



---

**Universidad de Valladolid**

FACULTAD de FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS  
DEPARTAMENTO de FILOLOGÍA INGLESA  
Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

Representation of Trauma in *Anil's Ghost*: Character  
Analysis

ANTHEA ARAGÓN MALO

Tutor: ROSALÍA MARTÍNEZ DE MIGUEL

2015-2016



## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an analysis of characters' trauma in the novel *Anil's Ghost*. Trauma is the consequence of a traumatic episode suffered by a person and people has many different reactions to a traumatic event. There are different kinds of trauma too and this work is focused on trauma in literary fiction from the point of view of psychoanalytic theory. In this work the main characters of the book, their different reactions to trauma and each one's possible traumatic event which causes trauma are presented.

**Keywords:** trauma, literature, psychoanalysis, reactions, novel, fiction

Este trabajo de fin de grado es un análisis del trauma en los personajes de la novela *Anil's Ghost*. El trauma es consecuencia de un episodio traumático sufrido por una persona y cada persona presenta diferentes reacciones ante un evento traumático. También hay diferentes tipos de trauma y este trabajo se enfoca en el trauma en la literatura desde el punto de vista de la teoría psicoanalítica. En este trabajo se presentan a los personajes principales del libro, sus diferentes reacciones al trauma y los posibles eventos traumáticos causantes del trauma de cada uno de ellos.

**Palabras clave:** trauma, literatura, psicoanálisis, reacciones, fantasma, novela, ficción

## INDEX

Introduction.....	4
1. Trauma.....	5
1.1 Psychological Trauma.....	5
1.2 Social/Collective Trauma.....	7
1.3 Trauma in Literary Fiction.....	9
2. Characters Analysis.....	12
2.1 Anil.....	13
2.2 Sarath.....	15
2.3 Palipana.....	17
2.4 Lakma.....	18
2.5 Ananda.....	20
2.6 Gamini.....	21
Conclusions.....	23
Annex I: Michael Ondaatje.....	25
Annex II: Sri Lanka's Conflict.....	27
Works cited.....	31

## INTRODUCTION

Trauma can be understood as any type of injury which affects the normal functioning of our body. People use the word trauma in reference to the consequence of any situation which causes in the person a tedious situation that alters the normal life of the person. Trauma in psychology is the consequence of a traumatic event lived by a person. There are different types of trauma; first of all trauma can be individual or collective, and second it can be applied into different aspects of people's life.

Inside individual trauma we have to keep in mind that each person is different and the reactions to trauma can be different too. There are some typical reactions to trauma but not all people present all the reactions. To cure a trauma is something difficult and it can take some months or even years depending on the person. The first thing to do it is to find the trauma and the traumatic event which caused it.

Trauma can be reflected in a literary work. The novel and the literary fiction are good examples where trauma can be presented. In this research paper we are going to discover the term of trauma applied to literature. From a psychoanalytic point of view we are going to see different trauma manifestations in the characters from the book *Anil's Ghost*. This book is a novel written by Michael Ondaatje. On it the reader is going to discover its characters and their personal stories; all of them framed in the civil war of Sri Lanka. The war and other elements are going to cause trauma in these characters which present different reactions to it.

This analysis of trauma in the characters of a novel is an interesting work where the reader can learn things about trauma. He can see a practical application in order to learn more about trauma focused in literary fiction and in this way apply it for future analysis about characters trauma in literature and the narrative tools that make it possible.

## **1. TRAUMA**

Nowadays the word “trauma” is overused. People use it to describe a strong, hardwearing emotion or negative impression, but the meaning of the word “trauma” goes far from this general use. In psychology the word “trauma” is used to refer to an emotional crash that produces a long-lasting damage in the unconscious of the person.

There are many different types of trauma and they can be produced by different traumatic events; people have many different reactions to a traumatic event and different ways of facing it. Psychological trauma can be observed in different aspects of human life such as the literary world.

### **1.1 Psychological Trauma**

Psychological trauma has been studied for a long time. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was the father of trauma theories and the founder of psychoanalysis; he stated that human mind was divided into three parts the Id (or it), the Ego (or I) and the Superego (or above I) and that human traumas are repressed in the unconscious part of their mind. The biggest part of the Superego and the Id are unconscious and it is there where human traumas are hidden. According to Freud, anxiety in a person can be developed by a trauma but this trauma cannot be remembered by the person because it is hidden in the unconscious part of the mind. Nowadays specialists on trauma define psychological trauma as:

An emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Long term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. (American Psychological Association)

As it is stated above, there are many different reactions to a traumatic event; not all people have the same reactions and the duration of the symptoms varies depending on the person. Not all people who face a potentially traumatic event are traumatized or show trauma symptoms. Trauma symptoms can be both psychical and physical.

According to the Medical University of South Carolina fear is the most common reaction to a traumatic event and it is the one that the majority of people that have suffered a traumatic event share. At the time of the traumatic event the affected person experiences intense fear (of being injured or even killed). This kind of reaction can persist for weeks, months or even years and this triggers the fear response of the person to certain sights, sounds, smells, thoughts and places that reminds him of the traumatic event. Traumatized people avoid those things that remind them the traumatic event and as a consequence sometimes they reduce their social lives because they only feel safe at home. Extreme forms of this unjustified fear are flashbacks, traumatized people use to re-experience the traumatic event in their dreams or their thoughts. When this happens, they feel as if the traumatic event was happening again. As a consequence of this, they re-experience all the fears. Intense fear and the feeling of loss of control of their own lives during the traumatic event may also continue to be experienced by traumatized people.

Denial is another one of the most common trauma reactions. This is something that affects the victim and even the ones that surround him. Victims deny the traumatic event and use false beliefs to convince themselves that nothing similar can have happened to them. People that show denial are very difficult to cure with therapy because they also deny the fact that they are traumatized.

Guilty feelings can appear as a symptom of psychological trauma. Guilt can appear by the false perception that the victim could have done something to avoid the traumatic situation or that he or she may deserve what happened, this is especially common in rape victims. Guilty feelings may also appear when other people have been involved in the traumatic event and the victim thinks that someone else could be injured or killed during the traumatic event. Guilt contributes to the creation of a negative self-image that frequently develops as depression. The victim feels unhappiness, crying spells and sometimes they experience suicidal thoughts. This is accompanied by depressed feelings; the victim feels sadness while doing things that were enjoyable for him before the traumatic event. As a consequence of depression, traumatized people are not capable of maintaining social

relationships with others, so disrupted relationships can also be considered a symptom of trauma.

The human brain can be affected after a traumatic event in a different way. There are victims that develop stutter as consequence of the stress caused by the traumatic event. This reaction can get worse and the victim can even stop speaking. There are also other physical reactions such as headaches, stomach aches, heart palpitations, changes in sleep patterns and appetite, susceptibility to colds and illnesses, constipation and diarrhea or the increase use of alcohol and drugs.

According to psychoanalysis, to cure trauma the patient has to try to remember specific experiences to relate them with the affectional emotions that they recall to him, so in this way he can see that what he looks to be is only a reflection of the forgotten past. According to Laurie Vickroy another good exercise is to write his experiences in order to discover the origin of his trauma and even being understood by other people or maybe help others to discover their traumas.

## **1.2 Collective Trauma**

Trauma can also affect a whole society. This kind of trauma can be a consequence of war, tragic episodes like the Holocaust, terrorism and events that can cause a trauma where all the people that form a society are involved. In cases where a whole society is affected or lives a potentially traumatic event we may speak about collective trauma.

Collective trauma is trauma that happens to large groups of individuals and can be transmitted transgenerationally and across communities. War, genocide, slavery, terrorism, and natural disasters can cause collective trauma, which can be further defined as historical, ancestral, or cultural.

Some of the symptoms of collective trauma include rage, depression, denial, survivor guilt and internalized oppression, as well as physiological changes in the brain and body which can bring on chronic disease. International relations are affected by collective and historical trauma as nations and peoples carry the weight of their own historical trauma with them as they wage war against each other. (Garrigues)



Traumatic stress is a consequence of a series of factors. In the case of war, some of these factors are hunger, persecution or oppression. Individuals, families and a whole society suffer torture, rapes, war wounds, loss and this happens when a country is involved in a war.

Collective trauma implies the loss of the identity of the whole society which has suffered the traumatic event. The whole society keeps in mind the traumatic event and how it affected to them, this is known as the collective memory. The entire society has to face the trauma in order to re-create a new identity.

Here memory, as far as it relates to the individual participant's biography, tends to be downplayed, because it is thought to act as a barrier to forms of collective behavior that transcends the normal routines of a daily life. The barrier of memory once crossed, the new collective identity is created *sui generis*, with the collective rather than the individual as its basis. (Eyerman 60-111)

*Anil's Ghost* portrays the civil war of Sri Lanka. Here can be seen how this country and its society were devastated by war and how the own characters of the book have suffered the consequences of war in their own lives. There are very interesting passages where events like the disappearance of people and how they were not seen again are described.

Sri Lanka is a country that knows very well what collective trauma is. First of all, the whole country was involved in a cruel civil war and in the year 2002 a tsunami devastated the island. Sri Lanka's entire society has been marked by trauma and as consequence of these facts their way of live has changed. Culture and literature collect people's experiences in order to keep in mind history.

Some catastrophic events were of such a scale that it left an imprint in everyone, on the "groupmind", on thinking patterns and memory. It changed the life of individuals, their families and their communities in fundamental ways, it transformed society and the experience passed on into the collective memory to be recounted in stories, narratives and folklore, songs, poetry and dramas; to influence future generations through subtle social processes, so that it may be appropriate to speak of an impact on the collective unconscious. (Somasundaram 11)

Collective trauma as well as individual trauma can be expressed in the literary world. The novel and the literary fiction are the right kinds of literature where we can see

trauma reflected. In these types of works we can see characters trauma and their reactions to it as individuals or as an entire society.

### **1.3 Trauma in Literary Fiction**

Human emotions and conditions can be expressed through literature. Trauma can be represented in literature due to it is a human emotion. Narrative fiction and specifically the novel are the better kinds of literature to represent trauma.

Novels represent this disruption between the self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the character's identity and the meaning of the traumatic experience. The term "trauma novel" refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels. (Balaev)

According to Laurie Vickroy by writing literature can be a good exercise for traumatized people; by writing they can figure out the origin of the trauma and in this case it can be good to cure it. Literature can also be helpful for a collective who suffers trauma; in this way literature can avoid the loss of the collective memory.

Fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience- have taken an important place among diverse artistic, scholarly, and testimonial representations in illuminating aspects of trauma and in elucidating our relationship to memory and forgetting within the complex interweavings of social and psychological relationships. (Vickroy 1)

Trauma narratives help the reader to understand what a trauma is through the characters who have suffered a traumatic event and how they react to it. This kind of literature presents certain characteristics. "Individuals' actions under extreme oppression, whether in a domestic or war situation cannot be understood by applying normalized values or moral systems" (Vickroy 2). This is the reason why writers use specific narrative tools such as the ones explained in order to show the reader how characters express their traumas.

First of all, these kinds of works are a consequence of political ideologies, poverty, war, etc. They are witnesses of trauma and how important it is in social terms. Second, trauma narratives explore "our ability to deal with loss and fragmentation in our lives" (Vickroy 3).

Third, people emphasize the problems experienced by the characters of these kinds of works and characters help to face them. Finally, trauma writers show the problem of the traumatized people's disrupted relationships, the difficulty of socializing with others when someone has a trauma.

In order to create a trauma narrative, writers use specific narrative tools which help readers to empathize with the characters. One of them is the combination of testimonial elements and multiple subject positioning, for example many voices, experiences or emotions. This is used to create "a dialogical conception of the witnessing" (Vickroy 27). Writers use multiple narrators; this technique makes the reader be a witness of character's trauma.

Another narrative tool frequently used in this kind of narrative is the use of flashbacks. The book's passage which contains a flashback goes back to a situation which evokes the trauma to the character or even it goes back to the moment of the traumatic event. Related with the idea of flashbacks, writers also use techniques such as shifts in time that affect the character's memory; its aim is to make the reader be similarly disoriented as the character is.

Textual gaps and repetitions are another kind of narrative tools frequently used in trauma narratives. They "break in the linear time, shifting viewpoints and a focus on visual images and affective states" (Vickroy 30). The repetition of sentences and structures re-create the ideas of the traumatized characters.

Symbolization can be created through metaphors. "Sigmund Freud noted that symbolization brings at least the illusion of control and mastery" (Vickroy 30). Through symbolization the author controls his literary work. Metaphors have the capacity of representing the relations between the person and his limits as well as representing how this relation can be broken as a consequence of a traumatic event.

Victims become obsessed with any associations that can be linked to the trauma, even if they exist within different contexts. This recalls the omnipotent thinking common to early stages of life, where self and object are still so inseparable that particular elements (words, images) become

overdetermined, as in dreams where one element can be traced to multiple psychic causes. (Vickroy 31-32)

Writers make possible to show trauma in their works through different narrative tools. These narrative tools can be seen in the book *Anil's Ghost*. Characters of this book show different trauma reactions which make the reader empathize with characters and this is possible thanks to the narrative tools used by the author.

## 2. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

*Anil's Ghost* is a novel divided into eight chapters (Sarath, The Grove of Ascetics, A Brother, Ananda, The Mouse, Between Heartbeats, The Life Wheel and Distance). Each one of these chapters is mainly focused in an event or character and inserted passages can be observed between chapters where past events are remembered. These past events are unleashed by character's thoughts presented during the book. This book tells the story of Anil, a girl born in Sri Lanka who left the country when she was a teenager to study abroad. She came back to Sri Lanka as a forensic surgeon in order to investigate the murderers and disappearances committed during the civil war. In this experience she found people involved in a difficult past and she found her personal identity.

Here there is an analysis of the characters from the point of view of trauma. In this book we can see on each character reactions that shows trauma. Each one of the characters has suffered different traumatic episodes and each one of them has different ways of acting as consequence of trauma. The author of this book does not give the reader concrete data and this can be interpreted as a reflection of what happens to characters, they lack data. As for example Anil and Sarath who do not have enough data to solve the murders committed in Sri Lanka.

Flashbacks are presented as inserted passages. They sometimes do not follow the story because on them a new piece of information is been given but the reader can think that it has no sense. By reading, the reader discovers that flashbacks are crucial to understand the rest of the story. This is something that creates confusion and disorientation but the book itself is certainly written in this way in order to recreate in the reader the same characters' feelings. In pages 31 and 32 we read how a person is assassinated by the officials of the government in a train; in page 42 there is a list with names, dates and brief description of people who disappeared in strange situations and they were never seen again; or in pages 172-175 there is told the murder of Sirissa and her pupils by the guerrilla. These are very good examples of flashbacks where traumatic events are told and that they help the reader empathize with the character's trauma.

## 2.1 Anil

Anil Tissera is a young girl from Sri Lanka who left the island when she was a teenager in order to study forensics first in England and then in the USA. During her childhood in Sri Lanka she lived with her parents and her older brother; she stood out as a good swimmer by winning some important competitions in the island which made her appear in some newspapers from Sri Lanka. Throughout the story we can see many references of Anil's life both in the USA and in Sri Lanka.

Since she was a child she was interested in the fact of exhuming bodies This fact can be a reason of why she studied forensics because she was fascinated with it since she was a child and the following fact had a repercussion in her life:

As a child in Kuttapitiya Anil had once stepped on the shallow grave of a recently buried chicken, her weight driving the air in the dead body out through its break-back with fear, her soul jostled, then clawed earth away, terrified she would see the creature blink. But it was dead, sand in its eyes. Anil was still haunted by what had occurred that afternoon. (Ondaatje 20)

The character of Anil is the one who shows trauma in lesser extent but we can see some ways of acting which give hints about trauma in Anil's person. Anil shows an obsession with the search of truth. While she is in Sri Lanka working as a forensic she has many troubles; the government and the officials are against her, the labor conditions are awful but she always tries to find the truth.

That night within the ship's hold Sarath poured plastic that had been dissolved in acetone into a shallow dish, and brought out the camel-air brush he would use on the bones. A diffuse light, the hum of the generator around him.

He moved to the lab table where a skeleton lay, picked up the alligator-clip lamp- the only one source focused bright light here- and walked with it and the long cord, still lit to a cupboard at the far end of the deep room. (Ondaatje 74)

Anil focuses her investigations in a skull which is going to name "Sailor"; she gives it a name because she feels that if she solves its case she would solve all cases. She creates a kind of bond with the things that she investigates but particularly with this skull because

she wants to think that it is the key that opens the solution to all the mysteries that have happened in the country as we see in a conversation between Anil and Sarath:

The one she was talking about was Sailor. [...] "Can you imagine how many bodies must be buried all over the island" he finally asked. He was not denying anything she had said. "This is a murder victim, Sarath." "It was found within a sacred historical site. A site constantly under government or police supervision." "Right". "And this is a recent skeleton," she said firmly. [...] "But we can prove this, don't you see? This is an opportunity, it's traceable. We found him in a place that only a government official could get into." (Ondaatje 51-52)

Anil's specialization is to reconstruct the story of dead people but along the book we can see how she also reconstructs the life's of the other characters. She makes this by collecting the pieces of information that she discovers little by little as the story goes on. Anil does not know everything about the other characters at the time she knows them but there is an external narrator who provides to the reader the important information about characters that he has to know; there is a good example in pages 79, 80 and 81.

Another important fact about Anil and that gives hints of trauma is that he suffers nightmares. Traumatic events are revived in the form of flashbacks and nightmares. There is an episode in the book where Anil falls ill and while she is sleeping she experiences a nightmare.

They taped down sheets from the Sunday Observer so the pages covered the floor. You have the felt pen? Yes. She began removing her clothes, her back to him, then lay down next to the skeleton of Sailor. She was wearing just her red knickers, silk ones she usually put on with irony. She hadn't imagined them for public consumption. She looked up at the ceiling, her hands on her breasts. Her body felt good against the hard floor, the coolness of the polished concrete through the newspaper, the same firmness she had felt as a child sleeping on mats.

He was using the felt marker to trace her shape. You will have to put your arms down for a moment. She could feel the pen move around her hands and alongside her waist, then down her legs, both sides, so he blinked the blue lines at the base of her heels. (Ondaatje 61-62)

In this nightmare we can see that Anil has a link with the skeleton that they are analyzing. There are elements on which we can see that Anil's appears to be dead, she lays on the floor and put her body as if it was a dead body. She appears to feel good in this situation.

“She rose out of the outline, turned back and saw he had drawn outlines of the four skeletons as well” (Ondaatje 61-62). Anil’s character shows some ways of acting that can be consequences of a traumatic event. She is a curious person that is obsessed with the search of truth, not only in her work but in her daily life too. Despite of this, Anil is a character who we do not know if she has really suffered a traumatic event that determined her way of acting.

## **2.2 Sarath**

Sarath Diyasena is an archeologist from Sri Lanka and the one who is going to help Anil to solve the murders. He is the one that helps Anil to discover who what they call “Sailor” is and the one that introduces to Anil the rest of the characters in this story. His life is framed in Sri Lanka’s civil war and he suffers the loss of his wife and the cruelty of war on his life. As well as on Anil’s character, we can see hints of trauma in Sarath’s character.

Sarath is a person obsessed with his work. He used to work until late and all his life is focused on his work. It seems that he is so focused on it to evade from his personal problems. Another fact is that Sarath gets drunk frequently; he uses to drink alcohol and most of times while he is working; we can read that “he drank as he works” (Ondaatje 57).

Sarath stretched and walked out of the lit into the darkness, his hands out feeling for the arrack bottle, which he brought back with him to Sailor under the cone of light. It was about two in the morning. When he’d coated all four skeletons, he made notes on each of them and photographed three from the anterior and lateral views. (Ondaatje 75)

As well as the other characters of this book, Sarath has suffered the consequences of the war. Some of them suffer it in a direct way and others in an indirect way. All of the characters see the atrocities of war every day in the streets as we can read in different parts of the book.

A man wearing a black coat walked in and sat down among them, blood on his clothes [...] His face was red and wet from the blood on the coat (Ondaatje 38).



There had been continual emergency from 1983 onwards, racial attacks and political killings. The terrorism of the separatist guerrilla groups, who were fighting for a homeland in the north. (Ondaatje 43)

A very important fact in Sarath's life is that "Sarath's wife killed herself two years ago" (Ondaatje 46). This can be the traumatic event which determines Sarath's way of acting. The fact that Sarath is very focused on his work and that he drinks alcohol frequently can be his personal reactions to a trauma triggered by the death of his wife. Related to this particular event we see a reaction of denial in the character of Sarath.

There is a particular passage where he lies to the front desk man in the hotel about the death of his wife. While he admits her death to Anil he denies it to other people. Denial is a frequent reaction in traumatized people.

"Did Mr. Sarath ever come here with his wife?"

"Yes, madame."

"What was she like?"

"She's very nice, madame."

A nod proof, then a slight tilt of his head, a J stroke, to suggest possible hesitance in his own judgement.

"Is?"

"Yes, Madame?"

"Even though she is dead."

"No, madame. I asked Mr. Sarath this afternoon and he said she is well. Not dead. He said to give me her wishes". (Ondaatje 57)

Sarath and his little brother were taught by Palipana, an epigraphist which had a peculiar way of teaching. Gamini is the name of Sarath's little brother and the relation between them is not too good, something that affects in a bad way not only Sarath but Gamini too. There is not a brotherhood relationship between them, jealousy and envy surround them.

### 2.3 Palipana

Palipana is an epigraphist and an archaeologist, he is also a teacher and a man of letters; a man who is described as “not easily liked man, he had lost charm somewhere in his youth” (Ondaatje 80). In many aspects of his life he was a tough man, but he knew how to teach his students in the right way. At the moment of the story he is blind as consequence of glaucoma.

The most important thing related to this character is that he is an ascetic. In a moment of his life, when his career is in decline, he decides to live apart from the rest of the people; working with his books and writing.

He lived in the forest grove with his books and writing tablets. But for him, now, all history was filled with sunlight, every hollow was filled with rain. Though as he worked he was conscious that the paper itself that held these histories was aging fast. It was insect-bitten, sun-faded, wind-scattered. And there was his old, thin body. Palipana too now was governed only by the elements. (Ondaatje 84)

Palipana’s reaction of isolation from society can be produced by a disagreement with the others or maybe as a consequence of a traumatic event as for example the loss of his siblings as consequence of war. By his isolation what he wants is to be alone with his own thoughts and in that way he is apart from the problems of the rest of society. Palipana lost his brother and sister as consequence of war and this fact marked his life.

He was seventy when he was killed by someone, perhaps breaking free- for that is the difficult stage, when you leave the world. I am the last of my siblings. For my sister too is death. This girl is her daughter. (Ondaatje 103)

Palipana decides to take care of his niece after her parents’ murder. Despite of he is on the worst moment of his life, he understands that he is the only relative of his niece Lakma. The girl is so traumatized and he also understands that she needs help and he is the only one that can help her.

## 2.4 Lakma

Lakma is Palipana's niece; in the book there are no many descriptions of this character but it is the one who shows more symptoms of trauma. When she was a child her parents were killed; children are more sensitive to a traumatic event.

A few years before, the girl Lakma had seen her parents killed. A week after their murder, the twelve-year-old child was taken to a government ward run by nuns, north Colombo, that looked after children whose parents had been killed in the civil war. (Ondaatje 103)

Childhood is the most innocent stage of each person's life; children are fragile and they are learning new things every day. For children the figures of their parents are crucial in their life. Lakma was living in a war country and the war killed her parents when she was only twelve years old, in addition she had to live in the orphanage with other children in the same situation as her. Fortunately, Palipana decided to take care of her but she had a very big trauma caused by this situation.

When Palipana decided to take care of her, she presents very clear signals of trauma. First of all she does not talk with anyone and as a consequence of the traumatic event she constantly suffers nightmares which remind her traumatic event. Even her motor system was affected by trauma too.

The shock of the murder of the girl's parents, however, had touched everything within her, driving both her verbal and her motor ability into infancy. [...] She lay hidden there for over a month, silent, non-reacting, physically forced from her room to do exercises in sunlight. The nightmares continued for Lakma, who was unable to deal with the possible danger around her. (Ondaatje 103)

When she is taken to the orphanage the situation is not much better. She is forced to do physical exercise in the sunlight and after that she has to be hidden in her room. Lakma discovers that the place where she is it is not as safe as she thought. "A child who knew the falseness of the supposed religious security around her, with its clean dormitories and well-made beds"(Ondaatje 103).

When Palipana goes to visit her, she shows more hints of trauma. Lakma rejects any kind of help and she is afraid of everything, and this fear makes her not sleep. Palipana is in his

worst moment but he understands that he is her only relative and that he is the only one who can help Lakma and the one who can give her back faith.

When Palipana, her only remaining relative, came to visit her he saw she was immune to any help in this place. Any sound was danger to her. She would finger through every meal looking for insects or glass, would not sleep in the safety of her bed but hidden underneath it. (Ondaatje 103)

In order to help her, Palipana uses his personal techniques. He takes her to a place far from the society, where he teaches her as he did with his pupils. Palipana has to do a major effort because of his starting blindness but Lakma starts to show, little by little, some progresses.

She took journeys with him- a two day walk to a chapter house in Mihintale, climbing 132 steps, clinging to this blind man with her fear when he insisted they go once by bus to Polonnaruwa so he could be in the presence of the Stone Book, his hands upon the ducks- that were for eternity-for the last time. (Ondaatje 104)

With Palipana's help, Lakma learns how to face trauma. She starts to recover her personal confidence and she starts to live a new life under the knowledge of Palipana and far from the others. Finally, when Palipana turns completely blind, she has created a new personal identity and she is prepared to take the control of her life.

With his blindness she gained the authority he had unable to give her. She rearranged the paths of the day. What she did in proximity to him was now a part of the invisible world. Her new semi-nakedness in a way represented her state of mind. She wore a sarong as a man would. Palipana would not see this, or her left hand on her pubis tugging the new hair or playing with it while he talked to her. (Ondaatje 106)

Lakma's character is the one who shows more reactions to a traumatic event. She is probably affected in such a big way because she suffered the traumatic situation while she was a child. We can say that this character is traumatized. Lakma presents reactions such as rejection, fear of everything and others developed by trauma such as she does not speak or the lack of sleep. As well as this, we can see how she faces trauma and how important Palipana's help is for her.

## 2.5 Ananda

Ananda Udugama was a sculptor and a painter; he painted through the ceremony of the painting eyes; when a painter is going to paint a holy figure, the last thing he does is to paint his eyes and finally by painting his eyes he brings life to the figure. This is a kind of “power” because to bring life to someone is something supernatural and these people “give life” to holy figures because of it they are treated as very important people.

There is a ceremony to prepare the artificer during the night before he paints. You realize, he is brought in only to paint the eyes on the Buddha image. The eyes must be painted in the morning, at five. [...] The ceremonies therefor begin the night before, with recitations and decorations in the temple.

Without the eyes there is not just blindness, there is nothing. [...] The artificer brings to life sight and truth and presence. Later he will be honored with gifts. Lands or oxen. He enters the temple doors. He is dressed like a prince, with jewellery, a sword at his waist, lace over his head. (Ondaatje 98-99)

Ananda presents reactions to trauma as the rest of the characters do. We can deduce that Ananda has depression as consequence of trauma. Ananda reactions are typical from people that suffer depression. Ananda used to be drunk; people with alcoholism lose the control of consuming alcohol. People that abuse of alcohol have low self-esteem and a necessity of endorsement. Depression can get worst because of alcoholism.

She saw the sadness in Ananda’s face below that might appear a drunk’s easy sentiments. It was possible he had been very drunk that night and remembered nothing about it. (Ondaatje 171)

Another reaction of people with depression can be suicide. Ananda tries to suicide but fortunately Anil and Sarath arrive on time and take him to hospital , saving his life. The lack of confidence and optimism facing the future are two of the consequences of depression; this causes suicidal thoughts in the person who suffers depression.

There were sounds she had never heard before. She ran back for the flashlight, yelled to Sarath and came back in. Ananda was lying against a corner, trying with what energy he had left to stab himself in the throat. The blood on the knife and in his fingers and down his arms. His eyes like a deer in her light. The sound coming from God knows where. Not his throat. It couldn’t be his throat. Not now. (Ondaatje 195)

The most important fact that determines Ananda's trauma is the disappearance of his wife, Sirissa. One day she was walking to the school where she worked as she did every day, and she started to see heads separated from their bodies, they were the bodies of pupils from the school; she was killed too. This is another horrible consequence of war; and Ananda, another character affected by Sri Lanka's civil war.

One day, Ananda was a man who had everything; he had a beautiful wife and a very good job where he was filled with gold, jewelry and lots of presents and the following day he had nothing. As consequence of the traumatic situation of his wife's murder he tried to forget that by drinking alcohol which made him lose his job because he was always drunk. Anil and Sarath meet him is because he is the one that is going to help them to reconstruct a skull that they are analyzing in order to understand how the person who the skull belonged to was killed.

## **2.6 Gamini**

The last character is Sarath's younger brother, Gamini. He is a doctor and he is described in the book as someone that "was brutal in his decisions when he realized he couldn't save the body he was working on. 'Enough' he would say, and walk out" (Ondaatje 212). He is a surgeon and he has to operate on wounded people. He was decisive when he had to take decision about if he could or not save the body of the wounded person. He is also described as a sparing person and someone that always helps the other.

Gamini shows reactions to trauma in the sense that he cannot sleep. The lack of sleep can be produced as a consequence of a traumatic event. What Gamini does is to take certain advantage of the situation and he uses this lack of sleep and some pills to be awake in order to help as much wounded people as possible. But this is something very dangerous because people need to sleep.

Gamini wasn't able to sleep, in any case. He hadn't come down yet from the pills he had recently started taking, the adrenaline still in him though his brain and motor senses were exhausted, so he would walk outside into the night under the trees. (Ondaatje 127)

Since he was a child, his relationship with his brother Sarath had not been good. Gamini was under his brother's shadow, something that he always hated. Another important fact related with this is that he had always been in love with Sarath's wife even when she was dying at hospital after committing suicide he was the one that was by her side. It can be said that he was the one that suffered this loss the most.

Where did the secret war begin between him and his brother? It had begun with the desire to be the other, even with the impossibility of emulating him. (Ondaatje 221)

Despite of being in love with Sarath's wife, he got married, but after many problems in their marriage his wife decided to abandon him and he lost their house. This situation caused him health problems and he is forced to take a break on his work. "Two months after his wife left him, Gamini collapsed from exhaustion, and the administration ordered a leave. He has nowhere to go, his home abandoned" (Ondaatje 215).

As a doctor, Gamini has to see the atrocities of war every day at work. He is under great pressure; he always tries to save people's life but not always with good results. "Hundreds of victims had died under Gamini's care. Thousands couldn't walk or use their bowels anymore" (Ondaatje 219).

## CONCLUSIONS

There are some clear conclusions about trauma in literature and particular in the book *Anil's Ghost*. First of all there are many different reactions to a traumatic event. As well as there are many different reactions, the characters of this book have their own different ways of acting and facing a traumatic event. Denial, hints of depression even suicidal thoughts are some of the different trauma reactions that the characters of the book shows.

Writers use certain narrative tools in order to show trauma in their works. The writer of this book introduces narratives tools related with trauma too. Some of these narratives tools are the combination of testimonial elements, textual gaps, and repetition of the structures or the most important one, the use of flashbacks. Flashbacks are very important in this book; we can see inserted passages were flashbacks help the reader to understand characters' reactions to trauma.

Writers who write about trauma in literature want the reader to empathize with the characters of the book. By reading literature about trauma the reader can feel what the characters feel. Another aim of this kind of literature is to be helpful for people. Readers cannot know what trauma is or maybe readers can be seen themselves reflected in the story. In both cases trauma literature helps the readers to understand trauma or even to face their own traumas.

Trauma can affect to only a person or to a whole society. This kind of trauma is known as collective or social trauma. This kind of trauma is presented in societies that have suffered a great tragedy such as the Holocaust, terrorism or a war. *Anil's Ghost* is framed in the civil war of Sri Lanka and despite of we cannot see a clear social trauma, many of the characters have suffered the consequences of the war. Palipana loses his siblings, Lakma loses her parents, Ananda losses his wife; all of them as consequence of war.

*Anil's Ghost* is a good example of what trauma in literature means. The book portraits a difficult moment for a country but and also a difficult moment in the life of a series of characters. All of them are devastated as a result of war but also as a result of many hard different moments in their life. The author shows very well how trauma influences and



changes people's life and how people are different ones from the others and as a result how people afford or acts while there are facing a traumatic situation.

## **ANNEX I. Michael Ondaatje**

Michael Ondaatje was born in 1943, in Colombo, Sri Lanka. In 1954 he moved to England in order to attend to school but he finally settled in Canada where he studied in Bishop's University, University of Toronto and Queen's University. After that, Michael Ondaatje was between London and Toronto teaching English literature in the universities of Western Ontario and York's University.

He writes different books with a mixture of styles such as fiction, autobiography or poetry. He has written thirteen poetry books, two of them, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970) and *There's a Trick With a Knife I'm Learning to Do: Poems 1973-1978* (1979), making him win the Governor's General Award in Canada. His novels are also very important and they were awarded with different prizes; *Anil's Ghost* (2000) won the Giller Prize, the prix Médicis, the Kiriyaama Pacific Rim Book Prize, the Irish Time International Fiction Prize and Canada's Governor General's Prize. His most famous work, the novel entitled *The English Patient* (1992) was awarded with the Booker Prize, the Canada Australia Prize and the Governor's General Award. This last novel was adapted in 1996 for cinema.

*Anil's Ghost* was first published the 30<sup>th</sup> March of 2000. The book had a good receipt as we can see because of the prizes it won such as the Scotiabank Giller Prize, the Médicis Étranger and the Governor General's Award for English-language fiction.

*Running In The Family* is a good example of Michael Ondaatje's stay in Sri Lanka and the depiction of his family. Ondaatje notes that his book is a mixture of his two return journeys to Sri Lanka in 1978 and 1980. He stayed for months each time, first travelling alone and then with his family. He and his sister Gillian also researched around the island. His family helped him to recreate the era. His raw material came from numerous friends, family and acquaintances across the island. (Bookrags)

Other honors he has received are Officer of the Order of Canada in 1988 and he also received the most important honor given by the government of Sri Lanka to foreign nationals, the Sri Lanka Rathna in 2005 by the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika

Kamaratunga; this honor recognizes different achievements related with Sri Lanka for the service to the nation.

Michael Ondaatje is married to Linda Spalding, a novelist; both together support a small independent press by editing a newspaper entitled *Brick, a Literary Journal*. Since 1990 Michael Ondaatje is a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His last novel was published in 2007 under the title of *Divisadero* and which tells the story of three friends that have been separated during their adolescence.

## **ANNEX II. Sri Lanka's Conflict**

This conflict was a very important one, a long war of 26 years duration with a lot of dead people; on the other hand it was an unknown conflict by the western world. While on one part of the world there was this horrible panorama on the other hand people were not informed by media about this serious conflict that was affecting Sri Lanka during a long time.

Sri Lanka is an island 29 kilometers far from India, it is inhabited by 20,277,597 people. Its first name was Ceylon, it was not known as Sri Lanka until 1948 when it obtained its independence, but before this independence Ceylon was under the control of bigger powers; first it was under China's control until 1505, after that Portugal controlled some coastal locations of the island. Dutchmen were also in the island between 1602 and 1639 during sporadic periods of time; England was relinquished this island in 1976 and in 1802 Ceylon was an English colony.

The majority of its population are Sinhalese people (74% of Sri Lanka's population) but there we can find other ethnic groups being the Tamil the next ethnicity talking about its number of practicans (18% of the population). The biggest part of the Sinhalese people's religion is Buddhism; they want woman's emancipation and its active presence in different spheres. On the other hand, Tamil people promote self-love and rationalism and fight against lineage's system and the oppression of the lower linages. (Paz)<sup>1</sup>

In the same year of Sri Lanka's independence, 1948, inside of this country a movement known as *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)* was born in response of repressive actions made by the army. What this group wanted was what Tamil people were demanding but in a radical way.

In the middle of a deep crisis that the country was suffering, a civil war burst in 1983 between the civil government that was controlled by Sinhalese people and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Tamil's movement was supported by the Indian state Tamil Nadu while on the other hand Sinhalese government followed a military victory in the name of

---

<sup>1</sup> Author's translation

national sovereignty. At that moment lots of Tamils died while a lot of them lost their houses and as a consequence they had to move out of Sri Lanka.

As the conflict increased the number of dead people from the two different sides raised too. In 1987 an agreement between India and Sri Lanka was signed in which India was allowed to take military part in order to cease hostilities. Two years after, Tamil guerrilla group wanted to negotiate with the central government but at the same time a Sinhalese, Buddhist, and extremist movement increased its attacks and as a result the government imposed violent measures.

The following years were the most difficult ones; there were many confrontations between the central government and the group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In the year 1991 Indian prime minister was killed by the members of LTTE and in 1993 Sri Lanka's president was also killed by an LTTE's kamikaze. (Paz)<sup>2</sup>

In the middle of this war and on the failed efforts for giving the peace to this country lots of people disappeared. Lots of innocents were killed without any explanation, lots of families were broken and there are lots of mysteries without solution. People was afraid of speaking and the ones that tried it some day they disappeared while they were buying bread or walking back home with their families.

2005 was another of the most difficult years of this war when the president rejected the creation of a new Tamil state. Between the years 2008 and 2009 the government defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam by killing their founder and majors.

Around 70,000 people have been killed in this war, 6,500 of them were civilians while the NGOs and the media could not access to the battlefields. According to United Nations around 150,000 civilians were trapped in this fight but the LTTE appeared to use these people as human defense not allowing them to abandon the territory. (Paz)<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Author's translation

<sup>3</sup> Author's translation

### Conflict's Chronology

In the year 1956 the Sinhalese was declared the official language of Sri Lanka and other measures related with Sinhalese and Buddhist feeling were introduced, Tamil people were not agree with this because they considered this fact as a discriminatory. As a result More than 100 Tamils were killed after a Tamil parliamentarians protest. At this moment is going to start an ethnical conflict between Sinhalese people and Tamil people. Tamils people started to designate Sinhalese people as “foreigners” and to reclaim the separation from Sri Lanka (Paz).

In 1958 more than 200 people were killed in anti-Tamil riots and in 1959 the prime minister was killed by a Buddhist monk. The 70s were a period of ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka. In 1972 Ceylon changed its name to Sri Lanka and Buddhism is declared as country's religion. At this point Tamils are the minority of the country and in 1976 the radical group of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is created in north and east areas of the country. Here the tension grew and more Tamils were killed in riots.

In 1983 the LTTE killed 13 soldiers and as a consequence several hundred of Tamils were killed too. This is the starting point of Sri Lanka's civil war; since the beginning the civil war little by little intensified. In 1985 there was a failed attempt of peace and in 1987 the government agreed in creating new councils for Tamils in north and east areas of the country, this is something that Sinhalese people did not like.

During the 90s the violence was growing and in its first years thousands of Muslims were expelled from the areas of the LTTE and this group continued with its radicalism. In 1993 President Premadasa was killed in a bomb attack made by LTTE. Between 1995 and 2001 the war increases in north and east areas, Tamil Tigers attacked with a bomb the holiest Buddhist place of Sri Lanka, President Kumaratunga was wounded in a bomb attack and a suicide attack on the international airport destroyed the majority of the Sri Lankan Airlines planes.

Between 2002 and 2004 Sri Lanka was not only affected by the cruelty of war but by natural disasters too. In May 2003 the floods left more than 200 people dead and 4,000 people were driven out of their homes. In July 2004 another suicide bomb blasted in Colombo and the same year, in December more than 30,000 people were killed by a tsunami generated by a powerful undersea earthquake. The country was completely devastated.

In 2005 the state of emergency was declared after the assassination of a foreign minister in hands of a Tamil Tiger. At the same moment the prime minister won presidential election and the majority of the areas controlled by Tamil Tigers did not vote. The next year violence was increased with more attacks that left more dead people.

Between the years 2008 and 2009 Tamil areas started to be controlled by the government again and Tamil Tigers began to lose their power. In March 2008 international panel investigated denounces related with human rights abuses in the country and ne conclusion was that authorities were hindering its work; government rejected the criticism.

The year 2009 was crucial, Tamil Tigers were finally defeated in May and their leader was captured by Sri Lankan authorities in August. In October presidential and parliamentary elections were announced and in November the new alliance included Muslim and Tamil parties; 100,000 refugees were released from camps. This was the end of the war.

## WORKS CITED

- American Psychological Association. *American Psychological Association*. 2016. 2016. <<http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/>>.
- Balaev, Michell. "Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered." New York: Macmillan, 2014.
- Balaev, Michelle. "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory." *Mosaic (Winnipeg)* (2008): 149-167.
- BBC. *Sri Lanka profile-Timeline*. 9 January 2015. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12004081>>.
- Bookrags*. 2016. January 2016. <<http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-running-in-the-family/#gsc.tab=0>>.
- Bower, Gordon. "Awareness, the Unconscious and Repression: An Experimental Psychologist's Perspective." *Repression and Dissociation: Implications for Personality Theory, Psychopathology and Health*. University of Chicago, 1990.
- Caruth, Cathy. «The Wound and the Experience.» *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, s.f.
- Eyerman, Ron. "Cultural Trauma, Slavery and the formation of African American Identity." Cambridge University Press, 2001. <<http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam031/2001035639.pdf>>.
- Garrigues, Lisa Gale. *What is collective trauma?* n.d. 14 July 2016. <<http://www.healingcollectivetrauma.com/>>.
- Medical University of South Carolina. "Victims Reactions to Traumatic Events Handout." n.d.
- Ondaatje, Michael. *Anil's Ghost*. London: Bloomsbury, 2000.
- Paz, Luz María. «Sri Lanka Historia de un Conflicto.» *Acción Cultural Cristiana* (s.f.).
- Somasundaram, Daya. "Collective Trauma in Northern Sri Lanka: a qualitative psychosocial-ecological study." *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* (2007): 27. 15 July 2016. <<https://ijmhs.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1752-4458-1-5>>.



Vickroy, Laurie. *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*. University of Virginia Press, 2002.