"More Beautiful Than Something We Could Create Ourselves"

Exploring Swedish International Transracial Adoption Desire

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of PhD in Sociology,
the University of Auckland, 2021.

Abstract

Globally the international adoption industry is in a time of crisis, beset by a steady stream of corruption and abuse scandals, and criticised by some as a racist and exploitative trade in children of colour. Yet, in Sweden, arguably the world's leading adopting nation, international adoption remains celebrated, wrapped up in national myths of anti-racism and goodness. This thesis critically explores the unique nature of Swedish international transracial adoption desire, examining how the adoptee body is deployed in national myth building and in fantasies of colour-blindness and white cosmopolitanism.

Drawing on the theoretical work of Ghassan Hage, bell hooks and Homi K Bhabha, the thesis uses deconstructive narrative analysis techniques to explore meanings and desires concealed beneath the surface of published texts and images. Analysing a range of sources, from commercials to popular adopter and adoptee autobiographies, it seeks to deconstruct narratives of adoption and goodness, and build a new understanding of white adopters' racial desires and their roles in maintaining a status quo of patriarchal white supremacy.

The thesis argues that the body of the transracial adoptee is used to signify a uniquely Swedish national goodness, and serves to unite a divided nation by symbolically connecting white Swedish subjects to a mythical glorious past, when white Swedes could have complete control over the positioning of bodies of colour in white national space. The adoptee body symbolises a safe version of multiculturalism, where a non-white body can be observed, controlled and consumed legitimately. It can also carry the possibility of white fantasies of being progressive, cosmopolitan digressive desiring subjects who are able to step out of whiteness to experience a world of Otherness.

However, while the adoptee body is central to upholding myths of Swedish goodness and exceptionalism it also troubles them: for it simultaneously carries hidden histories of Sweden's colonial past and racist present, which its presence forever threatens to reveal. The adoptee body therefore risks exposing the inauthenticity of Swedish virtue and the good white Swedish subject, and the histories of eugenics, racism and colonialism that good Sweden and the international adoption project are built on.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the University of Auckland for giving me the opportunity to complete this thesis, and I gratefully acknowledge the UoA Doctoral Scholarship that enabled me to finance my studies. I am also thankful for the University's PBRF and DRF funding that allowed me to take research trips to Sweden and Korea.

Thank you to the editors and anonymous peer reviewers at Interventions, Genealogy, Borderlands and Social Identities. Your helpful critique and encouraging comments were invaluable in shaping the articles that are featured in this thesis.

Thank you to Avril and Vivienne for your supervision for the first three and a half years of this project, to Claudia and John for your encouragement, and to Sereana for your open door and kindness when things got tough. Thank you to my PhD office mates, especially Luke, Jeevan, Charlotte and Aimee for getting through this with me and being there through good and bad times. Thank you George for your support and advice, and Hye Young for your friendship.

Thank you Christine M. for your encouragement from afar, and for your generous careful readings of drafts of my articles.

To Steve, I can't express how grateful I am for your help. You stepped in to supervise the final months of this thesis, immersing yourself in critical adoption studies; and you have guided, pushed and encouraged me to stay true to myself and to produce a thesis that I can be proud of.

To my lovely children: Poppy, who has only ever known me as a student, thank you for reassuring me by telling me I look like "an expert at PhD"; to Teddy, thank you for persuading me not to give up (more than once), and for your wonderful impressions of me lecturing.

To Lisa Wool-Rim. I wouldn't have finished this without you. I certainly wouldn't have started this without you. Your belief in me and your unwavering support has led me to do things I did not imagine possible: writing a PhD thesis is definitely one of them.

Dedicated to the memory of
Hyun Su, Yong Fang, and Hana Alemu.
May you play in peace.

Publishers' Permission

Chapter 6 was published by *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* as Wyver, Richey. (2020). "From Flat-Packed Furniture to Fascism: Exploring the Role of the Transracial Adoptee in Fantasies of Swedish Goodness". *Interventions*: *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 22(7): 897-915.

Chapter 7 was published by *Genealogy* as Wyver, Richey. (2019). "Eating the [M]Other: Exploring Swedish Adoption Consumption Fantasies." *Genealogy*, 47(3)

Chapter 8 was published by *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, as Wyver, Richey (2020) "'Too Brown to be Swedish, too Swedish to be Anything Else': Mimicry and Menace in Swedish Transracial Adoption Narratives", *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture.*

The images in the pre-amble are by Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom. They originally appeared in Sjöblom, Lisa Wool-Rim. (2019). *Palimpsest: Documents from a Korean Adoption*. Toronto: Drawn & Quarterly. They are reproduced here with permission.

Contents

It is the exotic children I want. More beautiful than something we could create ourselves. A tight Vietnamese profile, with the distinctive cheekbones. Or maybe an explosive South American, smooth and coffee coloured?

– Kerstin Weigl
journalist and white adoptive mother to two girls from East Asia, 1997, 58-59[1]

1 My translation.

Sweden, Adoption and Me

Like most sociology research, this thesis stems from personal experience. For that, I should thank my wife and the mother of my two children, Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom, who kindly let me use her story and images here. Lisa Wool-Rim is one of Sweden's approximately 60,000 international adoptees, and was adopted from Korea at the age of two, losing forever her family, home and language. It is through seeing her experiences of racism, helping search for her roots, and fighting together for the rights of adult adoptees that I realised that however controversial and upsetting my project may be for some people, it has to be done.

When I moved from the UK to Sweden to live with Lisa in 2009, I was confronted, as a white European, with racism close up for the first time. White strangers shouting "ni hao" at Lisa, university students calling out numbers from Chinese takeaway menus at her as she walked past. My shock and anger at each everyday racism, from shouted insults to mocking stares, tore apart the survival strategies she had spent a lifetime building. I felt a paralysing tension each time Lisa, and later Lisa and our children, went out alone. It wasn't an over-reaction – often she would come back in tears, having been told off by a white stranger, refused entry on buses, spoken to in English by other Swedes. On one occasion she called me in terror, as her and our young son, then a baby, had been surrounded by a group of teenagers, who were screaming racist and sexist abuse at her.

I came to learn why racist attacks cannot always be reported to the police, when I was laughed out of a police station; I learnt about why one stops talking about racism to friends, and I learnt that helpful statements like, "but she isn't Chinese, she's Swedish!" meant as a compliment, worked to silence experiences of racism.


In high school, what was left of my Korean pride was literally beaten out of me.
Go home!
Chink
Keep Sweden Swedish
Gook!
I went to school every day with my head held high. But I can't count the times...
I had to hide in the bathroom, and then run home before the end of the school day.
I had loved school more than anything. Now I was afraid to go there.
Finally, I couldn't take it anymore.
KKK
I refused to go back.
So, Lisa, have you completed the assignments I gave you the other day?
I finished high school after hours.

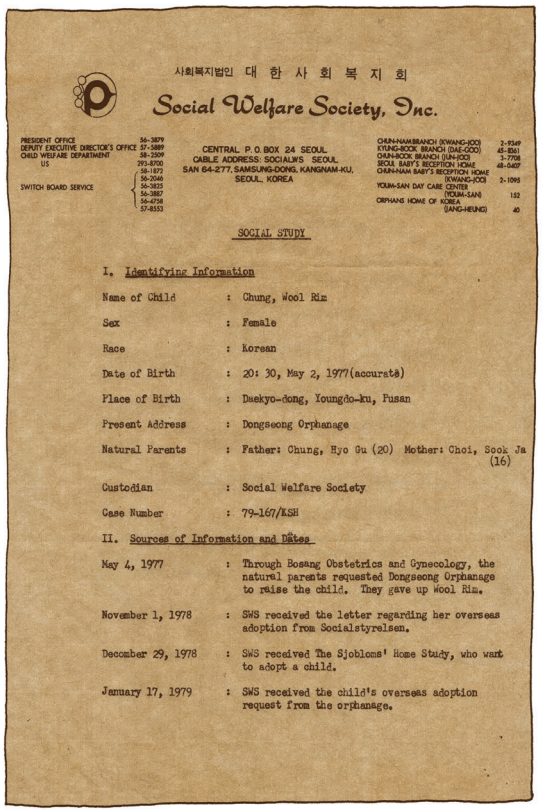
Searching

Lisa had tried to find her Korean parents as a teenager. She initiated a search with her adoption agency, but they wrote to her telling her there was no record of her mother. That she must have given a false name.

After our second child, our daughter, was born, Lisa decided she was ready to start searching again. We spread out all of her adoption papers, that her Swedish parents had saved. They must have pored over these papers, waiting for her. Lisa herself had spent hours staring at them. But this time, perhaps the benefit of a fresh pair of eyes, we noticed something new.

Laying the papers out in chronological order, we could not only see discrepancies between them, but also a slow erasure of Lisa Wool-Rim's Korean parents, the shaping of her from a child with parents into an adoptable orphan with no family ties and an uncertain history.

One document listed a mother and father's name, and a birthdate – and time; a later document listed the mother and father as unknown, and the birthdate as "presumptive".



사회복지법인 대 한 사 회 복 지 회

Social Welfare Society, Inc.

PRESIDENT OFFICE 56-3879
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE 57-5889
CHILD WELFARE DEPARTMENT 58-2509
US 293-8700
58-1672
56-2046
56-3825
56-3887
56-6738
57-8553
SWITCH BOARD SERVICE

CENTRAL P.O.BOX 24 SEOUL
CABLE ADDRESS: SOCIALWS SEOUL
SAN 64-277, SAMSUNG-DONG, KANGNAM-KU,
SEOUL, KOREA

CHUN-NAM BRANCH (KWANG-JOO) 2-9349
KYUNG-BOOK BRANCH (DAE-GOO) 45-8561
CHUN-BOOK BRANCH (JUN-JOO) 3-7708
SEOUL BABY'S RECEPTION HOME 48-0407
CHUN-NAM BABY'S RECEPTION HOME (KWANG-JOO) 2-1095
YOUM-SAN DAY CARE CENTER (YOUM-SAN) 152
ORPHANS HOME OF KOREA (JANG-HEUNG) 40

SOCIAL STUDY

I. Identifying Information

Name of Child : Chung, Wool Rim
Sex : Female
Race : Korean
Date of Birth : 20: 30, May 2, 1977(accurate)
Place of Birth : Daekyo-dong, Youngdo-ku, Pusan
Present Address : Dongseong Orphanage
Natural Parents : Father: Chung, Hyo Gu (20) Mother: Choi, Sook Ja (16)
Custodian : Social Welfare Society
Case Number : 79-167/KSH

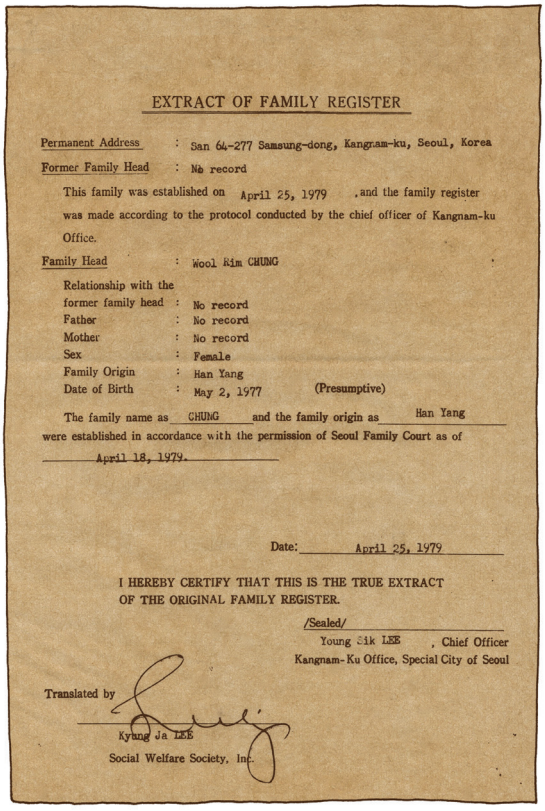
II. Sources of Information and Dates

May 4, 1977 : Through Bosang Obstetrics and Gynecology, the natural parents requested Dongseong Orphanage to raise the child. They gave up Wool Rim.

November 1, 1978 : SWS received the letter regarding her overseas adoption from Socialstyrelsen.

December 29, 1978 : SWS received The Sjoblooms' Home Study, who want to adopt a child.

January 17, 1979 : SWS received the child's overseas adoption request from the orphanage.



EXTRACT OF FAMILY REGISTER

Permanent Address : San 64-277 Samsung-dong, Kangnam-ku, Seoul, Korea
Former Family Head : No record

This family was established on April 25, 1979 , and the family register was made according to the protocol conducted by the chief officer of Kangnam-ku Office.

Family Head : Wool Rim CHUNG
Relationship with the former family head : No record
Father : No record
Mother : No record
Sex : Female
Family Origin : Han Yang
Date of Birth : May 2, 1977 (Presumptive)

The family name as CHUNG and the family origin as Han Yang were established in accordance with the permission of Seoul Family Court as of April 18, 1979.

Date: April 25, 1979

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS IS THE TRUE EXTRACT OF THE ORIGINAL FAMILY REGISTER.

/Sealed/
Young Sik LEE , Chief Officer
Kangnam-Ku Office, Special City of Seoul

Translated by
Kyung Ja LEE
Social Welfare Society, Inc.

Through correspondence with other Korean adoptees we learnt that we were looking at a standard practice in adoption. The second document was the "orphan hojuk", a legal document that makes the perspective adoptee 1) an orphan and 2) the sole member of their family, rendering them eligible for overseas adoption. These adoptees are paper orphans, fabricated orphans for adoption purposes.

We initiated a family search with SWS, Social Welfare Society, the massive Korean adoption agency that had facilitated Lisa's adoption, and KAS, Korean Adoption Services, the authority that supposedly oversees adoptions. While we waited, I began a little search myself. We could see the name of an orphanage in Lisa's papers, "Dongsonwon". We asked SWS about it. The reply came quickly: "It no longer exists"

I had this idea that if I could find someone in Busan who could help us, we could circumnavigate the adoption agencies that may have something to hide. I sent out emails to libraries, universities, the council … and someone replied! An inquisitive web-master at Busan Council. I asked her about the orphanage. Were there any records of it? Where was it? She got back to me in an instant: "I sent Wool-Rim's details to the orphanage, they will get back to us shortly". And a quick search with the name in Hangul found that not only was it very much still in existence, it had its own Facebook page and YouTube channel.

At this point it became clear that we were being misled, and misinformed. But for what reason?

Our search continued, and every request we made for further information was turned down, or only finally obtained after a struggle. Our contact at Busan City Hall offered to pass our case on to the police.

Around this time we managed to acquire the cover sheet for Lisa's documents from SWS. It's nothing, they told us. It's just the front cover of her file. People don't normally ask for it. It came full with information, much of which we had already. Examining the document though, we could see traces of text on the back-side. When we requested this, it revealed the name of an institution "Busan Children's Guidance Clinic" and a man: Mr Jung[2], its president.

It struck us that this organisation appeared in some way in all of the documents that we had been told didn't exist, or that we had had to fight to get. And Mr Jung appeared elsewhere too: he had written a letter to Lisa's parents after the adoption of her older brother, saying that he would find them a daughter.

2 Mr Jung is a pseudonym.

After a few months of silence, we wrote to SWS for an update. They replied. "We have been unable to find any trace of Lisa's mother. Her name and details must have been false." Lisa gave up hope.

The next morning, Busan police phoned us.

They had found Lisa's mother.

Sorry it took so long, they said. There were seventy people with the same name and similar details. We had to go through them all!

To Korea

In June 2013, we travelled to Korea. The first trip back for Lisa. As we continued searching for infomation about Lisa's roots, a terrible story began to unfold. Battling one organisation after another, we found that:

1) SWS and KAS did not carry out a search at all. In fact, they told us they don't do searches, despite advertising this – they just check and request files. Potentially thousands of adoptees are likely to have thought that their parents were being searched for, when they weren't.

2) The mysterious *Busan Children's Guidance Clinic*, who many people told us didn't exist, turned out to be an official organisation that found and housed lost children and organised international adoptions.

3) The policewoman helping us tracked down, unofficially, Mr Jung. At first, he denied ever being the president of the Clinic. Then he broke down, and confessed that his staff were involved in trading children through bribes. The scale of child theft was huge, he said, involving civil servants and politicians. The staff were paid to find and send children to adoption agencies. Mr Jung denied any wrongdoing himself, but was wracked with guilt about what happened, as he signed the papers that finalised the adoptions.

4) There was nothing we could do about this.

Back Home

As we began to tell our story back home, the reactions were strange. Shock, initially. Then defence. "You know, not all adoptees feel like that". "But if this hadn't happened, you'd never have met Lisa". "I know an adoptee, and he is fine with it". Friends slowly began to disappear from our lives. New people appeared though. Adoptee after adoptee who had been struggling for years to voice their concerns.

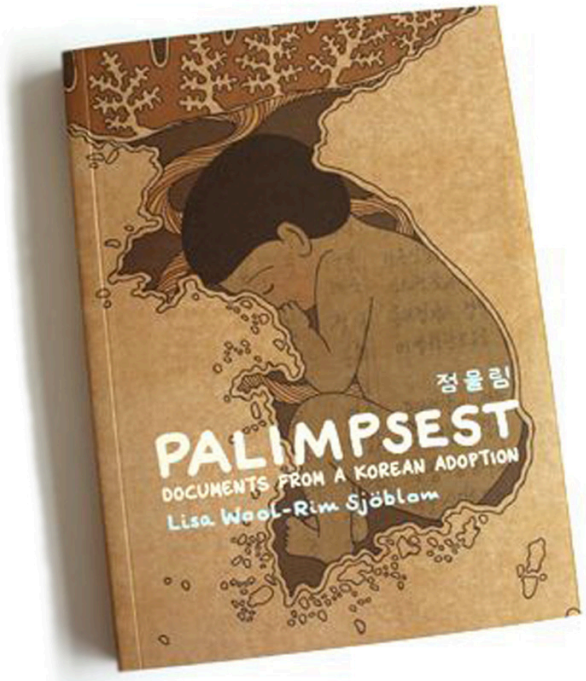
Some people asked us to look over their adoption papers. Horrible patterns began to emerge. Changed names, altered birthdates, separated siblings, exchanged children (where the paper trail clearly shows that the child initially described is not the same as the one sent).[3]

We began to understand that the racism, trauma – and defence and celebration of adoption – at one end, and the trafficking and corruption at the other, were connected. We realised that child theft and trafficking was not about individual cases, but part of the adoption system. And that this system could function because of the desire for

3 See Diann Borshay Liem's film First Person Plural (2000).

adoptable bodies, and the racist structures that enabled these desires to be acted out.[4] In the Swedish situation, these structures and desires were wrapped up in ideas of national identity, "good" nationalism in a homely anti-racist nation. Therein lay the great problem: what if adoption, such a central element in imaginings of the good Swedish nation and a good Swedish subject, was built on corruption, racism and perpetuating globalised racial and class inequities?

With limited resources, limited connections and very limited power, there was little we could do other than offer solidarity and support to other adoptees, and to do what we could in a small way to join the fight for adoptee justice. Lisa put her energies into art, and turned her search story into the graphic novel *Palimpsest* (2016).[5] As for me, I vowed that I would not give up the struggle to produce critical adoption research, which could eventually contribute to a field of Critical Adoption Studies, helping to create spaces for adoptee, first family and second generation adoptee[6] researchers.



4 Lisa Wool-Rim's story is far from unique, but is part of a broader structure of adoption desire, corruption, racism and identity manufacturing. See, for further discussion of this, Mckee (2016) and Park Nelson (2016).

5 Which, since its original Swedish publication in 2016, has been translated into Korean, Spanish and English.

6 The children of adoptees.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

On May 19th 2019, Adoptionscentrum (AC), Sweden's largest (and the world's 2nd largest) international adoption agency, celebrated 50 years of business. A powerhouse behind the Swedish adoption project, and indeed the global industry that has seen half a million children from countries perceived as being of the "Global South" transported to the West to be given new identities and raised in white families since the 1960s, AC has been a Swedish success story (Adoptionscentrum.se; Hübinette 2006; Yngvesson 2010)[7]. A people's movement – founded by white adoptive parents themselves, before being built into a global business that has been influencial in producing knowledge about adoption and taking the Swedish self-image of globalised "goodness" to the rest of the world (Yngvesson 2010).

Powered by a belief in Sweden having a unique history of no colonialism and no racism, and a national identity that had a responsibility to do something to help the world, AC had a key part in shaping and facilitating white Swedes' desires to adopt children of colour (Andersson & Jacobsson 1981, 39). Its success revolved around the shared belief that the white Swedish family and community is the best place for a foreign child

7 A Note on Language and Translations:
For clarity and in the understanding that Swedish international adoption is generally transracial, that is, children of colour are raised by white adoptive parents, I use the terms "adoption" and "adoptee" to indicate international transracial adoption/adoptees unless otherwise stated. Translations from Swedish are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

of colour to be raised; and the notion that Swedish society is anti-racist, supported by colour-blind laws and discourse, means that people don't even see difference, let alone attach meaning to it (Osanami Törngren, Jonsson Malm & Hübinette 2018).

From the 1960s, international adoption blossomed in Sweden, and came to represent the essence of the progressive post-race nation. Conveniently, it enabled involuntarily childless couples to have a child *and* enabled a child imagined as a "poor orphan" from a frightening faraway country to have a loving family and to become Swedish. It meant that white Swedes could get close to, look at, even touch, and love a body that didn't look like them, and through the presence of the adoptee body, learn about the horrors of the outside world, and learn about Other bodies: this would help to teach the reformed Swedish society to not be racist (*Adoption av utländska barn* 1967, 16; Yngvesson 2010).

Children arrived from around the world. Korea, Ethiopia, India, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Vietnam, Chile, China (and so on). Around 60,000[8] children, most of whom are of colour, have been adopted by white Swedish families since the late 1960s.

Korean children have long been the most desired, with around 9,500 children transported to Sweden from South Korea, making it the biggest sending country.[9] The Korean child was ideal for adoption; importantly, as there was no Korean immigration in Sweden, the adoptee would be understood to be an adoptee – not an "immigrant" (see Chapter 8). And Sweden has a special relationship with East Asian bodies, "celebrated" in yellowface performance in comedy (where white Swedes dress as "Asians", complete with squinting eyes, buck teeth and hilariously mixing "L"s and "R"s),[10] pornography, sex tourism, prostitution, and the popularity of older white men marrying young Thai women (Hübinette & Räterlinck 2014).

In many ways Sweden can be regarded as the world's leading international adopting nation. Sweden is recognised as having one of the highest rates of international adoptees per capita (Hübinette 2006; Yngvesson 2010; Hübinette & Andersson 2012), and has one of the highest proportions of international adoptees compared to live births. In 1978, a peak year for adoptions, Sweden adopted 1,600 children with a ratio of 17.4 transnational adoptions per 1,000 live births (Yngvesson 2012, 332). The country has also been instrumental in shaping European and international adoption legislation, and AC has acted as a model for the structure of other adoption agencies (Yngvesson 2010).

However, the commitment to the international adoption project goes beyond quan-

8 This total figure tends to vary between sources, and may not include private adoptions and adoptions in the early unregulated stages of the adoption project. "Around 60,000" is the figure used by adoptee rights groups and in recent news reporting on Swedish international adoption (see, for example, chileadoption.se).

9 See Kim 2010 for a history of adoptions from Korea. Again figures vary, and this number 9,500 is an estimate based on a figure quoted in Hübinette 2006.

10 See Hübinette & Sjöblom 2015 for examples of Swedish yellowface.

tity and legislative influence: the project has been central to the shaping of the modern Swedish national identity. Barbara Yngvesson, exploring the role of adoption in producing the national body, argues that there was an explicit commitment to the Swedish adoption project as a means of producing a multi-cultural nation (2012, 332). This commitment is certainly apparent in early discussions on whether to expand the international adoption programme, where it was endorsed as being a way of introducing a safe version of "multi-culturalism" into Sweden, with the visible presence of the transracial adoptee providing a means of educating white Swedes about non-White bodies (*Adoption av utländska barn* 1967, 16). The non-white body of the transracial adoptee could not just produce multi-culturalism in the home, but also shape an anti-racist society, with their body connecting the white family to the Third World, and to histories of racial oppression – without being implicated as an agressor. Indeed, international adoption is absolutely central to the imagining of Sweden as a colour-blind, post-race nation, where visible differences aren't seen, and where the concept of race is not approached critically, but actually erased altogether (Hübinette and Tigervall 2009; 2010).

What could be more quintessentially Swedish than adoption? Progressive – a new way of making a family; anti-racist – we could love a body that doesn't look like us; good – we can help rescue someone. Adoption is symbolic of the mythical golden era of Swedishness, when Sweden led the way in progressive policies of equality, supported decolonising movements, and took in refugees, a time Hübinette and Lundström describe as Sweden's white solidarity era (Hübinette & Lundström 2014).

While Sweden has seen a significant downturn in the number of adoptions in common with other demand countries, adoption remains something above criticism, and adoptees have found that to challenge the adoption programme on a structural level is taboo (see, for example, Dahlberg 2014; Rooth 2014). The use of adoption and adoptee bodies in commercial and political advertising indicates the continued celebration of the practice (Wyver 2019),[11] and the passing of policies such as a greatly increased tax-free grant for adopters to encourage more middle income Swedes to adopt internationally, demonstrate that the pro-adoption discourse is reflected in practice as well as in the national imagination (SVT Nyheter 2016). The on-going promotion of adoption, and sensitivity towards critique may well be indicative of its key role in national myths of Swedish "goodness", whereby international adoption is seen as being a pivotal part of the imagination of Sweden as the globally good nation (Wyver 2019), a discussion I persue in Chapter Six.

Goodness Questioned

The percieved goodness and the celebration of adoption conceals dark truths: international transracial adoptees face structural and systemic racism, which is often sexualised

11 See Chapter Six.

(Hübinette and Tigervall 2009; Lindblad and Signell 2008; Rooth 2002), and are greatly overrepresented in suicide and "maladjustment" statistics, and as victims of sexual abuse (Hjern, Lindblad & Vinnerljung 2002). Raised as isolated non-white bodies in otherwise exclusive white spaces in a "colour-blind" society that doesn't talk about race, adoptees are often tormented by internalised racism and lead existences where their bodies are both hyper-visible and deprived of positive representation (Hübinette & Tigervall 2009). There is also the grim reality of where adoptees really come from, which is largely avoided in adoption research[12]: adoptees' narratives of their root searches often describe falsified paperwork, and through DNA testing and root-searching, many adoptees find that they have either been stolen from parents, or have had parents tricked or coerced into relinquishing them (see, for example, chileadoption.se). Almost every major sending country has been affected by corruption and adoption trafficking scandals, to such an extent that it would be fair to make the claim that corruption and trafficking are central and necessary to the adoption industry, and should be treated as part of the industry rather than exceptions (Joyce 2013; Smolin 2006; Stuy 2014).

As a practice so entwined with Swedish nationalism and national identity, criticising adoption is controversial, and invokes strong emotions (see, for example, Hübinette 2011; Rooth 2014). Serious criticism of the practice of adoption and questioning of the racist desires behind it is rare. International adoption research and knowledge is traditionally produced by, and generally for, white adoptive parents of non-white children who are affiliated with the adoption industry (see Chapter Two). The powerful pro-adoption discourse, combined with the centrality of adopters in knowledge production, acts to silence the devastating impacts of adoption on adoptees and first families, by restricting critical voices and research.

Exploring Swedish Adoption Desire

The main problem I address in my research is that of international transracial adoption desire. Why, despite increased understandings of "race" and racism elsewhere, widely reported adoption corruption and child theft scandals, and resistance from sending countries, does the desire for white Swedish adults to adopt transnationally and transracially remain strong? How has this desire played a part in the development of the Swedish national identity and the performance of Swedishness?

Adoption research traditionally focuses on the individual. As Willing, Fronek and Cuthbert note in their review of sociological adoption literature, research tends to revolve around questions of what it is like to be adopted, and what it is like to adopt (2012, 20). A domination of adopter voices and individual focuses risks missing the wider

12 With some notable exceptions, not directly related to Sweden: see, for example, Smolin 2006 and Stuy 2014.

picture of the adoption phenomenon, and tends to work to normalise and justify it. In this project I intend to move research away from the individual, or from the family, and address the problem at a societal, macro or systemic-level. My interest here is not so much in the personal experience of adoptees or adopters, or, for that matter, first families, but rather in the discursive aspect of the international adoption in Sweden, the structures in place to direct and facilitate collective adoption desire and the question of how adoption has shaped the nation.

Importance and Aims

I believe that there is an urgent need to examine and challenge the dominant pro-adoption discourse from a critical, post-colonial perspective. Adoption is generally regarded as an individual act, rather than being part of a wider national project. In my research, I intend to approach this differently, arguing that adoption can be seen as a national desiring project, where the bodies of foreign children of colour are used to connect nation-building projects to the family sphere, and where the collective desire for bodies of Otherness is steered into an acceptable egalitarian fantasy. I seek to examine the role of the transracial adoptee body in building myths of good Swedish whiteness, and erasing the history of violence, racism and colonialism that the modern Swedish nation is built upon. I approach my work as classic ideology critique, an attempt to expose lies and other mechanisms of domination, and to challenge national myths.

The main aim of this thesis is to critically explore international transracial adoption desire in Sweden, with a focus on the representation and use of the body of the adoptee. I aim to make a theoretical contribution to critical adoption studies, as well as connecting the phenomenon of Swedish adoption desire to wider issues of racial inequality, colonial history and whiteness. I seek to challenge existing understandings of adoption in Sweden, and re-read history and adoption narratives against the grain.

It is important to clarify that this thesis is not intended as a guide to Swedish adoption, or adoption critique for beginners: I am not expecting the reader to be shocked by the fact that adoption is problematised here. My thesis is positioned within the field of critical adoption studies, and *builds on* critical work on adoption, taking an anti-adoption stance as a *starting point*.[13] This means that it aims to make an original contribution to the field, moving critical adoption research forward in an original project.

Research Questions

13 By an "anti-adoption stance" I mean that my approach stems from a fundamental critical questioning of the ethics and legitimacy of the practice of international adoption. I begin from the premise that international, commerical closed-stranger adoption, the industry behind it, and the desires that fuel the industy must be critiqued and actively opposed. See Drennan El Awar (2012) for further discussions on adoption abolition.

My project is centred around the following three research questions:

What is the nature of Swedish international transracial adoption desire?
What role does the transracial body of the adoptee play in this?
Is there resistance/ scope for resistance?

The first question is driven by a curiosity to explore the unique nature of adoption desire in Sweden, but also to understand the fact that it is a taboo to criticise adoption. I seek to understand the resilience of adoption desire, and how it can withstand evidence of corruption, increased understanding of transracial adoption as racism, and criticism from adult adoptees. The second question asks where representations of the adoptee come into this, asking what role the image of the adoptee body has in the adoption desiring project. The third question examines resistance, and with the desperate need to end adoption, and to expose and redirect the desires that propel and sustain the adoption industry, I reflect on where there is further scope for resistance.

I address the research problem through an analysis of a range of Swedish adoption-related texts, including adoptee and adopter autobiographies, political and commercial advertising, magazine articles and guides for adoptive parents. I use deconstructive narrative analysis techniques to read beneath the surface of texts and uncover and disrupt the unequal power relationships that control narratives. I begin my analysis by positioning Swedish international adoption in a wider history of racism, colonialism and eugenics.

Research Position

Adoption histories have been written by adopters, and by professionals in the industry. It is only in recent years that adoptees themselves have established themselves as researchers, and the struggle to find a voice that is capable of critically researching adoption has been a long one. As the role of the researcher is pivotal, I feel it is important to reflect on my own position within adoption, and how this drives and influences my research. The division between "traditional" pro-adoption research and reflective, serious critical research is marked by a difference in power positions of researchers, drawn along race and class lines. While my own connection to adoption is rather different to that of most researchers, it is deeply significant, and informs my political approach and position in analysis. I am a white European, I am not Swedish, I am not adopted, and am not an adoptive parent.

I believe that I have a rather unique vantage point, one that enables me to approach adoption research from a new angle. While I grew up in the UK, I lived in Sweden for many years, and I am connected to Swedish international adoption through marriage, and through parenthood. I am married to a Swedish Korean adoptee, and my children are mixed-raced children of a Korean adoptee and a white, foreign non-adoptee. They

were born in Sweden, carrying Swedish nationality, but are of Asian appearance in a society that makes a positive self-identification as Asian problematic and a mixed identity virtually impossible (Osanami Törngren et al. 2018). As a father of children descended from an adoptee I am familiar with the chilling echoes of adoption trauma through generations, on both a personal and professional level. My work and personal circumstances have led me to friendships with many adoptees of colour, involvement with adoptee activist groups, and assisting adoptees in family searches. I have witnessed, through my familial situation, my interactions with adoptees, and my research, the reverberations of the horrors of child theft, forced family separation, adoption trafficking and racism. I have been involved in root-searches that have uncovered systematic child theft, coercion of mothers, fraud and falsification of documents (Sjöblom 2019). For these reasons, *not* researching adoption from a critical perspective is unthinkable, and would be irresponsible and academically and morally dishonest.

From a personal perspective, my research is, and must be, strongly, categorically opposed to the international adoption industry, and naturally as someone who defines himself as a feminist and an anti-racist I am obliged to use every grain of power I have in my position as a researcher to challenge the racist desires that fuel the adoption industry, and the racist structures that enable white people in the West, particularly in Sweden, to regard international adoption as justifiable and positive.

It must be reiterated that adoption history is written by and for adopters, and research has been totally dominated by people who have adopted children themselves, and often takes on a mission to justify, celebrate and excuse their own adoption desires. Or, to put it more generously, while adoption research has sometimes performed a function of addressing problems *within* adoption (in the hope of fixing them), in general it has failed to address the problems *with* adoption. In recent years though, critical adoption research has taken hold, produced almost exclusively by researchers who are adoptees themselves. Carefully avoiding speaking for adoptees, I do endeavour to firmly place myself as a critical adoption researcher, one that will take on the responsibility of adding a non-adopted voice to a developing field of critical adoption studies. I do not have any stake in the adoption industry, and would never accept work or funding from the adoption industry, or act in affiliation with any organisation that profits from trading in children in any way.

Research as Resistance

This project is driven by a commitment and responsibility to read against the grain of adoption history, to contribute a counter narrative to the pro-adoption discourse, and to use the privileges that I have gained as an adoption researcher to fight for the rights of adoptees and first families. Because of the overwhelming pro-adoption discourse, widespread acceptability of pro-adoption racism, and dominance of pro-adoption activists in

academia, my small act of resistance is to place myself in an academic setting and provide a counter argument to the all powerful voices of white adopters and the adoption industry. Producing serious, reliable and valid critical work on adoption can help me to contribute to the developing field of critical adoption studies. It can also help adoptee activists outside the academy, and an additional aim of this project is to present my discussions in a clear and accessible manner, in the hope of enabling a broader readership to make use of, or draw strength from, my research.

This spirit of resistance positions my work in the traditions of critical sociology research, with the premise of not just seeking to describe the world, but to change it. As sociologist Steve Matthewman puts it:

> Sociology is the discipline that seeks to understand ourselves and our world. It has a critical edge: socioloigists expose relations of power and mechanisms of domination. Sociology also concerns itself with justice: we identify inequalities and commit to human flourishing. Finally, sociology has a utopian impulse. Part of our task is to educate and agitate for a better world. (2019, 4)

A Thesis with Publications

This thesis is presented as a thesis with publications in accordance with the University of Auckland PhD Statute 2016. It is comprised of three academic articles, all of which have been published in international peer-reviewed journals. These three publications form my analysis and discussion chapters, with Chapter Six published in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (Wyver 2020), Chapter Seven Published in *Genealogy* (Wyver 2019) and Chapter Eight published in *Social Identities* (Wyver 2020a). Elements of Chapter Eight, namely the theoretical framework built around mimicry, were published in *Borderlands* (Wyver 2018). The publications are reproduced here with permission from the respective publishers, and I have adapted them slightly in the interests of a cohesive and non-repetitive thesis. These minor adaptations include changing the introductions, removing the methods sections (which are addressed in a separate methods chapter here, Chapter Four), adding to the conclusions to connect to the main thesis, and removing repetitions. Despite this, the nature of this type of thesis does mean that there is some unavoidable re-treading of the same ground, and while I have endeavoured to adapt the article chapters to a consistent style, the developments in my writing over time and slight variations to suit the journals' audiences may by noted by the attentive reader.

I use a consistent methodology of close reading using deconstructive narrative analysis techniques throughout the three article chapters, but address a different aspect of the research problem in each one, using different theoretical lenses.

While the thesis with publications is less common in Sociology than other disciplines, I believe that it has a number of advantages in line with the ethos of this project.

The first is that it enhances the accessibility of my research: through publications I am able to make my work available and readable for other researchers and activists in my field. Secondly, it enables me to have an active engagement with my field and related fields, contributing something to the discussion, and working to build on other research in the field of critical adoption studies. Finally, producing work for publication has helped me to shape my writing and research skills, and provided me with expert feedback through peer reviewing and editing processes.

Outline

Chapter Two – Literature Review

In this chapter I review the literature on Swedish international adoption, examining research trends over a time line of 30 years, and identifying key texts and scholars. I look at who has a voice in Swedish adoption research, and where there are silences. I go onto discuss international trends and contemporary critical adoption work, in an attempt to locate my own position within the research nexus.

Chapter Three – Theoretical Context

This chapter presents and discusses the theoretical approaches I take to investigate Swedish transracial adoption desire. I begin by explaining my approach to using theory, before introducing the main theoretical themes and concepts that frame the thesis. Finally, I introduce the main conceptual tools of the analysis chapters, namely Ghassan Hage's work on governmentality and good and evil white nationalists (2000), bell hooks' writing on white desires for consuming Other bodies (1992), and Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry (1994).

Chapter Four – Methodology

This chapter outlines my methodological approach to the project. It presents my method of analysing adoption narratives using deconstructive narrative analysis techniques and qualitative coding. In the second half of the chapter, I discuss the scope and limitations of the project and how I address some of the challenges of critical adoption research, and the need to navigate white/adoption fragility in structural critique.

Chapter Five – Race, Colonialism, Eugenics and International Adoption in Sweden

This chapter provides a historical background to the adoption phenomenon in Sweden, by placing it in Sweden's "hidden" history of colonialism, race science and eugenics. I begin by summarising Sweden's colonial history and pioneering role in race biology, before discussing how this desire to control Other bodies provided the conditions for the study and widespread practice of eugenics. I use Sweden's extensive sterilization programme as an example of how eugenic study and discourse was practically used in eradicating unwanted Other bodies from society. I then explore the nation's move to being seen as an anti-racist, colour-blind *good* nation, as state-led efforts were made to

distance Sweden from Nazism and colonialism in the Post-WWII decades. This leads to the history of the adoption project, which was central to re-branding the nation. Finally, I reflect on the current state of Swedish adoption desire.

Chapter Six – From Flat-Packed Furniture to Fascism: The Role of the Transracial Adoptee in Fantasies of Swedish Goodness

The first analysis chapter looks at the role the transracial adoptee body has in building national myths of Swedish goodness. Comparing the use of adoptee bodies in commercials by two institutions of what might be described as opposing Swedishnesses: IKEA and far right populist party the Sweden Democrats, it draws on Ghassan Hage's work on white nationalism to locate the adoptee as a "dead ethnic" – a body of colour for Swedish whiteness to revolve around.

Chapter Seven – Eating the [M]Other: Exploring Swedish Transracial Adoption Consumption Fantasies

The second analysis chapter takes bell hook's classic essay "Eating the Other" (1992) as a starting point to build an understanding of the ethnic consumption desires of white Swedish adopters. Through analyses of published autobiographical adoption narratives the chapter reflects on what descriptions of adoptee bodies can tell us about adoption desire, and discusses whether outspoken desires to consume the adoptee Other offer the scope for resistance to racial oppression that they often imply, or whether such fantasies maintain racist and patriarchal structures.

Chapter Eight – "Too Brown to be Swedish, too Swedish to be Anything Else": Mimicry, and Menace in Adoption Narratives

In the third analysis chapter, "Too Brown to be Swedish", I examine where the adoptee fits in in the Swedish nation and explore the adoptee's role as a "mimic". Using Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry, I argue that the adoptee is desired as a mimic Swede, almost (white) Swedish but not quite, but is also a menace to notions of Swedishness. The adoptee mimic is limited to a simplified and excessive version of Swedishness, that at once marks it as a success of the adoption project *and* threatens to undermine the adoption project and myths of good white Swedishness.

Chapter Nine – Conclusions and Reflections

In this final chapter, I return to my research questions and aims, and summarise and reflect on my analysis. I discuss where both my project and the Swedish adoption desiring project fit in to the bigger picture of critical anti-racist adoption research and global systems of exploitation, destruction and racism respectively. I address the future of the adoption project, and call for a re-evaluation of its role in Swedish, and global, history. Finally I reflect upon where further research is needed.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Since the beginning of industrial scale international adoption, the body of the transracial adoptee has been an object of research interest, particularly in fields such as psychology and social work. In this chapter, I follow the development of adoption research in (and about) Sweden beginning with the early research produced by actors within the industry who worked to justify and promote the Swedish adoption project. Then I examine the impact of large-scale quantitative psychology studies that revealed the negative effects of the adoption project on adoptees, as well as the emergence of critical adoption research, that attempted to foreground "race" in discussions of international adoption, and established the project as an object of post-colonial critique. Moving to the international sphere, I will then discuss the development of critical post-colonial adoption studies, before reflecting on my own position within the field.

The Swedish Pioneers

The Swedish international adoption project began on an industrial scale in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the formation of what is now the world's second largest adoption agency, Adoptionscentrum. Research in the first few decades of the Swedish adoption project was totally dominated by adoptive parents, many of whom also worked for Adoptionscentrum (see, for example, Andersson & Jacobsson 1981; Hägglund 1979; Cederblad et al. 1999; Kats 1981, 1990). Research tended to focus on the individual child and adoptive family, and revolve around questions of adjustment into the family and Swedish society. Such work actively promoted the adoption project, with a focus

on stressing similarities between adoptive and non-adoptive families. In many ways, research in the early decades was little more than a celebration of the adoption project, and appeared as an on-going discussion between white adoptive parents of transracial adoptees.

Cederblad el al.'s (1999) study on adoptees' psychological well-being exemplifies this era, with the authors finding that there were no real differences in mental health between adoptees and non-adoptees, that adoptees reported that they had good self-esteem, and that any problems in adoptees' psychological health could be explained by pre-adoption factors. Carrying out qualitative research on 147 adoptive families in southern Sweden (that is, adoptive parents and their adopted children), the authors concluded that, "those [adoptees] who were most engaged in questions about their identity and felt mostly non-Swedish had more behavioural problems", and that "the majority (about 90%) of the adoptees felt mostly Swedish. Seventy per cent didn't feel any connection to their country of birth" (1999, 1239). What this implies is that a "successful" adoption is when the adoptee does not "engage in questions about their identity" and does not feel a connection to the country of origin.

The methodology of the study is certainly questionable. It was based around interviews and checklists completed during home visits with teenage and young adult adoptees *and* their adoptive parents. The research was carried out by Cederblad, who was well known as an adoption expert having published several guides for adoptive parents. It was affiliated with Adoptionscentrum. Cederblad is also an adoptive mother herself. Interviewing in the family home with parents present is unlikely to have been an ideal setting for teenage adoptees to feel comfortable discussing their mental health issues, particularly when these could call into question the success of their adoption and their relationship with their parents and siblings.

Psychologist (and former president of Adoptionscentrum) Madeleine Kats did hint at a recognition of what she called, "problems and difficulties" in the lives of adoptees, but also attributed these to the pre-adoptive life, what she referred to as, "the difficult start in life" (1990, 12). Yngvesson, discussing Kats' popular book, *Adoptivbarn växer upp* [Adopted children grow up], explains that Kats, a prominent adoption advocate and one of the "pioneers" of the Swedish adoption project, was responding to increasingly disturbing reports from adoptive parents and teachers suggesting that adoptees were showing emotional and social problems (Yngvesson 2010, 105-106). While Kats' simplification of the cause of adoption "difficulties" is fairly typical of researchers at this time (Yngvesson, 2010, 106), she does question the then widespread belief that providing a loving family home for an adoptee will "cure" them of emotional, psychological and social problems, with a rumination on the question of what will happen "if we get a child who isn't like us and who doesn't become like us – a child who doesn't just look different but in fact *is* different?" (Kats 1990, 9).

While the 1980s saw a gradual realisation that transracial adoptees were not exempt from the racism targeted at non-White immigrants in Sweden, this realisation was not reflected in adoption research (Yngvesson 2010, 98). Yngvesson suggests that the directing of emotional and social maladjustment issues to the first mother and country of origin – Kats' "difficult start in life" – was a means of distancing adoption problems away from adoptees' lived experiences of racism (2010, 99). So while there were allusions in the literature to "cultural differences" between the adoptee and their adoptive family and community, there was a distinct avoidance of any meaningful discussion of race and racism in adoption in these early decades of the adoption project (Yngvesson 2010).

Colour-blindness Impacting Adoption Research

International adoption is absolutely central to the imagining of Sweden as a colour-blind, post-race nation, where visible differences are supposedly not seen or given meaning to, and where the concept of race is erased altogether (Hübinette and Tigervall 2009; 2010). The impact of the colour-blind discourse, as well as a reluctance to criticise adoption and seriously engage with questions of race, is evident throughout the literature, and hinders proper discussion relating to problems with adoption and racism. For instance, Lindblad and Signell uncover "degrading attitudes due to foreign appearance" (2008) – rather than sexualised racism/racialised sexism, and adoptees of colour are described as "being of non-Swedish appearance", or "of non-native appearance" (Hjern et al. 2002; Rooth 2002). Hübinette and Lundström argue that such descriptions strengthen hegemonic whiteness, giving the meaning that a Swede is a white person, and therefore a non-white person is not, and cannot ever fully be, Swedish (2014, 426).

Colour-blindness is a central facet to Swedish anti-racism, and it is important to note that Swedish anti-racism is unusual in that it is both mainstream and almost exclusively performed and defined by white Swedes. Sara Ahmed makes a powerful critique of such white anti-racism, suggesting that, particularly with its "colour-blind" stance, it functions as a means of upholding white hegemony in an increasingly diverse Western world (2006, 121). This position is also taken by Hübinette and Lundström: "In contemporary Sweden, hegemonic whiteness is, for us, upheld through a colour-blindness that constantly reinscribes whiteness as the normative, yet unmarked, position that, for example, effectively forecloses, silences and excludes experiences of everyday racism among non-white Swedes" (2014, 426).

The problems of transracial adoption in a colour-blind, post-race context are also addressed by Yngvesson (2010), who identifies a tendency in research to direct adoption problems away from racial and racist issues. Yngvesson highlights the irresponsibility of adoption researchers directing problems away from race and racism in the name of colour-blindness:

> If she [the adoptee] sees someone "exotic" in the mirror, is disgusted when other pre-schoolers want to feel her hair, or is terrified when anti-immigrant sentiment seems threatening […] it is attributed to "early disturbances" that shaped the adoptee's psyche long before arriving in Sweden, rather than to the ways the adoptee encounters and is encountered by her parents, classmates and fellow citizens. (2010, 120)

Uncomfortable Truths: Suicide, Psychiatric Illness and Social Maladjustment

The colour-blind, post-race discourse and its related legislation mean that Sweden does not collect or keep statistics on ethnicity (McEachrane 2018). This makes quantitative research on racism challenging. However, detailed national records can give some clues to ethnic identities, with researchers able to ascertain the geographical background of people's parents and make ethnicity judgements based on that information (Hjern, Lindblad and Vinnerljung 2002; Rooth 2002; von Borczyskowski et al. 2006; 2011).

The emergence of quantitative research by clinical psychologists in the early 2000s, using Sweden's detailed and accessible public records, sent minor shockwaves through the adoption industry, and marked a dramatic move from the gentle self-congratulatory ruminations of early Swedish adoption research. Hjern, Lindblad and Vinnerljung (2002) used public records to examine the social development of transracial adoptees from Asia and Latin America. They found that such adoptees have a considerably higher suicide rate, higher levels of psychiatric illness and social maladjustment, and are more prone to criminality and drug and alcohol abuse than the majority population and minority or vulnerable groups, including domestic adoptees. These findings were confirmed by later studies (see, for example, von Borczyskowski et al. 2006; 2011). Published just three years after Cederblad et al. (1999), and based on a much larger sample, Hjern et al.'s study completely contradicted their findings, and revealed the disturbing truth that all was not well in the adoption project.

The authors identified inconstancies in previous studies as being a result of low samples of adoptees, and difficulty in comparison with relevant groups; they tackled this by using Sweden's national registers. The national registers keep socio-economic and health data for the entire population, and the use of personal identification numbers mean that it is possible to effectively follow each resident from birth to death. The authors were able to form a sample of 11,320 adoptees from Asia and South America who were born between 1970 and 1979, and used comparison groups of children born in Sweden to two Swedish born parents, children who were Swedish born but had an adopted sibling from the adoptee sample group, and children who had emigrated to Sweden from Latin America or Asia with their mothers before their 7th birthday (2002, 444).

The authors carried out a statistical analysis, using census data to measure socio-economic information, hospital discharge and cause of death registers to measure mental

illness, suicide and suicide attempts, and the National Register of Court Statistics to examine criminal records.

Their key findings were as follows:

> [I]ntercountry adoptees are three to four times more likely to have serious mental health problems such as suicide, suicide attempts, and psychiatric admissions; five times more likely to be addicted to drugs; and two to three times more likely to commit crimes or abuse alcohol than other children in Swedish society living in similar socioeconomic circumstances. (Hjern et al., 2002, 446)

In contrast to Cederblad et al. (1999), this methodology enabled the researchers to bypass the subjective opinions of the adoptive parents, accessing facts about adoptees' health and welfare directly. Using public records also avoided the problems of cherry-picking suitable adoptees and of families with adoption related problems dropping out of the study. The public records also provided a very substantial sample, effectively covering all adoptees from Asia and Latin America that had been adopted in the 1970s.

The Hjern et al. (2002) study became hugely influential. Examining peer-reviewed articles published since then, it is clear that any serious research on Swedish adoption is compelled to engage with their findings in some way. For example, as the starting point for critical discussion on the adoption project's impact on adoptees (Hübinette and Tigervall 2010), or as a key crisis point in the historical development of Swedish adoption debate (Lind 2011, Yngvesson 2010). It also initiated a wave of psychological research drawing on the population registers, with quantitative research using similar methodology finding that international adoptees struggle to reproduce their adoptive parents' socio-economic status and face discrimination on the labour market (Elmund et al. 2007; Rooth 2002).

Hjern et al. (2002), like Kats ten years previously, direct the focus on understanding adoptees' mental health and social maladjustment problems back towards the country of origin; their reasoning being that the risk of similar negative outcomes among non-adopted ("biological") children in families with adopted children are low (while they do caution that the relationship between the parents and their biological and adopted children may differ) (Hjern et al. 2002, 447). This assumption fails to take into account the racial/visual differences between the adoptee and the sibling, and what impact this could have on their lives, and the wider societal context beyond the family.

Despite the lack of consideration of the effect of race/racism on the adoptee's well-being, Hjern et al. do note that taken collectively their findings on adoptees were similar to those on immigrant children, even given the differences in socio-economic positions of immigrant and adoptive families. Consequently, they tentatively suggest that, "discrimination and prejudices against children and youths with a non-Swedish appearance

could be important in accounting for these similar odds ratios" (2002, 447).

Hübinette and Tigervall argue strongly against the dominant pre-adoption trauma explanation for increased adoptee suicide and social maladjustment risk. Their own qualitative study (2009, 2010), based around interviews with adult adoptees and adoptive parents, suggests that our focus should instead turn to the post-adoption factors, and that results such as Hjern et al.'s can be explained by the sustained, routinized and systemic racial discrimination faced by adoptees in their everyday lives (2010, 492).[14]

Lind (2011), in her study of the meaning of roots and origins in literature produced by the then Swedish Intercountry Adoption Authority MIA[15] between 1972 and 2004, highlights Hjern et al. (2002) as initiating a turning point in public adoption discourse. The early 2000s, Lind recounts, saw international adoption briefly become a subject of some controversy starting in the wake of publication of Hjern et al.'s findings (2011, 117). Two Swedish television documentaries centred around adoption problems followed in 2002, the first dealing with the lack of support for adoptees, and the second on children stolen for adoption. Ensuing discussions about the legitimacy and ethics of adoption (with critique led by adult adoptees themselves) led to the government commissioning an inquiry into the industry. The commission's report, *Adoption till vilket pris?* [Adoption at what cost?], was published in 2003, and authored by Cederblad. While not criticising or questioning adoption itself, the inquiry was critical of the economic transactions in adoption (Lind 2011, 117).

Further Quantitative Studies

As well as its significance in terms of adoption research and debate, Hjern et al. (2002) has had a lasting impact methodologically, with numerous further quantitative psychological studies drawing on the national records. Each has highlighted similar complications relating to the well-being of adoptees (for example, Johansson-Kark et al. (2002); Rooth, (2002), von Borczyskowski et al. (2005); Elmund et al. (2007)). Von Borczyskowski et al. (2005) used the national records to focus specifically on adoptee suicide, comparing suicidal behaviour in international and national (domestic) adoptees. Like Hjern et al., they found that international adoptees had significantly increased risks for suicide attempt and suicide death. Another key finding was that when separated by gender, the increased risk of suicide death and attempt for internationally adopted women was unexpectedly elevated (2005, 101).

14 See also Nordin (2005) and Pred (2000) for comprehensive discussions of Swedish racism in English.

15 MIA – Myndigheten för Internationella Adoptionsfrågor, Swedish government authority overseeing adoptions until 2016. Now replaced by MFoF – Myndigheten för familjrätt och föräldraskapsstöd.

While the authors mainly focus on pre-adoptive factors as increasing the risk of suicide, they also hint at the effects of racism stemming from what they call, "the non-Scandinavian appearance of the adoptee" (2005, 100). While von Borczyskowski et al. do not discuss or categorically name racism as a factor outright, they do suggest that "problems due to discrimination from their environment" should be taken into consideration (2005, 100).

The increased suicide risk of female international adoptees complicates the reliance on pre-adoption factors as a cause of suicidal behaviour. The authors found the increased suicide risk of female *international* adoptees compared to female *domestic* adoptees and female non-adoptees is far greater than for men. This leads them to contemplate the role of racialised sexual abuse as a contributing factor: "[I]nternationally adopted girls, due to their foreign appearance and gender, may not only be exposed to harassment in general but also to sexual harassment in particular" (von Borczyskowski et al. 2005, 101).

While the racialised sexual abuse of female international adoptees in Sweden urgently needs further researching, Lindblad and Signell have explored this topic in a subsequent work (2008), interviewing seventeen young women aged between 25 to 35 adopted from South Korea and Thailand about their experiences of "degrading attitudes related to their geographic origin and physical appearance" (2008, 46). The study identifies systemic discrimination relating to the racialised sexuality of the women, with Lindblad and Signell connecting the women's experiences to the prevalence of degrading sexualised cultural stereotypes about Asian females. They go as far as to note the paradox of the demand to adopt female Asian adoptees in Sweden, where degrading sexual attitudes towards Asian women are rife: "Many Asian children, especially from South Korea, are adopted by Swedish families but this occurs in a context of cultural prejudices about Asian women being exotic sexual objects, a stereotype fuelled by phenomena such as sex tourism" (2008, 47).[16]

While sexual abuse, incest and, to a great extent, racism have on the whole remained something of taboo topics in Swedish adoption research, Berg-Kelly and Eriksson's (1997) findings could be interpreted to give some indication of the over-representation of Asian female adoptees in sexual abuse figures. Through quantitative surveying of 9,329 13-18 year olds, 125 of whom were internationally adopted (mainly from South Korea and India), the authors examined the adaptation of adoptees, with participants

16 While the focus of the study is on the women's accounts of experiencing verbal manifestations of degrading attitudes, the participants do reveal serious physical and sexual assault too. However, these experiences are not discussed in the study, with the authors explaining, "Child sexual abuse, rape and incest were described but in these more serious cases it was difficult – both for the women and for us – to chisel out the impact of the adoption and the Asian origin" (2008, 50). This is surely a topic that urgently needs further investigation.

questioned about feelings of depression, suicidal thoughts, puberty, and concerns about the experience of unpleasant sexual encounters. The most striking finding was that the young female adoptees reported having experienced unpleasant sexual encounters to a far greater extent than any other group: 6% of the general population of female participants reported such experiences, compared to 22.21% of the female adoptees (1997, 203). The female adoptees also showed significantly higher risks relating to feeling suicidal, or having contact with illegal drugs. The authors themselves avoided connecting their findings to race/racism or adoption, and stressed that as most of the girls were not eligible to discuss intimate questions, these disturbing results should be treated as preliminary (1997, 204).

Rooth used the non-white bodies of transnational adoptees to explore labour market discrimination, drawing on similar techniques to Hjern et al. (2002) to identify which Swedish residents are adopted. Rooth finds that adoptees with what he calls "dissimilar looks to natives" (read, "adoptees of colour") have a lower probability of being employed than "natives" (white Swedes) (2002, 71), with Rooth describing a "large and significant difference" between the two groups. Separating adoptees into European and non-European groups, he finds that the European adoptees, who may look similar to Swedes (i.e. they are most likely white), fare almost as well as the Swedish born category, whereas those born outside Europe (i.e. likely to be of colour) fare much worse. Written well within the Swedish colour-blind discourse, and avoiding openly claiming racial discrimination, Rooth does argue that adoptees with a "foreign look" fare worse on the labour market, after controlling for age, social class and education (2002). While the study clearly shows that international transracial adoptees are discriminated against on the labour market, Rooth points out that it is difficult to conclude that the findings prove racial discrimination on the labour market per se, as there may also be an unidentified and unobservable "negative adoption effect" influencing employer attitudes towards transracial adoptees (2002, 91).

Elmund, Lindblad, Vinnerljung and Hjern (2007) also draw on the national registers to examine the prevalence of international adoptees in state care, highlighting the troubling fact that adoptees are a high risk group for placements in out-of-home care, in particular residential care (which would include living with a foster family) (2007, 437). The study finds that adoptees who have a higher age at adoption (from age 3 and up), are adopted by single parents, and whose adoptive parents are older than 35 at time of adoption are the most high risk group, with adoptees from South America being more at risk than those from Asia (2007, 440; 449). The removal of a child and placement in state social care could be for severe behavioural issues or parenting issues, and the fact that international adoptees are removed from or rejected by families and placed in institutions raises questions about the legitimacy of the adoption project.

While these studies highlight problems within the adoption project, none actually question the legitimacy of adoption itself, and while racism is mentioned or suggested as

a contributing factor to negative outcomes for adoptees it is seldom categorically named or discussed. The idea of transracial adoption desire being connected to structural racism is entirely absent, and I would suggest that both the pro-adoption discourse and the fantasy of transracial adoption being an anti-racist act in a post-race society causes serious limitations in the interpretations of findings (Hjern et al. 2002; Von Borczyskowski et al. 2005; Berg-Kelly & Eriksson 1997).

Discomforting an Adopting Nation: the Work and Legacy of Tobias Hübinette

Hübinette and Tigervall, reviewing Swedish adoption literature in 2010, suggest that research was traditionally dominated by psychology, medicine and social work, and was mainly interested in the adjustment, development and attachment of adopted children to their adoptive families (2010, 491). There were very few studies where adoptive parents were objects of research, while adoption knowledge was exclusively produced by researchers who were adopters, or who were affiliated with adoption agencies. They also found that adoptees as adults were ignored by research, and that the issues of "race" and racism were avoided: "In sum, mainstream adoption research tends to privilege childhood before adulthood, family before society, and the adoption factor before the race factor" (2010, 491).

Their own work sought to redress this. Hübinette and Tigervall's 2009 study involving extensive interviews with adult adoptees and adoptive parents around issues of race and racism has been influential in subsequent adoption research. Linking back to the Hjern et al. study, the authors argue that contrary to the beliefs of the Swedish colour-blind project, race (and racism) needs to be "taken into consideration by Swedish adoption research and the Swedish adoption community, in order to fully grasp the high occurrence of mental illness among adult adoptees" (2009, 335). Their research aimed to place race at the centre of adoption research, and through interviews with 20 adult adoptees and 8 white adoptive parents of young children of colour, they explored understandings of race and experiences everyday racism, and critically addressed the Swedish colour-blind project (2009, 2010).

They found that the colour-blind discourse conceals the fact that transracial adoptees' non-white bodies are, "constantly made significant in their everyday lives in interactions with the white Swedish majority population" (2010, 489). This includes both everyday racism, and also racialization – where their non-White bodies are given racial meaning – in different spheres, including public spaces, the home, and the school. The authors find that racism in various forms is sustained and systematic, and ranges from bombardments of "curious questions" from strangers about adoptees' ethnic origins to what they describe as "outright aggressive racialization" (2010, 489). They end with a plea to move on from the celebrations of colour-blindness in the academy, arguing that not only should race be taken into consideration by Swedish adoption research, but also that to

understand phenomena such as racialization and everyday racism, race as a concept and as a category needs to be included in Swedish migration research (2010, 505).

The emergence of Tobias Hübinette as an adoption researcher in the early/mid 2000s has had a significant and lasting impact on Swedish adoption research. The Swedish adoption programme had been understood as an anti-racist, feminist project, where (white) women effectively help women (of colour) in an act of international solidarity, where bodies of colour are brought into colour-blind, post-race Sweden – and their new parents don't even see their difference (see, for example, Andersson & Jacobsson 1981; Cederblad et al 1999; Juusela 2010). However, Hübinette, a Korean adoptee himself, turned these ideas on their head by approaching adoption from a post-colonial, anti-racist, feminist perspective and arguing that adoption was the antithesis of the ideals that had been used to justify it for so long. His research focused on racism, the exploitation of Third World bodies, and the colonial echoes of the adoption industry and the desires that fuel it.

Hübinette has been instrumental in establishing international adoption as an issue of colonialism/postcolonialism, and his seminal work, *Comforting an Orphaned Nation* (2006), explores the adoptee through Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and third space, as well as positioning the global trade in children and understanding of sending countries as part of a Saidian Orientalist discourse. *Comforting an Orphaned Nation*, which is based around a study of representations of international adoptees in Korean popular culture, is the first truly critical Swedish adoption text.

Hübinette depicts adoption as one of four mass forced global migrations, along with the slave trade; indentured labour, "which between 1834-1941 dispatched 12 million Indians, Pacific Islanders and Chinese as 'coolies' to the vast European empires" (2006, 17); and today's trafficking of non-Western women for marriage and sexual exploitation (2006, 17). These four forced migrations show "a long Western tradition of commodifying and transporting non-white populations intercontinentally" (2006, 17), but there is a crucial difference: the slave trade and indentured labour – in their classic forms – are confined to the history books, and sex trafficking is universally condemned, but transnational adoption "remains largely uncontested, made legal through various 'international' conventions" (2006, 17).

Hübinette also stresses the impact of the orientalist discourses in the overwhelming desire for white parents to adopt Asian children:

> [That] Asian children seem to be the most valued and marketable further underscores the orientalist imagery at work, where Asians in many Western countries are widely perceived as being docile and submissive, clever and hard-working, and kind, quiet and undemanding besides being cute, childlike, and petite. (2006, 16)

In his subsequent work, Hübinette has used classic postcolonial theories to explore the meanings of the transracially adopted body, positioning the Korean adoptee as a subaltern (2007), and a hybrid body (2007a), as well as researching Swedish racism and its impact on adoptees (Hübinette and Tigervall 2009, 2010). He has also explored race performativity and the popularity of Swedish yellow humour, where white Swedes dress up as East Asians, with grotesquely exaggerated "stereotypical" features – buck teeth, squinting eyes, mixing Ls and Rs – connecting this to white melancholia (Hübinette and Räterlinck 2014). Hübinette's more recent work has been mainly concerned with critical whiteness studies, exploring Sweden's history of whiteness, and locating it as a nation in a crisis of whiteness (Hübinette and Lundström 2011, 2014)

It would be an understatement to say that Hübinette's work, at once seriously criticising the Swedish adoption project and shattering the Swedish self-image of anti-racism, was met with opposition. The public defence of his PhD thesis became something of a farce, as he presented his work to a room of angry protestors; and for a period he was effectively ostracized from the academic community (Hübinette 2011).

As with Hjern et al., later research is compelled to "deal with" Hübinette in some way. One way that this is done by authors is by reiterating the fact that he is an adoptee himself, or that he is an activist. This is interesting on a number of counts, but particularly because seldom in his academic work does Hübinette use his own position in adoption to claim authority; in effect, he avoids "playing the game" entirely, not attempting to stress his authentic voice of lived experience as many of the adopter researchers do (for instance, Yngvesson, 2010). It is also curious that the practice of elevating an adoptee's voice is used by pro-adoption researchers to gain authenticity and truth, and to counter critical structural arguments, but at the same time, being an adoptee can diminish one's authority as a researcher. Perhaps it gives the impression that the researcher is damaged, using their research to deal with personal issues, or is linked to the notion of the adoptee as a perpetual child.

Countering Hübinette's research, and challenging other critical studies on adoption, is also done through the elevation of the voices of other individual adoptees and adopters. Across the literature, anecdotes and feelings of adoptees and adopters are given the same – if not more – weight than theoretical arguments and peer-reviewed research findings. The voice of adopters/adoptees is used to individualise issues within adoption, and becomes almost sacrosanct at times. To give a recent example, Schwartz and Schwartz (2017) use a conversation with a colleague who is an adoptive mother to dismiss Hübinette's discussions around international adoption as forced migration and trafficking (2006):

> [I]n conversation with a colleague about this [Hübinette's] research, Margaret

> Patterson an adoptive mother and adult educator responded, "He (Hubinette [sic] 2006) could not be more wrong […] [adoption] is the furthest thing from a consumerist choice, child migration or trafficking." (Schwartz & Schwartz 2017)

The use of an adopter voice or an adoptee's personal anecdotes to individualise adoption leads to some remarkable publications, and is surely a sign of the incredible strength of the pro-adoption discourse. Norwegian anthropologist and white adoptive mother Signe Howell, a strong advocate for the adoption industry, who argues for the lived experiences of white adoptive mothers to take precedence over the "psycho-technocrats" and "so-called experts" whose research raises negative impacts of adoption (2006, 7), also uses individual adoptee voices to defend the industry against criticism. For instance, studies on the importance of origins and respecting the adoptee's desire to search for roots are mocked as being the work of "psycho-technocrats", before being dismissed by a single "happy adoptee" voice: "The twenty-six year old Norwegian doctoral student of literature, Follevåg, who was adopted from South Korea, is highly critical of such thinking […] 'Humans do not have roots', he says, 'only plants do'" (2006, 114). This pattern of using an "authentic" voice of lived experience to dismiss structural level critique and problematising studies is repeated throughout her popular book *The Kinning of Foreigners* (2006), which is widely cited and treated as a serious academic work.

Anthropologist Eleana Kim notices the same pattern occurring across the adoption discourse, particularly when critically thinking adoptees attempt to discuss adoption issues and are labelled as bitter, angry "unhappy malcontents", who are pitted against "happy, well-adjusted adoptee[s]". This, she suggests, has the consequence of reducing discussions about macro-level, structural injustices and power relations to matters of individual psychology and life history (2010, 256).

In recent years, Swedish and Sweden-related work has tended to be interested in kinship and belonging/non-belonging (Yngvesson 2010, Lind (2011; 2012) and has seen a return to examining adopter experiences (Lindgren 2015), with researchers closely affiliated or funded by adoption agencies or MFoF (the state adoption authority) giving accounts on the history of Swedish adoption (Lindgren 2010; Yngvesson 2010). While the influence of Hübinette's research is less evident in subsequent Swedish work than perhaps is deserved, internationally his legacy of shaping methodologies of critical, adoptee centred analyses is notable (see, for example, Kim 2010; Trenka et al. 2006; Myers 2013, 2014; McKee 2016; and Cawayu & De Graeve 2020). His main contributions, I would suggest, are to place questions of "race" at the heart of research and to cement the adoption phenomenon as an object of critical postcolonial study. It is important to stress though that with the exception of Hübinette's work structural critique of the adoption industry is largely invisible in Swedish research, and criticism of international adoption

remains very much a taboo in Sweden, in public discourse as well as in academia.

International Trends and Postcolonial Studies

Willin, Fronek and Cuthbert (2012), reviewing international sociological literature on transntional adoption published between 1997 and 2010, found that the literature reflected the power relations of the "adoption triad": that is, adopters' voices and experiences were dominant, and while an emerging literature had begun to examine the experiences of adoptees, the families and communities who lose children to adoption were generally overlooked and unrepresented (2012, 465). They found that research tended to be interested in experiences, revolving around questions of what it is like to be an adoptee or adopter (2012, 474), and that work that critically confronts the broader socio-political structures behind international adoption, or fundamentally questions international adoption as a practice was "virtually non-existent" (2012, 474). Engel et al. (2007) report similar findings in their review of US adoption literature:

> The adoption literature reflects little input by sociologists, and as a result, theories and empirical studies in adoption have been limited to individual and family adoption, with less attention paid to social structure and the national and international factors influencing adoption. (Engel et al. 2007, 257)

Willing et al. also highlight the absolute dominance of researchers who are adopters themselves. They note that in international adoption research adopters were often the subject, and that their experiences and anecdotes took precedence: "Adoptive parents typically come from middle-class, educated backgrounds, are accessible and willing to participate in research and many adoption researchers are themselves adoptive parents" (2012, 473). The authors also observed that studies on first families were very rare (2012, 473). Indeed, I found none in my search of Swedish international adoption literature, although Finnish anthropologist Riita Högbacka has recently turned her focus to first families, interviewing South African mothers who have lost their children to adoption (2017). While "kinning" is a key theme in adoption research, Högbacka instead looks at "dekinning" in her highly original work.

Examining over 70 peer-reviewed journal articles and books, selected for having had some impact in terms of citations and being related to Sweden or to adoption desire or adoption as nation building, my findings concur very much with Willing et al. I found a strong focus on individual experiences, and the key questions often relating to what it is like to be an adoptee or adopter (Lind 2012; Kats 1990). There was a clear avoidance of addressing the wider structural and societal issues of adoption, with the exception of some of Hübinette's work (for example 2006, 2007a). Across the disciplines, both in Sweden and internationally, the dominance of researchers who are adoptive parents themselves was still very visible (Yngvesson 2012; Howell 2006; Lind 2012; Lindblad

and Signell 2008; Smolin 2006; Högbacka 2008). As well as the general focus on the individual, questions of desire (for instance, the desire to adopt, the desire for the adoption project itself) are also highly individualized, and reduced to the personal anecdotal level. There was a general avoidance of theory in Swedish adoption research, enabling adoption to be treated as individual familial experiences; indeed, this individualisation of the adoption programme was often used to counter "negative" experiences and findings. There was very little research that truly focused on the adoption phenomenon on a macro-level, though there is a trend of reflecting on the history of the industry and discussing its future decline, perhaps coinciding with the perceived decline of the industry (Engel, Phillips & Dellacava, 2007; Lindgren 2010; Fronek & Cuthbert, 2012; Selman, 2015).

Outside mainstream adoption research, it is possible to locate an emerging critique of the adoption industry from a postcolonial, anti-racist perspective, with research coming from literature and discourse studies, rather than the social science and psychology disciplines that have traditionally tended to produce most adoption research. Shome (2011), for instance, examines the image of the white celebrity woman adopter, relating it to the discursive positioning of white women as "global mothers" in popular culture. Exploring imagery and readings of celebrity adopters (in particular Angelina Jolie, Madonna, Mia Farrow and Meg Ryan), she locates a discourse which she terms "global motherhood", where wealthy white women's bodies are depicted to offer visions of a "multicultural global family" (2011, 389). Discussing the links between "global motherhood", colonialism, Western militarism and the role of organizations such as the World Bank and IMF, Shome demonstrates how the shattering of local families through Western-centred policies in underprivileged parts of the world creates children plagued by poverty or abandoned, which the white woman then "rescues and brings into her familial folds" (2011, 389).

The post-colonial link was also developed by Pal Ahluwalia (2007) in his discussion on adoption ethics and links to postcoloniality. He draws on Derrida's ideas of displacement and différance to reflect on the discomfort adoptees find when they attempt to reclaim their past, where rather than finding a simple comfort in returning to their country of birth, they are instead caught between the two worlds in which they exist (2007, 57). International adoptees are the quintessential mimics, Ahluwalia argues, with reference to Bhabha's (1990) concept of mimicry (which I address further in Chapter 8) (2007). Adoptees grow up in societies that simultaneously deny and problematize their difference; while they are raised to think and try to be the same as those around them, they are also confronted by racism that shatters their sense of self. In essence, they are almost the same – but not quite (2007, 61; also see Wyver 2017; 2018). As with Hübinette, Ahluwalia notes the connection between transnational adoption and the transatlantic slave trade: "In both cases we are looking at the ramifications of the com-

modification of human bodies and the need for some understanding of why their 'own people' were complicit in their relocation" (2007, 56).

Commodification of the non-white body is also a key theme of Kimberley McKee's work. Developing the concept of The Adoption Industrial Complex (TAIC), McKee argues that despite fantasies among adoptive parents of adoptees being a "gift", to defer the discomfort of "buying a child" (see also Triseliotis, 2000, and Yngvesson, 2002), adoptees are commodified bodies in a global marketplace, where in Korea alone the adoption industry – even in these years of decline – is worth USD $15 million a year (2016). In a detailed study of the complexities of the industry, with a focus on the trade in children between the USA and South Korea, she defines adoption as operating within and being propelled by the Adoption Industrial Complex, which itself can be located within the American Military Industrial Complex. Arguing that adoption is a neo-colonial trade, closely linked to American military imperialism, McKee defines TAIC as being a means of approaching the supply and demand nature of adoption. The TAIC links together seemingly disparate nodes, the Korean State, orphanages, American military, adoption agencies, American immigration policy and state procedures, and uses assemblage theory to establish their interwoven nature. The power, productivity and industrial efficiency of these interconnected parts enables the adoption industry to withstand trafficking scandals, and produces the adoptee as an interchangeable body (2016).

American adoption scholar Kit Myers makes an important contribution with his work on "the violence of love" in adoption narratives (2013; 2014). He argues that adoption takes place within a famework of violence and love, or violence *of* love, which entails the discourse of "love" in adoption narratives as concealing and perpetuating violences of racism, trauma and inequality. Analysing posts and readers' comments from a New York Times Online adoption blog series, Myers finds that adoption narratives articulate love in a way that carries symbolic violence through de-historicising and claiming "realness" . The perceived loving nature of adoption, i.e. giving a child in need a home, ignores "various forms of 'hidden' and 'direct' violence that are generated by the state, adoption agencies, adoptive families, and even by adoptees themselves before and after the moment of adoption" (2014, 176).

Legal scholar David Smolin makes the link between the financial value of the child and widespread adoption trafficking, exploring the concept of child laundering, the illegal obtainment of children from parents and the use of adoption and legal processes to turn them into "legally" adopted children (2006). Also within the field of legal studies, Brian Stuy examines the trafficking of children for adoption from China, dispelling the myth that there is an endless supply of healthy Chinese girls available for adoption (2014), while Jacqueline Bhabha critically examines both trafficking and the ethics of the adoption market, and considers the implications for human rights law (2004).

Despite this, outside legal studies the trafficking issue is notable by its absence in adoption research (particularly Swedish literature). However, across the literature the disparity between demand and supply – which arguably could lie behind the prevalence of adoption trafficking schemes – is a recurring theme. Dorow and Swifen (2009), for example, concur with Stuy on the supply of Chinese girls: "It is crucial to note that the percentage of healthy infant girls leaving China for adoption far exceeds the actual percentage of such children in orphanages; that is healthy baby girls are the ones demanded by and sent for international adoption" (Dorow and Swiffen, 2009, 571). Kathryn Joyce connects the demand-driven nature of the industry to the phenomenon of the orphan myth, the widely shared fantasy that the non-white world is full of piteous orphans living in complete isolation, desperate to be rescued by a loving family (2013, 132). Joyce suggests that the UNICEF definition of an orphan – which includes children who have lost *one* parent to any form of death – produces a distorted image of the number of orphans world wide, and does not account for older (and therefore non-adoptable) children, or children who have lost parents but are being looked after by other close relatives, such as grandparents (2013, 63).

Chen Fu-Jen makes a significant theoretical contribution relating to adoption and desire, examining desire in adoption in Lacanian terms through his analyses of Korean adoptees' life narratives (2012), picture books on Asian Transnational/-racial adoption (2013), paternal (both first father and adoptive father) narratives (2014) and maternal narratives in literature (2016). Central to Chen's analyses is the Lacanian approach to desire and lack, the understanding that lack is inherent: it can never be fulfilled. And therein lies the great dilemma of adoption desire: the adopted child can never fill the gap of the ghost child, nor can the aching lack the adoptee carries be filled by a successful family root search.

The Lacanian self, Chen explains, is split, inconsistent, and forever alienated from its self. Authenticity and wholeness can never be achieved, however much it may be fantasised about (2016, 165). One cannot, in Lacanian terms, speak of the adoptee as a split self in comparison to the whole, non-split non-adoptee: we are all as fragmented as each other. Studying children's picture books (for the most part written by adoptive mothers), he notes that there is a tendency for the adoptive mother, the first mother, and the receiving and sending countries to have their splitness disavowed, they are romanticised as (impossible) authentic wholes, whereas the adoptee is split and incomplete – but can be "fixed" to become whole (2016, 165). The adoption is imagined as the fixing factor. In narratives written by adoptive mothers, adoption fixes everyone: The adoptive mother lacks a child, the first mother lacks the possibility to raise her child, the adoptee lacks a mother. The adoption brings them all wholeness (2016, 166). As well as disregarding the colonial, historical and racial background to adoption, this denies the possibility of the first mother or adoptee to be a self: their mythical completeness leaves them as "Others

without otherness" (2016, 165).

Towards a Field of Critical Adoption Studies?

In a special issue of the journal *Adoption and Culture*, American researcher and white adoptive mother Margaret Homans edited a collection of short essays by established adoption scholars, who had been invited to define "critical adoption studies" (CAS) (2018). Homans begins by offering a broad definition of adoption itself, presenting its contrasting possibilities: from "regulating sexuality and contributing to the realization of racist projects" to enabling "nonnormative family forms" and "queer[ing] the family". She goes on to pose a dichotomy of arguments of abolition and celebration:

> Adoption can mean the kidnapping of Children from the Global South, even a form of slavery meriting only abolition; but it can also reconceive family as part of larger, sometimes transnational communities. (Homans 2018, 1-2)

Homans defines critical adoption studies as being the "scholarly debate that finds meanings in these controversies, and, in so doing, poses fundamental and constructive challenges to existing modes of thought and scholarly enquiry" (2018, 2).

There are some issues with this, as it positions the actual critique of adoption, where the premise of adoption itself is problematised, as being an extreme end of a dichotomy, rather than the central premise of the field. There is a danger that critique is limited to just one of multiple arguments in the field. The problem of pitting a perspective of adoption as a racist project that regulates sexuality as a polar opposite to adoption as a means of "queering the family", risks perpetuating a myth that adoption critique is "homophobic", a problem that Gonduin (2012) highlights as restricting activists from speaking out against adoption practices.

Through the mini essays, there are consistent calls for a multi-disciplinary approach to adoption studies (for example, Phelan 2018, 8), and the need for CAS to take adoption studies beyond academia (Phelan 2018, 8; Myers 2018, 19). Phelan warns against the consolidation of the field in academia, which could serve to "defrange" and "discipline" radical aspects of thinking. She is also wary of a focus on "*studies*" taking precedence over the needs of those whose lives are most impacted by the adoption complex (2018, 8-9).

Kit Myers calls for CAS to ensure that "Orphans, children and adoptive parents are no longer the only subjects of focus, and the title of 'expert' is no longer reserved for adoptive parents and adoption professionals" (2018, 19). For Myers, Critical adoption studies' role is to consider "alternative perspectives, truths and the expertise of adult adoptees and birth or first parents" (2018, 19). He describes CAS as a "multiply informed field" which encompasses actors outside the academy: writers, poets, artists and adoptee and first mother rights organisations such as *Lost Daughters* and the *Korean Unwed Mothers' Families Association* (2018, 9).

Many of the mini-essayists agree that first mothers, and first families, must have a bigger role in CAS. In a compelling self-reflective piece, Janet Mason Ellerby pleads for adoption scholars to start including first mothers in their thinking:

> I urge those who are thinking critically about adoption to include birthmothers in their projects: unpack the psychological and emotional wrongs that were done and continue; confront the exploitation of birthmothers; acknowledge the pain of those who paid too dearly for the happiness of others, Attention must be paid. (Ellerby 2018, 11)

Kim Park Nelson argues that CAS' role is to "complicate current views of adoption, family and kinship" (2018, 20). It must seek to go beyond seeing adoption as just a procedure or solution that merely requires "best practices", and it must have an intersectional approach that "recognizes race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability" as factors in adoption cultures (2018, 20)

Park Nelson stresses that there is no single CAS methodology, but that CAS should embrace designs and methods that "best illuminate complicated issues and problems within adoption policy, practice, or culture". Such research should be sure to foreground the researcher's (power) position in relation to adoption. She also argues that CAS should be grounded in social justice ideologies:

> It [good CAS research] acknowledges that the loss of a child, the loss of identity because of an adoptive placement or displacement, and the loss of control over reproductive processes are common within adoption experiences. It is willing to ask critical questions about possible negative outcomes of adoption, coercion in adoptive processes, and flaws in adoption industries. (2018, 21)

Reflecting on the 15 essays as a whole, I am concerned that there is little about major change, and little that advocates for an end to current adoption practices, which poses the risk of leaving the structures that enable international adoption intact. While adoptee and first mother voices are included among the researchers, they are just that – *included* – rather than central; the field is still being defined by white adoptive mothers (Homans; Briggs; Yngvesson), even if their research on adoption is critical and nuanced.

My own position is that it is imperative that the *critical* is more than just an adjective added to a slightly more inclusive and progressive version of "adoption studies". Critical adoption studies should be truly, fundamentally critical of adoption: in fact, oppositional.

It needs to re-assess adoption narratives, history, research and knowledge. It must work towards avoiding the language of pro-adoption discourse. This should be part of an active strategy of not being reduced to merely an opinion, a side of a debate, a differ-

ence of beliefs within the study of adoption.

Critical adoption studies needs to have a radical and practical role, one that keeps the urgent fight for adoptee and first family rights at the forefront. It should seek to move beyond describing the problem, beyond criticising, and towards creating real change. This requires it to transcend academic boundaries, and work with activist groups, legal advisors and therapists (for example). It needs to draw from expertise and learning across the disciplines and outside the academy. Yet it must be centred in anti-racist, post-colonial scholarship.

I agree with Myers (2018) that CAS should move beyond the study of children and adoptive parents: it should expand its attentions to not just adoptees as adults, but also to the children of adoptees, partners of adoptees, first families, non-adopted siblings, and the above all the broader politics and global racialised inequalities that adoption is part of.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Context

A theory offers a tool or a set of tools. It is neither a church you adhere to nor a football team you support.

– Hage 2016, 222

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss where my work fits in on a theoretical level, and the theoretical traditions that inform my project. I discuss my approach to using theory and the theoretical context that shapes my overall thesis. Finally, I present an overview of the specific theoretical tools I use in the analytical chapters.

Approach to Using Theory

My reading of Ghassan Hage (2005; 2017) has had a great influence on the development of my research, the way I present my work and my engagement with theory. I was inspired by his clarity of writing, his personal and reflective tone and his ability to communicate and develop complex theories in an inclusive and immediately useful way. Further reading led me to his article on using theory, aimed at post-graduate students (2016). Here Hage encourages a reflection on why one is using theory, and warns against theory (and theorist) fetishism. He identifies two reasons for using theory: to build cultural capital, and to understand and express a problem. To use theory as cultural capital, as an indicator of intellectual sophistication, is effectively the consumption of theory as a commodity (2016, 221): "There is no doubt that theory is consumed like a commodity in a market-like space in the academic/intellectual world. Theories – like many other commodities – go in and out of fashion. Some become so fashionable that they become a must" (2016, 223).

Alternatively, theory can, and should, be deployed for its analytical usage value (2016, 221). Hage encourages the practical use of theory as tools in a toolbox; the point is not to try to use everything in the box to try to do the job, but to carefully pick what you need and adapt its usage to best suit your problem. In this approach the researcher does not commit to use every aspect of a theory in a perfect echo of what the theorist may have intended, but should be aware of the ramifications of the specific tool of theory that they do use (2016, 222).[17] To avoid the temptation of theory fetishism, Hage suggests the following: "I encourage researchers to ask: 'what has this theory helped me see, understand or explain that I otherwise would not have seen?'" (2016, 224).

I endeavour to follow this guidance throughout the thesis. I make an effort to avoid theory fetishism, and continuously reflect on why and how I am using theory: am I using this to get a better understanding and better means of communicating my research?

There are over-riding theoretical themes to my project, relating to nation, race and desire – and above all the role and use of the Other (transracial adoptee) body in national and racial desiring fantasies. Each analysis chapter (chapters Six, Seven and Eight) is relatively self-contained, and approaches the problem through a slightly different theoretical lens. While I explain the details of this in each chapter, I will give a brief overview below. Firstly though, I will present the theoretical context of my thesis: the theoretical work that shapes the background and frames the whole thesis. Keeping my emphasis on the usage value of theory, I relate the theories that I introduce directly to the context of my project, rather than treating them as abstract entities.

Theoretical Context: Race, Nation and National Myth Building

I examine the role of adoptee body in Swedish national myth building throughout my analysis, in particular with regards to the construction and communication of Sweden as the "good" nation. In this section I will discuss the theoretical background to national myth making.

Étienne Balibar describes the nation as a product of a narrative, which positions the nation as the fulfilment of a project that has been on-going for centuries. The narrative, encompassing clearly marked stages, moments of reaching self-awareness and overcoming struggles, ultimately manifest in the unique "national personality" (Balibar 1991, 86).

The nation state combined with a myth of a national identity or personality leads to the creation of a "fictive ethnicity", the notion that a national people take on the attributes of an ethnic group, and shaped by historical national narratives, have *always* been an ethnicity (1991, 96).

17 This echoes Foucault, who uses a similar tool analogy: "I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area"(1994, 523)

> No nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized – that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity or origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions (1991, 96)

Yet, with ethnicity haunted by race thinking the mistake of conflating "race" with "nation" appears (Renan 1990, 8). And thus, a national character becomes associated with a national racial appearance.

In Sweden, this has led to the conception of a "Swede" as a member of an imagined national race of white people. While there was a long-held belief in a distinct Nordic/Swedish master race (McEachrane 2018), the possibility to speak openly of a Swedish race would have disappeared under Sweden's post-war colour-blind project (as I explore further in Chapter 5). Yet to speak of "Swedish" as a nationality while excluding Swedes of colour as "immigrants", regardless of their immigration status (Lundstöm 2017), or even using the term "ethnic Swede" or "native Swede" to describe a white Swedish person, indicates that *Swedish* is still imagined as a (white) race.[18] My argument is that race thinking and the belief in a unique race of white Swedes remains under the surface of the new, acceptable vocabularies of nationality and ethnicity in the Swedish colour-blind discourse.

The incredible emotional draw of the nation has been studied by scholars including Ernest Renan (1990), who discusses the sentimentality of nationality. Renan describes the nation as a soul, or a "spiritual principle", that carries a combination of a "rich legacy of memories" and a "present-day consent, the desire to live together" (1990, 19).

Balibar suggests that it is this sentimental dimension that pulls individuals in to the nation, into a national identity, through a process that he calls interpellation (Balibar 1991, 96). This interpellating process is the driving question behind Benedict Anderson's classic work on nationalism, where he explores how a nation's pull can be so powerful that citizens are willing to kill and die for an imagined entity. Famously Anderson depicts the nation as an imagined community, one that is imagined as being sovereign and limited (2006 [1983], 6):

> It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (Anderson 2006 [1983], 7)

18 See Chapter Eight for further discussion of the "Swede" – "Immigrant" dichotomy, and where the adoptee fits in with this.

The pull of this imagined community invokes feelings of fraternity that run deeper than inequalities within the nation's borders. It is this fraternity, which implies an imagining of being linked by family, by blood, to one's fellow citizens that makes it possible for millions of people to willingly kill and die for the imagined community of the nation (Anderson 2006 [1983], 7).

Shared Memories, Shared Desires

Collective memories of triumphs, or "common glories" are important in building nationalism and national identity, but, as Renan argues, it is memories of shared sufferings that unite more (1990, 19).

> [S]uffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort. (Renan 1990, 19)

I would add that the nation gives rise to collective desires too. As well as a uniting project, the nation is a desiring project. In their classic work, *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) conceptualise desire as being collective, pre-existing, steered externally and productive. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is everything, and it permeates the infrastructure of society (Young 1995, 168). Desire is never an individual matter, but always collective. Robert Young explains that Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of "desiring machines" to de-subjectify desire, and in his reading of *Anti-Oedipus* as a post-colonial text, suggests that they envisage colonialism as a desiring machine (1995, 168). The nation could be understood in the same way, and the populace can be imagined as interconnected desiring machines, with desire flowing through them, a desire that is manipulated at a state level (Deleuze & Guattari 1983).

Deleuze and Guattari describe desire as being productive: desire produces need or lack, not vice versa (1983, 41). In traditional psychoanalytical approaches, desire is understood as being produced to fulfil a lack/need (manqué); in a Lacanian approach, this manqué can never actually be fulfilled (Chen 2016). However, in Deleuze and Guattari's approach, manqué is produced by desire, or indeed is a counter-product of desire: "Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire: they are counter-products within the real that desire produces" (Deleuze & Guattari 1983, 27).

In this project I approach the Swedish international adoption phenomenon as a national desiring project, in an effort to move away from the simplistic reading of adoption as being about isolated transactions between individuals. I believe that the adoption project should be seen as more than the desire for a child to create a family, but about a collective, national desire, grounded in racist and colonial discourse, a collective desire for an authorised version of an Other body that can be controlled and legitimately consumed.

Collective desire can be understood as something pre-existing and productive. The flows of desire are controlled, directed, coded and manipulated externally. A way of thinking about desire is that it is "reproduced" and directed by tools such as positive representations of adoption and adoptee bodies. To place this understanding of collective desire in the Swedish adoption concept, one could think about a "collective transracial adoption desire", which is reflected in the shared overtly positive feelings around the adoption project and the continued drive for white Swedish society to adopt foreign bodies of colour. This collective desire is visible in the passionate celebration and warm normalization of international transracial adoption as part of mainstream Swedish life. Collective adoption desire encompasses the desire to see the isolated transracial body in a white space, it is a desire for a mimic body that moves between two poles of non-recognition, and two poles of excess: excessive "sameness" but not the same, excessive "difference", but not different. This is exhibited in the fantasy of placing the body of colour in quintessential representations of Swedish whiteness (Wyver 2017).[19] The desire to look at the Other is also captured in the study of the adopted body, through anthropological research, psychology, and in literature and popular pedagogy.

Shared Amnesia; Collective Forgetting

Collective memories and shared desires may be a key national binding agent, but they can only function with collective forgetting. Indeed, it could be argued that nation building, national myth and national identity rest on manipulated and selective memories; collective forgetting is as important as collective remembering. Renan describes a process of "historical error" as being crucial in the construction of a nation: at the origin of the nation and all political formations, he argues, there is a forgotten violent history (1990, 11). Indeed, Renan argues that unity always comes about through brutality (1990,11). Using the French nation as an example, Renan describes the need to forget the massacre and erasure of ethnic groups as being essential in making a French national subject:

> [T]he essense of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things. No French citizen knows whether he is a Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifale, or a Visigoth, yet every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Bartholomew.[20] (Renan, 1990, 11)

Similarly, contemporary post-colonial scholars, such as Robbie Shilliam (2017), address "colonial amnesia", the shared forgetting of colonial brutality. As I discuss in Chapter

19 See Chapter Eight.

20 On this occasion in 1572 many thousands of Hugenots were killed.

Five, such amnesia is certainly evident in the Swedish context, where there is a genuine belief in there being no colonial history (see, for example, Yngvesson 2010, 44-45; von Melen 1998, 185). The forgetting of colonial and racial history is an integeral part to shaping a "good" Swedish national identity (Gondouin 2012, McEachreane 2018). This forgetting is also essential for the international adoption project to flourish in a society that is imagined, both internally and internationally, as standing outside colonial and race histories (Yngvesson 2012, 44).[21]

National forgetting entails an active re-imagining of history and culture, or at least a simplified selective version of history. Memmi (1990) describes "victors" and colonisers as needing to falsify history, through diverting national focus to seemingly insignificant matters and rewriting laws in an effort to "extinguish memories" and legitimise their usurpation (1990, 118).

Myth

Barthes' concept of myth is a means of comprehending this forgetting process. Building on theories of semiotics, Barthes suggests that signifiers of the nation tend to act on two levels, one of which, the level of myth, seeks to *depoliticise* and *dehistoricise*. The myth becomes a means of passing from history to nature, naturalising present ways of being and understanding as if they "go without saying", and separating them from historical violences and complexities. Myth works to purify, simplify and erase dialectics, and is "depoliticised speech" (1993, 141). By way of example, Barthes describes the image of a black soldier dressed in French army uniform and saluting the Tricolour, pictured on the front cover of Paris Match.

> On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. Whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. (1993, 116)

The image is to be read as signifying the French empire in a positive way: it is such a benevolent success that even "our black subjects" are proud to fight under the French flag; the colonial expansion project is such that this soldier can be French, regardless of his colour. Yet this reading at a myth level erases deeper more complex meanings, violences, racism and the brutality of colonial history. Interpellating the viewer into French imperiality, the image freezes, becomes innocent and becomes a reference that estab-

21 I discuss this further in Chapter Five.

lishes French imperiality as the natural way of being (1993, 125). It effectively removes politics and purifies history (1993, 115).

Signifying at the myth level does not necessarily *deny*, but it simplifies and cleanses, and presents complexities as clear statement of fact (1993, 143).

> [Myth] abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible […] it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves." Barthes 1993, 143)

Myth operates through a process of *exnomination* (outside of naming), the removal of a type of speech from official and public discourse, to serve dominant interests. Barthes uses the term to refer to the phenomenon of the bourgeoisie hiding its name, and its identity, by not referring to or naming itself. It does this to normalise and naturalise its identity and ideology to maintain its hegemonic position. By being outside naming, the bourgeoisie comes to "naturally" represent the nation. Other groups that have to carry a name become less central to the nation, if not Othered (1993, 151).

While Barthes' focus was on class, one could substitute it for race and find that the analysis still holds. In that sense, it has clear connections to *white privilege* in that it revolves around advantages that can never be rendered visible or named (McIntosh 1988). This is all part and parcel of the depoliticisation of speech and the maintenance of white hegemony. It can be seen too in the refusal of many white people to accept being described by the term "white" (Diangelo 2018).

Barthes explains that myth and exnomination as used by the bourgousie rest on a number of strategies, three of which I believe can be adapted to be directly relevant for the study of Swedish adoption:

The innoculation: The government can admit the harm brought by one of its institutions. But by focusing on one institution, "a small inoculation of acknowledged evil", the system itself goes unchallenged (Barthes 1993, 150).

This is connected to the *individualisation* of adoption, the establishment of a myth of adoption as being about individual transactions (See Chapter Six); this means that when a case of trafficking, abuse or racism arises it can be acknowledged, but treated as a "bad apple" rather than a structural issue. This acknowledgement means that entrenched patterns of white racial advantage and the celebration of "Good Sweden" that sustain this go untroubled.

The Privation of History: The history standing behind the myth gets removed. People do not wonder where the myth comes from, they simply assent to it (Barthes 1993, 151). This contributes to processes of national forgetting and colonial amnesia. In Chapter Five,

I will discuss how this relates to the Swedish example, where the removal of colonial, racist and eugenicist history enables the adoptee body to signify good Sweden at a myth level.

Identification: The ideology of the bourgeoisie seeks sameness. It denies all concepts that do not fit into the system that serves it. The bourgeoisie either ignores subjects that differ from them or they put efforts into making the subject the same – or making it aspire to be the same – as the bourgeoisie (Barthes 1993, 151).

To relate this to my research, white Swedishness can stand in for the bourgeoisie: *identification* then manifests itself though the denial of difference and colour-blind racism that render the transracial adoptee unable to assert their "difference" – or a racial identity – but also condemns them to being *almost* white Swedish, *but not quite*. I discuss this fully in Chapter Eight.[22]

Familialising the Nation

Balibar (1990) discusses familialist national discourse and the relevance to the nation of the family as a small unit. The family unit gives the idea of 'private' life, but is measured, supervised and reproduced through the state. It provides "civic functions", for example through the role it plays in sustaining gender inequalities and hetronormativity. Additionally, the family should be read as a unit of capitalist consumption, and a unit of state control. (1990, 101)

Balibar notes that while the family is imagined as being a private sphere, and that the state stops at the front door of the family home so to speak, state control over family life is significant. For instance, the state has an interest in archiving marriages, co-habitations, births and so on. It also supervises the nation's health, morals – and reproduction (1990, 101). The family does not exist outside the state and the nation, but is a unit of it. According to Balibar, the significance of the role of the family in the nation also enables a "secret affinity" between nationalism and sexism: "the inequality of sexual roles in conjugal love and child-rearing constitutes the anchoring point for the juridical, economic, educational and medical mediation of the state" (1990, 102).

Balibar also identifies a nationalisation of the family, the fact that the nation is united through a symbolic kinship as if it were a family (1990, 102), as was evident in Anderson's descriptions of fraternity in the imagined community (2006, 7).

Symbolic Role of Family and Bodies

Feminist scholars, such as Nira Yuval-Davis, stress the gendered nature of nations, and argue that the nation is embodied as a woman (Yuval-Davis; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989, 8-10; Hübinette 2006, 105). This accentuates the familial connections with nation-

22 See also Wyver (2020a); and Wyver 2018)

hood, and means that it is the imagined role of "patriarchal nationalism and male power, often represented by the government and military, to rescue and defend, sacrifice and in the end die 'for her'" (Hübinette 2006, 105). As well as being biological and cultural reproducers of the nation, Yuval Davis suggests that women's bodies serve as symbols for the essence and unity of a nation. They also serve a purpose as symbolic border guards, marking out racial, ethnic and national difference (1989, 116).

Children also have a symbolic role in national identity and myths. In his study of representations of international adoption in Korea, Hübinette describes a history of children having a symbolic place in nationalist ideologies (2006, 162). For instance, Veema Das (1995) argued that the children of women abducted and raped during Indian partition came to symbolise national dishonour. Hübinette goes on to argue that the adopted child in Korea symbolises national shame. The adoptee body, sent for adoption from Korea, signifies Korea's past – and present – as a nation shaped by American military imperialism. As with the children conceived by rape during partition, "international adoption from Korea was also initiated as a result of war, and the first children sent away were products of sexual exploitation. Military prostitution, and most probably in many cases, rape" (2006, 163).

Dubinsky (2005) argues that in receiving countries transracial adoptees, as children, "often are used as symbolic markers of ethnic and national identity, and that social, cultural, and political anxieties are projected onto and operate through the bodies of these children" (Dubinsky 2005, cited in Hübinette 2006, 163).

In the Swedish context the adoptee body signifies Swedish universal goodness myths, and a safe version of multi-culturalism (Hübinette 2007a; Yngvesson 2010). The transracial adoptee body serves as a "diversity token" (Hübinette 2007a), and "emblematize[s] Sweden's vision to become a multicultural nation" (Yngvesson 2010). Indeed, Yngvesson argues that the adoptee comes to symbolise the good Swedish image as a model for the rest of the world:

> As 'black' she or he embodies the highest ideals of the Swedish nation for social justice and international solidarity and hence is a symbol of Sweden's (parental, national) goodness – of its capacity to stand as a model for the rest of the world. (Yngvesson 2010, 120)

Beyond that, the adoptee body, as a child, represents a possibility of breaking down national, racial and ethnic boundaries through love:

> This child represented a form of love that exceeded the boundaries of nations and the ethnicized and racialized exclusions through which national identities are constructed. At the same time, this child hinted at the contingency of national identity on incorporating such excess and at the key role of the

> adoptive parent (and especially the adoptive mother) in such incorporations. (Yngvesson 2010, 99)

The adoptee comes to symbolise a multicultural nation, but also symbolises a unique globalised goodness. Additionally, the adopter, in relation to the adoptee, comes to represent the good Swedish subject, performing the role of neutralising racial difference and incorporating it into the national family (Yngvesson 2010, 99).

The adoptee as an adult has a more ambiguous and ambivalent symbolic role, as I address in Chapter Eight. As the adoptee ages, or moves out of white spaces where they can be recognised as an adoptee, they are "misread" as an immigrant Other, and thus the meaning of their body can change from representing goodness to representing a threat. The simultaneous hypervisibility *and* invisibility of the adoptee also causes complications. While the adoptee's "blackness" represents Swedish anti-racist ideals, Yngvesson notes that this blackness "must disappear in the fantasy that color makes no difference in Sweden" (2010, 120). The adoptee needs to be visible, but unseen.[23]

The Normative Role of the Adoptive Family

Yngvesson (2010) explores the role of the adoptee body in the national family and nation building. She argues that the familialist project, the concept of the nation as a family and the nation building through the family form, was transformed through transnational adoption (Yngvesson, 2010, 44; Balibar 1991, 102). From the early days of pioneer adopters, to the peak years to the present day, the adoptee is at the very centre of the process of family and nation building (2010, 50).[24]

While the adoptive family, and in particular the transracial adoptive family is often seen as a progressive and digressive new way of forming families, giving promise of challenging gender and sexuality stereotypes and inequalities, it actually serves a purpose of upholding such inequalities. Yngvesson suggests that while the *non-adoptive* family form was afforded great freedom in Sweden – through legalisation of gay marriage, reproductive technologies, and similar rights for co-habiting couples as married couples, the adoptive family remained intact as a model of what a "real" family should be (2010, 51).

> [T]he international adoptee […] is envisioned as requiring a specific kind of family (heterosexual, two-parent, and married) in order to thrive … [This is] a conundrum in Sweden, a nation that is known for its generous policies in support of women and children, regardless of the marital status of a child's mother, and for its liberal policy with regard to same sex marriage. (2010, 51)

23 See Gustafsson 2020 for discussions on Korean adoptees and (in)visibility.

24 See Chapter Five.

Requirements for adoption, both real and imagined, favoured stable, regular, "traditional" family forms: heterosexual, married, middle class, home owning and white. The unwritten whiteness "requirements" are represented in images of international adoption (white parent, child of colour; see for example IKEA 2017, and Chapter Six) and the requirement for adopters to have a high income in a country that is economically segregated on racial lines (Pred 2000). The adoptive family performs a function of maintaining normativity and upholding heteronormative, white supremacist and patriarchal status quos (Dorow & Swifen 2009; Myers 2013). The stabilising quality of the adoptive family enables non-adopted family forms a degree of digression.

Yngvesson suggests that the desired normativity of the adoptive family is also related to its charge with performing an additional "civic function" for the state: to absorb radical difference – both for the needs of the child and the nation (2010, 51). The adoptive family, Yngvesson suggests, performs multiple functions: to symbolize the multi-cultural project, absorb Otherness and maintain Swedishness (2010, 99).

> In Sweden, a nation otherwise seemingly open to non-normative families, the *racial* difference of the child became the rationale for an adoption policy *requiring* a conventional family form, pointing to the ways that racialization, familialization (as heteronormativity) and projects to construct a national identity are intertwined formations. (2010, 51-52)

The adoptive family's civic roles of maintaining normativity and absorbing racial difference (Yngvesson 2010, 99) can be understood as part of a system of *domestication*, where the adoptee body (and, following Yngvesson's argument, race) can be dominated and controlled in a homely way (Hage 2017).

Domestication

The familialisation of the nation and the conceptualisation of Sweden as "the People's Home" (See Chapter Six) works to represent the nation as a homely space. The notion of nation as home entails a *domestication* of people into that home, as well as an understanding of who can belong in the home and who cannot. This can be understood through Hage's concept of generalized domestication, which he describes as a way of being in the world that seeks to dominate, control and get value from it (2017, 87). It is, he argues, a means of creating a homely space, but is dependent on domination and exploitation:

> Domestication is […] a struggle to make things partake in the making of one's home. It is a struggle to create homely spaces, or, to put it more existentially, a struggle to be 'at home in the world'. Yet, paradoxically, it is also a mode of domination, control, extraction and exploitation. (2017, 91)

While orthodox definitions of domestication tend to concern human and animal relations, Hage develops his theory to include the natural world and racist human-to-human relations. One of the definitions he analyses is this, by Sandor Bökönyi:

> The essence of domestication is the capture and taming by man of animals of a species with particular behavioural characteristics, their removal from their natural living area and breeding community, and the maintenance under controlled breeding conditions for mutual benefits." (Bökönyi 1989, 22, cited in Hage 2017, 88)

The consecutive moves in this orthodox definition remain important to Hage's theory: capture, taming, domestication. In terms of bodies, this entails that there are some who can be domesticated in to the nation, through capture and taming, and some that cannot. There is then a domesticatable body and an ungovernable one. A body that is ungovernable is also by definition exterminable.

The ungovernable is one that we desire to govern but are repeatedly unable to domesticate (2017, 77). The repetitive nature is important here, with the ungovernable being something that we have continuously *tried and failed* to govern. It is something within our sphere of imagined governance (not outside), for instance within the national white space, it is: "Around us but escaping us, in the realm of our governable sphere and yet ungovernable" (2017, 77). The ungovernable raises great fear within the domesticator, as it exposes their vulnerability and limitations (2017, 81). This is reflected in the Swedish context in the stark discursive distinction between "immigrant" and "adoptee", which I address in Chapter Eight. The "immigrant" is represented as a non-white body, or more accurately bodies, as it is generally imagined in the plural, that stands outside Swedishness and threatens its values, and however much white Swedes have tried to help it, it cannot be governed. The adoptee, on the other hand, is represented as an *almost* same individual body, that white Swedishness can try to "absorb" (Yngvesson 2010, 51), or, as I discuss in Chapter Six, can use to revolve around. However, the ambiguity and ambivalence of this body can always pose a threat, as I reflect on in Chapter Eight.

Domestication gives an idea of homeliness, and bringing into the home, but Hage reiterates that it is based on violence: "Domestication is not just any kind of homeliness, it is a homeliness obtained through domination" (2017, 92). In fact, domestication is an aggression that is imagined as the very opposite: "gentle and cuddly" (2017, 92).

Part of the gentle and cuddly perception is reflected in the fact that domestication is seen as mutually beneficial, rather than as gross power imbalances: relationships such as employer and worker, coloniser and colonised (and we could add, adopter – adoptee) are imagined as being beneficial to both parties involved (2017, 91). Hage points out that some relationships of domination are actually *experienced* as mutually beneficial (2017, 91), and this is certainly the case in many adoption narratives. Domestication is a system

of domination that appears to live as a relationship of non-domination: that is, its aim is to extract value from domesticated things, including bodies, and deliver this value in a homely way (2017, 93).

Domestication comes with fantasies of reversal, where the domesticated becomes the domesticator. Hage notes that fears and fantasies of reversal have long been part of a history of domesticating nature, a worry that "what we have dominated and exploited will rise against us and domesticate us in turn" (2017, 74). This is reflected in images of the plant world reclaiming the human built environment, or stories of humans being ruled by the animals we have domesticated (for example, Planet of the Apes).

Reflections on Domestication and Adoption

The adoptee has a role in Swedish national domestication, and it is an object of domestication fantasies. In terms of the role, the adoptee's body signifies the homely national space (a role that is shared by the adopter). Symbolising family beyond blood, biology and borders it is used to create a homely *white* national space while simultaneously signifying a national space that *is not* exclusively white. This comes through its role in colour-blind fantasies, as a demonstration that race does not matter; but for this symbolic role to work, the adoptee has to appear racially different, and has to be visible. The adoptee body is needed to mark the distinction between ungovernable, exterminable bodies and domesticated/domesticatable bodies (Hage 2017, 77). This is exemplified through the contrasting images of the feared ungovernable "immigrant" and the domesticated adoptee, which I discuss in Chapter Six.

Adoption follows the classic domestication pattern of capture, taming and domestication (Hage 2017, 88). This corresponds with tropes of adoption as rescue. In adoptee and adopter narratives, the themes of adoptee suffering pre-adoption (posited as justification) and captured through adoption industry ("left", "found", living in orphanage), and going from suffering immediately pre- and post-adoption to become "fully Swedish" and at home (tamed) to being as Swedish as anybody else (see, for example, Juusela 2010). The international transracial adoptee is effectively domesticated, but racism prevents them being *fully* part of the white nation (Hübinette & Tigervall 2009, 2010).[25]

My contribution

These theoretical understandings of nation, myth, and national family and domesticating bodies, form a conceptual background to the thesis. My theoretical contribution is to build on the traditions of theories of the intersections between race, family, nation and the body, and to address the specific role of the transracial adoptee body. My central argument that is shaped by the above, and that frames the proceeding analysis and discussion is that in the Swedish context, the adoptee body has a remarkable symbolic role

25 See Chapter Eight.

in connecting the nation and family, and is used to symbolise Swedish myths of goodness, or more specifically to enable white Swedes around the adoptee body to represent goodness, and to be good white subjects. The ambivalence of the adoptee body carries a symbolic threat too: the body is also a carrier of the hidden history of violence, racism, colonialism and eugenics that the Swedish nation, and adoption itself is built on. There is a danger that the adoptee body might reveal the inauthenticity of good Sweden and Swedish whiteness and the dark histories of Swedishness and adoption. This risk leads to a monumental struggle to sustain the pro-adoption discourse, silence adoption critique, and prevent meaningful challenges to the racist structures that adoption project is an integral part of.

Overview of Theoretical Tools Used in Analysis Chapters

While the above discussion contextualises the thesis, each analysis chapter (Six, Seven, Eight) approaches the research problem from a slightly different angle, and addresses it through a slightly different theoretical lens. In this section I will give an overview of the theoretical tools I use in each chapter.

In Chapter Six, I explore the role of the transracial adoptee body in shaping the myth of the Good Swedish nation. I use Hage's work on Governmentality, particularly his conceptualisation of good and evil white nationalists and dead ethnics, from "White Nation" (2000). Hage reimagines racism as being an issue of spatial control, more specifically White National spatial control. He uses the idea of "good" and "evil" white nationalists in Australia to argue that they are embroiled in similar desires and struggles for maintaining and governing white national space in what is a multi-cultural, diverse environment.

I use this as a means of dismantling the false dichotomy between good and evil white Swedish nationalists, who I argue are both trapped in a melancholic longing and struggle for an imagined time of complete white spatial control over the positioning and behaviour of Other bodies. Additionally, I borrow Hage's concept of the body of colour as a "dead ethnic" used to build white subjectivity around.

In Chapter Seven, the second analysis chapter, the main theory I work with is from my reading of bell hooks' essay, Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance (1992). In the essay, hooks challenges developments in race discourse where whites openly state their desires for Other bodies. hooks analyses a selection of cultural products and even conversations overheard or had with her students, to build an argument that open declarations of racial desire are desires to consume Other bodies. They are fantasies of consuming the primordial spirit of Otherness, and being changed by the experience. They mark a fantasy of moving out of discourses of racism to become a transgressive desiring subject that has broken away from past racist histories. Yet this flirtation with becoming a little bit Other, is utterly dependent on maintaining a status quo of patriarchal white supremacy.

I use hooks' work as a starting point to build an understanding of white adopter racial desiring fantasies, sparked by an interest in descriptions of adoptee's racial "differences" as foods: "almond eyes", "chocolate skin".

In Chapter Eight, the third analysis chapter, I draw on elements from Bhabha's colonial mimicry (1994) to explore the desire for the adoptee to be an "in-between" body, that stands out as being visibly different to white Swedes, but is not *too* different; that is the same, but not *too* similar. The chapter also discusses the denial of adoptee difference and the prevalence of claims of adoptees being "100%" Swedes, and anger among adoptees and adopters when adoptees are classified as immigrants.

Mimicry is a system of colonial desire and control that creates a colonial subject that is a partial present – partial as in in parts and incomplete. The mimic is caught in a state of ambivalence and non-belonging, caught in a perpetual state of slippage in a space between being not quite the same and not quite different. Mimicry is prone to become mockery when the mimic produces sameness in excess, becoming a grotesque exaggeration of a simplified, over communicated version of sameness. Yet both the excess sameness and excess difference (generally produced through the mimic being almost the same – but not white), conceal no presence beneath their masks. There is no essence concealed within the mimic, it is a neither/nor subject. The ambivalent and partial nature of mimicry make it the most effective form of colonial control. Yet it is also the most elusive, with the mimic constantly posing a threat to the colonizer and colonizing mission. The threat comes through the drifting from almost sameness to almost difference, but above all through the menace of the mimic returning the partial gaze. With the colonial Self being dependent on the Mimic almost Other, its own mythical wholeness, authenticity and authority is troubled by the ever slipping, ambivalent and partial empty subject of the mimic. Through this, the mythical wholeness, authenticity and authority of the whole colonial mission is revealed as inauthentic, and as just as much a product of mimicry as the mimic.

My use of all of these concepts is not an effort to perfectly reproduce what I think that Hage, hooks, or Bhabha was intending. It is not an exercise in displaying my correct understanding of a theory, and not an attempt to test a theory. Instead, my approach is to use my interpretation of elements of theoretical work to help me in getting a deeper understanding of the problem, and communicating this. To take Bhabha, for example, the idea of trying to pin down a concept like "Mimicry" and take it from examples of British colonial India and place it in contemporary Swedish adoption is an impossible, and futile one. Young suggests the possibility of Bhabha intentionally rejecting a "consistent meta language" and "static concepts" to avoid the problem of his analyses "ending up repeating the same structures of power and knowledge in relation to its material as the colonial representation itself" (1990, 146). The ambivalence and slippage Bhabha writes about, is reflected in the ambivalences and slippages in his own writings:

> In his essays, we see him move from the model of fetishism to those of 'mimicry', 'hybridisation', and 'paranoia'[…] On each occasion Bhabha seems to imply through his timeless characterization that the concept in question constitutes the condition of colonial discourse itself and would hold good for all historical periods and contexts – so it comes as something of a surprise when it is subsequently replaced by the next one, as, for example, when psychoanalysis suddenly disappears in favour of Bakhtinian hybrisization, only itself to disappear entirely in the next article as psychoanalysis returns, but this time as paranoia. (Young 1990, 186)

While Bhabha may initially seem to be giving an impression that concepts like mimicry are static, he treats them as ambivalent, fluidly slipping into one another (1990, 156). One cannot treat mimicry as a definable, concrete theory neatly applicable to different contexts. The definitions that I make for mimicry for clarity and to serve my analysis are very much my own, and other scholars are likely to interpret and use mimicry differently, or focus on different aspects of it. While there is slippage between mimicry and hybridity across Bhabha's writings, I have kept my focus here in Bhabha's discussions of mimicry in his essay "Of Mimicry and Man" (Bhabha 1994).

Summary

The nation is an imagined community, whose existence is dependent on an on-going narrative, which creates a fictive ethnicity, and the idea that the nation is an ethnic and racial entity. The unity of a nation is made possible through violence, the eradication and assimilation of groups and the identification and rejection of outsiders. With nations drawn together spiritually, in a fantasy of a common descendancy, shared glories and struggles, the narrative involves a collective forgetting, an amnesia. This forgetting can be understood through Barthes' concept of Myth, where signifiers of the nation can be dehistoricised and depoliticised, naturalised, and purified (Barthes 1983).

The nation is often imagined as a family, and at the same time, the family is a unit of the nation. While the family came to represent individual freedom, this small, controllable unit of consumption is in fact a site for national projects to be performed and communicated. The adoptive family plays an important role in this in Sweden (and elsewhere), in that its hetero-normative, middle-class, traditionally gendered requirements place it as the ideal family formation, which allows for digressions in family formations in non-adoptive families.

In Sweden, the adoptive family came to represent a new, progressive nation, which could absorb the racial difference of the adoptee body into the nation. Yet its perceived progressive nature concealed the violence of this type of family formation, and its status quo keeping role.

Women's bodies are used to represent nations, in particular with regards to the na-

tion's past and reproduction. Children's bodies should represent the future, but some come to represent guilt and shame – such as the 250,000 children taken from Korea for adoption (Hübinette 2006).

The isolated bodies of colour of adoptees, visible yet absorbed into the national family, play an integral role in Swedish whiteness, signifying white goodness. This process can be understood in terms of Hage's concept of domestication, which is the desire and means of dominating and extracting value from people and nature in way that is imagined as "homely", but that is based on violence (2017).

I address my research problems against this theoretical background, using different theoretical tools in each analysis chapter. My approach to using theory is inspired by Ghassan Hage, in particular his writing on avoiding theory fetishism and the use of theory as a tool, or a set of tools. My approach is to draw on existing theoretical work to help understand and communicate my research problems, and to find new ways of addressing them.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

Introduction

I approach my research through a methodology that draws from colonial discourse analysis, qualitative coding techniques and deconstructive narrative analysis. I aim to investigate, understand and communicate the nature of Swedish international transracial adoption desire, and its production and effects, while considering scope for resistance. I also aim to examine and decode dominant, hegemonic readings of adoption narratives, and uncover and expose silences and absences. I seek to re-establish the concealed link between a nationally denied race-obsessed past and a supposedly race-blind and progressive present. Throughout I keep a focus on the body of the adoptee, the desire for it, how it is used, and its role in Swedish whiteness. This is of particular importance, as the pro-adoption and colour-blind discourse tends to erase the relevance of the transracial adoptee body. I address these aims and my research questions through an analysis of Swedish adoption texts, including commercials and published adoptee and adopter narratives.

In this chapter, I begin with an overview of my methodology, before describing my methods of reading and analysis in a practical way. Then I reflect on the scope and limitations of the project, navigating the challenges of critical adoption research, and my own role and responsibilities within the research. Finally, I add a short note on the choice of language and methods of translation.

A Post-Colonial Approach

My project is centred within the emerging field of Critical Adoption Studies, but it is also grounded within my academic background of International Migration and Ethnic

Relations. I recognise international adoption as a colonial/post-colonial phenomenon, as previously addressed by scholars such as Hübinette (2006), Ahluwalia (2007) and Shome (2011). Drawing on influences from post-colonial studies, critical whiteness and critical race theory, I approach my project, and the study of international adoption in general, from a critical, post-colonial perspective. Given the range of meanings that that may have, I will define and clarify my position here.

Hübinette describes post-colonial theory as "drawing eclectically from Marxism and critical theory, semiotics and psychoanalysis, deconstruction and the writings of Jaques Derrida and other French poststructualists" (2006, 14). It is, he argues, openly political and oppositional, with an express aim of disruption and deconstruction. It disrupts and deconstructs, for example, the Eurocentric Self versus Other dichotomies that maintain racialised hierarchical distinctions between coloniser and colonised. Post-colonialism seeks to "decentre, destabilise and dismantle the West's grands récits" (2006, 14) and disrupt the West's discursive power, by opening up spaces in between, and beyond, binary oppositions (2006, 14). Similarly, Ahluwalia sees post-colonialism as providing "a counter-discourse that seeks to disrupt the cultural hegemony of the West, challenging imperialism in its various guises" (2010, 3).

Along with scholars such as Anne McClintock (1992) and Ella Shohat (1992), Hübinette challenges the notion of post-coloniality as marking colonialism as a "once and for all" or before/after situation. He approaches postcolonial theory with the conviction that "colonialism cannot be limited just to direct territorial control belonging to the classical imperialist period, but must be seen as the still existing relationship between the West and non-West in terms of economic, political, social, linguistic, and cultural dependencia, domination and subordination not to mention the moral and ethical aspects" (2006, 14, 15). This resonates with Patrick Wolfe's theory of settler colonialism being a structure, rather than event (2006).

International adoption, Hübinette argues, exemplifies this ongoing colonial relationship:

> Together with other critical postcolonial and feminist writers on international adoption, I consider the involuntary transferal of hundreds of thousands of non-Western children on a worldwide scale after formal decolonisation as a clear reflection of a global colonial reality and racial hierarchy, and a grim reminder of the still existing astronomical power imbalances between the West and its former colonies. (Hübinette 2006, 16)

Cawayu and De Graeve (2020, 4) also address the persisting nature of colonial structures, of which international adoption is a part. They interpret it as an aspect of *coloniality*, a term defined and developed by Maldonado-Torres (2007, 243), which is a colonialist mentality that is "maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance,

in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience". Coloniality continues to shape global socio-political relationships and inequities, and impacts even the most intimate spheres, infiltrating, for example, every aspect of the international adoptee's life (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243; Cawayu & De Graeve 2020, 4).

In-line with these other critical scholars of adoption, I approach my research with the understanding of the structural nature of colonialism, and concur with the standpoint that international adoption should be studied as what Hübinette calls a "contemporary colonial project" (Hübinette 2006, 15). The international adoption phenomenon is based around an industrial scale one way transportation of children (mainly of colour) from the global south to (mainly) white Westerners. Its history and knowledge is written by these white adopters. The industry is powered by a desire for the exotic body, accentuating and cementing ideas of white supremacy, "West is best" and notions of racial hierarchies. As such, the issue is ripe for examination through a postcolonial lens. Accepted adoption narratives need to be challenged, disrupted and re-examined. The question of adoption as a product (and producer) of imperialism needs to be pursued. This standpoint influences my choice of methodology and theory, as well as my interpretations of the data.

A key aim in my project is to move adoption research and the reading of adoption narratives away from individual experiences and to a structural, societal or macro level. While I do not undertake a Saidian discourse analysis as such, Edward Said's approach to colonial discourse, particularly his work in *Orientalism* (1993 [1978]) has influenced my thinking and methodology. Robert Young notes that an important element of Said's work was that he set out to chart the way Western literature and academic knowledge, which seemed impartial, was in fact instrumental in producing and administering the colonial project (1995, 159).

Young credits Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1983 [1977]) with developing colonial discourse analysis by acting to de-centre it "away from the East towards a more global surface", as well as placing capitalism at the heart of the colonial process and its material violence (Young 1995, 167). Bhabha (1994) made even further developments in response to the critique of the "totalizing aspect" of Said's work (Young 1995, 161). According to Young, Bhabha's key methodological contribution was addressing colonial discourse as not just functioning around what Young calls the "instrumental construction of knowledge", but also around the ambivalence of fantasy and desire (1995, 161). Bhabha places ambivalence, which entails "simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action", at the very heart of colonial social production (Young 1995, 161).[26]

26 See Chapter Eight.

My approach is influenced by Young's reading of these developments in critical discourse analysis. I seek to approach the reading of adoption narratives and representations of adoptee bodies as part of a knowledge production that shapes understanding and has a role in maintaining and justifying the adoption project. The role of desire, and the ambivalence of adoption desire is key to my readings. My analysis is driven by questioning the seeming paradox of bodies that are at once desired for adoption and rejected through racism; bodies that are desired for their racial difference, but find that both this desire *and* this difference are disavowed and rejected in the pro-adoption and colour-blind discourses.

Overview of Methods

My research focuses on published Swedish adoption-related texts, both in the form of literature (books and articles) and videos (advertising and political campaign). I used deconstructive narrative analysis methods as a means of carrying out critical close readings that explore power relations beneath the surface of texts. For an overview of the Swedish adoption discourse and on-going data collection, I developed an archive (see "Gathering Data", below). As a bridge between data collection and analysis, I use qualitative coding techniques.

In practical terms, I took the following steps in my analysis process:

Coding the texts

To guide my reading, identify adoption desire narratives and interconnectivity between texts, I used a systematic qualitative coding technique developed from guidelines presented by Berg and Lune (2012) and Payne and Payne (2004), which I have experimented with in previous analyses of texts (Wyver 2017).

Coding acts as a link between the collection of data and deeper analysis, and can help avoid what Berg and Lune describe as "exampling" – the selection of examples chosen to suit the researcher's arguments (2012, 371-2). Coding also has a vital role in exposing the researcher to unexpected patterns, which would be missed by exampling.

Beginning with an inductive reading of the texts, using colour-coding I identified and noted themes, narratives of desire and descriptions of adoptee bodies both inter- and intra-textually, a step that Payne and Payne refer to as "the preliminary analysis" (2004, 39). Naturally I made some adaptations to the reading of videos and images, but the ethos was fundamentally the same. The next step was to carry out a closer deductive reading of the narratives identified, before analysing specific sections of texts with a critical close reading using deconstructive narrative analysis techniques.

My coding process was as follows:

1) I began with an inductive reading of texts, noting key themes, patterns and narratives, both inter and intra-textually. For example, the hyper-visibility of the adoptee.

2) Using the notes from above, I created tentative categories for coding: for instance, "hyper-visibility"; "colour-blind racism". These categories were flexible and open to expansion, splitting and alteration throughout the analysing process, with new categories potentially emerging at any time.
3) Deductive reading. Having established categories, the next reading was a closer, more deductive one, using colour-coding to identify narratives within the categories, and cross-referencing texts.
4) I stopped and reviewed coding and categories at regular intervals.
5) I ensured categories included elements that contradict my theories too.
6) Once coding was complete, I examined the relevant narratives in depth, drawing upon my theoretical framework and deconstructive narrative analysis techniques.

Close Reading Using Deconstructive Narrative Analysis

I use deconstructive narrative analysis techniques to guide my reading and explore meanings and power relations beneath narratives, while interrogating the narratives with my theoretical frameworks and research questions. Deconstructive narrative analysis (DNA) seeks to disrupt accepted narratives, and to read "against the grain" and below the surface, offering an approach to reading that accepts the premise that "the text never exactly means what it says or says what it means" (Norris 1988, 7). Such a technique of analysis unearths hidden meanings and structures behind and beyond texts, and has a focus on uncovering and analysing power imbalances and their underlying mechanisms. It can also be effective in linking narratives presented as individual stories to wider structural societal narratives and discourses, which is my aim here.

Judith Martin employs DNA in her study of a speech made at a business meeting, and uses it to critically examine gender conflicts in the workplace, and also as a means of demonstrating how DNA might be employed by researchers in her field of Organizational Studies. She describes the approach thus:

> In a text, dominant ideologies suppress conflict by eliding conflicts of interest, denying the existence of points of view that could be disruptive of existing power relationships, and creating myths of harmony, unity, and caring that conceal the opposite. Deconstruction peels away the layers of ideological obscuration, exposing the conflict that has been suppressed; the devalued "other" is made visible. (Martin 1990, 340)

The idea of peeling away layers to expose concealed "truths" very much captures the ethos of my approach to my research, as I seek to find "forgotten" histories behind myths. Whilst stressing that there is no "correct", or set way of carrying out a deconstructive analysis of a text, Czarniawska presents a list of analytic strategies, based on those employed by Martin (1990), which I adapted to guide my analytical process.

1) Dismantling a dichotomy, exposing it as a false distinction
2) Examining silences – what is not said
3) Examining disruptions and contradictions
4) Focusing on the element that is most peculiar in the text – to find the limits of what is conceivable or permissible
5) Interpreting metaphors
6) Analysing double entendres
7) Reconstructing text to identify group specific bias, by substituting main elements (Czarniawska 2004, 97 [adapted from Martin 1990, 335])

I used this list, with considerable flexibility, to guide my analysis of narratives. Below I will elaborate on how the suggested strategies on the list connect to my analysis, and provide examples for each point.

1) *Dismantling a dichotomy, exposing it as a false distinction*
I looked to identify and complicate polar dichotomies and their role in power struggles in my readings. For instance, the idea of the "good (polite/grateful) adoptee" and "bad (angry/ungrateful/bitter) adoptee": it is apparent across the literature that some adoptees are depicted as good, making claims to have never experienced racism, being grateful, being "100% Swedish", and declaring that "my [Swedish] parents are my only parents", whereas those who reflect on experiences and traumas of loss and racism, or who are critical of the adoption industry, tend to be treated as "bitter" (see Chapter Eight).

2) *Examining silences – what is not said, and who is silent/silenced*
I looked for not just who got to speak, and who got to produce adoption knowledge, but also who did not. I questioned who was silenced and who was invisible altogether in the narratives. For example, the voices of first families are generally invisible. In narratives of Swedishness, where a distinction is made between "Swedes", "immigrants" and "adoptees", Sami, the Indigenous people of Northern Sweden, are rendered invisible (See Chapter Eight). I also, in accordance with Barthes' (1993) concept of ex-nomination, investigated the silences in histories and violences behind myths: for example, sexualised racism and eugenics.

3) *Examining disruptions and contradictions*
To explore what is hidden behind myths, and the concealed meanings in narratives, I examined contradictions and disruptions. For example, the "post-race" myth is challenged by declarations of not seeing race or visible difference, but then still describing race in detail.

An example of this can be found in Mary Juusela's (2010) interviews with adoptive families. The Lidbeck family "don't see race" and explained that they initially turned

down a white child for adoption as there is no trouble finding families for "light skinned" children (2010, 30). In the interview, the mother says to her non-adopted daughter, Sara, "when Petra [transracial adoptee daughter] came you told everyone she was your sister. You never said she was brown, but that she had freckles" (2010, 31). Then in the very next utterance she describes a game that she and Sara used to play: "Petra crept under my t-shirt – and then she was born! Sara stood by and shouted, "Look a little brown arm! There must be a little brown girl!" (2010, 32)[27]

Other common contradictions include the substitution of race words for food words (See Chapter Seven).

4) *Focusing on the element that is most peculiar in the text – to find the limits of what is conceivable or permissible*

This can sometimes give the impression that I am seeking the most extreme, shocking examples. However, it has an important function of showing what is permitted within the (adoption) discourse, and what the limits of the discourse are. For instance, in Weigl (1997, 59), the author describes her desire to rip a child out of a mother's womb. While this may capture the desperate desire to become a mother, and reflect the trauma of infertility, it also indicates what is desirable, permissible and possible for a white Swede to do with a foreign woman of colour's body within the discourse (Czarniawska 2004, 97; Hage 2017).

5) *Interpreting metaphors*

This is not so much about the accuracy of metaphor, more about what it tells us about the person making the statement and the meanings concealed behind it. For instance, Chapter Seven explores the use of food as metaphors of racial desire ("almond eyes", "chocolate skin" etc.). I discuss what these metaphors indicate in terms of what is desirable, permissible and possible to do with the body being described (Hage 2017).

6) *Analysing double entendres*

I examined sexual undertones, sexual jokes and references, which helped to uncover hidden desires beneath the surface of narratives, but also gave indications of what was permissible in terms of discussing bodies of colour within the adoption discourse. For instance, in Weigl (1997), where the prospective adopter studies images of "dark" children in an adoption magazine, saying, "expectation warms my stomach", before her fantasy is interrupted by her husband shouting, "child porn!" (58); or in the same text, poring over adoptable boys and wondering, about a Vietnamese boy, "boys who will only grow to 1.6 metres tall […] "would they have a chance with a Swedish girl?" (58) (See chapter 7 for an analysis of Weigl's text).

27 See Wyver (2017) for a full discussion of hyper-racialization/colour-blindness in adoption narratives.

7) *Reconstructing text to identify group specific bias, by substituting main elements*
This involved re-imagining the narrative with roles inverted reversed to expose unequal power relationships. That could be a matter of swapping adoptee and adopter voices, or white and non-white voices. While it may seem almost facetious at first, the substitution of roles demonstrates the extremity and absurdity of the power inequalities. For example, a white non-adopted Swede being stopped in the street by an adoptee of colour and interrogated about where they *really* come from, may seem humorous, but unveils the racial inequities at play in the classic version of that scenario (see, for example, Lundberg 2013; Sjöblom 2019; Hübinette & Tigervall 2007).[28]

A major question in narrative analysis relates to agency; the extent to which individuals can control the production of their own narratives (Czarniawska 2004, 5). My own position on this is that published narratives are products of societal power mechanisms, and should be not be read as free accounts of individuals' experiences. In other words, they should be understood in structural terms, as being embedded in broader discourses and power mechanisms (Cawayu & De Graeve 2020, 5). I concur with Atamhi Cawayu and Katrien De Graeve's (2020, 5) approach to analysing adoptee narratives as "discursive strategies which might have both restraining and potentially empowering and transformative effects" rather than interpreting them as "essential truths". It is important to make it absolutely clear here that my interest is not in the surface "truth" of texts, nor in guessing the intention of the author. This point is also stressed by Martin: "Deconstruction cannot and does not claim to reveal the truth about what the author of a text intended to communicate" (1990, 342).

Gathering Data
To enable me to have a broad overview of the Swedish adoption discourse, and to ensure reliable access to this discourse through the readings of individual narratives, I maintain an on-going project of building an archive of Swedish adoption related material. Tim Rapley (2007) recommends archiving as an important first step towards analysing discourses, describing an archive simply as "a diverse collection of materials that enable you to engage with and think about the specific research problems or questions" (2007, 22).

The study of adoption in Sweden is something of a long term, on-going project for me, building on my Bachelors and Masters theses work (Wyver 2013; 2016). I used a research trip to Stockholm in 2017 to work in the national library archives, and to collect Swedish adoption publications, especially adopter and adoptee autobiographies. Family connections to Sweden and adoption, along with my involvement with adoptee rights groups, help me to maintain a constant connection with trends and developments in discourses of Swedish whiteness and adoption.

28 And every other transracial adoptee narrative ever written.

Having such a collection helps me to place source texts within a broader discursive context, and identify which texts are particularly significant and influential. It also enables me to have an overview of the areas/genres where adoption knowledge is produced and communicated, and by whom. I identified six key areas of adoption knowledge production, which I describe below to give an overview:

Children's books. This includes picture books relating to adoption and also books where the transracially adopted body is used to teach children about diversity. Often such books are used as a subtle pedagogical tool to teach Swedish children about national projects (see, for example, Wirsén 2011).

Adult Adoptee and Adopter Autobiography/biography. There are several of these published through major publishers (for example: Lundberg 2013; Trotzig 1996) and also a surprisingly large number of self-published works, particularly by adopters. For the purposes of this research, I limit myself to mainstream publications, work published by established publishing houses (rather than self-published) in the understanding that such texts are likely to be more influential.

Expert texts. As I progressed with my literature review, and from my previous explorations in the area, it became clear who speaks and who is spoken to. Traditionally adoption knowledge has been produced by, and for, adoptive parents. As such it tends to serve a secondary purpose of justifying adoption desire. This is both true of academic publications and expert guides to adoption. There are also significant limits to what can be said. Even now, on the occasions when adoption research is produced by adoptees, it tends to cater for adoptive parents' fragility. By that I mean that critique of the adoption industry, adoption desire and the premise of adoption itself is absent. Texts tend to be written as if they expect a white, non-adopted readership. This comes through disclaimers or adoptee's declarations of their love for their adoptive parents (this is entirely understandable). There is also a propensity to uncritically build on pro-adoption literature, further legitimising problematic research. There are also multiple guides for (and generally by) adoptive parents (See, for example, Cruetzer 2002).

Entertainment. This area includes Swedish "yellow humour" and "yellow face" performances, which continue to be part of mainstream entertainment and comedy. This is significant as East Asian bodies are associated with adoption in Sweden, and the imagery of white Swedes dressing up as Asians is one of the main (only) forms of Asian representation in mainstream Swedish entertainment (Hübinette & Räterlinck 2014; Hübinette & Sjöblom 2015) Another important form of entertainment to consider here is the TV show *Spårlöst* [Without a Trace]. This popular prime-time TV show is arguably one of the biggest producers of knowledge about adult adoptees among the

non-adopted populace. The basic premise is that a film crew helps an adoptee search for their roots, taking the adoptee on a journey to their country of birth, and after a lot dramatic tension, the viewers usually get to watch a tearful reunion.

Adverts and promotional imagery. This includes the use of the transracial adoptee body and adoption itself to promote products. For instance – the IKEA advert, and SD promotional film that I analyse in Chapter Six.

Adoption agencies and lobby groups. This includes agencies' websites, promotional materials and members' magazines. There is a clear link between adoption agencies, especially Adoptionscentrum, and other areas of knowledge production, with agencies funding research, working in collaboration with authors or directly employing academic researchers (see, for example, mfof.se; adoptionscentrum.se).

Many texts are multi-purpose, and fall within more than one of the above categories. Often they may mix expert text with first-person narrative, are supported by adoption agencies, and are forms of entertainment.

Selecting Sources for Analysis

While I explain the choices of specific texts for analysis in the analysis and discussion chapters (chapters Six, Seven and Eight), the general premise for my choices was that the titles were mainstream, popular and published by major publishing houses. They were famous and reviewed or recommended, for instance on reading lists for adoptive parents (on adoption agency and advocacy sites, such as adoptionscentrum.se and mfof.se). They came up in searches for adoption books, they were cited, written about or discussed elsewhere (indicating that they had some influence in shaping adoption knowledge). I endeavoured to find texts that were contemporary and classic, and were written by adoptees or adopters, and where appropriate gave some indication of the representation of adoptee – and adopter – bodies. Texts also needed to be accessible, available in public or university libraries or online. They should have an interest for a wider national audience beyond adopters and adoptees, and give me a way into the wider adoption discourse.

Scope and Limitations

Studying Swedish adoption can feel like opening a can of worms, unleashing thousands of fascinating and vital topics, entangled and wriggling away in multiple directions of race, ethnicity, sexuality, corruption, colonialism and gender. In this project, perhaps one of the hardest tasks for me was deciding what to leave out (a potentially fraught exercise given my interest in silences). My study does not claim to offer an exhaustive analysis of Swedish adoption texts, but hones in on a small part of the adoption discourse, with the aim of accessing and illuminating wider discursive issues through this.

I do not claim to explain the individual desires of adopters, or to second-guess intentions of the authors and their informants that I encounter. Indeed, my approach is to move away from the individual desiring subject, and to endeavour to approach the study of adoption desire at the macro level.

I do not claim to present a single universal truth, and am aware of the possibility of multiple different readings of my source texts, and multiple "truths" that could be gleaned from them for varying political purposes. However, I do strongly believe in the importance of offering original, critical readings that go against the grain of the pro-adoption discourse.

Finally, to reiterate my aim here, I seek to investigate, understand and communicate the problems of Swedish adoption desire, through analysing texts relating to adoption. I seek to place adoption in a context of colonial, racist and eugenicist desiring projects that have shaped the Swedish nation; and I seek to offer a counter narrative that challenges the perception of adoption as a practice above critique, that is part of a good, anti-racist nation. In sum, in a small way, I am challenging the notion of "Swedish goodness" itself.

The Challenge of Doing Critical Adoption Research: Navigating White Fragility

It is January 2017, and I am a year into this project. I am in a university in the south of Sweden, presenting my PhD work-in-progress at a seminar organised by a department that is renowned for its research in migration, integration and ethnic relations. There are 19 people in the audience, about 14 of whom are scholars in the department, the rest are members of the public. Including myself, 16 of us are white Swedes, two of us are white Europeans, and two are Swedish Korean adoptees.

Only too aware of the sensitivities towards critical adoption research, I carefully presented a structural critique of adoption desire, and its place in shaping Swedish whiteness and racist systems, to a room of tutting, sighing and shaking heads. As soon as I'd finished speaking the room erupted, beginning with one white Swedish scholar shouting at me – "Hey! I know many adoptive parents who are just really good people who really, *really* wanted a child – this is nothing to do with desire!"

Others joined in, in a bombardment of anger:

> This stuff [racism] simply *does not happen* in Sweden!
>
> You are describing the situation of the 1970s! Look around you – today's Sweden is full of coloured people! It is not true to say adoptees grow up in racial isolation!

The chair, in an attempt to diffuse the chaos, turned to mocking humour:

> I call my children 'food analogies' – and probably racist ones! [laughter] it is a private matter, not about 'racial desires' [more laughter].

The adoptees were silent, looking crushed. As for me, I would like to say that I responded with intelligent comebacks, standing my ground, refusing to justify pro-adoption racism and the structures of white supremacy that it perpetuates and sustains. But I didn't. I was totally taken aback, hurt, ashamed. I sank into despair after that, emerging only thanks to the kind words of adoption scholars in Denmark and Sweden who I had shared the story with: "welcome to the club".

I had been warned about the intense emotional reactions critical adoption research can invoke, but somehow had thought my non-adoptedness, my whiteness, my non-Swedishness – and above all, my careful attempts at focusing on the *structural* rather than individual, personal issues would give me a free pass.

As I bring my project to a close now, I realise that this was the turning point for me in many ways, in that it has kept me going, and assured me of the importance of this research. In a country where adoption is so intertwined with the national self-image, where fantasies of the good Swedish nation are lived out through images of bodies of colour raised by white Swedes, the serious criticism of international adoption remains an absolute taboo. My physical and emotional distance, and yet my personal connection to Swedish adoption, make me feel it is my duty to take on this research.

After recovering from the seminar, my project took on a new urgency. It developed from being a slightly abstract Deleuzean intellectual rumination on desiring machines and adopted bodies, to being driven by a simple mission: How can I best describe and understand the problem? How can I best communicate this understanding? How can I use my writing and research skills to make a critical analysis of the Swedish adoption phenomenon that can be useful and accessible to adoptee rights activists and scholars alike?

Additionally, it led me to a deeper reflection of the destructive powers of the pro-adoption discourse and white fragility. It led me to think further on how these influences impact adoption research and what I, as a non-adopted white researcher, can do to navigate these to produce meaningful research.

Adoption research is produced within a pro-adoption discourse, internationally as well as in Sweden, and the sensitivity to anything that resembles adoption critique severely restricts meaningful research, and decisions in presenting work and drawing conclusions is strongly influenced by a fear of hurting white adopters.

Robin Diangelo's concept of *white fragility* can go some way to understanding, and navigating, the anger and tears that confront adoption criticism. The concept begins from the premise that white people are, "socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority that we either are unaware of or can never admit to ourselves, we become highly fragile in our conversations about race" (2018, 2). Confronted with their own whiteness, or with challenging conversations regarding race and racism, invokes emotions including, "anger, fear, [and] guilt" and "behaviours such as augmentation,

silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation" (2018, 2). White fragility is not weakness, although it is triggered by anxieties and discomfort: rather, it comes from a position of entitlement and feelings of superiority. Its purpose is to prevent any challenge to racial hierarchies and to protect the white supremacist status quo (2018, 2).

Fragility to adoption critique, which I would include within the definition of white fragility, acts as pro-adoption racism: it actively seeks to prevent race talk, the problematisation of racist desires, globalised hierarchies of race, gender and class inequalities, under the guise of protecting the feelings of white adoptive parents. This has the effect of sustaining racist structures and inequalities, and defending the adoption industry.

Resistance to adoption critique is strong, and dangerous. It manifests itself through disclaimers in research,[29] attacks on critical adoptees, the individualisation of adoption, the shutting down of race talk and calls for a need for adoption research to be "nuanced": i.e. not critical, to avoid possibly upsetting white adopters (Hübinette 2011). Central to pro-adoption racism is a denial that racism exists, or that adoption is problematic.

I believe that critical adoption research is vital. If the buying, selling and transportation of human bodies, the forced separation of families of colour to fulfil parenthood and racist fantasies of white westerners cannot be criticised – even if it might upset someone who "just wants to be a parent" – then this is a serious issue, and indicates deep institutional failings in academia. The critical adoption researcher must find a way of navigating pro-adoption racism and white/adopter fragility in their methodology.

How this Reflects on Methodology and my Ethical Responsibilities as a Researcher

As a white, non-adopted researcher, I have an ethical responsibility to intervene in pro-adoption racism. I should also intervene when given a "free pass", as a good researcher (i.e. as a white researcher who is not an adopter, and who is not working within the industry). My presence in the field is still part of a global structure of white supremacy,[30] which I benefit from.

It is also important to acknowledge that, as a white non-adopted researcher, I work with minimal risk of harm. While I may face some uncomfortable moments, like my awkward seminar in Skåne, my relationship with my family is not threatened, and while

29 It is something of an in-joke among critical adoption researchers, that most research that is supposedly critical carries disclaimers in the text, often, when written by adoptees, relating to their love for their (adoptive) parents.

30 I use the term "white supremacy" to describe the structural status quo, rather than extremist ideology, as defined by Diangelo: "[T]he all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white and the practices based on this assumption. White supremacy in this context does not refer to individual white people and their individual intentions or actions but to an overarching political, economic, and social system of domination." (2018, 28)

some academic and employment doors may be closed to me, the potential impact on me is minimal compared to critical adoptee researchers and activists who risk everything (Myers 2014).

My ethical research responsibilities, my unique researcher position and my understanding of white fragility and my own role in sustaining structures of inequality, as well as my awareness of the sensitivity of adoption research, impacts the choice of methodology. Firstly, I aim to make my research non-intrusive and non-exploitative. I make an effort not to take the adoptee voice or exploit the adoptee experience. My research is on adoption discourse, not on individuals or their feelings. In my critical research, I am criticising adoption and the racist structures that it is part of – I am not questioning any individual's love for their family. I work with publications, that is secondary data, which would have been planned, drafted, edited, published (etc.), and I understand that such texts are not free individual accounts, but part of a broader acceptable narrative produced within the Swedish (pro) adoption discourse. As emotions run high for many people when adoption is criticised, I take extra care to ensure that my work is accurate, meticulous and sensitively presented. However, it would be a failure on my part as an anti-racist white researcher if I took this to mean that I should shape my work in a way that will be sure not to upset white adopters, or whites who are pro-adoption. My work is fundamentally against international adoption, and while I do my best to be aware of adoptee and first family issues, silences and suffering, I absolutely do not claim to speak for them.

A Note on Adoption Language

In line with a post-colonial approach, critical adoption scholars should be sensitive to the risk of perpetuating the strength of a dominant power by attempting to oppose it on its own terms (Moore-Gilbert 1997, 139). This should entail an effort to work toward a new adoption grammar, a new way of speaking about adoption that avoids perpetuating an oppressive pro-adoption discourse.[31]

As a small step towards this, where appropriate I have endeavoured to use "neutral adoption language", rather than "positive adoption language" (Myers 2014a). The everyday language of adoption has often been coined by actors within the adoption industry, and acts to dehumanise the victims of adoption, and simultaneously justify and normalise the practice.[32] For instance, the term "birth mother" is offensive to many mothers who have lost their children to the adoption industry, as is the fact that adoptive parents

31 It must, for instance, go well beyond the problematic concept of the "adoption triad"; an expression that should be abandoned altogether (as it gives the impression that there are three equally powered parties: adopter; adoptee; first mother, and ignores the role of adoption professionals, the state, capitalism, as well as families and communities targeted for adoption).

32 See Myers 2014a for a detailed discussion on this.

get to be described as just "parents". As a means of avoiding this, where possible I have used the terms "first mother" and "adoptive mother" , or the nationality, i.e. Korean mother/Swedish mother.

Summary

To sum up my methods, I use close reading techniques steered by deconstructive narrative analysis approaches in my interrogation of Swedish adoption texts. I also use simple qualitative coding to maintain the reliability and validity of my readings. To enable a broader understanding of the discourse, I maintain an archive of adoption related texts and images.

Aware of my position and responsibilities as a white non-adopted researcher, I take care to avoid pro-adoption language, and white fragility techniques such as avoiding race talk. I strive to approach the critical study of adoption at a level that goes beyond the individual.

In the proceeding chapters, I discuss the role of the transracial body in shaping the good Swedish nation through an analysis of adverts by the Sweden Democrats and IKEA; explore desires for Other bodies in adopter and adoptee narratives, and examine desire for the adoptee as a "mimic" Swede, in a space between a white Swedish self and an Immigrant Other. Firstly though, I begin with an examination of Sweden's colonial and race history, discussing how this shaped eugenics policies and practices at home, and how it set the scene for the international adoption programme to flourish.

CHAPTER FIVE

Race, Colonialism and International Adoption in Sweden

> Swedes are a homogeneous population with no colonial past, which means very little perceived racism or experience with majority/minority clashes. All this made Sweden a well prepared soil for the idea of international adoption to grow. The Swedish adopters felt that it didn't matter that the child came from another country or that he had another genetic heritage, once he was adopted into his family and new society he would become fully "Andersson" and fully Swedish, integrated with the family as well as a citizen. (Andersson 1991, 2, in Yngvesson 2010, 44)

Introduction: Challenging the Myth of Swedish Exceptionalism

The opening quote, by former Adoptionscentrum president and self-proclaimed pioneer of Swedish international adoption, Gunilla Andersson, reflects a widespread belief, shared nationally and internationally, that Sweden is somehow excluded from European histories of colonialism and racism and is a neutral actor in global affairs. In this chapter I aim to present a counter narrative to this perception of Swedish exceptionalism. I argue that the soil in Sweden was suited for adoption to grow *because of* Sweden's racial and colonial history rather than due to a lack of it.

I begin by examining Sweden's role as a pioneer in race science, its colonial history and its part in the international slave trade. I move on to explore how this history shaped Sweden's eugenicist discourse, which developed from academic theory to practical social application through an extensive programme of sterilization of undesired sections of the population. The post WWII years led to an official rejection of race science, and the shaping of Sweden as a "post-race" nation, and the late 1960s saw the re-branding

of Sweden from the "whitest" nation to the "goodest" nation. I discuss this discursive shift, and how the development of the international adoption industry was integral to it. I then outline the history of international adoption in Sweden, before reflecting on how Sweden's racist, colonial and eugenics history – and the denial of its existence – enabled the nation to become the biggest demand country on the global market for foreign children of colour.

Denial of Colonial Past

At the core of Swedish exceptionalism is the belief that it is a country that is neutral in international affairs, and that it is a country without a colonial past (or present, for that matter) (McEachrane 2018; see also Engh 2009; Gondouin 2012; Pred 2000). Olof Palme, one of the most prominent advocates and symbols of Sweden as a globally good, progressive nation, invoked the idea of this exceptionalism in his Christmas speech as Prime Minister in 1965:

> Democracy is firmly rooted in this country. We respect the fundamental freedoms and rights. Murky racial theories have never found a foothold here. We like to see ourselves as open-minded and tolerant. (Palme 1968, cited in McEachrane 2018, 480)[33]

Even as recently as 2008, the Swedish government was stating that Sweden was well-suited to co-operate with Africa due to "Sweden's lack of a colonial past in Africa" (McEachrane 2018, 479).

Yet in his comprehensive study of the coloniality of race in Sweden, Micheal McEachrane argues that Sweden was very much involved in the European scramble for colonies from the early 17th century to the 1880s. In fact, rather than being exempt from colonialism and slavery, Sweden played an important role in these interlinked histories (2018, 475). Like Britain, Sweden had its own East Indian, African and West Indian companies. The Swedish African Company was particularly prosperous, and in 1650 established a significant trading colony in what is now Ghana. The colony was built by enslaved Africans, and the company traded in enslaved Africans as well as the products of slave labour: gold, ivory and sugar (McEachrane 2018, 476).

Sweden was a massive consumer of colonial goods: for centuries, plantation sugar and other products produced by enslaved or indentured labour were imported to Sweden (until as late as 1922). The impact that this demand had on sustaining slavery should not be underplayed: McEachrane calculates that in the mid-19th century, "Swedish sugar consumption alone required the labor of at least 15,000 enslaved adults annually" (2018, 476). Sweden was also a major colonial exporter, with the manufacture and distribu-

33 McEachrane's translation from the original Swedish.

tion of materials for the slave trade and colonial projects comprising a vital part of the national economy. For instance, iron, which was Sweden's largest export "played a major role in the transatlantic and colonial plantation economies to produce voyage iron, guns, shackles, chains, hoes, and machetes" (McEachrane 2018, 476).

Sweden's colony, the Caribbean island of St. Barthélemy, was held for almost a century. During that time, it was established as a free trade zone, and became an epicentre of the slave trade, with its port, Gustavia, recognised as one of the most prominent of all of the slave ports. The colony was later sold to France (McEachrane 2018, 476).

These external colonial developments were enacted simultaneously with the internal colonisation and oppression of the Sami people, indigenous to Northern Scandinavia. Fuelled by a growing belief that the White Swede was a member of a superior civilization, the colonisation of Sami, which had been on-going for centuries, accelerated in the 19th Century (Gaski 1993; Kvist 1992; Lundmark 2005). The White Swedish approach to Sami followed a path from a discourse of primitivism, whereby the Sami were infantilised, inferiorised and colonised, with the belief that they were a primitive savage race that would die out, to racialisation in the beginning of the 20th Century. This saw them re-imagined as a race with fixed, unchangeable physical and behavioural characteristics. Policies of assimilation were replaced with the attitude and approach of what McEachrane calls "Lapps will be Lapps", where effective segregation limited them to severely restricted opportunities and identities (McEachrane 2018, 477).

In sum, there is simply nothing to suggest that Sweden was an exception to European colonialism: it was integrally involved from the outset, and benefitted directly – and continues to benefit – from coloniality and slavery.

Race Biology, Race Hygiene and Eugenics

The Swedish academy were world leaders in the development of race science, and this stemmed from a long tradition of Swedish racial studies. The starting point for the idea of biological race is often attributed to Swedish botanist Linnaeus, who in his 1735 work made what is thought to be the first classification of humans into races (though he did not use the word "race"). Dividing homo sapiens into white, red, yellow and black geographically aligned sub-groups, each with its own set of psychological and behavioural traits, his work was the foundation for race science. In the same tradition, compatriot Anders Redzius established the cephalic index, the means of using skull measurements to establish race classifications, and in the 1870s the French minister to Sweden was race theorist Arthur de Gobineau, who developed the theory of an Aryan Master Race. During his years in Sweden, he described Swedes as being of "the pure race of the North – that of the masters", and for de Gobineau Swedes were "the purest branch of the Germanic race" (Biddiss 1970, 225; Broberg & Tydén 1996, 81-82).

Gunnar Broberg and Mattias Tydén, who have written extensively on Swedish eu-

genics, argue that the Swedish origins of race science meant that in the heyday of race biology the need for research into race and racial characteristics was regarded as being "a particularly Swedish concern" (1996, 81). This national tradition was particularly prevalent from the late 1880s, when race biology shaped the development of the study of genetic eugenics, which was led by plant scientists in Lund. Lund University became the home of the first genetic/eugenics association, The Mendel Society (formed in 1910). The question of combining race biology and eugenics was a central part of the society's programme (Broberg and Tydén 1996, 83)

"The Whitest of the White": Shared Belief in a Superior Swedish/Nordic Race and the Fear of Degeneration

At the turn of the 1900s, the idea of there being a separate and distinct Nordic race was upheld, and a growing interest in race and eugenics influenced anthropology, medicine, zoology, chemistry and criminology, with highly esteemed academics from across the disciplines involved in organisations like the Mendel Society. Despite this trans-disciplinary academic enthusiasm, it was not until after the First World War that public interest in the possibility of implementing eugenics on society blossomed (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 83). The strongly held belief that Swedes were of a superior race was coupled with a fear of degeneration. Mass emigration, the declining size of the middle classes and the increasing disgruntlement of the proletariat class led to publications such as Herman Lundborg's influential essay, "The Threat of Degeneration" (1922). The essay captured the tone of the spreading public interest in the possibility of a practical application of race biology and eugenics to preserve the purity of the white Swedish race. The essence of Lundborg's argument is illustrated in the following quote:

> The strong increase of the bottom strata forms the most dangerous part of the whole process, for it is their physical and spiritual deficiencies that are such distinct features in their make up"; [yet the] "racial power of our old farming stock is worth more than its weight in gold. (Lundborg [1922], cited in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 85)

In the immediate post First World War years, the effort to take race biology to the masses was redoubled. A popular touring exhibition was launched in 1918 displaying images of Swedish "racially pure subjects", and educating the public on race science, and a nationwide beauty contest "to bring to light and define a *Nordic-Germanic racial type*" was held in 1921 (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 86). [34] This era also saw race science move from the academic to the political sphere, with debate in parliament taking place over the estab-

34 Italics in original. Broberg and Tydén note that the winner was a "handsome bicycle repair-man from the West of Sweden" (1996, 86)

lishment of a state institute of race biology, charged with the responsibility of working to preserve Swedish racial stock (1996, 86). In the enthusiastic debates, the mood across parliament was typified by Social Democrat minister Arthur Enberg: "We are lucky to have a race which is as yet fairly unspoiled […] a race which is the bearer of very high and very good qualities" (quoted in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 87).

The decision was unanimous, and in 1922 the world's first state institute for race biology was created in Uppsala. With Herman Lundborg himself as director, the institute had an international impact from the outset, inspiring the establishment of Berlin's *Kaiser Wilhelm Institut für Rassenhygiene*. The first major project of the institute was to measure 100,000 Swedes. The resulting publication, "The Racial Character of the Swedish Nation" was published in 1926; it was printed in English for an international audience, and also as an illustrated popular version for the Swedish general public, as part of the institute's mission to study the Swedish race while promoting race biology and eugenics programmes to the nation. Lundborg then embarked on his next project: a complete inventory of the Sami, with the objective of investigating the merging of one race with another, and the effects of miscegenation (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 87).

Not only was the study of race hygiene endorsed at the higher levels of Swedish society (for example, the chairman of the Board of Directors of the institute was future prime minister Hjalmar Hammarskjöld), there were definite links to German Nazism, with leading German race ideologists presenting a series of public lectures organised by the institute (1996, 90).

The late 1920s saw the introduction of the concept of reshaping Sweden as *Folkhemmet*, "the People's Home" (which I discuss further in Chapter 6), which was built on solidarity between classes, and the nation imagined as a family home. It also saw the beginning of the peak years for eugenics, as the discourse shifted from racial hygiene to social hygiene, and the suggestion that the mentally ill and marginalized groups should be sterilized to ensure the genetic well-being of the nation by preventing them from reproducing (McEachrane 2018, 478). Yet race was still an important issue, and the sentiment of the Swedish/Nordic master race was evident in legislation like the Swedish Aliens Act of 1927, which declared that the purity of the Swedish race had, "a value which can hardly be exaggerated" (McEacrane 2018, 478). It can also be found in census classifications in the inter war period, where there was a distinction in the Swedish population between "ethnic Swedes" and "foreign races"; these races included Lapps (Sami), Finns, Gypsies and Jews (Rogers & Nelson 2003).

1935 saw Gunnar Dahlberg succeeding Herman Lundborg as director of the institute, which was renamed "The Swedish State Institute of Human Genetics and Race Biology". Lundborg's work took a turn to be more focused on anti-semitism, and he became an ardent supporter of Nazism (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 93). Dahlberg, on the other hand, was arguably more moderate in his racism; according to McEachrane he did

not believe in discrete racial types, but certainly did not doubt that Africans and white Europeans belonged in different races (McEachrane 2018, 478-9).

The history of race biology, the well-established institute and the public and political interest in eugenics, along with concerns about a "population crisis" and the ever growing fear of "inferior race groups" set the stage for Sweden's programme of eugenic population reforms, centred around a large scale sterilization programme. Broberg and Tydén describe this as "Welfare State Eugenics", a eugenics project that was supposedly for the good of the people, and an important tool in the building of the modern, progressive Swedish welfare state (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 124).

The welfare state eugenics programme was to combine sterilization with maternity leave, child allowance and similar benefits. It aimed to increase the wanted population, and decrease the unwanted. Indeed, Swedish eugenics has always carried the idea of balancing a negative eugenics with a positive one: for instance, anatomist Vilhelm Hultcrantz suggested in 1907 that due to nature's methods of "cruel but beneficial competition" becoming less effective, it was up to society itself to "put a stop to the generating of the unfit, the parasites of society" (quoted in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 83). Yet he also suggested that subsidies should be given to the *right* families to encourage them to have many children. As Broberg and Tydén put it, the approach of the Swedish model of eugenics was that "the law should be followed by the gospel" (1996, 83).

Welfare state eugenics was needed to build the "good Sweden" of the Folkhem project, which continues to be part of the Swedish national identity; race hygiene ideologies and their practical implications were seen as being required to "create a sound and healthy people" (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 136). The good, modern Sweden was built on beliefs in race biology and a superior Nordic race, and an extensive programme of sterilization of undesirable bodies. Despite the obvious links to Nazism, Swedish race science and eugenics was not confined to the domain of the far right: from the very beginning it was supported and steered by actors across the political spectrum: Social Democrats, Agrarians, Liberals. Good Sweden was built on racism and eugenic violence, by "good Swedes".

1930s – 1975 Eugenics in Practice

In the 1930s, racial hostility and pro-German sentiment was strong and widespread in Sweden. The main reason that Swedish Nazi parties did not gain a foothold in parliament was simply due to their factionalism (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 96). The belief in a pure but declining race persisted. In 1934 sociologists (and later Nobel Prize winners) Alva and Gunnar Myrdal published a book called, "Crisis in the Population Question", which introduced new discussions on the possible uses of eugenics (1996, 97). Soon afterwards, the first Swedish legislation on social sterilization, the 1935 Sterilization Act, was introduced. The act marked the beginning of a mass sterilization programme with

the explicit aim of cleansing the nation of undesirable bodies. Under the new laws, the main target group was what Broberg and Tydén call "the mentally retarded", who were sterilized on a large scale up until the 1950s. The act permitted sterilization without the patient's consent in cases of "mental illness, feeble-mindedness, or other mental defects" (1996, 102-3).

In 1936, the "Commission on Population", which included Gunnar Myrdal as a member, and Alva Myrdal as a consultant, discussed expanding the use of forced sterilization in the context of social reforms. The report produced by the commission reflected the commitment to social eugenics: "Today it is hardly denied by anyone that it is not only justified but also desirable to prevent the procreation of a sick or inferior offspring by means of sterilization" (SOU 1936, cited in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 106).

The report argued that sterilization was not just good for Swedish society, but also in the best interests of the individual being forcibly sterilized: "Sterilization of hereditary sick or inferior human beings is still a justified measure, beneficial to the individual as well as to society" (SOU 1936, cited in Broberg & Tydén 1966, 106). It also proposed broadening the target group, urging for the sterilization of "work-shy individuals, such as prostitutes, vagrants etc." as well as those people who were, "psychologically inferior, though not formally legally incompetent, with asocial disposition" (SOU 1936, cited in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 107).

Broberg and Tydén go to some lengths to distance the much-respected Myrdals from race thinking, race hygiene and "anything reminiscent of racism" (1996, 105). Yet the report led to the proposal of an updated act on sterilization, and it is clear from the parliamentary debate on this that eugenic sterilization and race hygiene were still tightly aligned in the political sphere. For example, Minister of Justice K.G Westman praised the proposed law as "an important step in the direction of a purification of the Swedish stock, freeing it from the transmission of genetic material which would produce, in future generations, such individuals as are undesirable among a sound and healthy people" (quoted in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 107).

Furthermore, Nils Wohlin of the agrarian party, *Bondeförbundet*, commended the law as a positive move towards "keeping the Swedish stock sound and vigorous for the future" (quoted in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 107). A number of parliamentarians pushed for harsher, more coercive legislation. There were a few lone voices that criticised the bill, but overall it was widely accepted. Broberg and Tydén note the Communist Party's Set Persson as one of the few dissenters: he argued that sterilization, "bear[s] an unpleasant resemblance to that improvement of the race which one seeks to achieve in some totalitarian countries by means of the scalpel" (quoted in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 107).

The result was the passing of the 1941 Sterilization Act. Further categories were added to those that could be sterilized without consent, including people with severe physical diseases, people with "an anti-social way of life", and women – "for medical reasons"

(Broberg & Tydén 1996, 108). Nearly 3000 people were sterilized under the first act (1935–1941), but the introduction of the new act saw numbers rise significantly, with a peak in in 1949, where 2351 sterilizations were reported in that year alone. From 1950 to 1970 between 1500 and 1700 sterilizations were carried out annually (1996, 108).[35]

Sweden's sterilization programme was undoubtedly aimed at the lower classes, and it was very much gendered. 90% of people sterilized between 1935 and 1975 were women. No *men* were sterilized "for medical reasons"; instead from the 1950s this aspect of the programme targeted women with large families and those living in "socially stressful situations", displaying "weakness" or being "exhausted" (1996, 111). Girls leaving special schools, hospitals and mental health institutions were also targeted, with some institutions including sterilization as a condition of discharge. As many as 26% of all girls leaving special schools were sterilized between 1937 and 1956 (1996, 117). The standard of what constituted deviance were clearly more rigid for women than for men, indicating a collective fear of female sexuality: Broberg and Tydén note the common use of "hyper sexuality" and "licentiousness" in official applications for sterilization (1996, 121). The sterilization programme was a means of regulation women's sexuality (1996, 121).

Critically, the sterilization programme was also raced. Arguably the group that sterilization was aimed at above all others, and had the most impact on, was the Tattare (Travellers). The Tattare were a racialized group, that is they were officially classified as a race or sub race, that lived on the fringes of agrarian society (Pred 2000, 112). Described as "dark" and "Southern", they were attributed set characteristics: immoral, idle, alcoholic and violent (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 125). Some race scholars, including Lundborg, saw them as being the result of a mix between Gypsies and Swedes. He described them as, "proletarians of a very complex heritage, with a bent for criminality" (1996, 125). Their irregular lives were at odds with the Swedish Welfare State, and the National Board of Social Welfare argued for regular sterilizations of Tattare as, "from a biological and social point of view they are a burden to Swedish society" (1940, cited in Broberg & Tydén 1996, 127). In 1942, the government initiated a nationwide inventory of Tattare and Gypsies, to aid the sterilization programme (Pred 2000, 116).

Statistics do not show how many Tattare were sterilized, but Broberg and Tydén cite many examples of Tattare "stock" or appearance being a factor in reasons for sterilization. For instance, in an application for the sterilization of a 16 year old girl in 1943, the justification read: "Typical *tattare* mentality: evasive, untruthful, and coward" (1996, 129).

35 These figures only represent the recorded operations carried out under the act. Prior to the 1941 act, only sterilizations performed without consent were recorded; Broberg and Tydén point out that sterilizations could always be carried out voluntarily (i.e. with consent from the patient) on medical grounds, or if there were "sound reasons of a eugenic, humanitarian or criminological nature" (1996, 108).

With post-World War II welfare reforms, the Tattare, as a concept, disappeared, incorporated into the welfare programme by no longer being recorded as a separate group. Broberg and Tydén argue that the Tattare example highlights the fallacy of race: they were an invented Other whose disappearance (presumably they were statistically merged into "Swedes" or "Gypsies" or "Roma") proves that they never really existed as a racial or ethnic group (1996, 130). The goodness of the new welfare state was demonstrated by its ability to gently absorb them into the nation, marking a clear turn from race thinking and eugenics. However, I would suggest that instead their disappearance could be seen as symbolic of a continuation of eugenicist race cleansing ideals: the good welfare state was more efficient in this regard than the sterilization programme, effectively writing the Tattare out of the nation, out of existence, and eliminating them from history.

The Post-WWII "Colour-Blind Turn": The Domestication of Swedish National Identity

In the immediate post war years, Sweden was involved in formulating the UNESCO Statement on Race (1950), in which the idea of race as a biological concept was dismissed. Both Gunnar Dahlberg, the president of the Institute of Race Biology, and Gunnar Myrdal – a staunch advocate of eugenic sterilization – worked on preparing the statement. This led to the official repudiation of the concept of race in Sweden, and in 1956, the institute was renamed again: it was now the Department of Medical Genetics (Broberg & Tydén 1996, 130-1)

From the late 1960s to the early 2000s, Sweden moved from being the world leader in race science and eugenics, and the "whitest of white" nations to being regarded domestically and internationally as a colour-blind, anti-racist, anti-colonial nation, where race no longer existed and where visible difference no longer held any meaning. This racial blindness was coupled with a wider image of egalitarianism across gender and race lines. This re-imagined post-racial Swedishness also positioned the country as the Third World's benefactor, and the one Western nation standing in solidarity with de-colonisation movements worldwide (Hübinette & Lundström 2014; McEachrane 2018).

The mid 1960s witnessed a dramatic transformation of Swedish domestic policies, along with the country establishing itself internationally as one of the most radical Western supporters of anti-apartheid and decolonization/independence movements and a proponent of social justice, anti-racism and gender equality. At the same time, Sweden began to construct an extensive welfare state and a Social Democratic political trend that dominated the country's politics until the mid-2000s. In an environment where radical social justice and human rights discourses stepped into the mainstream of politics, Sweden became an officially "colour-blind state" (McEachrane 2018; Osanami Törngren et al. 2018).

The powerful self-image of goodness that emerged from these radical re-configura-

tions papered over the fact that Sweden has simply never faced up to, or reckoned with, its racist and colonial history in any way (Hübinette 2013). A colonial country organised around race, *where the very concept of race and race hygiene originated*, and where an extensive programme to eliminate undesirable bodies from degenerating the Swedish "race" through forced sterilization became, almost overnight, the good anti-racist nation with no colonial past. This was despite the fact that the same actors that led, endorsed and supported the sterilization programme, and developed race theory, continued in their positions of knowledge creation. They were, however, now relabelled as *anti-racists*.

International adoption had the potential to bring the new Swedish identity of international solidarity, anti-racism and colour-blindness, and a safe version of "multiculturalism" into the home (Hübinette & Lundström 2014), with the adoptive family in turn reshaping the national body as a site of "national reproduction" (Dorrow 2006, 5). Symbolically, the body of the transracial adoptee, and importantly the white Swedes around it, would come to represent the new, globally good, Sweden.[36]

International Adoption in Sweden

The Swedish international adoption project began on an industrial scale in the late 1960s, with the foundation of Sweden's first and largest adoption agency, Adoptionscentrum (Yngvesson 2010, 26). According to Yngvesson, the emergence of the international adoption project stemmed from a combination of factors: an improved welfare state; changing attitudes towards marriage, co-habitation and single motherhood; and access to contraception and abortion. These factors impacted the supply of adoptable infants within Sweden and from the neighbouring Nordic countries by greatly reducing the number of "unwanted" babies. Indeed, domestic adoption placements fell from 1000 in 1965 to between 15 to 20 annually in the 1990s (Yngvesson 2010, 26).

Norwegian anthropologist Signe Howell echoes this understanding of the roots of international adoption, stating, "Due to a sharp decline in infants being made available for adoption locally, involuntarily childless couples in Western Europe and America have to look to the developing world" (2006, 26). While the decline in domestic adoptions and rise in international adoptions are visible in statistics, the direct correspondence between the two needs to be questioned and problematised, particularly with regards to the sudden switch from desire for likeness in adoption (the desire for a white Swedish child) to the desire for difference (a child of colour, most likely from Asia). While Howell's reasoning demonstrates the centrality of adopters (the "involuntarily childless couples"), and the emphasis on their needs rather than the child's, it fails to reflect on the whiteness of the adopter and the non-whiteness of the child, and the relevance of this.

The domestic adoptee and international (transracial) adoptee perform totally different

36 See Chapter Six.

symbolic roles, and produce different national identity narratives. Also to be considered are the financial transactions in international adoption, the emphasis on eradicating international adoptee backgrounds and the changing of adoptees' names (Gondouin 2012, 5). Additionally, Johanna Gondouin raises the issue of the Swedish model of family care whereby every length is taken to keep Swedish children with their parents, and the biological bond in Swedish families is treated as vital (2012, 5). Yet in international adoptions the biological bond is seen as "essentialist" and unimportant (2012, 5). So international adoption takes place in a discourse where placing a financial value on a foreign, non-white child, and permanently breaking the bond beteen that child and its parents is acceptable, but to separate a Swedish family (not to mention erasing the child's background) is unthinkable.

Judith Lind points out that the lack of domestic adoptions in Sweden means that adoption in Sweden is always associated with the adoption of foreign, non-white children by white families (Lind 2011, 116). This has consequences in terms of understanding adoptee identities, origins and the right to accessing information about familial background. The fact that almost all closed stranger adoptions since the late 1960s have been of foreign-born children means that the number of first parents in Sweden is very small. Lind notes that this creates issues with the rights of adoptees to know their parents, issues which are further exasperated by parental information being held by authorities in sending countries, who may go to great lengths to prevent this information being accessed (2011, 117). I would add that a further problem is that the lack of domestic adoptions also means an absolute lack of representation of first mothers, rendering the voice of women who have lost their children to adoption totally silenced and absent from debates on adoption ethics in Sweden.

A further consequence that Lind raises is that there are virtually no domestic *transracial* adoptions (Lind 2017, 117). I am slightly sceptic about the accuracy of this point, as the lack of ethnicity data in Sweden renders it impossible to ascertain the race of domestic adoptees on a quantitative level, and the domestic adoptees that appear in books of adoptee narratives which I analyse in this thesis are almost all technically transracial (see, for example, Juusela 2010). However, the actual numbers are certainly low, and this has meant that Sweden has never encountered the vigorous challenge to transracial adoption seen in the United States and the UK, where such adoptions have been considered an attack on black communities, causing harm to children who would be denied their black cultural heritage, and deprived of learning the survival skills needed to live as a non-white person in a racist society (Lind 2011, 117; see also Barholet 1991).

Prior to the establishment of the international adoption industry, there were a number of "international adoptions" that took place in Sweden. The first cases of legal international adoption in Sweden took place in the 1930s, when 500 Jewish refugee children were taken in by Swedish families. They were fostered, but later many of them were

formally adopted (Longfors 1996, cited in Hübinette 2003, 252). Then, during the 2nd World War (1939-1945), approximately 70,000 children were transported from Finland to Sweden. While their stay was meant to be a temporary evacuation, 10,000 remained permanently as foster children and some were adopted (Hübinette 2003, 252). Immediately after the war, 500 abandoned children in Germany were transported to Sweden for fostering and adoption. Some of them were Jewish survivors of concentration camps. Others were the offspring of German fathers and Norwegian mothers, bred through the Nazi's Lebensborn breeding programme, which sought to produce a master race through matching "racially pure parents" (Linder 1988, 133-141, Hübinette 2003, 252). While Sweden was certainly not unique in housing Jewish and other children fleeing war, arguably these adoptions are further indication of Sweden's pioneering role in adoption, and can even be said to be demonstrative of a society reforming around an image of transnational solidarity and goodness.

However, the concept of international adoption in Sweden as it is understood today, which Hübinette describes as, "the adoption of non-white children from the Third World countries to white adoptive parents in Western countries" (2003, 153), began a decade later, with Korea as the first supply country. The first legal adoption of a Korean child in Sweden took place in 1957 (2003, 253). By 2003 there were close to 9,000 Korean adoptees in Sweden, and adopted Koreans made up the largest East Asian population group in the country (Hübinette 2003, 254). Furthermore, with barely 1000 non-adopted Korean immigrants in the Scandinavian welfare states of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, Korean adoptees made up almost the entire Korean presence in Scandinavia (Hübinette 2003, 254).

Stages of International Adoption

I suggest that Sweden has gone through four stages of international adoption, where the discourse around adoption has changed.

1) Pre-1960s – The pioneers: Private adoptions by individual Swedes

2) Late 1960s to mid 1970s – Start of industrial scale adoption. Adoption is not just individual rescue, but also individual solidarity and a nationalistic quest to create a form of safe "multiculturalism" at home.

3) Late 1970s to Early 2000s – The peak years of the adoption project. Adoption as used as a "cure" for infertility, while rescue narratives still feature in the form of a win-win-win story: Parents who cannot have children get a child; a child without a family gets a family in Sweden; child is rescued from frightening Other world

4) 2005 onwards. Adoption as a rights issue: the right to be a parent. Decline in adoptions, more recently rise of surrogacy.

The Pioneers and "Naivists"

Yngvesson suggests that contemporary Swedish international adoption, which we should

remind ourselves in generally transracial, began with what she calls, "pioneer mothers", white Swedish women who travelled abroad to adopt children privately. Back in Sweden, the visibility of these children and transracial families led to growing curiosity and demand. The pioneers formed support groups for existing and prospective adopters, developing relationships with orphanages and childcare institutions overseas. These little groups eventually merged to become Adoptionscentrum (2010, 40-54).

While overt religious drives and imagined direct messages from God that are prevalent in narratives of the adoption movement in the USA (see, for example, Joyce 2013) are not so evident in Swedish adopter narratives, traces of Christian missions remain in descriptions of signs and images that inspired the pioneer adopters' fantasies. They tend to materialise in the shape of both sexualised racial fantasies of Other bodies, and fantasies of being a saviour. For example, when Yngvesson interviews Gunilla Andersson, such a key actor in the early years of Swedish international adoption, she is told that her desire to adopt a child from India stemmed from reading her mother's Sunday School magazines in the 1910-20s, and becoming fixated with a particular image:

> That picture was a picture of an angel holding the hand of a small child going over a small bridge over a cliff, and *this picture of children needing someone helping them not to fall down on the cliffs – this I kept in my mind*. When I grew up and read in the newspapers and when television came and showed pictures of children sitting in the orphanages of the world, I said to my husband-to-be that "when we marry, I'd like to adopt". (Andersson in Yngvesson 2010, 15)[37]

Margareta Blomqvist, another famous pioneer adopter, who adopted children from Korea and Ethiopia, was driven by a fixation with a Chinese girl she saw in a photography book given to her as a gift after her marriage: "There is a picture of a little Chinese girl with small braids which stuck straight out and who is trying to catch a soap bubble. I said, that one there, that child is the one we want" (Blomqvist, cited in Yngvesson 2010, 15)

A few years later, after giving birth to three children, the possibility of fulfilling her fantasy became real:

> [A]n article appeared in a women's magazine about an agreement between Sweden and Korea about adoptions… So we said, "Look, here's something concrete. There must be some special significance in that". And that's how I got involved in it all. (Blomqvist in Yngvesson 2000, 15)

The connection to colonial desires is not lost on Yngvesson, who suggests that like the colonial discourse that international adoption is part of, adoption produces a geopoliti-

37 Italics in original.

cal space of imagined geographies where "developed" nations are to intervene in "underdeveloped", and specific desires from infertile white couples for, "light-skinned infants, black skinned toddlers, 'cute little' yellow-skinned girls" can be acted out (2000, 17).

Andersson and Jacobsson suggest that international adoption was about a child's needs, which marked a major shift in Swedish adoption, as domestic adoptions had been about the needs of the parents.

> During the 1960s the borders opened up, and more and more Swedes began to travel abroad. These Swedes encountered many children without parents, homeless and abandoned, who needed families. (1981, 39)

Elsewhere, Andersson reiterates this point,

> The first generation of European intercountry adopters has been called the charitable or idealistic generation by many writers and researchers. This is also true of Swedes in that many of these parents did not adopt out of a desire for a child – but also to meet the obvious need of an abandoned child. (Quoted in Yngvesson 2000, 347)

Yet Andersson and Jacobsson go on to admit that by far the largest group of adopters have always been those who cannot have children of their own. Others have one or two "biological" children, but want to adopt rather than to bring another child into the world (1981, 39). I would suggest that this demonstrates a change in the adoption discourse to being a rescue mission rather than a change in adopters' reproductive needs, as the attention moved from desire for the white Swedish child to the foreign child of colour. In a way, this became the starting point for a "win-win" narrative, where someone who could not have children got to be a parent, and a child got to be rescued from the Third World.

Opening the Adoption Market

A deal in 1966 between the Swedish and South Korean governments was made for the transportation of a number of Korean "war orphans" for Swedish families. Korea rapidly became established as Sweden's main supply country, a position it maintains to this day, and for many Swedish people adoption is synonymous with Korean children. Despite Korea's global position as an economic power, children are still sent for adoption to Sweden. In 2016, 31 Korean children were adopted by Swedes (Adoptionscentrum.se 2017).

The development of adoption from individual, private missions to an industrial one-way movement of children was cemented in the early 1970s, with the first Swedish laws relating to international adoption enacted in 1971. In 1974, NIA, the first Swedish governmental authority for intercountry adoptions, was established, to mediate with adoption agencies and regulate adoption (Lind 2011, 116). What had begun as a few

wealthy individual women enacting their rescue fantasies embedded in colonial and racist discourses, had now become an official, legal and efficient system, endorsed and controlled on a national, state level.

In the 1970s, Adoptionscentrum started running courses for adopters, along with a steady stream of publications, with members and affiliates going on to become prominent researchers. The adoption agency, founded and driven by adoptive parents, became the main source of knowledge production on adoption in Sweden. This meant that the desires of the pioneer adopters and the worldview they shaped, and were shaped by, became legitimised by the production of knowledge around them, and the conventions and guidelines stemming from this knowledge (Yngvesson 2000, 17).

The Peak Years

Adoption peaked in the late 1970s to late 1980s. 1,031 non-Nordic adoptions were recorded in 1969, increasing to 1,791 in 1976 and 1,864 in 1977. The 1980s saw an average of 1,579 children a year transported to Sweden for adoption (adoptionscentrum.se). The fact that Sweden's peak years came decades before other major demand countries, such as the USA whose peak year was 2004, is further indication of the pioneering nature of Swedish adoption.

Steady Decline

From the late 1980s, the numbers of adoptions to Sweden began to steadily decline, falling from 1789 per year in 1981, to 965 in 1991. Lind explains this in demand-side terms: it is due to easier access to better fertility treatments and assisted reproduction in Sweden (2011, 116). However, this would imply that adoption is only about infertility. In an industry where demand has always exceeded supply, understanding the reasons for the fall in adoptions also entails considering changes in the supply of children. Lind says that the conditions for adoption became more difficult in 2000, with up to two year waiting times for children from many countries (2011, 116). This would suggest that the desire to adopt did not necessarily diminish. With adoption being a boom and bust industry, with different countries suddenly blossoming as major sending countries then suddenly shutting down for foreign adoptions after corruption scandals, and resistance to adoption increasing in many countries, sending countries began to introduce stricter legislation and criteria (Joyce 2013). For instance, in most cases adopters are now expected to visit the sending country, sometimes more than once, and transport the adoptee to Sweden themselves. In the peak years of adoption in the late 1970s, it was common for children to just be picked up from an airport in Sweden. While I am confident that other means of fulfilling parenthood would have made a difference to adoption demand, the fact that adoption was increasingly a very lengthy process with a greater degree of commitment in terms of time, travel and expense for the adopters would likely have contributed too. It is important to stress that the declining numbers do not reflect

a change in attitude towards adoption at all. This is indicated in positive representations of adoption, and recent legislation to encourage international adoption (SVT 2017).

From a Goodness Discourse to a Rights Discourse

Anna von Melen describes Swedish international adoption as stemming from a grassroots, folk movement (1998, 185), and this certainly corresponds with the descriptions that Andersson and Jacobsson (1981) and Yngvesson (2010) present in their histories of Adoptionscentrum and the early years of the adoption industry. Von Melen suggests that the enthusiasm for adoption stemmed from a desire to help the world's abandoned children have better lives, and was driven by ideology rather than childlessness. It perfectly captured the mood of the time, when many Swedes wanted to "do something" to help in the world, a feeling of duty that stemmed from Sweden being a country "without war and colonialism" (1998, 185)

Von Melen sees the peak years of the 1970s as being driven by a longing for children, a longing which replaced the rescue discourse (1998, 185). If the pioneering years were most focused on goodness, and the peak years on infertility, then the modern era of adoption is characterised by a rights discourse: the right for everyone to be parents. In fact, many regard adoption as an LGBTQ+ issue, to such an extent that adoptee rights activists have found themselves accused of homophobia for criticising adoption Gondouin (2012), for example, notes that the discussion around adoption that arose in 2003 when Sweden legalised gay adoptions was restricted by fears of being accused of homophobia. However, despite the perception of international adoption as a LGBTQ+ rights question, almost all sending countries forbid same sex adoptions, so actual rates of legal gay adoptions are miniscule. While Sweden legalised gay adoptions in 2003, the only two sending countries that permit international adoptions to gay couples at present are South Africa and Colombia. It was not until 2017, a decade and a half after legalising gay adoptions, that Adoptionscentrum reported that they had finalised their first adoption to a same sex couple, with two white Swedish men adopting a child from Colombia (SVT 2017)

By 2008, there were 48,887 officially recorded non-Nordic international adoptees in Sweden, with adoptions from Asia dwarfing those from other continents: between 1969 and 2008 there were 29,329 adoptions from Asian countries, compared to 2,379 from Africa, and 10,645 from North and South America (Yngvesson 2010, 182).

In 2008 793 non-Nordic children were adopted to Sweden (Yngvesson 2010, 182), but the last few years have seen numbers drop to below 500 a year (Adoptionscentrum.se 2017). The most recent figures show that 2019 saw a total 170 adoptions through Sweden's three remaining adoption agencies, down from 2018's total of 190. Of these adoptions, 42 were from Taiwan, 24 from South Africa, 18 from Hungary, 16 from Colombia, 15 from South Korea and 14 from India (Mfof.se 2020).

Present situation

While numbers of children arriving from abroad have steadily declined over the last decade, both the desire to adopt and the positive view of international adoption remains strong, exemplified by the government introducing a 75,000 SEK [about 11,800 NZD] grant to parents adopting internationally in the 2016 Autumn budget (SVT 2016).

The persistent presence of adoptee led resistance may be absent from mainstream adoption reporting, but it is a major challenge to the adoption industry: it has led to reshaping of policies globally. While adoptee activism can be a lonely and dangerous pursuit in Sweden, through literature and art, blogging and performance, adoptees continue to strongly present a counter narrative to myths of adoption goodness. To name but a few, organisations such as SKAN "Swedish Korean Adoptee Network" help adoptees negotiate root searching, social media influencers such as "Stulen identitiet" not only produce commentary relating to adoption, adoption racism and corruption, but also organise meetings of critical adoptees, and a conference.

Another challenge that has disturbed the adoption industry is the rise of DNA testing services, such as 23 and Me, which has seen a shift in thinking towards the importance of biological ties, and has enabled adoptees to bypass untruths written in adoption papers and invented origin stories, to find relatives and ethnic origins. A less positive challenge comes, sadly, from an industry that is also based on the exploitation of women –usually poorer women of colour's bodies: the surrogacy industry. In 2019, for the first time, the number of children trafficked through surrogacy was higher than the number of children trafficked for adoption (Dagens nyheter 2020).

Colonial Amnesia and Swedish Exceptionalism

Gondouin (2012) in her discussions of surrogacy, adoption and Swedish exceptionalism, re-iterates the centrality of "anti-racism" to the Swedish self-image (2012, 3). She argues that this is connected to Sweden's belief in the nation's exceptionalism (outside colonialism, race etc., as discussed above). She connects exceptionalism to cultural geographer Katarina Schough's work on the notion of Sweden and "hyperborea" (2008, cited in Gondouin 2012, 3). Hyperborea is "a Nordic version of eurocentrism, designating an idea of Sweden and the Nordic as morally and culturally superior and as a peaceful disseminator of culture" (Gondouin 2012, 3). This is how Swedes believe they relate to colonialism, more of a "participating observer" than a coloniser, that are "impartial explorer[s] in the name of science and culture."[38]

38 I was once told by students in an English language class I was teaching, who were executives in a bank in Helsingborg, in all sincerity that the reason that the Swedish language didn't differentiate between "to live somewhere" and "to stay somewhere" (i.e. "We lived in a hotel in Barcelona for a week") was because, "when a Swede goes abroad, they really do *live* there. They get to know the culture. When an English person goes abroad they just visit, pass through and don't see the culture"

This idea of cultural superiority exonerates the Swede from any responsibility for colonialism. Besides this, the Swede was imagined as "the whitest of the white", and thus above the "racist rating" of colonial hierarchies. The combination of physical and cultural superiority place the hyperborean Swede in an untouchable position: while a (white) participant in the colonial project the Swede is clearly marked as superior to colonised people, but more importantly the Swede is *morally superior* to colonisers, and even in a position to criticise the colonial project without being seen – by themselves or others – to be complicit in it (Schough 2008; Gondouin 2012, 3).

Gondouin makes the important connection between this colonial exceptionalism, modern Swedish whiteness, and international adoption. The belief that Sweden's role in international adoption is outside colonial structures is predominant, as is the genuine belief that Sweden is outside racism. This exceptionalism enables the belief that adoption is right – despite corruption, child trafficking and coercive practices (Gondouin 2012, 10; Smolin 2010). This exceptionalism is also visible in the trope of the "naive Swede" – that is the Swede as an essentially good, well-meaning person, who, when caught up in some sort of international diplomatic complication – or found to have trafficked children – will have done so with good intentions. The naïve and well-intentioned Swede can be excused from any part in structural racism, which serves an additional purpose of sustaining racist structures.

Summary and Concluding Reflections

Sweden has a notable, indeed pioneering, history of race biology and eugenics, a history that entailed a belief in the white Swedish "race" as superior and pure. From being a world leader in race biology, Sweden implemented the most extensive sterilization programme the world has ever seen (Gondouin 2012) on its population. While there is widespread belief in Swedish exceptionalism, Sweden was very much part of Europe's history of colonialism, slavery and racism.

In the post WWII years, Sweden began to officially distance itself from race science, and from the 1960s has become seen, both nationally and internationally, as a globally good nation. The Swedish international adoption programme was symbolically key to this reimagining, bringing national projects of anti-racism, colour-blindness and solidarity into the domestic sphere. Adoption is also important for the myth of Swedish goodness. The adoptee body came to represent the reformed, good Sweden, but the history of violence behind the imagery of the adoptee is forgotten. The adoptee does not just conceal and carry the history of Swedish colonialism, race and eugenics, but also conceals the violence at the "supply end" of the industry.

My argument is that the colour-blind turn was not a dramatic change in Swedishness, but a steering of racist desires into new shapes. The goodness of the Swede was already reflected in race biology discourses, and the purity and goodness of the *Swedish race*

became reframed as the purity and goodness of the *Swedish nation*. In this reimagining of goodness, the rescued adoptee body became a symbol of a new, non-racist Sweden, where race was no longer relevant. Yet, as the ensuing chapters will explore, this body also carries the secrets of Sweden's racist history, and forever threatens to reveal the fallacy of Swedish goodness, the continuum of race thinking and racism, and the fact that the desire for the adoptee body is not a deviant challenge to the status quo of racism and white supremacy, but very much a product and a sustaining feature of them. The fact that the adoption is above criticism only serves to maintain these structures in Sweden and globally.

CHAPTER SIX

From Flat-Packed Furniture to Fascism: The Role of the Transracial Adoptee in Fantasies of Swedish Goodness

Introduction

The body of the international transracial adoptee has a significant role in sustaining myths of Swedish exceptionalism and globalised goodness. The body signifies an imagined golden era of Swedish goodness, and when bodies of colour could be domesticated in Swedish society on white Swedish terms (Hage 2017). The adoptee body serves to dehistoricise and depoliticise Swedish goodness, by appearing detached from the histories of colonialism, racism and eugenics that good Sweden, and the adoption project, are built on (Barthes 1993). With a rise in the far right, a decline in the dominance of social democracy, and feelings of the utopian good Sweden being something in the past, the adoptee body takes on further relevence in an era of melancholia (Hübinette & Lundström 2014): it unites an increasingly divided nation of white Swedes by connecting them to the lost and longed for past.

In this chapter I reflect on the enduring desire for, and justification of, international adoption in Sweden, and I will also examine the role of the transracial adoptee body in building national myths of Swedishness. Discussing the national fantasy of Swedish goodness, I analyse the use of the international transracial adoptees in adverts for two seemingly opposing Swedish institutions: flat-packed furniture giants IKEA and the Sweden Democrats (SD), a far-right populist party. I explore similarities in the exploitation of the adoptee body, and discuss how this body is used to connect both IKEA and SD to the Swedish nation and Swedish goodness.

I begin by locating adoption's historical place in myths of Swedish goodness, before turning to Ghassan Hage's (2000) work on fantasies of White governance of national space to build a theoretical framework to analyse IKEA's 2017 TV commercial *Coming Home* and SD's 2014 election campaign film, *Låt er inte tystas* ["Don't let yourselves be silenced"], which I compare with their 2010 campaign film.

Adoption and the rise and fall of Swedish goodness

Along with the USA, Sweden is recognised as being a pioneer in the establishment of the global multi-million dollar trade in children that has seen around half a million children transported from countries associated with "the global south" to families in the West. In Sweden, adoption is mainstream, high profile, and political: leaders of two of the country's right-wing political parties are adoptive fathers of East Asian children; indeed, Ulf Kristersson, leader of main opposition party Moderaterna (the Moderates/Conservatives), is a former president of Adoptionscentrum, which gives an indication of the strength of the adoption lobby. With adoptive parents highly visible in academia, media and entertainment, and an adoption programme that has seen annual adoption to live birth ratios as high as 17.4 per 1000 (in 1978) (Yngvesson 2012, 332), it is likely that most Swedes know somebody who is adopted or who has adopted.

Numbers of adoptions to Sweden have fallen over recent years, in line with global trends: an average of 1,579 transnational adoptions a year between 1980 and 1989, compared to 800 in 2007 and less than 300 in 2017 (Yngvesson 2010, 178; SCB 2019). It is important to note that this fall in numbers does not necessarily reflect a change in attitudes towards the adoption project, and its place in the history of Swedish Whiteness and Swedish national imaginations. While a number of adult adoptees do speak out about their experiences of racism, alienation, and feelings of non-belonging, it arguably remains a taboo to openly criticize adoption in Sweden (Hübinette 2011; Rooth 2014). While problems *within* adoption have long been identified and discussed, the problem *with* adoption is seldom addressed. Indeed, adult adoptees who have publicly criticized adoption at a level that goes beyond their individual experiences, or who have questioned the validity and ethics of the adoption project, report being met by responses of anger and hatred (see, for example, Dahlberg 2014; Wyver 2018, 20). Furthermore, Swedish adoption scholar Tobias Hübinette, a Korean adoptee himself, reports being ostracised from the academic community, losing jobs and grants, meeting protests at his PhD defence and enduring serious threats of physical and sexual violence as a result of his critical adoption research (Hübinette 2011).

Arguably the sensitivity towards adoption critique is linked to the fact that Sweden's relationship with international adoption is very much central to national myths of Swedishness, or more specifically, to what can be described as "Swedish goodness". Swedish goodness is the national fantasy of Sweden being the "good" nation, both in

domestic and international affairs: a progressive nation built on social democratic ideals, with a generous social welfare system, which is also a haven for refugees and somehow exempt from European histories of colonialism and Nazism. Importantly, good Sweden is also anti-racist. In fact, it is even post-race: a colour-blind nation where race is not just approached critically – it does not exist at all; officially colour-blind, Sweden keeps no ethnicity data, and the word "race" has been removed from all legislative documents.

A pivotal role of adoption in building fantasies of Swedish goodness is that it operates as a means of bringing state level ideals of colour-blindness and international solidarity into the family sphere: it acts as proof that white Swedes can not only rescue a Third World body, but are also capable of loving a body that looks different to their own. Yngvesson, examining the role of adoption in producing the national body, suggests that there was an official explicit commitment to the adoption project as a means a producing a multi-cultural nation (2012, 232). This commitment is certainly reflected in early discussions about whether or not to expand the international adoption programme: a 1963 report by Rädda barnen [Save the Children] suggested that international adoption could give Swedish citizens, "greater knowledge about and understanding of foreign nations; [and] potentially, over time, less repudiation of people whose appearance differs sharply from that of Scandinavians" (Adoption av utländska barn 1967, 16). The non-white body of the international transracial adoptee could not just produce a safe version of multi-culturalism in the home, but could also act as vessel for transmitting state-led projects of globalised goodness and fixing Swedish racism into the domestic sphere. Beyond that, the adoptee body is imagined as a pedagogical tool, educating Swedes about the foreign bodies and nations, and even a means of connecting white Swedes to the Third World and global histories of racial oppression.

Externally, Sweden's goodness image is widely shared, and it tends to appear at the top of various polls of global "goodness" and equality: for instance, the Good Country Index, which compares over 160 countries' contributions to the world, placed Sweden number one in 2016 (Sirat 2016). Yet within Sweden, a long and sad decline of Good Sweden has been mourned for some years. Hübinette and Lundström (2014), charting developments and crises in Swedish whiteness, suggest that Good Sweden, or what they label Sweden's "White Solidarity" phase, emerged post-1968, with the rise of the Social Democrats party and Olof Palme's leadership, and was characterised by the nation's support of anti-apartheid struggles and anti-colonial independence movements, as well as international adoptions and generous refugee policies. However, with post 9/11 Islamophobia, the rise of far right populism, and the emergence of second generation migrants and adult adoptees voicing their experiences of racism and isolation, we have witnessed the passing of Good Sweden, and have moved into a period of White melancholia: a shared national longing for a time when Swedes could be anti-racist and good on their own terms.

Despite the sad decline of goodness, with almost every tenet of what made Sweden good either coming to pass, or being revealed as not quite as good as it seemed (Pred 2000, xii), international adoption remains. It is as if it is imagined as the last bastion of good Swedishness, which goes some way to explaining why for most Swedes it remains above criticism.

Yet the relentless celebration and nationalisation of adoption silences its violences, and the terrible impacts that it has on first families, communities in sending countries and on adoptees themselves. In Sweden, transracial adoptees are greatly over-represented in suicide and attempted suicide statistics and in markers of "social maladjustment", such as drug abuse and criminal activity (Hjern, Lindblad & Vinnerljung 2002, 446). Adoptees of colour report being subjected to sustained and systemic racism (Hübinette & Tigervall 2009), and are discriminated against on the labour market (Rooth 2002). There are also indications that female adoptees from East Asia are over-represented as victims of sexual abuse (Lindblad & Signell 2008; Berg-Kelly & Eriksson, 1997).

Sweden is also by no means exempt from involvement in the trafficking scandals that have rocked the industry globally. Chile is the most recent case to reach the media, with Chilean investigators finding that a significant number of the 2000 adoptions to Sweden between the early 1970s and 1992 were illegal, with cases of children being kidnapped from parents and having paperwork falsified to make them adoptable (Håkensson, 2018).

Despite this evidence of systematic child theft, the adoption project is widely seen as a success story; and, as with racism, abuse and suicidal behaviour, trafficking is seen as a problem within the adoption project that can be justified as an isolated historical example of malpractice at the supply end, rather than as a fundamental structural problem with transracial adoption desire and an industry dependent on the exploitation of poorer women of colour and their children's bodies. Importantly, the continued justification and positive attitude towards adoption is reflected in policy as well as discursively: for example, recently a tax free universal grant for people in the process of adopting was increased from 40,000 SEK to 75,000 SEK in 2016, to help more middle income Swedes to adopt internationally (SVT Nyheter, 2016).

Good and Evil White Nationalists

I approach my analysis using Ghassan Hage's work on White governmentality, and his concepts of Good and Evil White nationalists, and dead ethnics. In *White Nation* (2000), Hage addresses Australian racisms as White nationalist spatial control issues, and as fantasies of governmentality: the belief in having the right, and ability, to have a say in deciding on the positioning of bodies of colour in perceived White national space. By dividing what we might see as White racists and White anti-racists into Good and Evil White Nationalists, Hage demonstrates that both are driven by the same worries relating

to the control of positioning of "ethnic" bodies in white national space, and by the same fantasy of governmentality. By way of example, he describes observing a dialogue unfolding on a wall of graffiti, which starts with an argument between what he calls "ethnics" over Macedonian sovereignty and Greek imperialism. After a brief exchange of graffiti comments, a White/Anglo graffitist intervenes, writing: "May I remind you that you are here in Australia […] You are welcome to bring yourself, your family and your culture to this country, but please leave your bigotry and your racism behind". In the days that follow, the words "culture", "family" and finally "yourself" were crossed out, before another White/Anglo adds: "Where do you think you are, you bloody wogs? Go back to your own country!", which is replied with: "This is their country, too! We are a multicultural society in case you have forgotten". Finally the discussion ends with the decisive: "Fuck multiculturalism!"; followed by "Fuck you, you racist turd!" (Hage 2000, 15-16).

The White/Anglo commenters connect the "ethnic" behaviour and attitudes to the Australian nation (it becomes a nationalist issue). Their whiteness and shared feeling that they have the right to correct, modify and control the ethnic behaviour to fit into the nation make it a White nationalist issue. They share the mentality of the right to govern both ethnic behaviour and ethnic positioning within the nation (it becomes a White nationalist governmentality issue). Yet one is evil ("Go home!") and one is good ("You are welcome to bring your family here, but…"). As Hage puts it, "[B]eyond and despite their differences, what is most evident is the naturalness with which they both assumed that it was up to them to direct the traffic, as it were. Both the "racists" and the "multiculturalists" shared in the conviction that they were, in one way or another, masters of national space, and that it was up to them to decide who stayed in and who ought to be kept out of that space" (2000, 17).

Good and Evil White nationalists share the fantasy of the right to have a say on deciding who belongs in the nation space and who does not, and on what terms; the right to define what "integration" is, and who integrates with whom, and right to decide what is racism and what isn't (Hage 2000). Discussions around racism, race, immigration and refugee policy are validated by the whiteness of their subjects: the control of white national space, or more specifically the control of non-white bodies in white national space, is a debate only for White nationalists (good and evil); other bodies are there to be discussed, not to be involved in the discussion. In the Swedish context, Good and Evil White nationalists alike are embroiled in shared melancholic fantasies for the old, Good (White) Sweden: but their shared struggles are desperate and ultimately futile, being dependent on a fantasy of being able to control what is already a diverse, multicultural space.

The body of colour emerges from Hage's approach as a "dead ethnic", an ethnic object around which White subjectivity can revolve; while the White nationalists themselves as natural governing subjects, the non-white body is merely a passive object (2000, 96).

In the proceeding discussion, I approach SD and IKEA as two stalwarts of Swedish White nationalism, "evil" and "good" respectively. SD's well-known history of Nazism and racism, as well as their anti-immigration stance posits them as "evil" in many Swedes' eyes (Hellström 2016, 6), whereas IKEA are widely seen as representative of "good" Swedish values (Torekull 1999, 53).

IKEA: Good White Nationalists?

IKEA and Swedish Goodness

IKEA has a special place in national and global imaginings of Swedishness. With its stores painted the bright yellow and blue of the Swedish flag, its Swedish-named products, and its global domination of the flat-packed furniture market, IKEA has established itself as a symbolic ambassador for Swedishness and Swedish goodness at home and abroad. Much of this goodness revolves around the myth of the late Ingvar Kamprad, IKEA's founder, developing a company that could provide affordable furniture to all Swedish families: simple, practical, flat-packed furniture to furnish every household regardless of their financial, geographical or class position. Indeed, the accessibility of IKEA furniture, as well as the company's monopoly, enabled state led fantasies of a classless Swedish society to enter the home sphere, in the same way that the adoption project served to domesticate the fantasy of a post-race society.

As with the adoption project, IKEA is imagined as spreading notions of Swedish goodness abroad. Kamprad himself claimed that IKEA staff believe that their work helps to build better societies, and that their work contributes to a better world and spreads democracy abroad, (Torekull 1999, 53).

In her study of the IKEA store as a national archive, Lindqvist (2009) discusses IKEA's place in the Swedish national imagination, and its centrality to the myth of "Folkhemmet": "The People's Home". Folkhemmet, a concept Lindqvist accredits to Social Democrats party leader Per Albin in 1928 (2009, 44), is the imagined Swedish democratic (and essentially classless) society. It is a benevolent and utopian state that cares for all of its citizens equally (2009, 45). Lindqvist suggests that Folkhemmet imagines the state as a household, in which Swedish citizens are all family members, who are protected by the state, but also obliged to develop and use their abilities to serve it (2009, 45). The homely and familial nature of Folkhemmet captures the idea that while Swedish democracy is nationalist, it is also uniquely nurturing and non-aggressive (2009, 45). It has always encompassed the protection and rearing of the nation's children too, with fostering and adoption a natural element of the concept. Lindqvist argues that the Folkhemmet concept is effectively communicated through IKEA and its stores, and that the company's relationship to the nation is publicly understood to such an extent that it is even reflected in a popular saying: "Per Albin [Hansson] built the 'home of the people', and Ingvar Kamprad furnished it" (2009, 57).

Coming Home

IKEA's acclaimed and award winning 2017 advert *Coming Home* was part of a series of commercials called *Where Life Happens*, which supposedly captured the complexities of modern family life, whilst showing how IKEA's furniture can remain a constant, reliable presence in the background of such upheavals as divorce, adolescence and aging. The theme of the series was to reassure a troubled White Swedishness that, despite the unpredictable threats of modern life, IKEA is still there, an unshakeable pillar of Good Sweden and its values of unpretentious solidness, solidarity and uniquely Swedish democracy.

The advert begins with an image of heavy, chaotic traffic in an Asian country. A white Swedish woman looks cautiously and slightly apprehensively out from the back seat of a taxi, as it speeds past signs and advertising hoardings in Vietnamese. She looks down at a small teddy bear on her lap, and strokes it wistfully. We cut to the taxi driving away as the Swedish woman enters a building, welcomed by a Vietnamese woman. The latter leads the Swede into an office, where she signs a paper with a Vietnamese man, handing it over to him with a nod, and a mouthed "thank you". She is then sat in a waiting room, again stroking the bear. The door opens and a small Vietnamese boy enters, carrying a hard-backed photo album. He hands the book to the Swedish woman, and she passes the teddy to him. They look through the book together – and we see that the photos are all of the Swedish woman. In the first one, she is standing alone in a cornfield. As the boy's finger points to her face in the photo, we see that under the picture is written, "I can't wait to meet you" (in English). The boy looks up at the woman and laughs. As he looks back down at the book, she wipes away a tear. We then see that the front cover of the book has a photo of her, holding a photo of the boy.

The next shot shows the first page of the album: a photo of a small yellow Swedish apartment block, surrounded by snow. As with all the other photos, there are no other people to be seen. Above the picture is the text, "Welcome Charlie!", and below, "This is your new home. Look, it's snow on the ground!".

We skip to a taxi pulling up at the Swedish apartment block in the photo, in an echo of the taxi scene in Vietnam. This time though, there is no other traffic. From inside a clean, minimalist flat, we watch the front door open, and the child (Charlie) and the Swedish woman enter. Silently she takes off his coat, and he walks into the IKEA furnished living room, and gently pushes a wooden toy car on a table. The woman kneels behind him and watches him play, as product names and price labels appear on the furniture: "Drömmage (wall lamp) 79:-"; and even on the teddy bear. The camera pans to the outside of the very Swedish house, and the IKEA logo appears on the screen, with the slogan "Where Life Happens" (IKEA 2017).

Coming Home Analysis

The advert appeals to the Swedish audience through the shared understanding of the unquestioned joy and goodness of adoption. The love and tears of the adopter, and the title itself, which implies that the child is being brought "home" to where he belongs, posit adoption as a beautiful act of homely love. The love is colour-blind too: the fact that the child and his adoptive mother are of different ethnicities, nationalities, and cultural backgrounds is rendered meaningless by the heart-warming love imagery. Even their language differences pale into insignificance: they communicate in English; and the complications of the child having a Vietnamese name that might be uncomfortable for Swedes to pronounce, or that might mark his difference in his new home, is easily fixed – he is named "Charlie".

Universally praised, the advert was even celebrated as a triumph for anti-racism, with one review describing IKEA's furniture as "bearing witness" (Navidad, 2017); the reception of the advert in Sweden and abroad further evidence of the pro-adoption discourse and internationally shared perceptions of anti-racist Swedish goodness.

The advert normalizes adoption, portraying it as an uncomplicated everyday process, with no adoption agencies, no money changing hands, no multi-million dollar industry behind it: just an innocent individual act of pure love. The imagery of a chaotic, noisy, urban East Asian environment, sweating under the cruel sun, contrasted with tranquil semi-rural Sweden, sprinkled with the purity of the snow, and free from traffic, noise, and people, works to justify the adoption.

Yet the sensations of love and joy are dependent on a silencing of the realities of adoption violence, and justifying and normalising adoption silences ethical questions and critique of the industry. Fantasies of colour-blind anti-racist love silence questions around the racism of transracial adoption desire and the well-documented experiences of racism adoptees are subjected to as isolated bodies of colour raised in what is often exclusive White space (Hübinette & Tigervall 2009). The notion of Charlie "coming home" effectively erases both his background and his Vietnamese mother and family, and silences the wider structural violences of child removal, trafficking and transportation. The absence of other children and adoption agencies conceals the fact that the adoption is part of a complex global industry involving countless facilitators and middlemen and considerable exchanges of money.

There is an absence of adult male bodies in the advert, with the exception of the male official signing documents with the Swedish woman. In my reading, his official capacity and masculinity see him standing in for the Vietnamese state. At the same time, it is the benevolent Swedish state (represented here by IKEA) that stands in for Charlie's adoptive father, and enables the White woman to adopt him as a single mother. The state, and IKEA, will provide for her not just materially, but also by supporting progressive, generous laws, rights and norms that enable a single mother to raise a child without

discrimination or difficulty. The masculinity of the Swedish state father is juxtaposed against the emasculated Vietnamese state father, parallel to fantasies of the emasculated East Asian male in the Swedish imagination. The Vietnamese state father is not strong or capable enough to support mother and child, but the Swedish state father is. Yet the Vietnamese state father, understanding his inferiority, facilitates the ultimate act of love: signing away one of his children for a "better" life in Sweden. If the decline of Good Sweden is mourned as a loss of control over ethnic bodies in White space, then bringing Charlie home is IKEA's means of showing that they can reassert that control, as a strong benevolent father figure in the Swedish national family.

In Hage's terms, Charlie's body is a dead ethnic body, an object placed for the White mother, IKEA, and the Swedish audience to build their good Swedish subjectivity around. His body is totally controllable, physically placed in the desired space in the White Swedish nation and within White Swedishness. The erasures and silences around his background help to mould him as a dead ethnic object, as does his name itself: the process of renaming him with the "international" name Charlie, rather than keeping a Vietnamese name symbolically erases his ethnic past and kills off any threat of an "active" ethnicity that might make his transracial body seem less controllable, less mouldable to fit the White Swedish national will.

Violences of Renaming

While renaming in international adoption is usual practice, it should be seen as an act of violence, performing the same acts of power and de-sacrilization that colonizers used in renaming geographical sites in colonized areas (Wyver 2018, 7-8; Young, 2003, 141). Renaming erases any meaning in the adoptee's original given name, and makes a mockery of an original name being chosen for auspicious, religious or ancestral reasons. It also disregards the significance of the adoptee's first language, and symbolically severs ties to the adoptee's first family, birthplace and cultural heritage.

In a curious parallel to Charlie's (re)naming, Lindqvist (2009) reflects on IKEA's famous practice of giving Swedish names to its products wherever they are sold in the world, and discusses how this contributes to maintaining IKEA's Swedish/Nordic imagery, whilst effectively being an "archival violence" through its repression of the non-Nordic places where IKEA's products are made (Lindqvist 2009, 52). Effectively this system of (re)naming "erases their [the products] non-Nordic history prior to the moment of naming – that is, erases the labor of thousands of people in non-Nordic countries" (2009, 52).

The same could be said of Charlie's (re)naming: it is an act of violence that erases his history and background; however, out of step with the traditional practice of adoptees being given distinctively Swedish names, "Charlie" does not effectively communicate Swedishness. Also, choosing the name Charlie for a Vietnamese child has further issues:

during the Vietnamese War "Charlie" was the derogatory American name for their enemy – the Viet Cong, the Vietnamese communists. It is hard to imagine that this clumsy choice of name was an accident, yet it demonstrates the way that the adoptee body is placed outside history and context, and also links to the trope of the naïve, innocent adoptive parent, who could not possibly be expected to understand or take responsibility for historical violences.[39]

Connecting to Goodness, Cleansing Evil

Charlie's transracial adoptee body reconnects IKEA to Swedish Goodness, and to the nation's famed celebration of rights and gender equality. In the understanding that the adoption project is very much a nationalist project, which serves to link state-led myths of the good, colour-blind nation into the intimate domestic sphere, the advert links IKEA to the very heart of what it means to be Swedish. The transracial adoptee's body can unite the national imagination in a way that embraces Good *and* Evil white nationalists, enabling IKEA to appeal to the broadest possible audience. Were Charlie's body to be replaced with that of a refugee child, or indeed an adult, the response to the advert would surely be different, dividing opinion rather than being universally applauded.

As well as symbolising Swedish goodness, Charlie's body effects a process of purification, whereby IKEA's own connections to racism, capitalist exploitation and even Nazism, can be erased. Behind fantasies of goodness and Swedish exceptionalism lies the fact that, as with other multinational companies, IKEA's global success has been built on violences of capitalist exploitation. However, IKEA has another dark past that constantly threatens to haunt its good Swedish success story. The company's history and popularity is inseparable from the celebrity of founder Invar Kamprad, himself an institution of good Swedishness. However, Kamprad's own brand was tainted when he was revealed to have been an active Nazi in his teenage years and twenties in a scandal that rocked IKEA in 1994 and again, when new revelations came to light, in 1998. Kamprad admitted that he had been a member of a Nazi youth group for the Lindholmers (in his own words, "the most extreme Nazi group in Sweden") (Torekull 1999, 131), attending camps and parades, and distributing propaganda. He was also a follower and close friend of Per Enghdal, leader of Nazi group the Neo Swedish Movement, and was involved with Swedish Nazi groups until as late as 1958. There have even been suggestions that Nazi money financed the start of IKEA, allegations that Kamprad strongly denied (1999, 143).

The use of adoption in the advert works to repair IKEA and Kamprad's damaged brands, its goodness disconnecting troubling ties to capitalism and Nazism, recon-

39 This can be understood in terms of Barthes' concept of Myth (1993; and see Chapter Three above), where a function of the myth signifier, in this case Charlie's body, is to purify history)

necting, through the adoptee body, IKEA with goodness and Swedishness. Given that Swedish goodness and IKEA are so intrinsically linked, and that Kamprad's own dirty secret reflects Sweden's own hidden histories of colonialism and eugenics, it could be argued that, through the exploitation of Charlie's tiny body, the Sweden brand is cleansed too.

Made in collaboration with Adoptionscentrum, the advert also actively seeks to promote adoption and transracial adoption desire through the unproblematized depiction of adoption and the normalization and justification of the project. Connecting adoption to the state and nation via the national institution of IKEA cements its centrality to good Swedishness, and reiterates the understanding that transracial adoption desire is a key component of a good White Swedish subject. In this sense, Charlie's body is a body of propaganda, promoting the adoption project, Swedishness and IKEA all at once.

SD: Evil White Nationalists?

If IKEA can be seen as Good White Nationalists, then surely there is no better example of Evil White Nationalists than the Sweden Democrats. In common with other anti-immigration and Islamaphobic right-wing populist parties across Europe, SD have seen a huge boost in popularity over the last decade. They are Sweden's third biggest party, gaining 17.5% of the votes in the recent general election (Val.se 2018). Omitted from the equally balanced blocks of centre right and centre left parties in parliament, they effectively hold the balance of power. SD are well known for having their roots in Sweden's Neo Nazi movement, but after a split in 2001, they abandoned some of their more extreme policies and reshaped as an anti-immigration and anti-establishment party that claims to represent "the man on the street" (Hellström 2016, 39). Hellström (2016, 39) gives "The reinstatement of the death penalty and resistance towards extra-European adoptions" as examples of SD's extremist policies dropped in their re-branding, adding further evidence of the nationally shared feelings towards international adoption: to resist the adoption project is as extremist as calling for a return of the death penalty. The change in position on international adoption was the party's first step away from racist margins and into the fold as it were, in line with the consensus among political parties that international adoption is something entirely positive.

2010 was very much SD's breakthrough year, with the party entering parliament for the first time and gaining 5.7% of the vote (Hellström, 2016, 1). Yet their policies and troubling history left them facing heavy criticism from the mainstream media, all other political parties (who refused to work with them) and the general public, who continued to see them as representing "evil" (Hellström 2016, 6).

The party's 2010 election campaign film unashamedly captured their ideology, and reflected the public perception of them as racist. The advert is centred around a pursuit

for the state budget, and begins by showing accountants sitting at desks counting out the budget in cash, to be divided by pensioners and immigrants. A race then commences whereby an elderly white woman shuffles towards an emergency brake labelled "pensioners" that will give her access to the money. As she approaches the brake, a horde of faceless women in full black burkas and pushing prams charge out of the darkness behind her, pushing their way to an "immigrant" brake instead. The final image shows flailing hands desperately reaching for each brake (Sverigedemokraterna 2010). The advert was widely seen as racist, and was eventually banned by TV4, the main commercial TV channel, following multiple complaints (Modin 2010).

The problem that SD faced after 2010 was how to extend their vote beyond core supporters and break though into the Swedish mainstream. As an unashamedly nationalist party, how could they somehow tap into a shared national melancholic longing for the declining myth of Swedish goodness that haunts the nation in these turbulent years, and how could they distance themselves from their Nazi past, and appeal to a public that saw them as an embodiment of evil? Like IKEA, they solved their dilemmas by turning to the body of the transracial adoptee.

Don't Let Yourselves Be Silenced

The imagery of SD's 2014 campaign film was a sharp contrast to that of 2010. The dark, dreary office setting of 2010 was replaced with sunshine, trees and open air. The film begins with a close up of a South Asian man wearing expensive looking white and pastel clothes.

Man: *Racism is sickening*

We cut to a Swedish rural idyll, and we see that the man is walking next to an East Asian woman wearing a short white dress and high sandals, along a country lane.

It has caused some of the worst crimes in history.

(Close up of woman's face) Woman: *Racism must never be accepted.*

Man (to camera): *Protecting our country, our culture, our history. Is not racism. Nor is the will to stop honour violence, begging and human trafficking racism. It is caring and humanitarian.*

We cut back to their walk, where suddenly a third pair of legs has appeared between theirs: shiny black shoes, crisp white chinos. The camera pans to reveal the familiar features of SD leader, Jimmie Åkesson, dressed all in white with a black blazer. He stands between them, taller and protective.

Åkesson: *Do not let the conversation and debate be silenced by cowardly leaders and thought police who abuse the word*.

Woman: *Dare to stand up against racism*.

Man: And dare to stand up for our Sweden. For real. (Sverigedemokraterna 2014)

Don't Let Yourselves Be Silenced: Analysis

For the White Swedish audience, the two people of colour in the advert would be instantly read as adoptees, therefore desirable and not a threat to Swedish Whiteness. They are indeed adoptees, and SD members rather than actors: Camilla Jonasson was adopted from Korea, and Marcus Silverbåge from Sri Lanka. Their visible ethnicities, accents, and indeed the fact that they are SD members, marks them out as exceptions to regular non-white immigrants. This can only be truly picked up if one knows which ethnicities are likely to be adopted rather than of a refugee background, that speaking "perfect" Swedish is linked to whiteness, and that while SD may be anti-immigration and Islamophobic, adoptees are (almost) "one of us". The physical setting also aids the de-coding of the adoptee bodies: rural idyll rather than urban suburb. Sweden's geographical racial segregation sees (non-adopted) people of colour concentrated in outer city suburbs, while adoptees tend to be raised in exclusive white spaces. Finally, the pastel clothes of the adoptees indicate their belonging to the affluent middle classes, with Sweden also being known for economic segregation along racial lines (Pred 2000). In a sense, there is a deep Swedishness to the scene: the knowledge required to be able to effectively decode the adoptee bodies, and to read the connection that they have to Sweden, Swedishness and goodness, would be likely to elude non-Swedes.

Åkesson's protective towering over the adoptees and the message that SD are standing up to racism creates a link that goes from SD to a longing for Good Sweden and for the ability to control bodies of colour; but this link requires transracial adoptee bodies to authenticate it. Establishing this link is perhaps the most effective move of the advert, as it captures the melancholia of today's Swedish whiteness while broadening SD's appeal to include those Good White nationalists longing for the time when White Swedes could define what racism is, and could be anti-racist *on their own terms*.

As with Charlie, the adoptees are dead ethnics (Hage 2000), objects for Åkesson's whiteness, his "caring and humanitarian" whiteness, to revolve around; but the fact they are adoptees is most significant: were they to be replaced by refugee bodies, say, or the women in burkas from the 2010 advert, the message would simply not work. The success of the campaign is absolutely dependent on the bodies being read as adoptees.

The adoptees fade into the background against Åkesson's recognisable features, height, and striking white outfit. However, their positioning beside Åkesson is not just symbolic of him as a father-like protector: it is a symbol of control too. His

White, Swedish masculine presence, along with the way he seamlessly takes over their dialogue, steering it towards the conclusion, shows a success of White governmental fantasy: he does not just worry about the positioning of bodies of colour in the white nation, but demonstrates the strength and power to shape them to the white national will.

The contrast between the faceless mass of Muslim women in darkness in the 2010 advert and the individual adoptees strolling in the sunshine is a strong one. As an uncountable mass, immigrants pose a terrifying threat to white Sweden; as individuals, Swedish in everything but colour, the adoptees represent an entirely different multiculturalism where they pose no threat to daily life, social structures or Swedishness. In fact, they can just be a reminder of how good the White Swedish subject is: Sweden can not only welcome and love someone who doesn't look like them, but can also raise them to be "just the same as us".

The fact that the faceless bodies in the 2010 advert are women's bodies adds another level of significance to their threat to white Swedishness. Pushing prams as if they are weapons symbolises the fear of uncontrollable non-White reproduction (one could say they are "living ethnics"); the white pensioner shuffling forward with her zimmer frame, on the other hand, signifies the fear of the white Swedish "race" dying out. This relates to the fear of degeneration that lay behind Sweden's extensive eugenics programme (Broberg & Tydén 1996).[40] The prams contain the next generation of non-white, "non-Swedish" bodies, another uncountable mass that will go on to reproduce themselves, whereas the zimmer frame is empty, barren; the pensioner is the end of the line, if she had reproduced in her lifetime, the next generation is nowhere to be seen. Yet the adoptees, as dead ethnics, as isolated bodies safely controlled by the white space that surrounds them, may appear to be "ethnic", but there is no danger of them reproducing their ethnicity. As well as the likelihood of them having white partners, the adoptee is often imagined as a perpetual child, captured in the tendency for adult adoptees in Sweden to be referred to as "adoptivbarn": adopted children. Their bodies do not symbolise potential reproduction at all.

In the 2010 advert, all of the figures are women, except the accountants, whose masculinity represents the state. Yet despite their female nature, the women are de-feminised and desexualised by their covered bodies, by their uncountable huddle, by the darkness; this is contrasted with the clear gender distinctions between the adoptees in the 2014 advert, yet the male adoptee is still feminised through his pastel clothes and comparatively small stature, accentuated when Åkesson arrives.

If the accountants represent the state, it is a failing and emasculated father state, one that is too weak, too benevolent, too naïve; its generosity abused by the immigrants. Yet

40 As discussed in Chapter Five.

in the 2014 advert, Åkesson takes on the role of the father-like state. He gives an impression of firmness but fairness, common sense, a masculine state body able to protect women; it is most relevant that racism is described in the advert as, "trafficking, forced marriage and begging", all crimes associated with female victims. Åkesson as the state can protect women of colour from men of colour, but importantly on the Swedish state's terms. Sweden can be good again, but without white Swedishness being compromised.

The advert also justifies adoption, and reproduces adoption desire: it shows the project as a success story, giving the message that adoptees can assimilate so successfully, that they can become almost excessively Swedish, Swedish enough to be in a nationalist party. This is a stark contrast to the immigrants in the 2010 advert, who represent a "failure" of the refugee project, with bodies that will always be Others.

Comparison and Concluding Remarks

SD and IKEA in many ways represent two poles of Swedish whiteness, which might be seen as a crude racism/anti-racism divide. A more subtle definition, however, would perhaps label this false dichotomy as a divide of racist anti-racism and anti-racist racism. The racism of today's SD is concealed behind seemingly anti-racist sentiments: "we want to help refugees, but in their own countries; we want to protect women of colour from men of colour"; the anti-racism of IKEA, and mainstream Swedish whiteness in general, is dependent on racist violence, it is an anti-racism of the violent silencing actions of "colour-blindness", and an anti-racism built on the exploitation of Third World women and the trafficking of children of colour. Ultimately though, SD and IKEA can be best understood through Hage's concepts of Good and Evil White nationalists (2000, 17-19; 26): the goodness of IKEA and the evilness of SD are both based around their Whiteness and nationalism, and the two institutions, and indeed Swedish whiteness, racism/anti-racism and the immigration debate in general, are united by a similarly futile struggle for the control of White national space and the positioning of bodies of colour within it.

It is through the transracial adoptee body that IKEA and SD's sameness is revealed. Underneath their opposing exteriors lie uniting collective fantasies of white spatial control and a desire for the transracial adoptee body, a body that can produce Swedish goodness, justify racist policy and conceal linkages to a racist past. Both effectively use the adoptee to access Swedish goodness, to reconnect their soiled brands with the nation, to silence their Nazi roots, and to entwine themselves in the national mourning for the loss of Good Sweden and the era of white solidarity.

As a dead ethnic the adoptee does not pose a perceived threat to Swedish whiteness in the way other types of immigrant could. The adoptees in the 2014 SD advert can be assumed to neither perform nor reproduce a non-Swedish ethnicity: a vital contrast with the reproducing women in the 2010 advert. In effect, they are the end of the ethnic

family line. The same could be said of Charlie: decontextualized and dehistoricized, he is severed of both family and cultural ties. He may be a dead ethnic, but he is productive too: through the presence of his body, the adoptive mother, IKEA, and the Swedish viewer warmed by the loving imagery of transracial adoption, are all able to perform their good white Swedish subjectivity.

The presence of the transracial adoptee body can be tolerated by both Good and Evil White nationalists alike because its dead ethnic object status enables its existence within White space to be controlled and shaped in relation to Swedish whiteness and White Swedes. The adoptee body represents a fantasy of regaining a complete control over the national space, where non-white bodies can be positioned and fully trusted to behave on the White Swede's terms. Finally, the commercial exploitation of the transracial adoptee dead ethnic by IKEA and SD enable both institutions to claim their place in the Swedish national family, as paternal figures who can re-establish a seemingly lost control over the positioning of non-white bodies in the White Swedish "home".

CHAPTER SEVEN

Eating the [M]Other: Exploring Swedish Transracial Adoption Consumption Fantasies

Introduction

The adoptee body can signify a fantasy of governmentality and a collective melancholic longing for a golden era of "Good Sweden". It can also be used to enact racial consumption fantasies, and become a site for legitimately looking at and consuming Other bodies in a society that does not see or acknowledge race. In the previous chapter my focus was on the role of the adoptee body in shaping the nation. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the use of the adoptee body in shaping white Swedish subjects, allowing a controlled and safe site for imagined digressions from racial desiring norms while reinforcing societal status quos.

As previously noted, Swedish international adoption is generally transracial (that is, foreign children of colour are adopted by white Swedish parents), and takes place in an extreme colour-blind discourse where race and racial physical differences are supposedly not seen or mentioned (Osanami Törngren et al. 2018, 4). Indeed, colour-blindness is an official policy in Sweden, with all references to "race" being removed from legislation, and keeping records of ethnicity data is illegal (Osanami Törngren et al. 2018, 4). However, at the same time transracial adoptees are certainly not excluded from the structural and systemic racisms imposed on other non-White bodies (Hübinette and Tigervall 2009); they are raised in an environment that at once desires, problematizes, and disavows their difference, and the very difference they are desired for in the first place becomes something unspeakable.

Despite "race" being unmentionable, colour-blind silences tend to revolve solely

around skin colour, so colour-coding processes such as describing a transracial adoptee's hair or temperament rather than skin are often used to indicate race, while still being "colour-blind" enough. Descriptions of race differences can also come in the form of food race metaphors: for example, "chocolate skinned"; "almond eyed"; "coffee coloured". These metaphors function as coded racial markers that, in signifying desire and affection, are accepted as being positive race language, safe to use in a colour-blind discourse. Addressing such food metaphors as a starting point, this chapter explores white adopter desires and fantasies that descriptions of transracial adoptee bodies can conceal and reveal. I analyse examples from published adoptee and adopter narratives using bell hooks' *Eating the Other* (hooks 1992) as a framework for investigating ethnic consumption desires. My overriding aim is to explore what food metaphors can reveal about the nature of Swedish international transracial adoption desire, and to discuss how this ties in to the bigger picture of white adopter desiring fantasies.

I begin by introducing hooks' thesis, before turning to examples of body as food descriptions in adoption literature. I then discuss how the consumption fantasies revealed by food metaphors are part of a fantasy of a shift in white adopters' subject positions, and a fantasy of self-othering through the consumption of both the adoptee and the first mother. This othering entails a consuming and reawakening of a primordial spirit, and heightened sensuality and senses. Finally, I discuss how such fantasies are dependent on maintaining a status quo of white supremacist patriarchal structures.

My discussion revolves around an analysis of a selection of narratives in published, well-known and easily accessible adoption texts: journalist and adoptive mother Kerstin Weigl's autobiographical *Längtansbarnen* [The Longed for/Longing Children] (Weigl 1997); Annika Creutzer's guide to adoption, *Adoptera: Ett sätt att bli förälder* [Adopting: A way of becoming a parent] (Creutzer 2002), published in collaboration with parenting magazine *Vi Föräldrar*; Korean adoptee Anna von Melen's collection of interviews with adult adoptees, *Samtal med vuxna adopterade* [Conversations with adult adoptees] (von Melen 1998), and an article in parenting magazine *Mama* by Maria Lanner (2014). The narratives identified in the texts are used as a means of accessing the wider adoption discourse. They were chosen on the basis of their visibility and accessibility, as well as their nature of capturing a range of adoption voices, particularly those of white Swedish adopters of children of colour, over a timeline of almost two decades.

Eating the Other

bell hooks' classic essay, *Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance* (hooks 1992) explores how desire for the Other is communicated and commodified, and reflects upon what this can tell us about the white desiring subject. Throughout the essay hooks questions whether a contemporary open and commodified desire for Other bodies offers scope for resistance, or whether it merely perpetuates and strengthens the status quo of racist

domination and white supremacist patriarchal structures. hooks approaches her discussion through a cultural analysis of performance of desires for Other bodies and ethnic consumption in film, theatre and advertising, supplemented by her own observations.

hooks begins by identifying a contemporary expression of pleasure in the enjoyment and consumption of racial difference. Otherness, she suggests, is commodified and presented as a more intense, more exciting way of "doing and feeling" (hooks 1992, 21); and in these times of crises in White Western identities, ethnicity becomes packaged as a spice, "a seasoning to liven up the dull dish of white culture" (hooks 1992, 21).

The desire to consume the Other, and the open communication of this desire, positions the White desiring subject as being non-racist, and as breaking with a past of racial oppression and the repressed "dark desires" of old white men. White desiring subjects see themselves as transgressing cultural taboos about sex and desire for the Other, and transcending racist boundaries of desire. They do not see themselves as perpetuating racism at all, but instead believe that their desire represents a progressive change in attitudes towards people of colour, and a break with a white supremacist past where such desires would be secret and shameful (hooks 1992, 24).

Using her observations of white male "jocks" discussing their desires of sleeping with girls of different "races", hooks discusses white fantasies of being changed utterly by the experience of contact with the Other. It is as if intimate contact with the Other is, "a ritual of transcendence, a transformative rite of passage" where the white subject can be changed, but can return to a world that remains the same (hooks 1992, 23). In fact, hooks argues that this contact with the Other is a fantasy of the white desiring subject *becoming* the Other themselves, through their consumption of the Other body (hooks 1992, 25).

She explains this fantasy as emerging through the combination of imperialist nostalgia for what whiteness and colonialism has destroyed, and a revival of interest in "the primitive", arguing that whilst lamenting colonial destruction, there is a renewed White fantasy of a deeper, more sensual, spirituality forever embedded within Other bodies (hooks 1992, 25).

To consume the Other is to consume the spirit of primordialism imagined to reside in the body of the Other, a consumer cannibalism that will enable the white consumer to take on elements of the Other themselves. To demonstrate this, hooks uses the example of the film *Heart Condition*, where a racist white cop is saved from death by a heart transplant; the new heart is that of his late love rival, a young black man. The revived white cop then embodies his rival's good (and sexual) characteristics. hooks suggests that this represents consumer cannibalism repeating myths of primitive tribesmen eating the heart of their slain rivals, to be enhanced by their spirit and to take on their attributes. It also represents a fantasy of Other bodies dying so that white bodies can live. Fantasies of black bodies being closer to death and the ultimate

unexplored sensations that that could entail adds to the thrill of consumer cannibalism (hooks 1992, 31).

The consumption of the Other is entirely safe for the white desiring subject, however. It does not involve permanently leaving their subject position behind, or any loss of power and privilege. It does not require any structural change, and its promised break with a racist past is ultimately no more than a silencing of on-going racist oppression, and a denial of history and accountability (hooks 1992, 31). Consuming the Other, through commodification and exploitation, offers an alternative playground for the white subject, but "reinscribes and maintains the status quo" rather than offering real change (hooks 1992, 22).

Concluding, hooks finds that while many of her students and other people she has discussed her research with agree that acknowledging and exploring racial difference's pleasures can be seen as a challenge to white supremacy, she cautions that such images of desire must be addressed critically, for fear that, "cultural, ethnic and racial differences will be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate […] the Other will be eaten, consumed and forgotten" (hooks 1992, 39).

Adoption Texts

Needless to say, hooks is working in a different context and discursive setting, but the parallels with Swedish transracial adoption desires, and adopter fantasies of anti-racism are clear. My intention here is not to prove or disprove hooks' theories, but to use and develop elements of them as tools to investigate, understand and communicate features of Swedish adoption desire.

I selected the texts for their availability and popularity, and as texts that contained descriptions of adopter and adoptee bodies. The first text is by white adoptive parent and award-winning journalist Kerstin Weigl (1997). Something of an adoption classic, it is often to be found on adoption course reading lists, is visible and readily available in Swedish public and university libraries and is recommended reading on the website of MFoF, the authority that oversees international adoptions in Sweden. Published by Norstedts and reprinted twice, this oft-cited text should be treated as a well respected, mainstream and hugely influential adoption publication. The book follows the author's journey into transracial adoptive motherhood, her autobiographical narrative entwined with interviews with other adopters and adoption facilitators.

I selected Anna von Melen's *Samtal med vuxna adopterade* [Conversations with Adult Adoptees], (von Melen 1998) text as a contrast to Weigl's, with an interest in seeing how descriptions of the desired adoptee body impact adoptees themselves. The author, a Swedish South Korean adoptee, interviews 18 adoptees who arrived in Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s, and as a ground-breaking work, it is widely cited. Annika Creutzer's accessible, full colour *Adoptera: Ett sätt att bli förälder* [Adopting: A way of becoming

a parent] (Creutzer 2002), is a guide for adopters and would-be adopters, and gives an insight into how adoptee bodies are discussed in a "practical" discourse. Finally, for a contemporary example, I selected a recent article in parenting magazine Mama, by Maria Lanner, a white Swedish adoptive mother of a black daughter from Nigeria (Lanner 2014). In addition to these main texts, I also draw on Mary Juusela's *Adoption: banden som gör oss till familj* [Adoption: The ties that make us a family] (Juusela 2010), a collection of interviews with adult adoptees and their adoptive families.

Food Race Metaphors in a Colour-Blind Discourse

In Sweden's colour-blind discourse, skin colour in particular is unmentionable, simplistically being seen as *the* racial marker. The colour-blind argument goes something like this, "to see skin colour is to see race, and to see race is to believe in race, and to believe in race is racist". While there are significant arguments against colour-blind ideologies, and their silencing of oppression and voices and experiences of people of colour (see, for example, Bonilla-Silva 2006), the colour-blind ideology is also fundamentally flawed, in that not seeing skin colour does not mean that race thinking has disappeared; often racial markers just move to other parts of the body. For instance, adoptive parents may claim not to see their daughter's dark skin, but can make sure her race is read through a linguistic colour coding. For example, in Mary Juusela's collection of interviews with adult adoptees and their adoptive families (Juusela 2010), the author describes the colour-blindness of the parents of Cecilia, adopted from Chile: "The fact that Cecilia's mop of black hair stood out in the otherwise light surroundings was not something Hans and Britta [adoptive parents] thought about" (Juusela 2010, 101). Cecilia's black mop of hair becomes the racial marker, rather than her skin, and the light surroundings allude to the white space she was raised in. Her hyper-visibility as an isolated body of colour saw her standing out, yet her colour-blind parents claim not to even notice.

To use food to describe adoptee's bodies goes a step further, as not only does it emphasise the adoptee's racial difference, it also is demonstrative of the desirability of the body: something wanted, good and tasty. A South American adoptee can be "smooth and coffee coloured" (Weigl 1997, 59); a black, African adoptee can be a "piece of chocolate" (Lanner 2014), and an East Asian adoptee is "almond eyed" (Helgas dagbok 2010; Lind 2015).

The coffee, chocolate or almond adoptee openly announces the white adopters' desires for difference and for the Other body. It is a declaration of a desire and love that transcends racial boundaries but is also imagined as a special anti-racist desire that is distinct from the secretive desires for bodies of Otherness that fuel racism, exploitation and oppression.

Such descriptions declare difference in a positive way: the difference that the bodies carry is desired, and as race is not directly mentioned, it even becomes acceptable within

the colour-blind discourse. Indeed, I would suggest that it also challenges the repressive boundaries of that discourse, and is part of a trend of moving away from pretending not to see difference, or pretending to the adoptee that their body is the same as that of their white peers. Such descriptive declarations of desire are even presented as something non-racist and progressive in terms of adoption politics: the adopter-desirer breaks with the silencing past of supressed racist desires, breaks with adoption as a project of assimilation and breaks with the pretence that the adoptee body is not a commodity. Yet to describe a person as a food item, however tasty it is, is dehumanising and degrading. Unflinchingly labelling the transracial adoptee as a desirable, consumable commodity certainly concurs with hooks' work on ethnic consumption desires (hooks 1992), but the question is, what can this tell us about the white desiring subject?

Ghassan Hage, discussing animal race metaphors, suggests that the focus should not be on the accuracy of the metaphor, but on questions relating to the person making the description. He asks, "What does the imagery of the Jewish other or Muslim other as dog, snake, hyena, or wolf tell us about the racists themselves, about their sense of power, about their practical dispositions toward their other?" (Hage 2017, 11). He argues that animal race metaphors should be treated as not merely descriptors, but as "instruction manuals for racists" (Hage 2017, 11). Describing a slave as a "bull" or a Jew as a "snake" gives an indication of what is "desirable, possible and preferable" to do with their bodies (Hage 2017, 11). Likewise, one should ask what desires, possibilities and intentions lie behind describing people as wolves or cockroaches? The animals arouse different images and fears, but the desires and permissions of eradicating them are similar. Hage argues that such metaphors should be addressed as statements of intent: when a racist describes a Jew as a snake, the action to be taken is made clearer than describing them as just "inferior" (Hage 2017, 11).

Food race metaphors for transracial adoptee bodies should be treated in much the same way. What do we desire to do, and what can we do, with coffee, almonds or chocolate? What is desirable, possible and permissible to do with the almond-eyed East Asian body, or the chocolate skinned African? Food metaphors mark the transracial adoptee as an object of desire, a tasty treat for whiteness to enjoy, but they are also statements of intent and permission: these bodies are for white Swedish consumption and pleasure.

It is notable that the adoptee body-foods are not bland, everyday Swedish foods: there is no sausage skin or brown sauce eyes. Instead, the body foods are all sensual, exotic luxuries that conjure up Orientalist imageries of decadence and sensuality: almonds, chocolate, coffee. As with the adoptee body, they are desirable, slightly deviant exotic treats that can brighten up a bland diet of everyday whiteness, symbolic of hooks' argument that commodity culture uses ethnicity as a spice, as a "seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is white mainstream culture" (hooks 1992, 21). The fact that the adoptee body-foods are definitely not staple foods is important. These are treats to

be enjoyed amid an otherwise bland diet: delightful in small doses, but revolting in large quantities. Too much chocolate or coffee will make you sick. How telling it is that the food metaphors only apply to the individual desired adoptee body, never to bodies of Otherness perceived as undesirable: there are no descriptions of chocolate-skinned refugees; there are no almond-eyed and coffee-coloured "immigrants".

Kyla Wazana Tompkins, exploring food and consumption of race in 19th Century USA, reflects on who gets to eat, and who gets to be eaten (Tompkins 2012, 8). In Swedish adoption narratives, predictably, the eater/eatee dichotomy is clearly delineated: the white Swede eats, the foreign child of colour is eaten; the adopter eats, the adoptee is eaten, reflecting the gross power imbalances in adoption and adoption knowledge production. However, I did come across one curious exception (of sorts). The blurb on the back cover of Juusela (2010) begins thus: "Having daddy's potato nose maybe isn't so fun, but in the end it does show a genetic bond".

While for once the adopter gets to be the food, it is presented in sharp contrast to the desirable body foods of the adoptee. The potato nose is clearly a negative image (not so fun to inherit it), it is also a dull, everyday food. Swedish, home grown, rugged. The contrast serves to heighten the exoticness of the adoptee food examples, and the homely nature of the humble potato reminds us that chocolate, coffee and almonds are not just traditional imports, but were more specifically colonial imports. Discussing Sweden's often disavowed or "forgotten" role in colonial exploitation and expansion, McEachrane (2018) notes that Sweden was very much a participant in the "European scramble for overseas colonies" (McEachrane 2018, 6) from the early 17th century, and through its African, East Indian and West Indian Companies was able to become a major consumer of colonial imports produced by slave labour such as coffee, sugar and spices (McEachrane 2018, 6). While the rise in popularity of international adoption to Sweden coincided with post-WW2 anti-racism and anti-colonialism trends, the symbolic connection of the commodified adopted body of colour to eras of slavery and colonialism is carried through food.[41]

Smooth and Coffee Coloured

The coffee coloured adoptee, "an explosive South American, smooth and coffee coloured" appearing in *Längtansbarnen* (Weigl 1997, 59), is a body for consumption, and like coffee, slightly sensual and stimulating. Coffee's orientalist exoticism could be too much for the Western palate, but can of course be watered down to be translated to other cultures, mirroring the translations through de- and re-territorialising, nationalising and naming of adoptees through the adoption process (Wyver 2018). Like the transracial

41 See Ahluwalia 2007; and Hübinette 2006 for discussions and reflections on connections between the adoption trade and the slave trade.

adoptee, coffee often needs whiteness (milk) to dilute it to make it more palatable, with the adoptee needing the whiteness of racial isolation in white space, with white peers and white parents to be desirable and permissible in a white supremacist society.

As with the international adoptee, coffee comes with a hint of the unknown, a hint of danger and mystery around its background: we hear of stories of brutal exploitation at the supply end, and amid the smell of coffee is the lingering hint of colonialism, slavery, corruption and environmental destruction, and yet we consume it anyway. In fact, we can even tell ourselves that through our consumption (perhaps by buying Fair Trade coffee) we are actually helping, saving people in the "Third World". Mystery around adoptee origins is central to adoption narratives, as is the often unspoken knowledge of the brutality of the industry, with countless cases of kidnap and trafficking fuelling what can appear as a trade built on racist desires and colonialist fantasies at one end, and destruction, corruption and exploitation at the other. Yet, as with coffee consumption, the desire for the transracial adoptee body in the West is so strong that there are always ways to justify the horrors of the supply chain, and even to believe that adoption is an act of goodness and saviour.

Coffee's reviving, reawakening and stimulating properties make the coffee adoptee symbolic of the possibility of reviving a dying, non-reproducing white race too; it can reinvigorate Weigl's motherhood fantasy *and* Swedish whiteness. Weigl's narrative of the traumas and struggles of infertility, suddenly cured by the decision to adopt, runs parallel to a narrative of livening up Swedish whiteness by shaking up the dull Swedish gene pool:

> My God, we cannot continue with this inbreeding. Our Swedish genes could do with being mixed up, this sluggish rugged peasantry, this doesn't really work anymore. A race-mixing … that could work as an explosive charge. (Weigl 1997, 59)

Czarniawska suggests focusing on the most peculiar element of a text, to find the boundaries of what is permissible within a discourse (Czarniawska 2004, 97). In this case, Weigl takes her adoption desire narrative well out of what one would expect to be the confines of the colour-blind, post-race discourse. Her race-thinking has echoes of eugenics, yet is perhaps permissible as it is "good" eugenics: a eugenics of rejuvenation rather than extermination, and a eugenics turned upon the majority group. Silenced in this narrative, unsurprisingly, are the bodies that are used for the "race-mixing", the adoptee themselves. While they can wake up the "sluggish" white Swedishness, what happens to their own "genes", one wonders. It is significant that there is a sense of national duty in her adoption desire too: it is more than just a matter of her and her partner having a child, but it is something for improving the white Swedish nation.

To put the coffee coloured adoptee into context, Weigl's description appears in a

chapter of her book called "Which child do we want?" in which she ruminates on the type of international adoptee she and her partner should choose:

> It's the exotic children I want. More beautiful than something we could create ourselves. A tight Vietnamese profile, with the distinctive cheekbones. Or maybe an explosive South American, smooth and coffee coloured? (Weigl 1997, 58-59)

The quote demonstrates the acceptability of open declarations of desires for ethnic Otherness, and Weigl's desire for an exotic body that is *more* beautiful shows the success of the commodification of Otherness, the fantasy that these bodies can offer up "a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling" (hooks 1992, 21). The "we" can be read as Weigl and her partner, but also as the white Swedish nation. That limited gene pool cannot offer anything as intense and satisfying as the exotic children that Weigl imagines, displaying, as with hooks' white desiring subjects, the belief that exploring a world of difference through the Other body can provide "a greater, more intense pleasure than any that exists in the ordinary world of one's racial group" (hooks 1992, 24).

Weigl's desires for the exotic adoptee Other are permissible, and made possible by the adoption industry set up to enable the white desiring subject to act out their ethnic consumption fantasies. However, by openly desiring something that "we", or white Swedishness cannot create, Weigl demonstrates a fantasy of being seen as a subversive desiring subject, desiring something that should or would have been taboo; a fantasy of breaking norms of desire, and of being an independent desiring subject that can step outside accepted and permissible flows of desire, to become something more than "just" white Swedish. It is a desire to be seen as transcending boundaries of nation and race, but as it crosses lines dividing sexual and adoptive desires for Other bodies too, it is also a fantasy to be imagined as a *sexually* subversive desiring subject.

hooks argues that the "real fun" of white ethnic consumption fantasies comes from "bringing to the surfaces all those 'nasty' fantasies and longings about contact with the Other embedded in the secret (and not so secret) deep structure of white supremacy" (hooks 1992, 21; 22), and this is apparent in Weigl's text when she toys with tantalising flirtations between sex and adoption, often with a touch of humour. For instance, looking for images of adopted children in an adoption agency magazine, she describes her physical excitement as she approaches the "family gallery" page, which displays readers' photos of their adopted children in typically Swedish settings: "expectation warms my stomach"; "I love those pictures. I need them to keep the fantasy alive" (Weigl 1997, 58). She is suddenly caught looking by her husband, Sigge, who declares, "child porn!" and laughs at Weigl's "hunger" (Weigl 1997, 58). The subtler subversive sexual connotations of expectation, fantasy and hunger for the children's bodies are dramatically brought to

the surface by Sigge's "Child porn!" interjection, a cry that fully reveals the dark desires that would previously, or in another context, be forbidden.

The fantasy of changing white subject position is also an "anti-racist" one: in Weigl's text this is illustrated by depictions of adoptive parents who chose white children as being racist, but transracial adopters not (Weigl 1997, 66, 67, 69). As with hooks' examples, the white Swedish adopter-desirer seeks to symbolically step outside racist structures and racist pasts by openly declaring and performing their desire for intimate contact with Other bodies. The adopter is changed utterly by the experience of consuming the exotic child, leaving the norms of white desires behind and becoming something more than Swedish. However, they can step back into the familiar world, which has remained intact.

The change in the adopter comes about by the fantasy that the desired Other child is "more than", and the belief that within the body of the Other resides a primordial essence: the "explosiveness" of the coffee coloured South American perhaps. Despite the idealised perfect assimilation into Swedishness, the discourse of colour-blindness, and the "post-race" society, there is an imagined essence within the adoptee-Other body that will always be uncivilised and wild, a mysterious force that ever threatens to explode and destroy myths of sameness.

In consuming the adoptee body, the adopter can consume this essence too, and become a desiring subject that transcends race and blood ties, shatters desiring norms and emerges as a cosmopolitan body.

"The African Blood Pumps through My Veins"

Maria Lanner, a white Swedish adoptive mother to a black girl from Nigeria (Mimmi), writes in parenting magazine *Mama* of her experiences of racism. Each time she hears racist comments in her daughter's presence, anger builds up inside her:

> Every time it happens I am dumbstruck, and my African blood starts pumping in my veins. (Lanner 2014)

By the adoption-consumption of an African child, the white Swedish adopter has internalised Africanness to such an extent that when roused the primordial spirit of the Other pulsates through her veins as African blood.

As is common in adopter narratives, the first mother, the Other Mother, is notable by her absence. Yet her absent presence forever haunts these narratives, with the adoptee Other always marked by her genetics, ethnicity and features, however much the adopting project endeavours to silence this. However, international adoption needs the "death" of the first parents for the adopters to become parents themselves: it is through the death of the Other Mother that the white mother can come to life. The death of the first parents can come through a literal erasure as well as a discursive one. In adoptions

from Korea, for instance, parents' names are removed from documentation through the creation of an "orphan hojuk", a legal document that registers the child as an "orphan" with no mother or father, rendering them available for international adoption (see, for example, Sjöblom 2016). With Chinese adoptions, the relinquishment of a child was illegal, so even if a child had somehow been voluntarily given up by their parents, the names of the parents would not be recorded (Stuy 2014, 361).

By consuming the child through adoption, the white adoptive parent also consumes the Other Mother, and in a sort of consumption cannibalism akin to hooks' reading of *Heart Condition* (hooks 1992, 31), the adoptive mother is now given the gift of motherhood by the death of the Other Mother. Additionally, the primordial spirit of the consumed Other now lives on in the adopter, creating a bond between adoptive mother and child that goes beyond payments and paperwork, and even beyond biology: it becomes a bond of blood and primordial spirituality. This cannibalism enables the adopter-desirer to shift to become a transcending, subversive almost Other desiring subject. The African blood that pulsates through Lanner's veins is the blood of the Other Mother; pumping at times of great, uncontrollable, animalistic anger it is the awakening of the cannibalised primordial spirit, the civilised and restrained white Swedish blood explosively replaced by wild African blood.

Lanner's narrative follows her consumption of the Other Mother, initially acknowledging her existence (in passing):

> I had prepared myself so much. On the artificial attachments, on her background, mourned with the biological mother who could not take care of her own child. (Lanner 2014)

Then the Other Mother is consumed through Mimmi's body, as Mimmi emerges from the adoption transaction as Lanner's "newborn child" (Lanner 2014). Finally, Mimmi becomes Lanner's flesh and blood: "All I want is Mimmi to be Mimmi. My daughter. She is my flesh and blood, and I am her flesh and blood. In our own way" (Lanner 2014). The blood narrative complicates the traditional adoption fantasy of biology not mattering, and the post-race association of blood bonds with essentialism. Instead of replacing or standing in for the lost mother, through her consumption of the mother through Mimmi, Lanner re-emerges from the adoption *as* the Other Mother.

Lanner steps out of her white Swedishness, transformed into a subject that transcends traditional boundaries of desire and race; she can now experience racism, pump African blood, and reach a connection with her daughter on a deeper, more sensual and spiritual level. Her declarations of Other desire, and her use of a language of blood, are coupled with reassuring links to discourses of colour-blindness too: she stresses that Mimmi is *not* her "piece of chocolate" (drawing attention to Mimmi's desirable exotic Otherness), but rather, is her "godisråtta" [a type of Swedish sweet] just like her white non-adopted

daughter (Lanner 2014). She is still a body to be consumed, she is still a sweet, after all, but now she is a Swedish sweet, marking an imagined biological connection between her and her sister too.

The main premise of Lanner's story is showing that the white adoptive mother experiences racism, and that this is something she had not been prepared for. The racisms she lists are rather clichéd, that every Swede would be familiar with, be they a victim or perpetrator: the black child being a piece of chocolate; comments about it being dark when the black child enters a space; comments about sun tan, or about the much debated racist name for "chocolate balls" ("N–balls"), or reference to a deleted racist scene from a Donald Duck cartoon that is traditional viewing at Christmas time (Lanner 2014).

The adopter's change in subject position places her on the receiving end of these racisms now, as the African blooded mother. Yet her surprise and lack of preparation for the challenges of raising a black child in a racist white society is blamed on the state: her adoptive parenting classes did not do enough to prepare her for racism. In fact, preparation for a life of systemic racism was limited to the instructor showing the class a photo of a grown black man, and asking if they could imagine their children looking like that. The class joked that they expected to get a younger child, and Lanner reflects that it would have been just as hard to imagine her daughter as a 30-year-old white woman; there were no further discussions on racism or xenophobia (Lanner 2014).

While Lanner's adventure into the world of the Other saw her desire to be seen as something more than Swedish, to leave a dull white Swedishness behind, it still required and expected the white supremacist patriarchal structures of the state to educate, prepare and protect her on this journey, and to be ready to help if things go wrong. The fantasy of consuming the Other and being changed by the experience still requires being able to re-enter a world that remains exactly the same (hooks 1992, 24-25).

Awakening Primordial Senses

Through the consumption cannibalism of the adoptee and Other Mother, the "Othered" adopter can enact a fantasy of inheriting a primordial spirit. With that comes a fantasy of more physical, animalistic and intuitive feelings and knowledges, and a heightening of the senses. It is as if the adopter has stepped out of a cold modern Swedish body and been "re-wilded".

This is visible in Weigl's description of her fantasy of the "explosive" "smooth" "coffee-coloured" South American child, a description that goes so much deeper than seeing and desiring racial difference in skin colour alone, but draws on a full range of senses to imagine the body. The coffee of the skin invokes smell, taste and warmth; the smoothness is a physical touching sensation, sensual and bordering on the erotic as she imagines the feel of her hands on the child's skin. The white adopter steps away from the state-led colour-blind project of not-noticing difference (Osanami Törngren et al. 2018,

4), and becomes an independent desiring body that dares to not only see difference, but can even smell it, feel it, taste it.

The non-visual senses, with their more primordial and animalistic connotations, can connect the adopter to the adoptee at a level that goes beyond artificial bonds, and beyond even regular "biological" parent-child bonds. In Creutzer's *Adoptera: ett sätt att bli förälder* (Creutzer 2002), the author puts forward a suggestion of how adoptive parents can draw on these re-awakened senses to explore the possibility of the early onset of puberty in their transracially adopted children:

> As parents one can look out for bodily changes, and they are quite easy to spot. Sniff the armpits and feel whether the sweat odour has changed. Look to see if the little girl's breasts have started to ache and grow. It can be harder to see the changes in boys. The testicles could have grown, the sweat odour can be felt, and the skin could be more oily. (Creutzer 2002, 111)

The sniffing of the transracial adoptee's armpits by the white Swedish adoptive parents enables them to draw upon those new animalistic senses to charter and control the development of their child, to sniff out the possibility of an earlier move into puberty than a "normal" child. Visually, focus moves to a permissible looking at the body of Otherness' genitals, a legitimate gaze at growing breasts and testicles, accompanied by the *smelling* of sweaty armpits, and the *feeling* of oily skin: all whilst drawing on an instinctual feeling of whether the development they see, smell, or feel is correct or not. The natural instinct that the adopter awakens to make sense of what they see, smell and feel implies the fantasy of a mystical sixth sense of intuition, something spiritual: arguably, this is the tie that can connect the adopter and adoptee *beyond* biology.

The question of who gets to be the sniffer and feeler and who gets to be sniffed and felt must also be reflected on. Czarniawska (2004), and Martin (1990) suggest exchanging roles in a narrative to identify power imbalances and group bias, and to do that here raises some challenging thoughts: for instance, it is worth asking whether advising an adult person of colour to sniff and feel a pre-teen white child's body would be permissible, or indeed whether the sniffing and feeling advice would be acceptable in non-adoptive parenting.

Shaped as a body for White Swedish consumption, it could be argued that an excessive level of intimacy with the transracial adoptee body is desired, expected and permitted. As a hyper visible, consumable body that is desired as part of the Swedish white nation as well as for the individual, the body becomes almost public property: it becomes acceptable for strangers to ask an adoptee intimate questions (Hübinette and Tigervall 2009), and the adoptee body can be used in national entertainment (for example in the TV show *Spårlöst*). This permissible intimacy could also be a factor in explaining the indications of a significant over-representation of female Asian adoptees as victims of

racialised sexual abuse (von Borczyskowski et al. 2006; Berg-Kelly and Eriksson 1997; Lindblad and Signell 2008).

Reinforcing White Supremacist Patriarchal Structures

Self-Othering, race-transcending fantasies, while based in an anti-racist discourse, are in-line with traditional assimilationist adoption fantasies: they amount to a brutal racist silencing, a revival of eugenics and white supremacist control. A white Swedish adoptive mother making a claim to "African blood", erases not only the consumed African mother, but also erases her adopted daughter's own experiences of being a black and African child in a white, racist society, by claiming this subject position for herself. In pretending to blur a racial boundary that could never be transgressed from the other side (the first mother would not be able to stake a claim to having white Swedish blood), this fantasy ridicules the racialised inequalities that facilitated and legitimised the adoption in the first place.

Perhaps the fantasy of consuming the Other in adoption, along with the desire to be beyond white and to be re-wilded with primordial sensory intuition, is a means of dealing with infertility trauma, or a desperate longing to find a "real" connection with the transracial adoptee. Lanner's African blood may well be a misguided act of solidarity, a hope to share the burden of her daughter's experiences of racism. Good intentions aside, the question of what happens if the white adopter *does* sniff out puberty in the transracial adoptee's body is revealing.

As we will see in the coming example, the fantasy of re-wilded primordial spirituality, of shared Otherness, of transcended race and subversive desiring subjects stepping outside the confines of white Swedish norms can suddenly end in an abrupt panic, and the cold sciences of medicine, biology and eugenics and the father-like State are ready to step in and take over. While the transracial adoptee was openly desired for their exotic and explosive Otherness, when that Otherness becomes too Other, there are structures in place ready to medicate it back into something much closer to the known safety of Swedish Whiteness.

For Creutzer, the solution is simple: "If it [early onset of puberty] is discovered early one can slow it down with medicine, and one should do this mainly because such a small child needs to remain a child for a few more years" (Creutzer 2002, 111), but in Anna von Melen's *Samtal med vuxna adopterade* [Conversations with Adult Adoptees], the brutal impact of both early puberty and its fixing with hormone treatment on the adoptee body is revealed. One of von Melen's informants, Karolina, describes her experience of her adoptive mother discovering her early onset of puberty. Shocked by Karolina having her first period and growing breasts whilst still at primary school, after first attempting to bind Karolina's breasts to conceal them, her mother took her to the doctor:

> I remember the first appointment with the Doctor. Mother stayed to speak to the Doctor alone afterwards, while I stood outside the door and waited. That alone felt wrong. When Mother came out, she was crying and hysterical, and I didn't understand why, what I had done wrong …" (von Melen 1998, 43-44)

The decision was made to give Karolina hormone treatment to slow down her growth, to stop her growing up too quickly. However, she recounts the renewed panic at her next appointment: her growth was now stunted.

> Now it was the other way around instead, and they wanted to put in hormones to make me grow more and get taller! But by then it was too late. I had already finished growing, so I never did get more hormones. (von Melen 1998, 44)

As an adult, Karolina is under 150 cm tall, about 10 cm shorter than the doctor had predicted. Very short for a Swede, her height has on-going consequences in society and her everyday life: her feet cannot reach the floor when she is sitting on the bus, it is hard to reach higher shelves in supermarkets, it is pointless going to concerts "when you are just standing and looking in other peoples' armpits" and buying clothes is a challenge, as the Swedish "small" size is still too big for her (von Melen 1998, 44-45).

The intention was to adjust Karolina's Other body to White Swedish ideals, and to keep her as a child for longer. While arguably succeeding in the latter, the former was an unequivocal failure, making Karolina's Other body even more different in Swedish society than it would have been if it had been left alone.

Regardless of that failure, attempts at concealment (binding) and finally the strong medical intervention in Karolina's story exemplify the safety net that White Supremacist Patriarchal Structures can maintain underneath the White Adopter's re-wilding desires. The fantasy of primordial intuition, the slight shift in subject position and so on can be quickly re-adjusted and brought back into line with whiteness norms if things do not work out. The State and science are there waiting to catch the digressing desiring white subject, ready to safely bring them back into the fold of normal Swedish Whiteness, without incurring any consequences for adopter.

The African blood of the Other Mother may pump through the white adopter's veins when roused, sustaining a claim to a link to her daughter that goes beyond love, legality and even biology, but her whiteness forever protects her from racism. Meanwhile, in eating the Other Mother, she silences her forever, making the continuation of an adoption project that is dependent on the oppression and exploitation of poor women of colour desirable, acceptable and possible. At the same time, she may well see her embodiment of the consumed African mother the ultimate act of anti-racist solidarity, along with her open declarations of desire for the non-white body. As with hooks' desiring subjects, Lanner and Weigl would not see themselves as perpetuating racism.

> Not at all attuned to those aspects of their sexual fantasies that irrevocably link them to collective white racist domination, they believe their desire for contact represents a progressive change in white attitudes towards non-whites. They do not see themselves as perpetuating racism. To them the most portent indication of that change is the frank expression of longing, the open declaration of desire, the need to be intimate with dark Others. (hooks 1992, 24)

Yet maybe the subversive dark desires that adopters bring out into the open are not even so subversive after all. hooks suggests that contemporary desires for the Other are exploited, and used to support to maintain the status quo of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks 1992, 22). The open desire to consume the Other body through adoption simply cannot be separated from the history of racist white desires; and transracial adoption should be positioned on a continuum of racist eugenicist fantasies of controlling, moulding and owning Other bodies throughout Swedish history. From Sweden's pivotal role in the transatlantic slave trade, to its pioneering position in race science, eugenicist research and the international adoption programme (McEachrane 2018), to shared national fantasies of being the "Third World's benefactor", to a relatively generous refugee policy coupled with a relatively brutal processing and deportation programme, a fixation with desiring, measuring, positioning and controlling Other bodies has shaped the Swedish national identity, regardless of whether the desires are currently seen as "good" or "evil".

Summary

The use of food metaphors to describe the bodies of transracial adoptees is part of a broader discourse of "positive" ethnic Other consumption, where desires for difference and Otherness are brought into the mainstream. This open declaration of desire is demonstrative of a belief that the Other body offers new delights, and can liven up a dull and declining whiteness. The communication of this desire is a means for the white desiring subject to perform a fantasy of becoming a subversive and transcendent body, distancing themselves from histories of racist oppression and offering themselves as something more than "just" white Swedish. Their desiring fantasies are imagined as non-racist, with their desire for intimacy, ownership, control and consumption of Other bodies somehow outside structures and histories of racist oppression and exploitation.

With adoption consumption narratives, there is a concealed (and often not so concealed) fantasy of the existence of a primordial essence in the Other adoptee. Through consuming the adoptee Other, discursively enacting a commodity cannibalism of eating the adoptee, where the adopter is able to take on some of this essence, this primordial spirit, themselves. This is exemplified by the belief in having awakened senses, transcending race and even sharing Other blood through transracial adoption.

With the elimination of birth families being essential for international adoption per

se, but especially for the possibility of a repositioning of white adopter subjectivity, in a sense the Other Mother and Other Father have to die for the progressive white Swedish mother and father to live. My suggestion is that the fantasy of consuming the adoptee is also a fantasy of consuming the Other Mother (or father). As she disappears, it is her primordial spirit, cannibalised by the adopter, that lives on to enable the white desiring subject to be re-wilded, to become a little bit Other themselves.

However, I argue that the fantasies of exclusion from racism, and the imagination of becoming a re-wilded, transgressive almost-Other, work to reinforce the status quo of white supremacist patriarchy. The fantasy of a change of individual white subjectivity is permitted and supported by a structural safety net of science and patriarchal white supremacist state structures that both need to be in place to enable the fantasy and are ready to allow the adopter to move safely back into the fold when need be, and to supply measures to control the adoptee-Other body.

While the acknowledgement of difference, and the open communication of desire for the Other, could arguably offer a starting point for an environment where racial oppression could be challenged, this cannot work if it is performed at an individual level, where isolated adopters are posited as single exceptions of resistance to racist structures. For real change, the acceptance of one's white self as being part of these racist structures and histories – as both perpetuator and benefactor – along with the understanding that the nature and enactment of white desiring fantasies through international adoption are part of a racist patriarchal system of oppression have to be starting points. The fantasy of exclusion from racism, the desire and ability to consume the Other body, alter one's white subject position and transcend racial boundaries both strengthens, and is utterly dependent on, the maintenance of white supremacist patriarchal structures; the very structures that enable international transracial adoption in the first place.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"Too Brown to be Swedish, Too Swedish to be Anything Else": Mimicry and Menace in Swedish Transracial Adoption Narratives

> The immigrant label makes me very angry. It makes me really, really angry that in surveys I am classified as an immigrant. That makes me feel offended. And what makes me even angrier is that my children will be classified as second generation immigrants. That disturbs me immensely.
>
> – Hanna, adopted from India, in von Melen 1998, 107

Introduction

With around 60,000 children from countries perceived as being of the "global south" transported for adoption to white Swedish families since the 1950s, international adoptees are a visible and sizable immigrant group in Sweden. Yet the severing of roots that adoption entails, Sweden's state-led official colour-blind discourse, and negative perceptions of immigration combine to make adoptees' identification as immigrants problematic. Indeed, from Adoptionscentrum president Madeleine Kat's declaration in 1975 that "[internationally] adopted children are not *immigrant* children" (1975, cited in Yngvesson 2010, 97), to anger from international adoptees about being "mistaken" for immigrants (von Melen 1998, 107) and declarations from adoptive parents that their children are "100% Swedish" (Juusela 2010, 199), there has long been an effort to distinguish Sweden's international transracial adoptees from immigrant Others. At the same time, adoptees' hyper-visibility as bodies of racial "difference" in largely exclusive white spaces and continuous exposure to systemic racism, renders their socially ascribed Swed-

ish identity an uncertainty (Hübinette & Tigervall 2009). Where then do adoptees, desired for a difference that is both problematized and disavowed, fit in the Swedish nation, and what implications does this have for them, and for Swedishness and Swedish whiteness?

This question is the starting point for this chapter, and I approach it through an analysis of a selection of published Swedish adoptee narratives. I use close reading techniques guided by deconstructive narrative analysis (Czarniawska 2004, 97) to explore narratives and descriptions of adult adoptees, with the main interest in the complexities of being an adopted, non-white body in a society where openly identifying race and visible difference is taboo. Using Bhabha's (1994) concept of mimicry, I discuss and challenge the discourse of a hierarchical triad of Swedish belonging: Swede – Adoptee – Immigrant, and reflect on the scope for adoptee-led resistance.

Source Texts

My main analytical focus is on three books containing adoptee narratives, spanning a timeline of publication from 1998 to 2019. The first is Anna von Melen's *Samtal med vuxna adopterade* [Conversations with adult adoptees] (1998). Introducing the book, von Melen (who is a Korean adoptee) notes that adoptees are seldom treated or written about as adults, and are commonly referred to as "adopted children" (adoptivbarn), even in adulthood (1998, 14). She points out that although at the time of writing nearly half of Sweden's then approximately 38000 international adoptees were over 18, studies had focused exclusively on adoptees as children and teenagers (1998, 16). With adoption researchers generally being adoptive parents themselves, von Melen highlights a lack of adoptee voices and accounts of adult adoptee experiences (1998, 14). She seeks to open up the possibility of a new social category: "vuxna utlandsadopterad" [adult foreign adoptees], and above all, to give them a voice (1998, 16). The book is comprised of interviews with 18 adoptees, along with the author's own self-reflections, and is published in collaboration with NIA (Nämnd för Internationella Adoptionsfrågor), the government agency that oversaw and facilitated adoptions at the time.

The second main text is Mary Juusela's *Adoption: Banden som gör oss till familj* [Adoption: the tie that makes us a family] (2010), published by major publishing house Norstedts in collaboration with adoption agency BFA (Barnen Framför Allt). The author is an Indian adoptee, who is a pro-adoption activist, journalist and lecturer. Juusela's book is also a collection of interviews, but this time with adoptive families: that is, adult adoptees are interviewed *with* their parents and sometimes their siblings, and the interviews are portrayed as taking place in cosy family living room settings.

The final text, published in 2019, is by anti-racist activist group TNKVRT ["Thoughtworthy"]. Titled *Var kommer du ifrån egentligen?* [Where do you really come from?]. The book is a collection of one to three page narratives of experiences of racism written by

young Swedes of colour, including adoptees and children of adoptees. Aimed at young adults, the narratives are interspersed with illustrations and clear definitions of theories and terms relating to racism and anti-racism. It is highly contemporary, newly released at the time of writing, and makes for an interesting comparison of adoptee voices over time.

Mimicry

I use my interpretation of Bhabha's concept of mimicry (1994) to understand the roles of the adoptee in Swedishness. Mimicry can be seen as a form of colonial desire and regulation, constructed around a discourse of ambivalence (Bhabha 1994, 122). To exemplify this, Bhabha describes Macaulay's Minute, a proposal for the creation of a reformed colonial subject written during British colonial rule in India. Macaulay aimed to create "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay 1835, cited in Bhabha 1994, 124-125). The class of interpreters were to be a new section in the chain of colonial command: Other, but not too Other; the same, but not too similar, they were to become "authorised versions of otherness (1994, 126).

Bhabha also uses Grant's 1792 text that called for a system of partial reform in colonial subjects; similar to Macauly's translators, Grant's idea was to create a class of colonized Indian subjects with English-style behaviour, shaped by English language missionary education. They were to become *partial* Christians, who were versed in an "imitation of English manners" (Grant 1792, cited in Bhabha 1994, 123). This translation of native subjects into *partial* Christians*, partial* Englishmen, was a means of creating and maintaining controllable bodies, Grant's aim was the creation of subjects whose, "imitation of English manners will induce them to remain under our protection" (1792, cited in Bhabha 1994, 126).

The mimic subject produced is a colonized body that is both desired as and shaped to be a "reformed, recognisable Other", that is almost the same as the colonisers – but not quite (1994, 122). Bhabha describes Mimicry as being "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial control and knowledge" (1994, 122), as by splitting the mimic into parts, they are trapped in a perpetual state of slippage between two poles of non-recognition; continuously producing excess sameness and difference. The mimic can never quite forge an identity as fully the same, or fully Other. Effectively the mimic is an empty subject, partially reformed, but with no essence concealed beneath the surface. Sameness tends to be communicated in excess, and difference is visible but disavowed, leaving the mimic prone to drifting between mimicry and mockery – a grotesque, simplified exaggeration of sameness.

However, despite mimicry's effectiveness as a control system, its dependence on ambivalence forever poses a threat to the authority of the coloniser and the authenticity of

the colonizing mission; it is "at once resemblance and menace" (Bhabha 1994, 123). The ambivalence of the partial presence of the mimic unintentionally threatens the coloniser: with the coloniser's own presence dependent on the colonised, when the mimic returns the partial gaze, the coloniser and the whole colonial mission's mythical wholeness, authenticity and authority is disrupted, falling into slippage and ambivalence too. In effect, the coloniser and mission are shattered by the partial gaze, and one could argue they are revealed as mimics too (1994, 123).

Mimicry and the Swedish Adoptee

Pal Ahluwalia establishes the connection between mimicry and transracial adoption, positioning the adoptee as a quintessential mimic:

> [T]ransracial adoptees grow up in societies that problematize their very difference – these children grow up thinking and trying to be the same as everyone else, only to be confronted by racism which challenges their conception of self. As 'mimic children', these adoptees are the same but not quite. (2007, 61)

In Sweden's colour-blind pro-adoption discourse, such issues are taken to a further extreme. International transracial adoptees are desired for their difference, but this difference is problematized by racism and "anti-racism" alike. Problematized by adopters and a society that claim not to see difference, and yet raised as a hyper-visible body in what is often exclusive white space, the adoptee's difference is forever communicated but disavowed. The adoptee mimic is fixed in an impossible position of ambivalence and ambiguity: hyper-visible but invisible, not quite belonging not quite non-belonging, desired for difference but often over-communicating sameness.

Bhabha explains that mimicry arises from the irony at the core of the colonial civilizing missions, and exists within a discourse that "speaks with a tongue that is forked" (1994, 122). The same ironic discursive background can be found in the world of international adoption, which anthropologist Eleana Kim describes as, "at root, tragically ironic" (2010, 76). The contrast of emotions of shared humility contrasts sharply with the creation and reinforcement of massive inequalities between those on the demand side and those on the supply side of the global market in children. Kim suggests that adoption produces simultaneous, "closeness and distance, identification and difference, common humility, and base inequality" (Kim 2010, 76). This irony is magnified in the Swedish context, where international transracial adoption is not questioned as a racist endeavour, but is regarded as an anti-racist project that exemplifies myths of Swedish goodness. The brutality of a programme that removes children from families of colour in the non-Western world to create families and fulfil racial desiring and globalised goodness fantasies of white Swedes is seen as a project of the liberal-left, part of national and internationally shared notions of "good Swedish" solidarity and anti-racism (Wyver

2019; 2020). A further degree of irony is added by Lundström (2017), who stresses the relevance of Sweden's own forked tongue of race science and post-race colour-blindness, racism and anti-racism:

> [W]hen analysing the nexus between race, migration and belonging, Sweden's contradictory history of having been the centre of world leading race science *and* a country of colour-blind anti-racism with a strong white national identity alongside with a large non-western immigration and a growing non-white population is utterly important. (Lundström 2017, 80)

Desired for a difference that is almost the same

The adoptee is desired initially not for a complete Otherness, but for an almost Otherness that can be translated into a mimic Swede. This is captured in Barbara Yngvesson's discussions on the first generation of white Swedish adoptive parents in the pioneering days of the adoption industry in the 1960s (2010). There was, Yngvesson argues, a belief among these early adopters that "genetic heritage" would make no difference in Sweden. However, African children were less desirable, as they could cause "ethnical complications" (2010, 94). Yngvesson cites Adoptionscentrum's Margareta Blomqvist as explaining that Ethiopian adoptees' situation was complicated due to their physical and cultural similarities to immigrants from Africa, and this meant it would be harder for people to see that they were "'not' immigrants but instead fully 'Swedish' people" (2010, 96). Korean adoptees were most desirable; they were easily recognised as adoptees since there were virtually no immigrants from Korea in the 1960s and 1970s (2010, 96).

The mimic adoptee is supposed to be different enough to stand out, but this difference needs to be identifiable to strangers as "adopted", and not different enough to represent the complete Other: the immigrant. This is echoed throughout both von Melen and Juusela's texts, with adoptees struggling against being seen as the undesirable group "immigrants", while their references to "Swedes" indicate that they too are seen as a distinct group.

Further exploration of this requires dwelling for a moment on the meanings of the Swede – Immigrant dichotomy in the Swedish whiteness discourse. Lundström (2017) explains that "despite decades of migration and shared European privileges, Sweden still considers itself a white nation with no colonial history and where Swedishness *is* whiteness" (2017, 80). Even though 17% of Swedes are foreign born and 30% have a foreign background, there is a "lingering national and international perception that the country is still relatively homogenous compared to other Western countries" (2017, 80). Lundström also stresses that migration in Sweden is conceptualised with desperate poverty, high numbers and cost, or with racism and economic vulnerability, with a focus on refugees and "EU migrants" (a euphemism for beggars, usually of Roma and/or Romanian origin) (2017, 80). Combined with the myth of Swedishness equalling Whiteness, this

leads to the shared image of the immigrant as, "a non-privileged, non-white, non-western (refugee) subject in search of a better future in "our" country" (2017, 79).

Silences around race and visible differences in Sweden, which include the non-keeping of ethnicity data, can make identification as a member of an ethnic or racial group impossible (McEachrane 2018). This results in the category of "immigrant" being used to encompass *any* non-White body, regardless of actual immigration status. Conversely, white migrants are seldom seen as immigrants at all, with the terms "immigrant" "foreigner" and "non-Swede" referring almost exclusively to people of colour (Lundström 2017, 80). It would be fair to argue that, in discourses of Swedishness, the label "immigrant" denotes racial Other, and "Swede" is understood to mean exclusively, "White Swede".

A theme running through von Melen's book, and true to her aim of establishing a social category of adult adoptees, is the division of Swedishness into three distinct groups: Swede; Immigrant; and in the middle, Adoptee. The divisions between the three are impenetrable. Adoptees can be in white (Swedish) spaces, but cannot be Swedes. Both Swedes and adoptees are generally segregated from immigrants, but there are a few public spaces where the three groups are thrown together; von Melen describes the subway in Stockholm as one of these:

> The subway is a meeting place where immigrants, adoptees and native-born Swedes have the possibility of studying one another close up, in real life. (1998, 68).

For the adoptees, being "misread" as an immigrant is a regular occurrence, and a regular annoyance. Maja, adopted from India, describes staff in hospital turning to her (white) husband rather than speaking directly to her, assuming that she is an immigrant, and therefore would not understand Swedish (von Melen 1998, 154):

> That is something you just shouldn't do! I do not want to be seen as an immigrant! (1998, 54)

This misrecognition, Maja suggests, stems from an increasing difficulty of making an instant distinction between adoptees and immigrants.

> In the past it was never a problem, for there were almost no immigrants in Skellefteå [Maja's hometown]. Today it is not possible to distinguish between who is adopted and who is an immigrant. Immigrant girls from Africa, for example, have ordinary clothes, skinny jeans and that sort of thing. People don't understand at once that you are adopted in the same way that they could before. At the same time, you blend in more, you don't stand out in the same way you used to." (1998, 154-155)

For Maja, the issue is that the adoptee should be recognisable as an almost Other, different enough to "stand out" but same enough to avoid being confused with the total Other: the immigrant. After all, the adoptee, as a mimic, is desired as a "reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same" (Bhabha 1994, 122).

Maja goes on to reflect further on immigrants:

> I think that it is good that Sweden has taken in refugees, as I think we should take care of people [...] I also think it is important that we in Sweden learned about different cultures. Above all, we must think about how positive it has been with immigration [...] I mean, we would not have had pizza, kebabs, Thai or Chinese food. We would have been so ridiculous!
>
> At the same time it can be a little annoying to be mixed up with them. Immigrants take it for granted that if you are brown then you must be one of them. But I feel much more affinity with native-born Swedes, as I am Swedish and grew up in Sweden. But they are drawn to you and that can be a bit annoying. Sometimes one would like to have a little sign that says, "I am adopted." (1998, 155)

By associating immigration with refugees and the Swedish desire to care for them, she makes a clear distinction between the *Them* of immigrants and the *Us* of Swedes. Immigrants fulfil a specific role: to be cared for by (white) Swedish society, and to be learned from. Their pitiful role, and with cultures symbolized as foods, along with Maja's previous quotes, show that the immigrant status is meant to be something fixed and non-adaptive, non-progressive. It becomes problematic when *they* start wearing "ordinary clothes". Maja also marks a clear distinction between herself and Swedes: she is Swedish, grew up in Sweden and feels a commonality with Swedes, but does not entirely class herself as one, drawing a line between a Swede and a native-born Swede. The misrecognition of adoptees as immigrants is blamed roundly on immigrants, not Swedes. Their very existence problematizes hers, as does *their* misreading of her transracial body: by thinking that she is one of them, they demonstrate a non-understanding of Swedish colour-blindness and adoption's role in the good Swedish nation, and through this their non-Swedishness is exposed, and their group identity as polar opposites of Swedes is cemented.

In Juusela's narratives, adoptive families use the presence of immigrants to explain racism against adoptees. Adoption itself is not understood as racism, or as part of a globalised racist structure, and adoptees' experiences of racism are not attributed to white Swedes, but to a point in time "when the immigrants came" (2010, 48). This is seen as a turning point, where adoptees went from being isolated desired bodies to being treated

as immigrants, the divide between adoptees and immigrants' "dark" bodies becoming blurred (48). The Strand family, for example, speak of their children (one domestic transracial adoptee, one Ethiopian) going from being the only "dark" (their term) children in their village, where they were "popular and exotic", to experiencing racism for the first time when immigrants came to the village in the 1970s (48).

Exonerating white Swedes from any responsibility for racism upholds the "good white Swede" myth, while further distancing the immigrants from the good Swedish subject: after all, their bodies cause racism. However, it is also racism that is potentially the strongest uniting tie between adoptees and immigrants, and the strongest divide between adoptee and Swede. Alfred, one of von Melen's informants, reiterates this:

> If racists see me or an immigrant, they don't come up and ask, "are you adopted?" before they carry out their actions. In this regard I feel as threatened as any immigrant would, even though I don't see myself as an immigrant at all. (von Melen 1998, 161)

It is racism, Alfred reflects, that connects him to immigrants. His self-ascription as a non-immigrant is rendered irrelevant in a racist society; racism doesn't necessarily discriminate between desired and non-desired bodies of colour.

This perception of desirability is a strong dividing line between adoptees and immigrants in the Swedish imagination. "Immigrant" carries multiple negative connotations of absolute difference and non-belonging, whereas the adoptee is a coveted, desired body. Both may begin as helpless beings in need of rescue by white Swedes, but the adoptee is seen as something that can brighten up its white surroundings as an individual body, whereas the immigrant is a feared, faceless mass of Otherness. This numerical distinction in the Swedish discourse is reflected in adoptee narratives, with the adoptee body coming in the singular, the immigrant an uncountable plural. Amelia, adopted from Korea, tells von Melen:

> When I was a teenager I was in a relationship with another adoptee – I felt like a Chinese! People didn't realise we were adopted, that was difficult. (1998, 163)

Speaking at a time before the rise in demand for adoptable young girls from China, and when there would have been few non-adopted Koreans in Sweden, Amelia uses Chinese to represent a mass of Otherness; she also reiterates the idea that adoptees are expected to be same enough to be in relationships with white Swedes.

Another clear dividing line between the adoptee and the immigrant is the perception of adoptee privilege. Whereas the immigrant is supposed to remain a pitiful body of fixed Otherness, the adoptee is seen as almost Swedish, with access to otherwise exclusive white spaces. This perception is evident in adopter, adoptee and immigrant

narratives. For instance, in *Var kommer du ifrån?* Gladys, a Kenyan immigrant who has lived in Sweden for most of her life, having moved there with her (Kenyan) parents as a child, describes how white Swedes use compliments to alienate her from Swedishness. These compliments include:

> Wow! How good you are at speaking Swedish!" and "You must be adopted!" (TNKVRT 2019, 141)

Praising an immigrant as being a possible adoptee highlights the difference between the positive connotations of adoption and the negative connotations of immigration (it is after all a "compliment"). At the same time it serves to keep the adoptee category distinct from the Swede category (the praise is not "You must be Swedish!"). It denotes a clear marking of boundaries, maintaining the hierarchy of the three categories of Swedish (non)belonging. Confirming that Swedishness equals Whiteness, the compliment suggests she has achieved the ability to pass as an almost-Swede (adoptee), but the line between almost-Swede and Swede can never be transgressed if one is not White. Gladys reflects on this herself: despite her two decades in Sweden, her greater familiarity with Swedish customs than Kenyan, she does not identify as Swedish, as, "in other people's eyes I will never be Swedish" (2019, 141).

In-Between

> I do not belong anywhere. Too brown to be Swedish, too Swedish to be anything else." (Martin Öberg, Swedish Sri Lankan adoptee, 2014)

von Melen sought to establish a named adoptee category in the space between "Swede" and "Immigrant", as a means of creating the solidarity that can come from a shared collective identity based on commonality of experience. In a way, most of the adoptees in her and Juusela's texts concur with this, differentiating themselves from immigrants and Swedes alike. Yet their narratives reveal a much more complex story of the agony of non-belonging, the stress and trauma of being caught between two identities and not fitting into either, facing perpetual rejection from both sides. The mimic space of the adoptee is a stressful site of constant negotiation and constant negation: they are forever slipping between two poles of non-recognition, almost Swedish but not quite (/not white), almost immigrant Other, but not quite. It is also a site of constant bombardment of contradictions and ironies, heightened in the pro-adoption, colour-blind discourse: desired for a difference that is unspeakable; rejected for the very difference they were desired for; hyper visible but invisible; too similar, too different.

Tedros, adopted from Ethiopia, describes the desperate and futile efforts to find belonging:

> I am not Swedish and I am not Ethiopian. It feels like I am swimming in a big ocean [...] I am in the middle. I can swim to the left, and then right, but I never get there. I am always left in the middle. (von Melen 1998, 74)

Adoptees also express the further painful feelings of non-belonging and in-betweenship that root-searching can bring up. The erasure of language, cultural and ancestral ties through the adoption process take on horrific new meanings on individual levels in root-searches, reunions and journeys to first countries, when the impossibility of ever regaining cultures and families is revealed. Feelings of the possibility of invisibility, of "blending in" in first countries tends to heighten the impacts of sustained racism and hyper visibility in Sweden, driving adoptees further from full belonging in Swedishness. One of von Melen's informants, Per, who is adopted from Korea, sums up his own return journey as just confirming his in-betweenness:

> My return journey made me more certain of what I already knew: I am not one hundred percent Swedish, but I will never be Korean either, as I wasn't raised there, and I don't behave like one. (von Melen 1998, 93)

Per's journey shows that there is no essence beneath the mask of mimicry, (Bhabha 1994, 126), and the mimic is not a palimpsest-like body where an outer layer of Swedishness can be scraped off to reveal a Korean underneath. As with Macaulay's translator class, and Grant's partial Englishmen, the transracial adoptee is only supposed to be a virtual presence, a semblance of a Swedish subject, but nothing more. Mimicry's power comes from its elusiveness, the fact that it produces a form of resemblance that is a camouflage that "hides no essense, no 'itself'": it is this form of resemblance that also makes the mimic a threat (Bhabha 1994, 129)

TNKVRT dedicate a whole section to in-betweenship, "Mellanförskap", which includes narratives written by a variety of Swedes of colour, and set out a definition of this existential dilemma:

> A feeling that a person or group with two or more cultural identities can have when they do not identify themselves in either of cultures. (TNKVRT 2019, 111)

By naming and defining in-betweenship in a book that includes adoptees and immigrants alike, they offer the possibility of it being a place of solidarity and inclusion, something that can be a shared experience. In this section of the book, a new group is introduced, one that is desperately under-researched and under-represented: the (adult) children of adoptees. Mixed race in a society where race is taboo, with an adoptee parent they take on further degrees of non-belonging, unable to even occupy a named group – not quite immigrant, not quite White Swede, not quite adopted.

Linn, whose father is adopted from Korea, and whose white mother was born in Sweden, describes an upbringing that echoes that of many East Asian adoptees: looking different to her classmates and feeling hyper visible; wishing to be blonde; being racially abused and fetishized; then travelling abroad to find that no-one believed she was Swedish. Finally, she travelled to Seoul, believing that she could feel at home in Korea. Yet the feeling of belonging continued to be elusive: "My hopes were crushed, and in South Korea I totally screamed Swedishness" (2019, 124).

Ronja, whose mother is a Korean adoptee, describes feeling neither Swedish or Korean, and the agony of not fitting into any category of race or ethnicity, just being a multitude of negatives:

> I don't look like the others around me: I am not white, I am not black, I am not Arabic, I am not Chinese. So what am I then? (TNKVRT 2019, 110)

Ronja describes feeling stupid and embarrassed when teachers and classmates asked if she could say some words in Korean, and when she could not, told her to ask her mother. As an adoptee, her mother had lost her first language too. The humiliation left Ronja wishing that her mother was her white grandparents' biological daughter, giving an indication of the reverberations of adoption trauma through generations (2019, 110).

Hyper-visibility

> I was put up on display on a table at my mum's workplace the day after I came to Sweden. To make it easier for all of her work colleagues to have a look at me. (Anna von Melen, adopted from Korea, 1998, 109-110)

International transracial adoptees are typically raised by white families in exclusive white spaces, where, as rare bodies of colour, they are supposed to be recognisable as adoptees. Although the hyper-visibility that this entails may reduce the chances of being mistaken for an immigrant, adoptee accounts tell of the pains of racial isolation and the discomforts of being constantly on display as a body for public consumption: accessible for staring at, touching and interrogating with intimate questions. This consumption stems from the notion of adoption as a national project, which places the adoptee as something shared, something adopted into the Swedish national family, not just the adoptive family. It is also partly due to the adoptee constituting a rare physical representation of bodies that are usually only seen in degrading racist stereotypes, yellow-face performances by white Swedes, or in pornography (TNKVRT 2019, 110).

Von Melen describes one of her interviewees, Hanna (from India), and the attention she invoked in her village after her adoption:

> People were curious about what a little brown child looked like. Hanna was brown, small and cute. Very cute. For good and for bad. Because it is easy for people to go too far and treat children who look different/exotic as exhibition objects. (von Melen 1998, 109)

Hanna goes on to describe how much she detested being told she was cute, and having strangers come up and cuddle her (1998, 109).

In Juusela's narratives, adoptees and adopters also speak of the astonishment adoptees' bodies were met with as children, and again there is a persistent crossing of boundaries with physical contact from strangers. For example, Ulrica, adopted from India, was met with "fascination and curiosity" whenever her parents took her out as a small child: "Everyone was incredibly curious, and wanted to pet her as she was so cute" (Juusela 2010, 124).

White strangers' desire to look at and touch the transracial adoptee body is interesting in itself, but adoptees speak of people constantly acting on this desire, as if it is a normal, legitimate way of behaving. The touching of hair and bodies is a common occurrence in the adoptee narratives, particularly for black adoptees (Juusela 2010, 41, 35, 49, 56). Klara, adopted from Kenya, describes being made to feel like a dog through strangers touching her, expressing the utter de-humanisation of public access to her body; but the normality of the touching led to her not speaking out about it:

> Mum let people feel my hair and touch me. I felt like a dog, but didn't dare say anything. It's nothing to worry about, just let it be, I thought. (2010, 49)

The public consumption of the body leaves the adoptee in a state of constant unease, and serves as a constant reminder of not-quite belonging to Swedishness. In adoptees' narratives about hyper-visibility, they tend to describe themselves as looking *annorlunda* – different, with strong connotations of "exotic" in this context. With the colour-blind discourse preventing race talk, the adoptee cannot comfortably describe themselves as Asian (for example), and turn to *annorlunda* instead: this emphasises the Swedishness equals Whiteness myth, making it seem as if Swedish Whiteness is the correct appearance. The adoptee fails in achieving this by looking different. It also reflects racial isolation, hyper-visibility and internalised racism, suggesting that, "everyone around me looks normal, I look different". There is also an emphasis on the external factors of difference: the phrase "jag ser annorlunda ut" is used, meaning I *look* different (exotic), rather than I *am* different. This suggests that the adoptees are the same inside (white Swedish) but are let down by their problematic skin colour: the adoptee mimics are essentially almost the same but not *white*.

Using looking *annorlunda* rather than a race descriptor, "Black" or "Asian" for example, also distances the adoptees from complete Otherness, and separates them from a

racial group. It is a sign of denial and symbolic of the adoptee's inability to find strength and solidarity from part of a historical and global shared struggle.

Mimicry is a system of colonial control, as well as a desiring system, and the production of excess through hyper-visibility/ looking *annorlunda* means that the adoptee is recognisable as an authorised version of Otherness. This is why the presence of immigrants is seen as such a threat to the adoptees who fear misrecognition. Hyper-visibility acts as a system of surveillance of the adoptee body, which is backed up by good white Swedes status checking through intimate questioning, and "where are you really from?" dialogues that are so prevalent in adoptee narratives (see, for example, TNKVRT 2019, 7). In these dialogues, good white Swedes act as border guards, patrolling and defending boundaries between Swede and immigrant, checking for the menace that the adoptee could pose to Swedish Whiteness, fearing: "what if the adoptee becomes one of *Them*? What happens if it becomes one of *Us*?"

100% Swedes: Excess and Disavowal

> I am Swedish full stop! There are no ties or roots to India, and I don't feel like an Indian. (Sarita, adopted from India, in Juusela 2010, 96)

Particularly prevalent in Juusela's book is the "100% Swede" adoptee, an example of when mimicry turns to mockery. These are adoptees who over-communicate their Swedishness and strongly disavow their difference, or have these over-communicated and disavowed for them by adoptive parents. They describe themselves as "100% Swedish", while expressing a simplified clichéd version of Swedishness. They are presented as the "good/ happy adoptee", success stories of perfect assimilation into a colour-blind society that does not even notice their non-whiteness. The fact that the "100% Swedes" discourse dominates Juusela's book, where adult adoptees were interviewed in the presence of their adoptive parents, could be a reflection of what the adoptee expects the parents and the adopting nation want to hear. Indeed, it is often the parents themselves who go to some lengths to emphasise the excess sameness of the adoptee. For example, 28-year-old Korean adoptee Gunnar's parents are adamant that his Korean origins should not affect his – or their own – Swedishness:

> The fact that he comes from Korea shouldn't identify him. We are both Swedes, we live in Sweden, and we adopted because we wanted to have a child. The fact that Gunnar comes from Korea should not be something that changes us. Why should it? (Juusela 2010, 198)

Gunnar's mother adds:

> Searching for his origins isn't something that interests Gunnar. He is Swedish and belongs to Sweden and beyond that he doesn't need to know anything else. (2010, 199)

The statement that Gunnar belongs *to* Sweden, rather than that he belongs *in* Sweden, relates to the nationalistic intent of international adoption: his body is for the Swedish nation as well as the immediate family. The assertion that there is nothing beyond his Swedishness puts a powerful limit on the version of Swedishness he is permitted. A Swedishness without mixing, without outside influences and strictly shaped by White parents whose Swedishness has not been tainted by adopting transracially. It is a version of Swedishness that is limited, simplified and excessive: effectively a mockery of Swedishness.

As with Gunnar's parents' statement, Christoffer, adopted from India, can see nothing beyond Sweden:

> My home is in Sweden and my parents are Mum and Dad. There is nothing else […] Absolutely 100% Swedish in all regards. Although I will always look Indian, it is nothing I identify with. (Juusela 2010, 136)

Common among Juusela's adoptees is the theme of being a (white) Swede trapped in the wrong body. A curious example of this is Sebastian, who is a *Swedish-born* transracial adoptee (described as "dark": 2010, 46). He describes himself as "100% Swedish", "but with an *annorlunda* appearance" (2010, 56). The fact that he has to quantify his Swedishness, and goes through the same narratives of in-betweenness and distancing himself from "immigrants" as international adoptees is further evidence of the perception of Swedishness as being exclusively about Whiteness, not immigration status, nationality or country of birth.

As with Macaulay's translators, the 100% Swede adoptee mimics serve a purpose. They are used to promote adoption desire, break resistance from critical adoptees, and, through declarations of having never experienced racism or been impacted by adoption, serve to maintain the status quo of white supremacy.

Robert Young sees the civilizing process of colonialism as functioning around a violent system of "translating" (2003). This colonial translation is the forceful grafting of a copy, a version, of the colonizing culture onto a colonized one (140). This colonial copy is essentially a mimic version of the colonial culture, not an exact replica, but an exaggerated simplification, adapted to suit the needs of the colonial project and colonial desires. This translation eschews the complexities, discrepancies and constant developments of the original. Yet it is perceived as being an improvement on the original, and as the authentic version. As with mimicry, the translated culture does not give the colonized subject access to British culture (say), but merely to a semblance of it (Bhabha

1994, 125). The translated mimic culture acts to detach colonized subjects from both an authentic identity with their own culture, and also prevents any means of belonging to the colonial culture, making a split inauthentic mimic existence an inevitability.

Turning this to the adoptee body, I suggest that adoptees undergo a dual translation process, a translation *of* the body and a translation *on* the body. Their bodies are translated into mimic Swedishness through methods including naturalization, replacement of first language with Swedish and renaming. For instance, Gunnar, the Korean adoptee, was originally named Young-Min, but, as his father explains, his parents decided to replace it with something more Swedish:

> He already looked *annorlunda*, and if we could give him a more Swedish name so that he could be as normal as possible, then we thought we should do that. (Juusela 2010, 198)

At the same time a simplified and limited translation of Swedishness is placed on the adoptee, lacking the inconsistencies and complexities of a modern Swedish identity. This leads to the curious situation of adoptees declaring to be 100% Swedish and nothing else, while some white Swedish adopters communicate cosmopolitan fantasies about taking on primordial attributes from their adopted children to share in being the "Other", for example, by claiming to inherit their black child's "African blood" (Wyver 2019, 8-9).

While an adoptee declaring themselves 100% Swedish tends to be seen as a sign of the perfect assimilation into Swedishness, I would argue that instead this mocks the notions of good Swedishness and the authority of the adoption project. Substituting subjects and reversing roles in narratives can reveal hidden inequalities and power relationships (Czarniawska 2004, 97), and if the adoptee is replaced by a white Swede announcing, "I am 100% Swedish!", the message is no longer one of successful integration into an open-minded progressive anti-racist nation of good well-meaning people, but one of petty, small minded, xenophobic nationalism. In this sense, in their move from mimicry to mockery, the 100% Swede adoptee exposes the fallacy of the success of the adoption project and menaces national myths of Swedishness and globalised goodness the project is so essentially tied to.

If excess sameness in mimicry can threaten to undermine the colonial mission, so can excess difference, when the mimic moves from mimicry, a sameness that is almost total, but not quite, to menace, a difference that is almost total (Bhabha 1994, 131). One of Juusela's informants, Cecilia from Chile, reverted to her original name, Fresia, as an act of resistance during a period of difficulties with her adoptive family (Juusela 2010, 103). This was highly distressing for her adoptive parents, with her father recalling:

> I was most sad that Britt [adoptive mother] was so unhappy and Mattias [brother, non-adoptee] was so angry. (2010, 103)

The menace of the name change and a growing interest in her roots, which caused so much sadness and anger, came from Cecilia making an active attempt at disavowal of sameness and assertion of difference. Yet now, with Fresia having reverted back to "Cecilia", her father describes the episode as "normal for a teenager, whether she was adopted or not" (103). Comparing an adoptee's crisis with that of a non-adopted teenager is a denial of adoption trauma; it also shows the tragic ambivalence of the mimic, and the emptiness beneath mimicry's mask. Cecilia's renaming communicated that her Swedishness was inauthentic. Yet, as things turned out, her Chileanness was inauthentic too: removing the Swedish name did establish a more satisfying connection to a lost Chilean culture, and she came back to a place of non-belonging and in-betweenship.

Mimicry's menace also comes in the form of revealing the ambivalence of colonial discourse and through this, disrupting its authority (Bhabha 1994, 126). This is enacted through the mimic returning the partial gaze, when they, as their virtual, partial, fractured self become the observers, and colonizer the observed (Bhabha 1994, 127). With the good White Swedish subject dependent on the adoptee mimic for their own identity, the returned partial gaze reveals them as inauthentic themselves: if the adoptee almost-Other is forever fractured, slipping, ambivalent, the white Swedish self becomes partial too, exposed as a White subject whose existence is based on a failed racist fantasy. The adoptee gaze effectively reveals the white Swede as a mimic too, and in doing so exposes the full horror of the adoption project and the true identity of a "goodness project" that merely works to strengthen and maintain white supremacy.

Mimicry as Resistance?

The menace of the mimic is seldom intentional. More often it is a bi-product of mimicry, and can be disastrous for the mimic, desperate to fit in and be accepted by the colonising culture. The question is, can this menace be harnessed and controlled, and used consciously to challenge colonial oppression or, in this case, the adoption-desiring project and the racist structures it is part of?

I believe that in some respects, the TNKVRT book attempts this, and there is an element of consciously returning the partial gaze, by turning the observed into the observer, the researched into the researcher. This is evident through the pedagogical nature of the book, which provides definitions and real life examples of issues and theories of racism and anti-racism, defining racism on the terms of the racialized, rather than White Swedes, and building a racial education for Swedes of colour.

The inclusion of adoptees and children of adoptees in the narratives and illustrations throughout the book, without discussion or debate about whether or not they should be there, is a powerful device that blurs the boundaries between almost but not quite Other and Other. United as people of colour in a white supremacist society, and with shared experiences of racism and non-belonging, adoptees are given a chance to step away from

not quite being white Swedish, to a place of inclusion. This step from almost the same to almost totally different is a challenge to the adoption project and Swedish goodness myths. Although TNKVRT is a smaller, niche publication, to offer such an inclusive space to adoptees and children of adoptees is a significant step forward in the struggle for adoptee rights and anti-racism in Sweden.

While there are strong themes that run through all three books, such as hyper-visibility and racism, there is the impression of temporal trajectory, from the clearly defined Swede, Adoptee, Immigrant divide in von Melen (1998), the adoptee as a 100%+ Swede in Juusela (2010), to the inclusion of the adoptee as a person of colour among immigrants, children of immigrants, children of adoptees, people of mixed race and other Swedes of colour in TNKVRT (2019). The TNKVRT collection undoubtedly offers some scope for adoptee resistance by breaking the boundaries between adoptee and immigrant, but the unique problems faced by international transracial adoptees are in danger of being overlooked. An assimilation into other racialized groups risks overlooking adoption trauma and the very specific racisms relating to the adoptee body, as well as losing sight of the racism of the adoption desiring project itself.

Summary

Through an analysis of adoptee narratives, I suggest that one of the roles of the adoptee in discourses of Swedish Whiteness is as a mimic, positioned in a tense space of constant non-belonging between a dichotomy of (White) Swede and Immigrant Other. As such, it can be understood in terms of Bhabha's work on mimicry as "an authorised version of Otherness", and a subject of "a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 1994). Mimicry is a system of desire and control, with the adoptee desired not as a body of total difference, but one of a visible difference and almost sameness, that can be controlled and surveilled as a hyper-visible body, that is identifiable as an (desired) adoptee rather than an (undesired) immigrant.

The adoptee mimic is kept in a constant state of not quite belonging, producing its sameness and difference in excess, while disavowing the difference. The over-production and over-communication of sameness through declarations of being "100% Swedish" can turn mimicry into mockery, where the adoptee mimic becomes an over simplification of a limited, fixed and empty version of Swedishness.

While mimicry may well be the most elusive and effective system of colonial control, the mimic forever poses an inadvertent threat to the colonial system and, in this case, to good (White) Swedish subjectivity and the adoption project itself, through returning the partial gaze and revealing the fallacy of the myth of wholeness, authenticity and authority of Good White Sweden.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

My thesis has explored the nature of Swedish international transracial adoption desire, analysing and discussing the role of the adoptee body in the white Swedish nation. Through an analysis of representations of adoptees in advertising and adoption narratives, I argued that adoption is central to national myths of Swedish goodness and anti-racism. However, while the adoptee's body is used to signify a progressive, good Swedishness, it also carries hidden histories of Sweden's colonial past and racist present, which its presence forever threatens to reveal. The adoptee's body risks exposing the inauthenticity of Swedish goodness and the good white Swedish subject, and the histories of eugenics, racism and colonialism that good Sweden and the international adoption project are built on.

In this concluding chapter, I will attempt to tie the chapters together, revisiting my original research questions. I will also reflect on the scope for resistance to adoption desire, and my role in this.

Summary

Introduction

While there has been a decline in international adoptions in recent years, adoption is viewed unproblematically in Sweden. In fact, it is a taboo to criticise it. In many ways Sweden can be regarded as the world's leading adopting nation, and adoption is wrapped up in national myths of Swedish goodness. Yet the relentless celebration of adoption conceals its violences: not just its impacts on first families, but also on adoptees in terms of racism, trauma, sexual abuse and suicide. It also conceals the racist and colonialist structures behind adoption.

I established my aims of producing critical research that reads against the grain of adoption narratives. My research centred around the following three research questions:

What is the nature of Swedish international transracial adoption desire?
What role does the transracial body of the adoptee play in this?
Is there resistance/ scope for resistance?

Literature Review

I began by reviewing the literature on Swedish international adoption, agreeing with other critical adoption scholars that research has traditionally been dominated by researchers who have adopted children themselves, and who consequently have a vested interest in the adoption industry. When research has stepped away from small scale qualitative studies of adoptees and adopters written by and for adoptive parents, the scale of the devastating impacts of adoption on adoptees is revealed: from grossly high rates of suicide and attempted suicide, to sustained racial discrimination (Hjern, Lindblad and Vinnerljung 2002; Hübinette and Tigervall 2009; 2010). Yet even when problems relating to adoption have been exposed, the powerful pro-adoption discourse has tended to restrict critique, and prevent research from questioning the nature and ethics of adoption itself.

Most research has been focused on problems of adjustment, kinship and identity, but it is rare to criticise the adoption project. Internationally, the past decade has seen a growing field of Critical Adoption Studies emerge, mainly led by adoptee researchers. While there is less evidence of this in Sweden, this movement did arguably begin in the country, with the pioneering work of Tobias Hübinette. My own work sought to negotiate a gap in adoption research where race, nation and desire intersect in a critical study of Swedish adoption. I sought to build on previous critical adoption research by beginning from the premise that adoption is problematic, and that adoption desire is part of broader structures of racism, classism and patriarchy.

Theoretical Context

I built a theoretical background of scholarship on nation building and national myth making, relating this to race and family, and the symbolic use of bodies. A key argument that emerged from this was the use of the adoptive family in communicating and enacting national projects, but also in sustaining the status quo of gender and race power relations. I built on Yngvesson's (2010) argument that the adoptive family in Sweden had a unique and extreme role in this regard, charged with maintaining an ideal hetero-normative family form, while absorbing race, to enable a level of freedom for other family formations and progressive gender policies in the broader (white) Swedish society.

I outlined the importance of *myth* (Barthes 1993) in helping to understand Swedish

exceptionalism, the denial of a racist past and present and the ongoing positive perception of adoption. I also introduced Hage's *domestication* (2017), as a concept that is useful for comprehending the role of the adoptee body in creating an image of Sweden as a homely space.

My approach to using theory was to take on a slightly different theoretical lens to address the specific problems presented in each analysis chapter. The aim of this approach was to find new ways of addressing, understanding and communicating the research problems with an emphasis on using theory for interrogating the problem in the most effective way, rather than for cultural capital or theory fetishism reasons (Hage 2016).

Methodology

My research aimed to explore the nature of Swedish international transracial adoption desire, approaching it not as a simple question of individual couples seeking to have a family of their own, but as a question of nation building and collective desires for the Other, with a focus on the symbolic role of the transracial adoptee body. My project was driven by a need to present a critical counter narrative to established Swedish adoption histories. I approached my research from a post-colonial perspective, seeking to read against the grain and challenge conventional knowledges grounded in Western white supremacist thought. From the outset, I reflected on my own responsibilities and position as a white, non-adopted researcher. I addressed the challenges of critically researching adoption in a pro-adoption discourse, being aware of the restrictions placed on serious adoption research by white/adoption fragility.

In terms of methods I used a consistent system throughout my analysis, which involved using deconstructive narrative analysis techniques. I also developed an archive of Swedish adoption related texts and images and used simple qualitative coding techniques to enhance my analysis.

Race, Colonialism, Eugenics and International Adoption

To contextualise my research, I began by placing Swedish adoption in a history of colonialism, race science and eugenicist scholarship, discourse and practice. I argued that while adoption tends to be imagined as an individual act of anti-racist love, and that Sweden has nurtured an internal and external national identity as a "good" nation without a racist past, these myths are built on a national forgetting or colonial amnesia. Against this, I argued that adoption should be seen as part of a history of desire to control Other bodies, and as part of a history of race biology, colonialism and state-led eugenics. I placed the adoption project as a central feature of the re-imagining of Sweden as a globally good nation, which occurred in the decades immediately after the Second World War, as the country sought to distance itself from Nazism.

From Flat Packed Furniture to Fascism

In the first of my three analysis and discussion chapters, which analysed an IKEA advert and a promotional film for the Sweden Democrats, I explored the question of how the adoptee body is used in shaping Swedish whiteness and national myths of Swedish goodness.

I argued that the adoptee body is desired as a "dead ethnic" (Hage 2000): a safe, controllable version of Otherness that can be domesticated and used for white Swedish subjectivity to revolve around. The adoptee body can be utilised to unite an increasing divided nation, by symbolising an imagined golden era of Swedish whiteness, when Swedes could be "good" on their own terms, and could have complete spatial control over bodies of colour. This means that the adoptee body can create a space where both "good white nationalists" and "evil white nationalists" can be connected by their shared desires.

Eating the [M]Other

In the second of the analysis chapters, I turned my attentions to the racist desires of the adoption project, in relation to the desires for children of colour in a colour-blind discourse. I addressed the following question: what does the expression of a desire to consume the adoptee body tell us about adoption desire and white adopter fantasies?

In a colour-blind discourse, adoptees' racialised bodies are sometimes described in terms of food, to express their desirability. These declarations of desire for difference are a means for adopters to enact fantasies of presenting themselves as independent and deviant desiring subjects. White cosmopolitan fantasies of being changed by adopting, of becoming something more than white Swedes, represent a desire not just to consume the Other, but to become (a bit) Other themselves. However, such fantasies require structures and status quos of white supremacist patriarchy to stay firmly intact, to enable the adopters' to act out fantasies of digression, and to catch them when they need to move back into the safety of white Swedishness.

Too Brown to be Swedish, too Swedish to be Anything Else

In the third and final analysis chapter, I explored the "in-between" nature of the adoptee. I approached the problem of where the adoptee fits in discursively in Swedish whiteness, and their discursive role in the white Swedish nation. Identifying international transracial adoptees as "mimic" Swedes (Bhabha 1994), I discussed what this role entails, and how adoptees' existence both legitimises *and* threatens adoption desire and fantasies of Swedish goodness and national myth making.

Adoptees are desired as an almost Other, as bodies of a difference that are *almost* the same. In this sense, they are similar to Bhabha's mimics (1994). They are caught between an almost total difference and an almost total sameness. The poles of total difference and total sameness are represented in the Swedish discourse by the "immigrant" and the (white) Swede. The in-between space is a stressful one, and a place of non-belonging.

There is no support, solidarity or solace to be found in a shared identity. Some adoptees are driven into mockery, an over-communication of a simplified version of Swedishness. Despite adoptees' hyper-visibility rendering them heavily surveilled and controlled, they pose a constant threat to white Swedishness, with their inauthentic and split selves forever threatening to return the partial gaze, revealing the inauthenticity of the good white Swedish subjectivity that is dependent on the adoptee's presence. Resistance is difficult, and one way it can be approached is through solidarity with other marginalised groups.

Overall Conclusions

International transracial adoption is an integral part of Swedish whiteness and national myths of Swedish goodness. Its role in Swedish goodness and the fact that its history is written by white adopters and the adoption industry in a relentless pro-adoption discourse, renders it above criticism.

The body of the international transracial adoptee is used to signify the goodness of the Swedish nation, exploited to make a connection to the nation and national myths. As a "dead ethnic" body (Hage 2017), it provides a site for white Swedishness to revolve around: in effect, the good white Swedish subject is utterly dependent on the body of the transracial adoptee.

The adoptee body is used to both conceal and reveal forbidden desires for Otherness. It creates a space for desires for the racial Other to be permissible, enabling the good white Swedish subject to play safely and legitimately with racial fantasies of consuming the Other. This fantasy entails becoming a little bit Other themselves, through their consumption of the adoptee. While these consumption fantasies, often manifested in talking about adoptees using food analogies (almond eyes, chocolate skin), appear to indicate a radical departure from racist histories, they serve to maintain the status quo of white supremacy and patriarchy (hooks 1992).

The adoptee body symbolically carries the national myth of good Swedishness. It provides a place where a divided nation can come together in a shared melancholic longing for a glorious past of Good Sweden. It does this through signifying anti-racist, colour-blind love, people led international solidarity movements and a unique Swedish multiculturalism. It signifies a mythical time when anti-racism, "multi-culturalism" and the positioning of non-white bodies could be done entirely on white Swedes' terms.

However, the body also bears the hidden history of Swedish racism, eugenics and colonialism, secrets of corruption and the darkest racist desires. The perpetual threat to reveal these hidden histories, makes the adoptee body a simmering menace to good white Swedishness. It has to be controlled through its hyper-visibility, and placed within a discourse of relentless pro-adoption racism, where adoption desire is constantly justified, legitimised and reproduced. It is this threat that makes criticism of adoption impossible in Sweden – the menace of the adoptee risks revealing the inauthenticity of

Swedish goodness and the white Swedish subject.

The adoptee body is used as a signifier on a myth level (Barthes 1993). It has a role in purifying Swedish history, preventing looking behind the myth to histories of violence and exploitation. The perception of adoption as only being seen as a good, individual act of colour-blind love, means that adoption is dehistoricised, decontextualised and depoliticised. Because of this, the image of the adoptee body also serves a purpose of dehistoricising, decontextualising and depoliticising Swedishness, or more specifically, myths of good Swedishness.

With the adoptee and adoption representing good Swedishness, the violences behind good Swedishness, namely colonialism, racism and eugenics, are silenced. This is an example of what Barthes calls the *privitation of history*, where the history behind myth is rendered invisible (1993). This could certainly be seen in the images of Charlie in the IKEA commercial in Chapter Six, where his body was totally disconnected from histories of the Vietnam War and Operation Babylift – exemplified in the choice of name for him ("Charlie" being US military slang for the Viet Cong). The innocence of the child, the perceived goodness and love of adoption, and the fact that adoption is above criticism, work to disconnect the representation of adoptees from history and global structures of oppression, including the violence of adoption itself.

In relation to another of Barthes' strategies of myth making (1993), it is possible for a small degree of criticism of adoption to take place (i.e. Chile scandal, high suicide rates), but these are treated as an *innoculation*: small, acknowledged acts of "evil", which can be separated from the broader, structural problem. The problem being adoption itself, and the systems that enable it. With adoption treated as individual stories, rather than part of a national desiring project and a global system of racist exploitation, and a system of exnomination whereby race is unmentioned (and unmentionable) and the relevance of the adoptee's "difference" and the adopter, and societies' whiteness is hidden, further disconnect is made between the body of the adoptee and other racialised groups, and the body of the adopter and racist, white supremacist global structures.

The job of critical adoption studies should be to focus on the gap between history and myth, and work to recontextualise, rehistoricise and repoliticise adoption. It needs to continue to fight against the perception of adoption as individual acts of love, and address the problem at a structural level.

Resistance

There is a history of adoptee-led resistance, through art, literature and research. Adoptee led organisations such as Against Child Trafficking (ACT)[42] fight corruption and help

42 ACT is not a Swedish organisation, but has helped a number of Swedish adoptees https://www.againstchildtrafficking.org/

reunite adoptees with parents. Chilean adoptees in Sweden have led the struggle for adoptee rights after revelations that tens of thousands of adoptees from Chile were stolen (chileadoption.se)[43]. Yet, adoptees put themselves at great risk in challenging adoption. They risk alienating themselves from friends and family, and distancing themselves from Swedishness. I argue that the pressure to resist the adoption project and the racism that propels it should not fall on adoptees alone. Instead, I call for white Swedes, white adoption researchers, white friends and relatives of adoptees, to work at challenging their own positions in adoption racism, and their own racist desires that drive positive views on adoption.

Resisting racism and criticising adoption is a matter of life or death for adoptees, and accounts from adoptees of colour who dare to publicly speak out about racism, and the racism of adoption, indicate that they do so at risk of a brutal backlash from white Swedes, adopters and adoptees alike (Hübinette 2011). Particularly concerning is the risk of losing friends and family members: with adoptees naturally susceptible to separation trauma, this can potentially have devastating effects (Myers 2014).

Because of this, non-resistance is often a survival strategy. In Chapter Eight, I discuss the phenomenon of the "100% Swedes", the adoptees who feel that it is their duty to declare themselves as happy and grateful about their adoption, and that there is nothing beyond their Swedishness. While it is deeply sad to see the use of adoptees in promoting adoption and blocking critique, and worrying to hear the echoes of voices of narcissistic adoptive parents in "happy adoptee" narratives, this is a logical, understandable act, and it should be read as a survival strategy. A happy adoptee narrative should not therefore be treated as evidence that adoption is a success story or that there are "two sides to the adoption story".

While adoptee voices and adoptee-led research should be at the absolute forefront of the struggle against adoption racism, there should be no obligation for adoptees to be involved. The onus should be on white, non-adopted people to understand the role of their desires in adoption racism and work towards disrupting the structures that make international transracial adoption desirable, permissible and possible. Likewise, there should be no expectation on adoptees to "educate us" or tell their stories.

This is also discussed by Diangelo (2018), who firmly puts the responsibility for change on white people:

43 Discussions of corruption and child theft have been largely absent from Swedish adoption discourse, despite such abuses being widespread, and despite adoptee activists struggling for years to bring issues such as falsification of paperwork and kidnapping to light. However, at time of final submission of this thesis an important development is taking place: Dagens Nyheter, Sweden's main broadsheet newspaper, is publishing a series of articles on illegal international adoptions to Sweden (Sköld, Lundberg & Mahmoud 2021). There is hope that this will lead to long overdue public and political debate on the issue.

> I must first be clear that navigating white fragility is fundamentally a matter of survival for people of color. The consequences of white fragility include hours of agonizing as well as far more extreme consequences such as being seen as a threat and a troublemaker. These biased assessments often lead to job loss, stress-related illness, criminal charges, and institutionalization. To choose to survive in any way deemed necessary is thus an empowered choice. It is white people's responsibility to be less fragile; people of color don't need to twist themselves in knots trying to navigate us as painlessly as possible. (2018, 152)

Impact

What is the impact of my research?

While my project has focused on Swedish adoption, and Swedish whiteness and Swedish nation building, it reveals what is part of a wider global system of exploitation and inequality. The international adoption industry may well be in decline, but the structures it is part of are not: the desire to control and exploit the bodies of poor women of colour lives on in the growing surrogacy market, like adoption driven by racist desires and reproductive rights fantasies of rich white westerners. The massive global inequalities that create conditions for adoption supply, created and sustained by colonialism, military imperialism, relentless capitalism and the collective death drive of environmental destruction that frenetic consumerism demands, shows no signs of relenting.

My thesis endeavoured to add to critique against international adoption. From presentations and discussions of my work I am entirely aware that this is an emotional topic for many, and that the questioning of the love and goodness discourses around adoption gives rise to anger and shock. While I call for an absolute end to the international adoption industry, and investigations into adoption practices, both historical and contemporary, along with systems of support, reconciliation and compensation for adoptees and first families, I also urge the reader to look beyond adoption itself, and reflect on what it represents on a broader scale.

In completing this project I have come to realise the overwhelming significance of "reproduction politics" in capitalism, colonialism and war machines, as well as in the building of nations. To challenge adoption is to raise questions about mechanisms that go well beyond the uncomplicated stories of colour-blind love, and win-win transactions of goodness that adoption is so often depicted as: it is to question the premises that the modern Western world is built on and functions around.

As the climate crisis takes hold, and as we move deeper into our era of mass extinction, there are increasing calls for a new world order. For a new way of being and doing that may if not save the planet could prolong the existence of humanity for a few more generations. I argue that this change must also encompass a new approach to reproduc-

tive politics, and must be based around an end to the fantasies and desires of controlling the bodies of poor women of colour. The exploitation of women and children's bodies must end along with the exploitation of natural resources.

Reflections on the future of adoption

Even if adoption desire is still strong, it may not necessarily reflect a rosy outlook for the adoption industry itself. With rising criticism of the adoption industry and the constant revelations of corruption scandals, combined with tightened legislation and the need to meet domestic adoption demands, major sending countries have dramatically reduced the supply of children to adopting countries in the West. At the same time, new possibilities have arisen for involuntarily childless Westerners to reproduce, such as improved IVF treatment and commercial (and non-commercial) surrogacy. It may also be suggested that many of the visibly "desperate" children now gracing the Western media simply aren't the same objects of adoption desire for white would-be parents as East Asian or African children were. However the combination of factors manifests itself, there are certainly indications that the adoption industry globally is in something of a decline. Having said that, the resilience and resources of the major adoption agencies should not be underestimated, nor should their lobbying power, and as a project so central to meanings of Swedishness, international adoption may be around for some time to come, if not necessarily in its current form.

The rise of critical transracial adoptee voices along with an assertion of rights from sending countries becomes problematic for contemporary Swedish whiteness, as does the stream of accounts of racism and identity problems (not to mention the remarkably high suicide rates) of adoptees. Adult transracial adoptees, by their very existence, threaten to bring the "goodness" of good Sweden into question, and leave white Sweden longing for the age when they could be happily anti-racist without this "anti-racism" being questioned, criticised or disrupted by people of colour.

There is a real possibility of the end of the adoption industry as we know it the coming years. However, the desires that drive the industry may not be addressed, and with the history of adoption written by adopters and adoption agencies, the true impacts of adoption desire may never be reflected upon. There is also a real danger that the element of adoption desire that overlaps with infertility and beliefs in a right to a family in the West, could see the industry of adoption replaced by the industry of surrogacy. The desire to exploit poor women of colour, to control and use their bodies, and to take their children will merely be steered into another corrupt multi-million dollar industry, which some might argue is even less ethical than adoption. In fact, 2019 was the first year that saw the number of children transported to Sweden through surrogacy overtake the number of international adoptions (Dagens Nyheter 2020).

Where further research is needed

My research indicated that there is an urgent need to expand critical adoption studies to research intergenerational trauma, to explore the reverberations of adoption violence in the second generation: the children of adoptees. There are also notable gaps in the study of trafficking and corruption scandals, and the impact these have. Additionally, I was concerned by the lack of work on sexual abuse of adoptees in Sweden. While studies have indicated a significant over-representation of international adoptees as victims of abuse (for example, Lindblad & Signell 2008), their conclusions seem to be restricted by the pro-adoption discourse (See Chapter Two). Finally, while there is certainly an increase in work on adoptees as adults, there is little research on adoptees and their families, that is adoptees as partners, parents and so on. It is curious that even as 40, 50 year olds, the research focus tends to still be in relation to adoptees' adopted parents.

Where do we go from here?

> I guess you don't get it. The whole point is, there is nothing you can do to make shit better. You're white in a white supremacist society, and that's all there is to it. You purchase a colored kid (sometimes two or three) as a white person. You can never take that back. There is little you can do to repair the damage. No amount of cultural lessons, no amount of anti-racist work you do, no amount of money that you give, no amount of slang or phrases that you learn, can change the structure that you are part of. (Korean adoptee Kil Ja Kim 2003, cited in Ahulwalia 2007, 55)

Inspired by Diangelo's writing on white fragility (2018) I will end with a reflection on my, and other white non-adopted researchers and activists' responsibilities. I suggest that non-adopted researchers including myself, and those who have adopted, should work to support adoptees and others impacted by adoption, and should challenge pro-adoption racism and the structures that support it. This, however, does entail active critical work. To begin with, the race work that needs to be done to challenge adoption is life-long, and involves understanding one's own unavoidable place in structures of white supremacy. It requires building one's own racial education and racial stamina, the strength to be able to listen and be part of race conversations without fragility (Diangelo 2018).

The first step of that is to be able to see oneself as white, and understand that that carries meaning. Practically that can mean allowing oneself to be defined as a white adoptive parent. However, it is not just adoptive parents who need to acknowledge their whiteness and its meaning. This is also essential race work for those of us who are relatives or partners of adoptees and parents of "second generation adoptees".

Racial stamina must also involve building the strength to be able to hear critical discussions about adoption, without feeling that it is a personal attack. The restrictions on

critical adoption research are life threatening and will have on-going impacts through generations. It is essential that it becomes possible to seriously criticise the adoption project without invoking anger or tears.

Those of us who are white and/or non-adopted researchers and activists need to create space for adoptee and first family voices. While solidarity with the victims of adoption is vital, and exploiting one's privilege when needed can sometimes be a useful tool in the resistance, it is important to be careful to avoid solidarity silencing (Diangelo 2018). This is when one finds a common suffering that detracts from the main issue that we are not part of. For instance, this could be turning conversation from the adoptee's experiences of racism (which the white ally is excluded from) to a shared experience of sexism (for example), where the white ally can feel included. This move takes race off the table so to speak, and therefore acts to avoid race talk and sustain white supremacist norms.

I believe that a responsibility of white researchers and activists is to lead critique of whiteness and critique of adoption, with white people especially. Our safe and privileged positions in whiteness should be remembered, and even if it is discomforting it is our responsibility to cut in and intercept racism, colour-blind racism, pro-adoption racism. We should be able to accept being called out for these racisms too.

In terms of critical research I believe that everything now should be geared towards fighting for an immediate end to international transracial adoption, and fighting to allow space for its history in white supremacist structures to be communicated. As we move towards the end of the adoption industry as we know it, it is imperative, for the victims of the industry and their descendants, that the international adoption project in general, and the Swedish international adoption project in particular, is not resigned to a footnote in history about how some well-meaning Westerners rescued orphaned children from the Third World. Instead, adoption should be remembered as a massive scale trafficking of bodies of colour alongside the transatlantic slave trade, indentured labour and sex trafficking (Hübinette 2006), that will have on-going effects through generations. It must be understood as a significant feature of histories of white supremacy, colonialism and racism.

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