becomes once again mean and crude. (*Pure Immanence* 28)

According to Deleuze, when this disreputable man is on the verge of death and people become concerned about him, people do not consider the life of this rogue as belonging to a specific individual and defined in terms of representation. Rather, the "life of the individual gives way to an impersonal" life that transcends subjectivity and objectivity (*Pure Immanence* 28). Everybody "empathizes" with this life and "attains a sort of beatitude" (*Pure Immanence* 29). Could it be that, when Anil and Sarath try to save the dying Ananda, they experience a life that is beyond representation – a life that merges them with Ananda or everybody, since Ananda's life loses its individuality at the moment when they only concern themselves with saving life rather than with Ananda's life?

A shattering blow is needed to finally break the ice between self and other. Both Cullis and the former occupant of the *walawwa*, where Anil, Sarath, and Ananda work, can go beyond representation through their art, but they are unable to renounce the demarcation between self and other. Cullis

[u]sually [. . .] loved the letting go. When he wrote, he slipped into

the page as if it were water, and tumbled on. The writer was a tumbler. [. . .] If not, then a tinker, carrying a hundred pots and pans and bits of linoleum and wires and falconer's hoods and pencils and . . . you carried them around for years and gradually fit them into a small, modest book. (264)

When they meet each other for the first time, Cullis says to Anil, "Tinkers don't have wives. Not if they are true tinkers" (37). If a writer renounces the desire to possess, sees the page in front of him as water, which is without demarcations, and experiments with his writing all along, then a true writer constantly goes beyond old perceptions that have been saturated with represented facts. Yet during their love affair, it was as if "he had been encased in ice of metal and she was banging on its surface in order to reach him, in order to let him out" (263–64). Cullis would not allow for this breakthrough because "as a married man he had already pawned his heart" (264). In other words, his action does not correspond with what he has learned through writing.

In the case of the former occupant of the *walawwa*, there are two significant words in his room: *makamkruka* and *madanaraga*. As Sarath explains to Anil, "a man who is a *makamkruka* is a churner, an agitator. Someone who perhaps sees things more truly by turning everything upside down" (165). "*Madanaraga* means 'with the speed of love,' sexual arousal" (165). *Makamkruka*, connected to an upside-down view of reality, already points to a perception that goes beyond old represented facts. *Madanaraga* suggests an immeasurable life force, already implying a going beyond representation. Yet this occupant has killed himself out of his own sorrow, as Ondaatje suggests through the site and the location of the *walawwa*: They "make you turn inward rather than dominate the world around you" (201). That is, he was imprisoned within himself and could not merge himself with other people.

Ondaatje suggests that Anil has learned to go beyond representation and to merge herself with others by two episodes. One day "Sarath sees Anil from the dining room window," and he "watches a person he has never seen. A girl insane, a druid in moonlight, a thief

in oil" (181). "She is waking every muscle in herself, blindfolding every rule she lives by, giving every mental skill she has to the movement of her body. Only this will lift her backward into the air and pivot her hip to send her feet over her" (181). When she finishes, she "lies under the sound and witnesses her brain coming back" (182). If Anil has liberated her animality in the Grove of the Ascetics, the description quoted above indicates her new approach to life at the *walawwa* and indirectly explains *makamkruka*. Her dance "to the movement of the body" and her final witnessing of "her brain coming back" not only indicate that she follows her instinct but also reveal through the verb "witnesses" her consciousness of the imposition of a representation of nature. The fact that in her dance she gives "every mental skill she has to the movement of her body" and that "[o]nly this will lift her backward into the air and pivot her hip to send her feet over her" shows that in her dance she is employing a means of perception approved by the former owner of the estate (181). "Her feet over her" and her liberation of her animality recall *makamkruka*—"a churner, an agitator. Someone who perhaps sees things more truly by turning everything upside down" (165). The relationship between *madanaraga* ("with the speed of love,' sexual arousal") and her reawakened animality appears to be established to some degree when Anil also holds the skull of Sailor in her arms, as if it were alive. It is only "with the speed of love" that she can communicate with a life belonging to another time and space.

V. Ananda's Lesson on Forgiveness and the Emergence of People as an Interdependent Body

Through Ananda, Sarath and Anil also have a lesson on forgiveness, that is, respond to an injury with compassion and void of hatred. According to Buddhism, this non-violence is the necessary path to peace (Bond, *Buddhism at Work* 28). Though he presents a vision for the future by giving Sailor a peaceful expression, Ananda tries to kill himself, and this attempted suicide proves that he has not been able to release himself from his own sorrow, and hence to merge with other

people. A brief view of what Jacques Derrida says about forgiveness can serve as a temporary guide here.

Jacques Derrida argues that the offer of forgiveness must not be mediated by any rational consideration; otherwise it would not be pure forgiveness. For example, if one forgives the guilty on the consideration that the latter has repented, one forgives someone else who is no longer marked by guilt (39). However, “forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable” (32), and “forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself” (33). It would thus appear that Ananda cannot forgive and stop imprisoning himself because only the dead, or the victim, can forgive the guilty (Derrida 44).

However, Derrida’s statement does not really explain Ananda’s problem, for, after all, as soon as Ananda is able to shed his identity and merge with the others, including Sirissa, he will be in a position to forgive. It is Anil and Sarath who have benefited from Ananda’s failed example.

Because of her suffering from sexual discrimination in her childhood, Anil has been unwilling to consider herself a part of Sri Lanka when she returns to Sri Lanka fifteen years after her departure. She has not even let her relatives there to know of her return. The evidence of her forgiveness of her Sri Lankan past appears when she lost Sailor and has to defend herself in the court. Accusing the Sri Lankan government officials of having stolen Sailor, she exclaims: “I think you murdered hundreds of us” (272). Sandeep Sanghera has pointed out that one could mistake Anil for an “American (for that is where she studied and lives ‘mostly’),” to be “British (for that is the passport she carries),” to be “a representative of an international human rights centre based in Geneva,” or to be “a mishmash citizen of all things Western” (83). Since Anil has no cause to renounce her identity as American or a British even if she were willing to be a Sri Lankan, her “us” can only mean that she takes both herself and the Sri Lankan people to be a part of all human beings, and that she is hurt because a part of this collective human being has been hurt.

Sarath’s sacrifice demonstrates forgiveness still more clearly. After the suicide of his wife, Ravina, “the social world around

[Sarath]" becomes "irrelevant" (29). Now, knowing what can happen to him if he openly helps Anil in the court, he willingly sacrifices himself so that he can retrieve Sailor for Anil. In other words, as a relative of a victim and as a future victim, he accepts the past and forgives his future murderers in advance. We can infer that Sarath shares Anil's opinion and considers himself as an integrated part of the communal body since he only commits himself after he has convinced himself that Anil "is finally *us*" (272). What Anil is going to do with Sailor's body is not as important as the fact that she, as "*us*," is going to help the Sri Lankan people.

Being both a victim and a forgiver of his victimizer(s), Sarath's death achieves the merger of the majority and the minority in his family because his forgiveness and sacrifice lead to Gamini's merger with him. Gamini has imprisoned himself in his "medieval world of Emergency Services" and has never worried about the fate of his brother because he thinks that "he himself would be the fatal one" (289). Sarath's corpse therefore shocks him into reconsidering his relationship with his brother. Being an experienced surgeon, Gamini can see that Sarath's broken body proves his brother's willing sacrifice for and hence merger with the suffering Sri Lankan people. If division among people does not hold in Sarath's case, Gamini's enmity toward his brother has misfired. More importantly, Gamini now understands his deep love for his brother because he becomes aware of the fact that, working in the hospital, he has been "most frightened of seeing his brother's face" (289). So Gamini accepts Sarath, knowing that "[i]f he did not talk to [Sarath] in this moment, admit himself, his brother would disappear from his life" (288). In allowing his brother to live on in him, Gamini defies all possibilities of representation.

Also, since Gamini knows that his brother dies for the Sri Lankan people, and since the wounds on Sarath's body remind him of the wounds on the bodies of other Sri Lankan victims, we can see that, when he merges with his brother, he merges with the present and the past suffering Sri Lankan people, too: the familial war ends with Gamini's transformation into a communal body.

VI. Social Reform from the Bottom up

Because Ondaatje traces the beginning of war to its emergence in the familial war of hierarchical identity, it is reasonable that, following the end of familial war through the characters' ability to go beyond representation, to understand the interdependence of living beings, and to forgive former enemies, he should start presenting the birth of peace. What he offers immediately after the scene of the brothers' merger is such a scene about the coming of a new age, and this scene parallels the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement's political agenda in the main.

For Ariyaratne, "[d]evelopment should begin with the human personality itself" (*Buddhism and Sarvodaya* 113). All-awakening follows self-awakening. Social reform works from the bottom up, with villages as the smallest power units. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement also helps villages develop their own technologies as a measure against capitalism. In *Anil's Ghost*, a parallel to this collective action of social reform appears in the event of the assassination of "the Silver President" (294). When President Katugala is assassinated by a suicide bomber, his body is nowhere to be found. The question "*Where was the President?*" is repeated and unnoticed in the context of people celebrating National Heroes Day. As not even a name of the national hero is mentioned, and as the only one named, President Katugala, is bombed and his body is shattered into pieces, the true heroes and masters of the nation can only be the unidentified people. This erasure of demarcation among people explains why the assassin is not named and simply called "R-" (292). One should note as well that Ondaatje does not recommend assassination or violence for the Sri Lankan people. The assassination of a president who is called "the Silver President" indicates a symbolic reading of the event

VII. Buddha, Ghost, and Peace

Ondaatje's peace solution ends in a social vision embodied in the two Buddha statues. At the end of the novel there is a scene of

destruction and reconstruction. When a statue of Buddha had been bombed into pieces and Ananda was brought there to attempt the reconstruction, he decided not to “homogenize the stone” so that the old one remains “quilted” (303). The result is two Buddha figures—“one of scarred grey rock, one of white plaster—standing now in the open valley a half-mile away from each other” (304-05). Here the juxtaposition of the two Buddha statues merges Anil’s past with the national past, the eye-painting ceremony combines all the teachings that Palipana and Ananda offered to Anil and Sarath, and the leading role played by Ananda the artificer and the connotation of his name both signals a decision to exorcize the past, and point to the direction of the social vision.

The merger of Anil’s past, or her ghost, with the two Buddha statues, and with Sri Lanka, is effected through Ananda, who “and the woman Anil would always carry the ghost of Sarath Diyasena” (305). One can see that, because Sarath has merged with Sri Lanka in his sacrifice to save its people from the war that stems from the nation’s colonial past, Ananda thereby merges Sarath’s—and Anil’s, since she carries his ghost (Sri Lanka)—with the Buddha statues in his reconstruction as he merged the Sri Lankan people into the reconstruction of Sailor’s head. In addition, the fact that foreign specialists are excluded so that Ananda is in control of the reconstruction project gives the merger a significant coloring.

For two basic reasons the merger of the ghosts with the two Buddha statues forms an image of national revival. Firstly, since Buddha also exists in Hinduism and is an incarnation of Vishnu (Zaehner 91), and since Vishnu is one of the four divine guardians of Sri Lanka (Tambiah, *Sri Lanka* 60–61), the two Buddha statues do not favor the Sinhala Buddhists at the expense of the Hindu Tamils. Secondly, for Ariyaratne the value system of traditional Sri Lanka “was based on the ancient Hindu-Buddhist codes that ‘accepted the postulates of respect for life and in particular respect for human life’” (Bond, *Buddhism at Work* 32). Also, “Sarvodaya’s ideal of an integrated development supported by spiritual values critiques the materialistic, capitalistic model of development that has been dominant

in Sri Lanka since the colonial period” (Bond, *Buddhism at Work* 16). Ariyaratne connects the capitalism in Sri Lanka to its colonization by the West and to the decline of traditional Hindu-Buddhist codes. In *Anil's Ghost*, the two Buddha statues also imply the death of the present Buddhism and its rebirth into a new Buddhism, or engaged Buddhism, that can really help the Sri Lankan people. Thus the shadow of capitalism hovers over the cause of the destruction of the old Buddha statue: the statue was exploded apart because people hoped to find hidden treasure in the Buddha statue. The reconstruction is led by a man whose name has a Buddhist connotation, but who, instead of being a Buddhist, is simply an artificer who respects life.

Indeed, in addition to leading Sri Lanka toward a revival, the job of such an artificer is to cultivate life and to reunite Sri Lanka in peace. That is why the eye-painting ceremony recapitulates the teachings on identity, interdependence, and forgiveness. The teaching on identity and Ananda's respect for life appear in his superhuman vision. According to Palipana, during the ceremony the artificer can only look at the god through a mirror; however, the vision that Ananda enjoys just before he paints the eyes for the new Buddha is not limited by representation. Geetha Ganapathy-Doré says that Ananda's point of view when he paints the eyes for the new Buddha is “integrated”

as opposed to the well known third-person omniscience familiar to students of narratology; what matters here is not so much the power of seeing everything but rather the miracle of sight itself which embraces the near and the far, the small and the big, the still and the moving, earth and sky, water and wind, human beings, animals and plants, life and art in one perfect gaze. (paragraph 14)

If Ananda's vision is a “miracle of sight,” it is because he goes beyond representation in his perception of reality. What he sees is not divided according to representation. So Ananda sees his wife Sirissa in a tiny bird, and this vision implies that he sees life with love.

The teaching on interdependence appears in the cracked feature of the old Buddha statue. This seamed statue immediately resonates

with Sarath's broken corpse and Ananda's earlier reconstruction of Sailor's head. As both Sarath's body and Sailor's reconstructed head are communal bodies, the seamed one thereby signifies interdependence of the Sri Lankan people.

The juxtaposition of the seamed one with a smooth new one, finally, proves that Ananda is now able to merge with others, and consequently can exercise forgiveness. Ananda's acceptance of his misfortune, his forgiveness of the murderer, and his merger with the Sri Lankan people explain why the old Buddha statue is rich with death images: The old Buddha statue was reassembled in "a hundred-foot-long coffin" (301), infused with "cooling red iron" (303), and deliberately given an expression of "composure" (302). This "composure" reveals a decision to exorcise the past, and its co-existence with the new Buddha statue forms a message, urging the Sri Lankan people to give the old Buddha a rebirth, to take action for a future unfettered by demarcation. Thus the novel ends with a touch from Ananda's nephew, reminding him to act and to actualize his vision in the world.

VIII. Conclusion

With regard to peace making in Sri Lanka, Ariyaratne says, "What is most needed seems to be not highly academic peace plans, full of minute legal details but a down to earth approach within the reach of ordinary citizens of the country" (*Buddhism and Sarvodaya* 88). Having well researched the causes of the war, Ondaatje focuses on the issues of representation, interdependence, forgiveness, and capitalism and deals with these difficult questions through the characters' artistic experiences. He does not delve into technical or political problems for the exact ways to stop the war or to reconstruct the country. In other words, he treats experiences that are not beyond common people's grasp. Ondaatje's book is therefore a good supplement to Ariyaratne's peace-making movement, if not a useful peace-making solution by itself already.

Indeed, Ondaatje's solution to the Sri Lankan civil war also

surpasses the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in that, rather than being hampered by an obviously religious approach, Ondaatje avails himself of the omnipresence of artistic experience. Anyone interested in re-membering Sri Lanka is an artificer and can benefit from Ondaatje's peace book. Further, in demonstrating his ability to help the reader reach Buddhist understanding through his novel, he, like a good explorer, increases the territory of literature.

One notes as well that, compared with Ariyatne's peace-making movement, Ondaatje's peace book does not contain as many practical methods for reforming Sri Lanka. However, *Anil's Ghost* still presents a more urgent demand for spiritual reform. This urgency is especially detectable through the theme of ghost. At the beginning, Anil's ghost can represent her painful past or the identity of the unidentified skeleton of Sailor. With Ananda's mourning for his wife and his subsequent production of a communal body, Sarath's later sacrifice for all the Sri Lankan people, and the inhabitation of his ghost in Anil and Ananda, the ghost grows in dimension to cover all the victims of the war, and the cause of their misfortunes reaches back towards the Western colonization of Ceylon. With this growth in dimension, the pain focused on the ghost and inflicted through the ghost on the reader, who has witnessed one suffering after another, becomes more and more unbearable. Too many critics have noted the power of literature to better nature by creating another nature. One must therefore conclude that, however much Ondaatje has taken advantage of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement to ground his answer to the Sri Lankan civil war, his art has done something that the earthly movement cannot do: it has contracted the national pain into a ghost that haunts every reader of *Anil's Ghost*.

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人間佛教和文學： 翁達傑《阿尼爾的魅影》的和平藝術

摘 要

學界並未探討翁達傑〈Michael Ondaatje〉的《阿尼爾的魅影》〈*Anil's Ghost*〉如何呼應斯里蘭卡人間佛教的推動者阿里耶拉〈A. T. Ariyaratne〉所主導的薩佛陀耶〈Sarvodaya〉運動，藉以消弭種族內戰。翁達傑和薩佛陀耶都視精神改革為物質改革的基礎：從自覺而全覺。自覺為個人對再現、共生，及寬恕的體認；全覺以社會底層為權力和改革的起點，重建具佛教精神的古老價值體系。在斯里蘭卡的傳統佛教淪為集體身份的口號之際，翁達傑用文學達成佛教的深刻教誨。他把各主要人物化為足以推展和平的巧匠，並且把他們源自殖民遺毒的痛苦聚集於阿尼爾的魅影，展現了文學凌駕俗世和平運動的獨特創造力。

關鍵字：薩佛陀耶、自覺、全覺、共生、寬恕