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Transracial Adoption, White Cosmopolitanism and the Fantasy of the Global Family

Tobias Hübinette and James Arvanitakis

*This landscape remains alien, impenetrable, until a language is found in which to win it, speak it, represent it.*¹

Transracial adoption of children, as well as of adults, is a practice that has been going on for centuries. A common de-historicised understanding of the process, however, would probably date it to the postwar era and connect it to today's adoptions from the Third World to the West, or possibly relate it to the domestic adoption of minority children to majority families within certain Western countries. Despite such popular conceptions, during the classical colonial period (from 1500s to the 1930s) it was not only the adoption of non-white native children and adults by white colonisers and settlers but also the opposite that occurred in the European colonies. The existence of these 'inverted' transracial adoptions is well documented in literary and autobiographical texts, historical and official documents, and in art and visual culture. At that time, the white transracial adoptee who had been transformed into the Other was stigmatised and even demonised as something of an ethnoracial monster transgressing the boundaries between Europeans and non-Europeans.

In the contemporary postcolonial era, transracial adoption in practice solely means the adoption of children of colour to white adopters, whether it is on a transnational or a national level. At the same time, the memory of the 'inverted' transracial adoptions is still kept alive in literary, cinematic and visual representations and narratives. In these representations, the white adoptee who 'went native' and became the Other is romanticised and even portrayed as something close to an antiracist.

This article aims to reconceptualise transracial adoption within the framework of the fundamental inability of Europeans to attach themselves to the lands and peoples outside Europe by making use of the

1. J M Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Yale University, New Haven, 1988, p 7

concepts of indigenisation and autochtonisation – a term we will expand on and which is used by the physical sciences to describe something that originates where it is found. An analysis of classical colonial, late colonial and postcolonial literature, as well as cinematic and visual narratives, highlights the transformation of the white transracial adoptee from a tragic to a romantic figure. This is linked to today's shift to transracial adoptions, which took place on an imaginary level by the way of fantasies of transspecies adoptions as far back as the years between the two world wars. At the end, we argue that the contemporary Westerner's need and desire to create family ties with the Others has deep historical roots, which has resulted in what we choose to call a white cosmopolitanism and a vision of a global future family.

THE EUROPEAN SETTLERS' INABILITY TO FEEL AT HOME

During the 500 years of major colonial settlement, millions of Europeans emigrated to overseas colonies. Regardless of the initial intention – whether to conquer, permanently settle or temporarily migrate to make one's fortune – both the settlers and a substantial proportion of their descendants have had to live with a feeling of not belonging to the new land. This feeling of homelessness, which of course is not unique to the European settlers but is something that practically everyone experiences when moving to another country, created an obstacle for the Europeans. This is poetically captured by Howard Jacobson, who describes the longing for a homeland amidst the wealthy suburbs in Sydney, Australia in the following conversation between father and son:

Father: 'Sometimes I've stood on this very spot. . . and I've heard the sobs of grown men and women from a far away as Perth and Adelaide. The whole country shakes nightly. . .?'

Son: I stood by his side and listened. . . I made out. . . the low moaning. . . of fourteen million souls in exile.

Father: 'So don't ask me. . . if I'm homesick'.²

Such nostalgia ('home-sickness' in Greek) created a demand for a reflection on one's identity that has continued for generations on a psychic and symbolic level, as well as on a physical and material level. This sense of unease can only be overcome, it would appear, if one can finally attach to the new land.

It is this sense of not feeling at home in the new country, perhaps ever, that the South African author J M Coetzee discusses in *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*. Coetzee argues that identity is one of the main themes in settler literature by descendants of European immigrants both during and after the classical colonial period.³ The Australian postcolonial theorist Pal Ahluwalia echoes these sentiments in a more explicit way in an article bearing the fitting title 'When Does a Settler Become a Native?'.⁴

The image of the settler looking for this elusive feeling – but never able to settle on it – is exemplified by Australian author and playwright Patrick White in his novel *Voss*, which tells the story of a German, Johann Ulrich Voss, who sets out to cross the Australian continent.

2. Howard Jacobson, *Redback*, London, 1986, pp 149–150

3. Coetzee, op cit

4. Pal Ahluwalia, 'When Does a Settler Become a Native? Citizenship and Identity in a Settler Society', *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol 10, no 1, 2001, pp 63–73

Set in the nineteenth century, it is a tragic story of an ill-advised adventure on which Voss sets out with a large party, during which he remains alienated from the land he aims to conquer.⁵

The Canadian English studies scholar Terry Goldie presents a more confrontational image with regard to this theme. In his book *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigène in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures* he argues that the image of the native 'savage' in settler literature, which oscillated between abject nausea, a will to exterminate 'it', and an erotic desire, reflects the white European coloniser's sense of homelessness.⁶ This is more or less a permanent attachment problem to the world outside Europe and the dilemma of not being comfortable or feeling safe in the presence of non-Europeans. This leads to an almost eternal need to become the Other. It also leads to the ambivalent attitude towards 'the natives', who are sometimes demonised and sometimes romanticised.

One strategy to overcome the sense of being an outsider was to claim a (Christian) religious right to all lands outside Europe. Reference to Christian myths about the Promised Land, as well as to native myths about the coming of a race of 'white Gods', allowed one to imagine the new land as being either unpopulated and/or inhabited only by nomads who did not deserve it as they did not cultivate the soil. This allowed whole regions and even continents to be classified as *terra nullius*, virgin land or white spaces.

This strategy, which often went hand in hand with the trope of native savagery, was as much textual and literary as artistic and visual. In her excellent monograph Gesa Mackenthun argues that it was this strategy and ideology that lay behind the self-imposed duty to perform *la mission civilisatrice*, the manifest destiny and the white man's burden.⁷ This also extended to the obsession with naming new islands and territories as New England, Nouvelle France, Nya Sverige or Nueva España. However, the vast majority of the hundreds of millions of Europeans who moved to the overseas colonies between 1450 and 1950 needed much more than to re-baptise new land in order finally to feel at home outside Europe.⁸

5. Patrick White, *Voss*, Penguin, London, 1957

6. Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigène in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures*, McGill-Queen's University, Montreal, 1989

7. Gesa Mackenthun, *Metaphors of Dispossession: American Beginnings and the Translation of Empire, 1492–1637*, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 1997

8. Lorenzo Veracini, 'Settler Collective, Founding Violence and Disavowal: The Settler Colonial Situation', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol 29, no 4, 2008, pp 363–379

THE ISSUE OF INDIGENISATION AND AUTOCHTONISATION IN THE SETTLER COLONIES

In the American Spanish colonies a division eventually developed between those who were born in Europe, whom we can compare to today's first generation of immigrants, and those who were born and grew up in the colonies (our contemporary second and third generations, and so on) and were called *criollos* or Creoles. The original settlers were called *peninsulares*, and as time passed this group came to be mostly composed of higher ranked servicemen who had been dispatched by the European metropole to administer and govern the overseas territories. Today we might compare the peninsulares to so-called *expatriates* or *sojourners* who do not look upon themselves as permanent settlers.

The equivalent groups to the Spanish-descendent Creoles in British and French colonies were called settlers and *colons*. These were the white descendants of the first generation of British and French emigrants, and it was among this population segment that the most intense identity work and attachment process took place to construct a feeling of being 'at home' outside Europe.

For the Europeans, the colonies did not just mean a strange and wild landscape, an unknown and even bizarre climate and strange and exotic animals and plants, but also odd and 'primitive' peoples and cultures. Even if the indigenous populations, who most often were dispossessed and displaced, sometimes even exterminated, were treated and portrayed as being primitive, barbaric and wild in all respects, they had something which the European descendants lacked: an autochthonous relationship to the land. This natural science concept derives from Classical Greek and can be translated as that which comes from the earth itself.⁹ This can also be likened to the racialised *Blut und Boden*-thinking which the National Socialists made use of to be able to conceptualise the Jews as non-Europeans, Asians and 'Orientals', and which makes it possible for today's European extreme right to equate being European with being white.¹⁰

What followed was the practice and strategy of 'going native' by the settlers. This became central in the settler societies where the white population became the majority – or at least wielded hegemonic power – in cities across the Americas, in parts of Northern, Eastern and Southern Africa, as well as in Australia and New Zealand. The aim was to accomplish the degree of indigenisation and autochtonisation that was felt to be absolutely necessary to be able to feel at home as a white person living permanently outside Europe. In the postcolonial era, this always ongoing identity work has become even more accentuated, for instance in the nation-building processes in the Americas after independence. In the USA, portraits and paintings of Native Americans have been used frequently in the national symbolic language as has the eagle, which the white settlers inherited from the native population as a symbol of power. Similarly, in New Zealand, the (commodified) Maori *haka* has become a symbol of the 'fighting spirit' of the nation.¹¹

However, the linguistic, cultural, religious and racial barriers that existed between the white settler populations and the non-white native populations were, in reality, not easy to transgress. The settlers' need to accomplish indigenisation and autochtonisation – or to become the Other – became even more important during the late colonial period and in the postcolonial era. What developed from around 1900 was a strategy and a process that can be called 'transracialisation' or to 'become transracial', which arguably is the most extreme form of 'going native'. This racial transformation comes from a performative and a constructivist understanding of identity development and takes place when, for example, a white person learns a native language, adopts native food and native dress and practises native customs and sometimes even religions.

Both the literary and physical worlds are filled with examples of this transracialised white person who has gone native to the extent that they more or less fully identify with and perform a native and non-European position – especially from the first half of the twentieth century. The list of travellers, adventurers, artists, missionaries and anthropologists who have been studied as exemplars of 'going native' is extensive and includes: Joseph Conrad's Kurtz, Lawrence of Arabia, Lafcadio Hearn, Pierre Loti, Mary Kingsley, Isabelle Eberhardt, Paul Gauguin, Mother Teresa, Bronisław Malinowski and Margaret Mead.¹² One example of this is the Australian author David Malouf's (1993) description of an English boy, Gemmy Fairley, marooned in Australia and raised by a local Aboriginal group.¹³ Gemmy is confronted

9. René Dubos, Russell W Schaedler, Richard Costello and Phillippe Hoet, 'Indigenous, Normal, and Autochthonous Flora of the Gastrointestinal Tract', *Journal of Experimental Medicine*, vol 122, no 1, 1965, pp 67–76

10. Rob Garbutt, 'White "autochtony"', *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association E-Journal*, vol 2, no 1, 2006, pp 1–16

11. Jay Scherer and Steven J Jackson, 'Cultural Studies and the Circuit of Culture: Advertising, Promotional Culture and the New Zealand All Blacks', *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies*, November 2008, vol 8, no 4, 2008, pp 507–526

12. Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 1989; Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Native: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 1990

13. David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1993

14. Penelope Ingram, 'Racializing Babylon: Settler Whiteness and the "New Racism"', *New Literary History*, vol 32, no 1, winter 2001, pp 157–176
15. Sven Hedin, *My Life as an Explorer*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1998
16. Lasse Berg, *Gryning över Kalahari: Hur människan blev människa*, Ordfront, Stockholm, 2005
17. Paul Baepler, *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 1999; Kate Darian-Smith, Roslyn Poignant and Kay Schaffer, eds, *Captured Lives: Australian Captivity Narratives*, University of London, London, 1992; Rebecca Blevins Faery, *Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race, and Sex in the Shaping of an American Nation*, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 1999; Paul Neubauer, 'Indian Captivity in American Children's Literature: A Pre-Civil War Set of Stereotypes', *The Lion & The Unicorn*, vol 25, 2001, pp 70–80
18. Thomas Pellow, *The History of the Long Captivity and Adventures of Thomas Pellow*, printed for R Goadby and sold by W Owen, London, 1740
19. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Barnes and Noble Classics, New York, 2003
20. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Qualitas, Alberta, 2010
21. Linda Colley, *Captives: The Story of Britain's Pursuit of Empire and How its Soldiers and Civilians Were Held Captive by the Dream of Global Supremacy, 1600–1850*, Pantheon, New York, 2002
22. Mary Rowlandson, *The Narrative of the Captivity*

by arriving European settlers who try to save him. However, he is too native to go back; a situation that captures the transracialised strategy of the white population – and thereby throws into relief the split of white subjectivities in a foreign land.¹⁴

Sometimes it was not even necessary to involve the native population in this attachment work. The world-famous Swedish explorer and Asian studies scholar Sven Hedin explained in his memoirs that he used to lie down and hug the Asian ground which he had 'discovered' before he went to sleep. In this way, he argued that 'Asia became my cold bride'.¹⁵ In a similar vein the contemporary Swedish journalist and author, Lasse Berg (2005), has talked about his deep and sincere feeling of 'coming home' in a recent documentary which he filmed when he visited the Kalahari desert in Southern Africa in his quest for the origin of the human species.¹⁶

TO GROW UP AMONG AND LIVE WITH THE OTHER

A historical genre that reflects both the fear of and the fascination for becoming the Other is the so-called white slavery and white captivity narrative, which was written, printed and read in both the colonies and throughout Europe in the period around 1500–1900. The white slavery narrative centred on a white character who had become enslaved by a non-white people. The narrative could concern either a European or a white settler, and could be autobiographical or fictive.¹⁷ Thomas Pellow's famous bestseller, *The History of the Long Captivity and Adventures of Thomas Pellow* (1740), is an excellent example of the autobiographical white slavery narrative.¹⁸ Pellow tells us of his abduction from Cornwall as a child by North African corsairs and his upbringing and life in Morocco as a slave and as a Muslim. Daniel Defoe's fictive superhero, Robinson Crusoe,¹⁹ also spent some time as a slave in North Africa, as did Jonathan Swift's Gulliver who experiences several episodes of captivity with strong colonial overtones.²⁰

In her encyclopaedia-like study of the white captivity theme within the context of the British Empire, the English historian Linda Colley has written about all the soldiers, explorers, travellers, missionaries and settlers who, like John Smith in seventeenth-century Virginia, were captured by natives in colonies and who later returned to white 'civilisation' and wrote memoirs and books about their experiences. According to Colley, these were often reprinted over and over again due to the mass popularity of this particular genre.²¹ Some of these publications, such as Mary Rowlandson's *The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson* (1682), James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), Theresa Gowanlock's and Theresa Delaney's *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* (1885) and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), have also become part of the Western literary canon.²²

A variant of this white captivity narrative is to be found in all the literary adoption narratives involving both animals and 'natives' as adopters of white children lost and othered into a type of 'feral brood'. Examples include Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan* (1914) and Lee Falk's *The Phantom* (1936), both invented in the years between the world

and Restoration of Mrs Mary Rowlandson (1682), Kessinger, Whitefish, Montana, 2010; James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), Oxford World's Classics, Oxford, 2009; Theresa Gowanlock and Theresa Delaney, *Two Months in the Camp of Big Bear* (1885), Kessinger, Whitefish, Montana, 2004; Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (1901), Barnes and Noble Classics, New York, 2003

23. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912), Signet Classics, New York, 2008; Lee Falk, *The Phantom: Complete Newspaper* (1936), Hermes, Neshannock, Pennsylvania, 2010

24. For example see David Penberthy, 'How Australia Forgot About Schapelle Corby', *The Punch*, 9 July 2009, available online at <http://www.thepunch.com.au/articles/how-australia-forgot-about-schapelle-corby/>.

25. See Evonne Barry, 'Schapelle Corby, Bali Nine's Jail Nightmare Revealed', *Courier Mail*, 25 October 2009; available online at <http://bit.ly/i2O1C6>, accessed December 2010.

26. Gunlög Fur, *Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland*, Brill, Leiden, 2006

27. Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascañán, *Cautiverio feliz y razón individual de las guerras dilatadas del Reino de Chile* (1673), Editorial Universitaria, Santiago, Chile, 1992

28. Hendrik Hamel, *Hamel's Journal, and a Description of the Kingdom of Korea*, translated from the Dutch manuscript by Br Jean-Paul Buys of Taizé, Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, Seoul, 1998

29. Torgovnick, op cit

wars, when the European empires reached their zenith. Here the children grew up among 'exotic' animals as well as among 'primitive' natives.²³

More recently we have seen the voluntary examples of such transspecies adoptions in the form of Westerners who live together with animals, such as the 'gorilla woman' Dian Fossey among the apes in Rwanda and the 'grizzly man' Timothy Treadwell, who lived with grizzly bears in Alaska. This narrative has also taken a new shape in the form of Westerners imprisoned in exotic yet hostile environments. We see this through contemporary mass-mediated news reports about white Westerners who are in prison in South America, Southeast Asia or who have become hostages in, for example, West or Central Asia. This too is, in many ways, a modern continuation of the old fear of and fascination with living with and becoming the Other.

The Westerner is often portrayed as the victim, no matter the crime committed. For example, convicted Australian drug smuggler Schapelle Corby has been portrayed in the Australian media as the victim despite her criminal conviction.²⁴ These 'Western victims' are often portrayed as if caught in the kind of adolescent adventure story or feature film in which the heroine or hero is captured by a 'primitive' non-Western tribe and risks being tortured or even boiled alive in a cauldron before being eaten by cannibals.²⁵

The twin genres and subjects of white slavery and white captivity are certainly not limited to the British Empire. For example, Swedish historian Gunlög Fur (2006) takes up a couple of Swedish white captivity examples that have been documented in New Sweden, the present US state of Delaware, and in the land of the Sámis in Northern Scandinavia.²⁶ There are also Spanish titles such as Francisco Núñez de Pineda y Bascañán's *Cautiverio feliz y razón individual de las guerras dilatadas del reino de Chile* (1673), which tells the story of a Spanish Creole soldier becoming a captive among the Mapuches.²⁷ The captivity narrative often became the standard expert text about a certain ethnicity or country, as in the case of the Dutch sailor Hendrik Hamel, whose diary published in 1666 told the story of his thirteen years of captivity in Korea. Hamel's book subsequently became the European standard text on the Koreans and on Korea for the next 150 years.²⁸

Another modern version of the captivity genre, although in this case the captivity is desired, self-chosen and mostly even pleasurable, is the ethnographic anthropologist's method of temporary living with the Other. This can involve the researcher having sex with or even being 'adopted' by her or his native informants. This voluntary captivity contains a more or less explicit element of elevating the 'primitive' and leaving behind the 'civilised'. This is the conclusion of American English studies scholar Marianna Torgovnick, who analysed figures as well known as Franz Boas, Bronisław Malinowski, Margaret Mead and Claude Lévi-Strauss.²⁹ Other examples from the same period are the Swedish missionary and adventurer August Larsson who ended up as a 'duke' in Mongolia; the Swedish natural scientist Sten Bergman who was adopted by natives in Papua New Guinea; and today's 'antiracist' journalists like the Swedish author Jonathan Freud who has had children with several Roma women around Eastern Europe.

Another less demanding way of going native is to go native 'from the armchair' and create relations to the non-Western world by purchasing

30. Price, op cit
31. Edith M Hull, *The Sheik* (1919), Biblio Bazar, New York, 2007; *The Sheik*, 1921, silent black-and-white film, eighty minutes, directed by George Melford, Famous Players-Lasky Corporation
32. Alexander Lubin, *Romance and Rights: The Politics of Interracial Intimacy, 1945–1954*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, Mississippi, 2005
33. Joane Nagel, *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003
34. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Routledge, London, 1992
35. Tony Dokoupil, 'Raising Katie: What Adopting a White Girl Taught One Black Family', *Newsweek*, 22 April 2009; available online at <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/04/22/raising-katie.html>, accessed 31 October 2010
36. Colley, op cit
37. *The Searchers*, 1956, colour film, 119 minutes, directed by John Ford, C V Whitney Pictures; *Hombre*, 1967, colour film, 111 minutes, directed by Martin Ritt, Twentieth Century Fox; *Little Big Man*, 1970, colour film, 139 minutes, directed by Arthur Penn, Cinema Center Films; *Dances with Wolves*, 1990, colour film, 181 minutes, directed by Kevin Costner, Tig Productions, Majestic Films International; *The Missing*, 2003, colour film, 137 minutes, directed by Ron Howard, Revolution Studios
38. See for instance Mark C Jerng, *Claiming Others: Transracial Adoption and National Belonging*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2010.

and collecting non-European and non-Christian material objects and artefacts. These can be organic, in the form of animals and plants, and also of children, women and men who become domestic workers, servants, or even family members and partners. The American anthropologist Sally Price scrutinises this armchair method of going native in her book *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, in which she looks at Western collectors of so-called 'primitive' art objects. In her work, Price attempts to identify how these collectors attach to the earth, nature and the original and authentic by furnishing whole rooms in an imagined Native American, African, Polynesian or 'Oriental' style.³⁰ This can become materially problematic when such non-European objects and artefacts are smuggled in by illegal means and purchased from dubious sources – often depriving indigenous peoples of their own cultural artefacts.

INTERRACIAL INTIMACY

During the first half of the twentieth century, the white slavery genre became increasingly eroticised and developed into subgenres such as the harem or sheikh fantasy. The publishing of Edith M Hull's novel *The Sheik* in 1919, later to become the 1921 movie with Rudolph Valentino in the lead role, is a good example of this.³¹ The development of this genre went hand in hand with waves of moral panic as authorities warned white women against having relationships with non-white men or even reading novels or watching movies that had such themes of interracial intimacy.³² This was accompanied by so-called 'anti-miscegenation laws' in many settler societies that prohibited interracial relations, and sometimes even marriage, between white and mixed-race people.

This eroticised version of going native has, according to several post-colonial feminists, always existed as a forbidden yet ongoing phenomenon.³³ This was the case despite cultural condemnation and juridical legislation along what the American gender studies scholar Joanne Nagel has called the 'ethno-sexual frontier' – extending the arguments of Mary Louise Pratt who described this as the 'colonial contact zone'.³⁴ Laws have also existed that ban and prohibit people of colour from adopting or even caring for white children – reflecting a fear that non-white adopters will provoke hostile reactions and suspicions that the children have been kidnapped and abducted.³⁵ Persistent rumours that white women and children had been captured by non-white natives led to an obsession with liberating them and bringing them back to 'civilisation'. Punitive expeditions against Native Americans in North America were often triggered by the presence of such captives, as were military invasions resulting in massacres and atrocities elsewhere. Linda Colley explores the phenomenon, and its expression in visual culture through the portrayal of captives, in her book *Captives*.³⁶

This long history of interracial intimate relations seems to have been especially prevalent in the US and turns up in films like *The Searchers* (1956), *Hombre* (1967), *Little Big Man* (1970), *Dances with Wolves* (1990) and *The Missing* (2003).³⁷ It is also prevalent in numerous novels.³⁸ The specific US American patriarchal version of this fear is, according to the American journalist and feminist Susan Faludi, still haunting the nation – particularly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks

39. Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America*, Metropolitan, New York, 2007
40. George L Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*, Dent, London, 1978
41. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957), Penguin, London, 2010
42. Carlos Castañeda, *The Wheel Of Time: The Shamans Of Mexico, Their Thoughts About Life, Death And The Universe*, Washington Square, Washington, 2001; Marlo Morgan, *Mutant Message from Forever: A Novel of Aboriginal Wisdom*, Harper Paperbacks, New York, 1999; Olga Kharitidi, *Entering the Circle: Ancient Secrets of Siberian Wisdom Discovered by a Russian Psychiatrist*, HarperOne, New York, 1997
43. *The Karate Kid*, 1984, colour film, 126 minutes, directed by John G Avildsen, Columbia Pictures Corporation; *The Last Samurai*, 2003, colour film, 154 minutes, directed by Edward Zwick, Warner Bros; *Avatar*, 2009, colour film, 162 minutes, directed by James Cameron, Twentieth Century Fox
44. *Tribal Wives*, 2008, television series, produced by Diverse Productions
45. Agnes Davis Kim, *I Married a Korean*, J Day Co, New York, 1953; Betty Mahmoody and William Hoffer, *Not Without My Daughter*, St Martin's Paperbacks, New York, 1987; Corinne Hofmann, *The White Masai: My Exotic Tale of Love and Adventure*, Peter Millar, trans, Harper Paperbacks, New York, 1998
46. Arthur Golden, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, Vintage, London, 1997; Åsne Seierstad, *The Bookseller*

when white American men once again failed to defend 'their' white women and 'their' white children from being killed or captured by the Others. This, according to Faludi, can be seen as a revisiting of a colonial fear.³⁹

Within Europe there is a long and similar tradition of stories about Christian women being raped and abducted by non-Christian men such as Muslims and Jews.⁴⁰ Still more common were stories about Christian children being kidnapped and sacrificed in ritual murders by Jews or Roma people. Such rumours are almost always unfounded, but have often led to massacres, pogroms and persecutions. An echo of this European myth was the false accusation that a white Italian baby had been kidnapped by a group of Italian Roma in 2008, which led to police brutality and pogrom-like attacks against Roma people all over the country.

TRANSRACIAL FANTASIES

During the process of decolonisation and the emergence of the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s, the desire to live with and become the Other was transformed into an anti-colonial and antiracist discourse. This later morphed into the loosely defined 'New Age'. The American author Jack Kerouac, who sometimes claimed that he had Native American blood, wrote in his classic 1957 novel *On the Road* that, 'I wished I was a Negro, a Mexican, or even a Jap, anything but a white man disillusioned by the best in his own "white" world'.⁴¹ In a similar manner the iconic singer of the rock band The Doors, Jim Morrison, boasted that he was connected to the North American continent by way of his psychic contact with a Native American shaman.

Among the numerous examples from the same period reflecting this desire to live with, grow up with, and be taught and mentored by Others are the many books written by New Age authors such as Carlos Castañeda (2001), Marlo Morgan (1999) and Olga Kharitidi (1997).⁴² Such authors tell us of their encounters with Native Americans, Aboriginals and Siberians. Similar mentoring themes emerged in mainstream blockbuster movies such as *The Karate Kid* (1984/2010), *The Last Samurai* (2003) and *Avatar* (2009),⁴³ and have been accompanied by television shows like BBC's *Tribal Wives* (2008).⁴⁴ In such stories, white people are taught the true nature of things by the native Other.

Such transracial fantasies are also prevalent in literature. There are many stories of a white woman marrying and having children with a non-white man, among them *I Married a Korean* (1953), *Not Without My Daughter* (1987) and *The White Masai* (1998).⁴⁵ Then there are those who take on the persona of the Other: the bestseller *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997) was written by Arthur Golden, a white American man, and *The Bookseller of Kabul* (2002) by the Norwegian celebrity journalist Åsne Seierstad.⁴⁶ There are also the notorious books written by authors who falsely claim that they belong to certain minorities. Examples include *Forbidden Love* (2004) by Norma Khouri, which describes honour killings, and *The Hand that*

of Kabul, Ingrid Christopherson, trans, Back Bay, New York, 2002

Signed the Paper (1995) by Helen Darville, telling the story of Nazi persecution.⁴⁷

The final category belongs to subcultural phenomena, positions and characters such as the wiggers and the otakus: white youth and young adults who dress up and act like African-Americans or East Asians. This encompasses the numerous individuals and companies that teach and offer so-called 'Oriental' quasi-religious elements such as meditation and martial arts, as well as associations like the Sioux Indian Club Sweden whose members dress up and behave like Native Americans. Here we see the privilege of pretending to be the Other while retaining all the benefits of whiteness.

The narratives of white slavery and white captivity have also survived in a progressive and antiracist post-1968 form, particularly within children's literature and in a colonial romantic style. Amongst these are graphic novels such as *The Phantom* (1936) and *Tintin* (1929) and the Swedish author Janne Lundström's (1977) comic book series about Johan Vilde, the Swedish boy who grows up among West Africans, set in the Swedish colony Cabo Corso in the seventeenth century. Swedish author Helmer Linderholm wrote books about a Swedish settler boy, Claes Beehren, who, during the same period, is adopted by Native Americans in New Sweden.⁴⁸

The will to transracialise – to become transracial – and to change race and be the Other for a while is also reflected in the so-called racial transformation genre. This genre includes titles of cross-racial impersonation and race changers such as the white American journalist John Howard Griffin's book *Black Like Me* (1961) and the white German journalist Günter Wallraff's book *Ganz unten* (1985) and his film *Schwarz auf weiß* (2009).⁴⁹ These white antiracist journalists have been able to more or less successfully dress up and pass, the former as an African-American, and the latter as a Turk and a Somali. Other examples are the white female character Catherine in Ernest Hemingway's posthumously published novel *Garden of Eden* (1986), who wants to become a black man, and the white male head character Jeff in Melvin Van Peeble's film *Watermelon Man* (1970) who is transformed into a black man. We also see the white actor Steve Martin in *The Jerk* (1979) who plays a white adopted son to an African-American family, the British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen's various transracial transformations, and the late artist Michael Jackson, who was something of a dystopian symbol for racial transformation running out of control. 'Reversed' examples of non-whites transformed into whites include the American reality television series *Black. White.* (2006) featuring a black and a white family changing appearance, places and lives with each other; and the Swedish director Babak Najafi's short film *Elixir* (2003), based on a short story by the Swedish author Alejandro Leiva Wenger and in which a group of non-white youths in a proletarian suburb are transformed into white upper-class boys by means of a secret race-change elixir.⁵⁰

White actors dressing up and acting like non-white characters also has a long history within theatre and the cinema, dating back to a time when non-white actors were not allowed to perform (or when their existence was ignored). In such situations, white actors played 'black face' or 'yellow face' roles.⁵¹

47. Norma Khouri, *Forbidden Love*, Bantam Press, London, 2004; Helen Darville, *The Hand That Signed the Paper*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, Australia, 1995
48. Falk, *The Phantom*, op cit; Georges Remi (1929), *The Adventures of Tintin: Volume 1*, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, New York, 1994; Janne Lundström, *Johan Vilde: Refugee*, Phantom, Stockholm, 1977; Helmer Linderholm, *Den röda stigens folk*, Plus, Stockholm, 1977
49. John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me* (1961), NAL Trade, New York, 2003; Günter Wallraff, *Ganz unten*, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Cologne, 1985; *Schwarz auf weiß*, 2009, colour film, directed by Susanne Jäger and Pagonis Pagonakis, ARTE.Maxwell
50. Ernest Hemingway, *Garden of Eden* (1986), Scribner, New York, 1995; *Watermelon Man*, 1970, colour film, 100 minutes, directed by Melvin Van Peebles, Columbia Pictures Corporation; *The Jerk*, 1979, colour film, directed by Carl Reiner, Aspen Film Society; *Black. White.*, 2006, television series, produced by R J Cutler and Ice Cube, Actual Reality Pictures; *Elixir*, 2004, colour film, directed by Babak Najafi, Film i Väst
51. Susan Gubar, *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture*, Oxford University, New York, 1997

Another related theme from the same late colonial period of the first half of the twentieth century, and especially the inter-war years, is that of mixed-race people, in particular those with a white and a black parent, who could pass as whites but who constantly lived in fear of being 'exposed' as non-whites; this is present in literary texts such as James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured man* (1912), Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929) and Sinclair Lewis's *Kingsblood Royal* (1947).⁵² All these examples of racial transformation, cross-racial impersonation and race changers point to the fact that today it is still not possible to change race by medical means, in contrast to the possibility of surgical sex change, although this fantasy of changing race is kept alive in popular culture – for example in the episode of the TV cartoon *South Park* in which a white boy goes through race change surgery and is turned into a black boy to become a better basketball player.

TO HUG THE OTHER

During the first half of the twentieth century, when the European overseas empires reached their widest geographical spread and when the white slavery and white captivity genres were slowly but steadily transformed into eroticised and romanticised narratives, the idea behind the type of transracial adoptions that we know of today also appeared. As the colonial project had been almost fully achieved in this period, in the sense that the vast majority of all non-European peoples and countries had been invaded, defeated, subjugated and occupied by Western powers with the exceptions of the inner parts of China, Iran, Arabia and Turkey, Japan, Thailand, Liberia, Ethiopia and Haiti, non-white natives and especially non-white children were no longer perceived as a potential deadly threat. Rather, they became the object of philanthropic rescue and assimilation fantasies.

This was an 'imperial sentimental narrative', to borrow an expression from the American gender studies scholar Laura Wexler, whereby the white European bourgeois subject could imagine the adoption of non-white native children as a sort of a melodrama of redemption and reconciliation.⁵³ Although the true historical origin and development of transracial and transnational adoptions took place during the Cold War and at the time of decolonisation from the 1950s to the 1970s, the white desire to save, protect, care for, nurture, civilise and assimilate the Other's children can be traced back to the inter-war period. American literature scholars like Sharon Smulders and Martha Satz have for example highlighted a scene in the American author Laura Ingalls Wilder's world-famous autobiographical novel, *Little House on the Prairie* (1935), in which she relates her upbringing as a white settler child in the North American Midwest.⁵⁴ Here, she expresses this white desire to hug and care for a native child as she and her family watch the Osage tribe leaving their area for a distant reservation after defeat in a war:

Laura looked straight into the bright eyes of the little baby nearer her. Its hair was black as crow and its eyes were black as a night when no stars shine. Those black eyes looked deep into Laura's eyes and she looked deep down into the blackness of that little baby's eyes, and she wanted

52. James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912), CreateSpace, USA, 2010; Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929), Wilder Publications, USA, 2010; Sinclair Lewis, *Kingsblood Royal* (1947), Modern Library, New York, 2001; Baz Dreisinger, *Near Black: White-To-Black Passing in American Culture*, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, 2008; Elaine K Ginsberg, ed, *Passing and The Fictions of Identity*, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, 1996

53. Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of US Imperialism*, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2000

54. Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1935; Sharon Smulders, "The Only Good Indian": History, Race, and Representation in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol 27, no 4, pp 191–202, 2002; Martha Satz, 'Finding Oneself: Images of Adoption in Children's Literature', *Adoption and Culture*, vol 1, no 1, 2007, pp 163–185

that one little baby.
 'Pa', she said, 'get me that little Indian baby!'
 'Hush, Laura!' Pa told her sternly.
 'Oh, I want it! I want it! Laura begged. 'It wants to stay with me,' Laura begged.
 'Please, Pa, please!'
 'Hush, Laura,' Pa said. 'The Indian woman wants to keep her baby.'
 'Oh Pa!' Laura pleaded, and then she began to cry.
 Ma said she had never heard of such a thing. 'Why on earth do you want an Indian baby, of all things?' Ma asked her.
 'Its eyes are so black,' Laura sobbed. She could not say what she meant.
 'Why, Laura?,' Ma said, 'you don't want another baby. We have a baby, our own baby.'
 'I want the other one, too!' Laura sobbed loudly.

Ann Romines, another American literature scholar, has even suggested that Laura's desire to hug the Other can be interpreted and analysed as a heightened delight in racial difference that is simultaneously abject and attractive, as the Native Americans are simultaneously the despised Others and human beings like Us, bordering on that pleasurable and ecstatic feeling of *jouissance*.⁵⁵ Laura, both in the book and the television series, also owns a doll that looks like an American Indian and of which she is very fond; she carries it with her all the time and often hugs it; and she repeatedly harasses her father with her wish for a 'papoose', a 'little, brown, Indian baby', while fantasising about being a Native American herself, 'naked and free'.

The same kind of desire to adopt non-white children and a wish to transform and convert them into Westerners is found in children's literature from the same period, in which exotic animals often play the role of non-whites. In Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894), the monkey King Louie expresses a strong desire to turn into a white Englishman, and in the Disney cartoon film he sings: 'I wanna be like you, I wanna walk like you, talk like you'.⁵⁶ In light of the close relationship of monkeys with human beings, the colonial monkeys paradoxically appear to be those animals most difficult to civilise and uplift; in the examples of *King Kong* (2005) and *Curious George* (2006), they are adopted by white men who then fail to turn them into a white American and a white European.⁵⁷ Instead, representatives of two other animal species really foreground and foreshadow today's transracial and transnational adoptions, namely the African or Asian elephant Babar and the Peruvian bear Paddington, adopted and transformed into colonial subjects in the French and the British Empires respectively.⁵⁸

POSTCOLONIAL RECONCILIATION CHILDREN

The French author Jean de Brunhoff's story about Babar centres on an elephant in a French colony either in West Africa or in Southeast Asia. Babar's biological mother is killed by a white hunter and, having lived as a 'street child' for a while in a French city of *colons*, where he is also exposed to racism for looking different, Babar is found and taken into care by an older French woman belonging to the upper class. This single and elderly adoptive mother, called La Vieille Dame (The Old

55. Ann Romines, *Constructing the Little House: Gender, Culture, and Laura Ingalls Wilder*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, Massachusetts, 1997

56. Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book* (1894), Barnes and Noble Classics, New York, 2009

57. *King Kong*, 2005, colour film, 185 minutes, directed by Peter Jackson, Universal Pictures; *Curious George*, 2006, colour animated film, eighty-six minutes, directed by Matthew O'Callaghan, Imagine Entertainment

58. Jean de Brunhoff, *The Travels of Babar*, Random House Books for Young Readers, New York, 1937; Michael Bond, *A Bear Called Paddington* (1958), Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, USA, 2008

Lady), raises Babar as an adoptee and as a so-called *évolué*, the term for a Westernised *indigène* or native in a French colony, meaning literally ‘evolved one’. Through an education including the learning of manners, the *évolué* becomes Westernised and is later constituted in the postcolonial elite after independence in the former French colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and Oceania.

What is so fascinating about Babar is that the story not only heralds the future practice of transracial and transnational adoption as we know it today, but also the moments of decolonisation and the postcolonial era; Babar in the later books returns to his native people and country and is crowned king, bringing with him European ‘civilisation’, and he persuades the other elephants to become Westernised. More importantly, Babar also brings along his ageing adoptive mother La Vieille Dame, who becomes something of a right-hand *éminence grise* in Babar’s independent and postcolonial country. This foregrounds the many Western advisers who have come to play such a crucial role in postcolonial states in the form of military instructors, intelligence officers, relief workers, medical doctors, missionaries, diplomats, businessmen, scientists and so on.

Babar can thus be said to symbolise the ideal non-white adoptee from the postcolonial Third World in his full embrace of European high bourgeois culture and in his total loyalty to his adoptive parent and, in the end, to the whole colonial project and *la mission civilisatrice*. As the story of Babar belongs to children’s literature, it reminds us of Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of a strategy of innocence and an anti-conquest attitude, meaning the strategy by which whites secure their own innocence and goodness and in the very same moment assert their white hegemony.⁵⁹

Although there are many similarities, the same does not apply in full to Michael Bond’s character Paddington, the brown bear who is said to have been born in ‘darkest Peru’. Paddington, having presumably been orphaned, has been raised as a foster child by his elderly Aunt Lucy, who, because of old age, is subsequently forced to abandon him. Before doing so, she puts him on a boat bound for London. Paddington is then found at Paddington Station in London by the Brown family; he is wearing a red hat, which he claims was given to him by his biological uncle Pastuzo, and has a note attached to his coat with the text ‘please look after this bear’. The Browns, who already have two biological children, decide to adopt and take care of the brown Peruvian bear. The Browns are an upper-middle-class couple living in London’s bourgeois West End, and they give him the name Paddington because his original name is deemed too hard to pronounce. In the series of ten books beginning in 1958 the author describes how the adoptive family seeks to turn Paddington from an orphaned and homeless South American foundling into an English gentleman. In his journey, Paddington occasionally experiences racial discrimination – much like Babar.

Paddington must learn everything from the importance of personal hygiene to how to drink tea and wear gentlemanly clothes. Unlike Babar who, despite some initial clumsiness and awkwardness due to his non-white body, manages to learn to care for and discipline his own body, to drink wine and to wear a French three-piece suit and a bowler hat (as well as a black frock coat and a top hat), Paddington fails in his learning. We see Paddington regressing to his native ‘primitiveness’ in his failure to comply with his adoptive parents’ assimilatory wishes,

59. Pratt, op cit

and he resorts to food addiction, comforting himself by eating an excessive amount of jam. Paddington cannot fully manage to perform and reproduce his adoptive parents' European bourgeois habits and standards, and he therefore appears to be an 'ungrateful' non-white adoptee who constantly reveals his 'primitive' origin in the colonies of the Third World. Consequently, and in contrast to Babar, he does not deserve to be reunited with his native people and country, and instead becomes a minority person in England.

It is interesting to note that the books about Paddington were published at the time when the British Empire began to collapse, and when postcolonial immigration started to 'invade' the 'mother country'. Paddington can be said to symbolise the British Empire's failed attempt to 'lift up' and assimilate its native colonial subjects, while his regression to more 'primitive' habits reflects the anti-colonial movements of armed uprisings in the British colonies in the postwar period. Finally, and again differently from Babar, who returns to his birth country, albeit in the company of his adoptive mother, Paddington's permanent accommodation in London, the old imperial metropole and at that time the centre of the world, can be said to symbolise the beginning of postwar non-white immigration to Europe.

WHITE COSMOPOLITANISM AND THE FANTASY OF THE GLOBAL FAMILY

This exposition took as its point of departure the white European's need to connect to the colonies and their inhabitants and to feel at home in the world outside Europe and among non-Europeans. To conclude, then, the interracial families and transracial adoptions of our time seek to complete the processes of indigenisation and autochtonisation, thereby encapsulating the desire to live with and become the Other in a way that had not been accomplished previously. Here we see the division between the Western Self and the non-Western Other collapse into an antiracist transracial fantasy of postcolonial reconciliation, white cosmopolitanism and a vision of a future global family. Through intimate relations with people of colour – for instance, by means of transracial adoptions, as well as the construction of a white antiracist cosmopolitanism – white people can finally feel that they are comfortable with non-white people and at home in the non-Western world.

The desire to affiliate and establish kinship with the Other, the romanticising of the transracial white adoptee and the glorification of today's white adopters of Third World children, who on the surface may appear so different from each other, can perhaps also be seen as a combined attempt at dealing with and accommodating an envisaged future. In this near future, not only will whites have become a minority but the West will no longer be a global hegemony. Here family ties to the Others will be crucial to succeed and survive in a new, and truly postcolonial, world.