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Derrida and/to Žižek on the Spectral Victim of Human Rights in *Anil's Ghost*

Jan Gresil de los Santos Kahambing, Social Science Unit,
College of Arts and Sciences, Leyte Normal University, Philippines

Abstract

There is a wide spectrum in reading Michael Ondaatje's novel *Anil's Ghost*, ranging from thinkers who explore literary, historical, to ethico-ontological and (a)political aspects. I confine the study by strictly retrieving the subjectivity of the human rights victim as not rested in its being a subject and victim, hence as a specter that haunts or 'retaliates' into exposing its victimization. This article attempts to read the spectral nature of this victim using Derrida and Žižek. The Derridean reading grounds the central spectrality on his *hauntology* and what it says about the victim's ghostly character. Later, I expound on the act of haunting from a Žižekian standpoint by hinging on the notion of 'drive' that exposes the nature of victimization as depoliticizing the subject.

Keywords: Specter; Human Rights; Ondaatje; Anil's Ghost; Derrida; Žižek

Immersion into Death

Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* opens many ways in which the text can be immersed. Studies on the novel often relate to thinkers who cross borders in disciplines. Rosochacki (2007) echoes Levinas when he views the novel as disclosing the nature of ethical relations between people in the world by means of its aesthetic forms of language. Burrows (2008) hinges on Foucault's heterotopic spaces. Higgins and Leps (2009) addresses Gilroy's 'postcolonial melancholia' via Foucault, Agamben, and Negri. Chakavorty (2013) explores the novel through the lenses of Spivak, Agamben, Foucault, Freud, and in some sense, Butler, to name a few. Mowat (2013) asserts the presentation of the novel as an 'ethical aesthetic' via Scarry, Levinas, and Derrida without reducing the reading into a political perspective but 'is nevertheless motivated by a concern for the victims.' Yang (2015) reflects further on the text using Walter Benjamin's reflections of history. Herrick (2016) offers an alternative reading on the basis of *Katabasis* or descent into the underworld or Sri Lanka itself in a reading that journeys with the sense of 'shared vulnerability' and 'human precarity' via grief. More recently, Sarkar (2017) draws upon contemporary postcolonial eco-critics, especially Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee (2010) and Rob Nixon (2011), but directs it to material objects rather than spectral agencies.

There are also renditions on Ondaatje and his other works that reflect some insights into the novel. Literary nationalism, for instance, can be seen in Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The English Patient* (Mauro, 2007). Marais (2015) relates *Anil's Ghost* to *The English Patient* when the latter also portrays a 'community of strangers' (Marais, 2015: 17) but only because the former is its follow-up (Sarkar, 2017: 31). The notion of home, shared by the novel, is explored by Bhalari (2017) as he re-roots the diasporic sentiment of 'home' in Ondaatje's poems in the anthology *Handwriting*. Here, one can note that boundaries in Ondaatje's works are dissolved in a postmodern reading, especially through Derrida (cf. Bezar, et.al. 2016).

In reading the text, Nayar (2016: xvii) writes that *Anil's Ghost* focuses on 'rumors and fugitive discourses that construct the 'outsider' who is then placed on the genocidal continuum to be exterminated.' In Chakavorty (2013: 549), 'this outsider perspective – aligned as it is in Anil's case with a belief in the human subject constituted through the unity of logic, language, and law – is shown as predisposed to stereotypes about the post-colony as a space of stasis and danger.' Moreover, Chakavorty offers alternatives in reading the novel: one may 'escape the violent borders of Sri Lanka that Ondaatje enlivens with relief, leaving behind *specters* of unlawful death that seem hazardous and overwhelming even in fiction' or 'reform our ideas about death as a phenomenal as well as *ontological* experience' (555: emphasis mine). The latter is an invitation of immersion into what Chakavorty calls 'an archive of death' (542: 543), that is, to take our 'share in death in other worlds (555).' Such archive is telling since the novel, Nayar says, examines 'massacres and ethnicides' as 'the most obvious manifestations of the genocidal imaginary (21).' More from this archive is an 'inventory' – an inventory of the dead with the 'last sightings of the disappeared individuals' (Nayar: 83). The novel preliminary opens with a focus on reading that attentively watches the dead – 'This vigil for the dead, for these half-revealed forms (Ondaatje, 2000: 6; Henceforth, AG).'

What can be drawn from the examinations above is a reading that must dissolve boundaries and that can penetrate into this ontological experience of death. Sarkar (2017) already notes of material objects as seminal 'actants' against anthropocentric lens on humans and specters. While Sarkar renders this seminal agency in pillars, roofs, firewood, bicycles, and bombs, as opposed to spectral agencies, something she finds in studies on bones, skeletons, or amygdala (cf. Slaughter, 2007), I expand by expressing this spectral agency in the subjectivity of the victim. To do this, I explore the spectral nature of the human rights victim first through Derrida and/to further expose its victimization through Žižek's perspective in advancing the account of haunting in 'drive' and the spectral nature of reality. How, I ask, can the nature of spectrality within the subjectivity of the victim emerge in the text from Derrida and/to Žižek's standpoint?

The Human Rights Victim and/or its Specter in *Anil's Ghost*

Anil's Ghost portrays a polyphonic entry into the problematique of humanization (and consequently, dehumanization). Its scope albeit tied to a perspective of localization (of localized trauma, for instance, cf. Burrows, 2008: 165) is a plea for a universal human problem: 'the problem up here is not the Tamil problem, it's the human problem (AG: 111).' But far from viewing this as an escape from the specters of the novel, it seeks, on the contrary, to speak of an aporia of the human problem, that is to say, 'of the impossible objectification and dehumanization of humans (Nayar, 2016: xiv).' The novel makes it possible for depictions of 'precariousness' to reside in Sri Lanka (Chakavorty, 2013: 553). Alternatively, the escape is also viable but there are ethical stakes to be paid in the refusal to confront such precarity (cf. Butler, 2004; 2009). The novel then opens the floodgates of hermeneutic injunctions but is nonetheless glaring of a presence that lingers throughout the text, between the text, within and even outside the borders of the text. Such presence as an account of what has been left out (Chew, 2000: 154), of those who are farthest away (Nietzsche, 1969), 'the ones we do not know yet' (Abeysekara, 2008: 66) – hinges in the figure of the ghost, of a specter which haunts the text.

The answer as to the question of who is the ghost in the novel is multilayered in the polyphony of voices also. The orthodox reading is, of course, to point to Sarath, living on as 'Anil's whispering ghost' (Burrows, 2008: 74), explicitly figured in the novel: 'He [Ananda] and the woman Anil would always carry the ghost of Sarath Diyasena (AG, 138).' For Renaux (2017: 120), Sarath is 'the specter of a dead person for Ananda' and 'the image offered to the spirit by an object for Anil.' The novel 'registers the ghost of Sarath,' along with his connection with those he left behind (Yoo, 2009: 128). But there is another sense of the usage of 'ghost.' The novel also 'conjures up ghosts from the absences left by the Sri Lankan civil war (Yoo, 2009: 21).' In other words, the victims and their ghosts, the victims as the ghosts themselves, those who suffered. And along the inventory of these victims, Sarath also lies 'with the Friday reports of victims – the fresh, almost-damp, black-and-white photographs...faces covered (AG: 130).' Thus the problem of humanization is a problem of confronting these ghosts, of these lying victims

caught within the political turmoil 'picked up as far away as Kalutara' (136). The novel is 'supported by ghosts of memories, reveals many stories (Vukcevic, 2005: 592).' Moreover, basking on the outsider perspective, of a ghost that is not known yet, Vukcevic contends that Anil Tissera herself as an international representative of Human Rights 'appears as a ghost to discover the source of the organized campaigns of murder engulfing the island (585).' In the manner of detecting a ghost, there lies a paradox: the risk of becoming one.

In the confrontation of ghosts, in trying to name the victims, human rights representatives like Anil are cautioned of exposing the truth about the ghosts. In Sarath's words: 'Everyone's scared, Anil. It's a national disease (AG: 28).' It is in this context that subsequently no action has been taken from the previous representatives who have been there as if no intervention happened at all. At the risk of siding with the victims and exposing the government, 'a human rights lawyer was shot and the body removed by army personnel (AG: 23).' It is with a distance that to confront victims, Gamini, Sarath's brother, exercises his profession as a doctor by letting the victims remain as ghosts, 'categorizing', 'quickly assessing the state of each person,' without names, profession or race, and then moving on to another set of dead bodies (cf. AG: 61). Anil nevertheless confronts this aporia and goes on to find out the 'murder victim,' labels it the name Sailor, and investigates to recognize him, a 'victim among thousands,' in hopes of 'speaking about human rights' that *'one village can speak for many villages. One victim can speak for many victims* (cf. AG: 27, 44, 82, 125).' Having with her the spectral victim of human rights,

Anil hopes that the examination of the Sailor skeleton can produce evidence against those in power. This means that he could be one of those speaking for the other thousands of victims. At the same time Sailor is Everyman, as the name suggests. Even more apparently Sirissa becomes the victim who can speak for other victims, since the description of her fate is brought closer to life than that of Sailor (*History of Sri Lanka in Anil's Ghost*, 2017: 69).

The central manner of speaking with the victim and its specter in this regard is that a victim speaks on behalf of the others: that a ghost lingers is a manner of looking into a problem of other ghosts. Here, there is a manner of representation, a 'representational

ethics' (Babcock, 2014: 67) that signifies and deals with a witnessing of the human (Nayar, 2006: xvii). Ratti (2004: 128) claims that 'we can think of the discourse of human rights as a form of *witnessing* the other.' For Ratti, human rights, signification, and law are 'interlinked' in the novel (Chakravorty, 2013: 556). Witnessing is a process and a participation in this process. Throughout the novel, Anil, Sarath, with the help of Gamini, Palipana the epigraphist, and Ananda the eye-artist bear witness to the continuum of 'continual emergency from 1983 onwards, racial attacks and political killings (AG: 23).' That is to say, that what is witnessed here is not only the processional indictments, but of specters that continue to haunt: the government against insurgents, bodies of each camp, hence victims in their respective rights, demonizing the other. Ananda at the end of the novel witnesses what Ondaatje makes of 'spectralized others to the formation of the Western subject', and of a 'different way of conceiving and dealing with ghosts by introducing a unique artistic tradition' (Yoo, 2009: 21), capped in the war itself that conjures demons or what Ondaatje coins as 'specters of retaliation' (AG: 137).

But the problem that nonetheless emerges in this witnessing lies in the caution of the exposition of the truth about ghosts, that is, in Sarath's critique of human rights representatives:

His main critique of UN agents like Anil is that they seek to disclose "the truth" about human rights violations, but remain immune to the dangerous consequences that some truths—ostensibly positivist and neutral—may have for people living under the repressive government that the investigation targets [...]

'Human rights' thus becomes what Ernesto Laclau calls an 'empty signifier'. In this case, then, it is essential that the category of the "human"— and its "rights"—remain open to rendition by particular actors according to their needs. (Babcock, 2014: 68-69; 81; Cf. Cistelegan, 2011)

If the novel signifies the victim and its tie to human rights discourse, then the signification fails on the account of this distanced witnessing, of an exposition that still rests on the impossibility of dehumanization, merely working outside the paradox of becoming a victim itself. Even throughout the end of the novel, Anil is asked to complete her report and leave

Sri Lanka, that is, to leave the paradox. In this sense, she fails, leaving the task of reconciliation in the hands of Ananda by aestheticizing the war-torn country with the figure of the two Buddha statues. Further from this critique is Ondaatje's attempt of distancing also from politicizing the novel but is rendered impossible by Ismail (2000) because 'whether or not we (authors) intend, texts always do [take positions] (cf. Abeysekara, 2008: 59).'

What emerges now is the question of the nature of this spectrality: what can we make sense of an empty paradox that engenders the victim and/or its specter into revealing its full, rather than half-revealed, form? The sections that follow delve into the nature of spectrality in Derrida and Žižek, and how it relates to the victim. Anil confronts the ghost by becoming a ghost, clandestinely operating on a ship, behind the scenes, away from Colombo. Here, I run the risk also of attempting to be objective, to intersect deconstruction as 'learning to live with ghosts' and psychoanalysis as 'learning to live without ghosts' (Davis, 2007). I thereby echo the risk in Rivas (2014: 119) which mentions the 'relationship between Derrida and Žižek' as a 'risk of uniting two opposite strands of continental philosophy, but a risk that, notwithstanding the fact that any risk is fraught with danger, is still worthy to pursue.'

Ghostly Specter or Spectral Ghost: Derrida's Hauntology of the Victim

Derrida points out that in order to deal with specters, there is a demand to consider responsibility and justice 'as the haunting of the specter forces the present to carry within it an impossible history, a history that disorders the present (Yoo, 2009: 26; Cf. Derrida, 1994: 39).' A ghost that dwells in and of the past and makes its presence felt at the moment is asking something, of an agency that will render its haunting responded, if not reciprocated. But what is the ghost for Derrida and how does it relate to the victim of human rights? Or as he himself asks 'What is a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum (Derrida, 1994: 10)?' In *Specters of Marx*, he lays down the reality of ghosts lying in a metaxy or state of in-between:

If it—learning to live—remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death. Neither in life nor in death alone. What happens between two, and between all the two's one likes, such as between life and death, can only maintain itself with some ghost, can only talk with or about some ghost. (Derrida, 1994: xvii)

This reality echoes likewise Latour's argument that 'everything happens in the middle, everything passes between the two, everything happens by way of mediation, translation, and networks, but *this space does not exist, it has no place. It is the unthinkable...* (Latour, 1993: 37; my emphasis).' This may in fact suppose that the subjectivity of the victim, the specter that it summons, is one that is at once undecided, within and yet outside a temporal sphere. Derrida operates in the existence of the ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in his injunction that the now is disajointed, 'out of joint', by the apparition of the specter. The ghost that oscillates in the 'disadjusted', 'disjointed' present is a form of haunting that denies rationalization, unheard of, un-thought of – unthinkable, in Latour's term. And this by extension pushes the rhetoric: 'What else is the Ghost in *Hamlet* but just such a hybrid, walking the 'unthinkable' realm between the separation of the object and subject poles (Charnes, 2000: 61)?' This is for Derrida the logic of the ghost: 'it is because it points toward a thinking of the event that necessarily exceeds a binary or dialectical logic: the logic that distinguishes or opposes effectivity or actuality (either present, empirical, living--or not) and ideality (regulating or absolute non-presence) (Derrida, 1994: 78).'

Derrida's rendering of the ghost is against the ontological tradition of existences within the order of time. 'The haunting of the ghost, or hauntology – a term Derrida coined to oppose the word ontology – does not mean either presence or absence (Abeysekara, 2008, 200)', but only in this in-between, a spectral agency that dips in and out of the moment. It is this *Hauntology* that is against the ontology of time remaining within the 'grammar and lexicon of metaphysics (Derrida, 1982: 63)' that a ghostly present is able to *be*. This ghostly present is 'haunted by the untraceable and unmappable appearance and disappearance of ghostly moments, then forgetting in such a present can become a ghostly reality (Abeysekara, 2008: 216).'

What the ghostly moments reveal is that the specter cannot also be projected merely in the singular but also in the plural: they are specters as well as ghosts – ghostly specters or spectral ghosts. Derrida asks ‘the *specters* of Marx. Why this plural?’ (1994: 1, Italics mine) and affirms of a future that appeals to a ‘multiplicity’ or ‘heterogeneity’. This is possible given that for Derrida, ‘the experience, the apprehension of the ghost is tuned into frequency: *number (more than one)*, insistence, rhythm (waves, cycles, and periods) (Derrida, 1994: 133; Italics mine).’ At this point, clarity demands that the lexicon be formalized: ‘like esprit and like spirit, *Geist* can also signify specter (Derrida, 1994: 134).’ A spectral character is also a ghostly character, featured in a space of vice-versa. The semblances of ‘a specter, an illusion, a phantasm, or a ghost: that is what one hears everywhere today (Derrida, 1994: 47).’

Going into the novel’s exposition of victims, a Derridean reading or hauntology of the ghost can offer a path in the empty signifier of human rights, one in which the spectral victim can reside, that is, in the auspices between memory and forgetting. The victim then and its specter evokes both remembering and at the same time disremembering.

On the one hand, the archive or inventory of deaths points not only to the effects of violence but also to the lucid roll of cultural memory, an archive that is ‘cumulative’ in structure (Kamboureli, 2009: 28). McGonegal explicates this structure in the act of mourning: ‘Anil and those working with her seek to testify on behalf of the dead, to provide ‘a vigil for the dead’ that will bear witness to their loss and to the memory of their lives (McGonegal, 2009: 107).’ Mourning for Derrida essentially consists of an attempt to ‘ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead (McGonegal, 2009: 107; Cf. Derrida, 1993: 72).’ Remembering takes the imperative of hearing the ‘plural’ dead, the victims, the ghosts, resulting from ‘complex discursive forces (Kamboureli: 28).’ In this frame, the empty signifier of human rights pointing to the paradox of reconciling the victim and the abysmal trap of attending to it, is partially mitigated by the act but also the impossibility of mourning. That is because, on the other hand, the element of disremembering or forgetting subsists also in the act itself.

By forgetfulness (guilty or innocent, it little matters here), by foreclosure or murder, *this watch itself will engender new ghosts*. It will do so by choosing already among the ghosts, its own from among its own, thus by killing the dead: law of finitude, law of decision and responsibility for finite existences, the only living-mortals for whom a decision, a choice, a responsibility has meaning and *a meaning that will have to pass through the ordeal of the undecidable* (Derrida, 1994: 109; Italics mine).

The underlying kernel it seems in placing the spectral victim of human rights in Derrida is that the responsibility he accorded in haunting leads to a decision, a choice. The hauntology of the victim eventually accedes to the haunting of the ghost: 'In this mourning work in process, in this interminable task, the ghost remains that which gives one the most to think about and to do (Derrida, 1994: 122).' To view the victim of human rights is to trudge the undecidable. However, the interminability of such responsibility remains cryptic. The very kernel of this deciding in the midst of the undecidable, this hauntology that permeates in the domain of memory and forgetting, is that one cannot 'disavow the undeniable itself: a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back (Derrida, 1994: 123).' For in this hauntology that mourns the victim of human rights, 'new ghosts', new resistances, insistences, and paradoxes will continuously appear. What this means for Žižek is a radical kind of insistence.

The Victim's Vampire: Insisting Human Rights in Žižek

Perhaps the explicit rejoinder to the case of spectrality in Žižek as much as it follows on Derrida can be found not in the lecture portion but in an open forum of Žižek's 'purely philosophical' talk on *Todestrieb* or death drive (2009). Derrida's interminable hauntology reiterates the emergence of 'new ghosts' in the confrontation of ghosts, decisions and further decisions in the midst of the undecidable. Žižek steps into this by explaining, concerning his answer on the question of relating commodities with the living dead and the possibility of critiquing such spectrality, that 'the status of spectrality can change' (2009). Unfortunately for Žižek, Derrida in his *Specters of Marx* falls into the danger, the risk of the paradox itself, of the irreducibility of spectrality. That is to say, that Derrida's idea of spectrality operates merely on this irreducibility, or in Žižek's words: 'we can fight

it like a Hydra but it will forever return and so on (2009).’ There is then a possibility to critique this spectrality.

Before going into the open possibility of such critique, it is foremost to acknowledge that Derrida’s position goes initially in line with Žižek in terms of this insistency of spectrality in human rights victimization. To discuss Žižek’s reading of the nature of this spectrality, one can plot an example from Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s fairy tales, *The Willful Child*. To quote:

Once upon a time there was a child who has willful and did not do what his mother wanted. For this reason, God was displeased with him and caused him to become ill, and no doctor could help him, and in a short time he lay on his deathbed. He has lowered into a grave and covered with earth but his little arm suddenly came forth and reached up. And it didn’t help when they put it back in and put fresh earth over it, for the little arm always came out again. (Žižek, 2012: 100-101; cf. 2016a: 174)

Is not this weird insistence familiar with the joke that hinges on the notion of ‘drive,’ following from Derrida’s notion of insisting *différance*, and therefore of the in-and-out logic of the ghost/specter that goes out of the binary? The residence of the ghost lies in the space in-between itself, of the undecidable. To narrate:

In the well-known vulgar joke about a fool having his first intercourse, the girl has to tell him exactly what to do: ‘See this hole between my legs? Put it in here. Now push it deep. Now pull it out. Push it in, pull it out, push it in, pull it out. . .’ ‘Now wait a minute,’ the fool interrupts her, ‘make up your mind! In or out?’ What the fool misses is precisely the structure of a drive which gets its satisfaction from the indecision itself, from repeated oscillation. In other words, what the fool misses is Derrida’s *différance* (Žižek, 2007: 132).

Drive therefore is this indecision that can never even be tied to an extreme position (in or out), but only this repetition that goes in line with the psychoanalytic notion of *desire*. It should be noted however, as a brief (but nonetheless relevant) interruption, that strictly speaking, sexuality can be separated from desire, as a kind of organ (desire) without a body (sexuality) as seen for example in Žižek’s explication of Gilles Deleuze’s ideas and their implications in *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences* (2016a). In this

sense, Panossian (2018) misunderstands the basic tenet of what the presuppositions that will likely evoke the notion of a spectral ethereal body that will soon paradoxically trivialize the posthuman process, which I tried to expose, rather than express, (cf. Kahambing, 2018) but gets misinterpreted when she invalidly claims that the position of the abolition of sexuality as pointless in the contemporary post-human era directly implies the utter cessation of desire also, which is never even explicitly mentioned. The possibility simply acknowledges any synthetic host-body that might be far different from the current understanding of the human body. She also misses the point of distinction between posthumanity, which is the era, and posthumanism, which is the consciousness - similar as how one would carefully distinguish between postmodernity or modernity as the era as against postmodernism and modernism as their mode of consciousness or epistemological formulation (cf. Hornedo, 2001; Kahambing, 2017). In *Sexuality in the Posthuman Age*, Žižek (2016b) explicates the “undead” organs that can be feared, particularly by the highly modernist stance with which Panossian projects and situates Žižek in connection to Lawrence. Such fear, for Žižek, in connection to desire, drive, and its further transmogrification into death drive, has a ‘clear libidinal dimension: *it is the fear of the asexual reproduction of life, the fear of the “undead” life that is indestructible, constantly expanding...* (2016b: 64).

What this exposes is that for Žižek, the notion of drive further reveals a vital final paradox in, this time, death drive (*todestrieb*): ‘what Freud calls *todestrieb* is paradoxically his exact analytic name for immortality. *Todestrieb* is this evil insistence which goes on beyond life and death (2009).’ Continues Žižek: ‘If you want to find a figure of *todestrieb*, maybe like it’s the undead, *vampires*, this obscene other immortality (2009, emphasis mine).’ Something like this echoes an interview of Ondaatje himself when he recounts an old myth:

I remember reading the Indian myth, ‘The King and the Corpse.’ It’s a strange, nightmarish tale about a king who ends up with a body round his neck that he has to be responsible for ...the king keeps burying the body, but he wakes up the next morning and it’s round his neck again” (Ondaatje, 2004: 251; as quoted from Chakavorty, 2013: 555).

How does this drive – along with its connection to death drive – relate to the spectrality of the victim and human rights? Žižek contends concerning human rights that the victim is stripped, if not castrated, of his symbolic political participation. And when this happens, the real assumes a spectral character: ‘this real (the part of reality that remains non-symbolized) returns in the guise of spectral apparitions (Žižek, 1994a: 21).’ Here, one can but link again the crucial nature of this spectrality:

‘—the answer offered by Lacan [to the question of why the dead return] is the same as that found in popular culture: *because they are not properly buried*, i.e. because something went wrong with their obsequies. The return of the dead is the sign of a disturbance in the symbolic rite, in the process of symbolization; the dead return as collectors of some unpaid debt (Zizek, 1992: 23).

In his lecture *Human Rights and its Discontents* (1999) whose substantial content is published in *The Fragile Absolute, or, Why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?* (2000), Žižek’s point on the victim of human rights is that its subjectivity is no longer politicized – a ‘depoliticized universal human rights’. Consequently, the victim of this victimization is no longer political, or ‘not a political subject with a clear agenda, but a subject of helpless suffering, sympathizing with all suffering sights in the conflict’ and that ‘beneath this depoliticized, let’s-just-protect-human-rights rhetoric, there is an extremely violent gesture of reducing the other to the helpless victim (Žižek, 1999).’ For Zizek, instead of dehumanization, victimization means depoliticization. Why this victimization as depoliticization? The problem for Žižek is that this intervention beneath the ‘empty rhetoric of human rights’ is mystifying the perspective of looking at the victim as a ‘human catastrophe grounded in purely moral reasons, not an intervention into a well-defined political struggle (Žižek, 1999).’ But what this ‘moralistic depoliticization’ hides is that the victim, the subject individual, is not an abstracted variable in the universal narrating of rights, but a particular – you, me, him – and is always a ‘trans-individual’, that is to say as a particular with the societal (Yang, 2012: 5; Cf. Johnston, 2009: 86).

Herein lies the possibility of critique that furthers Derrida’s reading; the radical insistence of haunting that is distinctive of the Christian legacy offered by Žižek. Beyond this spectral simulacrum of continuous oscillations, that is, apart from the irreducibility of spectrality,

there is a miracle that 'we are not caught in an eternal movement (Žižek, 1999).' What the discourse of human rights means is not that the spectrality of the victimization that one is contextualized in is fixed, that only the act of mourning penetrates into this impossible responsibility that remembers and forgets the tragic loss of subjectivity, but that 'Human rights means precisely, no, you are something independently of your proper place (Žižek, 1999).'

This for the most part enshrines the insistence that human rights can do much more than to petty moralize. In this sense, McGonegal (2009: 102), Chakravorty (2013: 542) points, draws upon Žižek (1994b) the argument that what Ondaatje attempts to do in *Anil's Ghost* is to 'de-stigmatise the victim qua victim'. Such a reading offers a variant vantage point which subverts further the connection of human rights with liberal-permissiveness and the Decalogue: human rights as the right to violate the Ten Commandments, for example:

'The right to privacy' — the right to adultery, in secret, where no one sees me or has the right to probe my life. 'The right to pursue happiness and to possess private property' -- the right to steal (to exploit others). 'Freedom of the press and of the expression of opinion' -- the right to lie. 'The right of free citizens to possess weapons' -- the right to kill'. And, ultimately, 'freedom of religious belief' — the right to worship false gods. (Žižek, 2000: 110-111)

If there is an insistence of human rights for Žižek, it is that it must veer away from this conservatism that paradoxically engenders permissiveness. While Abeysekara (2008: 75-76) criticizes the passage as a 'less than serious attempt at thinking the problem of human rights or an unskilled and unflattering imitation of Nietzsche' – that there is something wrong with Žižek on the originality of his claim – to de-stigmatise the victim qua victim must mean to expose and depose 'rights' as 'human' and move towards a spectral 'vampiric' stand for the novel.

The intervention that awaits such de-stigmatisation is not a governmental project but a politically haunting reading – from the outside, a spectral intervention, unthinkable and working in the logic of a miracle. In Anil's words: 'Mr. Diyasena, I'd like to remind you that I came here as part of a human rights group. As a forensic specialist. I do not work for

you, I'm not hired by you. I work for an international authority (AG: 124).' This is the human rights victim's vampire: the insistence that human rights are never strictly confined to the negative protocols of natural law or civil law (cf. Decalogue, 'thou shall not...'), but of a much more politicized maneuver primordially repressed – the 'irrepresentable X' (Žižek 1994a: 21) that founds the spectral nature of reality.

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