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***Annah, Infinite and Abnormality As Imperial Duress: Relations, Assumptions, Power and Abuse in Crippling Annah la Javanais***

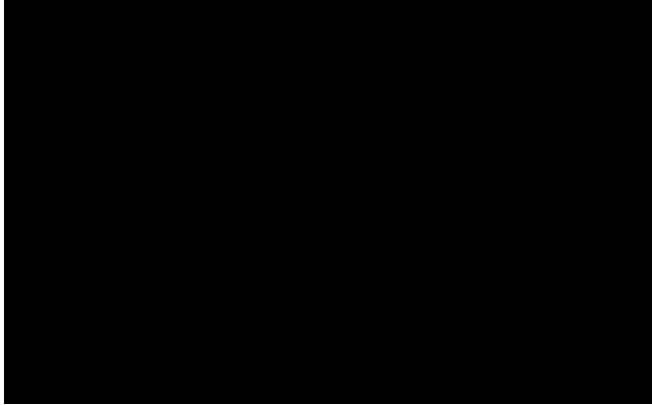
by  
Khairani Barokka

Submitted as Part of  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy by Practice

in the  
Department of Visual Cultures  
Goldsmiths College, University of London

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Khairani Barokka, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: September 23, 2019

## Acknowledgements

For funding this PhD, and presentation of the Annah work in progress at the NWSA 2018 Conference in Atlanta, and at the HASTAC 2019 Conference in Vancouver, I thank the LPDP Scholarship very much. For accepting such experimental endeavours as the Annah works and allowing them to be staged, projected, displayed, heard, printed, and seen, thank you to the Institute of Contemporary Arts and Astrid Korporaal, Aditi Jaganathan, SALTS Basel and Harry Burke, the editors of *The White Review*, and the editors of *The New Inquiry*. Thanks to my literary agent Niki Chang and the Good Literary Agency. All of them gave me hope that these stories will reach a wider audience, so we can move towards a culture of greater care in the arts, foregrounding respect for the brown, black, Asian and indigenous children of the archives and the present—many among them D/deaf and disabled children—and acknowledgement of all the possible Annah stories.

I would like to thank my many fellow disabled artists and activists for disability justice (and the disabled women of colour who coined this term), my literary and arts communities, and my professors in the Visual Cultures Department at Goldsmiths, including Alice Andrews. I'd like to thank Dr Yasmin Gunaratnam especially for taking on supervision of this project on very short notice, ensuring its integrity, and affirming my work.

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Wasi Daniju (apologies for many names not here who are important to me, am grateful for so many supportive, kind people). Thank you to my wonderful partner Hemal. Thank you to my Goldsmiths research colleagues in the Visual Cultures Department, and friends elsewhere doing their PhD, including Shelley Rae Calhoun. This PhD truly could not have been completed without the incredible support of artistic and academic peers Chandra Frank, Portia Malatjie, and Akanksha Mehta. Their friendship, encouragement, humour, tenacity, academic and artistic brilliance and loyalty inspire me, and I thank them very much.

Most of all, I would like to thank Annah(s), the presence of whom brought me—in the end, after years—to doctors who did believe me and how much I needed continual medication, in the course of doing this thesis; without Annah(s)' presence in my own soulbody, their calling for an acknowledging, I would not have been given more bodily and spiritual strength and relief. And for this alone, I owe Annah(s) the utmost care, and try to begin with remembrance. This thesis is dedicated to them and their families, and to my grandmothers.

## Abstract

In delving into how inconsistently Annah, the young subject of Paul Gauguin's painting *Annah la Javanaise* (c. 1893-4), is written about in terms of historical facts, this work queries assumptions of ablenormativity in narratives surrounding them. This multidisciplinary thesis presents scenarios in visual art and creative writing, with artistic process-as-research as primary methodology, presenting Annah outside of their usual context, and as a pained body—prefaced by how such 'unreliable' narratives echo the jumble of statements surrounding them; in turn using inconsistent, sometimes clashing 'facts' about Annah in these narratives, in order to negate the potential violence of declaring one truth for them, emphasising the liminality of information—in order to explicate what norms these portrayals rupture. Drawing from and linking the work of Sara Ahmed (2002, 2004, 2013), Yasmin Gunaratnam (2013), disability and chronic pain scholars such as Alison Kafer (2013) and Alyson Patsavas (2014), Indonesian feminist and disability scholarship such as Slamet Amex Thohari's (2013) work, and Ann Laura Stoler's (1995, 2016) theories, particularly in augmenting the latter's work on colonial Southeast Asia and imperial duress, this thesis places into relief the functions of compulsory ablenormativity regarding certain young, brown girls of supposed Southeast Asian descent. It exposes how elements of white supremacy and of patriarchy are linked to such ablenormative visual assumptions, and the real, often devastating effects such interpretations have on Southeast Asian women and girls today: ablenormativity, in interpretations of visual culture, as imperial duress. It argues for (a) decolonial, pained-aware readings, and (b) soulbody readings as methods of dismantling the affect structures of imperial duress.

## Content Warnings

The intertwining of multiple forms of harm<sup>1</sup>, including:

- Sexual Assault
- Abuse
- Child abuse/paedophilia
- Ableism
- Self-harm and suicide
- Violence
- Pornographic content
- Kidnapping and abduction
- Death or dying
- Pregnancy/Childbirth
- Blood
- Racism and racial slurs
- Sexism and misogyny
- Classism
- Islamophobia
- Transphobia and transmisogyny
- Homophobia and heterosexism
- Animal cruelty

No content warning exists in others' presentation of, or writing on, *Annah La Javanaise*, the painting or the figure.

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<sup>1</sup>List includes terms from: University of Michigan. (2017) An Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings. *University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and the Arts*. Available from: <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/2017/12/12/an-introduction-to-content-warnings-and-trigger-warnings/> [Accessed August 9, 2019].

### **List of Materials Included in Practice Portfolio:**

- ‘Three Months Earlier, or Annah #24,957 Observes a PhD Thesis’ (short fiction), 2019
- ‘Selected Annahs’, excerpt from book manuscript-in-progress, commissioned by *The White Review*, out in the October Issue (#26), 2019 [This is an uncorrected proof. Also included is a note on corrections I’ve made to the uncorrected proof, and images included with the final article].
- *Annah: Nomenclature*, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), 22-26 August, 2018 [Show description, photography, press, captioned script for D/deaf or hard of hearing audiences, ICA YouTube files: ‘Annah: Nomenclature’ and ‘Annah: Nomenclature: Q and A’, ‘Annah: Nomenclature’ film for wall projection of ICA performance installation, floor projection of ICA performance installation].
- *Selected Annahs*, SALTS Basel, June 15 – August 25, 2018 [the three large-scale mixed media collages, script, photography, and press].
- Program from Tate Exchange performance of Selected Annahs, and Q and A with Chandra Frank, June 23, 2018; part of Tricksters Brewing Futures II with 198 Contemporary Art & Culture.
- ‘Nightmares of 1965’, Khairani Barokka writing as Anonymous, *The New Inquiry*, 2015.

Link to materials: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1r36yYFeasCbRHNdarILi0kMyPzfFduZ?usp=sharing>



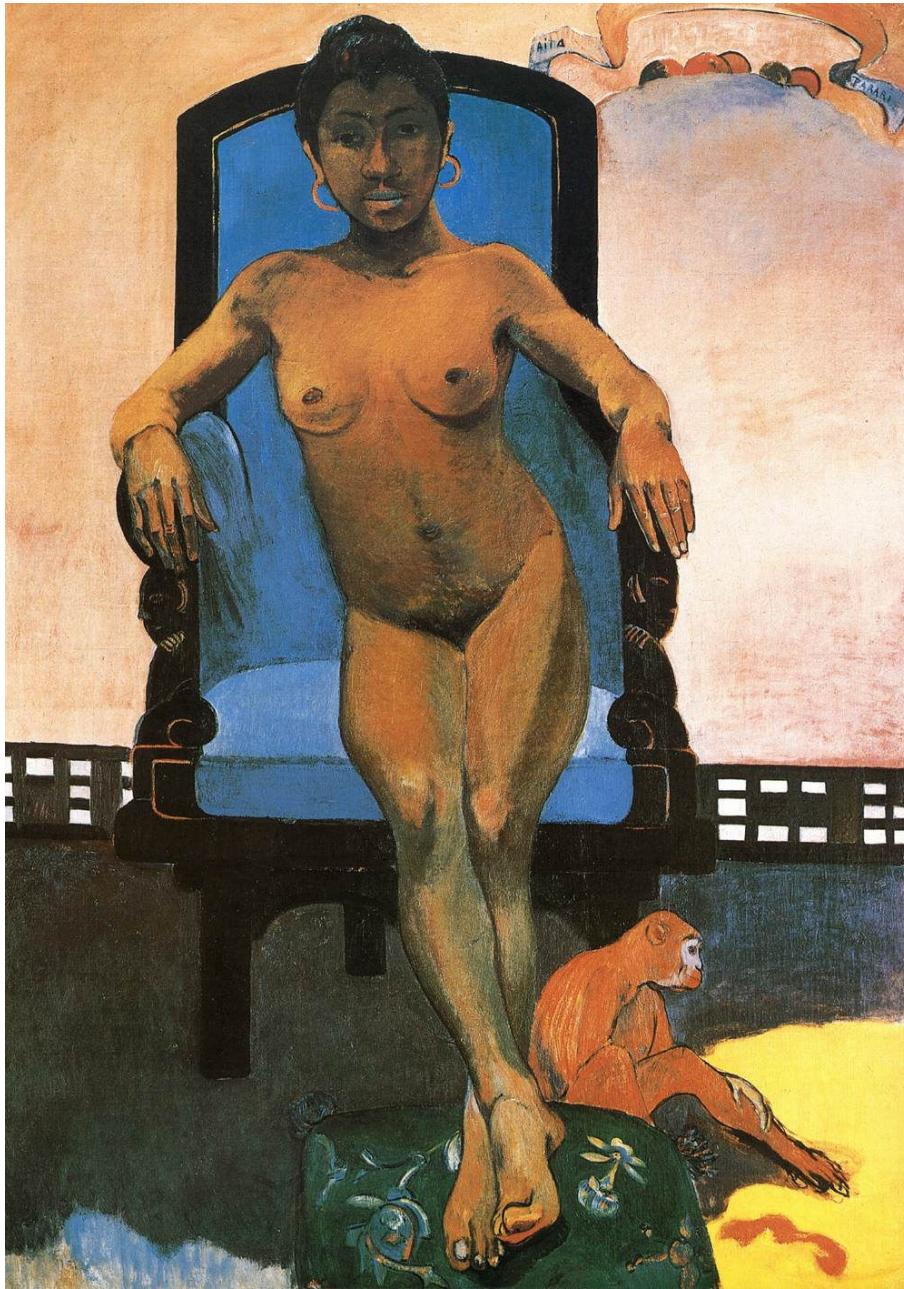
## Notes on Formatting:

- This is a practice-based PhD, with creative work included as both the Practice Portfolio materials listed above and creative chapters in the body of this thesis. The creative chapters of this thesis total 21,742 words of the 82,205 words total (References section not included). The specified word count of a practice-based PhD in Goldsmiths' Visual Cultures Department, minus the References section, is 50,000 to 70,000 words. Because creative writing chapters should be counted as part of my arts practice, the word count of the critical writing in this thesis should be regarded as 60,463 words, which is within the specified word count range.
- Citations in the creative writing chapters are located in footnotes; if any writing in the body of the text in creative chapters is not laid out in academic format, or otherwise not in keeping with formatting used in the critical writing chapters (i.e. single-spaced instead of double-spaced lines), this is done so deliberately, and should be considered by examiners as creative work.
- If phrases that are not in English, i.e. 'La Fille Française', are not italicised, that is also done deliberately. This is in keeping with my personal and political practice, as a literary translator who believes that to italicise is to 'other'. See also the practices of other contemporary, feminist literary translators included in the anthology *Currently and Emotion: Translations* (Collins, ed., 2016).
- Because of the frequency with which the abusive painting *Annah la Javanaise* (Gauguin, c. 1893-1894) is mentioned in this thesis, I do not cite Paul Gauguin as its artist in Harvard referencing format throughout the thesis (i.e. '(Gauguin, c.1893-1894)') after the first initial citations.
- When italicised, i.e. '*Annah la Javanaise*', I am referring to the painting by Gauguin. When not italicised, i.e. 'Annah la Javanaise', I am referring to the real person or people who were called by this name.

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## Preface



[Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese*, or *Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 c 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>2</sup> Painting of a naked child on a chair, her hair in a bun, her ankles crossed, arms on the chair. Monkey at her feet.]

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<sup>2</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001:p.199.

Annah la Javanaise was the real-life model for Paul Gauguin's work *Annah la Javanaise*. *Aita tamari vahina Judith te parari*. (oil on canvas, c. 1893-94, literally 'Annah the Javanese [in French]. *The child-girl Judith has not been breached* [in Tahitian]'). A young person whose origins and endings in life are not common knowledge, yet whose stories as related by others prove fascinating material, they exist in archives as accompaniment to a coterie of white, European, male painters in late-19th-century France, primarily, of course, to Paul Gauguin himself, a man known to have been abusive towards at least one lover, his Danish wife (Mathews, 2001).

In 2011, I gained my first knowledge of *Annah la Javanaise* the painting. It is 116 x 81 cm in dimension, and exists today in a private collection, undisclosed in name and location to the general public. I was alerted to its existence, however, by a web site, and thus experienced it, as the vast majority of people aware of its presence has, as a series of pixels on a screen, a digital marker of a work of art whose original form is exclusively the domain of those with wealth enough to have purchased it. A Javanese woman like myself, I'd thought, quickly uncovering multiple images of them via search engine—a Javanese woman documented abroad in the 19th century, both in painted form and in photographs. This was a rarity. It was around that time that I became increasingly aware of circumstances which drew me to the idea of Annah potently and immediately: women's increased susceptibility to chronic pain; the linkages of chronic pain to abuse histories; women's decreased likelihood to have their pain believed, whether by medical establishment, friends and family, or even passersby; women's compounding of pain due to disbelief, and the compounding of this disbelief due to gender and race.

For the past nearly seven years at the time of writing, I have held Annah dearly as someone to whom I could relate in terms of pain being disbelieved, and someone for whom I projected in fiction, poetry and visual art scenarios of escape and self-fulfillment, knowing well that a young child in their circumstances was very likely to have met a brutal end, and to have suffered throughout their life. After all, they were isolated as a young, brown girl in 1890s France, whose

guardian was a known domestic abuser who would certainly today be classified as a sexual predator, targeting women descended from European colonies precisely because they were less protected—during his time in the Pacific, Gauguin’s painting of three white girls, resident to the island, in sexually suggestive poses drew ire from their parents, his patrons at the time (Mathews, 2001). Yet there was no known outcry on these patrons’ behalf about his use of brown girls in paintings as sexual objects, and such was the case in France as well.

Over time, alternate imaginaries of Annah have expanded and become more self-aware of the imposition of personal beliefs and agendas, and in turn, more aware of how specific beliefs and agendas have shaped extant narratives surrounding the child and the painting. Persistent, however, has been the conviction in my imaginaries that there could well be narratives of Annah as living with pain, that the notion of configuring the painting *Annah la Javanaise* as a portrait of a young child in pain is necessary to explore, and in turn that it is vital to examine what it means to say we are ‘cripping’ them in that context, and ‘queering’ them in that context, as subsequent chapters will describe.

Why Annah in particular? Why pain? The goal of this dissertation is precisely to show how the perception that it is supposedly counterintuitive to describe people in paintings as potentially pained is shaped by conditions of ableism, and ableist interpretations that permeate the field of visual cultures. It is to urgent to show the continuous, constant linkages between ableism, racism and sexism within colonial mechanisms, and how bringing these to the fore illuminate how much we elide and deny histories of pain in portrayed human bodies—particularly vulnerable human bodies such as those of Annah, portrayed as vivacious and lively, whose wellbeing was profoundly at risk.

This thesis is thus an argument in favour of narratives of Annah's life that include the lived experience of extreme chronic pain, both the plausibility of this particular scenario in light of the manner in which contradictory 'facts' surrounding Annah's life have been assembled in historical narratives, as well as the profound relevance of it to the ways in which *Annah la Javanaise* the painting, with its attendant mythologies of Annah the person, circulates in the world: as commodity of the global financial market, and simultaneously, as contradiction of tropes regarding disabled, Southeast Asian girls in the global development industry. It aims to highlight four interlocking nodes of globalising narratives: finance and state violence, the fine art market and the 'development' industry, how they draw upon each other, and how perceived misalignments between them are, in fact, the key to why Annah matters—both the painting and the young person/people who existed—to the wellbeing of millions of people today. In doing so, it links the work of Alison Kafer (2013) and Ann Laura Stoler (1995, 2016), particularly in augmenting the latter's work on colonial Southeast Asia and imperial duress, via Yasmin Gunaratnam's work on total pain and palliative care (Gunaratnam, 2013).

As someone who has lived with and continues to manage extreme chronic pain, this thesis is situated within speculative possibilities for pain narratives, and bolsters the argument for disability studies' role not as corollary to, but as critical and urgent within, scholarship on visual cultures. It positions racialised ablenormativity, racialised heteronormativity, and its specifics with regards to Annah's situation in France as a form of *imperial duress* (Stoler, 2016). It does so, in critical and intertwined creative chapters, by explaining the interlinkages inherent in assumptions of visualised able- and heteronormativity—in particular illuminating linkages between the set of heteronormative, ablenormative, racialised beliefs around Annah, as a person who lived and as a painting, to the destruction, endangerment, neglect and vulnerability of Southeast Asian women and girls' bodies in contemporary life.

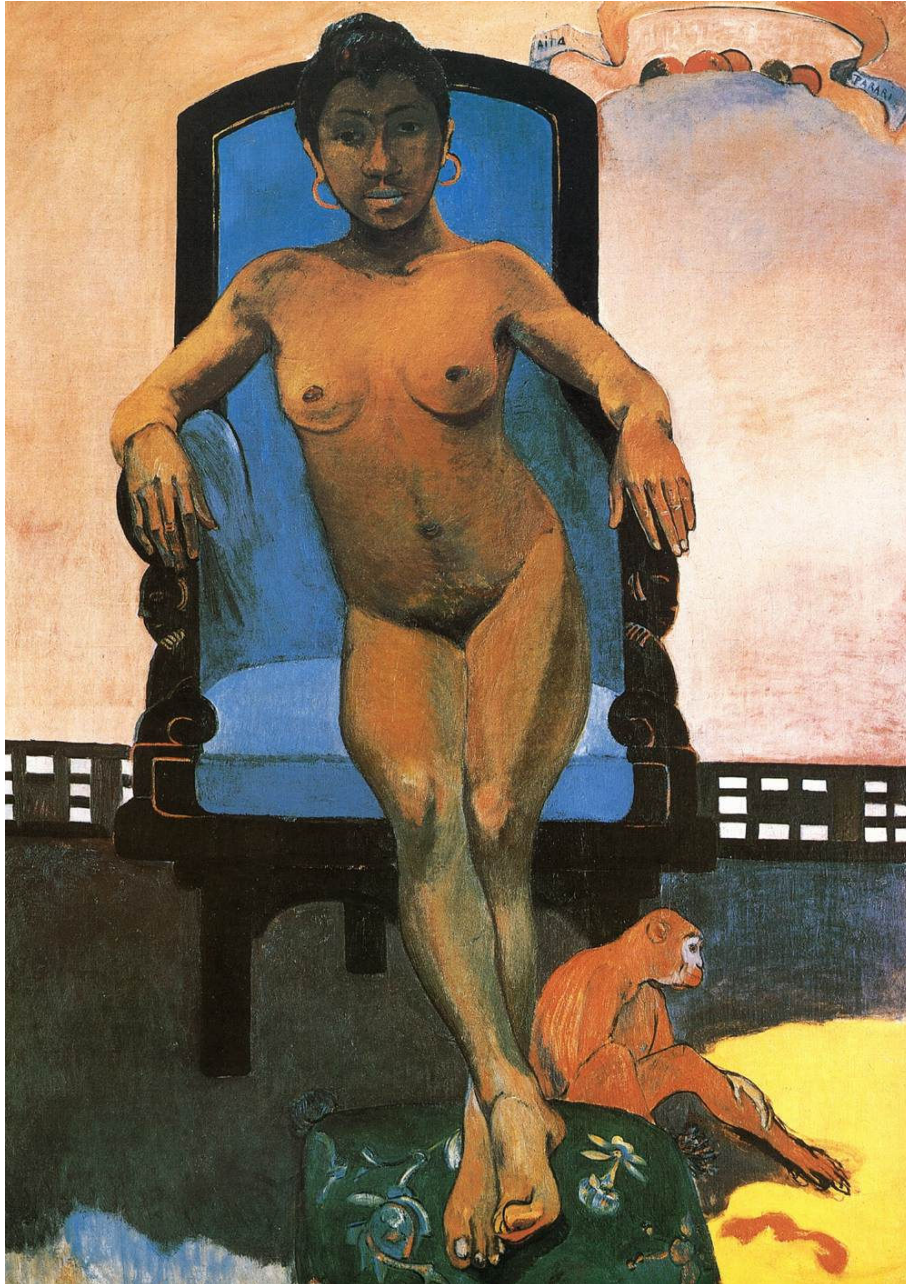
**My findings as presented in this dissertation are:**

- There is the possibility of pain in every picture. Pain is not always indicated by what sighted and/or abled/non-pained people perceive as pain. The possibility of pain is also present in *Annah la Javanaise* the painting, and in portrayals of Annah as person who lived.
- Annah is portrayed, as I touch on in Chapter One, with biographical facts that are so completely disparate from one to the next, such as ‘half-Malay, half-Indian’, ‘half-Indonesian, half-Dutch’, varied writing on their origins, etc., so that *slippages* in the interstices of these biographical facts are possible. I argue that compulsorily ablebodied interpretations of humans as visual subjects, particularly those who exhibit no ‘outer sign of pain’ as interpreted by abled people, make painedness a certain possibility.
- Annah was, I argue, made more vulnerable to chronic pain because of factors that would have made them more prone to bodymind injuries that contribute to chronic pain incidence.
- These factors of increased vulnerability to pain are bodily, and include: being a young, brown child in Paris of uncertain citizenship; having no documented guardians; a history of child labour; being under contemporary lenses a very likely ongoing survivor of abuse at the hands of an older, colonial white man who was a documented abuser; being surrounded primarily by older, white men who condoned this abuse if not contributed to and perpetuated it; being set up as sexual rival to the girls their age they were in contact with; and the profound isolation and lack of holistic healthcare and wellbeing that all of these factors contribute to, which in turn risks bodymind injury from trauma that creates chronic pain.
- All of the above contributes to explorations, as yet untouched in the literature, of the intersections between disability studies, de(colonial) studies, and visual cultural studies regarding race, ethnicity, nationality, disablement, sex, age, consent, queering and crippling. The creative work in this thesis shows paths forward for further practice-as-research into these explorations, into what implications Annah as a pained body in a painting provides.

- As such, I introduce the concepts of a) decolonial, pained-aware reading and b) soulbody reading of texts. The former asks for an understanding of the continual suppression of possibilities of human figures' painedness—particularly the painedness of those groups most likely to be pained—by colonialism, which persists into the present. The latter is a spiritual interpretation of human figures and their lives that exceed Western, colonial concepts of epistemologies and ontologies—an interpretation that queers and cripps time-space.
- As this is a PhD by Practice, I attach a Creative Portfolio consisting of interdisciplinary art and creative writing on speculative Annah stories. However, as I will elaborate on in Chapter Eight: Conclusion, I also trouble my own position with regards to this creative practice, and highlight the dangers of 'over-reading' (Gunaratnam, 2019), even when, as mentioned in the Abstract, my goal is 'to negate the potential violence of declaring one truth for them, emphasising the liminality of information'.



**Introduction: 'Aides-mémoire'**



[Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese, or Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 c 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>3</sup> Painting of a naked child on a chair, her hair in a bun, her ankles crossed, arms on the chair. Monkey at her feet.]

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<sup>3</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001: p.199.

This PhD presents scenarios of Annah as a woman with chronic pain and fatigue, and the acute political consequences of such a reading. For many, the interpretation of Annah as potentially in chronic pain and fatigue may seem strange, extreme, out of place or wildly improbable. This is precisely why this PhD project exists: to illuminate why, in fact, it is certainly possible and can in fact be intuitively probable as a reading, as it is for me. And if the young woman in Paul Gauguin's painting *Annah la Javanaise* (c. 1893-1894, 116 x 81cm) was in chronic pain and fatigue, how does this relate to both hegemonic, white patriarchal narratives and extant feminist critiques of Gauguin?

Pain is invisible in *Annah la Javanaise* the painting, yet I am absolutely certain of its presence, here and in not only many, but all other portraits. There is the possibility of pain in every picture. My conviction that this is the case forms the basis of this dissertation, and was formed from an analysis of patriarchal, colonial and ableist forces acting in concert, each bolstering the other, to create the assumption that a person is pain-free until proven to be pained. This argument will be supported by the use of queering, crippling, and decolonising as methods applied to images, and *Annah la Javanaise* in particular.

This involves working at the intersections of critical disability studies, which intersects with queer studies, and visual cultures, in particular feminist visual cultural analysis of Gauguin—decolonising both.

Is there a possibility that Annah, the young girl painted by and associated with Paul Gauguin in 1893-94 could be in pain, particularly considering Gauguin is a documented perpetrator of domestic abuse?

If so, what factors make this a possibility?

If Annah was pained in the painting, what are the implications of this for our understanding of visual cultures, and how art historical biographies are constructed—what fields of inquiry does this open up with regards to portrayal of Southeast Asian non-binary people, girls and women in particular?

## Methodology

The methodological approach of this dissertation, as a PhD by practice, is primarily using artistic praxis in visual arts and creative writing as research, in conjunction with examinations of the intersections of (a) visual cultural studies, particularly with respect to Gauguin, (b) Indonesian feminist studies, including decolonial approaches, (c) affect studies and (d) disability and pain studies. I use creative writing and digital art, including performance installations and mixed media collage, to reimagine the ways Annah is presented, and use this creative work as a method of opening critical theoretical pathways, that continue these intersections.

Critical chapters are interspersed with creative interventions in this dissertation. This dissertation engages with how visual and literary interventions push lines of inquiry further.

My methodology is primarily the undertaking of interdisciplinary art practice working in concert with creative writing on multiple possible Annahs. There are suggestions as well as outright assertions of Annah as disabled in terms of chronic pain, as well as potentially other ‘invisible’ disabilities.<sup>4</sup> The expansion of the ‘possible Annahs’ canon through speculative non-fiction art and writing both highlights the essentially fictional nature of most all clashing Annah accounts, emotional possibilities in regards to stories of Annah that are obstructed by patriarchy combined with racist colonialism and ableism.

The methodologies of visual cultures use theory and practice to illuminate perspectives on visual art that have not been brought to academic discussions before; *Annah, Infinite* as a practice-based project is very much in line with this modus operandi. Through applying disability cultures theories to visual studies, Annah (as both painting and person) is shown to be plural in

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<sup>4</sup> I use ‘invisible’ in quotation marks here because chronic pain, as with other disablements to the body, are often deemed ‘invisible’ according to an abled gaze. For people who live with chronic pain, the effects are visible in ways that abled perspectives often do not consider.

interpretation, and open to interpretation as a disabled young person—the contexts of these interpretations as transgressive to the status quo of literature on Annah and Gauguin opens doors to understanding persistent patterns of oppression historical and contemporary, what we call imperial duress (Stoler, 2016). Understandings of heteronormativity and ablenormativity as intertwined patterns of imperial duress are key to this thesis.

Coined by Teresa de Lauretis in 1990 at a University of California, Santa Cruz conference, ‘queer theory’ has created novel ways of regarding supposedly fixed categories of sexuality and gender, from what it means to be ‘heterosexual’ to how ‘woman’ is signified (Jagose, 1996), deconstructing ideas of heteronormativity and gender as fixed and mapped onto sex—however, it is not limited to these categories, and queer theory may be applied to any number of other unstable identities, such as class and race through myriad lenses.

Judith Butler is one of the seminal theorists contributing to this field, with her book *Gender Trouble* tying the instability of ‘ontological locales’ (1990:p.144) to not only gender but class and race, arguing that these categories are generated from performativity that reinforces them, and arguing for performance as a method of pushing against supposedly stable categories, as ‘the body is itself a consequence of taboos that render that body discrete by virtue of its stable boundaries’ (1990:p.133). Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick, like Butler, draws on Foucauldian notions of biopolitics and deconstruction to trouble accepted norms and uncover homoerotic subplots, seeking out and advocating for ‘queer idioms’ to replace heterosexual readings of literature, in works such as *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985). Both theorists were influential in shaping the field; their work is also used, however, to destabilise the notion of ‘queerness’ itself.

To understand why queerness itself needs querying is to peer into queer theory’s relationship to identity politics. Though originally tied to LGBTQ politics in the US that adopted ‘queer’ as an identity marker—an association that persists—in a special issue of *Social Text* beginning with

‘Introduction: What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?’ (Eng, Halberstam, & Muñoz, 2005), David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz call for a ‘queer epistemology’, that

‘reassesses the political utility of the term queer. The mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identity—as a mass-mediated consumer lifestyle as well as an embattled legal category—demands a renewal of queer studies that also considers the global crises of the late twentieth century. These crises, which are shaping national manifestations of sexual, racial, and gendered hierarchies, include the ascendance and triumph of neoliberalism; the clash of religious fundamentalisms, nationalisms, and patriotisms; and the return to “moral values” and “family values” as deterrents to political debate, economic redistribution, and cultural dissent.’ (p.1)

Identity politics thus is positioned as at odds with queer theory’s aims, yet materially, bodies marginalised by virtue of both sexual orientation outside heteronormativity and by race cling to it for survival and political gains. This is highlighted in ‘queer of colour critique’ for example, coined by Roderick Ferguson in *Aberrations in Black* (2004), which whilst disavowing set categories often posed in sociological critique as universal, attempt to build coalitions across identities towards anti-capitalist ends and away from the Eurocentrism and white-centricity queer theorists may write in, and to.

In practice, however, such identity coalitions may not always include disability studies, nor critical disability studies, the latter deconstructing labels of ‘disability’ and ‘ability’ in much the same way as queer theory. Subini A. Annamma, David Connor and Beth Ferri have proposed a ‘Disability Critical Race Studies’ or ‘DisCrit’ (2013), that ‘combine[s] aspects of Critical Race Theory

(CRT) and Disability Studies (DS)' (p.1) in a way that illuminates the intertwined nature of both the need to deconstruct 'race' in CRT and disability studies. A way that

'offers the possibility of a more complicated reading of the basis of white supremacy.

Without racialized notions of ability, racial difference would simply be racial difference.

Because racial difference has been explicitly linked with an intellectual hierarchy, however, racial differences take on additional weight.' (ibid.:p.15)

Though US-heavy in context, DisCrit is not dissimilar to the approach taken here with regards to deconstructing labels applied to Annah—I decolonise it further, reaching Southeast Asia and labels applied to bodies deemed (potentially or with certitude) Southeast Asians. In that region, it is impossible to maintain colonially-imposed labels of race, sexuality, class, gender, and disability, which often operate in binary modes. Hundreds of cultures and languages exist in what is now Indonesia (and in colonial times was the Dutch East Indies), giving rise to a plethora of subjectivities.

Annah's race, 'abledness' or 'disabledness', sexuality, age, class, religion, are all ontological fields that are deconstructed in the practice-based work here. As illustrated by the labelling of the photograph below as both 'Tohotaua of Polynesia' from 1900, said to be taken by Gauguin's friend Louis Grelet (Stanley, 1989:p.203), and 'Hannah la Javanaise, Paul Gauguin's mistress' on Pinterest (Harvey, date unknown), even Annah's name and identity in photographs can be multiple, thus unstable.



[Caption: a brown, femme-presenting person with long, curly hair depicted sitting with a fan, in black and white. In the background is a painting of what appears to be a white woman and baby.]

To embrace the non-binary (i.e. ‘Good’ or ‘Bad’), nuanced, fluid, socially structured nature of disability and disablement is what was intended when the term ‘cripping’ was utilised by Robert McRuer in *Crip Theory* (2006) and Alison Kafer in *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (2013). ‘Crippling’ and ‘crip’ as words, however, must also contend with Western- and Euro-centrism in disability studies, the fact that they are English words, and erasure of myriad understudied, non-Western perspectives and interpretations of disability and debility, including Indonesian and Javanese perspectives (which

I will discuss in Chapter Three). Nonetheless, it is important to describe the definition of crip theory, with regards to these words.

In the book *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006), Robert McRuer points to the overwhelming interpretation of events, people, situations, scenarios according to abled and straight perspectives. Just as ‘to queer’ something means to imbue something with potential beyond heteronormative gazes and strictures—to interpret, say, a poem *assumed* to be about heterosexual love as one about homosexual love—so too does ‘to crip’ or ‘cripping’ refer to a verb function, a movement, an action, that posits the possibility of non-abledness, of perspectives outside abled ones. To interpret, for instance, a body that is *assumed* to be abled as autistic, in chronic pain, blind, with cancer, depressive, anxious with a leg prosthetic, and any other number of ways in which a person can be called ‘disabled’ (‘disabled’ as a category, broadly speaking, that can be used to describe bodyminds outside abled norms within which societal infrastructure is built)—troubling the dichotomy between ‘abled’ and ‘disabled’ in the first place, pointing to the many, myriad signs of disability among us, in our own bodies. A poem assumed to be written from the point of view of an abled body may be ‘cripped’ to point to other possibilities, that the narrator could be disabled. That the two verbs ‘to crip’ and ‘to queer’ may be applied in interrelated ways, in concert, is the basis for the term ‘to crip-queer’ or ‘to queer-crip’ that I kept in mind when writing this dissertation—that a figure such as Annah, for example, interpreted as abled and heterosexual (why this is will be unpacked further in later chapters) could be both queered and cripped in interpretation. They could belong to more marginalised groups when it comes to bodies. Crucially, ‘[t]he system of compulsory ablebodiedness, which in a sense produces disability, is thoroughly interwoven with the system of compulsory heterosexuality that produces queerness’ (McRuer, 2006, p. 2).

For instance, ‘differently abled’ is a term which is problematic in reproducing person-centred vocabulary around disability, rather than pointing to the societal demarcation of certain



bodysminds as ‘different’. In other words, ‘differently abled’ always reinscribes non-normative bodies as different *in relation to those bodies deemed abled*, which reinscribes strict categories of ‘abled’ and not, that queer and crip theory seek to deconstruct. I also perceive ‘differently abled’ as abjected, and bodies that are, for instance, HIV-positive being called ‘differently abled’ as their bodies change as linked to the abjection of queerness.

Patterns of oppression made apparent by crip-queering are potent, fertile ground for analysis, and for working towards an application of theory towards material changes in how visibility marks brown girls, Southeast Asian girls, girls disabled in ways both obvious and not to the abled gaze.

Disability studies, however, is in no way a monolith. Heavily dominated by white Euroamerican perspectives, scholars have called for a decolonisation of the field (Block, et al. (eds.), 2015; Barker & Murray, 2010), with fascinating and profound insights emerging from a critical disability studies (Chen, 2012) that engages with constructs of race, gender, class, sexuality, gender, age, geography and economic status as inextricably intertwined with disability in a world in which all bodies bear the marks of colonialism and plunder as global economics. Queer theory is brought to bear here in my research as linked to all conceptual frameworks of the body, including those from critical disability studies, as has been illustrated by Alison Kafer with *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (2013) and others; as with Kafer, for instance, I argue against the erasure of disability and imbuing people with (potentially) white parentage as ways to erase suffering, ableism, and racism, that this would be liberatory for potential Annahs, existing in past, present and future here. Kafer writes,

‘This assumption that disability cannot be a desired location, and that it must always be accompanied by a nostalgia for the lost able mind/body, is what animates “the cure question” so familiar to disabled people...’ (2013:p.43)

Like Kafer, I develop in the creative work ‘a crip futurity that recognizes value in dissent and disagreement, that recognizes loss, that remains open’ (Kafer, 2013:p.24).

What my thesis also contributes to the fields of queer theory and critical disability studies is the beginnings of their examination—in the critical writing chapters as well as in speculative scenarios—from Javanese and Southeast Asian cultural perspectives, and the linkages of these to visual cultures as a field through analysis of *Annah La Javanaise* as painting and person, simultaneously embarking on a specified decolonisation of the frameworks of all these fields.

My practical work in creative writing and visual art form explores, among other things, how Annah’s existence continues to lend itself to markets that rely on the exploitation of some children as more disposable than others by virtue of sexualising tropes, and render the suffering of these more palatable. In the work, in other words, I will show the thrulines between the commoditisation of Annah in late-19th-century France to value systems in contemporary art markets, in both interlinked spheres of finance and ‘development work’.

In particular, the narratives I create will push against the structures of Annah proto-narratives that serve to strengthen a colonial hold upon Annah’s body—and the bodies of contemporary Southeast Asian people. Such work will be queering time and space, exploring various notions of utopia as derived from José Esteban Muñoz’s work (2009), crippling time and space as inspired by Alison Kafer’s work combining feminist, queer, and crip perspectives (2013), and furthering both queering and crippling as relates to visibility by including pain narratives (within crip narratives) as intrinsically linked to Yasmin Gunaratnam’s work on the hospice philosophy of ‘total pain’ (2013)—a state of absolute physical and emotional pain and vulnerability produced by intersectional violence, discrimination, and lack of avenues for pain alleviation, particularly for Black and brown women, children and non-binary people. How may we link all of these under the banner of

‘imperial duress’ (Stoler, 2016), a term used to denote the persistent effects of imperialist colonialism in contemporary society, which could for the first time be linked to regimes of ablenormativity?

### **Annah and Feminisms in Gauguin Studies**

‘The most intimate moment in the 19th century European colonial desiring of Java might have occurred in 1893 when Paul Gauguin took a girl of about 13 years of age he called “Annah la Javanaise” as a domestic servant. Annah lived in Gauguin's Paris flat and it is believed that Annah was also his mistress. Gauguin painted a nude portrait of her, together with his pet monkey, making Annah resemble classical Javanese statuary. Gauguin also proudly displayed Annah to his circle of intimates, and took her on a trip to Brittany. In Brittany, Gauguin got into a violent altercation with locals who apparently believed Annah was a witch. Annah quarelled [sic] with Gauguin, severed their relation, went back to Paris alone and ransacked Gauguin's apartment. She possibly modelled for Alphonse Mucha after she left Gauguin but beyond this no more is known about her (Mucha 1966). Annah was in fact Eurasian (Dutch-Javanese), brought to Paris from Southeast Asia by the opera singer Nina Pack and “found” by Gauguin's art dealer in the streets or brothels of Montmartre. Gauguin was fascinated with Javanese culture, going into raptures about the Javanese performers at the 1889 international exhibition in Paris and collecting postcards and other images of pre-modern Java. But Gauguin showed no desire to see Java through Javanese eyes. The closest he got to Java was to compel a domestic servant to assume its trappings. By inscribing Annah as pre-modern Javanese, Gauguin in effect transposed the rigidly compartmentalised racial hierarchy of late 19th century Java (where mixed race went

unrecognised as a legal category) onto the world of post-impressionism. Gauguin had no interest in displaying Annah in her current pathetic condition as a displaced half-Javanese adolescent turned street child and sex worker. For Gauguin, her only artistic interest lay in her capacity to be represented as a token of Javanese antiquity.’

- Matthew Isaac Cohen, ‘Dancing the Subject of “Java”’: International Modernism and Traditional Performance, 1899–1952’, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 35:101, 2007:pp.9-10

Though the above is a fascinating narrative on the subject of Annah la Javanaise, it is by no means the only one. M. Isaac Cohen’s compilation of sources here do not mention the fact that in various accounts that mention Annah, as I write in Chapter One, they are portrayed as variably ‘Malay’, ‘half-Malay half-Indian’, that they were perhaps ‘mulatto’ of indeterminate origin. That indeed, there exist many discrepancies regarding what has been written about Annah in the past, with varied accounts of:

- (a) their ‘race’/‘ethnicity’,
- (b) the manner in which they and Gauguin met,
- (c) the nature of their relationship to Gauguin, from ‘may have been mistress’ to ‘mistress’,
- (d) their personality if it was written about at all.

Though the reliability of each source on Annah may vary, it is this very variability that I seek to draw to the fore, as well as the assertion of each source as absolute ‘truth’. When in fact, even in Cohen’s account above, I see the use of the word ‘pathetic’ to describe Annah’s position, if they were indeed a sex worker and ‘street child’, as troubling and subjective, in no way assertive of their potential agency, resilience, resourcefulness, particularly as many in their position would have been highly vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

I open a number of chapters in this thesis with discrepant excerpts of sources on Annah, each relating to the specific focus of each chapter, in juxtaposition to each other, explicating in the paragraphs to follow exactly what these discrepancies mean with regards to developing my own views on Annah literature and critical theory.

What is telling in all of these descriptions is a perception that Annah, as is the case for nearly all visual subjects in critical analysis, is assumed 'abled', as they have not been specifically pointed out as being otherwise.

Of course, Gauguin's orientalist underpinnings in his portrayals of women have certainly sparked academic ink through feminist lenses in the past. Yet I find them still inadequate. Though feminist academic discourse on art mentioning Gauguin's work abounds, most instances mention him cursorily.

In Linda Nochlin's *Representing Women*, she mentions Gauguin amidst many other painters, 'Manet... Picasso... Matisse... the German Expressionists' (1999:p.141) when stating that '[t]he female nude is the contested site of vanguard versus conservative practices in the nineteenth century. The questions are: How different are these presumably adversarial practices from each other? ... Reading as a woman, I might well come out with a different answer to these questions than if I were reading as a man' (ibid.:p.141). Yet this assumption that there is a simple binary between 'woman' and 'man', that there must be only one point of a view of a 'woman', that a 'female' body automatically denotes 'woman' is troublesome.<sup>5</sup> So too are descriptions of Gauguin's *Where Do We Come From? Who Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897) and *Fatata te Miti* (1892), that are surface-level, the latter containing 'an erotics of exoticism' (Nochlin, 1999:p.212) that does

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<sup>5</sup> Cisness refers to inhabiting a body biologically denoted as 'female' and identifying as a woman, whilst one can be a non-cis woman in a body biologically denoted as 'male' or intersex, etc.

not then lead to discussion of a difference between how brown female-presenting nudes are portrayed versus white female-presenting nudes.

Lynda Nead's older *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (1992), to take another example, argues that 'one of the principal goals of the female nude has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body' (ibid.:p.6) but that

'[d]enying visibility to "the female body" as a universal category perpetuates the invisibility of women whose bodies do not conform to the ideals of the dominant culture and who may be struggling for the right to physical and public visibility.' (ibid.:p.75)

The issue here for me is one of ocularcentricity, and 'visibility' as the most important attribute above all. I would point instead towards words like 'resonance', 'understanding', 'power'. This is why disability cultures are *vital* to visual cultures—it shows that so much is to be gained when the balance of power is shifted away from the merely visible. For this same reason, disability perspectives are indelibly tied into queer politics, trans politics, and postcolonial perspectives, as I will continue to elaborate upon. They are about everything beyond the visible, in relation to the visible. Everything, I argue, with regards to the female body and feminism, needs to be reevaluated based on its ocularcentric determinism—in ways that are linked deeply with pain, as I explore in Chapter Two.

Though Nead covers disability, the assumptions made can still be proven false. She says,

'The disability arts movement has provided an important and significant forum for disabled women artists to challenge the stereotypes and omissions of non-disabled culture and to make visible new definitions of physical identity.' (1992:p.77)

Nead writes this as though there is only one disability arts movement, and again, using visibility as the greatest marker of power. I point out these specific sentences because they are prevalent in discourse I have come across as a disabled woman who has used my own body and concealment or exposure of it in my art, and over the years I have found it necessary to peel back these basic assumptions in discussions of feminisms—and more will be called into question in the chapters that follow.

The disabled body in visual art specifically has been the sole subject of both Ann Millett-Gallant's *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art* (2010) and Tobin Siebers' *Disability Aesthetics* (2010). To examine the former first, written by a disabled woman, I appreciated discussion of Saartjie Baartman, 'put on public display in London as a savage, oversexualized "Hottentot" Venus' (Millett-Gallant, 2010:p.32). Millett-Gallant rightly lambasts this form of colonial violence in terms of rendering non-white female bodies 'freaks'—that Baartman's experience 'links racist and ableist discourses further, for [her] "abnormality" ... was framed through languages of disability' (ibid.:p. 32). Millett-Gallant also mentions work on Saartjie Baartman 'in relationship to disabled female characters, empowered through their liberation from norms and social standards for beauty, in the resistance literature of contemporary feminist, African-American writers' (Millett-Gallant, 2010:p. 150). However, there is nothing explicitly said on disablement from the brutal and 'subtler' forms of violence inflicted by (neo)colonialism and/or slavery as a whole, to vast numbers of non-white bodies—something I think is telling, in terms of impairment of brown bodies as a result of (neo)colonialism not being discussed and somehow taken for granted.

If '[a]esthetics tracks the sensations that some bodies feel in the presence of other bodies' (Siebers, 2010:p.1), then although Siebers provides extensive and vital information on how bodies deemed non-normative in terms of symmetry or other signs of 'wholeness' or 'ableness' in fact create powerful artistic appearances, I find—as a body that experiences pain—his *Disability Aesthetics* wholly lacking in terms of discussion of how the bodies being perceived may feel

themselves to be in pain, yet consistently have their pain levels judged—in terms of non-pained bodies’ wholly inadequate ideas of what constitutes ‘pain visibility’, and indeed pain itself. Somewhat parallel to this, Siebers takes a somewhat ‘-etic’ (the term in anthropology for ‘outsider’ view) approach to postcoloniality, perceived ethnicity, and pain, as for example when he describes Chris Ofili’s *The Holy Virgin*, with one breast missing and one breast as elephant dung, as ‘hip-hop’ (ibid.:pp.66-67) (Why? What makes this mixed media work ‘hip-hop’ other than perhaps the artist’s ethnicity being associated with the movement, as opposed to a white artist’s collage/mixed media?) and ‘organic otherness’ (ibid.:pp.66-67; which is a term one might convey to describe non-white bodies), rather than interpreting the *Virgin*’s disability as potentially coming from centuries of colonialism, slavery, and their aftermath.

Taking the example of *Annah la Javanaise* (Gauguin, c.1893-94), I’d like to posit a fundamentally important counternarrative to Siebers’ *Disability Aesthetics* in terms of what a body may *show* and what it may *feel*, not only in terms of pain as individual affliction, but that of pain as societal hazard—deeply inextricable from legacies of violence as inherited trauma in epigenetics (modified gene expression rather than genetic code altering) as well as being bodies inscribed with *continuation and aftermath* of legacies of violence, leading to what Yasmin Gunaratnam deems ‘total pain’ (holistic physical and mental pain, combined with and exacerbated by social suffering; Gunaratnam, 2013). In doing so, I’ll invoke insights that are similar to those mentioned in Donna McCormack’s *Queer Postcolonial Narratives and the Ethics of Witnessing* (2014), which uses ‘multisensory epistemologies’ to discuss how (post-)colonial trauma is conveyed through the body; something I’ve felt in my own body and have struggled to articulate for many years.

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‘Annah was not the only young woman whom Gauguin took as a subject for his art. ... Teha’amana [a teenaged girl whom he had married in local custom while in Tahiti] had the status of wife within her own culture, but Gauguin’s illicit relationship with Annah would have caused her to be ostracized in 19th-century Paris. Little further is known of her life, although she later posed for photographs in the studio of Alphonse Mucha; deprived of her own name and history, she appears only as an object of representation in western [sic] art. She can perhaps be seen best as an imaginary body signifying the aesthetic and sexual fascination of many European male artists with the otherness of both race and sex.’ (Jiminez, 2001:p.47)

This version of events clearly differing from Cohen’s and others’, I take issue with ‘only as an object of representation in western [sic] art’, a terribly vague term when ‘representation’ can cover all and sundry, including dignity—what further concerns me is that using such language to describe Annah is subjecting them to narratives of sympathy, rather than empathy. This is something that might be tied to the relative paucity of scholars of Indonesia and Indonesian scholars writing about Annah from a point of view that acknowledges multiple Indonesian feminisms, including Javanese feminisms throughout history.

As the majority of brown women Gauguin painted were Tahitians in Tahiti, the literature on his orientalism has been skewed towards them in portrayals depicting ‘contrasts that Gauguin himself invoked between the “naturalness” of the Polynesian women and what he took to be the falsity of women of his own class in Europe, especially France’ (Duran, 2009). Paul Gauguin painted these women as a self-fulfilling prophesy, ‘infused his art with mystery, often by depicting enigmatic female figures, traditional symbols of nature and its secrets. In Tahiti he expected to encounter exotic and sensual women’ (Salvesen, 2001:pp.44-45; also quoted in Duran, 2009:p.89).

Indeed, Abigail Solomon-Godeau writes (1989:p.314) that Gauguin was ‘traditionally cast as the founding father of modernist primitivism’ and painted ‘primitivism as a form of mythic speech’, characterising his life as mythology and himself as a sojourner who spent 10 years in Polynesia and was himself ‘savage’; my thesis agrees fully with her view that ‘the critical interrogation of myth is a necessary part of art-historical analysis’ (Solomon-Godeau, 1989:p.314).

A contemporary body of work has arisen by Polynesian artists in the form of such critical interrogation. In Lisa Taouma’s ‘Gauguin is dead...there is no paradise’, she writes,

‘Motifs that have commonly been employed to depict this region as “paradise” have been turned inside out and upside down by artists re-inventing these images on their own terms. Rather than working against the images of the “dusky maiden” or the “jolly-polys” these images are presented in different contexts to point to the very nature of their construction.’ (Taouma, 2004:p.35)

These reactions are not only necessary in pointing out the agency of those considered subaltern to speak on their own terms, as per Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s work (1999), but in directly affecting contemporary discourses on Polynesian’s socioeconomic wellbeing, upon which Gauguin’s paintings and self-aggrandising mythology have cast a long shadow from the 19th to the 21st centuries. Simone Durutalo writes with urgency that ‘tourist transnationals and nuclear-imperialist powers have profited from ...myths of “floating South Seas paradises,” which have become so pervasive and institutionalised that the theoretical practice of studying these island societies cannot escape being engulfed by them’ (1992:p.207). Teresia Teaiwa includes this quote from Durutalo in her response to Gauguin’s (1901) journal of his Tahitian days, *Noa Noa*, coining a

term for those two populations' profiting as 'militourism', focussing on 'the "Polynesian" body as a dominant figure that has been appropriated into militourist discourses' (Teaiwa, 1999:pp.249-250).

Though *Annah la Javanaise* is quite a recognisable part of his oeuvre, no in-depth works on Gauguin—apart from a work in progress by Indonesian-American filmmaker and scholar Fatimah Tobing Rony, in which she includes a chapter on Annah as part of a volume on visual biopolitics (personal communication, 2016)—draw from feminist Indonesian theorists such as the above, to really query the juxtaposition between how Indonesian and specifically Javanese women are portrayed, portray themselves, and Gauguin's rendition of a girl called 'the Javanese', whether just in name or not. This despite the fact that Java, as with Bali, Sumatra, and other islands in the Indonesian archipelago, was hit by the 1965-66 Western-backed genocide that overthrew Sukarno, installed Soeharto as president for more than three decades of dictatorship, and cost very probably millions of lives; it indelibly linked 'sexual slander' of the leftist Indonesian women's and labour movements (Wieringa, 2011:p.544). Part of the work in my thesis, therefore, draws attention to this, drawing on Teaiwa's work to combine tourist transnationalism and imperial military power with 'amnesia-creation', to form an Indonesian articulation of militourism and militourist discourses in relation to Annah. All of this will be connected to disability and disablement, as I explicate further.

Why is this necessary when other feminist indictments of Gauguin's nudes exist? Firstly, these often focus on perspectives constrained to those of white, middle-class women in the West; the notion of 'three waves of feminism' has never spoken to me as someone for whom the idea of feminism may be traced back to anti-Dutch fighters for independence such as Tjoet Njak Dien (1848-1908), but also, within my own heritage as Minang (the largest matrilineal culture in the world), numerous folktales that demonstrate the importance of women's rights, as complex as our animist historical legacy is when now combined with Islam, Western influences, etc.

Annah also deserves special consideration because of their specific position of being characterised not as Tahitian but, through the hodge-podge, mismatching sources of information about them, ethnically ambiguous as much as ‘La Javanaise’. Further, unlike Gauguin’s other subjects, they are (a) portrayed *solely* as subject of Gauguin in the myriad sources I will draw upon in this thesis, rather than belonging to a community of Tahitians or, in their case, any other Parisians, their only peer a Judith who has been portrayed as seeing them as rival; and (b) captured in both photography and painting as being lone, both in terms of always portrayed as being the only young woman amidst a gaggle of adult, white men, or alone (indeed, the only example of Annah being shown with any visually-cis women or girls were with a painting of a white woman and white baby).

This is where speculative stories and art are so important to delve into—and also a nod to how Annah herself may well have deliberately ‘escaped’ the cataloguing of their whole life from beginning to end as a way of imposing their *own* sense of deliberate, uncapturable mystery. Mystery-claiming as a possible way of claiming autonomy by a young woman in social circumstances that, I will illustrate (literally, in art work) imposed strict barriers to gaining credence as an authorial voice of their own, rather than simply a subject of Gauguin’s. Diametrically opposed to how Gauguin imposed a very specific sense of mystery to his subjects that necessarily was moulded into his preconceptions of brown women in colonies: this, in order to perpetuate the aura of *himself* as closer to nature and these exotic locales, not least to bolster sales and finance travel to Tahiti (Mathews, 2001).

Nor do they take into account Javanese feminisms and/or Indonesian feminisms. On the subject of how racist, colonialist attitudes affected brown women’s portrayal in colonial Europe, much has been written, and I particularly find important here Magubane’s work (2001) on a case study of the Hottentot Venus of social psychology’s role in how people such as Annah la Javanaise would have been perceived—willing, sexual. On historical perspectives of how Indonesian women

specifically have been portrayed in Western-controlled societies—including colonial Java--and Western art, Ann Laura Stoler, Fatimah Tobing Rony and others have written detailed accounts (Dirgantoro, 2008; Dirgantoro, 2012; Stoler, 1995; Tobing Rony, 1996; Sears, ed., 1996), but none focussed on disability perspectives.

To quote James Baldwin (1963;n.p.), ‘I ... have been described by you for hundreds of years. And now, I can describe you. And that’s part of the panic’. My creative work on Annah is spurred by the lack of anything I’ve seen or read that addresses what I see as wide gaps in the literature on Indonesian feminisms and feminist histories and decolonised disability critique as a background for describing Annah La Javanaise. Feminist responses to Gauguin have not prevented the continued pricelessness of his paintings in the global marketplace, nor pride in and adulation of his art, exhorted by institutions which host it—indeed, the fact that Gauguin would today be a child abuser by international child rights conventions, infecting young partners with syphilis, is ultimately subsumed by reminders of his talents (Smart, 2010). This of course does not mean that efforts to sharpen our understandings of potential narratives of Gauguin’s subjects as women who existed should be discarded. With regards to Annah La Javanaise in particular, there is a need for deeper critique, and bolder art, one cognizant of Southeast Asian perspectives and feminisms, and crip and disability justice movements.<sup>6</sup>

### **Crip Cultures, Decolonisation, and the Visuality of Disability**

The notion of ‘disability cultures’ and what it means to/to be a ‘crip’, as aforementioned, foregrounds much of the work in this thesis. ‘Disability cultures’ is a concept artist and activist Petra Kupperts has been cultivating as a framework (Kupperts, 2003; Kupperts, 2011; Kupperts,

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<sup>6</sup> The term ‘disability justice’ was first coined in 2005 by US queer women of colour, including Mia Mingus and Patty Berne of Sins Invalid. Disability Justice — Project LETS. *Project LETS*. Available from: <https://www.letserasethestigma.com/disability-justice> [Accessed December 12, 2019].

2014), as well as her recent work on the need for decolonisation of such cultures, overwhelmingly represented in academic literature as it is by Western, Caucasian disabled experiences (Kuppers, 2013). The ‘Cripistemologies’ issue of *The Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* (2014), bringing together a myriad of perspectives on what it is to ‘crip’, shows that there is a vast plurality to ‘cripness’ that not all literature on it acknowledges.

This includes the pivotal perspective of Mel Y. Chen, in her brilliant essay ‘Brain Fog’ (2014), in which she takes Donna Haraway’s crucial notion of ‘partial perspective’ in the piece ‘Situated Knowledges’ (Haraway, 1988) as applied to practices exploring what it means to crip. Chen employs the following point of view, which I emulate in my own work in *Annah, Infinite*, one that does not limit itself to crippling as belonging to one boxed-off *situs* in academia or arts practice, and indeed cannot exist without being fundamentally interdisciplinary and intersectional, with caveats:

‘We might even tell a story about interdisciplinarity as a style arriving precisely in time to defang the efforts of specifically feminist and critical race interventions, in that way that certain developments appear convenient or easeful to certain people in ways that turn out later to look like the reproduction of patriarchal whiteness.’ (Chen, 2014:p.181)

In other words, the story Chen refers to, one potential usage by scholars of ‘interdisciplinarity’, may be one of erasure of numerous scholars’ work over the years that have employed specifically feminist and critical race interventions, who are not cited and whose areas of study may be subsumed under a sanitised ‘interdisciplinary’ label—one that, without aforesaid interventions, reproduces sexism and racism within it. There is ‘interdisciplinary’ and then there is ‘interdisciplinarity’. Just as theorist Judith Butler’s (1990) work can be employed extensively in academia and applied to issues discussed in this thesis, it should not be used in ways that erase perspectives of intersectionality addressing perspectives Butler may omit, as Viviane Namaste says

in 'Undoing Theory: The "Transgender Question" and the Epistemic Violence of Anglo-American Feminist Theory' (Namaste, 2009).

Just as Chen also says 'we might be able to claim ["Situated Knowledges" as a cripistemology] provided we bracket its use of sight as a structuring *metaphor* for knowledge probes and nothing more' (Chen, 2014:p.173), we may say the same of Butler's work, that potentially ableist usage of her terms and theories should be employed critically.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler writes,

'How does that materialization of the norm in bodily formation produce a domain of abjected bodies, a field of deformation, which in failing to qualify as the fully human, fortifies those regulatory norms? What challenge does that excluded and abjected realm produce to a symbolic hegemony that might force a radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as "life", lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving?' (Butler, 1997:p.15)

Reading this, I am reminded of non-normative bodies who identify as D/deaf, disabled or ill that produce a domain of 'abjected bodies, a field of deformation', in order to strengthen that those bodies we are not are normative, proper, and good. We who belong to this 'excluded and abjected realm' always pose a challenge to the aforesaid symbolic hegemony of abled bodies, particularly when, as this thesis does, we present radical rearticulations: of disabled/ill/pained bodies as life, as lives worth protecting and saving.

Where and how Annah's body in various guises and descriptions, visual and literary, figures in hierarchies of 'lives of worth saving' and 'lives worth grieving', is one I intend to dissect through the lens of cripistemologies, of viewing her body as potentially crippled, or non-normative, non-'abled'.

As unfortunately illustrated, however, by Butler's UCL lecture in early 2017 taking place in an inaccessible building, there is a disconnect between potentially cripistemological spirit and practice in academia. The same 'reproduction of patriarchal whiteness' invoked by Chen (2014:p. 181) is pervasive in the notion of using the term 'identity politics', mentioned above, as a way in which one may potentially discredit efforts to view Annah through a crippled and/or queered lens.

'Identity politics' is, somehow, assumed to be the purview of non-white, non-male, non-straight, non-cissexual, abled human beings, while those perceived to be normative largely dismiss any pointing out of their own societally-imposed identities as white, cissexual, abled, etc. by claiming or reacting to a supposed inherent right of non-normative bodies to claim 'identity politics'. In contrast to this notion, '[w]hite identity was always formed in conversation with those "others", but always saw itself not as contingent but rather as incarnate – given. It never acknowledged the other side of the dialogue... The push and pull of identity politics is the child of slavery and empire' (Rawlence, 2017:n.p.). In other words, '[i]f race and gender are no longer seen as powerful forces in structuring our social relations then why do racialised women remain one of the most economically, socially and politically disadvantaged groups in the global North and South (Mohanty, 2003; Nandi and Platt, 2010)?' (Mirza & Gunaratnam, 2014).

I would argue that the argument is not so much that 'identity politics' is not well-positioned to challenge such inequality at risk of reinscribing it—which often presupposes that 'reinscribing it' is only in the minds of white, normative bodies, and places the locus of power and ontology of our arguments as in those minds alone—but rather that we must shift blanket thinking of all identification by race, gender, and disabled experience as 'identity politics', and rather recognise these identifications as often ones of *shared affective experiences*. This is something those with non-normative, non-hegemonic bodies, such as I myself and members of my community, have always known viscerally and experientially. Similarly, 'white identity' has existed since the advent of colonialism, and though with respect to recent political events in the UK and US surrounding



Brexit and Trump, it is allowing itself to be more explicit, it is important to remember that the dominant current of white identity is something that those with ‘non-normative’ bodies in the West in particular have always felt continuously. Whether subliminally or overtly, the material consequences of white identity, including genocide and theft of Native American land—and de-development of non-Western countries to feed resource transfer to the West—have permeated media, public policy, education, and overwhelmingly every other sphere of private and public life.

Indeed, assigning of the term ‘identity politics’ outright to vital human experiences and political understandings that often come from the most vulnerable should be reconsidered. Though I understand the argument that identitarianism risks capture by neoliberalism, the fact is that global politics of colonialism and slavery which created many such identity labels in their current form were fundamentally based on capture. The capture has already occurred, the labelling has arisen from it. Thus, diminishment of many views and interests as ‘identity politics’ serves to further endanger—particularly in a climate of far-right nationalism across Western countries. I argue that labels for identity are adopted as a form of political organising *in response* to having such labels enforced on us in ways that endanger our lives and wellbeing. As Ta-Nehisi Coates writes (albeit within a men-dominant narrative), ‘[R]ace is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming “the people” has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy’. (2015)

I posit that much resistance to discourses on identity politics in critical theory believes such a politics separate from the affective, without looking beneath identity monikers to examine which affective experiences might coalesce to become ‘an identity’. For example, I did not identify as disabled until 2011, when lack of healthcare meant I had to seek out information on my affective experiences from disabled communities. Over the past several years, I’ve found a radically new purpose, solidarity politics, and perception of the body from discovering the work of activist-artists such as Petra Kuppens (2011, 2013), Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2015), and Lisa Bufano

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(2007), all encountered through examination of communities sharing my experience of mistreatment and endangerment by virtue of possessing non-normative bodies.

I contend that perceiving ‘queer’ and ‘crip’ as solid identity markers instead of verbs, tools with which to poke holes in normative hegemonic thinking about bodies, contributes to diminishing the importance of communities that attempt to resist neoliberal capitalism’s effects by adopting these identities, even as these attempts are slippery and do leave people vulnerable to further capture. José Esteban Muñoz writes of this particular vulnerability with eloquence in, for instance, *Disidentifications: Queers of color and the performance of politics. Vol. 2* (1999) and *Cruising Utopia* (2009), positing performance of ‘queerness’ as site of negotiation and resistance towards hegemonic notions of that term. What excites me as a researcher is the ability of queer, crip, and racial politics to critique identity, and to potentially critique the ways in which assuming an identity might allow for hegemonic culture to reinscribe dominance, by virtue of classification as ‘capture’ and a means of control.

The attempt to intersect disability and postcolonial perspectives being relatively recent in academia, I offer a critique of the following quote by editors of the special issue of *The Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* ‘Disabling Postcolonialism: Global Disability Cultures and Democratic Criticism’ (Barker & Murray, 2010). They wrote in their titular essay seven years ago:

‘Disability Studies has the potential to make a more urgent intervention into contemporary Postcolonial Studies than vice versa ... Disability Studies has already begun to look toward the important work of globalizing its outlook and methodologies, whereas disability is still almost completely absent from postcolonial theory and criticism ... Even so, contemporary Disability Studies is not especially perceptive in its articulation of global dynamics...’ (Barker & Murray, 2010:p.219.)

However, the notion of ‘globalizing its outlook and methodologies’ implies a Eurocentric and Westerncentric disability studies, as though there are not already regional variants of disability studies in places such as Indonesia. Though I agree with their last sentence as it pertains to Anglophone disability studies, I argue that the quote above provides a false distinction between disability studies and postcolonial studies.

The same dynamic of exclusion and non-engagement persists with regards to anglophone visual cultures studies in relation to disability. Words like ‘blindness’ and ‘deaf’ are still regularly used derogatorily in talks regarding visual art I’ve been to over the past several years, as disparate location-wise and in topic as they have been, perhaps the analogy of ‘blindness’ or ‘blind spot’ to omission or neglectfulness perceived as a given when discussing the visual. Yet this is 11 years after Joseph Grigely’s ‘Blindness and Deafness as Metaphors: An Anthological Essay’ in *The Journal of Visual Culture* (2006: pp.227-41), in which he skewers such usage as unthinking of the millions who live full, blind and D/deaf lives.

I would like to re-articulate the editors of the ‘Disability-Visuality’ issue of *The Journal of Visual Culture* in which that piece appeared, who sought not to discuss disability studies as minoritarian in relation to visual culture studies, but underscored that ‘what is vital about this issue is that it is a recognition that Visual Culture Studies and scholars of visual culture ignore at their peril the findings of scholars of disability studies’ (Davis & Smith, 2006:p.132).

The anthology *Occupying Disability: Critical Approaches to Community, Justice, and Decolonizing Disability* (Block et al., 2015) is an important step towards ‘a discursive space where the concepts of disability, culture, and occupation meet critical theory, activism, and the creative arts ... to bridge contested and negatively value-loaded academic and professional boundaries that [characterizes] disability studies as an interesting self-indulgence for the disabled’ (ibid.:p.4). With contributions from a variety of practitioners, whether speaking of Minamata disease from mercury

poisoning in Japan, or Krips Occupy Wall Street in Oakland, USA, *Occupying Disability* is an important interdisciplinary work. However, it is one that my work on this overarching *Annah, Infinite* project can still build on, in terms of adding new cultural and political interdisciplinary contexts for ‘disability’ and social change itself.

I hope this thesis will contribute to ways of understanding visual artwork that incorporate not only race and gender, but also perceptions of bodily ‘ability’ and ‘disability’, which have not emerged in scholarship coming from Indonesia and translated into English so far, apart from Slamet Amex Thohari’s *Disability In Java: Contesting Conceptions of Disability In Javanese Society after the Suharto Regime* (2013). This is hampered of course by the unfairly stratified nature of academic publishing and translation, penalising Indonesian academic institutions who lack the financial capacity to subscribe to international academic journals, as well as penalising academics who do not speak English. Lack of interest in translating Indonesian scholarship *to* English, rather than the other way around, is something I’ve perceived as a crucial component of this inequality.

Thohari’s *Disability In Java* (2013) is a vital book in terms of illuminating four frameworks for disability post-Soeharto on the island, Indonesia’s centre of economic and political power, and its most densely populated: (1) the Islamic ‘charity’ model according to a certain ableist interpretation of Islam; (2) the Dutch Christian missionary-introduced medical model of disability, prevalent today in an Indonesia where many still use the word ‘cacat’ (deformed); (3) the Javanese interpretations of disability that predate colonialism, including the presence of disabled deities, which honoured those who are disabled as spiritually touched; and (4) the social model of disability, which does not necessarily acknowledge these Javanese roots.

However, in my discussions of *Annah* I hope to bring up areas where more literature is required regarding, for example, the widespread adoption of ‘difabel’ identity in Indonesia, taken from both my compatriots’ love of acronyms and ‘differently abled’ language in the States. I will also draw a thru-line via creative work on *Annah* between queerness in Javanese lore (laying

groundwork for future work on, for instance, the legend of gender-fluid Srikandi) as connected to crippling the body; for necessary inclusion also is the highly increased vulnerability of disabled women to sexual violence, and the connection between this and the '65-'66 genocide, crimpness, disability cultures, militourism, and militourist discourses.

### **Pain studies**

There is a rich tradition of pain studies as well as pain studies in relation to *writing* the body (i.e. Gilmore, 2012; Hedva, 2016), and a growing tradition of pain studies literature written from and/or inclusive of the myriad experiences of brown and/or Black people and intersectionality. However, there remain so few recorded experiences of Black and/or brown women in severe, extreme, and/or chronic pain from non-Western countries. Counting myself among these women, I will argue within this thesis my theories as to why this is the case in Chapter Two, outlined later in this introduction. Stories I will include in *Annah, Infinite* serve to elucidate these experiences.

Just as the assumption that translation should not be seen as 'direct, unmediated access to a transparent reality' in which colonised individuals are 'objects without history' (Niranjana, 1992), I argue that ultimately we must see the visual as a *translation* of reality, particularly in the context of a disability studies aware of the impossibility of 'describing' the body 'objectively'. We are constantly *translating* the lived experience of being human inside our frames to other bodies so wildly different from ours, etched with varying memories, foods, emotions, pains, joys, perceptions, and senses. I can never describe my being in pain in the 'past' or 'present' accurately, but I can attempt at the affective, aim towards an asymptotic understanding. It is for this reason that practice-based methodology is employed in this dissertation.

In tackling the possibility of Annah as a pained woman, we must also tackle the notion of pain as 'invisible'. As anyone with chronic pain knows, when pain has become a regular, even daily occurrence in your life, even at extreme levels, you will find yourself in many situations where

people disbelieve your condition because your appearance does not fit with their own perceptions of what ‘pain should look like’. When pain becomes extreme for me, and at times when it was continuous, I have tried to be as still as possible, to just withstand and endure it. This requires concentration, steady breathing, and the determination not to lose my wits. Thus, onlookers have perceived me as being still, and ‘alright’. In the past six years of reading and listening to other pain sufferers’ accounts, I know I am not alone.

One professor interviewed for this thesis said that yes, perhaps Annah could be in pain, as they are leaning to one side on the chair, with their arms on its arms (Tobing Rony, personal communication, 2016); however, though sometimes leaning to one side is an indicator of attempts at pain relief, it is just as likely that Annah would show no visible markers ‘to the naked eye’. This certainly affects all of our understandings of how prevalent pain is and has been in the past. It contributes to medical statistics on pain, already an underreported phenomenon. Again, more on this will be demonstrated in Chapter Two of this thesis, with the help of theorists Sara Ahmed (2002, 2004, 2013), Yasmin Gunaratnam (2013), Alyson Patsavas (2014), Eli Clare (2017), Mel Y. Chen (2014), and Jose Esteban Muñoz (2009), and found throughout.

### **Imperial duress**

Hundreds of years of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia and European colonialism on a global scale have built histories and interpretations of timelines and cultures that are persistent (Young, 1990). Drawing on Ann Laura Stoler’s work in *Duress: Imperial durabilities in our times* (2013), I use ‘duress’ as a framework for what is experienced as Indonesians, and citizens of other formerly colonised nations, continue to (de)construct how we are seen through Western eyes in Western artifacts. There is a hitherto unstated link, a direct link, between Petra Kupperts’ exhortation to ‘decolonise disability’ (Kupperts, 2015) and Stoler’s work in *Duress* (2016). Specifically, the crux of this thesis: that regimes of racialised ablenormativity, as a form of imperial duress, are present in

interpretations of *Annah La Javanaise*, and are intrinsic to both global financial markets and the international development industry.

It is, furthermore, of interest to note how in the 1890s, Javanese identity was distinct from that of ‘Indonesian identity’, referring to a country that would come to claim more than 17,000 islands and hundreds of cultures including Javanese, and not be an independent entity until 1945. ‘The Javanese movement’s end coincided with Indonesian independence, when Indonesia began to organise cultural missions to represent the nation’ (Cohen, 2007:p.9), but ‘javanais’ was a term the French used ‘to designate a sort of pig latin’ (ibid.). The unification of myriad identities in the archipelago was a strategic political move, certainly not uncomplicated nor without its own brand of colonialism—the Indonesian government would annex West Papua, Aceh and now-independent East Timor/Timor Leste as the most internationally-known examples of colonisation and genocide (Kohen & Taylor, 1979; Melvin, 2014; Saltford, 2003) by Soeharto’s government. A government which was installed with the help of Western forces in the Cold War, which caused the killing and disablement of millions in the 1965-66 Indonesian genocide (Kahin & Kahin, 1997).

Yet, as academic inquiry on Indonesian disability cultures is so emerging, such little attention has been devoted to these histories as gendered forms of disablement that flowed onto each other, how they were laid out against a backdrop of the literal killing of the Indonesian feminist and labour movements, and how deep these scars of both forced ablenormativity and shame associated with feminism is to makers of my generation (Soeharto was finally ousted in 1998, when I was 13, and died ten years later. He never stood trial). Java is the island that is Indonesia’s most populated, where the bulk of our country’s wealth is situated, and from whence migrants were resettled to Indonesia’s other islands in a socially and environmentally disastrous scheme under Soeharto, transmigrasi. Its cultural colonialism of other islands, its orientalist and patronising attitude towards East Indonesians, such as towards Papuan tribes, means Javanese culture is both colonised and coloniser, disabled by hundreds of years of colonialism, yet also disabling.

All the above has yet to be covered under the rubric of ‘imperial debris’, yet I will argue creatively and critically that it deserves to be, and that these sociohistorical specificities must be included in crip readings of a girl named ‘The Javanese’ today. Although the violent developments of the 20th century with regards to Java had not played out when Annah was deemed La Javanaise, I argue that the complications of using Javanese as shorthand today must be included in crippling and queering them—queering time, as per José Esteban Muñoz’s *Cruising utopia: The then and there of queer futurity* (2009), is an important part of why my creative work for this thesis imagines a time and space where Annah is conversing with Foucault about his work to lower the age of consent in France. The creative portions of this thesis form examples of speculative fiction, I argue, in the vein of Afrofuturist work on non-Western world creation, particularly focussed on women’s stories (Barr, ed., 2008). I perceive this Annah project as part of the Southeast Asian speculative fiction tradition (see Lundberg, ed., 2012-2018; Chng & Goh, eds., 2015).

José Esteban Muñoz’s (2009) work forms major underpinnings of my argument that Annah as consistently viewed ablenormatively is intrinsically linked to norms of sexuality and race, and that this interpretation as a whole highlights sexualised, racialised ablenormativity as imperial debris. Muñoz’s notion of ‘queer futurity’ is parallel to my understandings of crip and Indonesian futurities as alternatives to a reality of imperial duress. Connecting Muñoz’s (2009) work to Stoler’s (2016) work to decolonising crip theory and art histories is a hitherto unexplored academic pathway.

‘Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality.’ (Muñoz, 2009:p.1)

Muñoz’s (2009) critique in *Cruising Utopia* of Lee Edelman’s assertion that futures are for children, and thus not for queer people, that this assertion denigrates the culture of the child and of



queer and Black and/or brown children in particular, is one I agree with. But further, what if the 'future' is an examination of the child in the past, one who traverses non-linear queer time?

Queering and crippling Annah's future and past, somehow imbuing their horizon with potentiality, creates multiple storylines for them.

Linked to all this, of course, is how sexualities and desire are crippled and queered with regards to a nude painting of a teenager by a man decades older. What I'd like to offer is the added notion of race, and how legacies of colonisation and racialisation create different prisms when crippling/queering. This is an element I find has not been explored in the literature, particularly when it comes to visual cultures, and especially when it comes to 'invisible' disabilities.

The role of anxieties in erotic desire foreground Margrit Shildrick's 'Dangerous Discourses: Anxiety, Desire, and Disability' (2007), specifically with regards to her study of what exactly the purpose is of denying disabled people sexual subjectivities, of what contemporary Western cultural imaginaries depend on so doing.

'Despite the ubiquity of sexual discourse, the question of who is to count as a sexual subject is contested and uncertain, not just as a matter of practical concern but at the psychological and ontological level too. The western discomfort with many manifestations of erotic desire—that *denies or prohibits infant or childhood sexuality*, or expresses disgust in the face of older people's desire—is most clearly invoked by forms of differential embodiment that cannot be subsumed unproblematically under the rubric of the normative body.' (Shildrick, 2007:p.222; my italics)

However, the above analysis does not take into account the sexualisation of brown bodies deemed children in art historical artifacts and narratives created in Western contexts and against

vastly diverse non-Western contexts, nor of this sexualisation in the physical, stratified world today. *Annah la Javanaise* the painting (Gauguin, c. 1893-4), as well as Annah la Javanaise the person who existed to inspire it, are both prime examples of this.

As will be shown in the varied descriptors of Annah the person in Chapter One, Annah proto-narratives are disparate in the literature, but they all ultimately condone the sanctioned subjugation of a racialised girl. My overarching creative arts project and book manuscript-in-progress, *Annah, Infinite*, aims to map these Western art historical proto-narratives of Annah and, by juxtaposing them with other Western narratives around brown, young bodies in contemporary visual landscapes, expose the contours of Annah's commoditisation as a human or humans who existed in the world, and as painting and image still circulating today.

Ann Laura Stoler's body of work on the intersections of race, gender, age, and sexuality, whether focussing specifically on 'the sexual politics of race' and Foucault's omissions with regards to colonial structuring thereof, particularly in Indonesia (Stoler, 1995), or more broadly 'tensions of empire' (Cooper & Stoler, 1997) and 'imperial duress' (Stoler, 2016) provide fertile territory to explore and apply to analyses of Annah.

This thesis, *Annah, Infinite and Ablenormativity As Imperial Debris: Relations, Assumptions, Power and Abuse in Crippling Annah la Javanaise*, extends attempts at answering questions of sex and empire vis-a-vis queer and crip theories. Missing from Stoler's and other's accounts of colonial sexuality is the further application of theory on disability, cripness, and pain, creating what I posit is an altogether new mode of thinking about Annah La Javanaise, Paul Gauguin, and indeed, the role of ablenormativity in racialising gendered norms today.

## **Chapter Outline**

A detailed chapter outline of this thesis is as follows. As explained, chapters existing wholly of creative work, with brief contextualisations, are interspersed with critical chapters. Throughout, I highlight the importance of focussing on decolonial, pained subjectivities.

My thesis posits that:

- (1) A crip narrative of Annah la Javanaise being in chronic pain (elaborated on below and throughout the thesis) is a plausible story that has hitherto not been explored, regarding both Annah and, by extension, Gauguin—in Chapter One, I explain the pluralities of Annah interpretations that already exist within current scholarship and writing around Gauguin, and present my own interpretations of plural Annahs. Apart from illuminating the gaps in critical thought with regards to Annah in feminist scholarship past and present, this chapter of creative writing and visuals presents a line of affective experiences, that lead to my asserting in Chapter Two—as a brown woman in occasionally acute and always chronic pain—that there is the clear possibility of a pained Annah. Here I employ Sara Ahmed’s groundbreaking work on the cultural politics of emotion (2004), Yasmin Gunaratnam’s concept of ‘total pain’ (2013), Alyson Patsavas’ work on the cripistemology of pain (2014), and Mel Y. Chen’s concept of ‘brain fog’ (2014) together to support the possibility of Annah’s pain as natural, important, and structurally created and framed.
- (2) The specificity of the moniker ‘Javanese’ for Annah with regards to ‘cripping’ in tandem with the presence of at least four frameworks for disability in post-Soeharto Java (Thohari, 2013), as well as racial-sexual European colonial mores vis-a-vis Javanese (Stoler, 1995), complicate Western assumptions in scholarship of crip theory (McRuer, 2006; Kafer, 2013), and lend extra layers to Margrit Shildrick’s work on sexuality and the disabled body (2007, 2009). This is, of course, complicated with regards to pain itself, and how it is experienced and communicated, for which I draw upon the work of Alyson Patsavas (2014), Emma Sheppard (2017), and Eli Clare (2017) to point to stepping-off points for decolonising pain studies. I also extend and

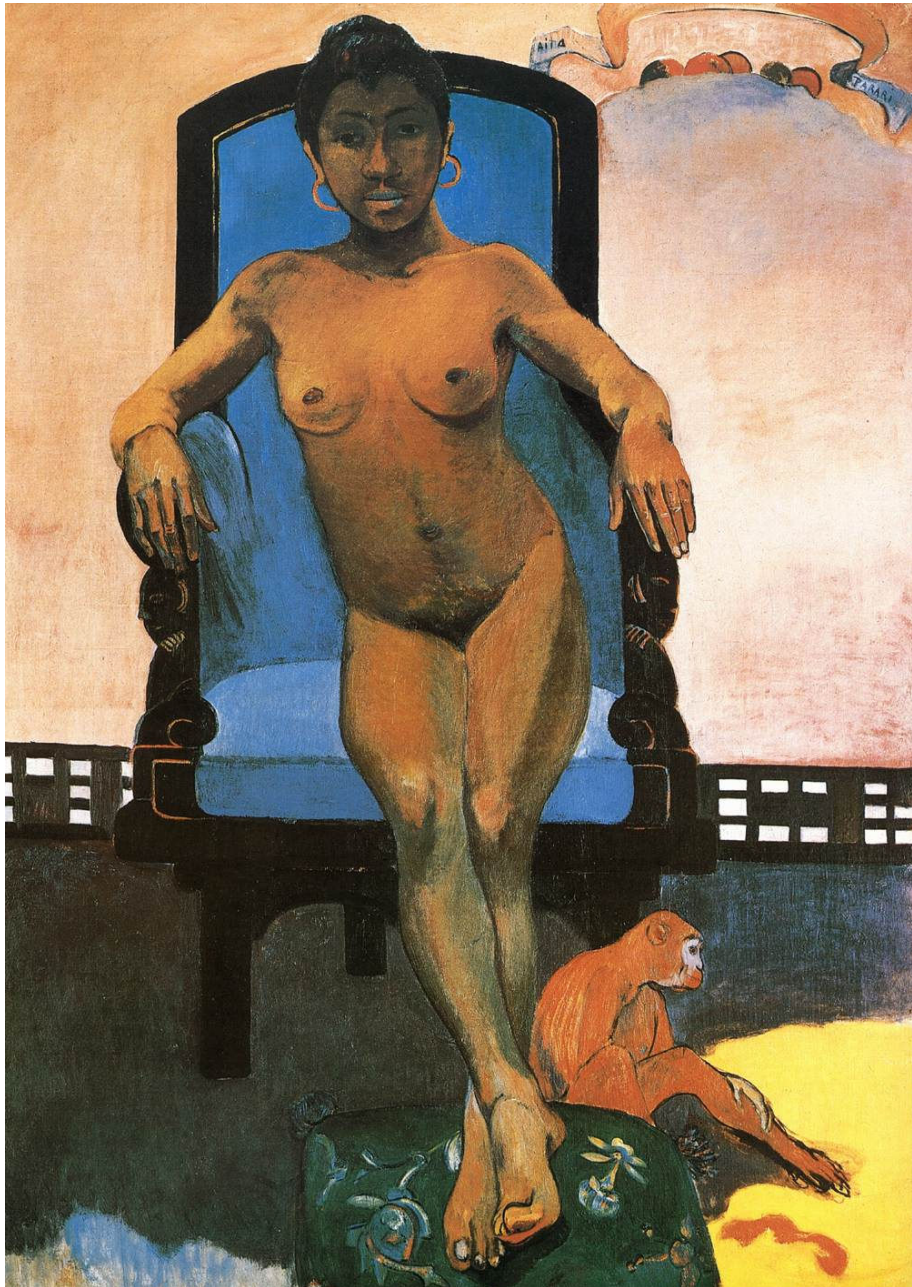
question the scope of Thohari's theories, with respect to the realm of Javanese diaspora, in Indonesia and abroad. This will be the focus of Chapter Three.

- (3) The limitations of Foucault's notions of desire and disciplining the body are brought to the fore in the case of Annah, in light of Foucauldian theories' ignoring of the bodily impacts on brown women and girls of French imperialism specifically and Western imperialism more broadly (Cooper & Stoler, 1997; Spivak, 1999; Stoler, 1995), and elaborates on both Stoler and Spivak particularly with regards to Foucault's activism on lowering the age of consent in France. These points will be illustrated in the form of a text-and-visual series, which forms Chapter Four, describing the limited avenues with which Annah would have been afforded the ability to represent herself with the same dignity as Gauguin has historically been afforded. As a brown-skinned inhabitant of France in the 1890s, and, in my narratives, as a girl in pain. Inevitably, it explores queering and decolonising notions of 'love', 'abuse', 'disabled', 'age of consent', 'the child', and 'the adult'—in the narrative context of Annah being a pained girl and Gauguin an abled man.
- (4) I argue in Chapter Five: *Sexuality, Age of Consent and Ablenormativity in Visual Cultures*, that a reading of *Annah la Javanaise* as a potential portrait of a child in pain is not only possible but crucial. This reading offers a necessary supplement to arguments for decolonising approaches to disability studies raised in *Occupying Disability* (Block et al. (eds.), 2015), by, among other points, further emphasising the cultural specificity of disability studies theories on sexuality as potentially Caucasian-centric and/or Western-centric. It focusses on Margrit Shildrick's work (2007) in particular in ignoring the disabling nature of colonial and otherwise violent histories upon bodies past and present. Using the valuable theoretical contributions of Jasbir Puar (2017), Clare Barker (2011), Theri Pickens (2019), and Sami Schalk (2018), I argue that cisheteronormative ableist patriarchal colonial marks of 'imperial duress' (Stoler, 2016) mask potential realities for Annah(s).

- (5) The practice aspects of this thesis, creative writing and visual art interspersed between chapters of critical writing (and in the case of Chapter Two, included with critical writing in one chapter) will also highlight how the ‘ambiguity’ of Annah’s origins nonetheless fall into specific parameters in written records. This ‘ambiguity’ has a lack of sociohistorical specificity, which nonetheless falls into certain rules in various narratives—including those that seek to ‘globalise’ visual interpretations of ‘brown girls’, under which falls the narrative of ‘brown’, visually cis-female subjects as ‘abled until proven disabled’, ‘straight until proven queer’ and ‘foreign until proven a citizen [of Western countries]’. In Interludes One, Two and Three, Annahs exist in past, present, and future simultaneously, communicating to each other, queering time (Muñoz, 2009) in order to further understandings of Annah(s) as soulbodies that do not subscribe to colonial ascribing of subservience or ‘wildness’.
- (7) I argue in Chapter Six that four intertwining systems—state violence, the international financial system, the fine art market and the ‘development’ industry—collude to create systemic affective systems (Ahmed, 2004) that service imperial duress; that enforce readings of Annah(s) as heterosexual, adult, and abled; that do so in order to enforce readings of Annah(s) as consensual partner of Gauguin’s. I write of the impact that these systems of imperial duress have on readings of Black, brown, Asian and indigenous people in general, particularly those of us from populations (disabled, young, femme, women, non-binary, LGBTQI, etc.) made more vulnerable to pain.
- (8) Chapter Seven is a creative practice chapter, using visual art and text to show how the aforementioned systems of fine art and ‘development’, state violence and international finance work together to enforce readings of Black, brown, Asian and indigenous children as both consenting adults and symbols for a ‘developing country’ in need of saving.
- (9) Finally, I conclude my thesis with a summarising chapter of what the above points reveal, and a description of the frameworks I offer of (a) a decolonial, pained-aware reading of all texts,

including visual images, that depict human figures, and (b) a soulbody reading, of figures like Annah(s), that exists outside Western epistemologies and ontologies. I contend that how ambiguous Annah's heritage is in records I've come across in research both (i) opens up the possibility of potentially infinite other cultural approaches towards disability/crippness, including a pained narrative, and (ii) also problematises thinking of Annah as 'infinite' in terms of stories that may be conveyed about the person and the image, so that (iii) a way forward for scholarship may be forged within which ableism, in interpretations of visual cultural artifacts, is recognised and foregrounded as a continuation of the cultural grammar of violent histories. These histories include that of ableist patriarchal white supremacy and its attendant erasure of vast swathes of histories, including disabled histories. That these systems of visual grammar, abstract systems of white supremacist patriarchy, are present in both financial markets and in the development industry, and that ableism is a core tenet of them. That considering the ongoing stakes to the bodies of brown women and girls today, particularly those of us in pain and striving to live full lives, there must be, therefore, room given to disabled (visual) histories elided by virtue of abled interpretations, in Southeast Asian studies, in feminist studies, in disability studies, in academia as a whole, and given space in the imaginary through the creative arts.

**Chapter One: Annahs, Plural (Visuals and Creative Writing)**



[*Caption 1*

Content warning: the intertwining of multiple modes of harm, including multiple characterisations without express consent of the deceased.]

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[*Caption 2*

Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese, or Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached)*, 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 c 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.

This image is easily Google Image-searched. Enter the three words ‘Annah la Javanaise’ into the visual search engine. See how many-many. Sisters linked hand by hand, linked by Primitivism’s frame. Embroided, as are all of us nowadays, in a grid of capturable pixels.

(The image of multiple Annahs below, in Google Image search, under the label ‘Annah la javanesa - Viquipédia’.)]



# Annah la javanese - Viquipèdia, l'enc...

Viquipèdia

Annah la Javanaise i Aita parari te tamari vahine Judith

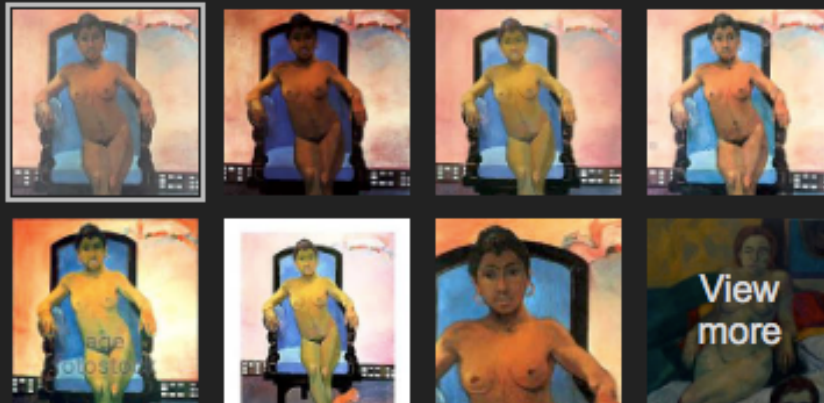
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Related images:



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[*Caption 3*

Painting of a naked child on a chair, your hair in a bun, your ankles crossed, arms on the chair.

Monkey at your feet.]

—

[*Caption 4*

To address you in Aksara Jawa (Javanese script), I would have to use pada luhur, punctuation for addressing a person of higher rank or age in a letter:



Although, with your permission, I'd want to take you to a loving parent all the time. And that would feel as though it would require the punctuation for addressing a person of lower age, pada andhap:



Except that pada andhap is also used for those of lower rank. I feel that you outrank me, however, in every instance. To use a term from poet Alexis Pauline Gumbs, everything I've created of your stories over the past eight years feels 'ancestrally cowritten'.<sup>7</sup> It feels as though you are banging down the door from inside a canvas, that all of you are, with an urgency that has not dissipated in 123 years.

Aksara Jawa punctuation without age or rank, pada guru:



Aksara Jawa punctuation for a person of equal age or rank, pada madhya:



]

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<sup>7</sup> (Gumbs, 2018:p.xi).

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[Caption 5

Here's to the plurality of 'you'.

If one looks at that particular Google Image Search, and scrolls down the entries and notices the captions attached to them, you might already have come across a particular nugget of truth: the same girl marked 'Annah la Javanaise' is elsewhere marked as being Polynesian.

From *LIFE Magazine's* 11 September 1950 issue (with the cover headline 'What The Jews Believe'), a feature entitled 'GREAT LOVES OF GREAT ARTISTS':

'[Paul] installed a bronze-skinned Javanese girl named Annah, whom he had met in Montmartre, and there he painted her like a South Sea queen on a blue throne, while his pet monkey leaped about the room and hung from the doorway on which was inscribed in Tahitian words, Here there is love. Later Gauguin took Annah and the monkey off to Britany [sic] where, in a fight with some sailors, the painter was seriously injured. While he was recovering, Annah slipped away to Paris, looted his studio and disappeared. Bitter and once again impoverished, Gauguin sailed away to Tahiti where he was to die, diseased and abandoned, eight years later.'<sup>8</sup>

Pobrecito Paul. Poor little man, of whom his son would write as a domestic abuser, who'd hit his Danish wife until she bled. Nowhere in what I've read so far is what ultimately became of you. The

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<sup>8</sup> (*LIFE*, 1950:n.p.).

myth of the vanishing thief. I am proud of you, Annah, of all versions of your history that involve robbery on own initiative.

According to Nancy Mowl Mathews, author of *Paul Gauguin: An Erotic Life* (2001), there was no evidence that Paul was intimate with you.<sup>9</sup> There is, however, every suggestion that he wanted the public to believe you were, to bolster his persona as closer to the savages.

‘Annah lived in Gauguin's Paris flat and it is believed that Annah was also his mistress... Annah was in fact Eurasian (Dutch-Javanese), brought to Paris from Southeast Asia by the opera singer Nina Pack and “found” by Gauguin's art dealer in the streets or brothels of Montmartre...’ writes scholar M. Isaac Cohen.<sup>10</sup>

Dutch-Javanese.

And elsewhere mentions of Annah:

mulatto<sup>11</sup>

mixed-race<sup>12</sup>

Ceylonese<sup>13</sup>

‘half Indian, half Malayan’<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> (Mathews, 2001:pp.1-2).

<sup>10</sup> (Cohen, 2007:p.10).

<sup>11</sup> (Pavloska, 2014:p.xxiii).

<sup>12</sup> (Coplans, 2003:n.p).

<sup>13</sup> (Walsh, 2016:n.p).

<sup>14</sup> (Vollard, 1936:pp.230-231).

Academic works in which not once is it ever mentioned that other works exist that describe your heritage differently. That describe how you came to know Gauguin differently. You are a puzzle piece, that despite lack of specificity always fits into Gauguin marketing, into the numerical value at potential auction of the painting *Annah la Javanaise*, a painting as investment.

It doesn't matter which colony you came from, as long as you are from a colony (never mind that Java was then under Dutch rule, not French--you know, Annah, you know how they work in brutal cahoots).]

—

[*Caption 6*

Nearly every single source says you were thirteen, or 'around thirteen'. One day, most unperceptive me was discussing this when my colleague, the artist and curator Ala Younis, suggested it might have been the age of consent in France at the time. She was right.

Schoolgirls are brought to museums and galleries, told how best to frame nudity. Taught of old masters, of sittees as muses, as willing friends of a genial mythos, as paramours to genius.]

—

[*Caption 7*

There's you. And you're the only one of all the girls he's painted that's ever described as Javanese. And there's Judith, the child-girl Judith has not been breached, that's in the title. And she is also

written of as around thirteen. This is most likely Judith Molard, daughter of your friends the Molards, in Paris.

There's a feature film from 1986 which lays claim to you: *Oviri*, or *Wolf at the Door*. Don't watch it, unless you'd like to see a scene in which a child actor with brown skin, portraying you, is seen naked underneath Paul, as portrayed by Donald Sutherland. The child is completely still, a plank on the bed. And so they dubbed the sounds of a woman moaning in pleasure over this scene, in which the child looks terrified. On IMDB, I see that the actress who plays this child (who I will not name here), has never acted in another film. I have no intention of seeking her out, of making her research for my book. The scene is a bruise.

Don't watch *Oviri* unless you'd like to see the film cut--amidst the dubbed moaning of Annah--to a shot of the child actor who plays Judith Molard in her bed in the room below Paul's. Tossing and turning at the sounds above, jealousy fanning the sheets of her bed. Don't watch *Oviri* unless you'd like to see the final scene with Sutherland as Gauguin kissing the child actor who plays Judith Molard, then refusing to have sex with her—how moral! How still-civilised towards white children!—before he returns to Tahiti.

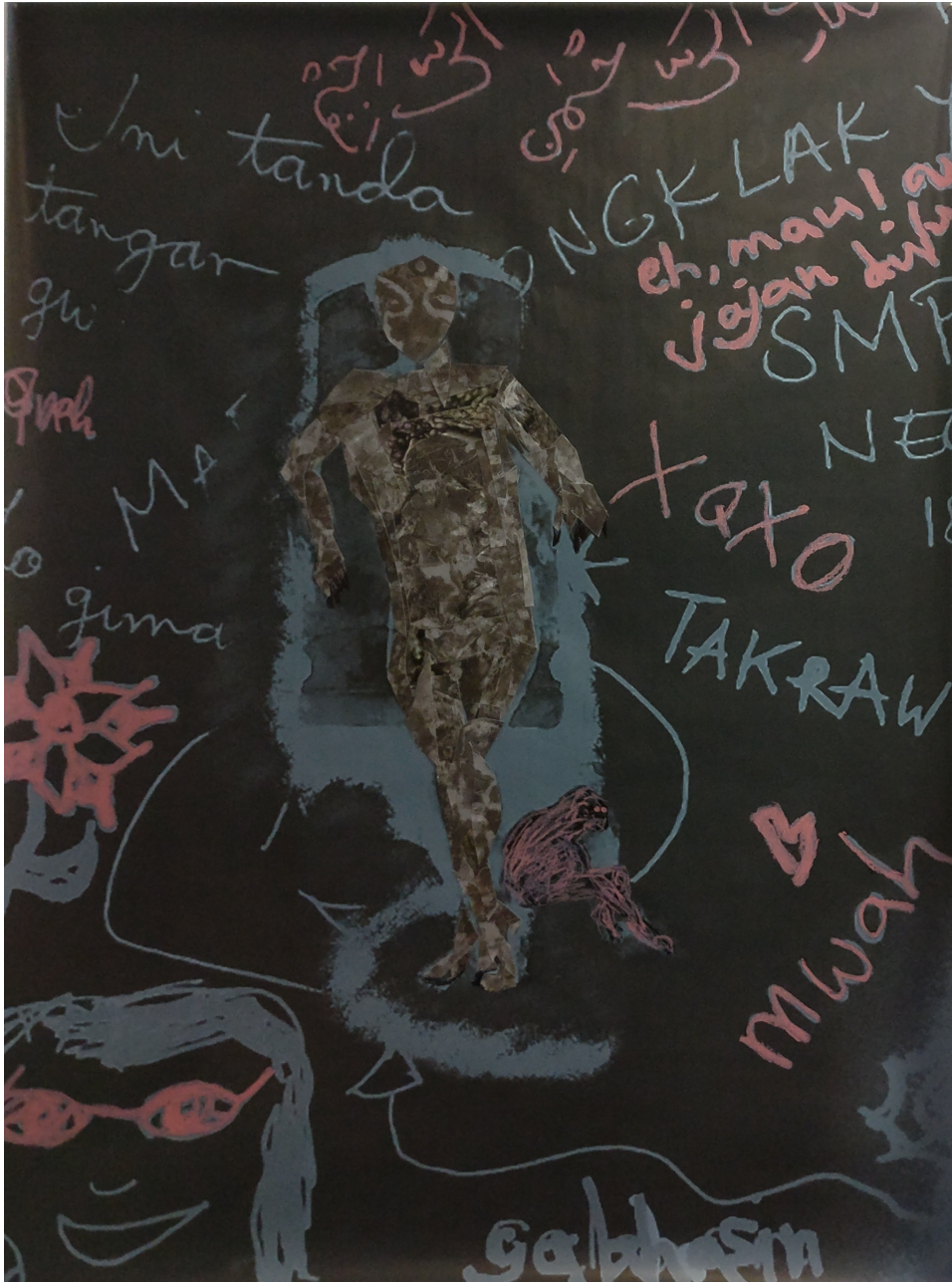
The Child-Girl Judith Is Not Yet Breached. Victorious Paul, he who is savage-adjacent, yet would never transgress European morals. Tenets that do not extend to Annahs' protection in any possible way.]

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[*Caption 8*

People referred to as Annah are never referred to as Javanese child-girl, but I remember being one. When I was twelve and in SMP (middle school) in Jakarta, it was the glory days before widespread internet access and smartphones, when we had to memorise each other's home landline numbers and this cemented friendships. When we would scribble in each other's books, in distinctively individual handwriting styles that meant we were becoming. When we could still make up cocoons of childlike fantasy, when salty and ingenious insults were forms of experimentation with power, when our crushes were sacrosanct and our nicknames for each other were legion. It was rebellious to hike up your school uniform skirt, and it was the trend to wear bras with clasps in the shape of animals, that would show underneath our regulation white, tucked in, button-down shirts. On Fridays at my school, we all wore long white skirts and long, white tunics, and went to the mosque in tittering unison, seen from above as a pale, moving sheet of burning hormones.

Below is a mixed media work entitled *Annah #99.16: School-aged*. The writing in the background is of the kind we would write in notebooks, in the mid-to-late 1990s. It was originally in greyscale, without collage in the middle; a photo printer mishap led me to rework the entire piece, when it was already on a gallery wall in Switzerland, hours away from opening time. I knelt on a cushioned stool, and remade you, already upright, with cut-up photo paper smeared with black ink, and pink halal lipstick of the kind I would have delighted in trying at around thirteen. As though you wanted to try some pink with you, as though you wanted layers and layers of ink to near-terrify.





[*Caption 9*

In 2011, I was in New York City when I saw the painting of you, and the title it had been given; I was wracked with pain as I still am when overstrained, beyond scales of ten as maximum level, beyond all belief. Truly beyond belief—neurologists dismissed me, repeatedly, my claims tinged in raised eyebrows, marked as hysteria and impossibility, all my words bent and frenetic by shock and PTSD and neuropathic hurt that ebbed then ramped itself to eleven. It was physically difficult to speak at times; at other times, I rambled in confusion at what was happening to my body. For months, and then intermittently, difficult to move. It was years before I was given enough good medicine (four years, to be exact), though neural pain remains a threat that bucks on occasion, and I am a ‘spoonie’, invisibly disabled, writing about you from bed. I've come up for air now, made a life.

In 2011, I had not, but I knew in that instance—of looking at how Paul had painted you, of looking at how others have looked at you for over a hundred years—that you too had a bodymind unknowable in spirit, that they thought they knew but could not have known. That none of us ever really know what the other’s miraculous body is feeling, and that if this was the case, you could have been a pained girl too. That, the more I researched you, it would have been miraculous to have been so close to an abusive older man and escaped pain. That pain is multivariable, shades and colours, that it is not always suffering though too often is. That people live with it all the time, and deserve to live. That who these people are, however, are often brown and/or Black bodies, femme bodies. That we in these bodies are seldom believed, disbelieved about many things for which faith in us could save our lives.

Called Javanese, both of us, whether or not you were. You could have believed me about my pain, and I would have believed, readily, easily: all your pains that came with pictures where you are the only child, the only brown soul, never with family. In a Paris built on forced labour, on resource extraction dripping in blood, with so many white men, doing god knows what in relationships with you the history books call benign, that you knew your own truth, and that that is not saying little at all.

Though our experiences are divergent, I would have believed the whole of it from you, that you were not merely abject or as one historian called it, in a 'pathetic' position. To have stayed alive in such circumstances required intelligence and a will to live. I am calling it, though I know you may well not need me to at all: you were built with such fortitude.]

—

[*Caption 10*

'Queer kids, street kids, kids of color — all of the kids cast out of reproductive futurism, have been and continue to be framed as sick, as pathological, as contagious.' - Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*.<sup>15</sup>

I want you to be contagious. I've marked your outline in white on a gallery floor in London, I have exhibited in different variations for this outline of a body that actually could have been, as Mario Vargas Llosa wrote in *This Way To Paradise*, a composite of you and Judith. Judith who may have sat nude for Paul, but was never breached. I want you to be Child-Girl too. I want people to think of

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<sup>15</sup> (Kafer, 2013:p.32).

what might have happened to you and hopefully, somehow, did not (my mind continuously says as prayer, even with infinitesimal likelihoods), to be a certain, horrific breach.]

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[*Caption 11*

This image has been redacted for the possibilities of violence, adult themes, trauma, language, disturbing imagery.]

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[*Caption 12, Unavailable*

This museum is inaccessible to blind and sight-impaired audiences.]

—

[*Caption 13*

Annah silhouette in orange:



Who owns the piece now is confidential information; ‘Private Collection’. I’ve been trying to trace you for eight years, leaning into academic and auction house leads. They turn into wind, sawdust taste in the mouth, and rumour—yet this is consistent with everything that has ever been written about you. And this is the main lead you give us, all you labelled ‘Annah la Javanaise’; to understand smokeshow, illusion trumped up as art historical fact, cloud-large contradictions in hearsay turned inconsequential when it comes to your legacy.

TGA 20043/1/2/6	Joule, Barry	Paul Gauguin - Polynesian female nude seated on blue chair with a small monkey at her feet	nd		OPEN
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Tate Library Archive and Public Records Catalogue entry, last accessed April 8, 2019 (when the screenshot above was taken), entry first discovered by me April 9, 2016, in London. At that time, the print had been borrowed by another artist, who upon being contacted confirmed that it was indeed of the painting *Annah la Javanaise*.

‘TGA 20043/1/2/6

Joule, Barry [who first gifted it, presumably, to the Tate]

Paul Gauguin - Polynesian female nude seated on blue chair with a small monkey at her feet

nd

OPEN’.

The monkey sits at your feet as part and parcel of your mystique. Did you know the original King Kong came from what is presumably Nias Island, off Sumatra, in what is now Indonesia?

Interchangeable apes, stealing white women atop buildings, originally known by ‘natives’,

discovered by 'explorers', finally emasculated. Some days it's Paul Gauguin, some days it's Tom Hiddleston in a *King Kong* franchise, native beings as scenery. A gun is a paintbrush.

In 1893 at the World's Fair, the Javanese Pavilion captivated the French imaginary so much that eventually, 'Javanaise' would become a term for a kind of French slang, a somewhat-Pig Latin, meant to make language seem near-impenetrable. Interchangeable sounds, haziness of meaning. A body, a body of text, a turn of speech. And a series of movements called the Java became a form of dance among the French. At one point, Parisian socialites would don Javanese dress to soirees.

'J'avoue j'en ai bavé pas vous

Mon amour

Avant d'avoir eu vent de vous

Mon amour

Ne vous déplaie

En dansant la Javanaise

Nous nous aimions

Le temps d'une

Chanson.'

'I avow I went through hell, didn't you,

My love.

Before I caught wind of you,

My love.

Whether or not it pleases you,

In dancing the Javanaise

We loved each other

The length of a

Song.’

- Lyrics from ‘La Javanaise’, Serge Gainsbourg, 1963<sup>16</sup>

Have you ever thought about how deeming us specifically one thing, one hyperspecified, exoticised escape, is somehow also part and parcel of deeming us haziness, fog, inconsequential molecules, dissipation, oddity, air to be cleared?]

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[*Caption 14*

Survivorship is a revenge plot. It is interminable—potentially infinite—and seemingly effortless.

I wonder at logistical marvels for this child you are:

Did anyone help you with your hair?

Did anyone help you with your French? That's assuming you lacked native fluency in French, which may not have been the case.

Did you speak Javanese at all on French soil? That's assuming you were Javanese, which as we've deduced may not be the truth.

Did you know how to read? To write? To sing? If so, in which language(s)?

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<sup>16</sup> Serge Gainsbourg and Juliette Gréco both sang ‘La Javanaise’ in 1963, after it was written by the former. The song plays with both the French slang form of language (similar to Pig Latin) called ‘javanais’, and a dance the French call the ‘Java’. In popular culture, the song was most recently used in Guillermo del Toro’s Oscar-winning film *The Shape of Water* (2017), as sung by Madeleine Peyroux and originally released in 2006.

Did you eat alone in 1893-4, or always with Paul? With your fingers, as we often do among ourselves back home, especially when noodles are not involved? At a table? On a cushion on the floor?

Were you allowed to be alone?

Were you inclined to, allowed to perform shalat? Did you sneak in a prayer or two, having determined the direction of Mekkah, having obtained enough privacy or respect for privacy to do so?

How many dresses did you own? Where were they procured, and by whom, and when?

Did you ever ask for a dress and receive it out of hand?

Did you know siblings, did you have extant family?

Did you initiate communication via long-shot whisper network with Java, or if you were not from there, wherever home of origin was (perhaps Paris), friends and family? (Throughout this work, I use the words 'perhaps', 'maybe', 'could have'; I do not wish to follow the vendors of false certainty.) Back then, on Java, native women weren't allowed to learn to the level Dutch women were. I quite pity Dutch women then for lacking knowledge of Javanese, unable to digest epic poems such as *Serat Centhini*, unable to access a language built on poetry. I excoriate myself for native fluency in only Bahasa Indonesia and English, for grasping at Baso Minang and Javanese as grandmother tongues I keep no time for, flailing and forgetting.

My grandmother was one of the first generations of Javanese women to be educated to secondary school level. She would cry in the bathroom when her visiting father would leave the boarding school, one she attended far from home when still a child. It was so strange, so rare, to be given the chance to learn in that way for native girls; she would have to be alright. In black and white, blown-up pictures of herself in the classroom, and with her schoolmates at the age of around thirteen, smiling and standing side by side in sarung and kebaya, photographs all propped up in her bedroom

by her desk until she passed away. Once, we discovered her writing in a history book about Indonesian women's education, a quote from a letter my grandmother wrote to her Dutch headmistress, saying she would use her education to teach other women.

My grandmother's writing desk and chair sit in my old room in Jakarta, inheritance. Using them when alive, she would draw up lists of all the birthdays of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, write to me in cursive curlicues. When I was around nine, she wrote me a letter, several pages long, never replied to (because I was silly, and perhaps afraid of matching her elegance). And now, I am writing this book, about brown girls far from home, and living alone (my grandmother, myself, and chosen subject(s): Annah(s)), about one painting in particular that has probably never been exhibited in Java, about old photographs in archives abroad hoarding stolen loot. About the faces of girls more than a century old, those whom they say we should have no pride in, though children who persevered at a hostile life, who kept themselves alive.]

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[*Caption 15*

Annah of the painting, you weren't the first young, brown girl(s) for Paul and not the last. You probably weren't one person, though every scrap of photographic evidence suggests that she (they) was (were) lone, very much alone.

Your faces in the photographs, surrounded entirely by white men, don't look all alike to me. One is of a small girl with a round face, mostly-straight hair with a part in the middle. You are at the top of the frame, surrounded by white men. Others marked Annah show you by yourself, or with bodies



coded as white men, artists all. No children. No other brown bodies. You are never shown smiling with teeth bared, or laughing, or touching another human being. There was likely no safety.

There is a photograph of you in the studio of Alfons (sometimes written as Alphonse) Mucha. There are versions of writing about you in which Alfons brought you to Gauguin, as a present. The Mucha Foundation describes it as follows:

‘Mucha with his friends in the studio, Rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris (c.1893-1894). Mucha's snapshot captures a group of his friends in fancy dress gathering in his studio. [...] Behind Mucha on the left is Paul Gauguin, who sits tall in a Moravian folk hat, probably from Mucha's collection of hats. On the far right is Gauguin's teenage mistress and model, Annah la Javanaise, posing with an enormous Breton headdress.’<sup>17</sup>

Left to right: Paul Gauguin, Alfons Mucha, Ludek Marold, Annah la Javanaise. Your hands are across your chest. You look to me to be terrified.

In the image below, that photo manipulated (a piece I titled *Spectral Vision*): Mucha and Marold are twisted to highlight just you and Paul, the distance between you two, still too near, your hands to me seeming to seek protection, or otherwise at peace with yourself.

In 2016, I discovered a chapter entitled ‘Gauguin, Mucha, and Art Nouveau’, in the 2010 book *Lasers in the Conservation of Artworks VIII*<sup>18</sup>. The chapter was written by John Fredrich Asmus, an

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<sup>17</sup> (Mucha Foundation, 2019:n.p.)

<sup>18</sup> (Asmus, 2010:pp.1-9.)



eminent research scientist at UC San Diego, as well as the co-founder of the university's Center for Art/Science Studies. The Annah theory he proposed shook me (a discipline unto itself: Annah Theory).

‘A few months earlier in Brittany,’ I read, "Paul Gauguin had been composing female images [...] until he became bedridden in the aftermath of a fistfight with three sailors. During the two-month convalescence Gauguin's model, “Annah la Javanaise”, stole his belongings in order...!’

I read on until I simply had to stop. I was stunned. Asmus had written of a famed poster of actress Sarah Bernhardt, with postage stamps on tile, that is attributed to Alfons Mucha, resulting in Mucha being called the progenitor of Art Nouveau. Asmus, however, suggests in his chapter that the poster

was in fact the work of Paul Gauguin, and would have been created by him during his convalescence after the Pont-Aven fight. If this was true, how could this priceless artifact have been misattributed to Mucha?

The crucial missing link in this art historical tale, Asmus wrote, was 'Annah la javanese'. She would have stolen from Paul in Pont-Aven, and then, according to this article, become Mucha's mistress and given him the Bernhardt poster.

In this version, Annah, you do not disappear without a trace. You leave your mark, and you know why. There is a possible version of the truth in which you knew full well your power to write history. There is a version where you knew the significance of the Bernhardt poster as Gauguin created it at his sick bed. There is a version where you refuse the ways in which he sickened you, and you wanted to siphon some of his glory away from him. There is a version I instantly want, in which you did not have to become intimate with Mucha, in which you dropped off the poster at his place and made your way in the world, refusing further harm, leaving them all to bicker amongst themselves and stay away. In which disappearance is escape and to vanish is sheer victory. I hope you felt exhilarated.]

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[*Caption 16*

Painting of a child. Escapee, runaway swirlsteeped in marronage and recovery of safety. A young girl who survived against the odds to the age of always 'about thirteen'. A possible thief. Possible convict. Possible genius of revenge and mastermind, possible invoking of all forms of mitochondrial song-story, child of fleeing capture under cover of interchangeability's stealthiness,

under night, sun, windstorm, sea gale, riverine turbulence. Child of the Sunda Strait and/or of French Riviera or of neither.

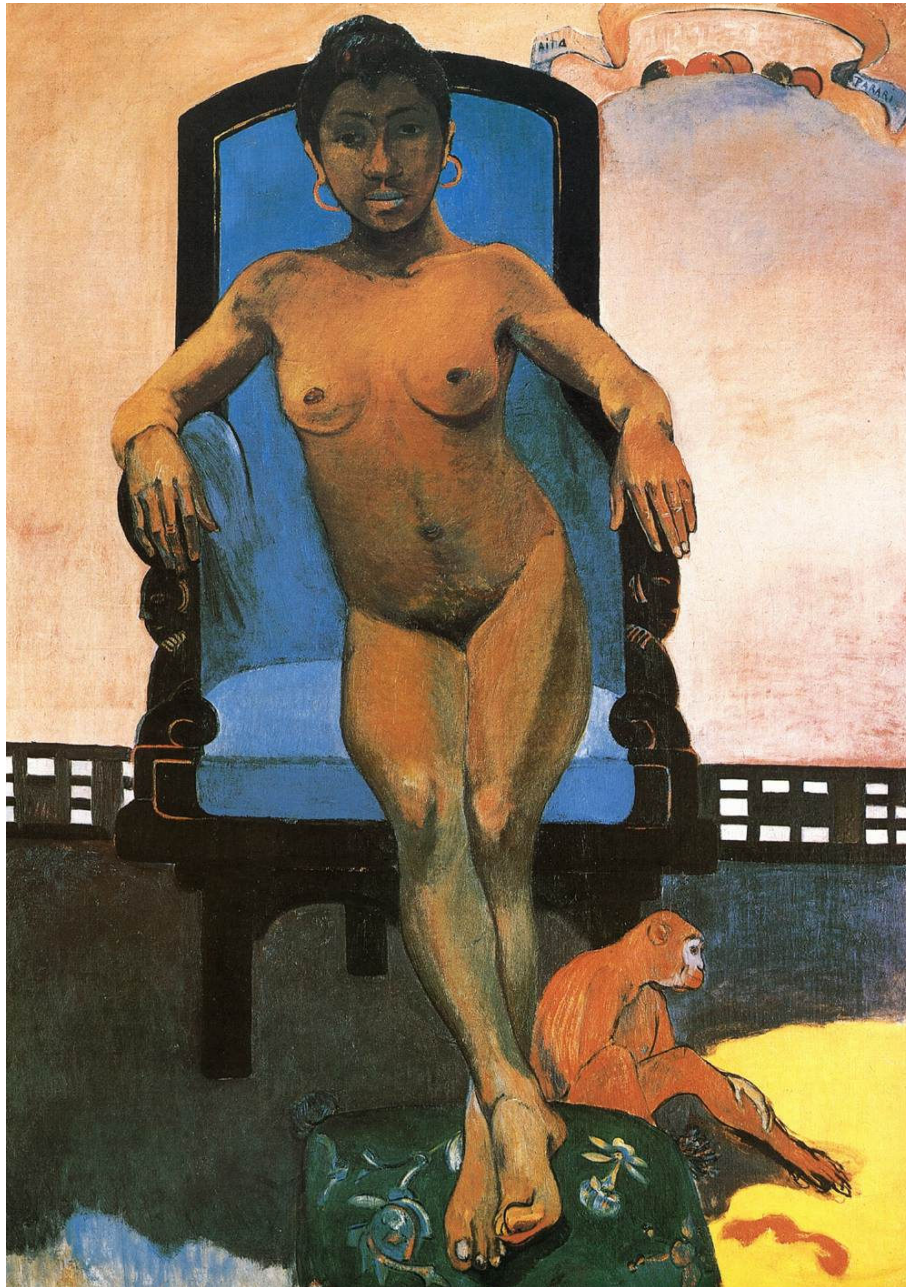
Child of possible mothers seeking lifelong, of possibilities beyond their knowing. Child of the therebegone. Child of no woebegone, not anymore, hush child lullaby, Nina bobok.<sup>19</sup> Child of lay with your secrets as finery, dust, and outpost of Scar Planet, alam barzah<sup>20</sup> in probable Qur'an learnings dripped somewhere in lineage, child who we will not ask to forgive. Child whose name was perhaps not Annah. Child who was called Annah by a man who hit his wife, biographised violence in both fists dismissed by contemporary curators of taste. Child of melanin as prone to more sin against. Child of Eden and hellfire both as not-enough (compensation, description). Child of oh-so-many pixellated lies, crenellated buffoonery, in obituary form. Child of no owner, of once-mother. No truth alive but their clock-swallowed own, time its own passageway for you to come here from so far beyond the edges of this screen, another set of frames, and tower upon us your sacred breath, tousling all of our heads with venom and grace in whichever measurements decided upon, to remind us all: no one can ever, ever hold the pith of you but you, in the end—Anna or Annah or Annahs or other names entirely, souls of unravelled, unravelling mistruths against, beading and threading each lie to a long cloth that holds in place bank vaults and market trends, and the exact, numerical value of your supposed semblance, and you who may shrug off each falsehood with each eclipse and laugh and laugh and stuff yourself with succour overflowing, to flood the sky with it, telling yourself, again, again—eternity, you have it—who you are.]

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<sup>19</sup> 'Nina Bobok' is an Indonesian lullaby.

<sup>20</sup> In Arabic, a realm in Islam between our world and the afterlife.

## Chapter Two: Complex Pain, Pictorial Forms (Creative Writing)<sup>21</sup>



[Caption:

This is a painting created in France, which affixes a name to its subject belonging to those who come from a densely populated Southeast Asian island. It is in colour, and meant to be placed upright, meaning, vertically as the subject is presented. His name comes first, then Annah's, then Judith's; observe:

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<sup>21</sup> Portions of this chapter are also included in Practice Portfolio materials.

Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese*, or *Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>22</sup>

This is a rectangle-shaped piece of commerce. A person sitting on a chair, taking up the frame's space, so we infer: this is Annah the Javanese. There is an unnamed creature inside it alongside Annah, but it is not Judith: it is a monkey at her feet. Annah is smiling like Mona Lisa, but naked. The background wall is peach-terracotta.

*What on earth is up with Judith in that title?* you might ask. You might well ask.

Annah is in the body of a girl. 'Child-Woman'. They have what might be called a medium amount of pubic hair, possible snail trail, round breasts. Probably a B-cup, perhaps a C-cup when they get their period. Their hair is tied up. Their earrings are looped and golden. Their legs are crossed at the ankles, on a green cushion. Naked and palatial.

Annah was around 13, they say, so perhaps they had not yet had their period. Or perhaps they had, though the child on the chair shows no signs of bleeding.

*What is this Private Collection?* Be patient.

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<sup>22</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001:p.199.

Over the past eight years or so, I have thought about her every day—how the contradictory facts that obscure her, sliding over each other, mean that there is a slippage.

### **Annah #45 on the Water**

I went to sit far by the river, as the river is also the ocean.  
As marine goddess Nyi Roro Kidul came and took me  
in her arms as a cauldron of fear, in a dream, telling of  
such things that I now know. And currently he is napping,  
so I may open into the sun. Napping as a prerequisite for  
busy waves in miniature and fervent, against my ankles.  
They call this liquid the Seine, and I say it is the Java Sea.  
Oil rises thick to the top, against banks, so I will swim deep.]

—

### **Annah #67, Greyscale**

So I wake up in monochrome, and someone is asking ‘Why would you think of her in chronic pain?’ And then it’s more than a person, it’s many. I scratch at the surface of the canvas from within, and find I can’t breathe. Then to realise respiration was never an option when your flesh is paint, what a godawful relief. So I throw my head back and laugh, because there’s no air to go in the lungs. *How am I even sure there are lungs in here when I can’t even remember the monkey’s name, can I be sure what I learned of anatomy*, I think. I think of the places I could have learned of two bags of hollow splayed in a chest, symmetrical, heaving in and out again.

Back in the village there was a school. Did I go? The Dutch weren't allowed to teach us, it was the mosque and Bu Des around us. There is a learning I knew before I knew it, which is that all the maps of a body we know were helped along by torture of women whose skin is brown. The sexual reproductive system was delineated this way. I don't remember the year, I don't remember the year I am in. I've banged my head, it seems, or were the voices always this loud and panicking?

'Why would you think of her in chronic pain?'

in chronic pain?

in chronic pain?

And I think of when P. nearly choked on a fishbone and then chucked a decanter at my neck, screaming the wine in his veins about how he'd hit his wife whenever he could, so I'd better get the fuck on my knees and suck him for cooking this shit.

Because I don't know the year, I somehow also know that his son will write about remembering this, father bloodying his mother.

In museums, there are so many girls who might be mistaken for me. I have been mistaken for them. I run my hands across their hair, all the world greyscale, in a different colour register from his, which is where this is possible. I lift up their hair with their permission, see scabs healing over on the napes.

'Don't worry', I tell all of them, 'I have a plan', and we leave stretched-out fibres together for the secret pot of paint.

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Having had no prior role models associated with both art and pain save Frida Kahlo, I had not expected to find an example of a Javanese girl in Western art to map this possibility onto. I have since come to steadfast belief that there are and have been many of us. We who are and have been in pain, of various levels and kinds, bodily and bodymindedly, psychically, and crucially, those of us who have not been able to translate this pain in order to be helped. The urgency of it. The fire of it. The way it intends to break us. The shock it can incur on the mind. The work required to undo this shock so that we may function in the contemporary world. The sheer added costs for those of us whose bodies are coded woman or girl, who are also coded as people of colour, brown, Black, mixed, or any kind of othering from whiteness. This matters. This matters in pictures.

Last night, I thought and thought again, another day, about how to translate what we endure as human beings, how marks persist. What pained Annahs could have been. What Annahs exist, here and not-here, parallel bodies. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

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Annah sits on blue upholstery in a wooden, carved chair.

Would you feel comfortable being naked next to a monkey at your feet? Would you be afraid of it biting you? Whom would you trust to see you sitting in a chair with legs crossed at your ankles, with nothing on but earrings and perhaps a hair fastener?


These words exist within a caption. Supposedly captions are meant to be concise descriptors of a visual image. In the interests of brevity, they tend to leave out a lot.

When we hold accessible events, my colleagues and I like to describe people speaking or in films; for the blind and sight-impaired among us, in case they are with us. As in, ‘Nina is a cis-woman of Hispanic descent, wearing bright blue pantaloons and a guayabera in all the colours of the rainbow.’ We leave out plenty, for time, for politeness to they who are described.

We need the minds of captions writers in every country to be woven into ancient storytelling spirits, rush through us to text-to-speech in languages always at risk.

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The entire Javanese alphabet is a poem.

 ← In Javanese script, Puryapada introduces a poem.

To wit, the alphabet:

Hana caraka | Two soldier-messengers, | ꦲꦤꦏꦏꦫꦏ

Data sawala | Each with animosity towards the other, | ꦢꦁꦠꦱꦮꦭ

Padha jayanya | Equal strength in battle, | ꦥꦢꦲꦗꦪꦚꦤ

Maga bathanga | Both become carcass. | ꦩꦒꦁꦧꦠꦲꦁ

(My translation. As every caption is a translation of an image.)

Is Annah a soldier-messenger? If so, who was their equal? We assume Annah has become carcass.

We do not have a death certificate.

When titling a painting, it is like titling a poem. What information does not exist in the poem? How can you insert this in the title, to contextualise the text?

What is this business with Judith? Why does their name need to be inserted here? The whiteness of the girl matters.

{This is a promoted tweet I received on February 11, 2018; most certainly because cookies pick up



**HowStuffWorks** @HowStuffWorks · Jan 18  
Get some perspective by finding out which painting best reflects you.



**Which Famous Painting Reflects Your Soul?**  
[quizzes.howstuffworks.com](https://quizzes.howstuffworks.com)

19 replies, 40 retweets, 129 likes

Promoted

on the fact that I read and write about paintings on a daily basis. From @HowStuffWorks on January 18, 2018, it asks ‘Which Famous Painting Reflects Your Soul?’, offering us crops of famous paintings, ‘Girl With A Pearl Earring’ among them. None of these white women feed me on

the molecular level required for a painting to reflect a soul. Their insertion, again, the white girls, men, people in our minds that we are made to understand.<sup>23}</sup>

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What follows is a poem I wrote to write about measure and pain, of personal value in examining a possibly-pained Annah:

### Sliding Scale

*What is it on a scale of one to ten.*

Is it aching, burning, raw,

Enraged and radiating,

Agonizing. Stinging.

Stabbing; is it suppurating.

Does it feel like a carcass under two tons of meat pounder,

Up and down, eternity. An apex of weight.

Is it mother's arm in the night,

The color of langsat,

Glowing radioactive as a Chevy truck

---

<sup>23</sup> See Safiya Noble's *Algorithms of Oppression* (2018) for more on how race and gender shape computational decisions.

Arrives and crushes it, grates it to the asphalt,  
Sparing only her rings.

Is it the mouth of a gash.

Sing it like a scream.

Who is invisible in there, is it malingering.

Is it attention you gouge out of knees

To bring them to the floor,

Joints and flesh uncertain of the stage cues.

Which act of empathy, fumbling,

All the world's pity and disinterest and love

Disguised or amplified in all the same trembling sighs.

Is it the neighbor man reaching his hand

Inside, pinning you beady-eyed

Just when you catch him in the door,

Was that a nightmare.

Is it her face. Is it his. Is it their legs

In your covers, and wondering

Which of these many weak bodies

Is weaker than yours.

Who could you get more pleasure from

In which of their open wounds.

Is it a wound.

Is it a blister, a bruise, a boil, a pimple,  
An ingrown curse from an ancestor  
Thick in the face and spitting through the eons,  
Heckling at your flesh to carve in it.

Did it begin when you turned the corner  
And the street lights came on  
And a cloud looked a lot like that hobo you pass,  
And everything became a cloud,  
And you passed out. Was it in the bathtub.

Was it in the cubicle.

Or in the lap of a terrified stranger,  
At the point of a revolver,  
Because this man is not what his mama  
Always thought he would be, and this is money, kid.

This is money. And I will pay you to shut  
The doors of hollering grief for good  
If you eat this, swallow this, believe in these studies.  
This is antidote ethereal, this will stop a world  
Of grief and the need to speak it.

I love you, I manufacture these compounds  
In a heart grafted of selflessness and cashmere

Concern, sugar in my giving veins, just sugar, baby.

Are you telling me you haven't heard about

The mortgage like a noose and my own father's

Slit in the chest, you think it comes free.

Is it squares on a board you were born into

That began with spices in trading ships

And men in peaked headgear who terrorized

Your ancestor's chickens and worse,

So much worse you feel the sickening

Of history like a plague in all your parts,

And this came from my friend in school, miss,

Caught it from him, hysterical disease,

Are you saying colonialism didn't give you the flu

Or are you just trying to get him in detention.

Must be going around.

Must be terror so dark it spits void.

Must be a needle in the lower eyelid,

Going through the cheekbone,

Must be the heat.

We are shedding so much of our baby-faces.

We are falling apart under all of our eyes,

I mean really, disintegrating,

No wonder muscles are always breaking down.

This is a planet of slough and hell,

If you are human skin.

Now is it dermatological

Or can you feel it in the bone.

I honestly can't hear your answer, girl,

Are you dancing to show you can still

Make the party or was that a spasm

Or are you being clever.

What are these bales of letters on your tongue

When all I want to know is a number.

—

‘maybe the body is the only question an answer can't extinguish’

- Ocean Vuong, *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*<sup>24</sup>

‘Alternatively seductive and bullying in his manner, he capitalized on the powers of his body not simply to reap physical pleasure (sexually and athletically) but also to carry out his wishes in the larger professional arenas of his life. His method of dealing with most people and situations was first to cajole and persuade, then, if not successful, to threaten and menace...

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<sup>24</sup> (Vuong, 2016:p.15).



Although he did not hesitate to physically abuse both men and women and evidently was titillated by their submission, he also imagined the pleasurable sensation of receiving such abuse. His many paintings of Eve frightened by the snake attest to his belief in the eroticism of both rape and submission.’

- Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Paul Gauguin: an erotic life*

(2001:p.1)

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The central questions this chapter addresses are: Is it possible Annah could have been a pained body? If so, why is it possible, and why is this possibility important in the context of pain? I posit that it is deeply relevant to examine why painedness in particular is a vital possibility for Annah—and indeed *any* body portrayed in art—because of the questions that possibility then posits further, lines of inquiry that are searingly relevant to current faultlines around societal frameworks of age, race, gender, pain and pleasure as visual spectacles of varying kinds. Theoretical standpoints on pain from Sara Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) and ‘The Contingency of Pain’ (2002) and Yasmin Gunaratnam’s work on ‘total pain’ (2013) are applied to Annah as person, and thus as painting—but crucially, they are used in conjunction with fundamental tenets from the work of Alyson Patsavas on a ‘cripistemology of pain’ (2014), Eli Clare on grappling with cure (2017) and Mel Y. Chen on (post-)colonial dynamics in disability relevant to pain (2014). Chronic pain of the kind Patsavas and I experience (in my experience currently: experiencing chronic pain mostly with the reprieve of finally-given pain medication, as opposed to the bone-deep and prolonged pain of years before I was finally given proper prescriptions—though the latter kind of pain is still experienced when overtired) is distinct from one-dimensional notions of pain as ‘bad’ in a binary system of affect.

Through the possibility of pain, I argue, we are able to more specifically frame historical visual tropes that continue to have real impacts on millions of bodies today, which I will elucidate further in later chapters. Thus, with this chapter, I will perform different ways of explaining pain: medical, social, and poetic, and contextualise the topic within pain studies. Under the rubric of ‘poetic’, I will present Annah La Javanaise, visually and through writing, as being a pained person, and the implications of this.

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### **annah #843 with bodily memory**

everyone else's trauma seems to glide on their skin like soft water.

their stories are jagged in the way precious gemstones reek architectural resplendence before human discovery, inevitable mining. untidy resolutions pat. there is always an arc.

my trauma presents as limescale and bone-breathing, spindly and burnish-prone, in a way that does not entice compassion. in a way that screams flying insects and bites off a chunk of perceiver's flesh. wards off with so much extra such hissing.

no one wanted to sit with this. it was not that no one knew.

there are pictures of various girls who look like me but only two, despite what they think, are actually of myself. thus the possibility of my hurt maps itself onto other bodies. who came from other bodies.

parental love is insufficient against relentless bodyminded onslaughts perceived as gauche, in the way torture details sometimes are. this is why blooming ovaries may be hushed when they scream at the cranium. my folks did not deserve a child who lives through years in the ring with pain, many said. but my grandmother kept orchids every day. tending is in the blood too. and the orchids kept her.

every week it is a selfishness, a narcissism surely, coalescing into the nightmare that none of the hot irons we escaped are in fact translatable. in a way that others' seem to be. or perhaps this harsh dream is made of a survival instinct that requires understanding by others. if understandable and translatable are not the same concept, how so.

and why must memories be these things for a wider public? so pain is thrown off from boarding another naive vessel? does pain leave or does it simply permutate? would it descend into another form if shooed away from one?

i don't want more brown girls to know because they were left out in the open, that's part of why, to the first question. what tempts a potentially merciful god to set us alight in a trap. why must i always feel marks from a metal jaw meant for catching bears. he kept one in his study. and i--

[here the handwriting of #843 in her journal is smudged with inkblots.]

—

### **The Possibility of Pain: Queer-Crippling Visuality**

‘Cripistemologies’ are epistemologies from a ‘cripping’ perspective; ‘crip’ being a term that arose out of US disability activism as a reclaiming of the word, much as ‘queer’ is reclaimed by LGBTQI communities (McRuer, 2006; Kafer, 2013); the words ‘queer’ and ‘crip’, however, are employed by theorists here, and in my own words, as verbs rather than stagnant identity markers. There is an importance in including understandings we have arrived at through lived experiences of our bodies, not to assert that my own lived experience has more legitimacy than any other person’s, but to argue that it does have value in theoretical discourse, as an addition to the panoply of potential lived experiences under discussion. Indeed, the theoretical insights shared in this chapter were derived initially through lived experiences, and informed through later academic research.

In discussing pain, it is of paramount importance that we do not paint pain with broad strokes as uniform, particularly as: unliveable, unworthy of living, or the experience of all chronic pain itself as wholly ‘bad’. Indispensable to the discussion here is Alyson Patsavas’ work on the ‘cripistemology of pain’ (2014). Patsavas has covered incredible ground in terms of points that are key to understanding my position on pain itself, in positing Annah as likely to be pained—a perspective on pain informed, like mine, by her first-person perspective. Like myself, Patsavas’ relationship to her pain has changed over time, and may change in the future, crucially in light of the fact that our healthcare is dependent on socioeconomic structures marked by geography, class, gender, and race that are beyond our control.

Writes Patsavas:

‘...I may not always have the same access to care. My privileged access to pain treatment remains precarious in a US system that increasingly erects barriers to health care and supports. A cripistemology of pain is motivated by the political urgency that comes from (however partially) knowing how precarious the lives of people daily affected by those

barriers are... I hope to retain a vantage point from which to see suffering as both structural and profoundly situated.' (2014:p.216)

In her article 'Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain' (2014), Patsavas provides a direly-needed corrective to the systematic, ableist notion that pained lives such as mine are defined solely by suffering, and therefore, in alignment with eugenicist beliefs, not worthy of living. The *varying level and nature of pain* features in her article, illustrating how, without proper medical care and medication, she found herself wanting to die, and now no longer does in the presence of care.

Annah could have been in pain. They also would have had their agency and the possibility of joy within being a pained life. At the same time, we must recognise the immense structural odds against this joy, against a joy that is understandable and more possible particularly if we 'queer' and 'crip' notions of their life.

To queer one's understanding of a history is an important theoretical concept used to frame the scenarios here: that of *queering time* and *archives as makeshift*, both interrelated notions put forth by the late scholar Jose Esteban Muñoz; I use the figure of Annah in science fictional scenarios that are at times simultaneously past, present and future, as a manifestation of these ideas.

'Because the archives of queerness are makeshift and randomly organized, due to the restraints historically shackled upon minoritarian cultural workers, the right is able to question the evidentiary authority of queer inquiry,' says Muñoz, who declares 'Queer acts ... contest and rewrite the protocols of critical writing' (1996:p.7). As Chapter One elucidates, supposedly canonical artists are also subject to profound inconsistencies in archives regarding their work, and those, like Annah, who allowed their work to exist. As someone who regards themselves as belonging to groups declared 'minoritarian', and a cultural worker, I find interrogating the possibilities of pain in Annah figures to be an assertion: *pain as queer*, not fixed, and therefore easily subjected to imaginings that do not need to be faithful to linear notions of time and space.

For, with regards to non-linearity of space-time as a way of framing archives, Esteban Muñoz advocates for *queering time* as opposed to ‘straight time’—the linearity of the hegemonic heteronormativity—a queer time that is not in the realm of identity politics, but aesthetics:

‘We may never touch queerness, but can feel it as the the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness’s domain ... [W]e must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.’ (2009:p.1)

Queering timeframes for bodies living with chronic pain can be an important exercise, even if subconsciously, particularly for those whose bodyminds are already vulnerable, abused, unprotected and in fact targeted—for those whose bodyminds are deliberately made marginal to interests of the state, of dominant bodies. Located within specific sociohistorical contexts, then, chronic pain’s objects are overwhelmingly society’s most vulnerable bodies, chronic pain being one thing that our bodies are most vulnerable to. Bodies least likely to obtain necessary anaesthetic help, support information, and other tools and resources for pain management.

Thus, in my fictional visual and written imaginings of various Annahs, I am queering time by imagining possible pasts, presents, and futures where Annah has the agency to present or hide their pain as they wish, to help their self and others. This is in order to imagine a future where we are not taught versions of history or of the present that erase the possibility of pain, in a world where chronic pain is highly underdiagnosed and undertreated, and at the same time, as Alyson Patsavas argues (2014) to my agreement, those of us who live with chronic pain are deemed to have

lives not worth living, patronised and paternalised by ‘an ideology of ability’ in which, as Patsavas quotes, ‘[p]ain plays a major role... as a motive force [used] to justify disability oppression’ (Siebers, 2010).

We are surrounded by versions past, present, and future where pains are erased, and therefore the causes of these pains not interrogated, and allowed to continue—at the same time, when it comes to the suffering of marginalised bodies, such as those of us socially coded as women and LGBTQI+ bodies, brown and black bodies, poor bodies, disabled bodies, and/or, yes, already-pained bodies, suffering may be seen as part of the natural order of things. Thus, it is either more easily ignored by those inhabiting socially-coded hegemonic bodies, socially-coded cis-gender bodies, white bodies, economically- and otherwise-advantaged bodies.

Jasbir K. Puar’s *The Right to Maim* (2017) claims that pride in being ‘disabled’—as an identity marker in line with neoliberal projects, and framing policies within it—masks the debilitation of oppressed populations, such as black Americans in Ferguson and Palestinians battered by settler colonialism. In her words:

‘It is this tension, the tension between targeting the disabled and targeting to debilitate, the tension between being and becoming, this is the understated alliance that I push in this project. The first presumes a legitimate identification with disability that is manifest through state, market, and institutional recognition, if not subjective position: I call myself disabled. But this cannot be the end of the story, because what counts as a disability is already overdetermined by “white fragility” on one side and the racialization of bodies that are expected to endure pain, suffering, and injury on the other. As such, the latter is an understanding of biopolitical risk: to extrapolate a bit from Claudia Rankine’s prose: “I am in death’s position.” And to expand: I am in debility’s position.’ (ibid., 2017:p.5-6)

However, this is not a simple story of people with neoliberal identity markers somehow oblivious to the debilitation happening to them and around them. Puar's analyses apply well to privileged populations that contribute to the overwhelmingly white population-oriented body of work in disability studies, that do not decolonise disability nor recognise the experiences of bodies marked as women of colour and/or LGBTQI+, for example.

Though I agree that neoliberal identity markers of 'disability' are more palatable in a world of white fragility, as Puar states, this does not mean that those of us in pained and/or D/deaf and/or disabled lives trying to gain access to wellbeing within this system always (if ever) perceive our work as a project directly in relation to white fragility as much as to helping ourselves in a white supremacist world.

Someone who has acquired disability as a result of debilitation still requires dignity and meets a world of socially-enforced discrimination--someone who is shot by law enforcement, leading to amputation, can identify as 'disabled' as a strategy in order to receive social services, access to medication, access to infrastructures, etc. in order to live. What those of us both debilitated by virtue of bodily and societal markers and identifying as 'disabled' underscore is that analyses of debilitation and disability, as Puar herself states—despite the need as I see it for further probing of the use of ablenormative concepts such as 'capacity' in her work—act in concert.

Making this point eloquently is Eli Clare's recent work *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (2017). Clare points to those affected by environmental toxicity who reject the sources of this toxicity, at the same time as they reject being seen as merely victims by environmental movements. Cure, Clare argues, is also a weapon, used to justify oppression of D/deaf and/or disabled bodies, in a world in which so many of us do not want to be 'cured' or justifiably are against a narrow, ableist, and eugenicist notion of 'cure'. This harkens back to Patsavas' nuanced understandings of what it is to be a pained body—I know that with medication, pained bodies may deem life pleasant *whilst* in a manageable level of chronic fatigue and pain.



All of the above is to say that when I illustrate Annah as in pain, I would like to illustrate them as one of so many pained bodies whose lives can be made worth living with proper infrastructure and support, that being pained should not define one's life as consisting of suffering alone. At the same time, the purpose of positing a pained Annah is to show that were they pained, the societal forces making a body coded young, woman and brown, and being in close proximity to Paul Gauguin, a man with a documented history of violence in many forms (Mathews, 2001), would have caused unnecessary suffering. Their experience of being a pained body—in a world where the architecture of buildings, the distances between buildings, and availability of proper healthcare were not present—would have been very difficult.

I argue that we need to *queer* and *crip* visibility as part of the project of queering and crippling pain—and that queer-cripping (that is, to both queer and crip as interrelated processes) Annah la Javanaise's stories opens up understandings of debilitation and widens the possibilities for historical interpretations of visual objects, as well as the lives they portray. Part of this queer-cripping is an understanding of pain as both broad and deep. I hesitate to paint Annah only as victim, and want to create understandings of them as multidimensional—at the same time, I want to emphasise the terror that was likely to have been a part of their life in proximity to Gauguin and co.

Here I would also like to open up conversation on the decolonising of pain studies in particular as intertwined with crippling and queering. Whereas Fanon says that 'Europe is literally the creation of the Third World' (Fanon, 1967:p.81), a physical and social infrastructure that caters only to the abled, by large around the world, has also been the creation of more and trenchant disabling, and of various ways that 'disability' is understood in local context. Also, it is important to keep in mind Andre Gunder Frank's (1998) world systems theory, and globalisation as beginning before European colonialism. Frank writes of the

“‘knowledge’ of the European historians who themselves “invented” history and then put it to good use. There is not even an inkling of suspicion that it may have been the other way around, that maybe it was the world that made Europe.’ (Frank, 1998:p.3)

I mention all this as a corollary to Puar (2017) when she writes of the globalisation of ‘disability’ as a neoliberal subject category creating problematic elision of local sufferings and contexts wrought by macro political and economic oppression.

### **Modelling Disability**

Briefly below are the meanings of three common models for disability, in order to situate (potential) painedness within them—there do exist more, and all three are complex and intertwined with others—used to frame disability, and often pain as a subsection of disability: (i) the medical model of disability, (ii) the social model of disability, and (iii) disability poetics as frameworks through which pained Annahs may be perceived, with disability poetics being where I see the most hope for queer-cripping, as a place of true nuance and greater depth of perception, if you will.

The decolonisation of pain studies aforementioned is directly linked to an understanding of these models as frameworks that exist within disability and pain studies, to be decolonised, to be questioned and disrupted. How we may fit pained models of Annah within existing literature rests on an understanding of the models below as a primer.

#### **(i) The Medical Model**

The medical model of disability is that of ‘disability’ as biological defects to be cured, in order to achieve normative bodies and minds (note traditional separation also of bodies and minds),

and all one's main problems in life as deriving from these defects (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001).

The blanket application of the medical model to D/deaf and disabled people is still pervasive, yet is clearly deeply harmful to huge swathes of population who do not desire a cure (Clare, 2017).

## **(ii) The Social Model**

The social model of disability is described as the concept of 'disabled' being the opposite of 'enabled' rather than 'unable' (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001); for instance, D/deaf communities not receiving BSL access throughout wide arenas of society *disables* them, rather than them having different bodies to hearing people being the problem. As Tom Shakespeare writes in 'The Social Model of Disability' for *The Disability Studies Reader*, the social model of disability relies on dichotomies, three in particular:

‘1. Impairment is distinguished from disability. The former is individual and private, the latter is structural and public. While doctors and professions allied to medicine seek to remedy impairment, the real priority is to accept impairment and to remove disability. Here there is an analogy with feminism, and the distinction between biological sex (male and female) and social gender (masculine and feminine) (Oakley, 1972). Like gender, disability is a culturally and historically specific phenomenon, not a universal and unchanging essence.

2. The social model is distinguished from the medical or individual model. Whereas the former defines disability as a social creation—a relationship between people with impairment and a disabling society—the latter defines disability in terms of individual deficit... Medical model thinking is enshrined in the liberal term ‘people with disabilities,’ and in approaches that seek to count the numbers of people with impairment, or to reduce

the complex problems of disabled people to issues of medical prevention, cure or rehabilitation. Social model thinking mandates barrier removal, anti-discrimination legislation, independent living and other responses to social oppression. From a disability rights perspective, social model approaches are progressive, medical model approaches are reactionary.

3. Disabled people are distinguished from non-disabled people. Disabled people are an oppressed group, and often non-disabled people and organisations—such as professionals and charities—are the causes or contributors to that oppression. Civil rights, rather than charity or pity, are the way to solve the disability problem. Organisations and services controlled and run by disabled people provide the most appropriate solutions. Research accountable to, and preferably done by, disabled people offers the best insights.’ (2006:pp. 198-199)

However, ironically, though the social model sets itself up as oppositional to the medical model, it continues to problematically use ‘impairment’ in a way that is in line with the medical model (Hughes & Patterson, 1997:p.326).

### **(iii) Critical Disability Studies**

See above for an exploration of critical disability studies that uses crip theory, for instance, as a way to explode dichotomies and reveal the presence of signs of disability around us in the world.

### **(iv) Disability Poetics**

This is the use of a creative arts framework to come to understandings of disability beyond the linear and constrained. Rather than ‘disability poetics’ dictating one specific usage of language, for specific ends, I use this as an umbrella term for the innumerable ways in which literary and artistic interpretations of disability, broadly defined (for example, including illness and D/deafness, if the creators addressing these perceive the work as being within disability poetics) can offer the creation of felt insights into the workings of bodyminds, both normative and non-normative alike, and into the systems and relationships within which our bodyminds live. As varied as there are ways of being in the world, of types of art, disability poetics can encapsulate any or all of the models above as well as the interstices between them.<sup>25</sup>

The social model remains inadequate to describe ways in which our bodies may be the source of suffering even in socially privileged circumstances, in aforementioned ceding to a blanket medical model with regards to ‘impairment’, in weaving histories and long time frames (i.e. of colonialism, slavery) into its arguments. Even when the social model is being questioned, the solution is referred to as a *single* ‘embodied ontology’ (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001:p. 9) that roots itself in British or Western social scenarios, rather than—and here I see solutions—a multiplicity of decolonised ontological views needed, as Mel Y. Chen (2014) exhorts, or an exploration through disability poetics. The way the social model is often used is that it is perceived as stemming from Britain in the 20th century—and applied in a way that renders varietal understandings of disability commonly known in, say, Indonesia for centuries, unacknowledged in many Eurocentric academic arguments; in a way that assumes one social model is universally applicable; and in a way that is deeply white in application even within Britain, that often when applied does not take into account the multiple social experiences within a diversity of British residents. In other words, uses of the

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<sup>25</sup> See *Stairs and Whispers: D/deaf and Disabled Poets Write Back* (Nine Arches Press, 2017), co-edited by Sandra Alland, myself, and Daniel Sluman, for a range of multimedia approaches to disability poetics. Also see my book *Indigenous Species* (Tilted Axis Press, 2016).

social model may tend, as Chen states (*ibid*), to skew towards white disabled peoples' experiences, erasing experiences of bigotry on multiple levels of race, class, gender and sexuality that compound it.

Of course, all three categories are not mutually exclusive in their application. A work of disability poetics may, in fact, be seen as supportive of the medical model for all. The social model's description by many as being about the societal implications of having 'impairments' creates an unsustainable dichotomy between 'impairment' and 'disability', particularly for those bodies who do not perceive themselves as having an impairment (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001:p. 9); this discussion of 'impairments' may echo the medical model. Indeed, disability poetics may also be used to reinforce medical and/or social models in a way that is reductive—however, it remains crucial in my view, as this umbrella term may encompass vast amounts of variety and cultural, emotional and political specificity in readings of disability.

One urgent need for disability poetics is because pained bodies such as ours still struggle with the medical model being applied to pain overwhelmingly, regardless of what has been discussed above by Patsavas and others, due to this singular, un-nuanced view of pain. What is the purpose of imagining Annahs as pained, and how might we? Pained Annahs, set in various times and locations in science fictional vignettes, fit into the literature surrounding pain, in various genres, as a way of opening up plurality, liminality, and queer time—in thus doing so, these exercises create openings for the interdisciplinarity, aforementioned in the introductory chapter, in disability studies that Mel Y. Chen calls for eloquently in 'Brain Fog' (2014:p.181). As a disabled woman who intends to crip and queer, I can interrogate the various layers of vulnerability Annahs inhabit in all of these scenarios, by virtue of being a teenaged cis-female body (at least, overwhelmingly

interpreted as such), brown in white spaces, and not unlikely to be economically precarious.<sup>26</sup> We can also imagine the environs and specific temporal circumstances within which they are pained, drawing attention to chronic pain and its manifestations, treatment, management, and presence in the world—acknowledged in varying ways by those around pained bodies or not. In doing so, we draw attention to chronic pain as societal, away from the medical model of disability, and pushing further into disability poetics as a way of understanding the hugely varied world of disabled bodies (Bartlett, Black, & Northen, ed.s, 2011; Alland, Barokka, & Sluman, ed.s, 2017; Barokka, 2016).

What is crucial here is the need to decolonise these categories and perceptions thereof. It is time to perceive global economic and social ‘development’ theory in terms of abling and disabling—in which vulnerability to painedness comes as a result of debilitation, as well as vulnerability to lack of treatment and management—and to look at history beyond Eurocentrism at the same time:

- (a) in terms of understanding the physical-socioeconomic infrastructure of European and US economies as having perpetuated selective disablement as more prevalent amongst BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of colour communities), women, and LGBTIQ, both domestically and in then and former colonies, and
- (b) going beyond Eurocentrism in terms of also acknowledging the incredibly complex, gendered and racialised history of what we know today as Southeast Asia, where (though I should say they probably did not fare well by contemporary standards of wellbeing in any case)

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<sup>26</sup> There is, of course, the question of who has the right to engage in disability poetics. Literally everything can be tackled as an artistic subject under disability poetics, and the issue of who has the right to call it such is another debate for another time, though those of us in bodies regarded as non-normative must lead this debate, and indeed contribute the most to disability poetics, being most vulnerable and having most at stake. Just as critical race theory illuminates white creators’ work to be within a political set of norms regarding race regardless of intent, disability poetics reveals (for instance) how liminal the space between abled and disabled lives is within a lifespan, and how all creative work engages or disengages with disability poetics.

‘[f]emale slaves in VOC-controlled Southeast Asia did not fare well under a legal code which erected a firm partition between free and slave status. This codification imposed a rigid dichotomy for what had been fluid, abstract conceptions of social hierarchy, in effect silting up the flow of underclass mobility.’ (Jones, 2007:p.215)<sup>27</sup>

Acknowledging these complexities also means acknowledging a vastly complex network of disablement and enablement, of perceptions of bodyminds and the ways this determined the life courses of such bodyminds;

- (c) in understanding a multiplicity of social models of disability predicated on specific histories predating colonialism, rather than a UK monopoly on ‘originating’ one social model;
- (d) in acknowledging that the visual perception of ‘disabled’, Black and brown bodies is historically specific, and often shunted into the medical model through Western, colonial, and in the case of Java, missionary-controlled health institutions (see Thohari, 2013). That indeed, conversely, so is the visual perception of ‘abled’, Black and brown bodies;
- (e) that ocularcentricity is indeed a part of this primacy of visual perception, particularly with regards to the history of Western painting, including that which includes *Annah La Javanaise* the painting, and that visual methods have been used to ‘capture’ and classify the colonised for subjugation (Rony, 1996);
- (f) and that pain is a fascinating and key indicator of how ‘disability’ and ‘disabled’ populations are labelled visually, perceiving *Annah La Javanaise* as a potentially-pained body a particularly potent tool with which to open up perceptions of the scope of disabled, postcolonial and visual histories, presents, and futures—particularly through disability poetics.

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<sup>27</sup> VOC refers to Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, otherwise known as the Dutch East India Company. Also see Stoler (1995).



## *Annah Clusterfuck*

‘To some extent the project of visual culture has been to try and repopulate space with all the obstacles and all the unknown images, which is the illusion of transparency evacuated from it.’

- Rogoff, ‘Studying Visual Culture’ (1998:p.22)

### I. The Name

Mulatto Eurasian Dutch-Javanese and Indian

Malaysian pure Javanese the Javanese is

Annah La Javanaise am I the girl the paint

a chair the blue of the chair the shade of a

skin and the monkey the monkey is tame

and my feet are beside it my nipples somehow

a reflection of smile so hair up in bun and thirteen

indentured supposedly here in a Private Collection

the name is redacted and so I am worth I am bank

I am millions in the nude and mucho dinero when

clothed in olden-time photographs only because I am

constantly posed amidst men ah the men they are

pillars of art and Gauguin and Mucha and all the rest

never Paul never Alphonse but oh I am Annah I am

she though maybe “like many Javanese, Annah goes  
by only one name” these broadsheets say in English

so I am financial backings and I am art conservationists  
signing NDAs I am the catalogue girl the .GIF the .JPEG  
the crux of a Google search here is my name and begin  
to read Nobel Prize-winning sir Vargas Llosa in paperback,  
oh his impersonation of Paul perceives me savage  
and lips so thick writes Vargas Llosa as character,  
or, himself that my plump, ready mouth could only be African.

Half-Indian half-Malay. Half-screengrab half-take care  
of the brown girls of today in developing countries unless  
museum-bound in frames where flesh will never pucker  
from cold unless you cannot afford the few pounds  
to send them for postal adoption instead of acknowledging  
many-yearred days of weight in the form of carrying  
the stripping away of land and food from our mouths  
in order to gild your streets and now the world is alive  
and changing but there have always been #rebels. They say  
that I was one then and in Brittany sun they called me a witch.  
Perhaps it requires magic to bloom in drought-filled earth,  
in chilly-winded lands where you sit for long hours in order  
to be claimed, as just the child opening expected of you.

## II. The Pain

He made me sit for eleven hours on a broken nerve.

He bled me too hard. On the boat from Java,  
when Madame Nina brought me over for work,  
it had already happened. I ate a piece of glass  
he'd cooked with the stew while drunk and he shouted  
*Sit*. I sucked myself into the most imperceptible part  
of a photograph, twisted myself into horsehair  
brush, became the palette whose wood could no  
longer feel sap dripping from it against its will.

I shut my mouth on Fridays, shut my eyes and  
said to God on the Holy Day *kill.kill.kill.kill kill*. I did not  
specify a target nor did I understand who it should  
be at that moment I thought I loved him. I think  
I may have, there were no other little girls who did  
not want him as well and Judith did, who batted her  
eyelashes at him and in an accident of crime my parents  
and siblings were separated from me, and they did not  
know that all of Europe was here to fete their child,  
that all of the world would be here to flatten their child  
into two-dimensional form as his and theirs, not Java's.

I am the daughter of a domestic servant from Solo  
whose eyes rolled back unalive childbirthing sister,

and a Dutch official whose eyes would nod at me  
from the few times a week I would glimpse him in our  
quarters, and then my mother passed. His white  
children not shipped off with the next stranger; cradled.

I tried to cook rice in the house and Paul stung  
my hand with the hot ladle *NO*. The sting in my hand  
spread to arm and both legs my chest and all upwards  
have felt as though they were gasping for air for the lack  
of pain. He'd shackle my ankles to enter me, sprain.

He'd love me the way he'd loved his wife in front of  
his son, with a bloodying of cheek and bone. When  
my arms began to shake and I felt a wound inside me  
I could not venture to explain I did not dare to tell him.

The reason my death was not recorded despite my  
prolific sitting was simply because such illness was  
commonplace and misunderstood and almost-almost  
made for the likes of us. Maybe. The debt of my life  
was paid for leaving my baby sibling behind. There is  
so much to be learned from the weights that make us  
feel searingness agony tingling discomfort inside of  
our migrained heads and the whole of my heart giving  
way to a body that finally reflected: how it had felt to have  
to hold breath, in bed, in front of the photographer  
with my hands spread across my chest and all of this

carrying me into firelakes of body into pain that  
was sparked by a hurt of bodymind distance away from  
green forests and sambel terasi and heat and mother.

Once a dukun woman came to my bedroom,  
sheets mine in Dream, with no one else there.  
She said in the rainforests of Gunung Halimun  
were eighteen plants very sacred to our people,  
with leaves could cut through any kind of pain, make even  
my firelakes bearable. That I would feel them simmer,  
and stay a slower pace to calm them, lay body to the sky  
to keep them at bay, paint and sing and dance in my way,  
my way enough to escape, If I took my jamu medicine just so,  
that she knew how to make a glowsun, oh that with a little  
prayer to Gusti Allah and a Javanese rite, drunk with this  
old medicine, I'd still be in the Hurt, but not firelakes-forever.  
Just heat and tiredness and simmers, which to me now  
sounds like a heaven. And I woke, in Brittany sunshine,  
with Paul's dirty boots on the edge of my bed, caught smiling.

In other words, exploring disability poetics creates more and multiple perceptions of a single visual image, such as *Annah la Javanaise*. It refracts the image through possibility, and language—be it visual, textual, sensorial in other ways—extrapolates such possibility. Painedness is multiple possibilities, as there is a multitude of possibilities within painedness.

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A 2016 study published in BMJ Open found, of UK residents:

‘Chronic pain was more common in female than male participants, across all measured phenotypes. Conclusions: Chronic pain affects between one-third and one-half of the population of the UK, corresponding to just under 28 million adults, based on data from the best available published studies. This figure is likely to increase further in line with an ageing population.’ (Croft, Donaldson, Fayaz, Jones, & Langford, 2016:n.p.)

Clearly such a whopping figure requires understanding in the context of austerity, and its effects on the UK population, with a UN report declaring a humanitarian emergency in the UK for disabled people.

Furthermore, despite the increased likelihood of chronic pain in women, according to this study, there is clear evidence that many women in pain, particularly those of us from non-Caucasian backgrounds, still remain undertreated, ignored, and disbelieved. There exists what is called the ‘gender pain gap’ both in terms of how people of different genders experience pain, but also, relatedly, in terms of how pain researchers and medical practitioners notice and treat pain in people of different genders (Bernardes, Keogh, & Lima, 2008). There is a gender-biased uncertainty about pain’s presence in another’s body, which has led, and continues to lead to, the undertreatment of pain. People who live with pain are so often disbelieved by medical professionals and others, to devastating effects—and may be left to suffer for years (Poon, Goodman, Yan, et al., 2012).

The bifurcation above, of the ‘emotion’ and ‘real pain’ as separate states of being, however, is problematic. ‘Sliding Scale’, of course, underscores the futility of a one out of ten scale to describe sensations that are very difficult to convey.

Elaine Scarry's seminal book *The Body In Pain* (1985), which I read years after writing 'Sliding Scale' in late 2011/early 2012, similarly describes the fundamental inability of pain to be described; though I disagree with Scarry's assertion that 'While pain is a state remarkable for being wholly without objects, the imagination is remarkable for being the only state that is wholly its objects' (1985:p. 161)—the object of pain is the human bodymind (all arguments against Cartesian body-mind duality aside, the physical systems for bodily pain and emotional pain map onto each other; here is elision, eliding, liminality). It is subjectively perceived, and this is crucial for any kind of elaboration on what pain exacts on bodies past, present and future. Even within the human body, pain's 'objects' can be areas of the body we feel are in pain; our whole body, or our right cheek, or our chest, for example, however amorphous their boundaries. A pain can be described by us as both emotional and physical, as the poem 'Sliding Scale' attempted to convey. This is important even if the source of the pained feeling exists within synapses found in the spine and/or the brain, as the subjectively-experienced parts of the human body in pain are still perceived as objects by the human brain (though not necessarily)—and crucially, by others in its orbit. Furthermore, the bodymind feeling of pain itself comes with attendant understandings, in a body with chronic pain, of past, present, and future as ghostly and uncertain in light of very immediate sensations.

In *The Body In Pain* (1985), Elaine Scarry claims that 'whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability' (p.4), and that this trappedness of pain in the body is all the more overwhelming as extreme pain 'destroys the world' (pp.29-30) for the pained person, who is unable to communicate this destruction, for whom pain becomes the only reality. Scarry links this to the use of torture as a way to inflict pain as an overwhelming fact that both takes over reality and denies the ability to communicate it. Thus, when a torturer interrogates the tortured, the questions that are posed have no bearing on the one in pain—the torturer's reality remains as it has been, but the tortured's reality becomes one of all-encompassing pain—and thus the provision of answers seem

inconsequential to the pained one in the context of their broken reality. Further, in war, a person's bodily pain becomes imbued with which side this body is on, its pains conceived as comprising part of victory or defeat. In order to move away from torture and war, and their attendant infliction of pain, Scarry postulates that democratic principles are necessary, and that the acts of creation (such as artmaking) are generative and are also movements away from the indescribability of pain.

However, the presence of the past and cultural differences when it comes to pain is also significant in criticising Scarry's work on pain and torture, and in understanding what these criticisms bring to bear on imagining a pained Annah. One may examine works that highlight different cultural and historical positionings of pain, such as David Morris' *The Culture of Pain* (1991) which—albeit fixated solely on Western and Russian cultures—notes sadomasochism as part of sexual variety, pain incurred as part of gender discrimination, and other variants of pain as cultural.

Scarry has also been countered by the scholars Judith Shklar and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, assertions summarised in Samuel Moyn's online article contending with Scarry's stance towards torture, 'Torture and Taboo: On Elaine Scarry' (2013). Moyn writes:

'The principle that Scarry champions—the democratic control of self-defense—is laudable. ... But her focus on excessive government, rampant technology and unchecked power leads her to embrace simple slogans like Democracy, Citizenship and Law. She never asks what kinds of democracy, citizenship and law are necessary to combat or contain the world's O'Briens and Strangeloves.' (ibid.:n.p.)

Specifically, Moyn says—and crucial to note when discussing a pained Annah, and pained brown women and girls, in a colonised and/or colonialism-haunted era particularly, whether past, present, or future—Scarry's condemnation of torture ahistorically omits Western countries use of



torture in colonisation. In visualising a human body, I contend, whether one's own body, another body in one's presence, or the image of a human body such as Annah's, there is always a hauntology of pain—there is the uncertainty of whether or not pain is present in a body, one might say also a hauntology of torture as I define chronic pain without relief to be. Even when there is pain perceived in one or more parts of the human body, there is the trace of painlessness or less pain in other parts. So if we see all human bodies in the context of a world's past riddled with colonisation's abuses of the human body for political gain, pain and painlessness exist as *trace* of these acts in all of us affected historically. Acts largely ignored, Moyn argues, as torture became a human rights issue for countries outside the West to be condemned by Western countries, without introspection into continued usage of torture by the latter's own hands.

Here, a clarification on what I mean and will mean by pain in this thesis. Jasbir Puar (2017) correctly states throughout *The Right to Maim* that the globalisation of 'disability' as a term is problematic on a local level. This also applies to pain as a concept within disability in particular. In shifting between categories of emotional pain, physical pain, pain belonging to a collective and belonging to the individual, I also intend to distort categories that have been imposed by Eurocentrism regarding, for instance, false dichotomies regarding these categories. The social model does not only apply to analysis of the collective, but of the individual; disability poetics applies to analyses here we might do of the metaphors and similes that are used involving pain across different scales.<sup>28</sup> There is the issue of ownership of the terms 'pain' and 'painedness', who gets to apply what terms to whose body/bodies, and how much weight is given to terms we choose for our selves in pain, when medical systems may not listen to us.

So now, let us think of Annah as a brown child in France in the 1890s, without any social support but a known physical abuser of women, Paul Gauguin, a child who was captured in painting

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<sup>28</sup> There is also the issue of ownership here, and the authority those who do not identify as being in regularly- or continuously-pained bodies have to discuss our experiences of pain.

and perceived as his possession; a child for whom the insinuations of their sexual association with Gauguin were very much part of this possession (Mathews, 2001). Though the causes of chronic pain are uncertain and widely varied, stress, lack of access to healthcare, and increased vulnerability to hurt of both physical and mental nature (again, a vulnerability that Gauguin's record greatly increases) would have made Annah more vulnerable to pain. And yet, the young woman in the painting is never described as anything but a kind of complacent, a kind of inviting, a kind of daring intertwined with sexuality.

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Here is an interlude. Also a reminder: that all of this still exists within one caption, describing the artifact *Annah la Javanaise*, painted by Paul Gauguin. To extrapolate on how intertwined various models of disability are, in terms of a medical model of disability, chronic pain would now be explained as persistent pain without preceding injury that lasts more than six months. However, pain research is still very nascent in medical research, and our neural networks are vastly complex.<sup>29</sup> This doesn't take into account social structures that create greater vulnerability towards chronic pain—the debilitation of Jasbir Puar's work—such as being poor and/or living in a country without access to pain management services and information; systemic racism inherent in healthcare systems; being working-class and in jobs without health and safety provisions that prevent injuries; or having the world discriminate against being a woman, young, poor, a migrant, non-white and disabled, all categories that in Annah's time as well as today make one increasingly susceptible to chronic pain. Inciting 'injuries' such as these, however, would scarcely go into a medical report. Conversely, uninformed social analyses of pain that differ from my own might find

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<sup>29</sup> Doctors still don't have the technology to detect the precise location(s) of origin for my own nerve damage, for instance.

the extrapolation of societal harm to bodily harm in the form of chronic pain tenuous. This is where it is useful to argue that, poetically, pain could encompass various strata when explicitly placed across queer time, creating affective connections between them.

Here is another point of contention Moyn brings up with regards to Scarry's juxtaposition of art-making and pain as two opposite poles, one deeply relevant to the painting *Annah La Javanaise* and how we may see the young woman in it:

'Further, Scarry's uncomplicated belief in the power of creation to change our lives and save —no, even make—the world seemed, for those who didn't find it sophomoric, to be genius. Movingly defending beauty and treating it as a moral resource, Scarry broke with a critical culture of suspicion that unmasked art as ideology, instead offering a touchingly naïve appeal to the true, the good and the beautiful as if it were an act of unexampled sophistication.' (2013:n.p.)

*Annah la Javanaise* is classified as art, yet it very likely involved and *incurred* pain—abuse of physical, sexual, emotional, financial nature—at the hands of Gauguin.

Scarry states that acute pain resists language, yet we are constantly *in language with pain*, whether it is ours or others, whether it is acknowledged or not, through bodily movements, sayings, and attempts at articulating a sensation we must at times *need* communicate to others with great urgency. Alyson Patsavas points out in 'Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain' (2014), however, that though Scarry claims pain is impossible to convey to others, there *have* been accounts of pain written by pained people with acute awareness and sensitivity:

'Much of the scholarship on pain begins with a discussion of Elaine Scarry's contention that pain is not only unshareable, but that it actively destroys language (3-4). Recent work within

pain studies increasingly challenges this, arguing that there is a rich history of narrative representations of pain (Hide, Bourke, and Mangion 1-2; Holmes and Chambers 129; Mintz 244; Morris 1-7). Despite these interventions, for many people, pain *feels* inexpressible.’ (Patsavas, 2014:p.214)

All pain language is asymptotal, meaning it can only *approximate* an interpretation of pained feelings, as is all language. Byron J. Good takes the example of a young man named Brian in chronic pain, and parses it as such: ‘the origin myth and history of pain (the narrative); the shaping of a world of pain (the phenomenology); and the struggle for a name (the symbolization)’ (1994:p. 31). However, when we are in the midst of an acute pain flare-up, all of these segments of pain language may seem to blur, creating a comprehensive feeling of pain that seems to defy categorisation. We are also able to trouble the imposition of Good’s framework onto Brian’s communications of pain past, present, and future, whether Brian as narrator would see ‘the origin myth’, for example, as a term inherently undermining the veracity of his account.

I therefore seriously counter Scarry’s ahistorical blanket statement of creation and art-making as a universal counter-force to pain, regardless of contexts: using *Annah la Javanaise* as one of innumerable examples, which future chapters illuminate, there is the trace of both pain and painlessness in each piece of visual input we receive of a human body—terms that are not binary, but are often perceived as such—and this has vital political implications. *Annah la Javanaise* as a picture of a potentially pained body is an art artifact where meaning is not so easily delineated as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ universally, but, as with any artifact, means different things to different people.

The inability of pain—or any bodily sensation, in fact—to be communicated exactly as one feels it means that when one is portrayed in visual art, there is always the possibility that the subject experiences a degree of pain. Further, with regards to frequent difficulties in communication when

intertwined with what people in hospital or indeed any settings *believe they understand about* pain (above), the creation of art—communication, interpretation—can serve to obscure one’s pains as *less felt by one’s self*, with all the complexities of that, or vice versa. Indeed, if we regard memory as a form of the brain communicating to our own bodymind, this may be beneficial—the instant haziness my brain produces in relation to the sharpness of some traumatic periods of my life when pained is a way of protecting myself, built-in.

This is all, of course, highly supportive of all of Sara Ahmed’s groundbreaking work on ‘the contingency of pain’ in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2013)—that pain can and is and has been used for political purposes, to draw people towards or away from certain bodies, to support or decry policies. Here it is useful to look to Ahmed’s 2002 essay by the same name (‘The Contingency of Pain’), which offers a way of understanding pain that’s highly relevant to the perception—or lack thereof, as is the overwhelming case—of pain in *Annah la Javanaise* the painting:

‘If pain makes and unmakes figures (bodies, subjects, worlds, etc.), then pain shows how the (un)making of figures involves processes of intensification, whereby surfaces become established through different intensities of feeling... It is not that pain *causes* the forming of the surface... Rather, it is through the flow of sensations that *become* conscious as pain and pleasure that different surfaces are projected... To be more precise *the impression of a surface is an effect of such intensification.*’ (ibid:p.19).

With an emphasis on ‘the *dynamic nature of surfacing itself*’ (ibid:p.21), Ahmed uses the example of the 1997 report *Bringing Them Home*, a Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families; in other words, a report on the Stolen Generation, to illustrate how language is used to invoke in the reader feelings

of hurt when employed to centre that hurt in bodies of the past, through the mediums by which the sociality and politics of pain intensify the affective surface of the story, of the page, of the screen, of the painting—of all of these things in the case of visual and literary artifacts on Annah. ‘Pain is not simply an effect of a history of harm, it is the *bodily life of that history* [or rather to use my preferred terminology of bodyminds here, the bodyminded life of that history]... Some-body is always at stake. I must repeat this. Some-body is always at stake,’ Ahmed writes (ibid.:p.27), invoking the need for us to care about those in the past as indelibly linked to the present, a haunting.

Thus, in using disability poetics as a deliberate modality in the creative portions of this thesis, I would like to advocate for it as the best mode I know how to intensify the affective surfaces, both created by others and by myself, in which Annah is presented.

Considering all of the aforementioned facts about pain being underbelieved and undertreated, particularly in women, the hauntology of pain comes to the fore as being both present and not present. There is also a finding in scientific research that is heartstoppingly relevant to perceiving or not perceiving pain in Annah, the person and/or the painting: in the study ‘Beautiful faces in pain: Biases and accuracy in the perception of pain’, it was found that ‘Physically attractive patients and male patients were judged to be functioning better than physically unattractive and female patients’ (Hadjistavropoulos, McMurtry and Craig, 1996:p.411). Clearly there is a contradiction in the interaction between stereotypes of a cis-male body as being ‘more functional’ or ‘stronger’—and a cis-female body as therefore being in more pain—against stereotypes of a cis-female body as being ‘hysterical’ and ‘emotional’, and our pain as therefore not being ‘real’. Again, there is a hauntology of pain and not-painedness.

If a perception of Annah as beautiful would make the possibility of them being in pain even more remote to observers—both as person-who-existed, and as painting—this is something we must be aware of and rally against. By extrapolation, of course, this is something we must be aware of

and rally against when thinking of pain in children and young women's bodies, bodies who are often disbelieved.

The context in which Annah exists also contributes to the illusion that they could not have been a pained body. Museums, galleries, libraries, lecture halls, and the internet are places where Annah's image is displayed, and, I argue, the possibility of their pain completely denied or elided. As I reject an emotion/body binary, there is the possibility of holistic pain from likely abuse, inflicted by a known physical and emotional abuser, but the likelihood of their body being in any kind of pain of the kind categorised as 'chronic pain' has never been present in any literature thus far.

In 'The Contingency of Pain', Sara Ahmed writes a succinct summarising of what I've discussed of her work in that essay:

'I will suggest that the bodily life of pain is bound up with the fragility and vulnerability of the surfaces of the world we inhabit. If pain makes and unmakes figures (bodies, subjects, worlds etc.), then pain shows how the (un)making of figures involves processes of intensification, whereby surfaces become established through divergent intensities of feeling.' (2002:p.19)

Sara Ahmed's work is also vital here in terms of what she wrote about the 'stickiness' of emotions—in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2013), Ahmed deftly illustrates how emotions such as, here, concern, care, empathy, worry over, with regards to Annah as a young girl, are made to seem extraneous and unnecessary by virtue of the literal framing of their body. *Annah la Javanaise*—perceived as a .GIF, .JPEG, in print in a catalogue, or, for those with access to the 'Private Collection' that owns Annah, perceived as a painting in front of a person—has not so far been described as 'in pain', 'in discomfort' or 'potentially in pain'. We are at a remove from their

possibilities of pain, even as someone who would be deemed a child being painted by a child pornographer today, and this remove is a deliberate one that upholds Gauguin's 'mastery'. What Ahmed's framework provides is a new way in which to examine the ways in which material and psychological tools act specifically within contexts—architectural, economic, sociological, political—to create this remove. The hows can be examined with scrutiny, from the Tate records stating Annah is a Polynesian girl to the biopics of Gauguin's life that condone sex with Annah yet unwittingly frame it as rape (i.e. *Oviri, or A Wolf at the Door*)—the sex scene being one of a very young-looking Annah silent, stiff and still on the bed for Gauguin, as a voiceover (was the actress too terrified to vocalise?) of their pleasure plays over it eerily. In this scene, for instance, potential and actual pain from what for all intents and purposes looks visually like rape is made less 'sticky' by the voiceover of pleasure, no matter how incongruous.

In her article 'Affective Economies' (2004), Ahmed 'challenges any assumption that emotions are a private matter, that they simply belong to individuals, or even that they come from within and *then* move outward toward others' (p. 117)—rather than being internal or external, she contends, emotions shape the effects of boundaries or surfaces between self and world. In this article, Ahmed analyses the language of Aryan Nation material which invokes 'love' as tethered to 'hate'—their love of white people and hatred of the other. She writes, '*It is the emotional reading of hate that works to bind the imagined white subject and nation together*' (ibid.:p. 118).

Thinking of the story that Gauguin had 'Here there is love' written in the studio where Annah supposedly sat, of the many sources alleging the two were lovers, I extend this reading to assert: *in continuously reinforcing the narrative that Annah and Gauguin were in an equal, loving relationship, what binds imagined white subject and nation together is, in this case, also the emotional reading of 'love'*—specifically of love towards Annah and other Black, brown, Asian and Indigenous children as automatically worthy of reciprocation, and of 'love' being used to characterise master-slave relationships and abuse.



If Ahmed writes, '*Together we hate, and this hate is what makes us together*' (Ahmed, 2004:p.118), with regards to racists, I assert that part of this hatred of the other is the compulsion to hurt and capture vulnerable members of 'other' groups under the guise of 'love'. *Together we claim people, claim 'love' between us, and subdue*. Perversely, Annah framed as both beloved and exotic contributes, I contend, to the idea that Gauguin was not only not racist, but 'closer to natives', serving as a beacon of acceptance so different from other French people with bourgeois values. 'Love' as abuse is another way white supremacy operates.

Sociologist and poet Yasmin Gunaratnam writes in *Death and the Migrant* (2013) of 'total pain', a state of painful situations creating such conditions of vulnerability that are overwhelming, particularly among the most disenfranchised populations in a society. If Annah was not in physical pain, I warrant that due to being a very young, brown person of little independence in 1890s France, in the company of abusive people, there is certainly the possibility that they could have experienced, throughout their life in France, a sense of total pain. 'Total pain', however, is not a perception of the word 'pain' as the one-dimensional suffering that Patsavas cautioned against when discussing pain, and in characterising possibilities for Annah, this is what we must keep in mind.

Gunaratnam is specific about taking in multiple dimensions of pain in defining the term, going beyond physical pain to the spiritual and psychosocial. Because of this, Annah's pain can be ancestral, rooted in Minangkabau or Dayak or Turkish or Surinamese mythologies and understandings. Gunaratnam's concept of total pain allows for 'the withdrawn' aspects of pain (Gunaratnam, 2013), and thus allows for pain throughout multiple, queered notions of time and space. This theorisation of pain allows for the multidimensional ontologies I use within this thesis and all its attendant creative work. I wager that the lack of healthcare available to Annah would have made them potentially totally pained in a true sense of suffering, with few ways to alleviate the pain to a level where they could be pained and happy (an experience we who live with chronic pain may have). I think of opium or alcohol addiction, I think of orgasm with those who did not have

their best interests in mind—avenues for pain alleviation that were dangerous and compounded their vulnerability. I explore Gunaratnam's (2013) theory deeper, to cumulative effect, in further chapters.

In sum, in addressing the central questions at the beginning of this chapter, I posit that:

1. Pain is difficult to describe and widely varied.<sup>30</sup> However, expressions in asymptotic approximation of pain, from pained bodies, from bodies traditionally discriminated against, are important and do exist. Furthermore, the fact that pain is difficult to describe, and that the daily descriptions of lived-in pain from those of us who experience it is so often—at times fatally—misunderstood is added grounds for the possibility of pain in every picture, that every expression of a body could theoretically be an approximation of pain.
2. It is wholly plausible, based on even extreme levels of pain in ourselves that may go unnoticed by another human being looking at us, and considering the situations Annah found themselves in, that they could have been a pained body.
3. Annah as a pained body presents a rupture in past narratives of them. The possibility of pain in every picture creates a fissure through which bone-deep histories may present themselves. How does this dismantle accepted notions of sex, consent, race, etc. in Annah's very specific context? Though I will discuss these implications in further detail in following chapters, here is where we may first open the floodgates of such inquiry.
4. This thesis marks the beginnings of a useful framework for deconstructing notions of painedness and what they mean for sexuality, harm, and power frameworks in relation to a visual object.

All lines of inquiry above are threads that run throughout the chapters that follow, the creative writing throughout this chapter, and in the images below.

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<sup>30</sup> I continue to ask how non-pain should be described: does pain always occur against the backdrop of non-pain, or is it the other way around? Why is the question of what non-pain feels like, in detail, never asked?

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## Sketches:

### i. Annah as painting by Paul

An object sits on a chair in this painting, in the shape of a woman made of brown oil. Primate at her feet, whole nudity stretched out. Hair in a bun, bum perched on seat's edge.

Is this 'nature painting'. Is this natural. *Annah la Javanaise* (Aita tamari vahina Judith te parari) is the title Paul gives to the painting. It means Annah the Javanese in French, and in Tahitian, the bracketed words go 'The child-girl Judith has not been breached.' This has four cultural components that can be discerned: Annah, Annah la Javanaise, is named in French (one) as Javanese (two), a culture on the island of Java, Indonesia's most populated island, and therefore Indonesian (three). Tahitian (four) is a language invoked by Gauguin to appeal to the understanding of himself as close to the savages.

There is the possibility here that Annah's body has widespread parts, nerve-sensitised, vulnerable to variable jolts, waves, and oceans of pain. As many-kind as water, Frenchwaters, Tahitianwaters. Javanese waters, Indonesian waters, the English waters we're traversing, concurrently—pain can be hazy drizzle in her arm, a shudder of rain, a deluge of sea, different intensities, ebbing in some collections of cells, flowing in others. A professor once said to me of the painting something to the effect of, 'Yes, she could be disabled and in pain, she is tilted', but those of us who are pained know fundamentally: we can assume Olympian positions of strength and endurance, appearing 'able-bodied' for hours, days, years at a time, holding all of it puckered inside. We can smile wide,

with no one but ourselves the wiser. Our bodies could be imploding internally, and the human brain may not be equipped to even process what is happening, what cannot be stopped for reasons that bewilder us. Sometimes we must appear abled for employment purposes, such as when sitting as an artist's model for a man who 'very likely did abuse his Tahitian vahine, the submissive feat in her eyes being his erotic reward.' (Mathews, 2001:p.182). And beyond Tehamana, there was Judith, because there were 'affections not only to Tehamana, Annah, and Pahura a Tai but also to Judith Molard, Jeanne Schuffenecker, and Marie Jade, we know that Gauguin's portraits and lessons for young girls could be overly affectionate' (ibid.:p.221). Annah's position is neither 'of one in pain' and 'of one not in pain', and it is also both.

What if this painting were entitled 'Portrait of a Child in Pain'. 'Portrait of a Nude Child in Pain'. 'Portrait of Nude Child Annah in Pain (The Child Judith Has Not Been Breached)'.

Since Annah could have been an amalgamation of Judith (who'd sat for him as a model, and wrote of enjoying his attentions) and Annah—and of any of Gauguin's fantasies surrounding young girls—any of them in the fantasy could actually be in severe pain. Entertain this notion. Stay with it. It is a clear option.

On the privilege of oil painting, the following comes to mind: 'The painter can paint while he is looking at the world because it seems to him that he finds in appearances themselves the style which will define him in the eyes of others, and because he thinks he is spelling out nature at the moment he is recreating it' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:p.56). Certainly Gauguin was deeply caught up in self-mythologising through his paintings, and also his life choices, each bleeding into the other.

What is this nature a presumed-abled Gauguin thought he was spelling out, if an abled painter is unaware of the nuances of the sitter's internal states? I assume the painter is abled and not in pain.

Do I assume that the painted body is not in pain? Why, and why not? Do I assume Gauguin was not in pain, the tortured artist? Thinking of the power dynamics here, I de-intensify his pain in light of how vulnerable he made Annah.

ii. Annah as screen-grab by anyone

In paint as in pixel, I interrogate the materiality of Annah as oil on a canvas in an unnamed private collection (a source I shall keep anonymous has told me of a diabolically wealthy family whom she thinks is in possession of the painting, a line of inquiry I fully intend to pursue, as both researcher and writer), and also as a series of pixels. Ones and zeroes, JPEGs, GIFs, PNGs, screenshots, Google Image searches, in print in books, and on endless screens. Alive in the cloud. The message here is repeated, as deliberate and unrecognised as systemic hegemonic conditioning with regards to visual images can be: they are abled. They are not in pain.

Each screen grab of her body, or glance at an array of paintings of Annah, is overwhelmingly interpreted by my own bodymind—familiar with pain in daily life—as communicating itself to abled bodyminds as ‘Abled.’ ‘Abled.’ ‘Abled.’ The possibility of pain has been so *de-intensified*, *de-escalated*, I imagine, that it is rendered moot. This is because, again, of my own experiences of having my own pain experiences disbelieved, when my body does not convey the signals others understand as an intensification of pain.

However, Annah's representation did not only exist as painting. The few pictures that exist of her are of a girl for whom I instantly feel a pang of maternal protection. They are the only living person

coded physically cis- as 'girl' in these pictures; but for one single frame in which behind her and to the side is a painting of mother and child, white. They are the only brown soul in these images.

Isolated.

A person can sit for a portrait sitting and be pained. A person can feel it acutely the longer one sits, or perceive it as a dull ache. Or forget about the pain, because it's lasted so long in the body that the mind has constructed a defense of many neurons that allows one to live so pained, in varying degrees.

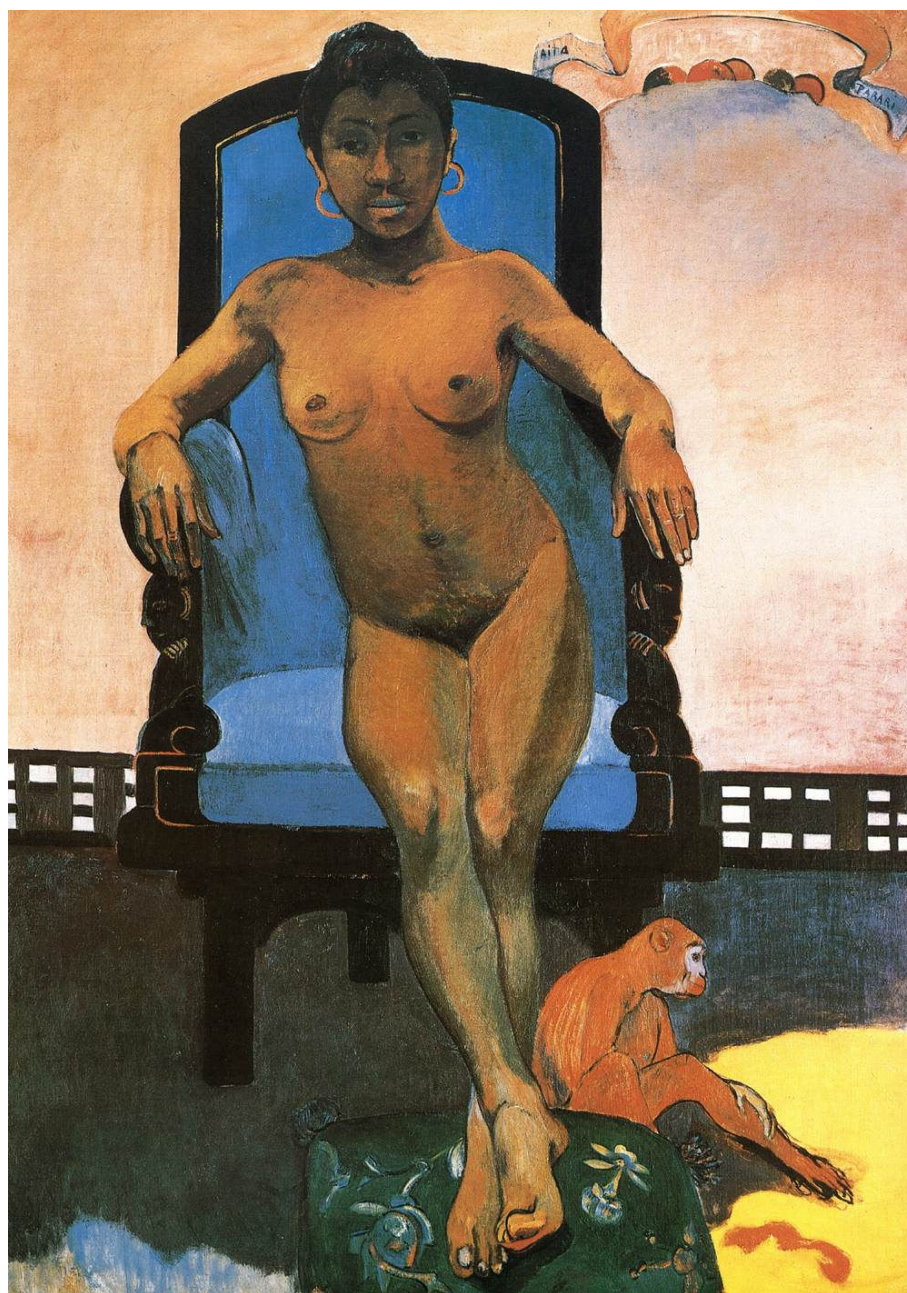
If you'd like to know what it's like to feel pain beyond anyone's ten, for more than you'd thought would be humanly possible, imagine this exercise (it won't hurt much, I promise): imagine each dot is a surge of more-than-ten pain, over one month, and the spaces are where it ebbs.

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The images here pose the question: particularly as the painting itself has such restricted access, amidst the proliferation of Annah's likeness online, where are the traces of possible pain in all forms of Annah-image: .JPEG, .PNG, screenshot, Google Search?

### Chapter Three: Of Java



[Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese*, or *Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 c 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>31</sup> Painting of a naked child on a chair, her hair in a bun, her ankles crossed, arms on the chair. Monkey at her feet.]

<sup>31</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001:p.199.

'J'avoue j'en ai bavé pas vous  
Mon amour  
Avant d'avoir eu vent de vous  
Mon amour  
Ne vous déplaie  
En dansant la Javanaise  
Nous nous aimions  
Le temps d'une  
Chanson.'

'I avow I went through hell, didn't you,  
My love.  
Before I caught wind of you  
My love.  
Whether or not it pleases you,  
In dancing the Javanaise  
We loved each other  
The length of a  
Song.'

- Lyrics from 'La Javanaise', Serge Gainsbourg, 1963<sup>32</sup>

Rejecting the idea of a static, reified notion of Java, and of what 'Javanese girl' means, is crucial to our understandings of Annah as potentially plural, and thus potentially in pain and under threat. I posit that a very caricaturish representation of 'La Javanaise' appears here and that this is in itself a violence. That innumerable violences proliferate as all the many multiple variations of 'Javanese' that exist are cut out of Gauguin's use of Annah, as prop for his mythos of wildness and genius. One could say that 'Java' may be opened up to speculative, virtually infinite violences, to historical, present and future realities. As Moten and Harney (2013) would say, I do this in a space both 'for and against': as a practising artist and writer who identifies as Javanese, with all the many complex possible meanings of this term, and one who performs in colonial spaces that have historically whittled down these complexities, spaces that have been built on the plunder of

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<sup>32</sup> Serge Gainsbourg and Juliette Gréco both sang 'La Javanaise' in 1963, after it was written by the former. The song plays with both the French slang form of language (similar to Pig Latin) called 'javanais', and a dance the French call the 'Java'. In popular cultures, song was most recently used in the Oscar-winning film *The Shape of Water* (2017), as sung by Madeleine Peyroux.



Empire.<sup>33</sup> As Ambalavaner Sivanandan states, ‘We are here because you were there’ (2008)--I am here in Europe because, over centuries past, European countries including the United Kingdom stole resources, land, and people from what is now Indonesia. Within the aforementioned ‘for and against’ modalities, I am aiming at the self-built mythos of Gauguin, propped up by colonial states--only applicable if his subjects have no chance of declaring for themselves to the history-(in)scribing public how they would prefer to be depicted and remembered. In doing so, I argue for a decolonised, un-ablednormative perspective on *Annah* that allows for possibilities of pain.

When we *centre* the ‘La Javanaise’ in *Annah La Javanaise* not as hazy pastiche of orientalist clichés, but an actual place, we understand the importance of polycentrism. Within Java Island itself are a multiplicity of centres, and my argument is that because these centres’ cultural vantage points have different notions of ‘abled’ and ‘disabled’, different meanings for and culturally-sanctioned reactions to pain, in opening up a more honest understanding of Java as multiple and complex, we are also opening up many possible bodyminds and affective registers for *Annah La Javanaise*. As with Thohari’s *Disability in Java* (2013), this thesis and attendant work are, I argue, part of an emerging body of work that questions the ablenormativity of decolonial movements, in particular here decolonial work in visual cultures. For instance, as Georgina Kleege writes, it is important to understand that access to visual cultures and analyses thereof are not the province of sighted people alone, but also of blind/seeing-impaired people (Kleege, 2005). The use of visual tools that are accessible only to seeing peoples in particular (that is, made inaccessible by design) are a mode of biopower. Including museums, paintings, catalogues, websites and the like using visual material in a

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<sup>33</sup> This chapter will argue that classifications of ‘Javanese’ encompass greatly diverse populations; in terms of my own specificities that inform my partial knowledge here, I am a Jakarta-born woman who calls Jakarta home, who is both Javanese on my father’s side and Minangkabau (otherwise known as Minang or Padang) on my mother’s side. My paternal grandfather was a Bantenese Arab man whose family settled in Ngawi, East Java; my paternal grandmother was from Tuban, East Java; both paternal grandparents worked in (what was before 1945 deemed ‘native’) education, and lived in various locations before settling in Jakarta. Though as an adult, I would discover that my paternal grandmother’s family is a ‘noble’ or ‘high-caste’ one in ancient Javanese lineage, my grandparents’ chosen profession as teachers and education workers meant they lived quite modestly (but, I would add, not wanting for warmth; they did have ten children to keep them preoccupied).

way that is inaccessible to blind/seeing-impaired populations, without descriptions in audio form or Braille for instance.

In this chapter, I present critical underpinnings for what is at stake in troubling the ‘*La Javanaise*’ in *Annah la Javanaise*; by showing that there are myriad violences within Gauguin’s usage of the term for this painting and its subject(s), I show that how the contemporary fine art market and Western arts institutions continue to situate the painting is a deliberate ‘masking’ of these violences with regards to Java and ‘Javanese’, a distancing of people from them. That these violences are not ‘obscure’, but extremely obvious ones when *Annah la Javanaise*’s contexts are reappraised—thus bolstering this thesis’ primary assertion that the possibility of Annah as a pained body is not only present, but likely.

When I use the word ‘Javanese’ in this thesis and the attendant creative work, there is a liminality between the term being shorthand for Javanese culture (Jawa), the majority and dominant culture of Java Island, and various refractions and contexts for what Javanese means.<sup>34</sup> When I reference Javanese as a culture and language that comes from my personal frame of reference, it is not meant as a blanket assertion of Javanese culture and language as monolithic in a way that excludes Javanese as used in Suriname, for example. This complexity and other complexities, including what I draw upon in the following pages, surround ‘Java’ and ‘Javanese’ yet are absent from Gauguin’s visual portrayal of Annah, his characterisation of the island and its inhabitants.

*Annah La Javanaise* continues to be (literally) framed by arts institutions, including museums, galleries, and universities in a way that acts as though the colonial context is not one of violence, in alignment with understandings of Gauguin’s work as ‘timeless’—and in attendance, the notion of the subjects of his portraits, bodies presenting as young, brown girls, as interchangeable.

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<sup>34</sup>Except when specifically stated otherwise, such as when I say ‘the Javanese alphabet is a poem’ in Chapter Two, in reference to the poem-structure of the Javanese language alphabet, as opposed to Sundanese, Betawi, and other languages indigenous to Java Island.

As one digital artefact supporting this evidence, I present the Tate Library Archive entry of a print I later confirmed was of *Annah la Javanaise* as ‘Paul Gauguin - Polynesian female nude seated on blue chair with a small monkey at her feet’ (see figures 3.1 and 3.2). The effects of institutional disregard for the specificity of brown girls’ origins, and of brown girls as distinct individuals, are not slight. That print was on loan at the time, April 2016, to Rosalind Nashashibi and Lucy Skaer for a project called *Why Are You So Angry?* (2017) that would contribute to Nashashibi’s 2017 Turner Prize nomination—in this work, Nashashibi and Skaer recreated Gauguin’s portraits of Tahitian women on Tahiti, documented staring at the camera in an 18-minute video, in poses echoing those Gauguin had placed them in. In personal communication with Nashashibi in 2016, I alerted her to the fact that the print she had borrowed from the Tate was *Annah la Javanaise*. She had had no idea. Annah had been absorbed into ‘Polynesian’ heritage for the purposes of creating more art—that, I might suggest with regards to *Why Are You So Angry?* reproduces the paternalistic, colonial gaze towards brown women and girls, rather than questions it.

I also take issue with the policies Nashashibi and Skaer employed with regards to payment amounts for the Tahitian women involved in *Why Are You So Angry?*; in response to an inquiry about whether or not models were compensated, Nashashibi revealed that some were, particularly if they had done professional modelling before, and others were not. The scouting process as relayed to me was a combination of recommendations from people in Tahiti and directly approaching local women (personal communication with Nashashibi, 2016). I argue that if all the models were performing the same task, they should all have been paid, and that this inequity reproduces the imbalance involved in Gauguin’s original paintings, for which he did not compensate Tahitian models, with the assumption—as is the case with Annah—that his models were merely happy to oblige for a personal friend.

Figure 3.1. Tate Library Archive and Public Records Catalogue entry, accessed April 9, 2016.

33	TGA 20043/1/2/6	Joule, Barry	Paul Gauguin - Polynesian female nude seated on blue chair with a small monkey at her feet	nd	On loan to Rosalind Nashashibi, Lucy Skaer, Paul Gauguin at Tate St Ives until January 2017	NOT PRODUCEABLE
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Figure 3.2. Tate Library Archive and Public Records Catalogue entry, accessed April 8, 2019.

TGA 20043/1/2/6	Joule, Barry	Paul Gauguin - Polynesian female nude seated on blue chair with a small monkey at her feet	nd		OPEN
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It is (ironically) a very crude, simplistic portrayal of Javanese-ness as crude and simple that Gauguin employs, and as I elaborate on in further chapters, one that deliberately relies on both presumed abledness and presumed lack of suffering. Gauguin's role in delimiting what 'Javanese' means, in a derogatory and simplifying understanding of 'Javanese', is to be expected if one looks at his role in the visual art movement of primitivism.

According to the Tate, primitivism

'is used to describe the fascination of early modern European artists with what was then called primitive art – including tribal art from Africa, the South Pacific and Indonesia, as well as prehistoric and very early European art, and European folk art.' (Tate Museum, 2019:n.p.)

It is important that this is what the Tate Gallery website uses as the public-facing definition for primitivism, the official, brand-approved, definition of primitivism that frames how works such as *Annah la Javanaise* and Gauguin's other portraits of brown-skinned girls are presented—how the public is educated about them, and what colonial contexts are included or excluded. Ann Laura Stoler's (2016) work in *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Time* (to be discussed later in this thesis, and in Chapter Six in particular) calls us to acknowledge that colonial presents exist. Stoler's

work calls us to acknowledge that violences in the present towards populations made more vulnerable are etiologies of colonial formations (2016:p.1); the interchangeability of Annah within art institutions is an example of this persistence, this endurance of colonial imaginaries and colonial violences.

If art exhibitions in a museum context are about ‘how museums perform the knowledge they create’ (Kirschenblatt-Gimlett, 1998:p.3), what does it mean to title a portrait of someone who is very likely to have been a child under psychological duress ‘Of Java’? What does this mean for perceptions of Javanese women today, both our perceptions of our selves and others’ perceptions of us? Building on the work of scholars Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1998), Sara Ahmed (2004, 2013), Tina M. Campt (2017), Slamet Amex Thohari (2013), and Ann Laura Stoler (1995, 2016), in this chapter I will develop a decolonial critique of the appearance of Java in Gauguin’s work, in order to ask what might be at stake in troubling it. Delineating how reductive ‘Of Java’ in Gauguin’s usage is lays the groundwork for Chapter Four: A Child of Thirteen.

Primitivism heightened the colonial gaze which allows art from ‘Africa, the South Pacific and Indonesia’ to be deemed ‘tribal’, and European art to be deemed ‘folk’—it took elements of ‘tribal’ art and placed them out of context in an orientalist fashion, perversely making myths of ‘primitive’ art that are actually deeply complex in order to perpetuate the myth of the simple native. Banaban, I-Kiribati and African-American scholar Teresia Teaiwa (2001) has written incisively on how Gauguin exploited a notion of Tahiti and Tahitian women through a colonial lens, self-professing mastery over and intimate knowledge of the place, despite being wrong about even what island he

was currently on.<sup>35</sup> Teaiwa has argued cogently how these myths and fantasies of colonial subjugation and superiority have persisted into the present, into how the military-tourism industrial complex operates there (Teaiwa, 1999). Yet to my knowledge, no in-depth research has been published on Gauguin's relationship to Java that centres *Annah la Javanaise*, rather than merely referencing them in relation to him. No text links it to the present-day perception of Java and Indonesian women as ripe for exploitation, for harming—for possibly-Javanese bodies being made more vulnerable to pain.

When describing a photograph in his possession of the Javanese temple Borobudur, Gauguin said it was of Cambodian buildings—in a similar vein to his ignorance of Tahiti being marketed as expertise on it (Teaiwa, 1999).<sup>36</sup> Java in particular has a specific role in Gauguin's career, life, and ongoing mythos, not despite this ignorance but in line with it. Gauguin created a statue he titled *Oviri* in 1894; though the name is Tahitian for 'wolf', Barbara Landy has noted that Gauguin is likely to have taken Javanese statues of women as an influence for it (Taylor, 1993:p.13). As *Oviri* was made around the same time as *Annah La Javanaise*, when notions of "Javanese" were obviously being engaged with in France, one might wonder why Gauguin omitted having been influenced by Javanese art. This may have been a tendency to (a) deny Javanese influences in his art more generally, and omitting any of their complexities in the original context, (b) (simultaneously) flatten 'la Javanaise' to be primitive in the imagination of Europeans, as part of the European

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<sup>35</sup>Teaiwa herself always put 'Polynesian' in quotes, as it erased the specificities of her identity, in a way that I relate to in terms of my description as an 'Asian', 'Indonesian', or even 'Javanese' scholar. In Teaiwa's 'Reading Paul Gauguin's *Noa Noa* with Epeli Hau'ofa's *Kisses in the Nederends: Militourism, Feminism, and the 'Polynesian' Body*', she states:

'As a woman of culturally mixed and displaced Banaban, I-Kiribati, and African American ancestry, educated within and beyond the Pacific Islands, I find myself regularly confronting the 'Polynesian' body—both 'real' and imaginary. In militourist contexts I find myself identifying with the 'Polynesian' body: it seems to have liberating qualities; yet I am also resentful of it: it overshadows the specificities of my own identity.' (1999:p. 250)

<sup>36</sup> The largest Buddhist temple in the world, one of the world's 'seven wonders'.

colonial project—including his own colonial project, which encompassed both intimate and professional realms.<sup>37</sup>

With regards to the second point, in associating Java with Tahiti, Gauguin painted gross caricatures of both locales simultaneously, *creating* a ‘vague brownness’ associated with very different Asian Pacific contexts. All this contributed to the fascination with and aping of Javanese culture among the French populace, from Greta Garbo playing a Javanese woman to society women wearing Javanese clothing to parties in France (Cohen, 2010). Indeed, the term ‘la javanaise’ has become part of French vocabulary that exists to this day. In French, ‘la javanaise’ denotes a form of slang in which vowels are rearranged as to render the original word *unintelligible* (related here to *uncertain or exotic origin*), much like Pig Latin (Pauchard, 1981), as well as a dance called the ‘java’. These meanings are all played upon in lyrics to the Serge Gainsbourg song *La Javanaise*, a part of which begins this chapter (Skibicki, 2010).

In a review of Cohen’s (2010) book *Performing Otherness: Java and Bali on International Stages, 1905-1952*, Dick Van der Meij pithily sums up this fascination with Java, as well as the interchangeability of cultures in Javanese performance for Western audiences:

‘The “artists” could call what they did as originating from Hawai’i, Bali, Burma, India, Hindu, Buddhist, it does not seem to have mattered: everything was blended to the delight of one and the exasperation of another, depending on the amount of naked female flesh that was displayed, which alternated between visual belly buttons to complete nudity.’ (2012:p. 184)

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<sup>37</sup> Though ‘an Assyrian relief of Gilgamesh in the Louvre’ was found to be related to *Oviri’s* image, in 1967, Barbara Landy found ‘a Javanese statue in the Museum of Djakarta’ (Taylor, 1993:p.13; references Landy, 1967:p. 245) to be a closer fit. Sue Taylor writes that Gauguin had likely seen similar images in photographs of, for instance, Borobudur Temple in Java and used it ‘repeatedly for motifs in both paintings and sculpture from 1886 to 1902’ (1993:p.13).

I argue that this manufactured vagueness is in line with the *non-personhood* attached to colonised or racialised brown bodies in Western countries, in the *fin de siècle* period and now, including the bodies of the girl(s) named Annah la Javanaise. In order to abuse someone, you attach non-personhood to them. Someone deemed to be a non-person is more vulnerable to having their pain being ignored, even to the point of having their lives eliminated.

Gauguin is said to have played a key role in primitivism as an art movement (Arnheim, 1992), and this is in line with the myth of the ‘primitive’ attached to ‘non-European’ art and peoples, ‘primitive’ meaning simple and pliant, open to subservience with an enticing, orientalist spark. In *The Myth of Primitivism* (2006), Susan Hiller writes (in summation of Signe Howell’s chapter in the book):

‘Since an understanding of art from one society by people who live in another is inevitably based on assumptions built into the cultural categories of the interpreters, the refusal to attend to the actual cultures where ethnographic art is made, or to the particular relationship of power and meaning expressed in ‘our’ possession and display of certain exotic artefacts, creates a space for the return of fantasies which are as primitivist and racist as those that formed the basis of early scientific exhibits of tribal objects.’ (Hiller, ed., 2006:p.154)

Just as the racist commentary underlying early European ‘science’ exhibits of objects deemed ‘tribal’ was presented as fact, so too do displays of Primitivism in contemporary art institutions continue to fail to incisively critique the colonialist presumptions and politics of this art movement.

In ‘A Cultural Search for Authenticity: Questioning Primitivism and Exotic Art’, anthropologist Paul van der Grijp deems Gauguin ‘the first Primitivist’ (2012:p.129), a man who forged Primitivism as an artistic movement based on racist notions of non-Western art. The more



the artist associated himself with these tropes, the higher the price of his paintings, the more the mystique of him as closer to ‘savage’ heightened his appeal:

‘Gauguin called himself a person adept to an instinct and experience of “the civilized savage,” a description that biographers have eagerly taken up and used to make sense of his outright rejection of certain practices, prohibitions, and relations that characterized nineteenth century bourgeois social life in France.’ (Raepple, 2011:p.6)

These are the building blocks of every single portrayal of Tahitian women Gauguin has created, and also of *Annah la Javanaise*—crude caricatures of colonised peoples were de rigueur for him. The existence of Annah, who was a child, in Gauguin’s art was to propel these myths of brown otherness and his own cult of personality.<sup>38</sup> One could argue that because Gauguin only used pastiches of exoticism from Java, Tahiti, and other Asian Pacific locales he interchanged with them, one can see through this that he has been able to bolster his own image, as an expert on these places’ and peoples’ wildness, as well as to challenge the social norms of the French bourgeoisie (another reason why Primitivism is given a positive value judgment by contemporary arts institutions).

To be captured and simplified this way was to be under his power—and, as he was a recorded abuser of women (Mathews, 2001), to be open to his abuse. Someone who could inflict upon women and girls physical and emotional pain; who, because he claimed Java as a province of his imagination, inspiration, and mystique, implied that he was above the law in hurting possibly-Javanese child(ren) Annah:

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<sup>38</sup> More on Annah as child in Chapter Four, particularly as linked to disability and sexuality.

‘His unceasing quest for power over others ultimately destroyed most of his personal relationship [sic], but can be credited with his eventual success in the competitive international art world of his day. The inborn power and talent of his body—which he honed to a fine degree both in his art and in such avocations as fencing—led him also to travel alone around the world, to face the unknown and the strange without fear, and to define foreign cultures in physical terms, such as race and sexuality.’ (Mathews, 2001:p.1)

Thus, because these women and girls appear to have been used by Gauguin to be mere evidence of his colonial imagination, if they hurt in his presence, because of his presence, it’s he who would be unable to bear witness to this pain. To do so would be to acknowledge Annah and her fellow muses as human. Gauguin would never speak of nor write about Annah as in any way a fully-fleshed human being with a full range of emotions, including the possibility we all have of pain—what comes under the purview of his history as perpetuated by Western arts institutions largely occludes it. However, despite Gauguin’s inability to recognise this pain in how he painted Annah, the painting *Annah la Javanaise* itself bears witness to this pain—marks of Annah’s pain persist in the painting, as well as in the institutions that (re)produce it and the mythos of Gauguin surrounding it, in the manifestations of the painting as digital images in circulation. As I will argue in the next section, marks of this pain and the persistence of these marks are forms of imperial duress, in which what ‘Java’ continues to mean matters as much as what it did in the late 1800s, when *Annah la Javanaise* was painted.

In this thesis, I choose to use the term ‘mark(s)’ rather than ‘trace(s)’ to refer to signifiers of pain in *Annah la Javanaise*, and in the art institutions responsible for the painting’s value and preservation. As Ann Laura Stoler writes:

‘...perhaps there is a problem with our vocabularies. The scholarly romance with “traces”

risks rendering colonial remnants as pale filigrees, benign overlays with barely detectable presence rather than deep pressure points of generative possibilities or violent and violating absences. The “haunting” trace seems too easily unmoored from material damages and disseminated landscapes, or from border barricades installed as colonialism’s parting gestures, now hardened and more intractable than stone.’ (2016:p.5-6)

The potential sufferings of Annah(s) are as intractable as stone, writ in oil on canvas—the painting *Annah la Javanaise* is not merely a parting gesture of colonialism, but a solid marker of colonialism’s persistence, irrespective of changes in national borders, irrespective of pronouncements that colonialism’s systemic oppressions have long been put to an end.

### **Java, Duress and Polycentrism**

Gauguin is not solely responsible for how *Annah la Javanaise* is positioned today by institutions, nor for the vulnerability of Annah(s) in relation to him that allowed the painting to exist—all of this is a product of systemic inequalities, violences and oppressions that are inherent in coloniality, modernity and patriarchal white supremacy. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have written about how ‘art history’ as it is studied in the West contributes to these persisting power dynamics (1998) (the duress that Ann Stoler (2016) writes of), and suggest how to chart alternate routes. In this section, I employ their strategy of polycentrism with regards to breaking out of European narratives for ‘Java’ and the arts.

What do we write about when we write about ‘Javanese’? To seek a different understanding of ‘La Javanaise’ than Gauguin would have us possess, it is necessary to employ a polycentric understanding of visual culture as advocated by Shohat and Stam (1998).

There exists a hegemonic narrative, Shohat and Stam write, of a linear European progression of art from realist to postmodernist, that privileges this timeline of art as the only one that exists, the only one that matters:

‘Endowing a mythical “West” with an almost providential sense of historical destiny, Eurocentric history sees Europe, alone and unaided, as the motor, the *primum mobile*, for progressive historical change, including progressive change in the arts. An arrogant monologism exalts only one legitimate culture, one narrative, one trajectory, one path to aesthetic creation.’ (1998:p.27)

The theorists argue that it is necessary to move away from the false Eurocentric notion of art and art history as sophisticated only in the West, of Western art movements being the only art movements, of European license to speak of other locales including Java in terms such as ‘primitive’—and towards the understanding that European art history itself is ‘limited and ultimately provincial’. In Indonesian, there is the unfortunate usage of the word ‘kampungan’ (my rough translation: ‘village-like’) to mean ‘provincial’ in a pejorative sense, including in Java, often employed by middle and upper-class urban denizens. However, Shohat and Stam use ‘provincial’ here to explode the centre-periphery model that privileges supposed ‘centres’ of power such as Europe and European capitals; they argue that this power also belongs to places marked ‘periphery’, and that both ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’ are in some way provincial:

‘Within a polycentric approach, the world of visual culture has many dynamic locations, many possible vantage points. The emphasis in “polycentrism” is not on spatial or primary points of origins or on a finite list of centers but rather *on* a systematic principle of differentiation, relationality, and linkage. No single community or part of the world,

whatever its economic or political power, should be epistemologically privileged.’ (1998:p. 46)

Epistemological privilege should be equitable among communities of, say, different sensorial modes of creating and consuming art (see Kleege, 2005, quoted above) as well as communities of different cultural denominations. Not only, then, are Javanese aesthetic movements equal to those of, say, the French, but as Shohat and Stam argue, there has not been a clearly demarcated division between these movements in the first place. They advocate for a polycentric approach ‘not only by stressing the aesthetic contributions of non-European cultures but also by insisting on the longstanding interconnectedness between the arts of Europe and those outside it’ (Shohat & Stam, 1998:p.27), with the European arts long indebted to Africa, Asia, and Indigenous American arts. Indeed, according to Shohat and Stam, European art movements have appropriated aesthetics from elsewhere whilst deeming them inferior—‘often subliminally imbricated with a view of Africa, Latin America and Asia as “underdeveloped” or “developing,”’ (ibid.:p.27). This is even though art that comes from outside Europe would be deemed advanced at a level beyond European art, if we look at the limited realism-modernism-postmodernism progression that is the dominant narrative of Western art—Shohat and Stam point to the fact that much art from Africa, Latin America and Asia has not been invested in realism to begin with, noting in particular South and Southeast Asia (Southeast Asia being a region that includes, of course, Java) as examples. And it is precisely these art movements that ‘liberated’ European artists.

‘The dominant literature on modernism often regards Europe as simply absorbing “primitive art” and anonymous “folklore” as raw materials to be refined and reshaped by European artists. This view prolongs the colonial trope which projected colonized people as *body rather than mind* [my italics; note here how Annah is portrayed thusly by Gauguin] much as

the colonized world was seen as a source of raw material rather than of mental activity or manufacture. Europe thus appropriated the material and cultural production of non-Europeans while denying both their achievements and its own appropriation, thus consolidating its sense of self and glorifying its own cultural anthropophagy.’ (ibid.:p.28)

All of the above is in keeping with how Gauguin himself took from the art of Java, flattened its rich cultural contexts, and used it to add to his self-mythos of grandeur in a European context that essentially rewarded cultural appropriation for being novel—whilst portraying a young girl from Java as constantly sexually available and willing, causing harm to all of us who might be labelled ‘La Javanaise’. I argue that Gauguin presented the young girls of Tahiti and *Annah la Javanaise* as so similar, in his flattening of their art histories, while simultaneously framing them as willingly vulnerable to harm, that it is not a coincidence that the Tate would confidently label *Annah la Javanaise* as ‘Polynesian female nude’. Indeed, that is what Gauguin’s entire oeuvre of brown girl portraits gestures towards—interchangeability of populations both infantile in intellect and sexually mature, that are primarily to be consumed. That Western art institutions continue to present as consumable through this lens.

Because of the unequal power dynamics between France and what is now Indonesia, dynamics in favour of Europe that have persisted since the late 19th century—what Ann Laura Stoler (2016) calls (imperial) duress—the beholder of a print of *Annah la Javanaise* in the Tate Library is nudged (through aforementioned website copy and general framing of primitivism) towards perceiving a view of Java as not only consumable in the form of young girls, but static.

Though my creative work submitted as part of this PhD by practice attempts to honour the queering of time and space that Muñoz (2009) writes of in *Cruising Utopia*, as mentioned in the introduction, it is also a rebuttal of a linear, Western world view that serves colonial, supremacist notions of the ‘other’, and it agrees with Shohat and Stam’s contention that:

‘A more adequate formulation, in our view, would see [temporality] as scrambled and palimpsestic in all the worlds, with the pre-modern, the modern, the postmodern coexisting globally, although the “dominant” might vary from region to region.’ (1998:p.29)

That a colonial modus operandi has persisted in the art world is due to the unequal power dynamics referenced by Shohat and Stam. This thesis is part of ongoing attempts to resist these dynamics and to turn them on their head. Any resistance to the master narrative of Gauguin and *Annah la Javanaise* is an effort to make palpable the power differentials that have made it, to use Ahmed’s (2013) concept, ‘sticky’—that make such resistance part and parcel of de-centering Europe and making Java just as important. Shohat and Stam’s polycentric strategy towards visual culture reenvision global visual art politics in an attempt to rectify longstanding inequities (Shohat & Stam, 1998:p.47), and approaching ‘Java’ through this approach is a key part of this thesis.

Shohat and Stam’s argument dovetails nicely with Ann Laura Stoler’s concepts of imperial debris and duress:

‘As those whose history has been destroyed and misrepresented, as those whose very history has been dispersed and diasporized rather than lovingly memorialized, and as those whose history has often been told, danced, and sung rather than written, oppressed people have been obliged to recreate history out of scraps and remnants and debris.’ (Shohat & Stam, 1998:p.42).

Out of the imperial debris surrounding *Annah la Javanaise*, imbued with the duress of imperial patriarchal values, we are more than able to parse through colonial cues still inherent in

Western art institutions, and seek and write more about the girls they frame than what currently exists. The possibility and indeed, as I argue, probability of violence contained in *Annah la Javanaise* is not a matter of Paul Gauguin as a lone abuser. It is structural, and this is confirmed by a dominant narrative surrounding it in which violence is ignored and thus condoned.

### **A Polycentric Java**

If we are speaking of moving away from Eurocentric analyses of art, and into polycentrism as a way in which we open up *Annah la Javanaise* to possibilities of pain, then it must be understood that 'Java' itself consists and has consisted of many centres, with interlocking, overlapping power structures. To understand the cultures of Java Island as polycentric and fluid, rather than monolithic and static, is a step towards multiplying even more the possibilities for bodyminds that Annah(s) could have inhabited, as I argue below, some of which could very well be pained bodyminds.

The island of Java is not monolithically 'Javanese' in terms of 'native' cultures. To explain what is meant by this, it should be emphasised: 'native' cultures and languages on the island of Java include the culture called Javanese (which itself includes distinct sub-cultures such as Cirebonese, Osing, Banyumasan, and Tenggerese), the Sundanese of East Java (40 million in population, and including sub-cultures such as Baduy, Bantenese, and Banjarese), and Betawi (indigenous inhabitants of what is now the Jakarta Capital Region). To make a UK analogy, it is the difference between English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, though English culture is dominant on the island of Great Britain in population as well as culture, in the same way that the Javanese population is dominant on Java Island compared to Sundanese and others. There are also those on Java who were born there, lived there all their lives, and may identify as, for instance, Indian-Indonesian, Chinese-Javanese, or one of hundreds of Indonesian cultures not originating on Java Island as far back as its first inhabitants. Note that there are also people for whom their origins or cultural heritage are on



Java, but—in the case of Surinamese and South Africa’s Cape Malay peoples—were transplanted from Java to other Dutch colonies through slavery, indentured servitude, and/or other colonial routes. These populations may come to adopt other monikers of community of varying levels of affinity with ‘original’ Javanese cultures. For instance, Surinamese people of Javanese origins speak Javanese but not Indonesian. For these people, their Surinamese culture predates legally-sanctioned Indonesian nationalist movements, so the concept of ‘Indonesia’ as a unified republic of disparate provinces does not apply; Surinamese people of Javanese origin are, I would argue, very strongly Javanese in a way that has been shaped by their colonial iterations, by the specifically Surinamese/Latin American flows of cultural influence and people<sup>39</sup>. All these elements of what ‘Javanese’ could mean have mixed between cultures and interbred, and the dynamics between them are influenced not only by creeds (including different manifestations of Islam in Indonesia, the country with the world’s greatest Muslim population) and ethnicities, but along lines such as maritime and more inland, insular influences (see Sulistyono & Rochwulaningsih, 2013).<sup>40</sup>

In this thesis, I focus on the possibility and indeed probability of disabled bodies in the presence of abusive figures, particularly with regards to chronic pain—by highlighting this perspective, I bring in a new positionality with regards to Javanese bodies that is hitherto absent in the academic literature I’ve encountered. The above numerous different iterations for what ‘Javanese’ could mean also encompass many different kinds of bodymind that would fall under the term ‘disability’, and are read in different sociocultural contexts than they would be in, say, the cultures of the UK.

As notions of ‘disability’ and ‘ability’ are inherently cultural (Block, et al. (eds.), 2015), there are variances in all the above of what different bodyminds signify. Slamet Amex Thohari’s work in

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<sup>39</sup> See Meel, 2011 for analysis of Javanese-origin Surinamese that explicates this further.

<sup>40</sup> For further reading, I would direct the reader to the work of George and Audrey Kahin (Kahin, A. & Kahin, G.M., 1997), Benedict Anderson, Ruth McVey (Anderson & McVey, 2009; Anderson 1990, 2001), and later, Eric Tagliacozzo (2007, 2009) as historians who conducted groundbreaking work in Western academe on Javanese and Indonesian histories—particularly as always being and having been connected to societies and cultures outside of the political borders of the Republic of Indonesia, first established in independence on August 17, 1945.

*Disability in Java* (2013) and previous academic work (see Thohari, 2012, below) is groundbreaking in its explication of at least four different competing frameworks for ‘disability’ in Java after the fall of dictator Soeharto in 1998: (1) the Islamic ‘charity’ model according to a certain ableist interpretation of Islam<sup>41</sup>; (2) the Dutch Christian missionary-introduced medical model of disability, still prevalent today in an Indonesia where many still use the word ‘cacat’ (deformed); (3) the Javanese interpretations of disability that predate colonialism, including the presence of disabled deities, which honoured those who are disabled as spiritually touched; and (4) the social model of disability, which does not necessarily acknowledge these Javanese roots. All of these are possible frameworks through which one might view a pained, disabled Javanese girl. However, it is model number (3) that I argue is most relevant to a framework for understanding a possibly pained Annah as not simply abject or, in Matthew I. Cohen’s words, merely in ‘her current pathetic condition as a displaced half-Javanese adolescent turned street child and sex worker’ (2007:p.10), but as a person who could have had agency in a pained bodymind.

In ‘Habis Sakti, Terbitlah Sakit: Berbagai Macam Konsepsi Difabel di Jawa’ (2012), Thohari argues that despite the marginalisation and stigmatisation of disability in Indonesia,

‘many people in Indonesia, especially Java, see the disabled as exceptional and possessing invincibility... [Here is another reason, incidentally, to title my overarching creative project *Annah, Infinite*] have incredible powers and must be respected. This view is related to the position of disabled people that is part of the cosmological system of Javanese society, a most important part that is inextricable from its people and daily life. An element of disability can also be discerned from wayang [shadow puppets, used to portray epic

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<sup>41</sup> I would add that there are many varieties of Islamic practice on Java, and though the charity model of pitying disabled folk is indeed behind much thinking deemed ‘Islamic’, it is not the only one, as Java also contains Protestant, Catholic, Baha’i, Hindu, Buddhist, and ethnic Chinese spiritualities; in my own lived experience as a Javanese person who grew up on Java, I find the pitying charity model to straddle all of these.

mythologies] stories, that Benedict Anderson called societal imaginaries about [Javanese] daily life.’ (ibid.:p.2; my translation)<sup>42</sup>

Thohari goes on to summarise several stories in particular from Javanese cosmology that I suggest might provide further research avenues of inquiry—beyond the scope of this thesis—relevant to our understanding of disability, and of decolonising concepts of ‘pain’ when it comes to imagining a pained Annah (the text here is Thohari’s, the numbering is my own):

- (1) ‘in a wayang creation story, Durgandini or Dewi Lara Amis [...] was a disabled person with a bodily strangeness, her skin was peeling and smelled rancid, so she was exiled to the Ganges. Until one day the Ascetic, Palara, came to help her, and made her invincible, beautiful and made it so she would have a child who was also disabled. This child was incredibly invincible, and was able to solve complicated problems that normal people could not’ (Thohari, 2012:pp.2-3; my translation);
- (2) ‘Dewi Ambalika and Ambaliki are [characters in] another story; they were sent to Saptaarga Mountain by Setyawati in order to grant them fertility. When it was time for Abiyasa, the Guru, to bequeath his power to them [granting fertility], Ambalika closed her eyes as soon as she saw Abiyasa, causing her child Destarata to be born blind. Meanwhile, Ambaliki tried to open her eyes [during the transfer of power], causing her child to be born not blind but pale and abnormal. One day, the child would be named Pandu, which means “pale”. From Destarata and Pandu would be born the two

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<sup>42</sup> Throughout the original Indonesian version of this article (2012), Thohari uses the term ‘difabel’ to refer to disabled people, a term which has become most prominent in Indonesian disability discourse. It is an Indonesian acronym for the English ‘differently abled’; I argue that this term seems to erase society’s role in disadvantaging non-normative bodies, and also does not question calling ourselves ‘different’ *in relation to* bodies deemed normative, thus othering ourselves. I therefore translate it here as ‘disabled’.

camps comprising key tales in the wayang version of Mahabharata, the Kurawa and the Pandawa' (Thohari, 2012:pp.2-3; my translation);

(3) 'Another element reflecting disability in Javanese society is the punakawan. Keeler, an Indonesianist expert on wayang, says: deformed and dependent, the punakawan might seem to be a perfect representative of what Victor Tuner calls marginality—anti-heroic, anti-structural, domain of those who criticize and reject the distinction on which society's power structure is based (Keeler 1987: 210) [in English in the original]. The Punakawan: Gareng the Hobbled, Petruk the Idiot, obese and wide-mouthed Bagong, or Semar who is a hunchback with an ugly face, but they are important people and "mandraguna" [exceptional] invincible. Usually the punakawan are portrayed as "little people", with patterned clothing and strange-looking bodies. Despite this, the punakawan are invincible, born of the gods. They are even manifestations of gods who are disguised as poor people, who become saviours, those who bring balance, and are present with all their wise ways (Anderson, 2000).' (Thohari, 2012:pp.2-3; my translation).

What the above mythologies show is that categories of 'abled as empowered' and 'disabled as not empowered' do not apply easily to Javanese mythological characters, characters who I plan on writing as interacting with Annah(s) in the book manuscript *Annah, Infinite*. As Thohari writes (2012, 2013), notions of 'disability' are multiform on Java, colliding with each other and jostling for prominence. In other words, Java has always been polycentric, and this means many differentiated frameworks for pain and disability among Javanese bodyminds have existed for millennia.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Wayang scholarship is vast—wayang performances for villages/communities can go on for nights and nights. Fully diving deep into these characters would be many theses and several lifetimes long, as there are an overwhelming number of stories/interpretations of wayang mythologies. I present in this thesis the possibility for a future weaving-in of aspects of these three stories in particular into potential Annah mythologies, recognising that there are many further avenues through which Annah stories could intersect with wayang tales.

The language Thohari uses is a fascinating study of describing disability in potentially contradictory terms—I continually question here how Thohari may be seen as slipping into an othering and perhaps a stigmatising of disabled people himself, in his vocabulary of Durgandini's 'bodily strangeness' (in relation to normative bodies), Pandu being 'pale and abnormal' (again, abnormal in relation to abled, normative bodies), 'Gareng the Hobbled, Petruk the Idiot', Semar as 'a hunchback with an ugly face' (ibid.:pp. 2-3; my translation), and the gods' abilities as being 'despite' being disabled. These are descriptive terms and frameworks that have often been used as insults and verbal tools of oppression towards disabled people, though there are those among us who reclaim insulting words to empower ourselves, whether in using terms like 'crip' in an expressly serious, political way (McRuer, 2006) or in humour as a form of resistance. There is a textual ambiguity here with regards to maligning or celebrating the disabledness of these gods. Durgandini's 'strangeness' becoming 'beautiful' is quite an ablenormative ugly duckling story, and not one that tackles discrimination based on appearance; that her 'abnormal' son Pandu possesses the ability to do things 'that normal people could not' echoes modern day forms of the idea of a 'supercrip', a disabled person whose abilities are deemed extraordinary (for example, Paralympians) and thus compensate for their disabled nature and for the pain that may be involved in both the hurt of exclusion and in bodyminds more prone to varieties of pain.

The nature of godliness, exceptionalism, and of certain abilities as potentially 'righting' other abilities these Javanese gods possess is such fruitful material with which to analyse possibilities of pain in these gods' presences. What happens when we apply to these spiritual traditions—of which there are a vast number of interpretations and variations, analogous to how many kinds of traditions encapsulate 'Javanese' cultures—to the notions of crippling pain (see Sheppard, 2017; Patsavas, 2014; Clare, 2017; Chen, 2014), to creating what Patsavas (2014) calls a 'cripistemology of pain', to Eli Clare's (2017) grappling with cure, and to Chen's (2014) analysis of (post-)colonial dynamics relevant to pain?

Because of the vast number of stories involving these gods, I acknowledge that in-depth analyses of each within Javanese spiritualities are beyond the scope of this thesis. Within this thesis, I am laying the groundwork for many future possible research projects. In my future fictioning or extending of the universe of these disabled Javanese gods, they visit Annah and leave with few set answers—however, in my stories, they have opened the door to varied possibilities for pained bodyminds. This includes the possibility of a tolerance for chronic pain levels beyond what normal people experience, as one of their ‘exceptional’ or mandraguna abilities. This includes the ability to heal in the aftermath of pain-induced traumas, and the ability to tolerate daily, consistent pain while bringing balance to the universe and even potential succour for Annah(s).

The three groups of characters from Javanese mythology Thohari invokes above are ones I return to in my creative work, and I draw attention here to the ways in which, in line with and predating Muñoz’s assertion of queering time by many centuries (possibly as early as the 1st century AD), they twist the fabric of linear temporality—that disabled people traversing space and time is not a novel invention, but a truly ancient part of Javanese societal culture, and are likely to be subconsciously part of my personal compulsion to create multiple disabled Annahs across time-space continuums. According to Thohari:

‘The punakawan are never free or freed from anyone’s era in wayang stories. They are present from the Pandawa era to the era of Parikesit, the grandson of Arjuna who died young. *Besides traversing time, the punakawan also traversed space.* Besides their presence in the world of wayang, on the wayang theatre stage, the punakawan are also present in [contemporary] life. In wayang performances, the punakawan frequently offer off-the-cuff quips, criticising the condition of modern society. They can comment on the importance of birth control, criticise the government for raising the price of fuel, and even engage in dialogue with the audience.’ (2012:p.3; emphasis/italics mine)

I draw attention to how characterisations of this space-time traversing in non-European storytelling are often called ‘magic realism’, when that term denies the fact that, as Shohat and Stam contend (1998:p.31), depicting reality the way European realist artists do has never been the main *modus operandi* of non-European cultures. What is called 'magic realism' or, I contend in addition, 'science fiction' and 'fantasy', are, in other words, realities unto themselves. As Javanese people, to imagine disabled people queering time and space is also, I argue, to create possible scenarios that we can imagine *Annah la Javanaise* inhabiting.

In terms of engaging with Javanese histories, including histories of diaspora, it is not only the contents of artifacts and stories that must be deconstructed and moved away from ablenormative interpretations, I argue. Historian Eric Tagliacozzo draws attention to differing methodologies of material objects, oral histories, and texts in historical research on Southeast Asia (Tagliacozzo, 2009). I find this valuable for thinking through the marks of *Annah la Javanaise* the painting and persons as mediated through different bodies and senses, including through non-ablenormative bodyminds. That is, when the painting is described in histories, it is universally with the assumption that all who regard it are sighted (and with the insinuation that we are all universally neurotypical and sensory-typical more generally). To privilege different senses as absorbing and creating histories—oral, textual, etc. as described by Tagliacozzo—is a step towards greater acknowledgment not only of diversity among bodyminds, but diversity among cultures, particularly with the denigration of many oral cultures as textual histories and laws were among tools of colonial subjugation. What I assert is that we urgently need to recognise these non-ablenormative, polycentric historiographic modes for interpreting archives on Javanese people in diaspora as well as on Java Island, modes which include a recognition of polycentrically Javanese cultural interpretations of pain and disability.

As discussed in Chapter Two, painedness encompasses a variety of states of being, (self-)descriptions, and a circumstantial spectrum of disablement—in other words, to invoke Shohat and Stam’s argument (1998), we need a polycentric view of pain and of disability. How pained bodyminds are treated by others, how bodyminds that are not pained become pained, and how we perceive ourselves as pained bodyminds, differs according to sociocultural frameworks. These sociocultural frameworks in turn (re)produce material realities; for instance, because of the contexts of colonialism, a young, brown, girl-presenting body would be much more prone in France to abuse that causes chronic pain, particularly in the company of an abusive man. When the above historiographic modes and cultural frameworks of Java are applied to understanding possibilities for who the bodymind(s) of *Annah la Javanaise* could be, this opens up so many possible interpretations, many varieties of a possibly-pained bodymind, many possible stories. In other words, we need a polycentric view of possible painedness, including polycentric Javanese cosmologies, if we are to look into the possibility that Annah la Javanaise was, in fact, Javanese.

### **'[P]anther or a cannibal': Javanese Bodies as Sites of Duress and Resistance**

*Annah la Javanaise* is a perfect example, I posit, of a femme body labelled Javanese that is characterised as unruly in a specifically sexually willing way that ultimately reinforces how she is ruled by Gauguin. Because abled sexual norms imply that disabled people, including pained people, are objects of disgust to recoil from, rather than sexual beings (McRuer & Mollow (ed.s), 2012; Sheppard, 2017), we are invited not to think of Annah as pained in order to service the idea that she is sexually willing and consented to Gauguin’s usage of her body (in paint and in person). I argue that *Annah la Javanaise* the painting is another artefact that, particularly as marketed within arts institutions, masks a long history of Western involvement in making bodies like Annah pained, perversely by making us a site of pleasure.



The wellbeing of bodyminds that are Javanese and/or on Java, furthermore, has always been interlinked with other regions, in terms of politics, economics, and culture.<sup>44</sup> Eurocentric depictions of Java as simplified according to specific, manufactured categories, filled with eager-to-please natives, have been informed by trade and politics—including that of the very first corporation, the Dutch East Indies Corporation. The Dutch East Indies Corporation was the bedrock of Dutch colonialism in what is now Indonesia, based on resource and labour exploitation; the idea of Javanese women's subservience has been key to maintaining this colonial power. M. Isaac Cohen (2007, 2010) argues that Javanese dance and music were performed overseas (under Dutch colonisation) as part of colonial diplomacy. It was by colonial design, argues Cohen, that the Javanese artists' performances were framed in a way that reified, simplified, and presented as static an incredibly complex island in constant upheaval and change. I argue that this reification and simplification are technologies of what Stoler would call imperial duress, that they persist into the present with *Annah la Javanaise* as prime example.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Stoler's definition of duress covers three main ideas: 'three principal features of colonial histories of the present: the hardened, tenacious qualities of colonial effects; their extended protracted temporalities; and, not least, their durable, if sometimes intangible constraints and confinements' (2016:p.7). I'd like to call attention to how her definition of duress also straddles space-time continuums, and may be a part of non-visual signs: 'It may bear no immediately visible sign or, alternatively, it may manifest in a weakened constitution and attenuated capacity to bear its weight. Duress is tethered to time but rarely in any predictable way' (ibid.:p.7). This sets up possibilities for non-linear, queered time and space to be battlegrounds for Annah(s) against forms of imperial duress, that may manifest in painedness invisible to abled populations. I argue here that what Stoler doesn't say, and what I think is urgent to include in an argument on duress, is that imperial duress

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<sup>44</sup> See Footnote 40.

disables by denying disability, and by denying thousands of different models for abled and disabledness, particularly non-European models.

The presence of many cultures on Java is surely a sign of many more possible disability models than the ones Thohari writes of. Yet—unsurprisingly—it is never made in any way explicit or implicit by Gauguin himself that he is (a) even aware of all the above multiplicity within the notion of what 'Javanese' means and (b) if he is, that he has any intent of portraying 'Javanese' in any way but in a predatory manner on his behalf, that if a girl is Javanese she is for the taking. The same applies to Gauguin's lack of recognition that Annah could be of a bodymind other than that considered 'abled', as on Java Island there are many different bodyminds and many different frameworks for them societally—as is the case around the world (Block, et al. (eds.), 2015).<sup>45</sup> That much seems self-evident, and there is a very urgent need to reclaim the discourse around what 'Javanese' means from Gauguin's framing of it. I argue that *Annah la Javanaise* is a painting loaded with imperial duress, prolonging colonial etiologies that impact real lives today, and how we view Javanese women and girls—I say 'we' here to mean every person, as well as us Javanese women and girls ourselves, particularly we who are pained. To deny Javanese cosmologies in framing pain and disability is to deny possibilities for girls like Annah who can well be imagined as pained across different time-space continuums, if ancient Javanese tenets are included in cultural imaginaries.

An important line of critique comes from the scholars in the anthology *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia* (Sears (ed.), 1996), on how Javanese and other Indonesian cultures are depicted as fantasy through feminine bodies in particular, refracted through sociopolitical lenses of varying origins. Another comes from Ann Laura Stoler's work in *Race and the Education of Desire* (2005), which critiques Foucault's theory of biopower by presenting the history of racialised sexual mores in the Dutch East Indies, including Java, and her essay 'Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers:

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<sup>45</sup> Note that though 'abled' and 'able-bodied' are often used interchangeably, to use them as synonyms is erroneous. Those who are neurodivergent, such as autistic people, may be 'able-bodied' but are not 'abled'. I use 'abled' throughout this thesis, to acknowledge that the body is not separate from the mind, and thus the distinction between 'able-bodied' and not is false.

European identities and the cultural politics of exclusion in colonial Southeast Asia' (2000). Stoler writes extensively about the effect of European colonialism on denigrating and endangering Javanese women and girls in particular—including in the *fin de siècle* period in which *Annah La Javanaise* the painting was produced—among them those that were *métisse* or ‘mixed’, the latter of which contributed to a group of abandoned children (Stoler, 1995; Stoler, 2000).

‘Colonial officials wrestled with the belief that the Europeanness of métis children could never be assured, despite a rhetoric affirming that education and upbringing were transformative processes. Authorities spoke of abandoned métisse daughters as *les filles françaises* when arguing for their redemption, but when supporting segregated education, these same authorities recast these youths as physically marked and morally marred with ‘the faults and mediocre qualities of their [native] mothers’ as ‘the fruits of a regrettable weakness.’ Thus, abandoned métis children not only represented the sexual excesses and indiscretions of European men but the dangers of a subaltern class, degenerate (*verwildereren*) and lacking paternal discipline (*gemis aan vader lijktucht*), a world in which mothers took charge.’ (Stoler, 2000:p.31-32)

It is this population of ‘abandoned, métis children’ among whom Annah(s) may have originated. The violent effects of Western forces on Java were not only during the colonial period, but continued following Indonesia’s independence in 1945. Work by historians Benedict Anderson and Ruth McVey (Anderson & McVey, 2009; Anderson, 2001; Anderson, 1990), George Kahin and Audrey Kahin (Kahin, A. & Kahin, G.M., 1997) not only dispels Javanese cultures' static nature, but implicates Western polities in direct violence on millions of Indonesians—I refer here to Indonesia’s 1965-66 genocide which killed as many as two million people, and the brutal political and socioenvironmental policies that stemmed from dictator Soeharto's resultant dictatorship, a

series of events in which the CIA almost certainly had a hand. These events' disablement of millions of Indonesians leads to another important, regionally-resonant point in my argumentation: imperial duress exists by denying forms of disability, including and perhaps especially forms created by imperial duress itself.

If Annah came from the island of Java, by birth and/or heritage, she would have come from cultures—plural—that contain myriad understandings of the human bodymind, of pain and how to live with it, to heal and ameliorate it, to avoid it. Cultures with healing practices passed down through matrilineal, and with legendary goddesses and heroines who did not simply sit on a chair, nude and in waiting for a European man, with no other purpose than subservience. Gauguin's dependency on *Annah la Javanaise* as a static portrayal of a Javanese girl with no implied agency or wants *beyond sexual servicing of Europeans* means that signifiers of pain that abled, Western viewers would understand are not there. However, as a Javanese woman who understands the visual bias with regards to 'proper' signs of painedness, and who understands the acute risk for painedness that a young, Javanese girl alone with an older, male abuser faces, I *do* see potential painedness in this painting. I perceive signs of it all over this painting, and all over how arts institutions continue to uphold it, and to uphold the myth of its maker.

However, just as we pained bodyminds are not automatically passive, all-suffering, and otherwise flattened versions of the fully-fleshed human beings we are, Indonesian women, girls, and non-binary people throughout history are not reducible to our suffering alone, should not be thought of as only victims. Even the millions of Indonesians who have died as a result of colonial violence and violence caused by imperial duress stretching into the present day are not merely victims—they had families, friends, interest, lives, and they also resisted. In 'Narratives of discovery: Joshua Oppenheimer's films on Indonesia's 1965 mass killings and the global human rights discourse' (2019), fiction writer and media scholar Intan Paramaditha has written a powerful argument on how Western media-makers, even when purporting to spread the word about Western

violence, tend to reinforce their own narratives in a way that is harmful to and erases the resistances of Indonesians. In Anonymous and Oppenheimer's documentaries, Intan argues, 'The entrance of the 1965 massacre into the global stage could be seen as a reproduction of a paternalistic scenario that begins with the Western discovery of a "dark secret" in the Third World' (ibid.:p.1).

This is why it is important, as a Javanese scholar and artist, for a rebuttal of Gauguin's likely crimes against women that does not erase these women's agency: it is important not to reproduce a narrative that Javanese women, Indonesian women, brown women, were and are passive in terms of reacting to how others frame us, and passive in the presence of very real violence. There is also, however, another dominant narrative with regards to the girl(s) named Annah la Javanaise—that she was not only sexually submissive, but unruly and wanton in an adult manner, restless, flighty and sexually fiery in the most terrifying imposition of exoticist tropes upon a child.

This narrative is abundant in Mario Vargas Llosa's biographical novel of Gauguin's life, *The Way To Paradise* (2003):

'[...] he would superimpose the image of his lover over the unfinished study of Judith. And so he did. The painting took him a long time because of the incorrigible Annah. She was the fidgetiest and most unmanageable model you would ever have, Paul. She was always moving, changing her pose, or, when she was bored, pulling faces to try to make you laugh—the favorite Thursday evening game, along with spiritism—or, tired of posing, she would simply get up, toss on some clothes, and run outside as Teha'amana would have done [...]

Annah hadn't asked to be what she was; she didn't even realize the incandescent power she derived from her origins, her blood, the untamed forests where she was born, just like a panther or a cannibal. How superior you were to ossified Parisian women, Annah!' (Mario Vargas Llosa, 2003:p.95)

What is noteworthy in interpretations of Annah so far is not that she has no ‘voice’ (to adopt an audiocentric view of self-assertion) and no self-determination in them. Descriptions such as those in Mario Vargas Llosa’s *The Way to Paradise* (2003) portray her as unknowable—the haziness of her background as being part and parcel of her flightiness and unreliability—in a way that implies this unknowability absolves Gauguin from responsibility. Responsibility as caretaker of ‘that devil in skirts [...] that magnificent savage [...] A true savage to the marrow, in body and soul’ (Vargas Llosa, 2003:p.102). Someone ‘who not only was not French, European, or white but also had the gall to show her breasts, navel, mound of Venus, and tuft of pubic hair’ (ibid.:p.95), Annah’s role was to supply Gauguin with renewed vigour for life, and her own welfare was immaterial:

‘In bed, it was hard to tell if she was enjoying herself or pretending. In any case, she gave you pleasure, and she entertained you at the same time. Annah gave you back what you were afraid you had lost since your return to France: your desire to paint, your sense of humor, your will to live.’ (ibid:p.92)

In the 11 September 1950 issue of *LIFE* magazine, a feature entitled ‘Great Loves of Great Artists’ includes writing on Annah as having betrayed Gauguin and left him to suffer for the rest of his days. Entitled ‘Gauguin’s Faithless Javanese’, the section is accompanied by the painting *Annah La Javanaise*, infusing the painting’s impression (a concept we return to later in this chapter, and used by Sara Ahmed) with ‘faithlessness’, Gauguin’s ownership of Annah, and so too an imagined biography of Annah.

*Annah la Javanaise* is a perfect example of a femme body labeled Javanese that is characterised as unruly in a specifically sexually willing way that ultimately reinforces how she was ruled by Gauguin. This narrative of her relationship with Gauguin implies that Annah and Paul

Gauguin were in a sexual relationship, despite the fact that Mowl Mathews writes of no evidence that they were, and '[e]ven their participation in his life as models is difficult to verify' (2001:p. 1-2). Vargas Llosa's writing goes with the narrative that whether or not she enjoyed this presumed sex did not matter. What her body feels overwhelmingly does not matter in contemporary conversations about Gauguin, as she is an object, as she is less than human, as she is not human, her body a tool for a strange man's self-realisation through art; the persistence of this is duress, and it is inextricably intertwined with ablenormative interpretations of bodies in art.

Indonesian and Javanese women have not been merely subservient to Western artistic and academic discourses that have been and continue to be imposed upon us. As mentioned, Paramaditha's critical work on Joshua Oppenheimer's and Anonymous' documentaries *The Look of Silence* (2014) and the *Act of Killing* (2012) (Paramaditha, 2019) imposes visual tropes of violence that are still Western-centric (and, I add, cishetero male-centric), that impose also narratives of discovery regarding genocide and violence in Indonesia. These do not reflect our intimate understandings of violence in visual form as Indonesians and particularly women who grew up in Soeharto's dictatorship. The very gendered nature of both the '65-'66 genocide and the violent Soeharto era has been very much refracted in the West by Western norms of violence, pleasure, and femininity in opposition to violence. Whereas within Indonesia including Java, women and girls' participation in the arts during the Soeharto period was a form of either self-preservation by aligning with some forms of dance instead of others, or defiance leading to destruction.

In her seminal work *The Dance That Makes You Vanish: Cultural Reconstruction in Post-Genocide Indonesia* (2013), R. Diah Larasati writes of how she 'trace[s] how the female dancing bodies obedient to the state's agenda are able to attain mobility while simultaneously erasing the unruly bodies that are not' (Larasati, 2013:p.i). Javanese women have long used our bodies in the face of violence to protect ourselves with our own creation of art, whether or not it is against our will. These are the narratives that need to come to the fore with regards to Javanese women and

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girls, not as panthers or cannibals or mere conduits for redemption or lust, nor as mere victims of imperial duress, but as people, who have negotiated all of this throughout our lives.

### **The Pained Archive**

It is the aforementioned false reflection in service to colonialist men and the colonial project that contributes to my reading of *Annah La Javanaise* as potentially of a pained girl, and it is the aforementioned negotiation of imperial duress with refusal and defiance that I argue can also be read in the painting, and in photographic archives said to be that of Annah la Javanaise. Sara Ahmed's work on bringing to the fore an 'unhappy archive', as laid out in her book *The Promise of Happiness* (2010) is important in this thinking, as is Tina Campt's *Listening to Images: An Exercise in Counterintuition* (2017), and the two in dialogue help reveal a pained archive of Annah la Javanaise. I contend that it is necessary for us all to be alive to the 'registers of fugitivity [Annah(s), in this case] simultaneously animates and suspends' (Campt, 2017:p.9), and thus the many possibilities for agency Annah(s) would have had in their life, rather than marking Annah la Javanaise as victim alone.

This relates to larger themes of how Javanese subjects, in this case during Western colonialism, are never 'merely colonised' or 'merely subjugated', but have always contained vast multitudes of resistance and fugitivity; I argue that there is the possibility of pain in every picture, and this does not preclude agency and defiance in bodyminds of varying degrees of painedness.

In *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), Sara Ahmed refers to the 'unhappy archive' as a project derived from anti-racist and feminist-queer movements, and thus as a collective endeavour, which makes dissent and suffering palpable within archives:



‘It is not simply a question of finding unhappiness in such archives. Rather, these archives take shape through the circulation of cultural objects that articulate unhappiness with the history of happiness. An unhappy archive is one assembled around the struggle against happiness... My aim is to follow the weave of unhappiness, as a kind of unraveling of happiness, and the threads of its appeal.’ (ibid.:p.18)

I would describe my project with this thesis as having the same goal, pursuing threads that unravel ablenormativity and heteronormativity as part of this unravelling of happiness—pursuing the threads that reveal possible pain in every picture. I would add that crippling pain is fundamental to this unravelling; after all, pained bodies are often immediately associated with unhappiness, despite the huge variety of experiences, including joy, that we as pained bodies may have (Sheppard, 2017)—cripping pain and including the possibility of it in archives of *Annah la Javanaise* expands our understanding of ‘unhappiness’ in archives, and it should be done with the understanding that pain does not automatically equal ‘unhappiness’, as argued in Chapter 2. This thesis is contributing to an unhappy archive, arguing that *Annah la Javanaise* has in fact been for more than a hundred years an extremely valuable commodity because it perpetuates myths around Javanese girls as somehow incapable of suffering when painted nude by a known abuser, because there are political and economic stakes in perpetuating the painting as not artefact of probable crime but sanguine, benign, pleasing.

I contend that the absence of narratives of possible pain for Annah arise from the aforementioned characterisation of Javanese girls in the West as ablenormative objects that were capable of performing their roles as commodified bodies, and that this is imperial duress, from the late 19th century in which *Annah la Javanaise* was created to the present day. In the following pages, I will argue that it is in particular how archival objects depicting girls labelled as Annah la

Javanaise—including the painting *Annah la Javanaise*—have been used in circulation, attaching more ‘stickiness’ to some emotions than others in regards to them.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed writes that ‘emotions are both about objects, which they hence shape, and are also shaped by contact with objects’ (2013:p.7). Asking why a child is afraid of a bear, Ahmed suggests:

‘fear is not in the child, let alone in the bear, but is a matter of how child and bear come into contact. This contact is shaped by past histories of contact, unavailable in the present, which allow the bear to be apprehended as fearsome. The story does not, despite this, inevitably lead to the same ending. Another child, another bear, and we might even have another story.

[...] Fear shapes the surfaces of bodies in relation to objects. Emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of “towardness” or “awayness” in relation to such objects.’ (Ahmed, 2013:p.8-9)

If *Annah La Javanaise* is a painting that was created with the specific goal of inducing ‘towardness’ of people towards it, in particular potential buyers of Gauguin’s art, and in the present day is upheld as an artefact of his genius, we must deconstruct the ways in which this painting is not framed as an artefact of horror but as an amenable, pleasing object. It is a depiction of a child in dangerous circumstances, a child who likely was hurt and likely could not run away easily. Ahmed’s methodologies are useful here:

‘If the object of feeling both shapes and is shaped by emotions, then the object of feeling is never simply before the subject. How the object impresses (upon) us may depend on histories that remain alive insofar as they have already left their impressions. The object may stand in for other objects, or may be proximate to other objects. Feelings may stick to some objects,

and slide over others. [...] I offer an analysis of affective economies, where feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation. The circulation of objects allows us to think about the “sociality” of emotion.’ (Ahmed, 2013.:p.8)

The sociality of emotion is described by Ahmed as perceiving emotions not as psychological states, but as sociocultural phenomena (ibid.:p.9), and we can apply that to thinking about the sociality of emotion with regards to *Annah la Javanaise*, and how Java is portrayed. *Annah la Javanaise* is an object that is both physically proximate to Gauguin’s paintings of Polynesian girls in arts institutions which sort prints, originals and the like by artist, to the point where the aforementioned mix-up at the Tate Library could happen; the print of Annah was near prints of Polynesian girls, and they are seen to resemble each other. Because depictions of both Annah and her Tahitian counterparts are (a) marketed the same way, as objects whose significance is in their ‘aesthetic’ value, and their contribution to the myth of Gauguin; and (b) producing the same range of affect as each other (that is, the suggestion of pliancy and exoticism imposed on them by Gauguin), they are placed—literally—in the same boxes, and prone to interchangeability by workers at arts institutions, and by general audiences. In other words, brown girls painted by Gauguin are all marketed in such a way that the intended socialised emotions are not those of horror and fear at these artifacts of likely abuse, but aesthetic appreciation for the creator. The idea of Java in a Gauguin collection is incidental—it is his (warped) vision that matters, that we the public are meant to consume. The ‘affective economies’ Ahmed writes of shape the financial system that allows *Annah la Javanaise* to be highly priced, and preserved, and dissociated from images of living Javanese/Indonesian/brown children.

Powerful artists accused of sexual assault and harassment in the 2010s (particularly after a newly publicised surge in the #MeToo movement, which was begun by Tarana Burke in 2006) are beginning to face repercussions for behaviour that has antecedents in ‘the coercive paternal violence

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of slavery' (Kindig, 2018:p.15). There continues to be a 'towardness' socialised towards Gauguin despite knowledge of his relationship with young girls. I contend that arts institutions' uses of marketing to induce the public's appeal, 'towardness' with regards to Gauguin, condones behaviour which continues to make people vulnerable, particularly bodies coded as brown girls and described by those who would use them as (colonial) commodities.

I argue that *Annah la Javanaise*, and the "towardness" and calm, appealing emotions socialised towards it, can be further understood as a mark of imperial duress when one considers two contrasting ways in which the sociality of emotions are cultivated towards painted portraits: that of the National Portrait Gallery in London, the United Kingdom and that of current exhibition *Black models: From Géricault to Matisse* (2019) at Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

The National Portrait Gallery (NPG) aims to cultivate reverence and curiosity about the subjects of the portraits displayed, and about portraiture as a category of art; though they hold exhibits organised around portrait artists, the primary impetus of NPG is to maintain a canon of notable Brits:

'The concept of a Primary Collection of paintings, sculpture, miniatures, etc., and a Reference Collection or study collection of prints, was established immediately following the Gallery's foundation in 1856. These collections were later extended to include photographs. The collections fulfil two enduring functions:

- to display portraits of the men and women who have made and are making British history and culture.
- to act as a national focus for the study and understanding of portraits and portraiture.' (National Portrait Gallery, 2019)

Whereas the galleries that display *Annah La Javanaise* (when on loan from its private owners), and all the literature surrounding the painting published so far, do not focus on Annah, but entirely on Gauguin. Even Indonesian-American scholar, Fatimah Tobing Rony, whose work first introduced me to the painting, told me ‘I don’t care about her [specifically], but what she represents’ (personal communication, 2016). The public is not taught that Gauguin was a menacing and abusive man (Mathews, 2001) by the arts institutions where *Annah la Javanaise* might be hung, nor is the public taught that Annah is a human child, nor is the public taught the power differential between a child coded ‘Javanese’ and an older man coded ‘French’, one that persists to this day, as the final chapters of this thesis elucidate. Arts institutions handle the valuable commodity of *Annah la Javanaise* and are invested therefore in maintaining the image of Gauguin as a master artist towards whom we are expected to be sympathetic, and notates *Annah la Javanaise* as willing participant in his journey—and, I argue, the relationship between Java and France as benign.

As a point of comparison to the NPG, the exhibition *Black models: From Géricault to Matisse* at the Musée d’Orsay attempts to centre the black sitters of paintings in a vaunted (and all-male) French canon of artists. In this exhibition, paintings by ‘Théodore Géricault, Charles Cordier, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, Edouard Manet, Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse, as well as the photographs of Nadar and Carjat’ (Musée d’Orsay, 2019) are renamed for their black subjects. The exhibition is planned in a way that at least makes its intended audience aware of the fact that they had names, a step of ‘towardness’ in the direction of perceiving them as human. However, I argue that *Annah La Javanaise* proves that one can be named in a painting’s title and dehumanised by it simultaneously, and I posit that being named in the painting one sat for, to be displayed in a future public exhibition, might not in fact be the wish of the sitter. They might object to how they are portrayed, particularly considering racial power differentials.

All of the above is related to the *impression* that the painting gives when it is displayed—not only in a building owned by whichever private estate possesses *Annah la Javanaise* currently, but

on our screens in Google Image searches, always as an object created by Gauguin, always bolstering the myth of the artist. There is also the myth of the muse as pliant and compliant.

Ahmed works with notions of ‘what sticks’ and what happens when an impression is formed, particularly by institutions, which are applicable to *Annah La Javanaise*:

‘To form an impression might involve acts of perception and cognition as well as an emotion. But forming an impression also depends on how objects impress upon us. An impression can be an effect on the subject’s feelings (“she made an impression”). It can be a belief (“to be under an impression”). *It can be an imitation or an image (“to create an impression”).* Or it can be a mark on the surface (“to leave an impression”). We need to remember the “press” in an impression.’ (Ahmed, 2004:p.6; my italics)

The [Alfons] Mucha Foundation website (2019) contains a photo captioned as follows:

‘Mucha with his friends in the studio, Rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris (c.1893-1894). Mucha's snapshot captures a group of his friends in fancy dress gathering in his studio. Mucha, in his trademark attire, sits casually in the front. He turns his head, possibly to respond to Czech painter Luděk Marold, dressed in a dashing Renaissance costume, who looks towards Mucha as though trying to catch his attention. Behind Mucha on the left is Paul Gauguin, who sits tall in a Moravian folk hat, probably from Mucha's collection of hats. On the far right is Gauguin's teenage mistress and model, Annah la Javanaise, posing with an enormous Breton headdress.

© Mucha Trust

Media type: Photography

Medium: Reproduced from original glass plate negative

Date: c.1893-1894”

The photo, in possession of and displayed by the Mucha Trust, is an example of how possible pain is elided: despite no record of Gauguin's relationship to Annah as one of mistress, this is written in the copy as fact. Therefore, one is coaxed to look at this picture and think 'consensual relationship', with the flamboyant costumerie, I argue, contributing to the sense that all four people are in congenial play together. The title says 'Mucha with his friends'; Annah is a friend of all three men. Everything is consensual, all of this argues. The fact that I easily duplicated this image by screenshotting it on my laptop is significant; these messages are so easily reproducible, marks of colonial duress embedded within the images that carry them.

I argue for a more incisive reading of 'Mucha with his friends in the studio, Rue de la Grande Chaumière, Paris (c.1893-1894)' that opens to possibilities of pain and abuse. Below is a version of the photo that I manipulated; though all three artists could have abused Annah, I chose to make Mucha and Marold skewed and menacing in an abstract way, and focus attention on the dissonance and tension between Gauguin and Annah—and in particular how Annah here conjures for me a great fear of Gauguin, and of the men. Her hands are crossed over her chest in the costume. She is not smiling. Only the person photographed can truly know what was transpiring in their interiority at that point. However, I would suggest there is the distinct possibility of pain and/or suffering and/or fear and/or anxiety in Annah in this photograph. And, as I repeat often and deliberately, in the presence of an abusive man this fear is absolutely justified—I repeat that Gauguin was recorded as being abusive in order to instill fear of him, fear and repulsion that is absent from most presentations of Gauguin in arts institutions. Can the normative sociality of emotions surrounding the painter be disrupted?

[Fig. 3.1. 'Annah with shadows: hands cross her body']



Again, it is important here, for reasons I state in Chapter Two, not to automatically equate pain with suffering, suicidality, and other associations abled perspectives may immediately tie to pain. However, excessive pain without relief may cause these things—everyone’s pain feels different, and induces different reactions—and in situations where one is vulnerable, one is prone to the inability to manage one’s pain, and prone to being around people for whom your pain is of no consequence. Even without suffering, the presence of a ‘hum’ of pain may well reference a precipitating event or situation that caused this pain where it didn’t exist before.

These different registers for pain draw into this discussion Tina Camp’s argument in *Listening To Images: An Exercise In Counterintuition* (2017), which provides another framework through which to mark the possibility of pain in pictures. ‘The relationship between the quiet, the quotidian, and the everyday practices of refusal enacted and inherited by dispossessed subjects is the defining tension of [*Listening To Images*] and the archives of images it explores’ (ibid.:p.4-5), 167



with a focus for Camp on visual archives of the African diaspora. What Camp means by quiet is ‘unsayability that exceeds [...] sound and utterance’ (ibid.:p.4-5), and by quotidian, she means ‘a practice honed by the dispossessed in the struggle to create possibility within the constraints of everyday life’ (ibid.:p.4-5). In other words, she is training us as readers to understand what exists in archival images that operates on registers that are too easily missed or misdirected away from.

I find this framework incredibly useful as one with which to regard *Annah la Javanaise*.

Because Gauguin’s narrative is the ‘loudest’, so to speak, and people are deliberately being herded by arts institutions towards the loudest narratives, narratives that privilege abled people, what gets ignored are narratives such as those in which Annah(s) is/are potentially pained bodyminds. Though I think it is fundamentally important to interrogate how one might utilise ‘listening’ and ‘seeing’ as metaphors in ways that potentially reinforce the idea that abled bodyminds, who are able to listen or see, are the only ones that are whole; in other words, ableism. In using the work of Camp (listening) (2017) and Shohat and Stam (seeing) (1998), the attention to different modes for understanding art in both are important for this thesis, and I am using the frameworks of both in what is intended to be as non-ableist a manner as possible.<sup>46</sup>

In *Listening To Images*, of specific importance is the attention paid to different registers of quietude and quotidianness operating within the same portrait, a framework that lends itself to my argument when one applies a crippled-pain viewpoint (see Chapter Two). However, it is necessary to critique, I argue, Camp’s assertion that her work is ‘counterintuitive’. What is counterintuitive to abled viewers may be intuition to pained ones: that following Camp’s notion of multiple registers in pictures, I argue, allows for the possibility of pain in every picture. I took on the argument that Annah is potentially pained in this thesis because it is not at all counterintuitive to me, a pained person, yet my own sense of what counts as intuition and not is given less credibility than the

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<sup>46</sup> For instance, there are tropes through these discourses that equate “mute” or “blind” with non-responsive, and tones that assume a reader is hearing and/or sighted.

hegemonically abled view that Annah was abled—it is a view that Campt actually reinforces with her assumption that ideas of ‘counterintuition’ are for all.

Campt works with ‘images assumed only to register forms of institutional accounting or state management’ as ‘images produced with the purpose of tracking, cataloging, and constraining the movement of blacks’ (Campt, 2017:p.3)—from the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries—but also containing so much more, specifically modes of refusal in a way that honours the subversive potential in the ‘quiet’ photographs contain, a quiet I argue contains possibilities of pain. In particular, Campt focusses on ‘a genre of image that is both quiet and quotidian: identification photography. These photos are produced predominantly for the regulatory needs of the state or the classificatory imperatives of colonization’ (ibid.:p.5). From engaging with South African convict photos of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through ‘physical, affective, and archival touches’, to looking at studio portraits as being between ‘postured poses’ and ‘compelled poses’, thus redefining the term ‘to strike a pose’ (ibid.:p.10), Campt’s work offers us ways to reimagine Annah(s) in both *Annah La Javanaise* and in archival photography of people labelled as her. I also need to state that while Campt writes ‘refusal is not a response to a state of exception or extreme violence’ (ibid.) in her interpretations of archives, my work on *Annah La Javanaise* aims to make extreme violence a definite possibility.

Parallel to Campt’s subjects, I recognise that photos and prints of bodies labelled ‘Annah la Javanaise’ may also be described as identification images—albeit describing at times different people and different faces.<sup>47</sup> Gauguin’s painting and all prints of it should be recognised as a mode of tracking, cataloging, and constraining this heavily-reproduced image of Javanese girls’ compliance to colonial France. However, the photographs and prints of Annah all contain, as Campt

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<sup>47</sup>As shown in attendant recording of *Annah: Nomenclature* at the ICA (2018) and a subsequent Q. and A., submitted as part of this thesis.

argues of her own subjects, registers of fugitivity beyond what colonial tracking mechanisms can control.

Though Annah images are labelled as ‘mistress’, ‘unmanageable’, ‘like a panther or a cannibal’, the fact that all the words attributable to her are fictional (in Llosa’s 2003 biographical fiction, for instance) means that all depictions marked as being Annah La Javanaise carry with them the great hum of possibility, of possible different interpretations for who she was/they were, for what a body marked ‘Annah la Javanaise’ felt like in 1893-1894, in the presence of an abusive Gauguin. There is the great possibility of refusal, of defiance teased from accounts of her alleged robbery of Gauguin, of an unwillingness to submit whether in a pained body or not. Indeed, I argue this hum of unwillingness, of refusal, whether in a pained body or not, and always with the possibility of pain, applies to every picture.

Therefore in the following chapter, ‘A Child of Thirteen’, I imagine various disabled Javanese deities visiting Annah, including them in narratives of Annah, as well as including Annah in the greater corpus of Javanese stories and myth. I draw these narratives from the ‘hum’ of promise, of fugitivity. I do so in order to offer different ‘impressions’ of the image than arts institutions steeped in colonial values prescribe for us, to expand upon Shohat and Stam’s argument for polycentric, decolonial perspectives (1998), to mark and oppose the violent duress Stoler theorises (2016) as it exists in visual archives of *Annah La Javanaise*, to utilise Ahmed’s concepts of the unhappy archive (2010) and the sociality of emotions (2004), by paying attention to how institutions stifle the registers of quietude and quotidianness Camppt writes of (2017) with ablenormative narratives.

I present a speculative, graphic novel-inspired interpretation of what meetings between childhood(s) and Annah(s), the latter as possibly abandoned, possibly illegitimate, possibly of ‘mixed-blood’, might assume form—and what ‘mixed’ or ‘nativeness’ has meant and continues to mean for different Javanese children. From the perspective of polycentrism, and all the registers of fugitivity that opens us up to in *Annah la Javanaise*, I will show how Annah being disabled and

pained as a possibility intersects with notions of age, sexuality, and gender in addition to coloniality, raising notions that have been ignored in the literature. Drawing inspiration from Ann Laura Stoler's critique of Foucault's denial of colonialism's various biopower techniques (Stoler, 1995), I stage Annah(s) in various scenes relating to age and childhood, and raise questions for possible future research modalities. This thesis offers a template for how we may tease alternate, fugitive, registers for visual archives of Annah, including ones in which she is both pained bodymind and resistant, defiant, alive. For how we may understand that this is not a contradiction—that there is not only the possibility of a pained archive, but that a polycentric understanding of Java provides the possibility of multiple, polycentric pained archives.

## Interlude One: Queering and Crippling Time (Creative Writing)

[Caption for *Annah la Javanaise*]

*The three time zones for Interludes One, Two, and Three are 300 AD, 1890s AD, and 2020s AD—  
simultaneously.*

[Annah is being continually called by the Annahs in the other interludes. It is the most constant of hums, it is a thrum in the very neck.]

Dimulainya begini: Your body is the truth.<sup>48</sup> You should trust it. You should notice the ebbs and flows of sensation, the prickles, the irritations, the reliefs and kinetic workwomanship inside you. Dalam Bahasa Indonesia sebutannya jiwa raga. So you should remember that jiwa (soul) and raga (body) are linked, together, one phrase, one being. Your soul asks you to honour the truth of your body. If it hurts like hell, and keeps hurting, take it somewhere safe. Bring it all the wailing of emergency, hellfire begone, give it care, take it home. And if you can't take it home, make it home. Understand that even in the worst weather, that will not abate for years, what is underneath is the jiwa raga of yourself, indestructible shelter. Impermeable to others' assertions. You know who you are your name is your own.

‘Wati.’

Madame Nina is laughing at my name. ‘Wor-tee? Wahtri?’ Her tea is literally snorting out her nose.

We are in her parlor, it is 1890s Paris. I suppose women can snort their tea out, it's fine.

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<sup>48</sup> In Bahasa Indonesia: It starts like this.

...

I begin to see visions on the wall of her house. My body feels bending and then starts to break. First softly, in my hands, then throughout my frame. Down the middle, the chest. It feels as though a hole has been blown in it, short-circuit ventricles. But from the paint in Madame Nina's parlor, a vision hits me the wall is an ocean and Nina is gone, it's an ocean surrounding me I'm in it I'm wet, I realise it is the year 300 AD (as opposed to the time in Javanese years).

My body was made from thousands of women. God now I feel it. And they are all inside of me, and their laughter rings each cell and wrings a voice together that runs through my nerves that have gone awry in this parlor, they say: *Swim. We are here now, long before this building or this woman existed, swim in this sea and come home. Your body was not meant for this shithouse dressed in finery. This air that reeks with thievery and the slitting of thieves who had no choice.*

Srikandi appears before me with a bow, and she who is also he tells me that I am the arrow, I am the arrow. And I do not know what they mean. I don't need to be a symbol for warfare, I am too small to be feeling this blasted, this damned, this sinking. Madame Nina threatens to sell me to the brothel when I miss a spot, and I think perhaps there are other girls like me in that place and brighten, then I realise what it is that is threatened.

...

She sent me to his house, alone, with a sign. *Oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no oh no—*

White out. My lungs want to escape through my mouth. I breathe shallow, each gasp a punctuation mark a period dot dot dot dot dot dot dot.

‘Annah?’ says Paul as he opens the door and his grin turns his lips, poisoning his face with intent.

I miss Ibu so much, I broke something.<sup>49</sup> Something has cracked inside me. I think, the realisation that conditions are overwhelmingly for me staying in this country where hateful and/or lustful are de rigueur. What is Paris now for a brown child. I am twelve and wise. I’ve escaped much by dexterity of thought. It was not Madame who first wanted to take me; back home it was the plantation owner near Jogja who wanted me for housekeeper. He did not smile but told me with his eyes that proximity to his house was a yawning maw. I begged Madame Sarah to take me instead, before he could. A month after cleaning at her house, she introduced me to Madame Nina Pack, an opera singer. I enjoyed listening to her when she visited Madame Sarah, but she looked at me as though I was furniture, and when the two Madames got me in a room and told me I was to leave for Paris, it was not an ask. I hugged my friends goodbye with so many tears: Bejo, Siti, Wulan, and my younger sisters: Bilqis, Dhitta, both bewildered. I don’t understand the concept of crying as anything but relief. It is not a crack in the armor, but the armor speaking to the world.

And in Paris no one could pronounce Wati (even Nina’s original pronunciation was shite) so they called me Annah. I’m Minang and Bantenese, but was born on Java and lived there, so I became: Annah la Javanaise. They don’t understand more than what they make up, do they.

I’m having what in the 21st century is known as a panic attack and I also have PTSD from so many near escapes already in Paris, I don’t want more. I don’t want to enter gaping holes when I should

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<sup>49</sup> Ibu is the Indonesian for ‘Mother’.

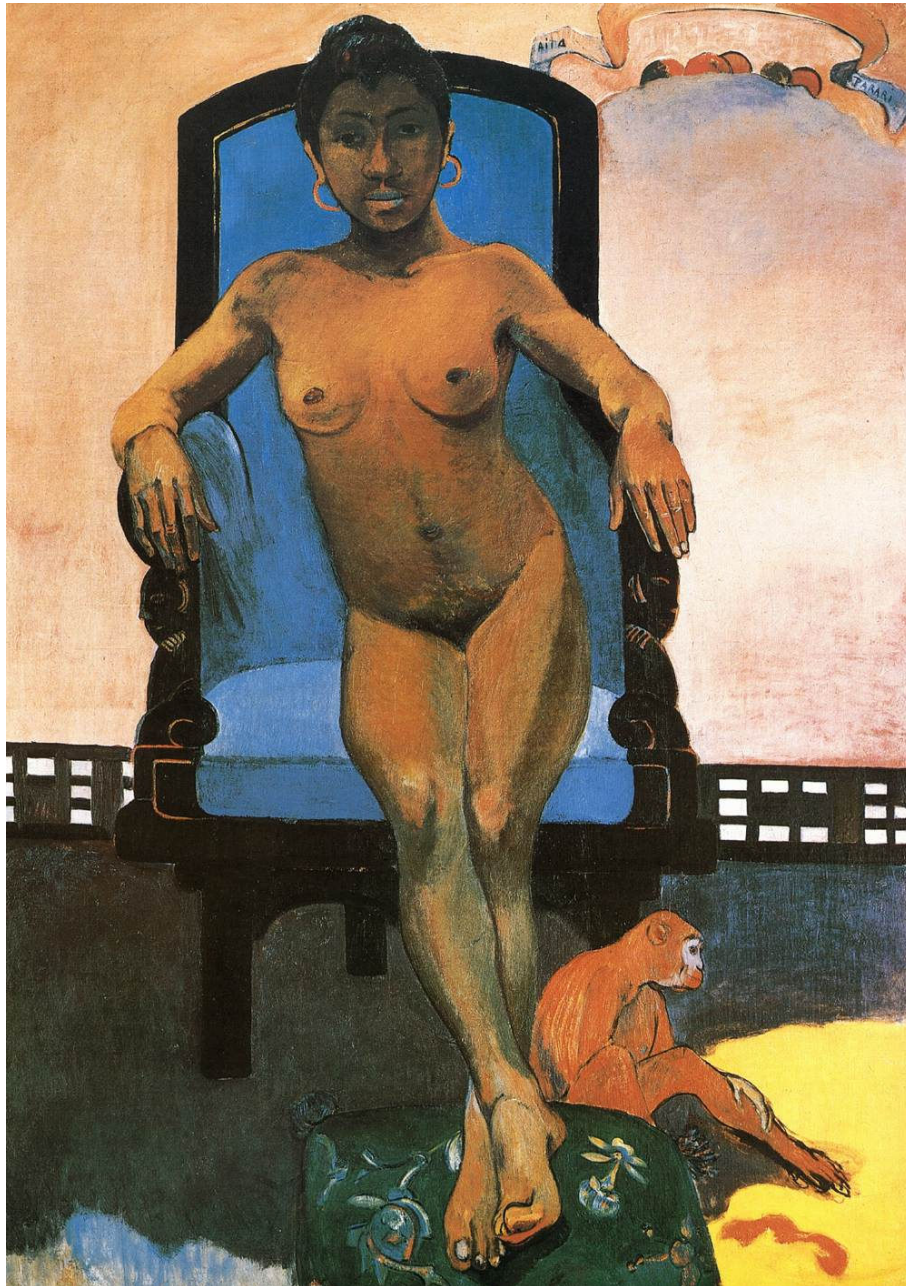
be with my mother. And I should be with my friends. And the next five days are a blur but already I feel it, the cracking, I am in such pain. How do I beg Madame Nina to take me to the doctor when she smirks at me in salons of their coterie that Paul takes me to.

I cannot possibly be in pain when in a frivolous European dress. I cannot possibly be in pain when Paul, who I know wants to hurt me and is closing in, gives me such shelter and access to the finest young European painters. They photograph me in costumes at Mucha's studio, they have a game they all play when drunk that involves persuading me, wooing me, and I white out then as well I nausea my way through it and the version of reality in my mind is just that I hurt and I want to be home, and everything else is a dream, isn't it?

Day six, however, I begin to be summoned. At night, an ocean appears on the ceiling of my small room where I stay when I clean until late, and Paul is too drunk to stay awake painting, so I can breathe easy and be more alone. From this ocean comes Nyi Roro Kidul, and I ask her why she did not take Paul when she takes so many other sailors all the time. What is the purpose of a goddess of the sea if not to smite the right humans? He went to Tahiti and I see those paintings and speak to those girls and say god I am sorry, please tell me how you got him to leave. From the whirlpool on my ceiling, the goddess comes closer to my face and says *a light at the end and so many voices are calling 'Here, come here with us.'* She disappears and all I hear are the voices, and my body's thrashing pain, for it has been thrashing, through all the smiles, through everything it has been its own ocean of fire and I am supposed to keep clean his house and it's only because he has been too busy and drunk and I know how to disappear when he wants me that nothing has happened, but he tells the world we are lovers while I grit my teeth back into my gums and watch my doorknob at night I am screaming screaming screaming inside my nerves blazing so what are these voices I do not know but I am desperate for salvation, and I have just seen a form of God.



## Chapter Four: La Fille Française: A Child of Thirteen (Visuals and Creative Writing)



[Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese, or Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 c 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>50</sup> Painting of a naked child on a chair, her hair in a bun, her ankles crossed, arms on the chair. Monkey at her feet.]

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<sup>50</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001: p.199.

A few moments to sit with, if you would oblige. When a colored panel appears, kindly take a beat and notice what thoughts, what imagery, each page brings up in you.

This is a space for further impressions of sex and age of consent, of whether or not it is possible that Annah(s) could have been pained bodies. Within them are strains of practice-based research, which I hope to continue after this thesis. For now, I would like to gesture at them as elements which have been present in the making of the work. I want to hold space for our emotions, and to recognise that reading about and grappling with these histories requires emotional energy, emotional labour.

they gave you



a new name

[Panel 1 caption: In light brown text, ‘They gave you [rectangle of a child’s multicoloured name-in-a-heart stamp, used many times over on a tan sheet of paper] a new name? .]

There are versions of Annah's story which claim she was half-Dutch, half-Javanese, elsewhere described as 'mulatto'. When Indonesia was the Dutch East Indies, there were populations of abandoned, part-white, part-Indonesian children sparking contradictory colonial policies.

Speaking of both Dutch and French colonial regimes, Ann Stoler writes:

'Colonial officials wrestled with the belief that the Europeanness of métis children could never be assured, despite a rhetoric affirming that education and upbringing were transformative processes. Authorities spoke of abandoned métisse daughters as *les filles françaises* when arguing for their redemption, but when supporting segregated education, these same authorities recast these youths as physically marked and morally marred with "the faults and mediocre qualities of their [native] mothers" as "the fruits of a regrettable weakness." Thus, abandoned métis children not only represented the sexual excesses and indiscretions of European men but the dangers of a subaltern class, degenerate (*verwilderden*) and lacking paternal discipline (*gemis aan vader lijkucht*), a world in which mothers took charge.' (Stoler, 2000:p.334-335).

verwildereren

La Fille Française

gemis aan vader lijktucht

[Panel 2 caption: In purple text over tan background,

verwildereren

La Fille Française

gemis aan vader lijktucht]

*In 1977-78, Michel Foucault made clear his view that all age of consent laws serve the purposes of regulating norms of decency and criminalizing certain forms of sexuality. He took part in public conversations in France in 1977 and signed a petition, along with Jean Danet and Guy Hocquenghem, to abolish all age of consent laws. He maintained, [sic] that '[a]ll the legislation on sexuality introduced since the 19th century in France, is a set of laws on decency [la pudeur], but now, [w]hat is emerging is a new penal system, a new legislative system whose function is not so much to punish offenses against these general laws concerning decency, as to protect populations and parts of populations regarded as particularly vulnerable'.*

- Judith Butler, 'Sexual consent: Some thoughts on psychoanalysis and law' (2011:p.8-9)

*Why, for Foucault, [do] colonial bodies never figure as a possible site of the articulation of nineteenth century European sexuality? And given this omission, what are the consequences for his treatment of racism in the making of the European bourgeois self? More troubling still are the implications for those of us who have sought to extend Foucault's approach to sexuality and power into imperial settings. Do we run the risk of reproducing precisely the terms of colonial discourse itself where any and everything could be attributed to and/or reduced to the dangers[,] contaminations, and enticements of sex?*

- Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the education of desire: Foucault's history of sexuality and the colonial order of things* (1995:p.vii)

I am trying to get through this PhD without entering the search term ‘Southeast Asian girls’.



Last year, I flew Thai Air from Jakarta to London, with a stopover in Bangkok. On the plane, we were all made to watch the most bizarre commercial I'd ever seen. The advertisement, made by the Thai government, interspersed horror-style red- and black-tinged frames, reminding us that human trafficking is illegal, with tourist-friendly frames following a genial older white man, as he greeted Thai person upon Thai person, eating their food, smiling with them on the beach. From the tourist-friendly advert to the admonishment of the illegality of human trafficking again. The final scene was of the smiling white man with each arm around a Thai adult, smiling with them.

Splintered frames of reference colliding. Asking white men *nicely* not to engage in human trafficking. Are any of these ads targeted at asking thieves to *kindly* not steal from Thai stores? In whatever country you come from, would you ever see an advertisement asking thieves not to steal items, let alone people, trying to persuade them to treat humans as humans?

*Come to our shores, give us your Euros and dollars. And here's a small reminder: do not forsake your hosts. Back to the beach!*

I imagine us Southeast Asian women, girls, non-binary people as levitating, each of us holding a rope attached to the opening of a door that allows people into our lives, our bodies. Repels them, sends them away should we not wish them there. I imagine Papuan and Acehnese and Minangkabau people who have been murdered and raped by Javanese and other Indonesians holding their ropes, above the ground. Asked to be calmly tethered to constant threat.

As I discuss in the next chapter, the age of consent laws, and how governments police consent—including through the media and adverts such as the Thai one—rest on international geopolitical and socioeconomic relations.

possible prayer #467 from annah's mother

calm the waves  
reverse their flow  
bring her brine to my door

possible prayer #786 from annah's father

because more might befall her  
the further she's made to walk from us

how far would Annah(s) be from a paediatrician

would they treat brown, slave girls

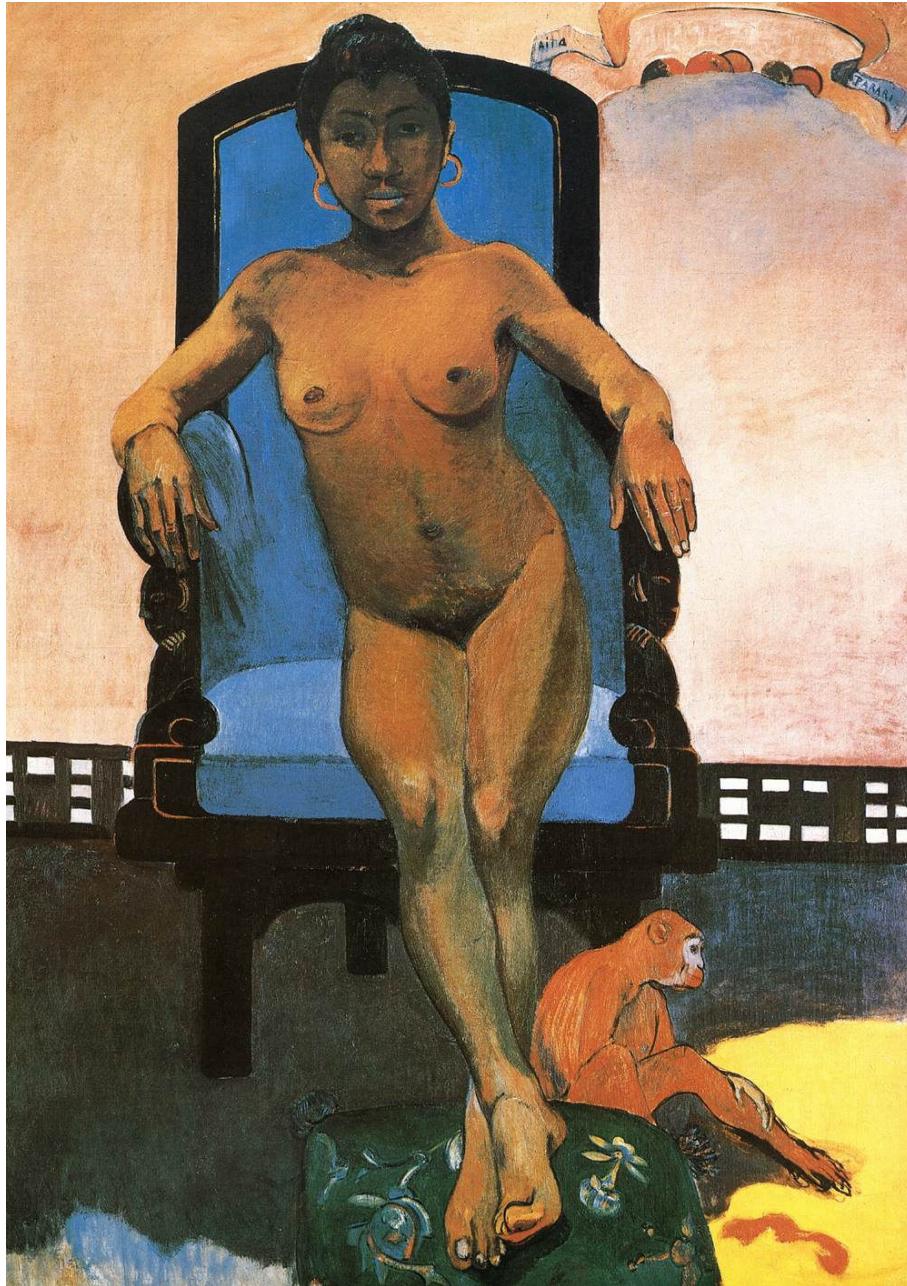
how far is she from traditional healers, whose eons of wisdom continue to be decimated into the present by dint of palm oil plantations, mining, factories, 'development'

how far would Annah(s) be from a rainforest

Recently, I was working in my flat in South London on this thesis, when I came to a realisation—eight years into thinking about this project, and four years into the PhD.

At the Q and A for my performance *Annah: Nomenclature* (ICA, 2018, Aditi Jaganathan as moderator), an audience member who was half Indonesian, an art curator, said that ‘Annah’ sounds like ‘anak’, the word in Indonesian and for ‘child’. I agreed, and noted that in Tagalog, it also means ‘child’. However, it took about another year for me to realise that the child who was given the name ‘Annah’ might have been called this because, when asked who they were by their slavers, they had replied with ‘anak’. They had said, in an Indonesian no one understood, in defiance of a nonsensical world: ‘I am a child’.

## Chapter Five: Sexuality, Age of Consent and Abnormality in Visual Cultures



[Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese, or Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>51</sup> Painting of a naked child on a chair, her hair in a bun, her ankles crossed, arms on the chair. Monkey at her feet.]

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<sup>51</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001:p.199.

I argue that perceiving the subject(s) of *Annah La Javanaise* as potentially pained provides a conduit into heretofore understudied nexuses of decoloniality, pain studies, and visual cultures. My focus is on how youth and sexuality studies influence consent with regards to all of these fields and *Annah la Javanaise*. In particular, I argue that the case of *Annah la Javanaise* necessitates going beyond the important work that has already been written about disability and sexuality. This includes problematising work by theorists such as Margrit Shildrick (Shildrick, 2007), and building upon Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's work on acts of looking and staring from a disability perspective (Garland-Thomson, 2009), and Emma Sheppard's work on pained people and kink (Sheppard, 2017). My work takes steps towards decolonising all of these perspectives by centering the colonial relationship to Javanese or colonised children's bodies, and importantly, centering these children within their own stories. Finally, I underscore the pluralities of spatiotemporal possibilities for sexuality in the lives of *Annahs* for whom time and space are queered. Throughout all of this work, Sara Ahmed's work on emotions, Tina Campt's on registers of perception, and Ann Laura Stoler's on imperial duress help propel new theoretical insights. I add here Marisa Fuentes' important work on reading archives 'against the bias grain' (2016), so that I may position my argument as counter to the deliberately white supremacist, colonialist, racist and ableist nature of *Annah* archives' positioning in hegemonic art institutions.

What I aim to add to the literature here is the specific focus on problematising sexuality and age of consent for brown children as revealing the flawed logics of colonial ablenormativity. I particularly look at the world of visual representations and art history, in which colonial violence operates in duress into the present. Having been recently challenged with regards to the word 'ascribing', I emphasise that personal responsibility and complicity should always be acknowledged, by all of us; to do otherwise is to uphold the notion of 'white innocence' or denial of complicity in colonial and racist violence (Wekker, 2016) and is a hallmark of the concept of white

fragility, in which white people become defensive and antagonistic when their complicity in the violence of racism is highlighted (DiAngelo, 2018).

Pain, disability, and sexuality are intrinsic in readings of Annah as a possibly pained body, as she is presented in Gauguin's creation of self-mythology, and by those who perpetuate it, as a sexual creature. In the following pages, I parse how such sexuality is presented as a mark of violence when one regards Annah as a developing young person or child—and the complex ways this intertwines with painedness.

### **Sexualised Abnormality: Pleasure, Abjectivity, Love, Age, and Colonial Capture**

Vulnerability of young, brown children, especially 'native' and mixed children, in what was in the 1890s the Dutch East Indies and is now Indonesia, has been emphasised in Chapter Three, particularly as discussed in Stoler's work. It is important in this chapter to look at how the interplay of that vulnerability relates to the sexualised nature of *Annah la Javanaise* then and now. Again, considering the varied ways Annah is described in terms of background, they may not have been Javanese, but my arguments here relate to what being called Javanese might mean in the colonial context. Dismissing the vulnerability of Javanese children as a direct result of colonial, capitalist expansion in the Dutch East Indies is part and parcel of that violent, plundering process. As Stoler details (Stoler, 1995; Stoler, 2000; Stoler, 2005) it is the covering up of harm done to these children by virtue of denial of rights, less access to resources, psychological damage, and increased vulnerability to every form of pain.

I contend that if *Annah la Javanaise* is a colonial depiction of a supposedly Javanese child, it is a typical form of denial of their right to be perceived as a fully human child in need of care. I assert that it is in the colonial interest for them to be denied the possibility of being a pained body, not only because Gauguin was a citizen of France as colonial power, as well as being coded white,

male and abled (all attributes that increase the likelihood of power in European colonial governance), but because Annah was turned into a commodity. Annah was commodified through the mythos surrounding her supposed consensual sexual relationship with Gauguin, which again cannot be proven, yet was what Gauguin wanted (Mathews, 2001), a sexual commodity enshrined as such by being depicted in the nude, with a soft smile, with body language coded as inviting. As discussed in Chapter Three, and as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, the more sexualised and seemingly consenting, seemingly adult Annah was, the higher the monetary value of Gauguin's paintings as boosted by his 'wild' reputation. I mention this briefly here to draw attention to how such hiking of painting prices in relation to sexualisation of brown girls is particularly opposed to the way Mowll Mathews details white girls also under threat of abuse by Gauguin yet still perceived as children (2001); 'The Child-Girl Judith Has Not Been Breached'.

Many of the varied retellings of Annah in Chapter One mention them as teenaged, thirteen, or 'around thirteen'. Here I must credit my colleague, artist and curator Ala Younis, for suggesting to me that this was most likely because that was the age of consent in France at the time the painting was created. I argue that such prevalent determination of a very specific age marker for Annah—when their photographs might be interpreted as depicting a much younger girl, and when so many other details about them in terms of, say, ethnicity are so varied—is part of the legitimization of Annah's position as potential sexual paramour for Gauguin and his ilk. I also argue that racialised determination of age for (a) brown children marked as 'Annah' or (b) marked as 'Annah' in one place and elsewhere as, for instance, Polynesian and with a Polynesian name, is important to mark as part of racialised negotiation of brown women's, non-binary adults' and children's social status in France and in other Western countries. *Annah la Javanaise* is a prime example of how racialised negotiation involved the tacit approval of framing brown children's ages as more 'adult', in order to justify making them vulnerable to pain.



In “‘A Muse for the Masses’: Gender, Age, and Nation in France, Fin de Siecle’ (2004), historian David Pomfret writes of the creation of the ‘Festival for the Crowning of the People’s Muse’. This was essentially a national (and musical) pageant for girls, that ‘swept across France from Paris to the provinces after 1897’ (ibid.:p.1440), with ‘tens of thousands of spectators’ (ibid.:p. 1441), only a few years after *Annah la Javanaise*. The pageant, Pomfret argues, was part of French society’s negotiation of the social ascendancy of women and girls, and an example of how ‘age situates individuals within implicit or explicit hierarchies of power, further complicating gender, class, and race’ (ibid.:p.1442). He asserts that the Festival was a way in which ‘political elites used female bodies as public spectacle to represent the modern nation’ (ibid.:p.1441) (much like, I contend, contemporary beauty pageants), with older political figures selecting these girls on the criteria that they were “‘young” and “beautiful”” (ibid.:p.1441). The following paragraph is quoted in full for the rich insight it offers into how Annah’s positioning in 1890s France was as a body who could not represent France, but a subjugated body owned by France, whose very likely pain was made negligible:

‘Although the European fin de siecle has also been viewed as a period of confidence, commercial prowess, and cultural creativity, scholars have recently focused on crises accompanying symptoms of relative decline. Explained in racial terms but also in terms of "degeneration," "decadence," or "over-civilization," it has been argued that these crises caused especially acute concern in France, where demographic stagnation and the legacy of military defeat by newly unified and vigorous Germany reinforced perceptions of their gravity and prevalence. Historians have emphasized contemporaries' understanding [sic] of the crises of the fin de siecle in terms of a crisis of gender relations. Contemporary commentators made frequent reference to biological models in explaining evidence of "degeneration." Pathologies (neurasthenia, suicide, prostitution, and a worryingly low birth

rate) were believed to be upsetting the balance of the social organism and undermining the "virility" of the French nation. The concomitant efforts of women to move beyond bourgeois models of domestic femininity and to claim social and political rights thus became a major source of conflict.' (ibid.:p.1442)

A version of Annah's history was, as I've stated previously in this thesis, that they were possibly found in the brothels of Montmartre, with the implication that they were a sex worker. I argue that the bringing in of Annah into a male artistic coterie—taking them out of prostitution seen as pathology—was precisely to boost this sense of French 'virility' in the form of Gauguin's power over them, as per Chapter Three's explication of the relationship of France to a vague sense of 'Java'. They were taken in from degeneracy and made palatable as an *owned* sexual object, boosting France's sense of virility through visual artifacts of them—and because neurasthenia and pathologies in general were also regarded as being in opposition to virility, a perception that is part and parcel of eugenicist thinking which aims to wipe out bodies that pose a threat to nationhood. It is never in France's colonial interest to allow Annah to be a pained or ill person. In fact, if they were perceived to be a sex worker, the stigma around sex work that persists to this day, and makes sex workers vulnerable to this day, would have contributed to Annah(s) being seen as sexually voracious, indiscriminate, always consenting to sexual activity, and immune to harm, pain, and danger.

I argue that the aforementioned duress of a sense of colonial 'virility' is why Annah(s) is/are not seen as a child, essentially made adult and consenting by default—and that the racist attitudes towards brown girls then and now that enable(d) this are in stark contrast to the fact that the late nineteenth century Annah(s) lived in also marked the beginning of centralised, governmental French laws to protect abandoned children (previous to that time, the responsibility for abandoned children belonged to charities and local officials) (Fuchs, 1984:p.1). *Annah la Javanaise* not being regarded

as a portrait of an abandoned child, I contend, is also because that interpretation would be a clear sign of the French government's failure to care for a child vulnerable to pain, at a time when protection of child rights was finally coalescing at the national government level. Though Fuchs writes of 'the increase in and types of state intervention for the care of abused children after the 1880's [sic]' (Fuchs, 1982:p.237), she also writes:

'Modern concepts of child abuse date only from the 1880's [sic] in France. Child abuse in 20th century terms of emotional and physical assault, neglect, abandonment, and sexual molestation was not considered a crime during most of the past century. Prior to the 1880's [sic], only 2 acts, abortion and infanticide, constituted crimes against children. Child abandonment, rather than a crime, was the state supported, societally acceptable alternative to abortion and infanticide. After abandonment, malnourishment and neglect of these children, even to the point of death, likewise were not crimes. With changes in attitudes of the 1880's [sic], parental neglect, assault, and starvation of children became defined as child abuse, as did perceived immoral behavior of the parents such as habitual drunkenness and debauchery. Under these new definitions of abuse, state officials could deprive parents of their legal rights and make the children wards of the state for their own protection. The state became *in loco parentis*.' (ibid.:p.237)

Notions of child abuse in France were thus quite new when Annah was in Gauguin's presence, and furthermore, abandonment had been, not long before that time, *preferable* to 'burdening' the state with child care. I argue that a brown child in the 'care' of an abusive older man could also be seen by many in 1890s France as preferable to 'burdening' the state. I argue also that the French state's pillage of colonies meant brown children were seen as resources to be exploited,

not people to use resources on protecting, the same way the Dutch saw children native to what is now Indonesia (see Stoler, 1995).

### **Decolonising Sexualities from a Disability Perspective**

The assumption that Annah is attracted to men, specifically Gauguin, is also a form of heteronormativity acting in service of abuse—though there was certainly the chance that Annah was not only unattracted to Gauguin and his friends but to men in general, this is never mentioned. It is important to emphasise that I do not conflate heterosexuality with consent here. To think of Annah as possibly being anything other than strictly attracted to Gauguin is to be anti-Gauguin's self-mythos, perpetuated in imperial duress, and also to make obvious the prevailing likelihood of abuse. Racialised age here is also important as Annah(s) would likely only recently have begun exploring forms of sexuality in terms of self-agency, if they were around thirteen, but there were and are persistent myths of brown girls' sexuality being more advanced at younger an age.

These myths of imperial duress shape the production of art as well as the interpretation of it. In a conversation with Rosalind Nashashibi (see my writing on her piece *Why Are You So Angry?* in Chapter Three) she told me that Tahitians were very sexually promiscuous at the time of Gauguin's sojourn to Tahiti, that Gauguin's behaviour was in line with native promiscuity (personal communication, 2016). Again, even in creating work supposedly about Gauguin's patriarchy, the artist perpetuated the omission of Gauguin's role as recorded abuser who married Tahitian Teha'amana—also written of as being thirteen years old, which is not to my thinking a coincidence of framed consent—and associated himself with young Annah to imply they were sexually involved. The rights of the child to be protected from pain are moot if the child is seen as adult in French contexts as well as in 'native' colony contexts, a double condemnation for a brown girl like Annah in 1890s Paris.

Also of importance in addressing disability and sexuality studies from a decolonised perspective, in this case when it comes to potential pain, is the understanding of how, when, and why a person discloses that they are in pain, in a potentially or explicitly sexual situation. Comfort with disclosure requires safety and consent, that may be negotiated and manifest differently from case to case (including, for instance, pain people into BDSM/kink; see Sheppard, 2017). However, if the relationship is in fact not perceived as being between two people, but between a person and a commodity—between Paul and Annah, Annah who is sub-human by virtue of being brown and a child in colonial times, and potentially further dehumanised by being disabled—I argue that safety and consent are made impossible for the commodified person in sexual situations.

Of course, I am not denying Annah(s) their potential agency, ingenuity, and capacity to survive, even in close proximity to an abuser. Indeed, I hope that my work on them brings to the fore the possibilities for them to have(/have had) all of these, in the face of extremely difficult circumstances aimed at dehumanising them. Furthermore, I argue that the preponderance of stories about Annah's spirited demeanour and their thieving, while in the presence of culturally powerful men, may point to clear possibilities of incredible resilience and ingenuity on their part. What I am referring to in the previous paragraph refers to difficult external circumstances for Annah, particularly in sexual situations that may be forced, and in great risk of such situations. This is particularly the case if we view her under contemporary understandings of a thirteen-year-old as still being incredibly vulnerable, as still a developing mind.

All of the above persists in what Stoler calls duress through the continuous circulation of *Annah la Javanaise* today. In the context of duress, Stoler has written specifically about France's refusal to acknowledge its violent colonial past despite duress in France of racialised violence, describing it as 'colonial aphasia' (Stoler, 2011; Stoler, 2016). Aphasia is a condition wherein a person is unable to

produce or process speech, specifically via brain damage and trauma (see Sigmund Freud's first book *On Aphasia* (1891), in which he details aphasia as a result of psychological trauma, not explainable by what was then known of neurophysiology). Stoler's writing on the French state's 'aphasia' (Stoler, 2011; article that formed the basis for a chapter in 2016's *Duress*) states that France is unwilling to discuss, face, or articulate its history of colonialism and racism, likening this to aphasia in a human body. *Duress* (Stoler, 2016) is a theoretical source that underpins this thesis, but I do want to highlight Freud's pathologising in *On Aphasia* (1891) that gives rise to potentially ableist readings of aphasia and its parallels. Understandings of 'impairment', 'ability', and 'disability' are of course shifting and contextual, as the work of Thohari (2013), Pickens (2019), Schalk (2018) and others show, and this means aphasia as a disorder may be read in wider terms than a pathology of the body. Going back to my earlier point, it could in fact be an important tool in the soulbody's reaction to trauma, or simply exist, in a body that is not 'bad' because of it. In Freud's own field of psychoanalysis, it has been shown that what Freud thought with regards to language acquisition and expression does not take into account social contexts for meaning and acquisition of language (Wilson & Weinstein, 1990), which varies widely from culture to culture and across time. Even when not pathologised, it is worth remembering that mental ill-health and mental disability, as Pickens (2019) shows, is fluid and cultural—and that colonised bodies not working in service of Empire are pathologised for 'mental health' as well 'physical health'.

As 'La Javanaise' for the French came to denote a vague Orientalist view of origin (Cohen, 2017) and, I argue, sexual as well as romantic availability, I assert that the alluring myth of 'La Javanaise' is also rooted in ablenormativity and cisgender heteronormativity *to inscribe the myth of the happy native*. This includes the native who is willing to fall in love readily, to offer their body readily, and to nullify arenas of abuse by making them arenas of pleasure. Of importance here is the concept of 'Pain as culture' in the context of women's agency within sadomasochism, from a

postcolonial feminist context (Deckha, 2011). Emma Sheppard builds on Deckha's work on S/M, feminist theory, pain studies and women's agency in a Western context (2017), showing that pained people are capable of using their pain as a component of sexual pleasure, and that it is possible for certain kinds of pain to be framed by people as something lived with, rather than something suffered through. I contend that this is another possible soulbody framing for a pained Annah, another kind of possibly pained Annah, which is that of a child for whom pain is managed and lived with. However, it must be emphasised that considering the availability of healthcare, the possibility of pain management would have been incredibly slim for a brown child alone in 1890s France, and affording Annah agency over her pain to a level where it could be lived with is thus also unlikely.

### **Eliding Harm Against Children in Disability Studies**

Margrit Shildrick's *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity and Sexuality* (2009) is a touchstone text in the field of disability and sexuality studies, and delves deeply—in an urgently needed way—into how disabled people are perceived as non-sexual beings or objects of disgust in Western societies; it would be remiss of me to omit Shildrick's work from this chapter. However, I believe that the notion of *Annah la Javanaise* as a sexualised, potentially pained, child of colour draws attention to areas where this book still does not provide appropriate intellectual frameworks for sexuality and disability. I focus on Shildrick here particularly because of the work's salience in the field of disability studies in the Anglophone world, and as a strong example of how racist configurations of neoliberal globalisation permeate the field.

Shildrick writes with a 'focus firmly on the Anglo-American context' (ibid.:p.60) of 'the strange paradox evident in western society that alternates between denying that sexual pleasure has any place in the lives of disabled [sic], and fetishising it' (ibid.:p.60). According to her, this paradox is due to the anxiety that occurs in the 'mainstream' when thinking of disabled bodies, as laws and

governmentality in general are meant to cover all bodies, yet ‘clearly some forms of corporeality exceed the limits of what is thinkable’ (ibid.:p.60).

It is important to understand Shildrick’s arguments as indeed very applicable to Western societies, with regards to many non-disabled people’s reactions to disabled people:

‘I do not mean to suggest that all responses to disability are uniformly negative, but that even the most seemingly benign socio-cultural developments or personal attitudes may merely mask an underlying fear of that which resists the closure of final classification.

Moreover, the very real physical violence which continues to erupt against disabled people as a category, and which can be experienced on the individual level at any time, is no mere aberration, but is paralleled by a less obvious discursive violence that is an intrinsic feature of any binary system of sameness and difference.’ (ibid.:p.45)

I believe that if visual archives of Annah’s body/ies conformed more to ablenormative, sighted-normative notions of what disability looks like, the already incredibly high risk they had of living with violence would have been impacted by a fear of the ‘other’ in a very different way than how ‘La Javanaise’ exoticises the ‘abled other’ as consumable exotic commodity. If a child is brown and thus regarded as adult, when they were actually likely robbed of their childhood in the presence of Gauguin and his friends in 1890s France, how would their life be different if they ‘appeared to be disabled’ according to sighted, abled understandings of disability?

The ways in which disgust and erotic appeal interacted with each other upon the same body would of course be variable, depending on how Annah’s disability would be visible, who the beholder of her body was, and their relationship to Annah in terms of sociocultural power hierarchies. Both would make her very vulnerable to harm and pain, including sexual harm, as it does for millions of children today. I assert here that the question of what visual cues are



gleaned from an ‘invisibly disabled’ Annah (for we pained people know that what is ‘invisible’ to many is not so for us), in variable potential circumstances of vulnerability in 1890s France, expands meaningfully on Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s work on bringing disability perspectives to looking and staring (Garland-Thomson, 2009). Garland-Thomson’s (2009) work on staring and looking from crippled perspectives is important, but does not include the perspectives of those many millions of us who are ‘invisibly disabled’ by abled standards. These hypotheticals raise heretofore unasked questions in disability and visual cultures studies.

Considering the perspective of pained lives throughout history, with regards to the epistemological contexts for seeing in Western philosophy over time, breaks new ground—including in the context of what intellectual historian Martin Jay has covered in his books *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (1993) and *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (1993). Jay notes that from an earlier standpoint of seeing equated to knowledge in Western thought, twentieth century French philosophical thought marks a move away from the primacy of sight, even being ‘ocularphobic’ (Jay, 1993:p.61).

However, this ocularphobia, exemplified according to Jay by such art movements as Surrealism (Jay, 1993:p.211), and including women philosopher’s takes denigrating ocularcentricity (Jay, 1993:p.61), takes only white, abled-presenting European women’s philosophies into account. While the likes of Hannah Arendt, Agnes Heller, and Sarah Kofman are discussed in intellectual histories of ocularcentricity in Jay’s work, I argue that decolonial, crippled perspectives on ocularcentricity coming from decolonised feminisms are vital. After all, as the circulation of art objects such as *Annah la Javanaise* in contemporary life shows, colonised bodies continue to loom in the sphere of white intellectual histories, yet are still rarely allowed to be interpreted according to non-white, D/deaf and/or disabled frameworks. This is particularly important, I argue, in privileging the perspectives of colonised, racialised people as all potentially disabled and all potentially pained, in a

way that is still underacknowledged. This includes, of course, the lack of a crippled, pained perspective on artifacts such as *Annah la Javanaise* and the histories it is bound up in.

Despite the insights above, however, Shildrick writes of decentralisation as increasing by virtue of twenty-first century economic globalisation, and as a positive force with regards to disability, sexuality, and subjectivities in a way that would potentially decrease harm—without any writing on colonialism, mass violence, or disablement by what Ann Laura Stoler calls imperial duress (2016). The sweeping generalisations of statements such as ‘the spacio-temporal [sic] transformations of globalisation are felt in the instantiation of disability, and [...] disability in turn might exemplify the deterritorialisation that global movements imply’ (Shildrick, 2007:p.14) insinuates that there have never before been mass migrations, mass intercultural interplay, that have gone on in the world for millennia, including interplay of disability frameworks. It is thus an erasure of global patterns of harming and inducement of pain, in line with ablenormative narratives in art history, when Shildrick implies that interplay between disability identities is new. As I wrote in Chapter Three, the singular example of Javanese versions of India’s Mahabharata and Ramayana creating evolving disability models over time disproves that.

Furthermore, writing as Shildrick says she does from the ‘Anglo-American’ perspective, she pays no attention to the ways in which the United States was built upon white supremacist ableism as a violence imposed upon slaves and the colonised, certainly including large swathes of disabled people, and certainly including large masses of people made disabled by such violence; thus, this chapter will draw on relevant work by contemporary scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw (1990), Jasbir Puar (2017), Nirmala Erevelles (2011), Clare Barker (2011), Theri Alyce Pickens (2019), and Sami Schalk (2018) (the latter two focussing on science fiction author-theorists in their analyses, with relevance to the creative segments of this thesis). All of these theorists contribute to an understanding that how intense dis-ease, unsafety and harm manifested in the soulbody of a brown

child in the 1890s would likely, in my view, not be trackable or traceable to child welfare authorities, even if the welfare of brown children at that time was at all a priority; more on all of this later in this chapter.

Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw first coined the term intersectionality in an academic context, to refer to a method of analysis for injustices facing black women, impacted by both sexist bias and racist bias (1990), and the term continues to be used (albeit often incorrectly, particularly outside academia) in social analyses where multiple oppressions occur. My method of artistic inquiry in this thesis is certainly in the realm of intersectional analyses, in how disability impacts racial, sexual and child discrimination in *Annah la Javanaise*.

However, it is not just a matter of multiple intersecting oppressions making children named Annah more vulnerable, which I believe is true. Recent work by theorists looking at disability, speculative fiction, and Black American woman/girlhood/non-binariness have spurred my thinking onwards—into the consideration of subtle affects in the application of intersectional Annah analyses, particularly with regards to pain and racialised trauma, and into a clarification of why I've chosen speculative and hybrid-genre work as my mode of artistic research. For instance, Theri Alyce Pickens' *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness* (2019) and Sami Schalk's *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction* (2018), both of which have looked at black women speculative fiction writers' work.

In *Bodyminds Reimagined* (2018), Schalk discusses how writers Shawntelle Madison, Nalo Hopkinson, and N.K. Jemisin create worlds within which societal racial and gender constructs contribute to interpretations of able-bodiedness, able-mindedness, disability and ability. Schalk writes of the same with regards to Octavia Butler and Phyllis Alesia Perry, who are described as creating parables for racial violence and trauma, and as pushing against ablenormative notions of what constitutes a good body.

In Theri Alyce Pickens' *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness* (2019), she pushes for the concept of disability as a creative, generative space, and understandings of madness in Black communities as forms of resistance to, refusal of, white supremacist ablenormativity—I use this here as a way of considering any ‘abnormalities’ in Annah’s soulbody as including ways in which resistance of Asian, indigenous, brown and Black bodies is coded as ‘madness’ in different ways.

Though Annah may have been called ‘a little negro girl’ by Mme. Nina Pack, who asked for her to be brought to Paris in one version of Annah’s origins (Vollard, 1936:p.230-231), the intersection of Blackness and brownness in racist colonial logic is an unexplored point of inquiry in Annah stories. It deserves more dedicated research, for which this thesis serves as my starting off point for further work.

‘Black Madness :: Mad Blackness rests on the idea that ability and race are intertwined ... Suturing madness and Blackness together, I debunk the perception that the title is redundant, oxymoronic, or excessive. In ... white supremacy, Blackness is considered synonymous with madness or the prerequisite for creating madness. ... Mad studies perspectives mobilize activist and scholastic impulses in their refusal of the historical definitions of madness as “irrationality, a condition involving decline or even disappearance of the role of rational factor in the organization of human conduct and experience” and the equation of madness with lack or inability.’ (Pickens, 2019:p.4-5)

Such thinking, combined with my understanding of disability and ability in Javanese spiritual structures and stories of deities (mentioned in Chapter Three), prompts me to argue that understanding Annah(s) as potentially disabled child(ren) according to white supremacist ablenormative society is a form of sociopolitical, and deeply intimate, resistance. An uprising within a child’s body. That my speculative works and performances of reaching out to potentially-pained

Annah(s) are a recognition that racialised, gendered, colonial, anti-child trauma (per the neo-slavery narratives Schalk discusses) could well have manifested in chronic pain within the body (Barokka, 2018; Barokka, 2019). The argument of this thesis focusses on the possibility of Annah as a pained bodymind or *jiwa raga* (soul body), but this serves as the starting point for understanding their body/ies as being potentially non-ablenormative in any number of ways, possibly concurrent, possibly interacting within one person. Acute psychic pain could have damaged her nerves, and this would not only be possible, I argue, but a *natural* outcome of living in a society from which there was likely no escape into safer, more nurturing situations, in a body marked as brown girl, brown child. The soulbody could well, should well, tell us we are in danger, that we are in harm, and manifest that in pain.

Pain, in other words, could be read as a form of resistance and generative possibility, as a state of soulbody alertness/recognition, rather than the ableist understanding of pain as a monolithic marker of suffering.

*Annah la Javanaise* as potentially pained is a marker of disability as a manifestation of white supremacist ablebodiedness, both in terms of an ‘othering’ by such a society of those deemed abnormal, and in terms of such a supremacist society creating the conditions through which the soulbody manifests what is deemed disability. I find Pickens’ (2019) work particularly stimulating in terms of integrating the work of Sami Schalk (2018) as well as Nirmala Erevelles’ *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts* (2011) in discussing madness:

‘Blackness modifies (and I use the grammatical term deliberately) who and what is mad.

Madness as noun calls attention to what Sami Schalk insists is a useful slippage between materiality and metaphor in Black studies. She argues that within Black literature ...

“disability metaphors allow us to explore the historical and material connections between disability and other social systems of privilege and oppression.” As with Erevelles’s

formulation, the two categories do not exist in a simple causal or analogic relationship; they inform each other such that madness modifies how we understand Blackness. ...[M]ore vast in scope than heretofore imagined.’ (Pickens, 2019:p.6)

Although the idea of brownness and La Javanaise is different from studies of Blackness—and as Pickens says of Erevelles’ work, ‘definitions of Blackness and disability cannot and should not be moved carelessly across transnational borders’ (Pickens, 2019:p.5)—this call to imagine disability as vaster, more open to refractions and permutations of what ‘disability’, ‘madness’, and ‘ability’ really mean in racialised contexts deeply resonate with my own work of speculative Annahs. For instance, how ‘pain’—something that can be brushed aside by others as non-existent, as a form of hysteria or madness—manifests in possible Annahs is tied for me to notions of a soulbody; one is informed by, for instance, Javanese or other spiritualities indigenous to what is now known as Indonesia, for which the interactions of nerve endings and cosmologies reach far beyond what is recorded in Western art histories. What happens to the soulbody of a child in danger in different understandings of the world as we know it, in different cosmologies, means the equation of Annah’s potential pain as suffering pure and simple must be questioned. Again, I call on Pickens’ work that references Erevelles and Hortense Spillers:

‘I choose to nominalize Black and mad by adding the suffix “ness” to attend to the two words as both description and category. [...] Nirmala Erevelles, in writing about the Middle Passage, rereads Hortense Spillers’s work to point out that the simplified causal relationship—slavery produces disability—does not fully encompass the way disability and Blackness function. Rather, disability/impairment and race are neither merely biological nor wholly discursive, but rather are historical material constructs imbricated within the exploitative conditions of transnational capitalism.’ (Pickens, 2019:p.5)

To expand upon this in the context of possible Annahs and the cultural frameworks that could be brought to attention: I am Minangkabau as well as Javanese, and the Minangkabau (also known as Minang or Padang) are the largest matrilineal society in the world. Though we are now overwhelmingly Muslim, there were waves of Hinduism and Buddhism that came after indigenous Minang spiritualities as well. In Minang indigenous spiritualities, there is the concept of ‘semangat’ (literally ‘energy’ or ‘life force’), that humans have two souls, one which is the true ‘semangat’, and another spirit within us, that can be closer or further away from the ‘semangat’ life force. A girl marked ‘Annah’ could well have been Minang if she was of what was then the Dutch East Indies, even if she was taken from Java; part of my interpretations are therefore that Annah’s pain could be a manifestation of her semangat acting in the face of danger, a massive spiritual warning sign. My visual work as well as written and performance work contain various versions of Annah that could be described as science fiction or fantasy—however, I would like the audience to entertain the possibility that spiritual worlds other than Western-prescribed rationality exist, and that goddesses, Minang and Javanese spiritualities interacting with their pained body might be, to Annah(s), fundamentally real.

Much like Pickens’ assertion, the refusal of jiwa raga (the soulbody) to submit to ableist colonial norms—for instance, by recognising the real, physical, psychic impact of unsafety and harm by internalising it and manifesting that harm in the body, which is in fact natural—is a sign of resistance. By being the truth, pain is resistance. I do not want to glorify anyone’s pain when it is at an intolerable level (including mine); any pain that is suffering should not be romanticised. This is in no way incongruous with recognising it as the soulbody’s reaction to a state of emergency, a completely plausible reaction when one looks outside Western rational frameworks for the body. Looking outside Western rational frameworks for the soulbody, and for painedness, also opens up possibilities for pain narratives that are beyond the scope of my knowing, even as a pained person

myself. These possibilities include different pain narratives in a child's brown soulbody/jiwa raga than in an adult's.

It is not the goal of this thesis to map out all possible pain narratives, as that is impossible; indeed, the project of all-knowingness and universality is one inherent to colonialism and white supremacy. Thus admission of how much we do not and can never know, as individuals, with regards to interpretations of bodies and spirits is a refusal of such imperialism. What I'm trying to do here is to open up a starting point for understanding that pain narratives in Annah archives *exist*, and for understanding that in many frameworks, including contemporary rights-based discourses, Annah was a child/children and thus a member of a very vulnerable group, in addition to the vulnerability of being brown in Paris and presenting as a girl or woman, and the vulnerability of being the only one of their kind in all known archives in which they exist.

I argue that this point is even more trenchant when one considers the vulnerability of disabled children today, as the work of Subini Annamma (2017), Jasbir Puar (2017), and Clare Barker (2011) help to elucidate.

All the work of theorists discussed above expose the flaw in Margrit Shildrick's framework, which is apparent and harmful, when she writes 'Against the view that globalisation further disadvantages those who are already excluded, I suggest—with some caution—that the work of Deleuze and Guattari could provide a potentially positive understanding of the relationship between globalisation and disability' (Shildrick, 2007:p.14). Shildrick conceptualises globalisation as a twenty-first century phenomenon, and de-links it as a neoliberal pattern of capitalist destruction rooted in empire, that has debilitated and caused disability (Puar, 2017). Furthermore, she makes broad generalisations about the way disability functions as an exclusionary tool throughout history, when the truth (as written in Chapter Three) of how it operates is indeed as rhizomatic, as Deleuze and Guattari (and Shohat and Stam) might describe it, and not uniform. Disability as exclusionary

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can actually be a product of destructive colonial forces (as it is in Java; Thohari, 2013) that initiated what is today called globalisation, yet this fact is erased in Shildrick's work. Again, the work of theorists I've mentioned above do a much better job, and will be discussed further along.

Despite calls to the rhizomatic and decentralised frameworks that Deleuze and Guattari advocate for—or perhaps because of the ethnocentrism of Deleuze and Guattari's writings—Shildrick's writing remains deeply Western-centric and harmful to those not in the West or marginalised within it, particularly when speaking of 'global corporealities':

'[...] it is only the relatively well-off—those who are busy and short of time, but in control—who can live in a perpetual present, whilst the poor, who also often busy [sic] and short of time, must always struggle with a lack of control of both their past and their future, as well as with the immanence of place. In other words, nomadic shifting (which Deleuze and Guattari in another register have theorised as the privileged mode of becoming), the sense of being a space/time traveller, appears to be only fully open to those with resources.' (ibid.:p.152)

This is a dangerous untruth when you consider the many millions of migrant workers, refugees, and human trafficking victims in the world, including hundreds of thousands of domestic workers from Indonesia who work abroad each year, virtually all of whom are women—as I highlighted in the *Annah: Nomenclature* performance (2018), Annah too was potentially a foreign domestic worker. These include millions who have been working with scant protections from both their home government and the places where they reside, vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including sexual, including human trafficking (Andrevski & Lyneham, 2014). This vulnerability extends not only to the women themselves, but to the families they leave behind in their home countries, for whom

‘[p]recarity chains effectively *remit persistent dependence and future precarity* on the families and household economies of these low-wage domestic workers, tending overall to reproduce the relative poverty, persistent socio-spatial precarity, and transnational subordination of domestic workers over the life-course.’ (Silvey & Parreñas, 2019:p.1)

The possibility of pain in every picture, I argue in this thesis, is a layer of potential vulnerability that is often omitted from art historical narratives. This is because the narratives by which brown women, girls and non-binary people are made precarious, and thus more vulnerable to pain, are precisely those that imperial ablenormative narratives’ duress seek to erase.

Shildrick writes,

‘What has become clearer is that as the ground for a form of oppression widely perpetuated in western societies, disability—like alternatives to heterosexuality, or racial differences—poses probing questions about the nature of those societies, both in terms of their overt organisation and their social imaginaries.’ (2009:p.15)

This sentence further illustrates how limited and white-centric Shildrick’s work is: it is not ‘racial differences’ themselves that pose questions; it is the system of false racial categorisation. Furthermore, the wording here is problematic. To ‘pose probing questions about the nature of... societies’ implies an awakening of those people unaware of how racial categorisation and discrimination are a fundamental part of western societies, as has been experienced by ‘others’—such as those labelled Annah—our whole lives. It implies that such false racial categorisation is not, as is the fact, integral to making people more vulnerable to pain.

When Shildrick writes of ‘global corporealities’ (2009:p.146), it is a Thomas Friedman-esque flattening of corporeal realities.<sup>52</sup> Failing to link twenty-first century economic globalisation as the latest stage of a process begun centuries ago, as part of colonial, neoliberal capitalist expansion, is an egregious omission. I argue that as Shildrick’s work has become a touchstone in disability literature, these harmful gaps must be acknowledged as inapplicable to critique of images like *Annah la Javanaise* from a *decolonial* crippling perspective. What I do agree with is Shildrick’s point here, in relation to my arguing for the possibility of pained Annahs:

‘The coming together of disability, subjectivity, and sexuality under the gaze of postconventional critique will certainly generate dangerous discourses, but finally it is a necessary move of ethical responsibility.’ (2009:p.16)

My arguments on Annah further the academic conversation surrounding subjectivities of disability, age and sexuality, specifically in terms of visual depictions of Annah as colonial artifacts.

With regards to subjectivities, Shildrick’s professed focus on Anglo-American populations is nonetheless mapped onto notions of globalised identities, which completely ignores the inequalities and differences among disabled populations within the United States.

Jasbir Puar’s work *The Right to Maim* (2017) (to be revisited in Chapter Six) clearly discusses the multitudinous global power dynamics shaping disability identities, in a much more useful, truthful framework than Shildrick’s:

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Friedman is a highly popular author of books on globalisation that advocate for unregulated trade (Friedman 2006; Friedman, 2005; Friedman, 2000), in which he ignores the violations such lack of regulation allows for globally.

‘Disability is not a fixed state or attribute but exists in relation to assemblages of capacity and debility, modulated across historical time, geopolitical space, institutional mandates, and discursive regimes. The globalization of disability as an identity through human rights discourses contributes to a standardization of bodily usefulness and uselessness that discounts not only the specificity of location but also the ways bodies exceed or defy identities and subjects. The non-disabled/disabled binary traverses social, geographic, and political spaces. The distinctions or parameters between disabled and non-disabled bodies shift historically, as designations between productivity, vagrancy, deviancy, illness, and labor market relations have undergone transformations from subsistence work to waged labor to hypercapitalist modes of surplus accumulation and neoliberal subject formation.’ (Puar, 2017)

### **Pain Narratives in Cultural Memory**

Both Deckha and Sheppard’s work are springboards to further the conversation around Annah: the differing, prismatic nature of recorded Annah narratives as a whole draws to the fore the importance of power dynamics in the construction of cultural memory, and in the construction of *pain narratives in cultural memory*, particularly as interlinked with sexualities and notions of relations, assumptions, power and abuse. Using Ahmed’s (2013) work on emotions and the cultural power and origins of them, as I did in Chapter Three, I’d like to underscore how pain narratives or lack-of-pain narratives exist in Annah historiography, with specific attention to who she was: sexual ablenormativity for Annah as forms of Stoler’s imperial duress. Again, imperial duress as defined by Stoler as

‘three principal features of colonial histories of the present: the hardened, tenacious qualities of colonial effects; their extended protracted temporalities; and, not least, their durable, if sometimes intangible constraints and confinements.’ (Stoler, 2016:p.7)

Sexual ablenormativity is part of the durabilities of imperial policies, ‘the sensoral regimes on which it weighs’ (Stoler, 2016:p.7) with ‘temporal, spatial, and affective coordinates’ (Stoler 2016:p.6), ‘the politics of scarred tissue, debris, and exposures’ (Stoler, 2016:p.xii). I argue that what stories are told about Annah repeatedly, always in relation to Gauguin, and with Annah as a minor character, show a limited, ableist understanding of sexuality as being diametrically opposed to pain, in a way that Sheppard’s study of BDSM and kink (2017) undoes. Because of this limited framework, sexual pleasure, or sexual pain as at least consensual in the narratives of Annah’s relationship to Gauguin, is embedded in the violence of Annah’s colonial archival portrayals. I also emphasise that this is part of the ongoing project of white supremacy as duress, and includes the denial of Annah’s childhood in narratives about them.

What difference a perception of Annah’s demeanor has on understandings of the relationship between them and Paul, predicated on understandings of what a certain demeanor supposedly *permits*, and with what degree of enthusiasm. For instance, Vargas Llosa’s biographical novel of Gauguin depicts Annah as fiery and impetuous. In the painting *Annah la Javanaise* itself, Annah is portrayed as being—according to simplistic abled understandings of outward demeanor—calm and smiling, open arms on the chair, legs crossed in comfort. There is the suggestion that they are comfortable with the monkey being in such close proximity to their naked body, an animal symbolising neutered Indonesian men; the film *King Kong* (1933) was, after all, set on the island of Nias off Sumatra, in what is now Indonesia (Rony, 1996), and similarity to apes has long been an insult towards enslaved and colonised peoples. The juxtaposition of this wildness in monkey form

and Annah's nude body with a Parisian domestic setting all go towards the suggestion of consent, and a legitimisation of the interaction between observer and Annah as object.

Thus Gauguin depicts Annah as willing participant before various histories chronicle her as being so—people have taken the painting as cue. Her characterisation as passive person who thus, it is assumed, is in a willing sexual relationship draws on aforementioned colonial tropes of colonised and enslaved peoples as happy to be so—but so do histories of Annah as being a spitfire, as this plays into the idea of the sexually exuberant and exotic native girl. Both act to 'de-stick', to use Ahmed's work again, the notion of Annah as a child in peril. If Saidiya Hartman says the aftermath of slavery is an aesthetic problem, with regards to how Black bodies carry the past, present and future (Hartman, 2008), I present the critical need for the study of visual cultures to foreground the sexual ablenormativity of historical interpretations, and in the importance of doing so for readings of subjects in history beyond the relatively recent present. I'm attempting to do that for us as brown bodies capable of pain.

Jasbir Puar's *The Right to Maim* (2017) calls attention to how rights-based discourses in Western countries coincide with discourses in which human populations within and outside those countries—but indelibly marked by the West's foreign policy—are deliberately made more vulnerable to disablement and debility in the name of profit. Puar argues that the focus on the disabled person as a neoliberal subject, a subject deserving of rights, obscures how countries in which these neoliberal subjects live continually oppress marginalised populations with economic and other forms of violence, reserving the right to maim and disable some while upholding the rights to safety and welfare of others (I discuss this further in Chapter Six). This maiming and disabling, Puar argues, also includes the dismantling of material and social infrastructures that would prevent such maiming, whether public healthcare or, ostensibly, humane child protection services.

Her examples of those that are maimed by neoliberalism include Palestinians in the Occupied Territories as well as Black Americans in places such as Flint, Michigan who are the recipients of life-altering environmental racism. Both the Black children of Flint and the Palestinian children of the Occupied Territories have been and continue to be maimed due to their classification as populations which others have the right to maim. The brown child(ren) named ‘Annah’ in *Annah la Javanaise* and Annah archives, I argue, fall inside this category as well, which explains why young schoolgirls in the West may increasingly be made aware of their right to sexual self-determination, agency, and protection, yet are told to admire work in which brown girls are hypersexualised and laid bare to deeply searing forms of harm.

There is a lack of empathy for these childrens’ narratives in the most-circulated media of the Western world. Indeed, considering disabled women and non-binary people, girls, children in general are multiple times more likely to be sexually abused, to be physically abused, and thus at much greater likelihood of being chronically pained, disabled women and non-binary people and children are not always included in the conversation. This is also tied to the lack of sexual education for D/deaf and disabled children. Again I use Sara Ahmed’s ‘stickiness’ of emotions (Ahmed, 2013), or lack thereof—also sociality of emotions, ‘towardsness’ as it relates to sexuality and non-sexuality—to show how lack of empathy for the needs and vulnerabilities of pained girls is (re)produced in visual perceptions of pained people as non-sexual, and all people with agency over their sexuality as non-pained, again using Emma Sheppard’s work on kink and crippling pain (Sheppard, 2017). I also note the difference between empathy and sympathy for pained girls, and the difficulties of expressing the lived-inness of pain to abled bodies as related. As discussed in Chapter Three, the pain of us pained people can exist on lower registers than it does for abled people, so the possibilities of its entanglements with sexuality and age of consent are also deemed counterintuitive—which they never are for us as pained adults. Queered, crippled temporalities also underscore how many different kinds of pain may exist simultaneously.

Here, I draw on the work of Subini Annamma (2017) and Clare Barker (2011), both of whom have written about disabled brown children's characterisation in Western countries and outside of them, in a way that illuminates why the (lack of) conversation around age and the age of consent for Annah(s) contribute to the possibility of them being a pained person.

Subini Annamma, working within a US context, wrote *The Pedagogy of Pathologization: Dis/abled Girls of Color in the School-prison Nexus* (2017). Her work draws on dis/ability critical race theory (Annamma, Connor & Ferri, 2013) or what she calls DisCrit, which provides a framework for understanding the confluence of racism and ableism in Black and brown children's lives in the US as multiply marginalising. I find resonance in Annamma's ethos of using DisCrit to examine 'dis/abled' Black and brown girls' lives, with an approach I aim for in addressing Annah archives:

'I utilized the work of an intellectual ancestor of Critical Race Theory, W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) who [...] found that Black people had unique knowledge and gifts to share with the world, specifically due to the oppression they faced. Therefore, this Gift Theory, as Reiland Rabaka (2010) later identified it, required me to refuse the notion that the girls were inherently dangerous or deviant. Instead, I conducted this work with the central assumption that multiply-marginalized disabled girls of color had Gifts I did not possess.'<sup>53</sup> (Annamma, 2017:p.5)

It is important, however, to note that what constitutes 'pain' is extremely variable and fluid, ranging from extremely acute pain from which a person is desperate to be relieved to low-level chronic pain that someone has learned to live with—because of this, we must examine the following quote while gesturing towards the multifaceted nature of being pained:

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<sup>53</sup> Contained within Annamma's explanation of the term 'dis/abled'.



‘Situating this work in DisCrit means that I *approached* this work understanding that there is nothing wrong with our students, their families, and their communities. That means I did not approach this work seeking to understand how to fix the girls in this study. I did not assume they were lying or seek to inform them how to live better lives.’ (Annamma, 2017:p.5)

I wholeheartedly agree with this approach, but as someone who has had many experiences of acute pain from which I should have been and wanted to be relieved, I would want possible Annahs not to suffer such pain—this does not, however, mean that I want to ‘fix’ them, but rather, the unnecessary conditions of suffering, the social mechanisms they were caught in. Potential Annahs who are pained at a level they can live with, however, may not have wanted their condition to be ‘fixed’ (I myself am a pained woman who does not want to be abled if the pain is manageable). It depends on soulbody experiences of pain across time, and within specific cultural frameworks of pain. Considering the existence of queered, crippled decolonised frameworks for time here, it is also possible to have multiple kinds of pain exist simultaneously.

In theorising Annah as a possibly-pained brown girl, I too, intend to open up the possibility of their Gifts, rather than paint them as one-dimensional, lacking anything to offer the world—as Marisa Fuentes does, I would like to write against ‘the bias grain’ (Fuentes 2016:p.78). I would like to consider this thesis and attendant artwork, as well as what I hope will be others’ responses to it, as forms of ‘corporeal generosity’, which Ros Diprose (2002) describes as ‘writing passionately in blood, writing in matter that defies the culturally informed habits and perception and judgement that would perpetuate injustice by shoring up body integrity, singular identity, and their distinctions between inside and outside, culture and nature, self and other’ (Diprose, 2002:p.100).

As written in Chapter Three, Annah is written of, whether in *LIFE Magazine* (LIFE, 1950) or by Nobel-winning novelist Mario Vargas Llosa (Llosa, 2003), as criminal, deviant—she steals from Gauguin and breaks his heart after reinvigorating him artistically and sexually. As I've written in that chapter, this deviance is connected to racialised stereotypes applied to women and girls who might be labelled 'Javanaise'. The effects of these racialised stereotypes of deviance, dangerousness and criminality are also, I argue—and make explicit in my performance *Annah: Nomenclature* (2018)—to make the children who were Annah(s) already more vulnerable by being attached to racialised labels, even more at risk of being harmed by being characterised as adult. This imposed adulthood is fundamentally important for increased risk of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, including by, as Annamma writes (2017), institutions. I note that institutions here also include art institutions, and governments who determine realms and modes of punishment and care. This is where age and constructed notions of childhood and adulthood are paramount, particularly as they relate to France, race, and imperial duress.

Annamma writes that Black and brown children in the US are more susceptible to being labelled as 'dis/abled' in the classroom setting, and that this increases their likelihood of being shunted into the school-to-prison pipeline; that such labelling is a way for educational institutions to relinquish care (2017). This resonates in how the criminal acts of theft and sex work in 1890s France were attributed to Annah in some accounts of her, accounts that did not describe her as a child—in other words, Annah is criminalised in a way I argue is parallel to how disabled children of colour, including pained children, are in the US today. US schools have a framework of care that they are ostensibly tasked with in their mandates, and labelling a child 'dis/abled' in a way that makes such children more susceptible to the US school-to-prison pipeline allows such institutions to easily relinquish this mandate of care. I argue that the duress of colonial France's historical mistreatment of brown girls, and its duress in Western arts institutions, involves perpetuating ablenormative characterisations of Annah in art institutions as well as perpetuating myths that only

adults can commit what the state deems crimes, and the myth that disabled children are universally cared for in countries such as the US.

This is particularly salient if we consider that Annah may have come from territories now liable to be described, and inscribed, as being ‘the Third World’, and that the portrayal of disabled children from these territories (including what was then the Dutch East Indies and is now Indonesia) follows political and socioeconomic narratives, particularly in art. Clare Barker specifically describes such narratives within literary works. In her book *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability: Exceptional Children, Metaphor and Materiality* (2011), Barker examines the ways in which disabled children in such novels as Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (1991) are interpreted as metaphors for larger narratives on nationhood, whether the promise of that nationhood, nationhood as ‘freak show’ (in the case of *Midnight’s Children*), or national disunity, to name a few frameworks of ‘the disabled child-nation’ (Barker, 2011:p.3) collapsing the ‘developing country’ with the child. Barker provides sharp theoretical critiques of the tropes we see repeated in both contemporary fiction and media portrayals of disabled children, which I will return to in Chapter Six:

‘In the explosion of representations that accompany war, famine, natural disaster and civil disorder, [...] aid campaigns often rely for their impact on overdetermined associations of disability--and childhood—with helplessness and victimhood. [...] Media representations of global trauma capitalize on this formation of the child’s docile or fragile body, emphasizing its susceptibility to disablement in order to heighten the sense of humanitarian crisis and to insist on the urgency of western intervention—the “myth of rescue” by which stigmatized postcolonial subjects “are constructed as being in need of rescue from their own culture” (Kim and Jarman, 2008, pp. 67, 65).’ (Barker, 2011:p.11)

This quote is included in full because of its fundamental importance to the Annah narratives I am attempting to tease out as being many possibilities, as infinite: recognising possible disabled Annahs must, I argue, never fall into the above capitalisation, nor into tropes of needing white or Western saviours. In fact, possible disabled Annahs act in defiance of such tropes, and my creative work as part of this thesis poses such supposed saviours as traps of endangerment and harm. I also aim to recognise individual possible Annahs without the ‘individualization, narrativation and sentimentality [...] strategically deployed in images of disabled “poster children”’ (Barker, 2011:p. 11) to serve tropes of disabled children needing to be saved by the West.

I also aim to subvert the frameworks of temporality usually associated with paternalistic, colonial narratives admonishing rescue of the disabled child in or from a ‘developing’ country. In such narratives,

‘[t]he disabled child generates a desire for a story by inviting speculation and development (“what happens next to this child?”) and futurity and development (“what happens next to this child?”)’ (Barker, 2011:p.11)

Whilst in my creative work, I place Annah as a child in different possible temporal subjectivities, particularly those native to Indonesia, including Javanese subjectivities that I’ve also identified as potentially queer time in the vein of Jose Esteban Muñoz (Muñoz, 2009) and crip time and crip futurity in the vein of McRuer (2014). The notions of ‘past’, ‘present’ and ‘future’ in Annah narratives, as exemplified by the three Interlude chapters of this thesis, are purposefully fluid, interlocking, simultaneous. This concept of time in which a disabled child such as possible Annahs live aims to throw a wrench into the teleological argument of ‘developed country’ as goal and messiah.

All of the above is important because *Annah la Javanaise* the painting and the Annah archives circulate, are archived, and preserved in countries where the rights of the child are a professed tenet of contemporary law—yet Annahs are never treated as children under these contemporary rights. The painting is not treated as evidence of what would today be a heinous crime, but evidence of Gauguin’s genius, rather than his endangerment of the vulnerable. Annah as portraits and a painting represent a likely battered and/or otherwise mistreated child. Their visual archives are of violence against children, yet the painting *Annah la Javanaise* is treated as trophy and literal priceless artifact. In the vein of Barker (2011), I argued in Chapter Three that if Annah is consistently portrayed as being from a colony, yet with no consistency as to which, she is a metaphor for the lack of care given former colonies, even today—as this shoddy art historiography continues. In other words, she serves as metaphor as a form of imperial duress. Further, I argue that the possibility of Annah as a pained child seems ‘counterintuitive’ to those ascribing to abled colonial white supremacist narratives because the possibility of Annah as pained and Annah as a child both expose fallacies: in the notion of rights-based discourses being applied consistently to both children and disabled populations by Western countries—note that echoing Puar, I say ‘by’ and not ‘in’ to reflect foreign policy’s global impact—while this image continues to be part of the mythos of not only Gauguin’s artistic genius, but the central importance of white male artists and arts institutions that uphold them as central to colonial white supremacism’s hold on nationhood.

My points above show how the real person/people portrayed in *Annah la Javanaise* was/were not only possibly pained, but more likely than not to have been pained or abused due to being in a dangerous childhood, made vulnerable by virtue of being racialised, and sexualised as commodity. I argue that because Annah body/bodies was/were brown, art historical archives and contemporary art institution texts conspire to eliminate their childhood by making them consenting adults at the age of around thirteen. How disability and sexuality interact, particularly as painedness is ‘invisible’, is highly variable, racialised (Pickens, 2019; Schalk, 2018) and if one adds to this the

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element of sexual ablenormativity imposed upon children, how Annah could have been perceived in 1890s France as a disabled brown child creates perspectives previously untouched in the literature.

Thus my scholarly work is deliberately going ‘against the bias grain’ (Fuentes, 2016), operating on registers of visual signalling for *Annah la Javanaise* that may seem ‘counterintuitive’ to ablenormative thought but in fact is highly intuitive from my perspective as a pained, brown person. Lack of attention to the possibility of Annah’s painedness by art institutions past and present is a result of this conspiring to create a ‘stickiness’ (Ahmed, 2013) of a lack of empathy for the child or children who really existed, surrounded by white men and women in the arts as a kept object. I also open up the field to Javanese and other Indonesian subjectivities, the notion of the ‘soulbody’ and queered, decolonised, crippled time in order to create possibilities for pained Annahs to exist simultaneously, for various Annahs to help each other, as they do in my creative work. In the next chapter, I will draw from more archival texts on Annah, to draw direct lines between the forces keeping them vulnerable in the 1890s and those same forces continuing to imperil Black and brown women, non-binary people, and children today, making us dangerously likely to be pained beyond reason.

## Interlude Two: Queering and Crippling Time (Creative Writing)

[Caption for *Annah La Javanaise*]

300 AD. A Minangkabau woman foresees her offspring moving to Java, and one of them moving to Paris. She is also met with women in India, in Guyana, in South Africa (Cape Malay), in Sri Lanka, in Malaysia, in Polynesia, in Nepal. You know they made up some of our names and and so many of our borders in any case.

‘But I feel that she is in pain and no one believes her,’ says the woman in what is today Bukittinggi, West Sumatra.

So do I, says the woman in what is today Ahmedabad.

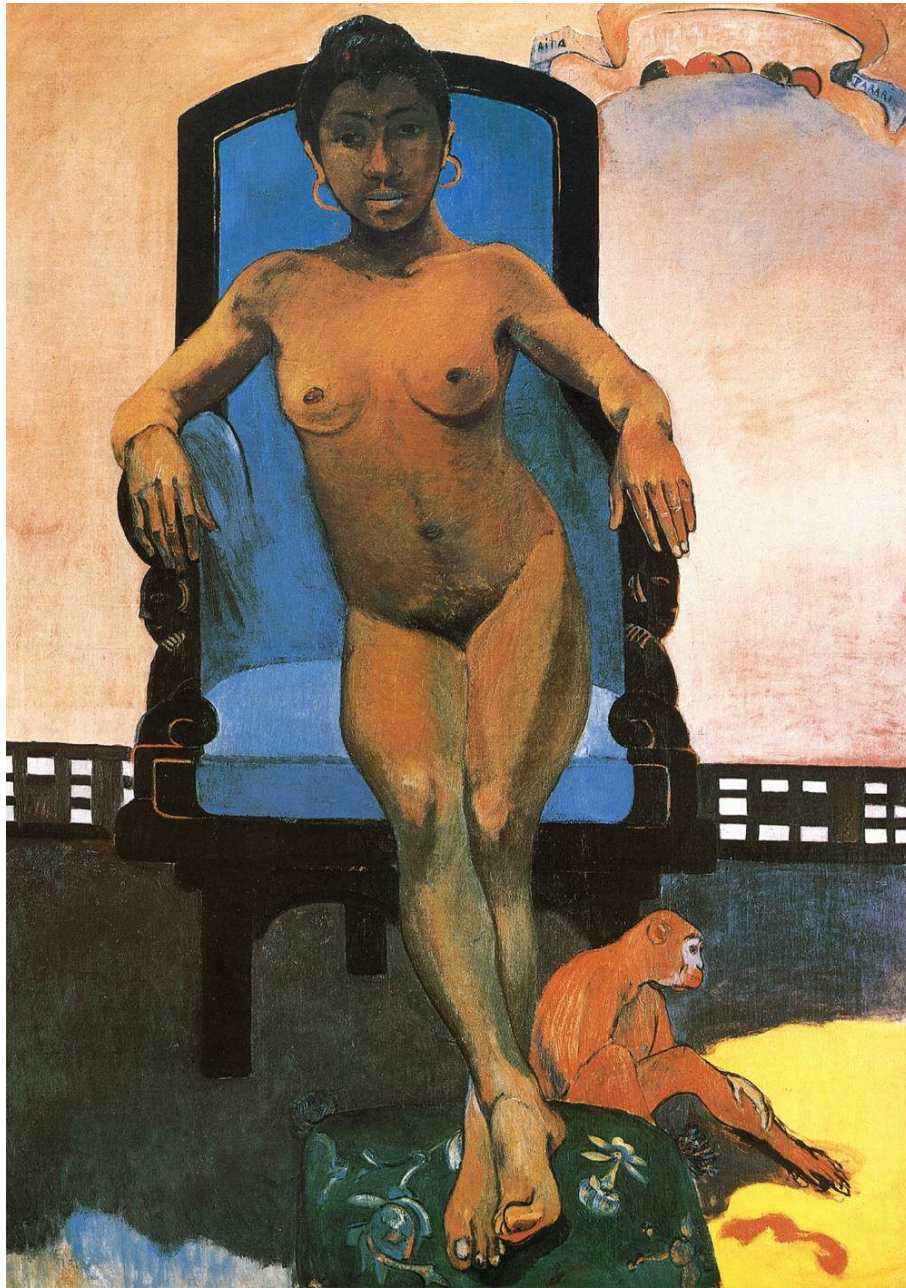
So do I, says the woman in what is today Mancora.

So do I, says the woman in what is today As Sarriyah.

So do I, says each woman in shapeshifting villages, townships, cities and shores.

They are visited by Nyi Roro Kidul, Javanese goddess of the Indian Ocean, in the incarnation of when her skin was deemed ugly, and she had to swim into the waves. And the women pray with their bodies across time and space, for their children who are their children’s children’s children’s children’s—on and on and on—children.

## Chapter Six: Threatening Systems of Duress



[Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese*, or *Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>54</sup> Painting of a naked child on a chair, her hair in a bun, her ankles crossed, arms on the chair. Monkey at her feet.]

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<sup>54</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001:p.199.



‘Seorang pejuang harus bisa menahan resiko, apapun yang terjadi... Seorang pejuang harus bisa melaluinya.

[A fighter has to be able to take risks, no matter what happens... A fighter must be able to get through it all.]’

- Nurma, a West Sumatran woman whose family suffered during the Soeharto dictatorship, quoted and translated by Yenny Narny in her PhD thesis at Deakin University, *Resilience of West Sumatran Women: Historical, Cultural and Social Impacts* (2016: pp.94-95)

‘An opera singer, Mme. Nina Pack, was on friendly terms with a rich banker who had business relations with the traders of the Malayan Isles. The singer happened to say before the representative of one of these, “I would like to have a little negro girl.” A few months later a policeman brought Mme. Nina Pack a young, half-breed, half-Indian, half-Malayan, who had been found wandering about the Gare de Lyon. She had a label hung around her neck, with the inscription: *Mme Nina Pack, rue de la Rochefoucauld, à Paris. Envoi de Java.* She was given the name of Anna. Some time later, in consequence of a little domestic drama in which Anna was implicated, she was dismissed. She came to me, as I had known her at her employer’s house, to ask me to find her a good situation. I judged her qualifications as a housemaid to be very middling, and thought she stood more chance of succeeding as a model. I told Gauguin about her.

“Send her to me. I’ll try her,” he said.

Anna pleased him, and he kept her.’

- Ambroise Vollard, Gauguin's art dealer (Vollard

1936:p.230-231)

The previous chapters of this thesis have elucidated how the possibility of Annah being in pain, and of *Annah la Javanaise* possibly being a painting of a child in pain, is an outcome of Annah(s) being in situations where they were so vulnerable to harm, isolated and only in the company of older Parisians who did not see them as human. This chapter focusses on four main institutions—(1) the international finance and banking system, (2) police states and state and institutional violence as enforcers of harm against Black, brown, Asian and Indigenous peoples, including both children and adults, (3) the ‘development’ industry and (4) the global neoliberal art market—as interlocking systems of white supremacist, ableist oppression, that continue the circumstances Annah(s) were in into the present day. In other words, Stoler’s (2016) concept of imperial duress, of imperial durabilities existing as marks—not traces, but the more visceral, substantive *marks*—throughout the world. These four institutional fields also form the structure of the *Annah, Infinite* project as it will be laid out in book form, into the four chapters or sections, with interspersed vignettes and images. The quote from Vollard’s book above is included in my book excerpt for *The White Review* (Barokka, 2019) as part of my practice portfolio, but is repeated here in full. This is to highlight how shockingly immediate the connection is between the institutions mentioned above. How Annah became a likely indentured servant and likely abused child, and how there is a direct link between the structures that imperiled Annahs and imperilment of Black and brown people today, including disabled children. For they are all, ultimately, the same system of white supremacist, ableist, capitalist oppression.

The institutions in question in the Vollard quote are:

(1) The international finance and banking system: the banker who worked in the ‘Malayan Isles’, who facilitated Annah’s capture, transport to Paris, and ultimate abandonment to further slavers;

(2) State and institutional violence: Annah was found and brought to Nina Pack by a policeman, and policemen watched on as European male painters surrounded Annah as a child, as Annah became an indentured domestic slave under Nina Pack;

(3) The arts, in the form of Pack, Vollard, and their coterie, including Gauguin.

The international ‘development’ industry, the fourth structure I bring to attention here, was formed in the wake of decolonisation, and was not present in the 1890s. However, its presence is extremely important in conjunction with the aforementioned other three interlinked structures, in the contemporary world of neoliberal globalisation within which *Annah la Javanaise* circulates. Each of these structures relates to memories and materialities—the violent ‘marks’ Stoler (2016) emphasises over the more ephemeral concept of ‘traces’—of Annahs past and also Annahs present. Each creates debility and vulnerability to suffering for Black, brown, Asian and Indigenous adults and children, children who continue to be treated as Annahs were.

It feels like an overwhelming task to summarise in this chapter the entirety of what Annah’s potential painedness represents, the thread of duress into the present from their pain to others’ now living. I think about all the forms of resistance to socioecological crisis that are currently and have been underway in Indonesia, all the people whom Annah’s body represents: the vagueness, as I wrote in Chapter Three, of the term ‘La Javanaise’ encompassing all brown people with femme characteristics. The majority of the world, with our infinite number of experiences, thousands of languages and cultures, many at risk, subsumed into one non-specific category. I think of all the ways we could be pained, for all kinds of reasons, many reasons imposed by other bodies, whether cancer epidemics from pollution that stems from industry

lobbying, land grab for factories to destroy women farmers' lands—as is the threat currently in Kendeng, Java, Indonesia, and a vast number of other locales—from carelessness and disrespect for human lives that are, like Annah, seen as objects, accessories, incapable of pain.

As in Mel Y. Chen's article 'Brain Fog' (2014), which I discussed in Chapter Two, expendable people in expendable locales are sent toxic materials and waste from Western countries, such that disability and toxicities bound up in it are racialised. With Ahmed's (2014) affective economy, the lack of care and concern for disabled, brown children manifests in toxicities, in the stickiness of material ecologies that rely on people thinking of children like Annah as incapable of pain. Chen (2014) references Nirmala Erevelles' work on the school-to-prison pipeline in the US for disabled children of colour as an example of this flow of toxicities and lack of empathy. To this, I would like to add Subini Annamma's (2017) recent work on disabled US girls of colour in particular as servicing the school-to-prison pipeline. The vast trade in private prisons means disabled children of colour are serving the capitalist machine when they are imprisoned.

I perceive another kind of servicing in the creation of disabled child bodies as feeding international NGOs' need for 'target populations', 'stakeholders', and 'beneficiaries'. Similarly, Julie Livingston's 2006 ethnography of debility and disability in Botswana mining communities describes a system of efficiency. A system wherein miners are debilitated, and also provided with wheelchairs, prosthetics and the like by the same mining companies, in order to manage their debilitated bodies. Thanks to 'British colonial and South African industrial interests' (Livingston, 2006:p.112) in Botswana, the capitalist need for mining had an in-built understanding that bodies would be debilitated and disabled. Non-miners who become disabled, Livingston writes, may have a chance of receiving the same access tools from NGOs, but overall the debilitated miners fare better with companies. This management of debility is a feature of both the 'development industry' as interacting with, and part of the same structures

as, capitalist hyperextraction of resources through mining and plantations. Both of these dynamics are still ravaging Indonesians, especially indigenous peoples and their lands.

Saying that Annah could not have been in pain is an act of violence—it is, again, overwhelming to me to attempt to list the innumerable ways that we witness Annah narratives. Of vulnerable soulbodies being expected to bear every kind of likely assault and not be deserving of empathy and protection and recognition of the danger they face. It is an impossible task. I have experienced what racialised ableism is like in the three Western countries I have lived my life in, the US, the UK, and Australia, and also in other countries including in Indonesia, where I grew up as well. As Jasbir Puar's *The Right to Maim* (2017) reminds us, national borders are no boundaries against the effects of foreign policies on bodies, especially brown, black, Asian, Indigenous bodies. Especially disabled bodies, and the creation of disabled bodies in places lacking support for them.

With this caveat in mind, I posit that it is, in fact, possible to link disparate and multitudinous structures of oppression to the four interlinked abstract systems.

## **(1) State Violence and (2) International Finance and Banking as Interlinked Systems**

It is important to discuss state violence and international neoliberal economics of finance and banking together, particularly from the context of Annah as potentially Indonesian. As an Indonesian girl raised by activist parents, I grew up understanding how interlinked neoliberal capitalism in Indonesia is with no less than genocide. I've known the state was capable of mass murder from at least the age of eight or nine, and that this genocide of '65-'66, which I've discussed in Chapter Three, led to the disappearance and murder of activists and to capitalist expansion.

It behooves me to briefly explain more about the implications of the 1965-66 genocide, which forms a large part of the forthcoming book of creative nonfiction based on this PhD thesis (working title: *Annah, Infinite*), and which has shaped my life and my outlook. Part of *Annah, Infinite* is about linking what happens to Annah(s) to the legacy of the Western-backed 1965-66 genocide in Indonesia. The mass slaughter, abuse, imprisonment and suppression of artists, activists, and other civilians that began then, but continued throughout, the thirty-three years of Soeharto's dictatorship, installed by the genocide and blamed on the Indonesian Communist Party. Soeharto was deposed in 1998. When I was eight or nine years old, circa 1993-94—despite the protections of parents who'd met as student activists, and surrounded me with their own accounts of politics, and with family friends who were artists in exile or whose families were threatened by the dictatorship—I was traumatised by state media to an extent of harm that I am still resolving today. This involved rumours of communist women's torture of male generals' genitalia, while these women danced around their victims, their killing of the good apparati of the state; a repeated reversal of true victims and true perpetrators. These political dynamics are linked to Indonesian Women's Movement activists, who were targeted and killed in the genocide (Cribb, 2004; Pohlman, 2008), and to other women activists.

Indonesian feminisms and women-centred cultures were vibrant and progressive long before any similar political and cultural developments in the West. Apart from my own Minangkabau matrilineal society, to name just one example of such a culture (Minangkabau are the largest matrilineal society in the world), we had numerous women freedom fighters under colonialism, already more equitable a movement than suffragettes' non-acknowledgment of colonised women. Even under colonialism, the Indonesian Women's Movement had a National Women's Congress in the 1920s that called for an end to polygamy and a claiming of women's rights. The murder of women activists in '65-'66 decimated this movement, and the New Order dictatorship deliberately tried to terrify young children, young girls like me and my peers, away

from Indonesian feminisms. This thesis is personal proof that, with great thanks to what my family had already told me of state deception, they did not succeed. This thesis is a form of processing trauma. Our national mythology of fabricated stories is what I recognise today as torture pornography.

My time as an Indonesian girl living in the New Order dictatorship was filled with people who were resisting in ways large and small, with laughter and food and art that was made in quiet and in palatable public ways. Mine was a rich childhood, and my parents and their compatriots were an object lesson in long-term strategising of opposition, of choosing battles and modes of expression.

This experience is in contrast to the ‘discovery’ tropes regarding the 1965-66 massacres that fiction writer and media scholar Intan Paramaditha (2018) chastises Western artists for purporting. This includes Anonymous and Joshua Oppenheimer’s films *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2014). In films such as Anonymous and Oppenheimer’s, there is no evidence of continual resistance by Indonesians throughout the dictatorship, and today. Our experiences of living within the New Order are also in contrast to the monolithic image of suffering imposed by development tropes. In such tropes, our suffering is regarded as somehow separate from, and relying on, Western policies—rather than the result of such policies.

In 2015, I wrote an article as Anonymous for *The New Inquiry*, entitled ‘Nightmares of 1965’. I enclose it as part of the practice-based portfolio for this thesis, and direct the reader to it, in order not to repeat myself with regards to statements on the psychosocial effects of living under the New Order dictatorship. I was anonymous because as much as I would like to say I live in no fear, as someone literally funded by an Indonesian government scholarship to do this PhD over four years here in the UK—and as someone who knows, by virtue of my family, far too many outspoken people whose lives have been threatened by accusations of communism—I

have people I'd like to protect. Particularly in this era in which anti-Communist sentiment is still used to imperil and imprison people in Indonesia, and is on the rise, and considering my whole family lives in Indonesia (apart from a few cousins who have migrated to Europe and the US).

I address the history of the 1965-66 genocide in Indonesia in Chapter Three; I bring it up again here because of the fundamental importance of linking 1965-66 to all the socioecological crises that have happened since, and to the four institutions I mention here. Simply put, the genocide was an instrument of the Cold War, and wiped out alternatives to a capitalism that has continued to decimate the fourth most populous country in the world. With the World Bank and International Monetary Fund imposing structural adjustment loans creating huge debt, and neoliberal economics that destroy public welfare, Indonesia is among the many countries that have been underdeveloped due to policies enforced by Bretton Woods institutions. These are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Peet, 2009).

This neoliberal encroachment ranges from the world's largest gold mine in the Indonesian province of West Papua, the Freeport McMoran mine protected by the military, seeding violence and deathly pollution for locals (Kyriakakis, 2005; Chao, 2019), to Trump's resort-building in Bali, presumably in ignorance of how the island is the site of mass graves as much as rich culture (if any thought at all is given to Balinese culture). The site of farmers' paddy fields being bought by foreign investors, in a place where ties to the land, sea, rivers, are spiritual, yet have been glossed over in favour of Elizabeth Gilbert's (2009) *Eat, Pray, Love* phenomenon.<sup>55</sup> 'I want to go someplace where I can marvel at something,' says Julia Roberts in the cinematic adaptation (Murphy, 2010) of Gilbert's book. What is marvelled over, objectified, includes Indonesian, Balinese people and their lands and waters. There is a thruline of violence

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<sup>55</sup> For further reading on *Eat, Pray, Love* (Gilbert, 2009), Asia and tourism, see (Larasati, 2010).



that reaches to colonialism and even before, but the violent marks of Soeharto's dictatorship continue to this very day, its own form of duress.<sup>56</sup>

Among these forms of New Order era duress *as part of* imperial duress are the politics of remembrance and forgetfulness, and here I focus particularly on the Indonesian women's movement. Violence against women did not stop with the 1965-66 genocide, far from it. The labor organiser Marsinah was raped and killed during the New Order era, alongside many other instances of sexual and physical violence against women instigated by the government. Leftists continued to be 'disappeared', including poet Wiji Thukul in 1998, the year Soeharto was ousted; a recent history of violence towards artists that informs Annah's own journey in *Annah, Infinite*, and my own.

Banned art included songs such as 'Genjer-Genjer', a song tied by the New Order to Communist women and banned for decades, a song that my musician friends still face opposition in performing in Indonesia. I've sung this song in a number of performance works, including in performance installation *Annah: Nomenclature*, commissioned by and performed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in 2018. Despite a positive *Art Asia Pacific* review of the performance (Masterson, 2018), I noted the white, male reviewer's assertion that I needed to delve more deeply into the 1965-66 genocide, that it was a shame I hadn't, as this was important. He was not aware of the different meanings I'd interwoven into my visual and song choices, that were not merely children's songs or lullabies but each one a song containing political subtext. Meanings Indonesian viewers, who approached me after the show, understood and appreciated. The reviewer was not aware of the very real fear I had to break through to even sing 'Genjer-Genjer', as a woman who had grown up in the New Order, who is in the UK funded by an Indonesian government still ruled by so many New Order shadows. To name just

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<sup>56</sup> It is the same duress that means I balk slightly at having to cite academic references for the Soeharto dictatorship, when I was born into it and lived under it until I was thirteen. This is embodied knowledge, generational knowledge, and a firsthand survivor's account; my soulbody feels a twinge of concern at having somatic knowledge forms seen as less 'accurate' or 'truthful' than the academic work of white, Western academic allies.

one prominent example, General Prabowo, who committed mass human rights violations and massacres under Soeharto, and has never been tried, has been able to run for presidential office twice in recent years. The past is now, and is embodied. The *Art Asia Pacific* review reminded me that even my own embodied trauma and artistic catharsis may be refracted on a mass scale through the lens of white male ‘experts’. I mention this because I want to emphasise the many, at times ‘minute’, forms of cultural violence linked to the politics of 1965-66 remembrance, in this case in the arts and in reception of work I have created for *Annah*, *Infinite* and this thesis.

This is a form of ‘testimonial injustice’ (Carel and Kidd, 2014) that I experience repeatedly as a disabled, racialised migrant woman. In the case of the *Art Asia Pacific* review of the ICA performance, my testimony of pain’s possibility in Annah(s) as related to the ’65-’66 genocide is denigrated as insufficient. This is because my womanhood, my race, my nationality, and my disabled, chronically ill, and chronically pained status, as well as my crippling and decolonial perspectives in my art, are all factors linked to ‘the presumptive attribution of characteristics like cognitive unreliability and emotional instability that downgrade the credibility of [...] testimonies’ (Carel & Kidd, 2014:p.529). Indeed, all of this discrediting contributes to why I was compelled to undertake this thesis, as a pained person who has been repeatedly disbelieved about my own body over nearly a decade. Though other Indonesians understood my hermeneutics of Indonesian cultural cues—such as the choice of songs to sing, and the exact moments in which I chose to sing them, against specifically determined visual backdrops in my installation film—that these cues even existed is negated by a white male reviewer’s hermeneutic and epistemic privilege.

Though much academic work has been written on Indonesia’s legacies and ongoing violence (see for instance Anderson & Kahin (eds.), 2009; see also the academic journal *Indonesia*, published since April 1966 and based at the Kahin Centre for Southeast Studies at Cornell University, where I have interned (Barker & Tagliacozzo (eds.), 2019)), this remains a

‘niche’ endeavour in Western scholarship, and is still dominated by the work of US scholars. This is because Southeast Asian studies, for instance, is still regarded as ‘area studies’ unrelated to the US. Even Asian-American studies and studies of Asian immigrants are marginalised, as Viet Thanh Nguyen argues (Nguyen, 2002; Nguyen, 2006). Despite so much art in the form of novels, films, and nonfiction books being devoted to ‘Vietnam’ in the US, it is still overwhelmingly shorthand for the Vietnam War, Nguyen states, and even then it is that war from the US perspective.

I contend here that this is also because of a lack of translation of scholarship from Indonesia, Vietnam, and elsewhere. This means hermeneutic injustice for Southeast Asian scholars, who are expected to write in English for a ‘global’ audience, yet whose universities have not had the financial means, over the past several decades, to subscribe to academic journal networks. This contributes to how the ’65-’66 genocide in Indonesia, as well as its antecedents and aftermath, are not common knowledge in Western countries—despite Western involvement. The act of ‘recovering’ Indonesian violence is not recognised as also being part of Western history as perpetrators, because Indonesian and other Southeast Asian scholars remain marginalised within English-speaking academia. This is in itself a form of cultural imperialism, including cultural memory imperialism.

In cultural memory studies, Kali Tal’s ‘Remembering Difference: Working Against Eurocentric Bias in Contemporary Scholarship on Trauma and Memory’ (1996) argues persuasively that Eurocentricity ignores the genocides of Indigenous, Black and minority Americans, preferring to retell repeatedly the story of the Jewish Holocaust, in which Europeans and Americans are portrayed as heroes. Trauma, Tal asserts, is thus portrayed as exceptional, rather than the bedrock of United States history. I would like to add here that the genocidal history of US imperialism overseas should also be treated with equal attention and given the same weight as European genocide.

State violence, of course, did not begin with the 1965-66 genocide, which I count as part of imperial duress—the Western backers of this genocide are also complicit in colonialism, and the need to exploit Indonesian resources stems from the capitalist imperatives of colonialism. The New Order itself *is* a manifestation of colonialism from the Cold War era, of neoliberal capitalism seeing Indonesia as a marketplace and site for resource extraction—the basis of colonialism.

In fact, as researcher and writer Flavia Dzodan writes of her firsthand research:

’(T)he Dutch East Indies Company was the first global corporation to actually create racial categories and taxonomies [...] I was poring through the cargo manifests of their vessels and you can see how they created taxonomies of cargo where [sic] enslaved human beings were named "pieces" and listed alongside "x pounds of coffee" for example’.’ (Dzodan, 2018)

Neoliberal economics, an extension of the colonial corporate world, was first coined by French economist Charles Gide ‘at the very end of the nineteenth century’ (Thorsen & Lie, 2006:p.11)—the time of *Annah la Javanaise*. Sociologist David Harvey defines neoliberalism as:

‘an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices [...] It must [...] set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as

land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary.’ (Harvey, 2005:p.2, as quoted in Thorsen & Lie, 2006:p.11)

Annahs’ supposed origins are all colonies, all imperially controlled *markets*. Crucially, they are all places regarded today as ‘emerging markets’. As politics scholar and Indonesianist Lisa Tilley cogently writes,

‘the emerging market term functions as a racial signifier, maintaining the hierarchical distinction between the “superior” developed West and its “inferior” Others, even when this is grounded in no differential economic correlate. In this sense the emerging market label has dual and seemingly diametric functions – first as a marker of optimism, of inclusion within the world of mobile capital, of investibility; and second as a marker of exclusion from the world of developed markets.’ (Tilley, 2018:n.p.)

Going back to the politics of remembrance, Tilley writes that ‘the emerging market discourse is understood here as a mode of constructing investibility which was explicitly authored to replace the once emancipatory idea of the Third World’ (ibid.:n.p.). Incidentally, a cornerstone event in the history of decolonisation as emancipatory movements was the 1955 Asian-African Conference, comprised of nation-states in the Non-Aligned Movement. Held in the city of Bandung, West Java, it was an ‘important landmark in the growth of co-operation among the Asian-African peoples. The proposal to hold the Conference was specifically made by Dr. Ali Sastroamidjojo, Prime Minister of Indonesia, on 13 January 1954’ (Appadorai, 1955). Ten years after this in Indonesia came genocide, and the installment of a dictator by the CIA and its allies, which allowed

dictator Soeharto to begin mass exploitation of Indonesian resources, and land grabs, that echoed colonial policies and served the Indonesian oligarchy and their wealthy foreign corporate allies.

Everyone benefitting from the fruits of capitalism, all of us, are embroiled in geographer Kathryn Yusoff's notion of 'banal violence' (Yusoff, 2012), in which everyday acts contribute to extinctions elsewhere in the world. However, I venture the notion of what is 'banal' and not depends on Ahmed's (2004) 'stickiness' of emotions contributing to how empathy for another group is formed or not. For instance, as an Indonesian, I am conscious that palm oil plantations contribute to death, illness and homeland destruction. The violence of a candy bar containing palm oil, even when sold in London, is less 'banal' for me. I also posit that the principles of white supremacy contribute to 'habitat destruction' not including violence towards indigenous and other peoples in areas that are deemed 'nature', and for the diminishing of Southeast Asian genocides, such as Pol Pot's Cambodian massacre and the 1965-66 Indonesian genocide. The neoliberal capitalist political economy, as an outgrowth of white supremacy, is as truly global in scope as its colonial antecedents, and continues the notion that those not deemed white are less than human, less capable of pain.

All of these harms are perpetuated by state violence protecting the interests of the international finance and banking system that employs hyperextraction of human labour and human lives, lands, and waters, to service the neoliberal white supremacist ableist capitalist system. It behooves us to remember that Gauguin was, at one point, a stockbroker (Brettell & Fonsmark, 2007:p.25).

### **The International 'Development' Industry and the Art Market**

The sectors of the international 'development' industry and the international art market may seem like unlikely bedfellows. However, they both inscribe the overarching ideology of

ableist white supremacist capitalism in ways that are not so different—and part of the success of this inscription of ideology is that the constructs of international ‘development’ and the art market are made to seem separate, unrelated. However, they both prescribe the role of Black and brown children in the white supremacist capitalist ableist world order, albeit in different ways, but serving the same overarching system of neoliberal economics and white supremacy. Both are serving the same people, and with relevance to this thesis, the success of both sectors, working in concert, is evident in pain for Annah(s) being cast in doubt.

The international art market is a collection of mechanisms intent on keeping the monetary value of *Annah la Javanaise* high, its collector’s name hidden, and the nature of the painting in service of Gauguin’s legacy unbesmirched. In *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art*, Olav Velthuis writes that

‘markets are, apart from anything else, cultural constellations. Like any other type of social interaction, market exchange is highly ritualized; it involves a wide variety of symbols that transfer rich meanings between people who exchange goods with each other. These people are connected through ties of different sorts, whose emergence, maintenance, and possible decay involve complex social processes.’ (Velthuis, 2007:p.3)

In the face of these relationships’ possible decay, the ‘stickiness’ of emotions (Ahmed, 2013) of empathy towards Gauguin and lack of empathy towards Annahs keep art dealer, auction house, collector, museums (to which *Annah la Javanaise* may be loaned, for instance), libraries belonging to museums or universities, educators, and the average person acquainted with Gauguin all in agreement. All perpetuating the same mythos of the artist’s work in relation to Annahs as benign and even edifying.

Not long ago, I was asked to describe my thesis by a literary colleague, who then proceeded to tell me all about his trip to the most recent Tate exhibit of Gauguin. ‘But Gauguin, [...] is he just bad, is he?’ this colleague asked in earnest, before continuing to describe the artist’s printmaking work. ‘Bad’ here refers to Gauguin as abuser of women and children. So strong are these emotions of reverence and congeniality towards *a specific version* of the legacy of Gauguin as genius, so difficult to mar is it, that even the clear equivocation that he was an abuser sparks only mild wavering. The benevolent genius version of Gauguin is one that has obfuscated his unequivocal violations, and uphold this myth of *Gauguin as intrinsic value and betterment* to the intellect, to the morals. Understanding Gauguin’s work to be morally edifying as a sign of one’s ‘civilisation’. It is the mark of white supremacy, of Stoler’s (2016) notion of imperial duress, that the cogs of the machine run so smoothly, that a criminal’s work can be so hallowed as edification, that the machinery which I perceive so clearly as a disabled Minang-Javanese woman is deemed imperceptible.

The contemporary art market that supports Gauguin’s *Annah la Javanaise* as valuable monetarily is a network of ableist practices, that do not recognise themselves as being such, yet are systematic in implementing specific views and relations of power. These views are ocularcentric ones. Ones in which blind and sight-impaired people are seen as curios or objects rather than creators or analysts of visual art themselves—see the work of blind scholar Georgina Kleege, including ‘Blindness and visual culture: An eyewitness account’ (Kleege, 2005)—and that are deterministic in claiming itself, as so many do, as understanding what a painting signifies of the abled or disabled nature of the subject. All despite the prevalence of ‘invisible’ disability. As I discuss in Chapter Five, intellectual historian Martin Jay has written (1993) about Western intellectual thought turning against the ocularcentricity of modern European philosophies of visual cultures. However, those Jay cites as instigating this philosophical turn are white women theorists coming from an abled perspective.



I argue that a crip reading is required in which ocularcentricity has always been challenged by those attaching primacy to different sensorial modes, including disabled artists, writers, and theorists. Furthermore, the way theorists of colour and theorists from the Global South conceptualise sensorial modes has been incredibly varied over time, and any analysis of intellectual histories needs to be cognisant of narrowmindedness, of an unwarranted focus on white, European intellectual thought.

This is deeply linked to the racist, ablenormative violences of the imperial state's duress, and are also linked to the monetary wealth and clout of those who profit from the circulation of *Annah la Javanaise*. Velthuis (2007), finds that prices themselves have emotional and social value in the contemporary art market, that a high price is a symbol of pride for artist, owner, dealer, compared to a previously low price. 'Culture is *restraining* in economic life insofar as cultural values codetermine which types of goods can be exchanged, which social and cultural contexts are legitimate for conducting this exchange, and which business practices this exchange should be accompanied by' (Velthuis, 2007:p.4). This includes, he says, the white-walled architecture of Western art galleries over the past sixty years, a deviation from which would cost a gallery its reputation.

'To give another example: when it comes to setting prices, ostentatious price decreases need to be avoided because such decreases harm the status of dealers and reputation of artists significantly in the eyes of their peers.

At the same time, culture is *enabling*, since it provides economic actors with the tools to shape markets, social relationships, and contexts of commodification, in legitimate and meaningful formats.' (ibid:p.4)

So when we speak about the contemporary art market enabling—legitimising—the perception of *Annah la Javanaise*, the perception of Annahs who lived, to be in accord with Gauguin’s mythos and not come from the standpoint of child protection, we are speaking of multitudinous overlapping social and material practices. From the architecture of galleries, to the clothes worn during business meetings between art dealer and collector, to business card and website copy, to textbooks in which Gauguin is deemed unproblematic because Tahitian practices of marriage at the time were of girls around the ages 12-14 being wed (Van der Grijp, 2009)—as though dynamics of colonialism and race do not make abuse and coercion more likely. All of these social habits and particularities have been maintained since 1893-94, to keep this painting’s value high. That is 125 to 126 years of behaviour, thoughts, words written, numbers tallied, upholding power structures, ensuring value for *Annah la Javanaise*.

Meanwhile, globally exploitative corporations like BP sponsor art exhibitions in the West, directly connecting the art market to the destruction of black, brown, Asian and /// Indigenous people’s biomes. While artist coalitions like the Art Not Oil Coalition and Liberate Tate draw attention to BP’s sponsorship of Tate Museum exhibitions, amidst a giant oil spill caused by BP and related corporate misconduct (Mahony, 2017), corporate sponsorship that ties the fine art market to sociopolitical and environmental destruction of people of colour’s homelands continues apace. Warren B. Kanders, vice chair of the board of the Whitney Museum of American Art, owns the company Safariland, which trades in tear gas deployed at Standing Rock, Ferguson, Palestine, as well as handcuffs, body armor, batons and other military equipment to the Israeli Defence Force, the NYPD, and others (Black, Finlayson & Haslett, 2019). Tear gas that has killed and/or injured Black, brown and Indigenous people—including such children, as Black, Finlayson and Haslett write (ibid.), as eight-month-old Palestinian Layla al-Ghandour—who are already vulnerable to debility. Yet the vast majority of artists

involved in the 2019 Whitney Biennial did not withdraw themselves in protest; though there is a call to action, ‘the art world is in the midst of a hard rightward swing’ (ibid:n.p.).

The higher the price maintained for the painting *Annah la Javanaise*, the further counternarratives such as mine and Teresia Teaiwa’s aforementioned (1999) work (on the harm Gauguin continues to cause via Pacific militourism) get to the dismantling of these overarching structures.

In James Ferguson’s 1990 book *The Anti-Politics Machine: ‘Development,’ Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, he details a process of ‘development work’ that has not changed in the 29 years since the work’s publication. This process is one in which ‘development’ workers in Lesotho falsely misrepresent the region as ‘isolated’ and ahistorical, and impose programs on it that are implementing dependence on an unequal global market system, with no understanding of the local political and socioeconomic systems already in place. This is a process which has been exacerbated in scope and intensity as a part of late-stage capitalism’s global hegemony. Ferguson writes:

‘Like “civilization” in the nineteenth century, “development” is the name not only for a value, but also for a dominant problematic or interpretive grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known to us... Poor countries are by definition “less developed”.’ (Ferguson, 1990:p.xiii)

The issue with this teleology is, of course, that so-called ‘poor countries’ are not inherently poor but have been ravaged by colonial resource extraction. This colonial extraction continues, which forms the basis of Stoler’s notion of imperial duress (Stoler, 2016), operating with the policies Jasbir Puar analyses in *The Right To Maim* (2017), as I discussed in more

detail in Chapter Two. This extraction is perpetuated by structural adjustment policies (SAPs) implemented by Bretton Woods institutions, which keep so-called ‘developing countries’ in perpetual debt. Incidentally, ‘developing country’ is a term which, as I cover in ‘Three Months Earlier’, my fictionalisation of an actual interchange (part of my Practice Portfolio), is what a professor asked me to use in relation to Indonesia in this thesis as ‘the politically correct term’.

The Belgium-based Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt writes the following of Africa, also applicable to Asia, Latin America, and other regions deemed ‘developing’:

#### ‘Africa Is Rich

Africa is not poor. Whilst many people in African countries live in poverty, the continent has considerable wealth. A key problem is that the rest of the world, particularly Western countries, are extracting far more than they send back. Meanwhile, they are pushing economic models that fuel poverty and inequality, often in alliance with African elites.’ (Curtis & Jones, 2017:n.p.)

Andre Gunder Frank’s *The Development of Underdevelopment* (1966) and Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), both of which show how far back in history the institutionalisation of ‘development’ as fact, instead of as colonially imposed falsehood, are as relevant today as they have ever been. Frank asserts that ‘underdeveloped’ regions are not inherently lacking in capital or resources, but have been deprived of their resources by capitalist extraction. Further, using Brazil as an example, he found that places that were the target of ‘development’ policies were made ‘into internal colonial satellites, de-capitalized them further, and consolidated or even deepened their underdevelopment’ (Frank, 1966:p.31). Similarly, Rodney’s (1972) work focusses on how European colonisation stole

resources from Africa for centuries. This is in contrast to how ‘development’ organisations’ visual media, and the news media, reinscribe the notion that ‘underdevelopment’ is an inherent, ahistorical state of affairs for countries in the Global South and for underserved communities in the Global North.

It is also important here to reinscribe what I wrote in Chapter Three of this thesis about the vast complexities of ‘Indonesia’ as a nation-state. Within Indonesia alone are hundreds of cultures, languages, gender dynamics, and conceptualisations of pain, violence, suffering, poverty, joy, community—all easily elided in stereotypical visual images imposed by ‘development’ agencies that are in no way locally-specific.

For theoretical underpinnings, I also often draw on my own lived experience as a former aid worker for UNORC, the Office of the UN Recovery Coordinator for Aceh and Nias, in a job that required monitoring of foreign aid and development activities in the tsunami- and war-stricken province of Aceh, Indonesia. In the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, many foreign aid organisations pledged contributions to Aceh, but in 2006, two years later and when I began working for UNORC, many had pulled out without transition plans for their served populations, some with schools still half-built and many corrupt building practices unchecked. Boats were delivered by European aid that proved unusable by local fishermen. And, as was the case in *The Anti-Politics Machine* (Ferguson, 1990), ‘development’ was all too often implemented without any understanding of the local cultures and politics. In the case of Aceh, the 2004 tsunami prompted a ceasefire between the Indonesian government and the Acehese resistance. Because foreign aid post-tsunami had to purposely ignore the decades-long civil war that had occurred in the province, many whose lives had been destroyed by the war complained of, for instance, not getting the new house that their nearby neighbour had gotten due to tsunami foreign aid, simply because their house had been destroyed by war and not natural disaster.

In contrast with Sri Lanka, which was also devastated by the 2004 tsunami and resumed war in its aftermath, Aceh had a cessation of war (De Alwis & Hedman, 2009), but this ceasefire was not without complications. In Aceh, the ‘development’ regime interacted with the complexities of regional politics in ways that were at times detrimental to local populations. After all, the immediacy of the tsunami emergency meant any and every offer of aid was accepted by the Indonesian government, and in my own six-month tenure in a UN office for aid coordination, often aid packages were implemented with no understanding of local socioenvironmental and political histories and circumstances. In order to get aid into Indonesia, INGOs had to comply with the Indonesian government’s instruction to ignore populations in need who were affected by civil war conflict. ‘[M]any large NGOs may have compromised what some would hold to be essential principles for humanitarian action because of domestic political concerns, donor restrictions and resistance among certain NGO chiefs’ (Zeccola, 2010:p. 308). Furthermore, in the observations of me and my colleagues, there were INGOs that clearly had no ‘exit strategy’ or sustainable policy for helping the Acehnese after a brief period of providing disaster aid. Though the reconstruction process did not hinder the ceasefire process, and much was achieved in rebuilding Aceh, it could be ‘slow, unequal and often poor’ (Gaillard, Clavé, & Kelman, 2008:p.511).

This is just one regional example, but such complications are too often elided in conceptions of ‘development’. For advertising and marketing purposes, it is far easier for an image of a Black or brown child to accompany an appeal to sponsor them by an international non-governmental organisation (INGO), without revealing that such organisations not only channel a large portion of funding towards overheads, but that their policies are actually deeply harmful and *impoverishing* people, as well as perpetuating harmful racist stereotypes about Black, brown, Asian and Indigenous people and children, at the same time as INGOs like

Oxfam and WWF are embroiled in brutal sexual assault allegations internationally (Baker, Engert, & Warren, 2019; Hirsch, 2018).

Sita Balani (2018:n.p.) has written cogently of Oxfam's sexual abuse crimes in Haiti and historian Mary Beard's inexcusable tweet, which read, in full, 'Of course one can't condone the (alleged) behaviour of Oxfam staff in Haiti and elsewhere. But I do wonder how hard it must be to sustain "civilised" values in a disaster zone. And overall I still respect those who go in and help out, where most of us would not tread' (Beard, 2018, as cited in Balani, 2018). Balani recounts how the backlash to Beard's statement, which included discussion of 'white women's tears' being used as a tool of white supremacy, was met by Beard with a photo of her crying, reinforcing the supremacist nature of the tweet by appealing to ingrained racist notions of white women's feelings being put above those of the affected Black children. Similarly, the clout and feelings of Nina Pack as a woman in the arts were regarded above the wellbeing of Annah(s), allowing the former to enslave the latter. Beard wrote that she was not a 'nasty coloniser' as people thought, but as Balani astutely states, 'good colonisers' cause harm as well. Oxfam staff 'withheld the aid they were there to deliver to bargain for sex. The widespread sexual exploitation is made possible precisely because it comes with the moral cover of "aid" and "charity"' (Balani, 2018:n.p.). Again, widespread images of Black, brown, Asian and Indigenous children are framed according to 'development' agencies' notions of harm as innate to their location, citizenship, and identity, rather than as targets of harm by such agencies. Again, the images of children who are harmed by colonisers are twisted into another meaning entirely, their harm diminished. The tears publicised are those of a white woman who claims those harmed are 'uncivilised', living in a place 'where most of us would not tread'—yet we who are born in and claim residence in what many call the Global South are the global majority.

Where visibility and ocularcentrism pervade, so too do hegemonic ideals through them.

Images such as CARE's 'Celine dreams of being a doctor. Find out how to make her dreams

come true.’ ad, which I spoof with *Annah La Javanaise* in Chapter Seven, are continually inscribing and reinscribing, alongside marketing copy, a white saviour gaze that endangers the children being depicted, renders their parents’ involvement moot, and work to institute white supremacist ableist capitalism. In this way, the ‘development’ industry and the art market both perpetuate the circulation of images of young, brown, Black, Asian, and/or Indigenous children that uphold ableist white supremacy.

Maria Kyriakidou (2014) writes that a news media image we associate with sensationalism is an ‘anchoring point’ through which the viewer identifies with the sufferer, and also relies on psychological cues repeated by news organisations’ messaging patterns. I assert here that the ‘development industry’ is responsible for reinforcing these tropes of ‘suffering’ and the patterns of language and image that propel these tropes. Moreover, Kyriakidou writes that such sensationalism is what some viewers cite as the reason for engaging with certain media. In other words, systemic affective economies (Ahmed, 2004) are enforced by the media to compel viewer emotions, but viewers also choose their media in order to experience these emotions. Here I assert that this is why a nuanced view of painedness and potential painedness, as I discuss in Chapter Two, is not present in mass media, let alone nuanced portrayals of potentially pained people in ‘developing countries’—because simple notions of ‘suffering’ as caused by being from and in a developing country persist through ‘development industry’ tropes. The compulsion of viewers of news media to somehow relate emotionally to distant sufferers are refracted through these ableist, colonialist tropes, and these same viewers are being asked to donate to INGOs, and the cycle continues.

This is not a coincidence—they reinforce each other; the more images that objectify young, brown, Asian, Indigenous and/or Black children in a ‘developmentalist’ narrative, in the media or in public transport ads, the more the Annah(s) of *Annah la Javanaise* and the muses of similar artefacts in circulation in the art market are seen as *not children*, because Black, brown,



Asian and/or Indigenous children associated with ‘developing regions’ are dehumanised, to look like charity and INGO ads’ notion of children in need of white saviours. *Annah la Javanaise* and Celine of the CARE ad are in dialogue with each other. The location of each girl is hazy, and unnecessary to the overarching goal of the context in which they are portrayed—once again, it does not matter what colony they are from, let alone what part of the colony they are from, as long as they are from a colony. A colony inherently in need of ‘development’.

It is important to me that the international ‘development’ industry and the fine art market, both undergirded by white supremacist capitalist expansion, are discussed as interlinked here—and understood as being part of the same financial system, of the same global market. The hypocrisy of white supremacy with regards to visual images becomes clear when one juxtaposes a ‘Celine dreams of being a doctor.’ ad tagline with an *Annah la Javanaise* image because the former asks Western, white saviours to supposedly contribute to the wellbeing of a child, while the same population targetted to be Western, white saviours admire an artefact of very likely child abuse as ‘fine art’. Furthermore, this is all part of a systemic economy that actively supports this splitting of affect; a systemic affective economy.

A typical ‘development’ ad is meant to contribute to the extractive, exploitative system of ‘development’ by infantilising billions of people. The profits from this system go towards the richest of society, who as Olav Velthuis (2007) wrote, have since the 1970s been investing increasingly in what is now known as the contemporary art market. These financial logics form the framework of a system that keeps art markets operating according to notions of art as commodity, and art *about* women by Western ‘geniuses’—such as the painting *Annah la Javanaise*—more recognisable and revered than art over millennia that was actually created *by* brown women in what is now Indonesia. It is the same framework that keeps Indonesian antiquities housed in the British Museum.

The monetary values of ideas and artefacts, as Olav Velthuis (2007) pointed out, are also social and emotional artefacts, laden with meaning. If we consider prices as emotional, social artefacts, what is the price of ‘sponsoring’ a child meant to signify emotionally, and to whom? What does the price of a painting like *Annah la Javanaise* signify emotionally, and to whom? What I hope audiences will ask when they are presented with my practice-based PhD portfolio is: what is the value of a brown, girl-presenting child in these different contexts, and how are these values set?

What if these girls, in ‘development’ ads, as well as girls portrayed in vulnerable positions by much older male ‘geniuses’, were disabled? What would be the monetary value embedded in these images, in an overarching white supremacist ableist heteropatriarchal capitalist system? What is the price of ‘helping a disabled child’ in a development ad, in which disability is seen as complete lack of agency, contributing to the overall developmentalist narrative of people in the ‘developing country’ having a lack of agency, in need of Western aid to ‘progress’ and ‘develop’?

Clare Barker’s book *Postcolonial fiction and disability: Exceptional children, metaphor and materiality* (2011) makes important points on disability and coloniality in a world where developmentalist narratives reign large. These points need to be taken into account as a baseline for which to include the possibility of pain in Annah archives—as fictions in and of themselves (see Chapter 1)—and indeed, the possibility of painedness in any depicted body.

Barker writes:

‘In many literary narratives, disability operates on both figurative and material levels: childhood disability provides a range of metaphors for postcolonial nations, cultures and communities, while the characters themselves are participants in and subjected to the machinations of postcolonial history and politics. It is this aspect of

disability representation—the depiction of disabled characters as embodied agents, as national subjects as well as symbols—that is missing from current postcolonial scholarship, perhaps precisely because of their hyperlegibility in terms of national or cultural allegory.’ (Barker, 2011:p.3)

Though ‘normalcy is culturally contingent rather than universal’ (ibid.:p.4), Barker states that a specific ‘combination of individualization, narrativization and sentimentality is strategically deployed in images of disabled “poster children”’ (ibid.:p.12). What ‘happened’ to the disabled child—with the ableist notion that neurodivergence and bodily non-normativity always ‘happen’—is tied up with what will happen to the child.

Of course, that a disabled child could be anything other than a victim is not even considered a possibility in these developmentalist narratives, in which development signifies not only ‘what happens next to this child?’ but ‘what happens next to this country?’. My creative work on Annah queers time in the vein of Jose Esteban Muñoz’s (2009) work, as I mention previously. I specifically queer and decolonise time by centering an interpretation I derive from a Javanese conception of spiritualities, calendars, and affect—thus, I am going against the grain of disabled ‘poster children’ in terms of the need for causality and futurity being attached to them in a normative, linear time frame. If disabled Annah(s) exist(s) on planes in which time behaves differently, in which deities interact with Annah in both past, present and future simultaneously, normative perceptions of causality and futurity are called into question.

It is fascinating to compare Barker’s (2011:p.9) analysis with Annah(s) as very much in colonial times, as a colonised child-adult-creature, and how the neoliberal economics portrayal of the underdeveloped disabled child is currently so at odds with the reality of abuse they would likely have been surrounded by, and is evidence of the colonial nature of contemporary arts

institutions: in which they choose the narrative of Annah as already adult, a non-child, because of this contemporary trope of the underdeveloped disabled child.

If Vollard's (1936) account was accurate, opera singer Nina Pack caused every bit of suffering Annahs could have been expected to receive in France. She represents white women's complicity in the dehumanisation of Black, brown, Asian and/or Indigenous children, especially disabled children, including complicity by white women in the arts. Ambroise Vollard too, of course, represents the arts' complicity here. The impact of Vollard on upholding the Western visual arts canon cannot be underestimated, especially a canon of male 'geniuses'—not only was he business colleague and social contemporary of Gauguin, but also boosted the careers of Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Pierre-August Renoir, and Pablo Picasso, among others. The quote above illustrates that Vollard, in his own account and judged according to the ethics and subjectivities of this thesis, was a child trafficker.

A white opera singer, Nina Pack, *asked for* a girl, without even a specific 'job description' (Vollard, 1936:p.230). This is slavery—asking for a body to do whatever one wishes, with no guarantee of their safety or return. It behooves me to write here that an underdiscussed aspect of Dutch colonialism of Indonesia was slavery, over two centuries (Vink, 2003). Slavery as state violence.

If Vollard's account is true, Annah was a slave, and *any* historical account of her involvement with Gauguin in which she is a mistress is a violent act. Further, as Aditi Jaganathan aptly said in the *Annah: Nomenclature* Q and A with me at the ICA (2018), stories in which they escape are those of marronage, or escape from slavery. Her story is far from unique in the landscape of Indonesian slave histories. In 'Fugitive women: Slavery and social change in early modern Southeast Asia' (2007), historian Eric A. Jones writes of women slaves in the eighteenth century who escaped:

‘As long as slavery has existed, so too have fugitive slaves, and the reasons behind both phenomena are as varied as the nature of human bondage itself. In Batavia [now Jakarta], headquarters of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, VOC), some ran away because of physically abusive mistresses.’ (Jones, 2007:p.216)

Again, this is a reminder of white colonial complicity by women in other women’s and in children’s bondage. It is also prudent to remember that the emergence of narratives of *Annah* as child slave is very much tied to a present-day France being ‘a nation where talking about race, colonialism, and slavery (not to mention their interconnections) remains taboo’ (Fleming, 2017:p.5).

Lack of protection for millions of Indonesian migrant domestic workers, resulting in exploitation and human trafficking (Andrevski & Lyneham, 2014), is a contemporary problem with such antecedents. However, violence against women and children—including ongoing violence against Papuan Indonesians (Chao, 2019) by other Indonesians, particularly by Javanese Indonesians, shows (as I explained in Chapter Three, the Javanese are the colonisers within Indonesia)—continues to be a truly urgent epidemic.

It is overwhelming to describe the ways in which *Annah la Javanaise* symbolises the masking of violence against billions of Black, brown, Asian and/or Indigenous women and children throughout colonial history, in which I count the present day.

The day I write these words, Toni Morrison passes away. I feel the surging potency of her words in the world, and am particularly drawn to this (it is a particularly long quote, but I ask for your lenience):

‘Racism was always a con game that sucked all the strength of the victim... Its hoped-for consequence is to define black people as reaction to white presence... It’s important to know who the real enemy is and to know the very serious function of racism, which is distraction. It keeps you from doing *your work*. It keeps you explaining over and over your reason for being. It may very well be left to artists to grapple with this fact (the distraction). For art focuses on the single grain of rice, the tree-shaped scar and the names of people shipped not only the number... And I urge you to be careful for there is a deadly prison. A prison that is erected when one spends one’s life fighting phantoms, concentrating on myths and explaining over and over to the conqueror your language, your lifestyle, your history, your habits. And you don’t have to do it anymore. You can go ahead and talk straight to me.’ (Morrison, 1975:n.p.)

In explaining the thrust of this PhD and the book of which it is a part, currently titled *Annah, Infinite*, I have found immediate understanding from fellow women of colour, and fellow pained women. I have found initial resistance to the notion of Annah in pain—resistance that can take quite some time and energy to confront—from people who have no lived-in understanding of the overbearing, overwhelming, constant presence of ableist white supremacy in every sector of life, whether in the UK, or in an Indonesia ravaged by the needs of Western consumers for palm oil and gold. Toni Morrison has reminded me, though I am not Black, of the continuous battle to explain, explain, that nearly made this thesis impossible.

I wanted to write this chapter as a litany of numbers, of numerical evidence of oppression: the numbers of children abused at the hands of development workers and UN peacekeepers, the hundreds of thousands of children who’ve died early deaths from pollution, who were deemed unimportant—who died, for instance, from pesticides in Papuan palm oil plantation land marked as

‘green’, as a ‘conservation area’, after this land was stolen from native peoples. I had wanted to write of millions of rapes and murders and of ICE detentions, starvations, the many structural violences that lead to maimed bodies, that led to my own maimed (still capable of joy) body, to the easy way in which everyone clamoured to the tale of Gauguin’s Javanese ‘temptress’, and the way no one asks what became of them, or how they was abducted as a trafficked child. I’m tired of numbers counting towards someone’s belief in pain. After eight years of trying to convince everyone when I need to (i.e. need to lie down in a room) and observing those who refuse to believe in and respect pained people, I am tired of having to prove we exist, how we have always existed.

Because Toni Morrison died today, I remembered her words, and I want the ‘evidence’ of survival and suffering to be what you already know in your body. And I am talking to you, the reader, who already knows and understands how a brown child, alone, abducted, shunted from slaver to criminal abuser, could have been in pain. Who understands how pain can be caused by the white supremacist, ableist mechanisms of finance (the banker Nina Pack knew, and regarded as a trustworthy trafficker of ‘little negro’ children) and the arts (Nina Pack and Ambroise Vollard and all the ‘geniuses’ Vollard represented, from Mucha to Gauguin) and the literal police state (the policeman who found Annah alone in a strange city, with a plaque, and understood that this was a slave child that needed to be returned to their owner, rather than a child who needed help and escape). If you still do not understand, I refuse to waste my energy trying to persuade you of a truth I already know in my body. This subjectivity matters, whether or not anyone believes it. That some people have believed it is a large part of why I’m able to write these words today.

In theoretical terms, I consider understanding the possibility of Annah being in pain as hermeneutically marginalised, a form of what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls ‘epistemic injustice’, in which some ways of knowing, and the people who know these things, are injured. Pained people understand that whether or not we appear to exhibit what abled people regard as signs of pain, we can be in very serious pain. Our epistemologies are not honoured, and this slighting causes us to be

disbelieved, to be denied healthcare. (I myself spent four years in acute chronic neuropathic pain without medication, due to disbelief and lack of adequate healthcare.) What I am doing with this thesis is using my personal subjectivities to provide ‘hermeneutic resources’ whereby those who do not have access to my way of knowing might begin to do so. Specifically, my way of knowing has helped me understand that there is the possibility of pain in *every* picture, an understanding that I’ve observed is difficult for abled people to absorb. This is epistemic violence, this is ableism. Not only that, but colonial racism, sexism, cisheteronormative discrimination against children combine with ableism, in the case of Annah(s) being perceived as incapable of pain. We bear the brunt of multiple systemic oppressions, of multiple systemic affective systems of violence. In terms of colonial, racist epistemic violence, what I speak of here is often ‘what in race theory and in contemporary epistemologies of ignorance has been termed “white ignorance”; that is, the kind of hermeneutical inability of privileged white subjects to recognize and make sense of their racial identities, experiences, and social positionality.’ (Medina. 2012:p.201)

We all live in the same world, amongst these palpable violences. Yet some of us are unmoved to feeling for the same people that inspire movements. The ‘stickiness’ of feeling for those most effected by violences, by imperial duress, is mediated by arts institutions as much as by other purveyors of media and arbiters of knowledge, as is the prevention of empathy. That I can see such pain in one painting that other people gloss over as an emblem of its time, of a violence that they think perhaps no longer exists, is due to systematic desensitisation and dehumanisation.

In highlighting desensitisation towards violence against racialised, disabled, femme bodies, I draw inspiration from scholars who have analysed the interpretation of historical violence against Black bodies. Christina Sharpe’s work *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (2009) looks at Black bodies in diaspora as interpreted through subjectivities manifested from ‘everyday mundane horrors that aren’t acknowledged to be horrors’ (ibid:p.3). I see the interpretation of Annah(s) as a similar project. In particular, like Sharpe, I intend to bring to the fore ‘a series of



repetitions of master narratives of violence and forced submission that are read or reinscribed as consent and affection: intimacies that involve shame and trauma and their transgenerational transmission' (Sharpe, 2009:p. 4). I am clear about my interpretation of the relationship between Paul Gauguin and Annah(s) as one of abuse turned into a love story. Saidiya Hartman's book *Lose your mother: A journey along the Atlantic slave route* (2008) was also very influential in framing my own tracing back of Annah(s) as ancestors, in melancholic urgency, of recounting horrors as a remembrance, a reckoning, of Indonesian diaspora. These scholars have foregrounded their epistemic truths in service of rectifying epistemic injustices, and which is also the goal of this PhD—to write, as I discussed in Chapter Five, 'against the bias grain' (Fuentes, 2016).

I do not know where to start in using numbers and facts on how Black, brown, Asian and/or Indigenous children, women and non-binary adults are dehumanised, are diminished, are pulverised and asked to bear unbearable things. Which regions' stories would I highlight more than others, have I given more time to in the performance installation *Annah: Nomenclature*? Whose stories could I tell, hundreds of millions of different, nuanced tales from Indonesia alone? In the forthcoming book *Annah, Infinite*, I take Annah to Palestine, and to an Indonesia in 1965-66, the site of a Western-backed genocide and a Western-installed dictatorship into which I was born. I take her to Sandra Bland. I take her to the millions of indigenous activists around the world, from unceded Musqueam territory to Kalimantan to Brazil, who are not marginal. Who are survival, who need help. It is impossible to make an 'objective' tesseract of pain that spans the world, particularly as objectivity is a tool of white supremacist logic. In *Annah, Infinite*, I will leave out, and in this thesis I have left out, untold stories from past, present and future, of bodies connected to Annah through the same mechanisms that have injured us. I am livid when I think of what Annahs went through, go through, will go through in disabled futurities, and am also cognisant of resistance, resilience, and survival, as exemplified in my own family's histories, in my communities'. I'm writing these words with a chest and right leg that has ached with pain all day, and will now rest

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temporarily; with the added clarity that the primary goal of this thesis is to affirm what we already know, not to convince unbelievers, despite what others have said. I write this for those of us who see in *Annah la Javanaise* the possibility of pain. It is not, and never is, our burden to try to convince others of our humanity.

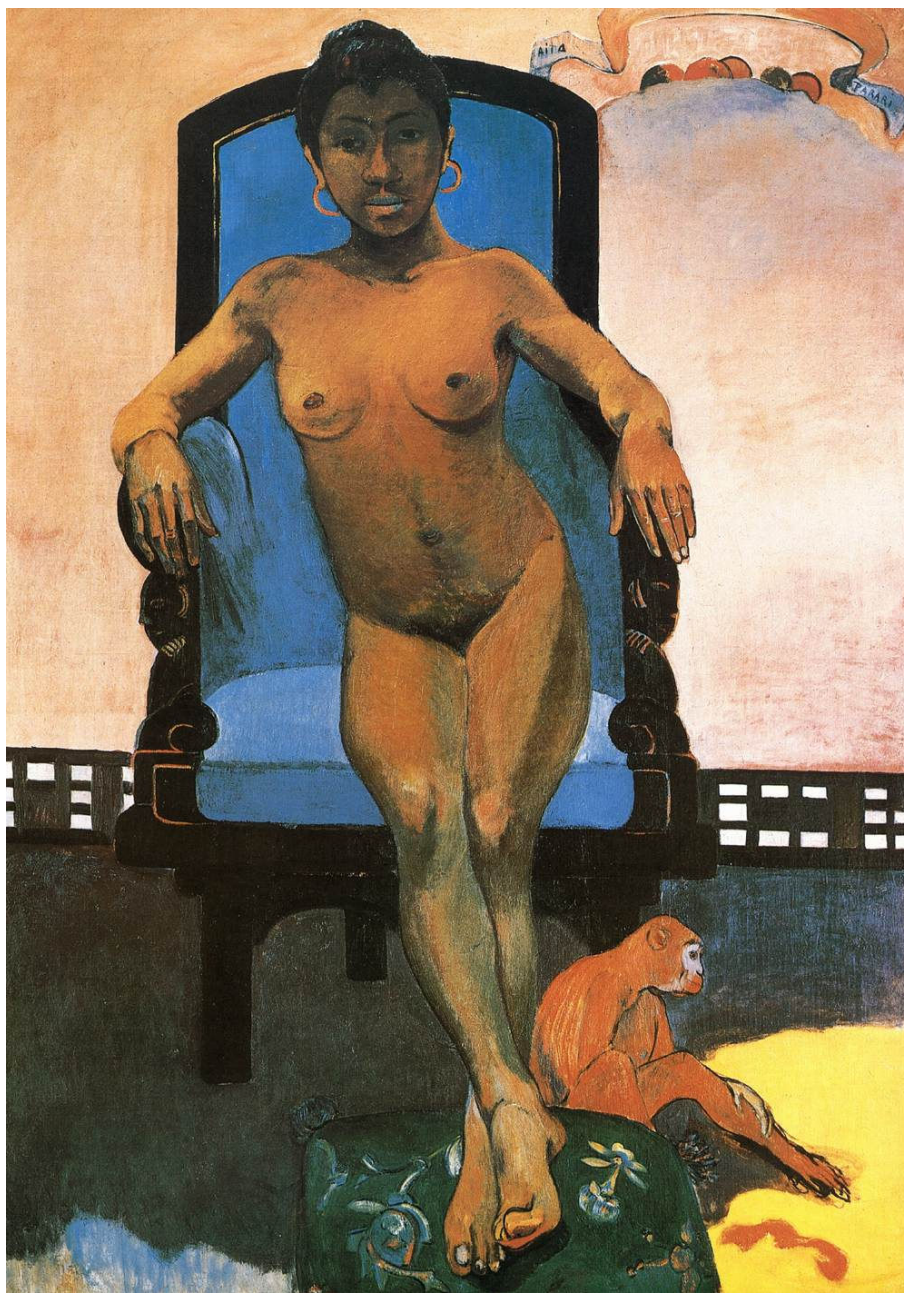
If numbers which, as Olav Velthuis expounds upon (2007), are also social and emotional artefacts, laden with meaning, and meaning creators: what effect and for whom exist numbers of women in populations that others have the ‘right to maim’ (Puar, 2017) being abducted, assaulted, murdered, disbelieved, rape kits piled up? How do you measure the destruction of entire civilisations? The United States government lacks even a record of how many indigenous women in the US have been abducted and murdered.

With regards to pain and the significance of numbers, what effect does it have that, according to a document by international associations of pain and hospice care specialists (Kamerman, et al., 2016:p.4), there are over 518 million prevalent cases of adults with neuropathic pain globally, myself and many other brown women and girls included? What effect did that statistic have on the WHO’s decision (Saxena, 2017) to reject this document, which made an urgent case for the neuropathic pain medicine Gabapentin to be named an essential medicine worldwide, because of suspicions that those of us who need it would be drug abusers—despite the fact that Gabapentin does not behave like the opioids associated with the opioid crisis in the US? With that single WHO document, a future of myself and other pained brown women being able to get access to necessary medication wherever I am is discarded.

The ableist mantra of ‘abled until proven disabled’, of suspicion towards those whose health requirements are not visible to the ocularcentric eye, is all-pervasive. It shapes our presents and futures. I want people to believe Annah is capable of pain, because I want all of us as pained people, black, brown, Asian and/or Indigenous women, non-binary people and girls especially, to be believed.

There is the possibility of pain in every picture. There is the possibility of pain in every person you meet.

## Chapter Seven: Annah As Rupture (Visuals and Creative Writing)



[Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese*, or *Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 c 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>57</sup> Painting of a naked child on a chair, her hair in a bun, her ankles crossed, arms on the chair. Monkey at her feet.]

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<sup>57</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001:p.199.

The following is a selection of the work I've done over the past eight years, on the processes and politics that contribute to masking the possibility that Annah(s) could be pained bodies.

In a rupture of soulbody time, the museum-goers find themselves beset by Annahs...

[Caption: Two white women museum-goers, appraising *Annah la Javanaise*, are approached from behind by a bevy of brown girls, appearing from a teal and brown vortex.]



Annahs invade their line of sight. What they see is:

[Caption: Four figures, three men and one girl, dressed in late nineteenth century garb. The tall man on the left has his face blotted out by red, the middle two men's faces and bodies are blurred, and the girl on the right has her face and hands in a yellow glow. Over her face is written ANNAH.]

What they hear is:

child

child

child

child

child

child

child



And things they have said to themselves, to each other, are repeated for them, in their minds, on a loop. Among them:

*We need to eliminate third world poverty. Who else is going to help them?*

*I'm going to sponsor a child from a developing country.*

*I'm thinking of buying that painting, but I need to check our investments.*

*Did you see the news? Isn't it terrible what happened in Indonesia? ...Yeah. ...Do you want to check out the Gauguin exhibit later?*

*It's so hard to find good help that speak the right amount of English, you know? ...Oh, is yours Filipina? See, I hear their English is better. Mine doesn't even have kids back where she came from, so, you know, I thought she'd be more focussed.*



‘Help her live, learn and earn.’

[Caption: *Annah la Javanaise* painting below ‘Promoted Tweet: Bare International UK | @bareintuk | Annah dreams of being a doctor. Find out how to make her dream come true’. To the right, ‘Help her live, learn and earn. UKAID’. Alteration to a real CARE UK ad on Twitter in 2016, which said, ‘Celine dreams of being a doctor. Find out how to make her dream come true’. It used a simple headshot photo of a small, Black child.]

Promoted Tweet



**BARE InternationalUK** @bareintuk · Mar 16

Annah dreams of being a doctor. Find out how to make her dream come true



*Loving*, knowing ignorance is not loving at all; it is not a way of practicing loving perception.



Neither is it a way of practicing loving ignorance or seeing the other with all her boundaries but not knowing much about her. In fact, it denotes a stance in which the perceiver and the knower are actually involved in the production of knowledge about women of color—whether by citing their work, reading and writing about them, or classifying them—while at the same time using women of color to the perceiver’s own ends. It is a ode of arrogant perception whose alleged aim is not simply to coerce or dominate or

turn someone into what we want them to be, but to make knowledge claims that are supposed to further understanding of the object of perception, of women of color. Thus, there is a sense in which this loving, knowing ignorance has nothing to do with love,



although the perceiver may claim that it does.

- Mariana Ortega (2006:p.61)

[Caption: Two orange silhouettes of the figure from *Annah la Javanaise* interspersed with the text.]

When the museum-goers come to, the painting has disappeared.

The girls are fugitive paintings.

The girls are disappearing themselves and being disappeared, all the time.

### **Interlude Three: Queering and Crippling Time (Creative Writing)**

[Caption for *Annah La Javanaise*]

The painting is calling to a young girl, an Indonesian domestic worker in London, to enter it. She wants to be buried in Indonesia. Half-Javanese and half-Minangkabau. The white male employer looks her up and down a lot, makes inappropriate comments; she feels unsafe and stuffs her sarung and sajadah, rolled up, against her locked door at night. Once, she heard him try to turn it. The very next day, she is relieved that he has gone to his banking job (sovereign wealth funds in his conversation; she notes, like 1MDB), the wife asks if she would mind helping her take her six-year-old daughter to the museum, there's a Gauguin exhibit, the wife needs to take a conference call at the same time. And at the same time, Annah from the past has sent a message for salvation in any form, to come to those who need it. Wati goes inside the painting *Annah la Javanaise* and sees all the colours and muck and tries wading in it, bathing in it, trudging through it, starts to cry. Where is this going? She sees a light at the end and so many voices are calling 'Here, come here with us.'

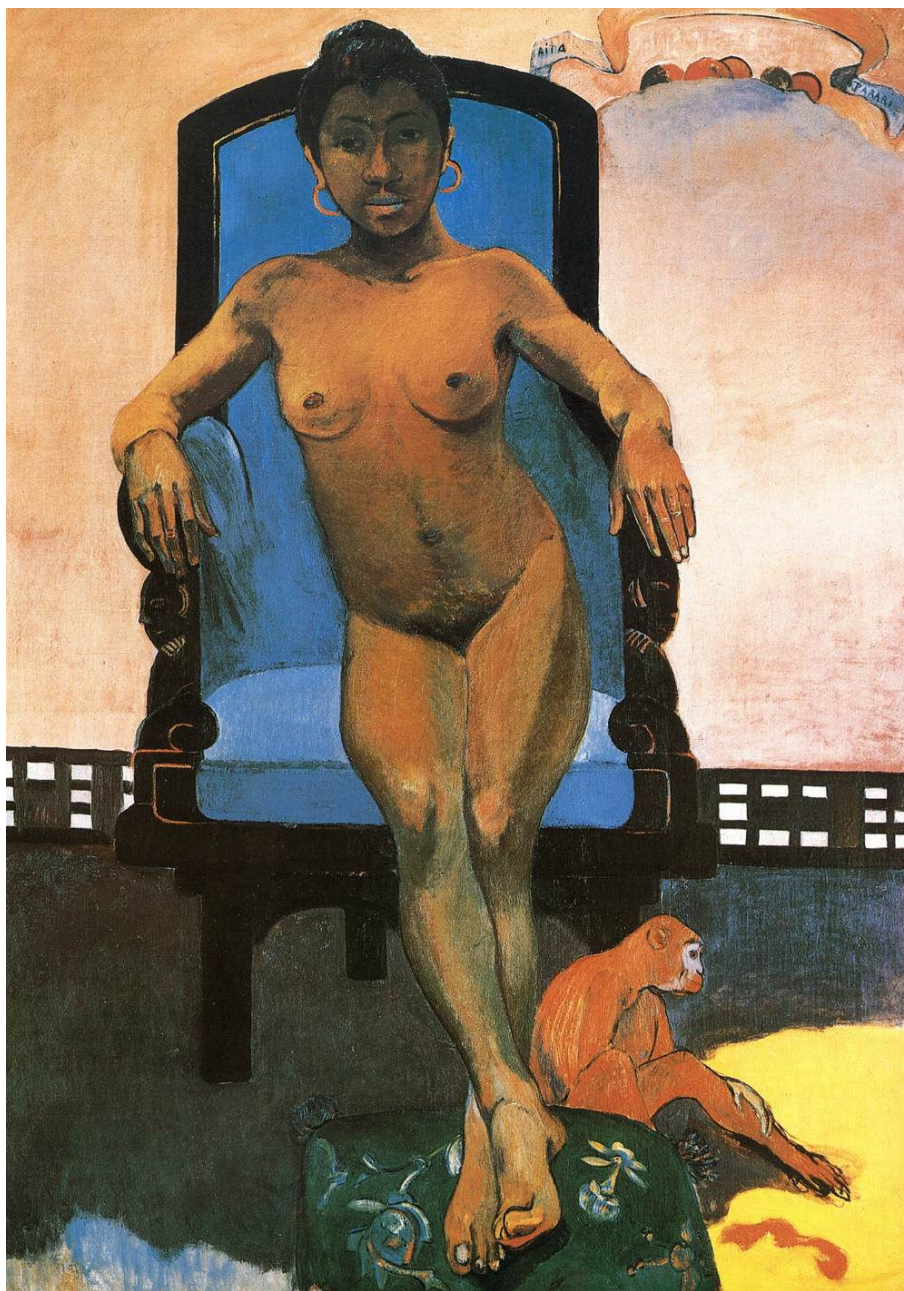
Her chest begins to hurt just from the threat and the condescension and the isolation and the distance from family and friends. The worry about dying so far away from home. Her hands begin to hurt, her chest begins to hurt. Something feels like it's cracking inside, about to be pieced away.

It's funny, being caught in the extreme. Because she is trapped, and her daughter needs to go to the doctor, she works through pain of a sharpness beyond the edges of possibility. When life is so absurd and violent that nothing of your pain will be believed, by anyone around you, including by the young kids, then you learn to smile through the shellshockedness just to survive. You do not have the energy to try to explain your pain; you want to swiftly work so you can feel the pain and

try to make it cease in the comfort of your bed. The white British employer woman has period pain, talks about it and how it's as much as a heart attack, and doesn't understand when Annah says 'It is like that but much deeper, and more spread out.'

One night, the lights come through her ceiling, and people with her name. They pound with mortar and pestle some jamu medicine for her. Annah is alright lying down with lots of healing medicines in the ocean of women, in the end; her body has been broken and salved—but now that she has what can inure her from extreme pain, she does not want to rejoin the swathes of people who do not understand it. She barely understands herself, but there is no way to change the past.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusion



[Paul Gauguin, *Annah the Javanese, or Aita Tamari Vahine Judith, te Parari* (The Child-Woman Judith Is Not Yet Breached), 1893-94. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 c 31 1/2 in. (116 x 81 cm). Private Collection.<sup>58</sup> Painting of a naked child on a chair, her hair in a bun, her ankles crossed, arms on the chair. Monkey at her feet.]

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<sup>58</sup> Caption from Mathews, 2001:p.199.

It's not how little we know that hurts so, but that so much of what we know ain't so.

—Toni Morrison, 'quoting the old folks' (Tal, 1996:n.p.)

Alam takambang menjadi guru. (Nature/the universe becomes teacher.)

— Minangkabau proverb

This is a practice-based PhD thesis. As such, my methodologies of art and creative writing as research, of the creative process as research, have helped strengthen my own subjectivities as a pained, Minang-Javanese woman soulbody, who has always felt the possibilities of there being more to recorded stories of Annah(s). Here, I will briefly recount each work of art and writing practice included in my Practice Portfolio. I follow this with a recap of my theoretical points and a troubling of my own methodologies. I finish with a discussion of directions for future research.

In 'Nightmares of 1965' (written as Anonymous, 2015), a piece of creative nonfiction for *The New Inquiry*, I privilege my subjectivity and those of other survivors of the systematised state traumatisation of children. I remember reading, in 2015, a Facebook comment on that article by a scholar of Indonesian descent on a colleague's page, below a post sharing 'Nightmares of 1965'. It said, 'I found this to be rambling and disjointed', and I remember wanting to assert that this was not an academic essay, which is probably what the commenting scholar thought it was and 'should' have been. The essay is non-linear and considered creative non-fiction because of this. It is non-linear because traumatic memories can be non-linear, because the recounting of them—in my personal experience—is non-linear. The non-linearity refers to both the nature of individual memory pieces as well as the order in which they come into the world. The mind's way of perceiving the world fractures at points of trauma, and pieces them back together as puzzle pieces, in their own order, against the strictures of colonial notions of time and space. In this way, the 'Nightmares' essay sets the tone for the queering, crippling, and decolonising of time and space

found throughout this thesis. In addition, it connects the 1965-66 Indonesian genocide, and both its antecedents and fallout, to Annah(s) and to the vulnerability of Black, brown, Asian, and/or Indigenous children.

The intended outcome of this PhD project is *Annah, Infinite*, a forthcoming creative nonfiction book which also contains visual artwork, poetry and fiction. This shows my intentions of dismantling the various structures behind the objectification of Annah(s) on a wider scale and for a general audience. The book concept was accepted in 2018 for representation by the Good Literary Agency. 'Selected Annahs', an excerpt from this book, was commissioned by *The White Review* and will be out in its October 2019 issue. My hope is that the work from this PhD contributes to the creation of a critical mass that refuses the narratives imposed on Annah(s) and contemporary Black, brown, Asian, and/or Indigenous children and pained people. The book excerpt is included as an example of what the research and practice from this PhD will lead to in the future.

Also included in the Practice Portfolio are the YouTube videos of 'Annah: Nomenclature', a performance installation commissioned by and performed at the ICA in 2018, and the Q and A for it with myself and moderator Aditi Jaganathan. There are other materials from it, as well as from the performance installation 'Selected Annahs' (2018), commissioned by SALTS Gallery in Basel, Switzerland, and opening the same week as Art Basel. 'Selected Annahs' came first, and in it, I pretend to be various Annahs. In 'Annah: Nomenclature', I speak to Annah(s) as myself, which felt both more natural and ethical, showing the evolution of my practice as self-reflecting and questioning. Both performance installations use digital collage, performance, recorded audio and (in the case of 'Annah: Nomenclature') video in order to foreground the possibility of pain in Annah, and the forces of ableist, colonial white supremacist patriarchy that mask this possibility. Both 'Selected Annahs' and 'Annah: Nomenclature' were opened with a live performance installation. After the first day of the exhibits, an audio recording was broadcast around the gallery spaces, and in the case of 'Annah: Nomenclature', the two digital projections were turned on against a synced



audio recording of me performing on opening night. For both works' opening nights, I made spatial choices for how the audience would experience the performances. At SALTS, the gallery space was filled with rugs so that the audience would be sitting or lying on the floor, just as I was. At the ICA, I made sure beanbags were provided along with chairs.

In line with practice as a way of discovering avenues for conveying critical thought, the portfolio ends with 'Three Months Earlier, or Annah #24,957 Observes a PhD Thesis', a fictionalisation of my own experience with this PhD and its supervision. The fact that I feel most comfortable presenting fictionalised versions of real world events points to institutional shortcomings, specifically within academia, and the difficulties involved in both (a) completing this PhD as a woman of colour doing decolonial work that is regarded as 'extreme' and (b) in creating institutional change in the face of academic racism. This entails preventing those involved in opposing my thesis from harming more people, in a way which can easily reinforce toxic power in the academy by making perpetrators more 'aware', as opposed to hiring more professors of colour who are anti-ableist and decolonial. It is also about understanding that 'complaints tend to be treated as destructive. A complaint biography often involves the experience of the costs of how you are treated' (Ahmed 2017:n.p.). What was recorded in the emails and voice recordings involved in the incidents fictionalised do not tell the full story of the psychic and physical effects of academic racism. In this way, artistic practice can enforce the importance and veracity of subjectivities.

Sometimes, as in writing the essay 'Nightmares of 1965' (as Anonymous, 2015), my process has only belatedly been connected directly to this thesis, even when written alongside it. At times it is only years later that I realise how important and central certain works are to my *Annah, Infinite* project, even though they do not mention Annah(s). Over the course of the eight years of my internal dialogue about *Annah la Javanaise* the painting, there have been poems, essays, short stories, journal entries, notes and public assertions I have made that—though these works may appear unrelated to the thesis—have strengthened its argumentation. Creating new work in general

has strengthened my understanding of what I wish to say about Annah(s), my confidence in asserting my own subjectivities, my commitment to my own holistic health management, and my creative voice.

It has been a deliberate choice to intersperse critical chapters with creative vignettes in the thesis. This is done in two ways; by having: (1) a ‘purely critical’ chapter such as Chapter Five: Sexuality, Age of Consent and Ablenormativity in Visual Cultures positioned between two portions of creative work as research, and (2) combining creative work with ‘critical writing’ in one chapter, such as in Chapter Two: Complex Pain, Pictorial Forms. I’ve done this to continuously recentre my practice as the culmination of research, the act of research itself, as well as the production of questions for further research. Furthermore, aside from being a reminder of the practice-based nature of this PhD, critical and creative work are intermingled in order to trouble false categories of genre and audience: between fiction, poetry and non-fiction; between ‘academic writing’ and ‘writing for a general audience’ as wholly separate.

In Introduction: Aides-mémoire, I lay out my research question, methodology of artistic practice as research, the gaps in current research, and how I aim to further these fields by presenting the possibility of Annah(s) as pained person/people. This research topic is inherently interdisciplinary, and draws from, as well as contributes to disability studies (particularly crip theory and pain studies), decolonial studies, and visual cultures studies. Essentially, I use artistic practice in interdisciplinary arts, including visual art, performance, and creative writing, to explore the possibility that Annah(s) was/were in pain. My artistic works showcase how pain was not only possibility for them, but probability. By positioning them in contrast to the ablenormative assertion that pain for them is not even a possibility, I have the material from which to draw theoretical conclusions elucidated in the following chapters.

In the previous PhD chapters and interludes, I have made the following theoretical arguments:

(1) In Chapter One, my creative work elicits and highlights how Annah is portrayed with disparate details from one biographical text to the next, whether she is described as ‘mulatto’, ‘half-Malay, half-Indian’ or ‘half-Javanese, half-Dutch’. How she came to be in Gauguin’s company is written variably, as are other details surrounding her life. Further, no text that mentions Annah refers to these fundamental biographical inconsistencies, details that are invariably written by white people and/or men. This means that these texts are colluding by creating their own fictions, and not acknowledging this fictitious quality, or at least the doubtful nature of their ‘facts’. By acknowledging these ‘facts’ as fictions, I am opening up the possibility of further *slippages* in the interstices of these biographical ‘facts’. If so much writing on Annah is contradictory, and thus potentially fictional, a potentially pained body/ies for them are also possible conjectures.

(2) In Chapter Two, I delve into the possibility—indeed, probability—that Annah(s) is(are) pained—using theoretical standpoints from pain studies, and my own embodied understandings as a pained woman. As I elaborate on through both critical and creative writing, there is the very real possibility that Annah(s) were pained. Furthermore, I argue that it is incredibly relevant to examine this crucial possibility of painedness for Annah and for *any* body portrayed in art. This is because of the lines of inquiry that possibility creates, in terms of where and why power imbalances lie between different ages, genders, races, sexualities, disabledness/abledness, nationalities, and other categories. Applying this possibility of pain to any visually-portrayed figure illuminates historical dynamics of inequity and abuse, and highlights compulsorily abled interpretations of humans as visual subjects. This is the framework I am applying to Annah(s) throughout this thesis. I emphasise that the greater likelihood of abuse and mistreatment, the greater likelihood a person could be pained, and untreated for that pain. Compulsorily abled interpretations, especially of those exhibiting no ‘outer sign of pain’ according to abled people, mark the certain possibility of painedness. Asymptotic descriptions of pain, especially by pained

people, are multitudinous and important, especially as these self-descriptions are so often disbelieved. To bolster these points, I have used relevant theory in pain, disability, and affect studies, including Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) and 'The Contingency of Pain' (2002), Yasmin Gunaratnam's work on 'total pain' (2013), Alyson Patsavas' 'cripistemology of pain' (2014), Eli Clare's work on cure (2017) and Mel Y. Chen on pain-relevant (post-)colonial dynamics (2014).

- (3) In Chapter Three, *On Java*, I present an argument against the rejection of a reified, static understanding of Java, and of 'Javanese girl'. This rejection is crucial to understanding Annah(s) as potentially plural, and therefore potentially in pain. I argue that the representation of 'La Javanaise' in accounts of Annah are caricatures. They are a form of violence through which Gauguin's use of Annah(s) and other brown girls promotes his self-mythos of being closer to savages. The introduction of Stoler's work *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Time* (2016) presents coloniality as violent marks persisting into the present. Duress, it is argued, augments prior interpretations of Java, including work done by Slamet Amex Thohari (2013) on four Javanese frameworks for disability post-Soeharto, as well as work by others on Indonesian and Javanese histories. In this chapter, I open up understandings of 'Java' to speculative realities and multiple forms of violation.
- (4) In Interludes One, Two, and Three, I 'queer' and 'crip' time through hybrid-genre vignettes of multiple Annahs existing on simultaneous planes yet different eras, and spiritually communicating with each other. In doing so, I illustrate further the possibility of pained Annah(s), and also the duress of colonial marks on bodies over time.
- (5) Chapter Four: *A Child of Thirteen* is a visual and text series in which I present Annah as a child against variable tropes of 'child' and 'adult' that they are placed into. By troubling contemporary narratives, I highlight the variable nature of their potential age and potential consent to various relationships with Gauguin. I also present Michel Foucault's positionality

vis-a-vis Annah, which will give rise to further theoretical work on age, coloniality, and painedness.

(6) Chapter Five argues that sexuality, age of consent, and ablenormativity are bound up in configurations of potential harming, potential causing of pain, particularly in Annah's case. The assumption that Annah(s) were sexually willing and available for Gauguin hinges, I posit, on the assumption of their abled nature, their heteronormative nature, and of their adult nature. When their consent, their age, and their sexuality are put into question, the likelihood of abuse is multiplied, as is the likelihood of pain. I argue that these processes of heteronormativity, ablenormativity, and child abuse are not separate but intertwined, and form the bedrock of imperial duress. The case of Annah(s) is evidence of this, and points to new directions in decolonial studies and disability studies. My work highlights that the interaction of disability and sexuality, especially as painedness is 'invisible' to abled people, is racialised and highly variable (Pickens, 2019; Schalk, 2018). My work operates against 'the bias grain' (Fuentes, 2016:p.182), on registers of sensorial signalling for Annah that ablenormative thinking may deem 'counterintuitive'. From my perspective as a pained, brown being, however, the possibility of painedness in every figure is intuitive. Using Sara Ahmed's notion of 'stickiness' (2013) in systemic affective systems, I point to the deliberate production of emotions by overarching structures—the deliberate lack of attention to the possibility of Annah's painedness by art institutions past and present. In effect I illuminate a conspiring to create a 'stickiness' of empathy for Gauguin and a lack of empathy for the child or children he depicted. I also center Javanese and other Indonesian subjectivities, the idea of the 'soulbody', and queered, decolonised, crippled time—in allowing pained Annahs to exist simultaneously, and for these Annahs to assist each other.

(7) Chapter Six connects the above analytic points and draws attention to four threatening systems of duress. These interlocking systems are (a) the international banking and finance system, (b)

state violence, (c) the fine art market, and (d) the ‘development’ industry. I argue that all four are based in white supremacist ableist heteronormative capitalism. This violent ideology ensures that from colonial times to now, from Annah’s origin stories to the present, the four systems continue to assault the wellbeing of Black, brown, Asian and/or Indigenous children. Benefitting from the power dynamics among and between groups, the ideology manipulates systemic affective ecologies to create a violent world for these children, especially if D/deaf and/or disabled. This is a world in which the image of a child who was likely abused is valorised as ‘fine art’, while the ‘white saviour’ myth masks abuse of children by ‘development’ organisations.

(8) Chapter Seven is a visual and text series that highlights the comorbidity, if you will, of both Western paternalism towards Black, brown, Asian and/ Indigenous children, and the consumption of *Annah la Javanaise* and colonial histories of Annah as part of the fine art industry.

Overall, my thesis has argued for a fact that is still perceived as disputable: that there is the possibility of pain in *Annah la Javanaise*, and in accounts and archival materials portraying the person or people in the painting. This possibility is increased due to the likelihood of abuse and pain a child would go through in those circumstances, of living with recorded slavers and abusers. Furthermore, I argue that there is the possibility of pain in *every* picture, a conclusion arrived at through my personal subjectivities as a pained person who has consistently been disbelieved. I reiterate: pain is not always indicated by what sighted, abled/non-pained people perceive as pain. Thus painedness must be understood as a possibility in *every* image.

This understanding is urgently needed in a world where 540 million people live with neuropathic pain (Kammerman, et al., 2016), yet the World Health Organisation (Saxena, 2017) refuses to list our required medicine as essential, and accuses us of being drug abusers first. It is

urgently needed in a world where children continue to be hurt and murdered every day under the watch of state-sanctioned organisations around the world. It is urgently needed in a world where racialised children and adults are still made more vulnerable to hurt and death. To see the world from a pained soulbody perspective is a gift, and it is one I think all abled people need to accept *as* a gift from us when we provide it, to increase empathy, to dismantle systemic affective systems that aim to erase possibilities of pain—and thus possibilities for succour.

It is important for me to acknowledge the danger of ‘over-reading’ (Gunaratnam, 2019) when portraying figures from the past, who are deceased. In my analysis of Annah archives and fictioning, I am negotiating the risks of overdetermining or even representing the dead in a way they would not want.

My intent is for this PhD thesis to minimise harm in both its creative and critical components. Annah has already been represented, on no less a scale than as a valuable artifact on the global fine art market. However, this representation is one I find untenable in its opacity, and in its potentially violent nature. With my methods of fictioning Annahs and pronouncing that *all* Annah representations are speculative and potentially fictional—especially given that those who record or write of Annah(s) are largely collaborating with epistemic and archival colonial violences—I restore ownership over Annah(s)’ stories to themselves. I am not claiming truths, I am claiming possibilities, and this is a crucial distinction. In so doing, I hope to disrupt the powerful structures of epistemic violence within arts and other institutions, those that continue to lay claim to a singular ‘truth’, even when their stories have contradictory details. This is also the goal for my creative nonfiction book *Annah, Infinite*, the dismantling of harmful structures of representation by declaring *all* representations of Annah fictions, null and void, certainly including my own. My representations of course still risk being those that the dead would not want, from my use of pronouns to the stroke of my hand making collages from ink and paper. However, it is my assertion that to do otherwise, to leave untouched hegemonic Annah representations, contributes to ‘the barring of nonwhite subjects

from the category of the human as it is performed in the modern West' (Weheliye, 2014:p.3), and to the further barring of subjects who are also young, femme, disabled.

Yasmin Gunaratnam (2019) synthesises both Jose Esteban Muñoz's work and that of Alexander Weheliye and Katherine McKittrick (2017) in cautioning researchers of 'over-reading':

“‘Mattering movements in Black’”, in similar ways to Muñoz's 'brown commons' is full of dynamism. This is not a version of an ontology/biology as politics narrative, such as black bodies being determined by a radical alterity. Rather McKittrick and Weheliye (2017: 36) seem to be marking out a provisional mode of ontological thinking, responsive to the gathering of the plurality and event of “black livingness” in both its historical-then and situated-now human and non-human networks. Black flesh can be inscribed by biology and the social, but is also open to “different formings and matterings” (McKittrick & Weheliye 2017: 31).’ (Gunaratnam 2019:n.p.)

These 'different formings and matterings' are also what my work creates with regards to Annahs. Again, I want to present all Annah scenarios in my practice-based works as fictions, in order to show that what we think of as 'art historical fact' are also fictions. And, most importantly, I would like to emphasise that the real Annah(s) themselves own their own stories and dignity, and I would like to sincerely apologise to them and their families for any representation they would disagree with.

All of the above contributes to explorations, as yet untouched in the literature, of the intersections between disability studies, de(colonial) studies, and visual cultural studies regarding race, ethnicity, nationality, disablement, sex, age, consent, queering and crippling. The creative work



in this thesis shows paths forward for further practice-as-research into these explorations, into what implications Annah as a pained body in a painting offers.

One of these paths involves affirming the uses of the speculative in affect and memory studies, disability studies, decolonial studies and Southeast Asian studies—whether surrounding violence in Indonesia or elsewhere—and introducing the concept of the ‘soulbody’ that honours regional subjectivities based in spiritualities, in this instance, Indonesian spiritualities in which time and space are already queered and crippled.

There are layers and layers to Annah stories, not palimpsests, but Stoler’s (2016) notion of marks. Part of this thesis’ project is to convert understandings of ‘traces’ into understandings of how indelible and violent *marks* of coloniality exist in all archives and artifacts surrounding Annah la Javanaise. In so doing, I would like coloniality to be understood as violent, brutal, maiming, debilitating, and present, rather than benign and/or in the past. Understanding the ever-present and constant possibility of pain is crucial to this process.

Again, I stress that there is the possibility of pain in *every* picture, especially when those controlling how images are interpreted, and which images remain in the public eye, are colonial institutions. This continuous possibility of pain in every image is something we all know inherently—we have all been pained in some way and not been recognised as being such, whether hiding an emotionally stormy day at work, or begging for pain medication in a hospital Emergency Room and being brushed aside. Yet we are asked to follow along with an ablenormative world, continuously denying that ourselves and others have the capacity for immense pain in every situation. There are entire universes we do not know of each other’s lives. This creative work that forms the main body of this thesis argues that there are whole universes of Annahs we do not know, and must acknowledge as not knowing, and in every universe a world of potential pain.

Acknowledging the possibility of pain in every picture, actively, in language, in museum design, in curricula, opens us up to empathy for others and also ourselves. We are consistently told

to adhere (pun unintended) to the ‘stickiness’ of emotions Ahmed (2004) writes of, in such a way as to negate possibilities of pain in images—despite the omnipresence of situations of ‘total pain’, particularly for debilitated populations (Gunaratnam, 2013). It is high time the structures that continually reinforce these processes be dismantled. It is part of acknowledging that every pain we have ever felt ourselves was/is real, whether or not anyone else registered it, whether or not anyone believed it.

Against the pervasive use of ‘universality’ as a white supremacist tool of erasure of specificities, of entire populations, I stress that there is more likelihood of painedness the more brutalised a population—and that for someone such as Annah, who was a member of multiple maimed populations, and in extremely unsafe situations, the likelihood of pain was high. Saying that there is no possibility of pain in *Annah la Javanaise* is equivalent to saying that pain is never a possibility, regardless of circumstance, even if that circumstance is conducive to pain. We are socialised and socialising others not to see (particularly for us sighted populations) or register pain. And with this regimen, enforced by the regime of white supremacist ablenormativity that has spanned centuries, we are trained and training others not to recognise people as human, not to recognise the innately human capacity for pain, for great pain. Denying that pain exists means denying the humanity of others, and of ourselves, limiting our capacity for empathy and imagination. Tolerable pain, however, is generative—having experienced years of intolerable pain, and learning to live with and manage tolerable pain, I maintain that imagining pain in others past, present, and future is a bedrock part of changing arts institutions, of dismantling the white supremacist structures that undergird deliberate dehumanisation of Black and brown children, of Black, brown, Indigenous, Asian people. There is urgency here. We must act to offer humanity and dignity to the children whose lives populate ours, who have died many years ago, who are fighting not to die today.

I wrote, illustrated, and performed this entire thesis in a pained soulbody, in continuous chronic pain of varying levels, in the past four years on the highest dosage of Gabapentin allowed a single human frame. It has taken years of unlearning to offer myself the same empathy I want Annahs to have had, to take pride in my non-normative soulbody. This PhD has been an enormous part of that process, of articulating and spelling out what I feel so violently in my daily existence as a pained person: the overwhelming disbelief of pain, strangers' looks when you take a disabled seat, people looking at your legs when you leave an airport wheelchair, the doctors from my past who refused to believe me, and give me medicine. Being yelled at by a nurse to stop screaming in my ER gurney, until I forced myself to be quiet. Because my wounds are internal and 'non-visible'. To me, they are very visible. To me, I look pained because I am.

Throughout the completion of this PhD, I have faced racist and ableist roadblocks. In my fiction 'Three Months Earlier', the names may be changed, but all details of incidents are accurate to my own experience—from repeated failures to pay for my disability taxi benefits, to attempted obstruction of my critique of disabled academics because they were white, mere months before my submission date. In other words, both in the body of and the making of this thesis, I have been arguing for my needs to be taken seriously, for my disability to be understood and believed and honoured, and it has not been easy despite all other privileges afforded me, from my bilingualism in English as well as Indonesian to my UK Visa. Disbelief and a negation of power dynamics are tools of white supremacist patriarchal cisgender ablenormativity.

In the experiences of Melinjo (from 'Three Months Earlier') that mirror my own in creating this thesis, there is complicity with white supremacy; there is denial of white guilt. This denial is explained theoretically through Gloria Wekker's (2016) concept of 'white innocence' (Wekker 2016) and the praxis of Robin DiAngelo's (2018) 'white fragility'. Gloria Wekker's (2016) book *White Innocence* draws on the propensity of white Dutch people to erase the violence of their colonial history, resting on the presumption of 'white innocence'. Robin DiAngelo's (2018) book

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*White Fragility* draws attention to how white people become defensive when their white privilege is brought to attention and challenged. One might say that the systemic affective systems (Ahmed, 2004) that keep white people's sense of superiority intact, that also keep their sense of white innocence intact, mean that aggressive, defensive actions are taken when these systems are held to account.

These are the dynamics that underlie the relationships between Melinjo and white people she worked with in close vicinity. I have experienced white fragility in action already with regards to my analyses of Annah narratives, in the presentation of my work in progress at Goldsmiths, including in the incidents of academic racism allegorised and presented in 'Three Months Earlier'. There was also the day when I was invited to give a guest lecture in a graduate curating program. A lecturer (who presented as a white femme adult) interrupted my Annah talk to call out that Brooke Shields had also been sexualised as a young child in photographs. I agreed with them that that was terrible, but the added layers of racialisation, and of colonisation, particularly in 1890s France for a brown, unaccompanied child, made Annah even more vulnerable than presenting as a girl would. This is just one example of several I have collected in the course of writing this thesis, in various circumstances, including many attempts by others to soften my language around white, colonial complicity and white guilt. I hope that such painful encounters will form the basis of future work. I provide the Shields interjection as emblematic of the nature of these interactions, and I mention it here as a reminder that academia forms a part of institutional complicity in the veneration of abusive circumstances, and of ableist rhetoric as a cover for colonial crimes.

I would like to highlight here the workers and toxins calling Melinjo's thesis project 'extreme'. This is an allegory for an incident that happened to me, followed by the person involved repeatedly apologising, followed by equivocations, all the while appearing to misunderstand what 'white fragility' is, despite claims to the contrary. It is appalling to me that a project that aims to highlight harm against children would be called 'extreme', without self-awareness that this in itself an

extreme thing to say, by a person who supposedly meant to champion the thesis. This is an example of white fragility protecting ‘white innocence’ in a verbally violent manner without recognition of violence. ‘Woke’—a term first used in print by Black novelist William Melvin Kelley, in a 1962 *New York Times* column (Schulz, 2018:n.p.)—is not a destination, but a lifelong process. The ‘hermeneutical inability of privileged white subjects to recognize and make sense of their racial identities, experiences, and social positionality’ (Medina, 2012:p.201) infuses knowledge production in the academy. This is the epistemic foundation of Wekker’s ‘white innocence’ (2016) and DiAngelo’s ‘white fragility’ (2018).

By fictioning my experiences in the making of this thesis, I am also highlighting institutional barriers in the process of ‘complaint as diversity work’ (Ahmed, 2017:n.p.). Namely, there are experiences I cannot bring to light without consent from all parties. Furthermore, as Sara Ahmed writes,

‘pointing out institutional sexism and racism is heard as “rocking the boat,” reflecting on how when you expose the symbolic emptiness of diversity, as a symbol of diversity, you are understood to be causing damage.’ (Ahmed, 2018:p.331)

If it weren’t for my colleague and friend pointing out, at the beginning of a meeting with a perpetrator of academic racism vis-a-vis my thesis, how ‘white tears’ and white emotionality are often used to demonise the person of colour making the complaint against a white woman—as Sita Balani recounted vis-a-vis Mary Beard’s tears (discussed in Chapter Six) when confronted with her racism (Balani 2018:n.p.)—there would have been more of a risk of white emotionality controlling the emotional narrative. The systemic affective economies surrounding Annah(s) are as much a problem in institutions of higher learning as they are in fine art auction houses.

Eleonora Fabião writes:

‘The project of performance art is related to making fluid and dynamic not only art itself, but highly stratified and inflexible states of things. Performance art disorders a culture based on the principles of solids: repetition, reproduction, mimetic representation, durability, monumentality, quality certificates, guarantees, diplomas, certitude, belongings, dishwashers, furniture, shoes, trucks of shoes, boats of shoes, decorative baskets. It works against repetition in its broadest subjective sense: It deconstructs automatic modes of behavior, works against habit’ (Fabião, 2012:p. 126)

In other words, performance art can be described as awakening people to the inherent fluidity and inherent dynamism of art, and of things thought to be highly stratified and inflexible. It can be described as awakening people to the systemic affective economies (Ahmed, 2004) that underlie all things thought to be solid and immovable, unchangeable—the flows of psychological and emotional cues and materiality that lead us to perceive things as being solid. As I have reiterated in this thesis, a painting is not just a painting. The painting *Annah la Javanaise* contains multitudes of hurt, of potential realities, and in the course of completing this thesis, I remind myself that there are potential sanctuaries and escapes from what colonists would have it represent. My creative writing in the practice portfolio is as much a part of making structures fluid and dynamic as my performance installations at the ICA (2018) and SALTS (2018). The creative work aims to highlight the fluid power dynamics behind the creation of this thesis.

The quote at the beginning of Chapter Six, from Nurma, a woman from West Sumatra, Indonesia (as am I, on my mother’s side; West Sumatran culture or Minangkabau is, as aforementioned, the largest matrilineal society in the world) is taken from a 2016 PhD thesis on resilience. As the author of that thesis, Yenny Narny, states, the concept of ‘resilience’ is cultural

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and means different things to people of different places. As I mention in Chapter Five, painedness is often associated with the body breaking down, rather than the body signalling alarm as an outcome of deeply oppressive circumstances. I would also like to posit that painedness is often regarded as a sign of weakness, and yet, in my own embodied experience as a Minangkabau woman, inheriting a bloodline of matriliney, I have come to understand painedness as a sign that there is too much to bear. It is the universe saying ‘your pains are real’. As such, pain is spiritual, and spiritually complex, particularly when unbearable. Fluid emotional dynamics in pained women may occur on subatomic internal levels, with ontologies that are not recorded in colonial archives.

Now that *Annah La Javanaise* is in the public domain, allowing the painting to be used repetitively in this thesis and Google Image searches, this begs the questions: whose public domains, and for what? The book of creative nonfiction I am writing, *Annah, Infinite*, will probe for answers to these questions.

Respecting Annah(s) as children; would it mean rethinking laws that allow defamation of dead people? It would hopefully mean thinking outside of Western colonial legal structures entirely, looking beyond, to soulbodyness, to subjectivities that come from Java, from West Sumatra, from thousands and thousands of cultures in which Annah could be protected in some way.

Should we leave children in the 1890s to their fates and only care about the welfare of children now? This is a false question, because Annah(s)’s continued portrayal and legitimization of violence *does* affect brown children now, and on a gargantuan, monstrous scale. The way *Annah la Javanaise* the painting is treated is both cause and effect of racialised children’s vulnerability and suffering. It is also important to recognise the photographic archives and the painting as chronicles of resilience, of children who have learnt how to survive, however short their life expectancy under such great duress.

The *Annah, Infinite* project in fiction and visual art forms will further serve to show the unstable nature of the identity of *disability*, its interchangeability with *ability*, and the ways in which racial assemblages are also those of dis/ability assemblages, assemblages of ‘the child’ and ‘the girl child’ in particular, destabilizing the delineation of unwanted and wanted according to compulsory racialised ablebodiedness and heteronormativity in a white supremacist society in which Annah as person and painting is circulated.

Why is this work urgently important today? Any news outlet, whether print or digital, on any given day displays headlines of adults, particularly cis white men, accused of abuse who nonetheless continue to accumulate accolades and power on a daily basis—from Trump to employees of companies and government institutions around the world. They are enabled to do so, tacitly and explicitly, by brushing aside the pains and suffering of those who present stories of violation, and in crafting very specific visual and emotional narratives. Whether abuse by UN soldiers in Africa, by those posing as volunteers in ‘a developing country’, by those who present images that injure those they portray, by those in the highest seats of political power, it is necessary to understand that ‘globalisation’ as we know it is also the global circulation of a specific set of racialised, sexualised, ablenormative beliefs affecting young women’s bodies, which I know most intimately as relating to my region of origin Southeast Asia. In illuminating facets of abuse that are ancient, yet also still barely touched on in academia, we are acknowledging their existence and the existence of those they affect. They are right in front of us, and unlike the painting *Annah la Javanaise*, we do not value them.

Again, I assert that ablenormativity, borne of ableism, is a tool of colonial duress because *colonial subjects need to be perceived as bodily and psychically able to serve the needs of colonial capitalism*. It is key to remember that millions of children are and have been debilitated and disabled by this overarching neoliberal colonial economic and political system that seeks to globalise, capture, commodify and destroy (Puar, 2017). The system that continues this violence



relies on the (mis)direction of visual images towards two false tropes of disabled children: serving an overwrought metaphor for a suffering, ‘developing nation’ (Barker, 2011) in need of Western saviours, and only discernable as disabled from an abled person’s sighted perspective. The ‘disabled child’ serves colonial capitalism by being the intended object of rescue, while simultaneously excluded from acting as an agent of their own that can meaningfully subvert colonial tropes. The systemic affective economy creates a particular ‘stickiness’ of emotions (Ahmed, 2013) that ensures going against the bias grain (Fuentes, 2016) is not a natural inclination.

What is at stake in attacking white supremacist colonial capitalism from all fronts possible is no less than human survival. As Heather Davis and Zoe Todd write in ‘On the Importance of a Date, Or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene’ (2017), Indigenous scholars have been arguing that

‘the Anthropocene is not a new event, but is rather the continuation of practices of dispossession and genocide, coupled with a literal transformation of the environment, that have been at work for the last five hundred years. Further, the Anthropocene continues a logic of the universal which is structured to sever the relations between mind, body, and land.’

Over the 125 to 126 years that *Annah la Javanaise* has been upheld as a prime example of white male artistic genius, Indonesian women have suffered immensely. *Annah la Javanaise* was a part of the fine art world in 1965-66, when the Indonesian genocide occurred, and through all forms of violence before and since, including current persistent land grab on a mass scale for ‘development’, resorts, palm oil plantations, factories, mines. I argue that potential Annahs were dispossessed of land and the needs of body and mind. In fictioning, I argue, fabricated Annahs could be offered holistic healing. In order to conceptualise healing, however, it is important to

understand the imperial duress that both causes and masks pains, so far as to occlude the possibility of pain in every picture. As I've argued in this thesis, that possibility exists.

It is important to me that this intellectual work does not support false equivalencies. Part of neurodiversity is that every soulbody or bodymind registers 'hurt' or 'pain' differently. The point here is not that of all brown children who lived then, Annah was under such extreme conditions that only she and those in very similar circumstances could have been in pain. The point is that truly anyone could be in extreme pain, whether or not they give off cues that ablenormative thought deems 'cues of extreme pain'. The point is also that even when probabilities of hurt are as extreme as they were for Annah, she is assumed to be *incapable of feeling pain*. This calls attention to the infinite other ways we judge people's internal states by their outsides, calls attention to the myriad ways all of us have experienced this judgment for ourselves.

The point is not that people can only be possibly pained if they are more vulnerable to painedness than other groups. Possible painedness, including extreme painedness, can certainly belong to soulbodies dancing in the street with a monkey, soulbodies photographed with abusive older men, soulbodies whose naked figures command wealth, whose memories are often desecrated, or belong to any of us, even when the outside world thinks otherwise.

Black, brown, Asian and/or Indigenous adults and children, especially femme-presenting, are both more likely to be pained and less likely to be believed—and art historical archives reinscribe these injustices continuously through ocularcentric, ablenormative perspectives, as crucial parts of white supremacist ableist cisheteronormative colonial duress. The fine art market, 'development' industry, state-sanctioned violence and the global finance system collude to perpetuate this imperial duress. They do this by socialising our interpretation of visual representations, according to harmful learned understandings of sexuality, age of consent, and ablenormativity. It is important to underscore this, in order to right the hermeneutic injustice of us pained bodies not being believed.

As this thesis has shown, there is an urgent need to expand pain narratives beyond the Western

and Anglocentric. There is so much that can be done to right injustices, by adding pained interpretations of visual figures to the work done by chronic pain and chronically pained scholars such as Alyson Patsavas (2014), by Indonesian disability and disabled scholars like Slamet Amex Thohari (2013), scholars of Blackness and disability in the West (Pickens, 2019; Schalk, 2018), of coloniality and disability (Puar, 2017; Chen, 2013), Indonesian feminist scholars of art and media like Intan Paramaditha (2013, 2018), scholars of coloniality such as Ann Laura Stoler (1995, 1997, 2010, 2013), and scholars of affect, emotion and memory studies like Yasmin Gunaratnam (2013) and Sara Ahmed (2003, 2013, 2017).

What I argue for in this thesis are two intertwined ways of approaching human figures in visual form, in the archives, in art, and in other texts: a) *a decolonial, pained-aware reading* and b) *a soulbody reading* that I attribute to my own personal Indonesian feminist perspective of ‘jiwa raga’ (literally ‘soul body’)—informed by the specific Minangkabau, Javanese and Muslim pedagogies that have helped guide me throughout my life, and not to generalise all Indonesian feminisms as the same.

Decolonial, pained-aware reading is a form of interpreting texts with the somatic awareness that colonial forces continue to suppress and even extinguish the perspectives of pained people, and those of us made more vulnerable to pain. Adopting this reading provides an understanding that there is the possibility of pain in every picture, and especially for groups made more vulnerable to debility and disbelief by continued imperial duress. A soulbody reading for brown figures is the possibility of time-space understandings for humans that defy Cartesian duality and Western, colonial epistemologies and ontologies. I would like to acknowledge that my particular lived-in spiritual frameworks have been informed by the specific Minangkabau and Javanese pedagogies (each with their own interpretations of Islam) that have helped guide me throughout my life; the term ‘soulbody’ to me seems appropriate. If one’s spiritual background is wholly different, for instance, one that does not recognise the term ‘soulbody’ as appropriate, ‘soulbody’ may be

substituted with a better term for the reader. As one example, someone whose spiritualities harken back to Minangkabau traditional spiritualities, in which there is a second spirit, or a force of ‘semangat’, may choose to call their method of interpretation a ‘semangat reading’.

Speculative Annah narratives have shown, in this thesis, that there *is* the possibility of their painedness, and that we all need to uphold a valuable assertion by pained knowledge and cultural workers such as myself and my pained peers: the assertion that there is the possibility of painedness in every human figure. If we did so, those of us from groups most subjected to pain and debilitation, as well as most disbelieved, could find more succour, more urgently needed relief.

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