The Conditional Subject Position

A study of Transracial Adoptees and the Zone of Non-Being

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Abstract

This thesis uses Frantz Fanon's concept of the *zone of non-being* to analyse how the subject position of transracial adoptees in Sweden is shaped within the colonial structures of racial capitalism and whiteness. The study examines how ontological negation, discursive silencing, and conditional inclusion function as mechanisms through which adoptee subjectivity is constrained and made legible. Rather than interpreting autobiographical narratives as expressions of individual psychology, five publicly available testimonies—presented as podcasts, interviews, poetry, and monologues—are read as discursive sites where structural violence becomes visible.

Following a theory-driven, abductive method grounded in discourse theory and Black thought, the analysis moves through two analytical lenses: *Body* and *Affect*. These lenses trace how subjectivity is regulated through embodied and emotional registers under conditions of racialised governance. The analysis identifies three central structural mechanisms: silence, as both theme and ontological constraint; adaptation, as a demand to conform to dominant norms; and a third, unnamed pattern—an affective and narrative movement that resists categorisation and exceeds available frameworks.

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1. Introduction

The liberal notion of the child as tabula rasa, Latin for “blank slate,” imagines a mind empty at birth. Yet what the blank slate denies — origin, relation, memory — is precisely what constitutes it. Tabula rasa functions as a liberal project of making empty in order to be filled, claimed, renamed and managed.

In transracial adoption, the child is often imagined as such a blank slate upon which a new identity, culture and belonging can be inscribed. This position requires embodying both visibility and erasure. To become a symbol of both fortune and loss is to inhabit a space that remains opaque to others. The modern-colonial structured world demands coherence and legibility, and this opacity disrupts that demand. Such disruption is often met with structural and affective violence. It is this tension, and the violence that sustains it, that this study takes seriously.

To enter this space is never solely an academic task. It is also personal, political and existential. This study does not begin from identity or adaptation, but asks how subjectivity is shaped and constrained within racialised structures, and what structural mechanisms emerge through the analysis of adoptees testimonies. I attempt to begin where the universal ends: in the space where subjectivity is denied, yet continually negotiated.

1.1 Background

In Sweden, transnational and transracial adoption was institutionalised in the post-war period and peaked during the 1970s and 1980s. Adoption practicies is shaped by Cold War politics, humanitarian discourse, and the construction of the welfare state. Since the 1950s, more than 50,000 children have been adopted into Sweden, primarily from the Global South (Socialstyrelsen, 2022). These adoptions have been framed as rescue missions narrated through affective idioms of love, care, and salvation yet inseparable from broader colonial and economic structures. This extract from Foreign Policy provides a sampling of a stance that appears to be widely shared among those aforementioned sources criticizing the structural integrity of international adoption:

> “Westerners have been sold the myth of a world orphan crisis[…] many of the infants and toddlers being adopted by Western parents today are not orphans at all […]. There are simply not enough healthy, adoptable infants to meet Western demand—and there's too much Western money in search

> of children. As a result, many international adoption agencies work not to find homes for needy children but to find children for Western homes". (Graff, 2008)

Sweden's role as a receiving country was not ideologically neutral. Transracial adoption became part of the nation's self-image as modern, humanitarian, and anti-racist. Adopted children were frequently depicted as symbols of solidarity, as living proof of Swedish moral exceptionalism. This image concealed the racialized and geopolitical asymmetries that underpinned the practice. The demand for children was driven not by sending countries, but by the West, and institutional mechanisms operated across unequal legal and economic systems. Investigations have since revealed widespread irregularities, falsified documents, and the coercion of birth families (Thorsen, 2019; Hübinette & Lundström, 2020). Many sending countries have in recent years suspended international adoptions due to legal uncertainty.

As scholars have noted, the figure of the adoptee is not a neutral subject but a politically saturated one, marked by loss, projection, and symbolic value (Kim, 2010; Yngvesson, 2010; Virgiel, 2014). This background underscores the need to read transracial adoption not only as care, but also as a site of structural violence, epistemic rupture, and affective governance. Sweden's status as one of the countries with the highest number of transracial adoptions per capita makes it a revealing site from which to trace violence embedded within a social or institutional structure which conditions adoptees subject position.

In this thesis, the terms transracial adoption, transnational and international adoption are used interchangeably. However, the analysis consistently refers to transracial adoption, meaning the adoption of black/brown children into white families, most often across national borders. This is an accurate reflection of how racial difference is central in modern politics.

2. Aim and Research Question

The aim of this study is to explore how the subject position of transracial adoptees in Sweden can be understood through Frantz Fanon's concept of the zone of non-being. Through close readings of autobiographical testimonies, the study examines how colonial structures that racialise and sort subjects shape adoptee subjectivity and how these mechanisms become visible in the adoptees' own accounts. The study seeks to clarify how structural power operates at the level of lived experience and to identify the structural mechanisms that emerge through the analysis.

Research Question:

How can Frantz Fanon's concept of the zone of non-being be used to analyse the subject position of transracial adoptees in Sweden, and what structural mechanisms become visible through the analysis of their testimonies?

3. Previous Research

Psychological and Medical Frameworks

Early research on transracial adoption has primarily been informed by psychological and medical frameworks, focusing on adoptees' adjustment, behavior, and mental health outcomes (Herman, 2001; Palacios, 2006; Kirk, 1995). This tradition prioritized the study of adaptation, often centering questions such as: How are adoptees doing? How do they perform in comparison to non-adopted peers? While this research has generated valuable data on risk factors and well-being, it has often overlooked broader questions of social belonging, subjectivity, and structural conditions. Research on transracial adoption has been shaped by various ways of thinking about race, culture, and identity (Miller, 1999; Hall, 2010; dos Santos, 2012; dos Santos & Wagner, 2018).

Mental Health, Therapy, and Subjectivity in Sweden

Several recent Swedish studies have focused on the psychological and existential consequences of transracial adoption, especially in therapeutic settings. Hanna Wallensten's (2024) qualitative study explores how adult adoptees carry non-verbal forms of loss and disorientation that are often overlooked in mainstream therapy. She argues for the need for a decolonial therapeutic space capable of addressing racialised grief and silence. Similarly, Strand and Hillerberg (2024) identify a significant gap in psychological support for adoptees, despite longstanding documentation of mental health challenges. These findings indicate that even within care systems, adoptees' experiences are marginalised, reflecting a broader societal blind spot regarding the structural conditions shaping adoptee lives in Sweden.

Representation and Discourse in the Swedish Context

Although not part of peer-reviewed academic literature, Patrik Lundberg's undergraduate thesis *Marginaliseringen av adopterade* (2008) remains one of the few Swedish studies focused on adoptee representation in national media. Using critical discourse analysis and social constructionism, Lundberg investigates how adoptees are portrayed in Swedish television series. His conclusion—that adoptees can challenge dominant ideas of Swedishness through cultural identity, yet simultaneously remain "exceptions"—points to the tension between visibility and racial legibility. While not offering definitive answers, Lundberg's work opens space for further inquiry into the discursive positioning of adoptees within racialised imaginaries.

Structural and Political Critiques of Adoption

Broader research across disciplines acknowledges the complexity of transracial adoption, but often treats race as secondary to issues of culture or identity. This colorblind approach is itself symptomatic of a larger trend in migration and political theory, where racialisation is rarely centered as a structuring force. In the Swedish context, Hübinette and Tigervall (2011) conducted qualitative interviews with adult adoptees and adoptive parents, exposing how ideals of Sweden as a colorblind society obscure the everyday realities of racism and institutional exclusion. Hübinette (2021) traces the transformation of Swedish racial discourse, from race science and sterilisation to a post-Holocaust identity of humanitarian antiracism. Within this national self-image, adoptees often function as "honorary Swedes," expected to be grateful and not to speak of race, thereby reinforcing silence and assimilation.

Parallel phenomena have been documented in other national contexts. In Australia, Heather Ellemor (2003) describes how white Australians symbolically include Indigenous identities through the rhetoric of "black hearts," masking ongoing structures of colonial domination. Such symbolic inclusion, like the honorary Swede, conceals rather than resolves deeper political and ontological inequalities.

Artistic Research and the Politics of Visibility

Recent scholarship has begun to explore the dynamics of visibility and erasure within transracial adoption. For example, Bergqvist (2024) compares the transracial adoptee to a taxidermied whale in a Swedish museum, suggesting that adoption operates not only through narratives of care, but as a form of necropolitical preservation. This aligns with concepts of archival violence and haunting (Hartman 2016; Gordon, 2008), where subjects are simultaneously preserved and erased. While such artistic and conceptual work opens up valuable theoretical terrain, it often remains at the level of metaphor or symbolic interpretation.

Existing research has provided valuable insights into the psychological, cultural, and representational dimensions of transracial adoption. However, few studies examine how adoptee subjectivity is shaped within modern- colonial structures. These structures regulate which forms of subjectivity become thinkable, speakable, or permissible. The zone of non-being is used not to analyse liberation or resistance, but to clarify how subjectivity is produced, constrained, and made intelligible within modern violent structures.

4. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical tools used to analyse how the subject position of transracial adoptees is shaped by structures of coloniality. The framework consists of five parts: racial capitalism, whiteness and racialisation, the economy of the other, legibility vs. opacity, and the zone of non-being. Rather than treating subjectivity as an individual or psychological condition, the study understands it as produced through structural processes that act on the body, language, and affect. Frantz Fanon's concept of the zone of non-being is central to this approach, offering a way to theorise how subject positions are not only socially located but ontologically constrained. This framework does not prescribe fixed categories, but allows the analysis to trace how structures of power take form in embodied, affective, and discursive registers.

4.1 Theoretical Perspective: Racial Capitalism

Cedric J. Robinson introduced the concept of racial capitalism in *Black Marxism* (1983) to describe how capitalism has always relied on racialisation and colonial domination. Racialisation is therefore not a by-product of economic development but a foundational condition for the expansion of capital (Wilson Gilmore 2024, 00:00–1:16). In this study, racial capitalism is treated not as background context but as the structuring logic through which the conditions of transracial adoption are understood. Racism is not external to capitalism but constitutes one of its organising logics. Capitalism rests on captivity rather than liberty, and there is no capitalism without the subordination of working classes and the exploitation of the global south.

As capitalism functions as the dominant economic order, it appears rational and normal, and so too does racial differentiation. The value and meaning of life and work are shaped by race and geography, which for instance, means that a worker in Sweden is not equivalent to a worker in Congo (Mabasa 2021, p. 38). To analyse labour without race is to accept the liberal fiction that concepts such as work, justice, and democratic participation operate universally.The normalcy of colonial modernity is sustained through bureaucratic labour regimes that allow individuals to participate in systems of dehumanisation with a sense of virtue, without confronting the consequences of violence (Mbembe 2003, p. 8; Mishra 2024, p. 4). Within coloniality certain bodies and territories are organised as extractable resources, material to be reorganised, moved, or consumed for the life projects of westerners.

The transatlantic slave trade marked the emergence of a global race-based system of economic exploitation and the moment when Blackness was produced as a structural position. As Wilderson writes, “Africans went into the ships and came out as Blacks” (Zalloua 2020, pp. 127–128). Spillers demonstrates how the racialisation of the enslaved created a profound rupture between body and flesh, and between gender and sex, enacting a social and political order built on violence against the flesh (in Kline 2013, pp. 8–9). Blackness becomes an ongoing structural transformation shaped by the continuous pressure of this economic and political system. Christina Sharpe (2016) cautions against romanticising Blackness as capacity or opportunity and instead urges us to recognise it as an experience shaped through enforced transformation (p. 30).

NGOs and international adoption agencies drew directly on this global racial capitalist order to generate profit, framing extraction as care and moral duty (Amin 2019; Kline 2013, p. 12).The distinction between “orphan” and “adoptee” follows the same logic: the orphan is framed as a subject worthy of grief and closure, while the adoptee, particularly in transracial contexts, is portrayed as rescued from loss. Grief becomes gratitude and displacement becomes opportunity. This enforced transformation of meaning sustains imperial and racial projects by recoding structural violence as care.

Cheney (2023) shows how visual tropes, such as images of barefoot children, mobilise humanitarian sentiment while embedding racialised children within systems of commodification and affective management (10:53–11:10). Cheney (2019) terms this global dynamic the orphan industrial complex, where structural inequality is moralised to legitimise a profitable market for children (p. 21). Significant financial flows benefit institutional and organisational actors under minimal regulation, revealing how charity and profit fold into the same global economic logic (Cheney and Ucembe 2019, p. 4). Taken together these dynamics show that transracial adoption operates within a racialised global market in which care and extraction are structurally intertwined.

4.2 Whiteness and Racialisation

This section draws on whiteness studies, Black studies, and critical race theory to examine whiteness and racialisation as historically contingent structures. Racialisation builds on older theological and patriarchal hierarchies that separated humankind and rendered some lives disposable. As Gardell (2021) shows, these classificatory logics are reworked in modern racial capitalism, where racialisation functions as a technology of differentiation rather than a biological fact (pp. 411–414). Blackness, as discussed in the previous chapter, is understood as a position produced through repeated and structural forms of violence for economic profit.

Alexander Weheliye (2014) describes racialisation as a sociopolitical process that orders the human into full humans, not quite humans, and nonhumans (p. 4). Theories of race have circulated across domains such as law, theology, and philology, and it is through this historical production of knowledge that racial categories have been constituted. Through such sociopolitical processes, racism maintains a white ontological understanding of the world (Gardell 2021, p. 411). Whiteness is not merely a cultural identity but a structural position naturalised through power. White subjects thereby become norm producing and norm enforcing (Fanon 1952/1997, p. 67). Whitness operated as a normative centre of authority. In contemporary contexts, witness is sustained through racism: distribution of humaness also death, legitimacy, resources, and recognition.

Within regimes of race and capital, the Indigenous and Black person is never neutral but positioned as "not yet human," marked as irrational, out of time, or incomplete (Fanon 1952/1997, p. 27). Maria Lugones (2017) deepens this insight by showing that this condition is not only ontological but temporal: racialised people are situated as out of time within modernity, rendered delayed in relation to an ideal anchored in whiteness. Sylvia Wynter (2015) further situates this within a broader evolutionary schema in which coloniality organises humanity along a graded scale, from nature to culture, primitiveness to civilisation, and from Blackness to whiteness (p. 26).

Fanon describes how colonial violence passes through the family, how it is state sanctioned, therefore enacted within private life. The family and the state both reproduce normative subjectivity and regulate the terms of belonging. This means that as the child moves beyond the family they will encounter the same norms and values that organise national life. In many European welfare states, the family is

explicitly imagined as a microcosm of the nation, a parallel long noted in scholarship linking patriarchy, state formation, and colonialism (Fanon 1952/2008, p. 164). Considering transracial adoption, where ruptured Black kinship is rendered acceptable, necessary, or even benevolent within a white moral horizon. Du Bois's reflections in *Darkwater* show how white social coherence has long depended on the negation of Black familial ties, reinforcing binaries of civilisation and nature, culture and blood.

Across Black studies, decolonial theory, and critical race theory, whiteness and racialisation are understood as temporal and structural processes that sustain colonial order (Fanon 1995, p. 28). This framing is essential for analysing the transracial adoptee's subject position, shaped by racial classification, family rupture, and the politics of legibility and erasure. These dynamics set the stage for Fanon's zone of non-being, where the forces of coloniality, racialisation, and whiteness reveal their full structural and affective weight.

4.3 The Consumption of the Other

This section draws on affect theory, postcolonial critique, and critical race scholarship to examine how racialised subjects acquire value within dominant structures through emotional and symbolic consumption. Subjectivity is not simply erased, but reconfigured into something legible and useful, something that can be felt, known, and consumed. This logic becomes particularly visible in Sara Ahmed's account of affective economies (2004, 2011), which provides a central framework for this study. Emotions circulate between bodies rather than residing within them, attaching themselves unevenly and producing hierarchies of value. Through these attachments, the national "we" is shaped by orientations of love, fear, guilt, and pride. Thus, the shift from biological to cultural racism does not diminish racial power; it merely modifies its grammar. Cultural racism regulates affect and moral legibility. The racialised Other becomes included not through recognition but through conditional readability. Their value rests on their ability to uphold the emotional coherence of the dominant group. As Ahmed notes, inclusion is never the opposite of exclusion but a form of managed belonging (2011, p. 127). The physical, historical, and political dimensions of the Other are stripped away, leaving a figure capable of absorbing white feeling without disturbing the dominant order. Emotions do not simply move between subjects, but attach to racialised bodies, producing them as surfaces for projection and as vessels that carry fear, guilt, and desire (Ahmed 2004, pp. 119–127).

Coloniality produces an order that does not merely exclude, but positions Blackness as structurally unintelligible and yet available for affective extraction. The racialised body becomes a container for the emotional life of whiteness rather than a subject who can signify on their own terms. One side of this structure casts the Other as carrier of white fear, guilt, and desire, sustaining whiteness as a moral and affective centre (Kilomba 2020, pp. 124–125). The other side casts the Other as a source of value, story, and symbolic enrichment. hooks (2000) describes how racial and ethnic difference becomes "spice," an aesthetic or affective supplement that intensifies white experience while leaving racial hierarchy intact. De los Reyes (2011) shows how multicultural consumption extracts fragments of culture and reinserts them into dominant narratives as controlled encounters that affirm rather than unsettle racial order (pp. 353–354). Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1997, 2011) similarly demonstrates how cultural difference is severed from its political context and mobilised as an aesthetic resource for dominant subjects.

Consumption thus stabilises the colonial world order. Gendered and racial scripts intensify this dynamic through recognisable figures. One prominent figure is the strong Black woman, celebrated for resilience and endurance. As Patricia Hill Collins (2000) and Kilomba (2020) argue, this figure does not signify complexity but functions as a symbol of survival. Her visibility depends not on subjectivity but on what she is imagined to carry for others. Strength becomes a burden rather than recognition, permitting the erasure of fragility, vulnerability, or need. Affect circulates through her body to affirm dominant emotional orders while concealing the lived realities beneath (Kilomba 2020, pp. 124–125). The affective economy in which this unfolds is not reducible to individual feeling. It is a structured field where histories, bodies, and meanings circulate in service of national coherence.

These dynamics are not separate from the material conditions of racial capitalism but help sustain them. As earlier sections have shown, racial capitalism relies on the transformation of lives into extractable resources. Transracial adoption participates in this logic. It involves being made to carry white familial and national ideas and emotions, while having one's own specificity, history, and relationality stripped away. Recognition depends on translating difference into forms that align with ideals of civility (de los Reyes 2011, pp. 352–356). As Tobias Hübinette argues in *Sveriges sista rasdebatt*, the Swedish left's anti-racist project centred on the search for an antidote to racism. This want, mutable and historically contingent, was articulated through political debate. It is this desire that structures the affective and discursive conditions under which transracial adoptees become intelligible as lovable, pitiable, threatening, or redeemable (Ahmed 2004, pp. 119, 126).

Ahmed's discussion of passing further sharpens this point. She distinguishes between a Black subject passing as white and a white subject passing as white. Both may be recognised, but only one is affirmed. This passability is fragile and often falters in moments of racial misrecognition, institutional silence, or the fragmentation of kinship ties (Ahmed 2004; de los Reyes 2011, p. 366). Transracial adoptees exemplify this condition of conditional legibility within a white family and nation. They are expected not only to assimilate but to embody a visible difference that can be absorbed into a national narrative. They are also expected to align emotionally with expectations of gratitude, flexibility, and moral redeemability. The dependent position in transracial adoption is continuously recharged by political desire.

4.4 Legibility vs. opacity

The question of legibility is central to how racialised subjectivity is structured and regulated. Under racial capitalism, the particular must be translated into forms recognisable within a white universal. This process erases embodied and historical differences in favour of readability. Fred Moten (2024) argues that subjectivity is shaped through norms that assume whiteness as the universal position. Similarly, Mills (2017) notes that the Black, migrant, and enslaved are constituted through artificial origins that obscure history and context, allowing the subject to appear only within the epistemological frame of whiteness (p. 80). Under racialised conditions, subjectivity becomes a site of negotiation rather than a space for self-definition. The distinction between subject and object is not descriptive but structural according to hooks (1989), meaning that the subject defines reality while the object's reality is defined by others. In her later work, hooks conceptualises love as an ethical practice that affirms another's humanity (2000). Yet such relational practices are constrained within a racialised order that mediates recognition through hierarchy rather than reciprocity. Legibility is granted through what one is imagined to endure rather than through the fullness of lived experience. This mechanism shows how emotional readability is tied to dominant expectations, not to complexity or specificity. Whether one speaks or remains silent within the dominant political grammar is thereby beside the point. Spivak's text "Can the subaltern speak?" (1988), concerns not the presence of voice but the terms of recognition. It's an epistemological issue. Legibility becomes a form of capture: to be seen is to be arranged within a grammar that predefines meaning. As Lee (2003) notes in the formulation of the transracial adoption paradox, the adoptee is simultaneously drawn into whiteness and held at its threshold. Gustafsson (2021) describes this as a condition of hyper(in)visibility: to be seen and unseen in the same breath.

Articulations of pain, anger, refusal or further opacity such as sexuality or non-christian belief remain unintelligible, not due to lack of meaning but because they fall outside what modern-colonial discourse can register. This is not an incidental feature of transracial adoption but echoes the broader condition of Blackness: to be rendered visible while cut off from continuity, genealogy, and an inherited sense of belonging.

Édouard Glissant offers opacity as a response to the demand for readability, affirming a right to remain unknowable and irreducible (1997). Those secure in dominant subject positions may retain opacity without consequence, while racialised subjects are required to justify, explain, and translate themselves for the comfort of others. Refusal can therefore appear as silence, excess, or failure. Opacity functions less as a universally available strategy than as an ethical reminder: not all must be made legible to be real. Legibility marks capture by a dominant interpretive frame, while opacity gestures toward forms of life that elude full translation and interrupt the demand for transparency.

These dynamics open toward a deeper ontological question. Legibility and opacity do not only mark discursive positions; they reveal the conditions under which racialised subjects are produced as incomplete, constrained, or socially dead. In the next section, Fanon's concept of the zone of non-being is used to explore this terrain: a space structured through negation, where existence unfolds outside the grammar of the human.

4.5 Zone of non-being

Frantz Fanon's concept *zone of non-being* originates in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/1997), where he describes a condition of ontological disqualification, a position outside the structures that confer humanity, recognition, and futurity. While Fanon wrote across both the material and revolutionary dimensions of colonial domination and its phenomenological and ontological effects, this study draws specifically on the latter. The concept is used not to analyse liberation or resistance, but to clarify how subjectivity is produced, organised, and made intelligible within colonial modern structures. In the context of transracial adoption, the zone of non-being offers a vocabulary for understanding how the adoptee's position is shaped through conditions of conditional recognition, relational dependency, and disrupted access to personhood. This analytic use does not equate the adoptee with Fanon's account of Blackness under direct colonial occupation, but recognises that the structure he describes illuminates how hierarchical racial orders position subjects in relation to humanity.

The zone of non-being is not a description of oppression alone. It names a condition produced through colonial and racial structures, in which the subject is placed beyond the bounds of social and symbolic life. This involves a withdrawal of political and social recognition and what Fanon terms a form of ontological erasure. To be placed in this zone is not simply to experience exclusion, but to exist as outside the terms by which life becomes intelligible. As Lewis Gordon (2015) notes, it marks a collapse of the normal terms of reason, reciprocity, and sociality (pp. 41–43). It has become a foundational concept in Black existentialism and in analyses of coloniality, taken up by theorists such as Mbembe (2019) and Hartman (2022) to clarify the ongoing structures of racial violence and ontological capture.

To understand how this zone is produced, Fanon turns to the encounter between Black subjects and the colonial world. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/1997), he describes arriving in Europe not as migration but as confrontation with whiteness as world, as gaze, and as structure. This confrontation activates what he calls the *historico racial schema*, a pre-existing system of meaning that reads the Black body as lack, threat, and failure.

> "I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things… and then I found that I was an object among other objects" (Fanon, 1952/1997, p. 107).

This moment of objectification becomes internalised and affective. Fanon writes of a psyche shaped by mistrust, self-censorship, and the persistent withholding of recognition In this world, whiteness appears

as the default form of being human, and Blackness becomes the disqualified mode of the human. The zone of non-being captures this condition of active negation.

"What is going on here? Two processes. I do not want to be loved. Why not? Because once, very long ago, I attempted an object relation and I was abandoned" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 54).

Here, abandonment is not a single event but a structural position, a racial schema that produces a split within the subject. "The Black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man" (Fanon, 2008, p. 9). This fractured condition is echoed in W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness, a mode of awareness shaped by seeing oneself through the eyes of a dominant white world. The concept developed within a context of systemic violence including segregation, criminalisation, incarceration, economic exclusion, and premature death. Du Bois traces how such structural positioning shapes psychological, social, and political life. He captures this affective struggle in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), describing "two warring ideals in one dark body." As Appiah (2014) explains, Du Bois reworks the Hegelian dialectic into a relational form of awareness that does not produce self-knowledge but a fragmented identity governed by racial expectations (p. 57). Racial ordering operates both internally and institutionally. Du Bois's trying to deal with the segrergraton in America through the notion of the Talented Tenth wich illustrates how even elite inclusion remains tied to the colour line; visibility does not dissolve racial hierarchy but reorganises it.

Christina Sharpe (2016) deepens this insight by arguing that anti Blackness is atmospheric. Her concepts of "the weather," "the hold," and "the wake" show how racial domination saturates the environment itself. Saidiya Hartman (2022) similarly describes coloniality as "an unfinished sentence," a present order rather than a closed historical past (p. 1). The zone of non-being gives this condition ontological form. It is not the mere absence of status but a position in which the frameworks that grant personhood are suspended. Fanon describes the zone of non-being as a state without relationality, history, or futurity (Fanon 1952/1997, p. 112).

While this study focuses on the phenomenological and ontological effects of colonial domination, the structure of ontological disqualification also clarifies how genocide operates and ongoes for instance in occupied Palestine. Where legal exception, racialised control, and spatial confinement render life unlivable (Mbembe 2003, 2019). Mbembe's concept of necropolitics demonstrates how modern power produces death worlds. Bringing genocide into view is not to equate contexts but to clarify that the zone of non-being presupposes, as discussed in Chapter 4.2 on whiteness and racialisation, the sociopolitical

processes that organise humans into full humans, not quite humans, and nonhumans (Weheliye 2014, p. 4). Fanon, as both psychiatrist and philosopher, later understood the struggle against the colonisers in Algeria as a way to liberate oneself from the colonisers violent grip. For Fanon, fighting colonialism was also the means through which the Wretched of the earth could begin to heal a psyche that had been pathologised by domination.

To confront the white power's war machines in one's neighbourhood, or to realise that the future of one's children lies in the hands of the same power that enacts your death, is to confront the persistence of coloniality. Settler colonialism operates through forceful separation and control. Transracial adoption, even when fully legal, operates through the same modules .The adoptee is folded into a structure in which life is shaped through loss, severed relationality and conditional recognition. It does not undo racial hierarchy or inequality. It obscures the very structures that produce the zone of non-being by recasting rupture as care. This conceptual terrain allows us to trace how the adoptee is positioned not simply as marginalised but as ontologically unsettled.

4.6 Concluding remarks

This theoretical framework brings together concepts that allow for a structural reading of subjectivity rather than a psychological one. The testimonies of transracial adoptees are therefore approached not as expressions of inner life but as discursive articulations shaped by colonial structures acting on the body, language, and affect. Fanon's account of the zone of non-being clarifies how subject positions emerge through negation, misrecognition, and ontological unsettlement, while Du Bois, Spivak, Glissant, and Ahmed illuminate the psychic, epistemic, and affective mechanisms through which racialised subjects are rendered conditionally legible. These concepts do not function as predetermined explanations but as tools for tracing how power takes form in embodied, relational, and discursive registers.

Taken together, the framework shows that the adoptee's position is shaped not only through racialised negation but also through the material and geopolitical arrangements of racial capitalism that make certain lives available for displacement and reconfiguration. The aim is not to define the adoptee but to illuminate the structural conditions that shape where, how, and whether subjectivity can appear. These theoretical tools guide the analysis that follows by tracing what becomes visible at the limits of legibility within colonial modernity.

5. Method and Material

This chapter begins by outlining the research design and clarifying the structural orientation of the study. It then presents the selected material and the criteria for its inclusion, followed by the study's epistemological approach. Thereafter, discourse theory is introduced as the primary methodological framework, alongside a discussion of methodological tensions. The chapter concludes with reflections on positionality and ethical considerations.

5.1 Research Design

This study adopts a theory-driven, abductive analytical approach with a thematic structure. While not a formal discourse analysis, it is informed by discourse-theoretical sensibilities, particularly an understanding of subject positions as produced through colonial and affective discourses. The analysis is driven by a theoretical framework centred on Frantz Fanon's concept of the zone of non-being, and complemented by concepts from affect theory, critical race theory and Black thought. These perspectives guide both the selection of material and the interpretive approach. In this abductive approach, theory guided the reading, but the analytical lenses emerged through the material itself.

The aim is to explore how the subject position of transracial adoptees in Sweden can be understood through Fanon's concept of the zone of non-being. Drawing on autobiographical testimonies, the study examines how experiences of racialisation, dislocation, and exclusion are articulated across affective and embodied registers. Selected citations from five autobiographical texts are closely read, not as transparent expressions of inner life, but as discursive witness accounts that show how subjectivity is shaped under structural and affective conditions.

While interviews were initially considered, the study does not aim to document personal trajectories or gather new experiential data. Instead, it engages with already published testimonies to explore how subjectivity is structured and conditioned. This choice is both methodological and ethical: it enables a structural reading of affective and discursive formations without relying on potentially extractive or retraumatizing fieldwork.

While this study is grounded in structural and discursive theory, I have also considered psychological models that address minority experience. One such model is the Minority Stress Model, which has been

influential in mapping how marginalised individuals navigate chronic stress (Meyer, 2003; 2023). However, as this study focuses on how subjectivity is produced and conditioned within colonial structures, rather than on individual coping strategies, this framework is not applied in the analysis.

The intention is not to speak for all adoptees or to offer a complete account of their experiences. Instead, the analysis aims to trace how structural power becomes legible in autobiographical speech—how discursive and affective constraints shape the field of what can be said, felt, and inhabited. Subjectivity is not treated as separate from structure, but as an effect of it. The analysis therefore moves within this in-between space, seeking to identify the mechanisms that condition the adoptee's position within the racial order. Since the study is situated within a theory-driven, abductive framework, where interpretation is guided by structural concepts rather than predefined categories the analytical lenses emerged through the reading process and are introduced in the analysis chapter.

5.2 Material and Delimitation

This study is based on five publicly available autobiographical testimonies produced between 2021 and 2024 by transracial adoptees living in Sweden. The material reflects a shared national context shaped by the Swedish welfare-state, liberal–humanitarian ideals, and ongoing colonial legacies. The criteria for selection was thematic: each narrative centres on what it means and has meant to grow up and live as a transracial adoptee in Sweden. While differing in form and voice, all testimonies engage with the themes of racialisation, loss, and belonging. The material spans interviews, podcasts, and poetry.

Den talande tystnad by Maria Diemar and Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom (2022) is a podcast episode created by Korean adoptees that explores silence, racism, and resistance to dominant narratives of family and adoption.

Heliumballong by Susanne Johansson (2023) is a 29-page poetry collection on adoption and racism, using fragmented and emotionally charged language to portray silence and affective rupture.

Sommar i P1 by Hanna Wallensten (2022) is a personal radio monologue in which the psychologist and public intellectual reflects on racialisation and belonging as a Black adoptee, discussing school, family, and the emotional terrain of recognition.

Söndagsintervjun P1 with Marcus Samuelsson (2024) is a one-hour radio interview tracing his journey from Ethiopia to Sweden and later to the United States, addressing themes of identity, gratitude, and return while framing adoption as a redemptive structure.

Teater Tribunalen with Sara Grönroos (2021) is a podcast monologue reflecting on her research for biological parents and the institutional silencing surrounding adoption in Sweden

All speakers and authors included in this study were adopted during the 1970s and 1980s, a period when Sweden was significantly more culturally homogeneous, with fewer racialised peers and little public discourse on race. This historical context shaped the affective and existential contradictions articulated in the material, and the analysis pays close attention to how these contradictions are embedded in broader patterns of structural racialisation.

Although the material reflects a specific generational and contemporary moment, the aim of this study is not to trace a historical development of adoption practices. Rather, it examines how racialised subjectivity is shaped and narrated under enduring conditions of coloniality. The analysis remains relevant beyond the material's temporal frame, since the structures that condition adoptee subjectivity persist even as their expressions shift over time.

5.3 Epistemological Approach

This study is grounded in a constructivist epistemology with poststructualistic methodological influences. The constructivist epistemology rejects the idea of a neutral observational language and holds that knowledge is always mediated through discourse. The poststructualistic methodological influence is present in the way this analysis is concerned with subject positions and hegemonic discourse. From this perspective, language does not merely reflect reality; it constructs it. We do not observe the world "as it is"—instead, we see and experience the world through historically and socially produced linguistic frameworks. What we perceive as "truth," "objectivity," or even "identity" is always shaped by the meanings made possible through discourse (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Barthes, 1993 [1970]). The constructivist view provides the basis for the study's analytical approach, which is further outlined in the following section on discourse theory. The constructivist view provides the basis for the

study's analytical approach, which is further outlined in the following section on discourse theory. While this study does not follow a classical dialectical model, it remains attentive to contradiction and relational tension. Rather than seeking synthesis or resolution, the analysis traces how subject positions emerge through the friction between structural forces and narrated experience. In this way, the study engages with dialectical movement as a method of reading, not as a destination.

5.4 Discourse Theory

Discourse theory is a broad theoretical and methodological approach within social sciences and humanities that focuses on how language and communication shape social continuities, power relations, and identities. It is often linked to poststructuralist and constructivist perspectives, emphasizing how realities and truths are constructed through discourses rather than seen as immutable or objectively given.

In discourse theory, developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), the concept of hegemony plays a central role. Discourse theory understands subjectivity as relational and discursively produced: individuals are not the origin of meaning but are constituted through the subject positions made available within discourse. Language is not a neutral medium for describing reality but a constitutive force that, through social and discursive practices, shapes it. The meaning of a sign is always contingent, negotiated in use, and therefore open to contestation.

What distinguishes discourse theory is its emphasis on the political. Drawing on the concept of hegemony, it investigates how certain meanings become dominant and others excluded. It asks not only what is said, but how and under what conditions certain subject positions become intelligible, while others are rendered impossible or unspeakable. This makes discourse theory particularly suited for studies of identity, belonging, and exclusion, as it allows for a critical reading of how subjectivity is shaped, produced, and reproduced within structures (Foucault 1972; Laclau & Mouffe 1985).

A subject position is not an inner essence or identity, but a discursive location, a place from which one can speak, act, or be recognized. These positions are not neutral but shaped by power structures and the struggle over meaning and intelligibility. Therefore, discourse theory is not just about language use, but about the conditions under which certain ways of being become possible or impossible. Discourses are systems of meaning that structure social reality, often working to establish certain meanings as natural,

neutral, or inevitable what discourse theory terms hegemony. By treating something as fixed, discursive hegemony is reproduced, while alternative ways of thinking or being are rendered unintelligible (Bergström and Boréus 2008, pp. 258-259). In this study, I do not approach the material to interpret personal meaning-making but to trace how certain experiences are re-fixed, made intelligible or illegible within a broader political grammar of belonging.

Historically, discourse theory has been used primarily in the study of political movements, ideologies, and leadership, often focusing on public discourses. However, this study does not engage with elite language use or party ideology but the conditions under which certain ways of being become possible or impossible. Instead, I use discourse theory to analyze how hegemonic discourses shape and structure the narrated lives of transracial adoptees within Swedish arenas of discursive locations such as school and family.

To conduct this analysis, I use subject positions as a discourse-analytical tool to trace how transracial adoptees articulate and negotiate their subjectivities within the discursive frameworks of racial capitalism, whiteness, and racialization. Rather than focusing on specific institutions, the analysis attends to how subject positions are made available, constrained, or foreclosed within a broader political grammar that governs belonging, speech, and affect.

Subject positions, as understood in discourse theory, do not reflect inner identities or psychological traits. Instead, they refer to positions made possible, intelligible, or restricted through discourse. These positions are not mere illusions or relativist constructs; rather, they are materially real in their effects: they shape what one can feel, express, or claim within a given social order (Bergström and Boréus 2008, p. 264) In this study, “the transracial adoptee” is not treated as a stable identity category but as a subject position emerging through racialized, institutional, and national discourses. This position is not neutral or descriptive; it is saturated with expectations, constraints, and affective demands. To be interpellated as an adoptee is to enter a set of normative scripts of gratitude, assimilation, belonging, or loyalty that shape which narratives are legible and which remain unspeakable.

Importantly, discourse theory holds that subjects do not exist independently of discourse. Our understanding of who we are is formed through the subject positions discourse makes available. These positions both enable and constrain agency. Individuals can simultaneously inhabit multiple positions such as “child,” “student,” or “daughter” each embedded within broader regimes of power shaped by modern/colonial logics (Bergström and Boréus 2008, p, 264). The study’s methodological approach is

informed by the assumption that subjectivity is not preexisting but produced through discursive structures. The study resists both the romanticization of the adoptee voice and the liberal gesture of "letting them speak." I am not asking who they are, I am asking what space has been made for them to be anything at all.

5.5 Method Discussion

Discourse theory has become a central methodological orientation in the social sciences, particularly in studies seeking to understand how language and communication shape social reality. It is especially shaped by post structuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Laclau & Mouffe, who provide powerful tools for analyzing how language, power, and subjectivity are intertwined. However, its application is not without methodological tensions and epistemological challenges.

One of the main critiques of discourse theory is its perceived lack of methodological clarity. Foucault and many of his followers have refrained from offering strict procedural guidelines, favoring flexibility and context-sensitivity. While this is beneficial, it can result in fragmented or inconsistent approaches, making it difficult to outline a replicable or transparent research design. This lack of clarity in methodology may make it challenging to establish definitive conclusions about power relations and discursive hegemonies, particularly in complex areas such as race and colonialism. Additionally, the interpretations may become subjective, affecting the reliability of the analysis, as highlighted in previous research on critical discourse analysis.

Another critique concerns the epistemological relativism of discourse theory. Since it denies the existence of universal truths, there is a concern that "anything goes" when it comes to interpretation. If all truths are historically and discursively constructed, this creates challenges in justifying political or ethical commitments. This critique questions the ability of discourse theory to support clear normative claims or contribute to social critique without falling into ambiguity (Bergström and Boréus 2018, p. 292).

A third issue is the position of the researcher. In discourse theory, the researcher is not seen as a neutral observer but as a part of the discursive field under analysis. This necessitates reflexivity and awareness of the researcher's role in shaping the analysis, especially in studies dealing with marginalization, race, and subjectivity. Despite these challenges, this perspective opens up a more situated, ethical, and accountable approach to research.

Despite these tensions, discourse theory remains methodologically rich and conceptually generative, especially for analyzing how hegemonic orders shape what can be said, thought, and felt. As Bergström and Boréus (2008, pp. 263–266) note, discourse analysis offers different ways to structure the content in a text. For instance, content can be structured using overarching themes or more quantitative techniques. Regardless of the method chosen, initial thematization must be conducted to identify recurring patterns in how events or phenomena are represented. These patterns can then be analyzed in more detail in subsequent steps.

In my study, discourse theory enables the analysis of how transracial adoptees articulate and negotiate their subjectivities within the broader discursive frameworks of racial capitalism, whiteness, and racialization. The goal is not to interpret personal meaning-making but to trace how subject positions are shaped, constrained, and renegotiated in relation to institutional and national discourses. The study examines how certain experiences are made intelligible or illegible within a broader political grammar of belonging.

To conclude, discourse theory does not offer a ready-made method but provides a critical framework for understanding how subjectivity is shaped by power structures and hegemonic forces. Despite the inherent tensions, this theory enables a reading that considers both the violence and the possibilities inherent in subjectivity, particularly for marginalized groups such as transracial adoptees within the Swedish welfare context.

5.6 Positionality and Ethical Considerations

As a transracial adoptee, I write from a position that is both lived and situated — what is sometimes called “from within.” This does not mean that the analysis is autobiographical, but rather that my position is not separate from the structures I examine; it is entangled in them. The analysis moves within this in-between space, tracing the discursive and structural mechanisms that condition the subject position. It is shaped by, and responsive to, the location from which it speaks.

The research question guiding this study is: How can Frantz Fanon’s concept of the zone of non-being be used to analyse the subject position of transracial adoptees in Sweden, and what structural mechanisms become visible through the analysis of their testimonies?

Because my position is entangled with the structures under study, the analysis requires careful ethical and methodological attention. A common critique of studies centred on racialisation and colonial structures is that they risk reproducing narratives of erasure. Invoking the zone of non-being also carries the risk of simplifying or constraining adoptee subjectivity. The aim here is not to define adoptees but to make visible the structures that surround and condition their position. The violence described does not begin in this text; it begins in the world the text attempts to name. The study therefore draws on Black radical and feminist thought to highlight both constraint and the forms of agency, relation, and creative survival that persist within such conditions. Subjectivity is understood as shaped by both negation and possibility.

The analytical perspective taken here is grounded in situated knowledge and ethical reflexivity (Smith 1999; Moreton-Robinson 2013; James 2023). This requires attentiveness to the conditions under which knowledge is produced, to the tension between personal resonance and analytical clarity, and to the risk of reinforcing normative expectations around adoption, identity, or belonging. Importantly, the analysis does not assign or absolve individuals of responsibility. It focuses on how each narrative articulates the structural conditions that shape the adoptee's position within racialised and colonial formations.

6. Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the study, which examines how the subject position of transracial adoptees in Sweden is shaped within coloniality. The analysis is guided by the research question: How can Frantz Fanon's concept of the zone of non-being be used to analyse the subject position of transracial adoptees in Sweden, and what structural mechanisms become visible through the analysis of their testimonies?

The approach is grounded in Fanon's insight that racial structures shape where and how a subject can appear. Autobiographical accounts are therefore read not as personal disclosures of inner life, but as discursive traces of how subjectivity is produced under structural pressure. The analysis draws on the theoretical framework established in the previous chapter, with particular emphasis on racial capitalism, racialisation, whiteness, and affect.

The analysis is organised around two analytical lenses: Body and Affect. These lenses did not pre-exist the reading of the material; they emerged abductively through repeated engagement with the testimonies. They function as tools for tracing how subject positions are shaped in two intertwined registers: the embodied and the affective. Through them, the analysis attends to how racial order is materialised in the body, how it circulates through feeling, and how both can become sites where colonial structures are reproduced, strained, or momentarily unsettled.

Under each lens, selected excerpts are examined in detail through close reading, followed by short analytical remarks that tie the interpretation back to the broader conceptual frame. The chapter concludes with a section that synthesises the mechanisms that became visible across the material.

The analysis is theory-driven, but it does not assume coherence. Some moments in the material exceed categorisation or resist interpretation. Rather than smoothing over these tensions, the analysis allows them to remain. This is both a methodological and ethical stance: it recognises that expressions emerging from the zone of non-being cannot always be made fully legible, and that their opacity is itself part of the structural condition being examined.

6.1 Body

This section examines how the adoptee's body is shaped by racial and institutional structures. It includes both medical and social interventions, where the body is treated as something to be managed or corrected in order to align with white norms. The analysis focuses on how care and adjustment are framed as necessary for belonging, and how the adoptee's body becomes a site where racialised expectations are enforced. The body does not simply represent identity, it becomes a point where structural power is enacted and felt.

Corrective Care

The following citations reveal how the adoptee's body becomes a target for intervention, positioned not as a subject but as a problem to be corrected. Institutional and medical logics frame physical adjustment as care, concealing how racialised norms of embodiment dictate belonging.

> *"I think about all the adoptees who have been forced to take growth hormones that their parents have pumped into them, both in order to fit in, but also, well, to delay puberty."*
> (Den talande tystnaden 2023, 12:04–12:24)

> *"The specialist, the school nurse, became worried when she (the author) couldn't reach her locker. And the prognosis was 152 cm plus/minus 4 cm…Dr. Talleman said, yes, that can happen for starved adopted children."*
> (Wallensten 2021, 19:08)

These moments show how racialised bodily difference is interpreted through a logic that equates conformity with care. What is presented as medical support is embedded in a broader structure where Black and Brown bodies must be modified in order to become acceptable. "Forced to take" signals a structural imperative, not individual choice. The quote from the doctor naturalises the effects of

structural neglect, locating the problem in the adoptee's body rather than in the world that has produced this vulnerability.

This imperative to correct what is "too much" or "not enough" is not only physical, but ontological. The body is asked to change not just in shape or size, but in meaning. As Fanon writes, "the Black body is not permitted to just be" (1952:2008, p. 83); it is shaped in relation to white norms, made into an object of fear, guilt, or moral redemption. This reflects a logic of ontological surrender, where survival is made dependent on giving up one's difference. As the subject is measured and treated, they are simultaneously diminished and made legible.

> *"The last time we met, Dr. Talleman said he could not help me anymore. And I got the impression that I had disappointed him. I got the impression that he knew so much more about me, my life, and my future than I did."* (Wallensten 2021, 21:16)

> *"I had gotten the wrong impression from Dr. Talleman. I became two centimetres taller. But I wasn't a millimetre happier. I maybe came a million kronor closer to average height, but I didn't feel a single penny more belonging for it."* (Wallensten 2021, 22:05)

These reflections expose the disconnection between bodily conformity and actual inclusion. The line about "not feeling a single penny more belonging" underscores how adjustment fails to generate recognition. What is at stake is not simply the adoptee's well-being, but the legitimacy of their presence. The desire for the body to become unmarked becomes a demand to erase the structural conditions it testifies to.

The subject is not offered acceptance, only a path toward conditional toleration. The logic that governs this is not isolated to medicine. It is part of a broader structure in which race and normality are co-constituted. As McKittrick (2014, p. 17) notes, racialized bodies are valued not in their specificity, but in their function within systems of difference. Belonging is granted only when the body aligns with what is already legible.

This is not a story of individual trauma but a structural demand. The adoptee becomes a site of investment, where medical and institutional power converge to reshape the subject in accordance with

white-coded norms. What emerges is not a double consciousness, but a fractured subjectivity shaped through correction and compliance. The result is not recognition, but regulated presence.

The mechanisms that emerge are bodily regulation, affective conditioning, and ontological surrender. These are not isolated responses, but systemic demands placed on the racialised subject, where visibility is managed through physical alignment and legibility is secured through compliance. The analysis illustrates how whiteness operates not only through exclusion, but through conditional inclusion.

Un(visible)

This section examines how the transracial adoptee is positioned through a logic that demands both visibility and erasure. The citation illustrates how the adoptee is interpellated as simultaneously exceptional and disposable. This contradiction is not incidental, but structural, it defines what the body is allowed to signify and how that significance must be sustained.

> "*If I didn't have these eyes, my life would be much better… I'm not wanted here, and at the same time, you have to deal with the fact that it's like this….Yes, but you're more wanted here. You're more wanted than some children, because you're adopted. Those are the two extremes you have to handle."* (Den talande tystnaden 2023, 1:10–1:25)

I read the tonal shift in this dialogue as ironic, perhaps as a strategy to mimic or expose the absurdity of the racialised logic that frames her. Her words do not describe an inner paradox but mark a process of structural adaptation, a way of surviving within contradictory demands. As Lee (2003) notes in the formulation of the transracial adoption paradox, the adoptee is simultaneously drawn into whiteness and held at its threshold. Gustafsson (2021) describes this as a condition of hyper(in)visibility: to be seen and unseen in the same breath.

The adoptee is marked as Other, yet positioned as "saved" and expected to express gratitude. This contradiction does not originate within her, but it becomes the atmosphere in which she must live. bell hooks writes that the racialised subject is not recognised as a full person, but consumed as an image through which whiteness affirms itself (hooks in de los Reyes, 2006, pp. 353–354). The citation can be

read as a trace of that consumption: the adoptee is asked to uphold a national fantasy of rescue, while remaining materially and socially marginalised.

This is not a matter of internal confusion but a structural mechanism. The adoptee's body becomes a surface onto which conflicting moral and racial narratives are projected. The demand is not only to be visible, but to be legible on whiteness's terms. This creates a form of discursive and affective adaptation, where coherence must be performed even when the underlying logics are irreconcilable.

Within the Body lens, this moment reveals a mechanism of symbolic inclusion through contradictory embodiment. The adoptee is asked to perform roles that cannot coexist: to be grateful and displaced, exceptional and erased. What is shown here is not a psychological tension but a systemic demand. The body becomes a site where moral projection and national desire converge, without granting the subject full personhood. The structural mechanism visible in this moment is symbolic inclusion through contradiction, where the adoptee becomes intelligible only by sustaining mutually exclusive meanings.

Everywhere, Everything, All at Once

This citation unfolds as a fragmented montage, capturing how transracial subjectivity is shaped across multiple registers: care, projection, surveillance, and exclusion, all at once. Each line opens a scene in which the adoptee's body is narrated, evaluated, and made to carry the moral and symbolic demands of whiteness. Rather than presenting a singular event, the citation reveals a structure of cumulative violence and projections —affective, discursive, and embodied—embedded in the routines of family, school, and nation.

> *"Mom tells about when I came here. / They say it was lucky that I came here. / Mom / says my real mom was so young. / They always say I fit so well in color. / The children sometimes say n*gger. / I say that I'm not from Africa. / Mom says that I probably wouldn't have survived if I hadn't come here. / ... Mom says it was lucky that I came here. / The teacher asks where I'm from. / She says she sees me as Swedish. / The teacher says that I / could also be Lucia because the first Lucia was dark. / The children say they see me as Swedish. / Dad says pig repeatedly."* (Johnnson 2023)

What this citation foregrounds is not merely the adoptee's negotiation of belonging, but the structural grammar that frames her speech, body, and social value. The repeated invocations of gratitude "Mom says it was lucky that I came here," and " Mom I probably wouldn't have survived" is positioning her as if care is inseparable from erasure in a colonial/modern world. It enables her affect and it creates rapture in the perception, to this she is without any ontological resistance. Bergqvist (2024) refers to this as ontological neutralisation, a killing of nature, drawing on her analysis of the taxidermied whale exhibited in a museum, preserved not as life but as symbol. In the context of adoption, this echoes Fanon's zone of non-being, where life persists not in fullness, but in a state of suspended recognition (1952/1997, p. 112). The adoptee is not affirmed as a subject, but held in place as a moral symbol: preserved, visible, yet fundamentally dislocated. Within this logic, Blackness is not recognised on its own terms but used, sustained only to affirm the coherence of the white nation. The adoptee's body becomes a site of symbolic preservation, a container for the imagined goodness of those who claim to have saved it.

Thus, the language is disciplinary; it tells her what is, was and what ought to be. The former native/stranger/adoptee assimilated good due to the precision of erasure. The violations on people and land are still going on, but it won't happen again to you. You persevered once, be grateful, yes unfortunately in your native flesh. The socio-political order is built on crimes against the flesh, severing the body from its will and desire (Spillers 1988, cited in Kline 2013, pp. 8–9).

The adoptee is no longer a native, still marked and racialized; they are meant to pass not just in appearance, but in orientation. They must pass as grateful, as assimilated, as morally available. Ahmed reminds us that the act of passing is not neutral, but structured by histories of exclusion and recognition (2004, p. 366). Thus, the fragility of this passability is always felt and experienced. This citation holds moments of racial misrecognition, in institutional encounters, in family silences: Being seen as Swedish, being told she "fits in color," or could be Lucia does not structurally function to affirm the adoptee's full subjectivity, but to contain it within tolerable, white-coded limits. They must pass as grateful, as assimilated, as morally available.The ones who can be consumed, celebrated, and absorbed into the moral fabric of the nation (Trinh T. Minh-Ha 1997; 2011).

The line "Dad says pig repeatedly" punctures this symbolic order. It disrupts the contained space of benevolent whiteness and returns us to the visceral underside of the colonial structure. It does not simply

mark an abusive moment but points to what the structural conditions of adoption might permit, produce, or fail to hold back in a world where animals are raced and races are animalised. It is a contradiction and could mean, one or the other from time to time.

It can be read not just as the result of personal pathology, but as a symptom of a system in which the adoptee's position: racialised, objectified, and indebted but never stable. Blackness is an ongoing process of transformation, shaped and reshaped under the pressures of colonial structures. However, romanticizing Blackness as an 'opportunity' or viewing it as something positive is, as Sharp reminds us, simply an experience of imposed change (2016, p. 30).

This moment, then, highlights how the body is made to carry the contradictions of racialised inclusion: rendered visible but not seen, desired but not recognised, saved but not safe. It suggests a structural mechanism of adaptation in which the adoptee's subjectivity is produced through misrecognition and affective containment. While not fully absorbed into the white gaze, the subject is nevertheless positioned by it and expected to manage contradiction without access to a legitimate refusal. The finding here gestures toward a logic of discursive and affective adaptation, where bodily presence is inscribed with moral narratives that discipline, rather than affirm, the subject.

Prepared to Pass

This final excerpt returns to the question of bodily regulation within the logic of racialised protection. While the adoptive mother's language appears caring, it reveals how the child's body is managed as a site of risk, trained to conform to white-coded norms in order to survive. Within the Body lens, this moment shows how subjectivity is shaped not only through external projection, but through bodily preparation for survival in a structure that will not recognise them otherwise.

> *"It was her (his adoptive mother's) way of protecting this little boy from…what might happen in school, or what would happen…when you're on your own"* (Samuelsson 2024, 13:58)

> *"To be prepared, you have to be good at what you do. When you leave here, you should, like, wear nice clothes, clean clothes, not brand clothes or anything like that, but we look a certain way"* (Samuelsson 2024, 14:13).

He recounts: "I needed confidence when I left that door" (Samuelsson 2024, 13:50). Read structurally, the effort to be "prepared" unfolds not as agency, but as adaptation to an ontological negation. Even where protection is offered, it is offered within whiteness as structure, as what Sharpe (2016) calls "the weather," the atmospheric conditions that make anti-Blackness continuous.

The adoptive mother's guidance is meant to be protective of the nonwhite child. Her words can be read as an attempt to install an awareness of how the world sees her adopted son, and how he must see himself through that gaze. This concern, however, operates within a larger structural frame: to have a double consciousness relies on maintaining different private and public appearances in relation to white norms. For the transracially adopted child, this becomes particularly acute, as they are literally always in the presence of white people, drawn out from their nonwhite consciousness, and the zone of non-being becomes palpable in everyday interaction. As Fanon (2008, p. 9) observes, "The Black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man." W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1994, p. 2) similarly describes double consciousness as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others," particularly the white world. In this framework, preparation and care are not simply personal lessons—they are structural requirements. The adoptee must anticipate white perception in order to reduce harm.

The mother did not want him to get harmed simply. The problem is that racialisation appears in the sphere of vision: "the Black individual is measured against a Euro-modern standard of humanity that remains perpetually unattainable; they cannot be fully human" (Fanon 1997, p. 34). Striving to be good, mannered, or educated—as Du Bois (1903/1994) identifies in the Talented Tenth—is an effort to navigate this structural violence. Inclusion does not resolve negation; it only positions the subject conditionally, tolerated as long as performance aligns with dominant norms. Even proximity to whiteness does not close the ontological gap. Black life under racial capitalism is lived within the wake of death, made more bearable only by a narrower corridor of acceptability (Sharpe 2016, p. 30).

At the level of lived experience, this reads structurally as self-knowledge. It concerns managing black visibility within a structure that renders him threatening. It is also unclear whether the final quoted

advice, “but we look a certain way,” originates entirely from the mother, or whether the speaker has absorbed and expanded on her words. As Ahmed (2004, p. 366) notes, we must distinguish between a white person passing as white and a Black person doing so: both may appear to “pass,” but only one does so within a structure that affirms their position. The racialised subject passes across a field shaped by exclusion, risk, and rupture. Her “we” implies shared norms of respectability, but these norms are not equally accessible. Her whiteness allows her to be read as neutral; his racialisation ensures that no degree of preparation will erase the body’s markedness.

Seen in this way, the moment reveals not merely a pedagogical relationship, but a structural mechanism: he must prepare to pass, not only in appearance, but in emotional and behavioural terms. This logic of adaptation reflects a broader pattern in the material: care and violence are not opposed, but entwined. The adoptee is protected by being conditioned, and conditioned through the expectation of danger. Fanon’s concept of the zone of non-being (1952/2008) helps name this position. His mother’s instructions reflect the impossibility of escaping the racial order, and the demand that he absorb its effects without the power to change it. His confidence, as he states, is something he must carry “when I leave that door,” a line that underscores the space between the private and the public, between familial belonging and societal rejection. What emerges here is a mechanism of discursive adaptation through familial, affective regulation, and internalization. The adoptee is not allowed to finally be and become anywhere: the zone of non-being appears as a space in which subjectivity is always in negotiation with violence, never granted, only conditionally permitted.

6.1.2 Affect

This section examines how feelings are shaped by racial and structural conditions. It focuses on how emotions like grief, silence, longing, or numbness are not just individual experiences but formed through systems of power. The analysis looks at how the adoptee’s emotional life is regulated—what feelings are allowed, where they can be expressed, and how they are received. Affect is treated here as something that shows how the subject is positioned: not through choice, but through the limits set by racialisation and colonial history.

Rhythmic Melancholy

These citations trace how the position is shaped by loss as a condition because of one event. The speech is of silence, repetition, and disillusionment that return again and again. What differs is not the emotion itself, but how it is allowed to appear, and how the subject is formed within its rhythm; it is an example of silence and grief as affective structure.

> *"I'm in a vacuum, / without sound / only a devouring feeling / of loneliness / of abandonment / of suffocating emptiness / The silence roars / echoes around my body / crashes inside my head / it is so empty and silent / where I am, / in me."*
>
> *"Desolate."*
>
> *"Vast landscapes of nothing."* (Johansson 2023, chapter "Begynnelsen")

The citation's visual composition contributes to its emotional and political intensity. The words do not unfold in continuous lines but are scattered across pages, with pauses of white space between them, sometimes one word at the top, another in the middle, a third on the next page. This spatial dispersal mirrors the affect it conveys: emptiness and silence that is not merely described, but enacted through the layout and wording together it performs a rhythm of absence. This absence of self, meaning, history and names is the typical situation for transracial adoptees. Furthemore, it is the absence of the right to know, the right here is not legally, but politically: law has nothing to do with this right. Being denied access to your history is an integral part of racial capitalism and slavery. What emerges here is the weight of silence. This is not a metaphor for emotional distance, but a dense affective atmosphere shaped by negation. The speaker does not request to be heard: instead, she becomes the echo of a world that has overwritten her. What is described aligns with what theorists of ontology call ontological instability which is not merely a loss of voice, but a loss of being as such (Fanon 1952, p. 28).

"It hurts when buds break, fall into bloom. / When everything you knew slowly dies. / It hurts when illusions wither, / it hurts the way it should" (Johansson 2023, Chapter 4, DIMMAN)

This is not a metaphor for growth. The cycle described is not one of healing, but of repetition. “It hurts the way it should” signals an emotional rhythm shaped by recognition. The pain is not surprising, but expected. As Christina Sharpe (2016) argues in In the Wake, Black life unfolds in proximity to death, not metaphorically, but materially, historically. The “buds breaking” is not new life; it is life that always already carries rupture. Yet Glissant (1997, p. 6) reminds us that the nonworld is not death, but life in broken form, he writes “Therein lies both the trauma and the necessity.” This is the paradox of the transracial adoptee positionality: to live in a space where life requires proximity to whom and what’s been erased and displaced, it is where loss repeats itself. As Kilomba (2020) observes, the loss of history, language, and collectivity is often framed not as violence, but as salvation.

These two citations reveal different articulations of the same structural mechanism: affective repetition. In one, silence becomes a space of suspended being. In the other, pain is scripted as inevitable. Both reflect how transracial adoptee subjectivity is conditioned not by single events, but by a racialised affective economy where grief is not an interruption, but a requirement.The condition of brokenness is not the end of relation, but the start of another grammar, one not grounded in recovery, but in endurance. What becomes visible here are structural mechanisms of emotional recursion, narrative foreclosure, and ontological instability, where to feel: is not an escape, but a consequence of having been made to live within the erasure**.**

Supervisor and First Parents

These citations illustrate two distinct affective encounters with the structural limits of speech and belonging. In the first, the adoptee’s meeting with her supervisor exemplifies institutional negation, where the desire—within the field of social anthropology—to conduct research on international adoption and biological parents is dismissed. Regardless of its relevance or feasibility, the topic is deemed structurally implausible or excessive.

> *“How would you be able to find those parents?”* (Grönroos 2021, 16:33)

> *"Since I had previously encountered many who showed a lack of understanding or interest in questions about biological parents in international adoption, I had prepared myself for his possible reaction."* (Grönroos 2022, 19:37)'

A lack of interest in biological mothers does not obscure the racialised and gendered differentiation at play. On the contrary, it is embedded in a worldview that structures political and social relations through hierarchical gradations of humanness. This rationale is sustained through the bureaucratic organisation of labour, which allows individuals to participate in systems of dehumanisation and erasure while maintaining a sense of virtue without confronting the consequences of their actions (Mbembe, 2003, p. 8; Mishra, 2024, p. 4).

> *"His CV stated, among other things, that he had worked in Ethiopia on behalf of Sida, but he didn't seem particularly interested in that assignment, nor in the other countries he had visited for Sida. He didn't seem to have much interest in my research topic or in international adoptions at all."* (Grönroos 2021, 19:33)

The fact that he had worked in the Global South, and for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), reinforces the idea that humanitarian work alone does not disrupt the structure. Racial capitalism is sustained by a value system where labour and moral worth are distributed according to race and geography (Mabasa 2021, p. 38). The boundaries of whiteness and patriarchy are maintained. This is a form of affective consumption where the subject can feel cosmopolitan, inclusive, and culturally engaged without relinquishing their privileged position. This dynamic is mirrored in the student-supervisor relationship. The difference between working or travelling in a place and approving a research project about that place lies, perhaps, in whether the experience is one the supervisor must personally confront. What might be disinterest may also be about safety: a refusal to encounter the exotic/danger up close rather than from a comfortable distance.

The demand for readability seems central here. Experiencing the Other at a distance is part of what makes them safe. Within consumer culture, difference must be digestible; it is something that can be absorbed and used (de los Reyes 2011, pp. 353–354). Cultural racism appears inclusive, embracing the Other as long as they are assimilable. Biological racism, on the other hand, rejects difference outright.

Within this logic, the stranger may be assimilated; the native can't. It all can be prolonged if there is white moral leverage to be gained. Otherwise, the Other is merely a remnant of a long gone time.

> *"...No, I think it's better that you choose another topic, became his final answer."*
> (Grönroos 2021, 20:17)

The supervisor's setting becomes a space where grief is rendered unthinkable. In contrast, the encounter with the first parents offers a radically different affective space, one not governed by the same white moral grammar.

> *"The meeting with these parents was powerful but also strangely simple. Despite the often intense and painful stories I heard in their accounts, there was something deeply healing for me in listening to them, and I also got the sense that these parents truly wanted to share their stories."* (Grönroos 2021, 35:23)

This citation introduces a different kind of relationality. Unlike the institutional space of the university, this encounter is not shaped by normative suspicion. The confirmation the parents offered was, she tells, that the grief was real, that what had happened had indeed happened. No more fiction of them (Mills 2007, p. 80) and instead a shared experience of the structural silence that had surrounded their situation. The speaker and the parents were not related, not previously known to each other. It was an interview where the interviewer was privileged, coming from Europe, while the biological parents were not. However, the encounter held weight not because of transparency, but because of a will to speak, perhaps as if they had never been allowed to speak before. This brings us to Spivak's (1988) concept of epistemic violence, can the subaltern speak? Any expression of having a child stolen, sold, or declared dead: within a world where the death of millions of black / brown /indigenous children is structurally normalised. The speech will become unintelligible not because it lacks meaning, but because the specifically multimillion-dollar industry of orphans.

Together, these moments illustrate how affect is shaped by the moral and epistemic regimes of transracial adoption. The structural mechanisms visible here are affective anticipation, silence and

uneven recognisability. In one setting, silence is enforced through polite disbelief. In the other, relation becomes possible through a shared disposal. These dynamics reflect the conditions of the zone of non-being as theorised by Fanon: a space where the subject is not only excluded from recognition, but made to anticipate and manage their own unintelligibility within dominant moral and epistemic orders.

Att vilja hem / Desiring Home

This citation offers an example of how racialized subjectivity is shaped not only through rejection or assimilation, but through affective longing for a form of belonging that lies outside the normative boundaries of the nation and the adoptive family.

> *"I remember my biggest dream when I was in middle school—I had read an article in, I don't remember exactly, but it was some youth magazine about Rinkeby, which was called the Village of the World, and there was a picture of a bunch of young people from all over the world dancing hip hop. That was my dream. I wanted to be at that youth center, because then I would feel at home"* (Den talande tystnaden 2023, 30:02)

The desire expressed here is not a call for inclusion into the white nuclear family or the Swedish national imaginary, but a longing to exist in a space where difference is not negated but shared. This dream of "världens by" is not reducible to a fantasy of diversity, but gestures toward a mode of relationality that is structurally unintelligible within the dominant racial order.

At a theoretical level Fanon and Wynter remind us, belonging is not only a matter of relation but of the temporal and ontological order through which personhood becomes recognisable.

This longing reveals the limits of what kinds of attachments are permitted to carry meaning within the dominant social order. The imagined home is not rooted in biology or legality, but in shared marginalisation, a desire for mutual recognition beyond normative structures of belonging. When the speaker describes their longing to be in Rinkeby "because then I would feel at home," it is not merely a desire for inclusion. It is a gesture toward something deeper: the search for a place that might substitute what has been irretrievably lost. At stake here is a deeper distinction: there is a distinction between

losing one's land and losing one's origin. The former allows for mourning, for political resistance, for imaginative return. The latter marks a different kind of displacement: one in which no symbolic frame exists through which to narrate belonging. As bell hooks reminds us, love is not a possession but a practice, "a verb" (hooks 2000). Origin can be understood in a similar way: not as a fixed point, but as something enacted, sustained, and made real through relation.

But when that relation is rendered impossible, when origin is not simply distant but erased, the very conditions for belonging collapse. What remains is not a home one cannot reach, but a gap in time, a space of affective suspension. Here the zone of non-being unfolds, not as dramatic rupture but as the slow and silent impossibility of relation. Read through Fanon's zone of non-being, this citation reveals a subject who is not asking for assimilation, but whose position already exists in excess of the structure that defines her. She dreams of an elsewhere because the "here" offers no affirmative space of subjecthood. What this moment illuminates is not resistance, but the quiet evidence of ontological exile, of being placed outside what the social order is built to recognise.

Fanon's zone of non-being also operates as a space of capture, a condition where the racialised subject is not only excluded, but institutionalised into a system that convinces them there is no life outside its terms. Whether through the family, the school, or the state, this position is maintained through affective regulation and psychic enclosure. As Fanon (1952/2008, p. 112) notes, the Black subject is stripped of history and agency by being positioned at "the beginning of humanity" due to the presumed inferiority of their lineage.

Read alongside this, this desire of an alternative home can also be read alongside Du Bois's understanding of double consciousness not just as an internal conflict but as a response to living in a world where the "I" is always a problem for someone else (Du Bois 1903/1994, p. 2). In contrast to the void of recognition that characterises the zone of non-being, the imagined community in Rinkeby represents a space where racialised sociality might resist full erasure. The dream is not just about place, but about relation.

Taken together, the citation marks a differentiated mode of inhabiting the zone. It does not rupture the structure, but neither is it fully contained by it. Rather than being swallowed by negation, the desire expressed here rests at the threshold of intelligibility, a quiet longing for sociality that cannot yet be named, but insists on being felt. This moment is read through the lens of affect, not to locate resistance, but to trace how longing itself may emerge as an articulation of structural absence. It gestures toward

attachments that, while shaped by ontological negation, are not wholly consumed by it. Rather than rupturing the dominant order, such longing lingers at its edge, elusive, barely speakable, yet insistently present.

Tabula Rasa and Gratitude

The following two excerpts offer different, yet connected, articulations of affect within the context of racialization. Rather than representing separate truths they reveal how the transracial adoptee is positioned through recurring logics of erasure, gratitude, and displacement. Read together, they speak to how affect is shaped within an order that often demands an ontological erasure: forgetting of origin, a rewriting of self, in exchange for (be)longing.

> *"Tabula rasa, life wiped away what I thought was me, with a sour, foul-smelling rag. Same Sanna every day, same damn Sanna every single damn day. But is it me?"*
> (Johansson 2023, Chapter 3)

This citation engages directly with the logic of tabula rasa, not as a philosophical abstraction, but as a lived condition. The idea of the blank slate, rooted in liberal humanist thought furthermore, imagines emptiness as potential. This is the fundamental modularity of coloniality where individuation is upheld as a norm, yet made impossible in practice (Moten 2024, 16:00–17:00). The figurative slave and object constitutes the subject and the human.

I read the "... .sour, foul-smelling rag" not as a poetic embellishment, but as a structural figure, a trace of how the colonial script is enacted on the body/personhood through affective and mundane repetitions of erasure. Thus, the perspective on subjectivity is continuity not distinguishing between the subject who defines their reality and the object who is defined by other (hooks 1989).

I am reminding the reader that this reading is informed by the theoretical framework of this study, where subjectivity is not viewed as interior essence but as shaped by racialised and ontological pressures. From this standpoint, the rag becomes a material sign of how the self is made knowable figuratively being wiped clean.

The repetition of “same Sanna every single damn day” evokes not stability, but exhaustion through a circular performance of a self that has been stripped of continuity. “But is it me?” is not merely rhetorical. It gestures toward a deeper epistemological dislocation, a moment in which the speaker suspects that the name, the identity, the very personhood may not belong to them at all.

This affective tension recalls Fanon’s (1952, p. 107) formulation of the colonised subject who, upon entering the world, discovers themselves only as “an object among other objects.” In this frame, the adoptee is not simply erased but reconstituted—as a symbolic container emptied of origin, history, and context, and filled with the liberal ideals of whiteness: autonomy, coherence, humanity.

That this passage comes from a poetry collection matters. Poetry is less policed than other registers, it allows pain to emerge without the immediate demand for resolution or narrative acceptability. This unstructured space opens up a register of that cannot easily be neutralised. It is from this space that the next citation departs, an institutionally sanctioned interview, where a different affective logic becomes legible.

> *“Lucky in bad luck. Our mother died of tuberculosis. Terrible. The luck and the fighting spirit. She brought two children into the city. Walked. So I come from this. There’s an inner strength in her that lives on in both me and my sister, and I’m incredibly grateful for that “*
> (Samuelsson 2024, 08:32- 12:40)

> *“If that hadn't happened, a little Bolivian boy would have grown up instead, who might also have been named Marcus.”* (Samuelsson 2024, 08:32- 12:40)

This excerpt is analysed through the lens of affect, as it articulates gratitude, strength, and origin within a racialised structure of meaning. Building from these reflections, I read the speaker’s words as expressing a sincere and intimate connection to his biological mother. The gratitude is not framed as assimilationist or strategic, it may be a genuine way to hold on to what’s lost. The evocation of maternal strength offers a form of coherence and lineage, yet risks reproducing familiar tropes: the strong, enduring woman of colour, always surviving, rarely allowed grief or contradiction (Hill Collins 2000; Spivak 1988).

This reading is not a critique of the speaker's intent, but an attempt to understand the emotional and linguistic economy in which such expressions usually become possible. As Ahmed (2004, p. 119) argues, emotions do not emerge from an inner state but are shaped and circulated within historically and politically determined grammars. Gratitude, in this case, travels along permitted lines of expression. Language is not neutral; it is what enables affect to be expressed, but also what disciplines it. As Ahmed notes, language both channels and contains affect and it gives form to feeling in ways that are already structured by race, power, and belonging (2004, p. 126).

Extending this reading the mention of "some little Bolivian boy… maybe even named Marcus" may appear as a casual remark, even affectionate. But read through the lens of this study, it evokes the structural logic of tabula rasa. It reflects a way of imagining identity as detachable—as if any child, given the same conditions, could step into the same name, the same life. What comes into view here is not a conscious substitution, but a language formed under conditions where personhood becomes interchangeable, stripped of history and filled with narrative coherence. All possible because of racial capitalis, where children of the global southa are consumption.

From this perspective, even seemingly neutral statements can reproduce the affective logic of tabula rasa, not because they are false or ill-intentioned, but because they emerge from a discursive order that frames adoptee subjectivity as open, available, and substitutable. The structural imagination of identity as replaceable obscures the political and material realities of transnational adoption. As shown in previous research and background reports, many international adoptions have occurred under conditions of coercion, legal irregularity, and the erasure of birth families (Hübinette & Lundström 2020; Socialstyrelsen 2022).

These two excerpts trace how subjectivity is structured through affective contradiction. Taken together, exhaustion becomes a mode of refusal. In the other, survival becomes an authorised posture of gratitude. Both expressions orbit the logic of tabula rasa. Neither voice is insincere. But their emotional lives are shaped within the affective economy of transracial adoption, where belonging is mediated through whiteness, and where even pain and memory must be legible on colonial terms. Together, they reveal structural mechanisms such as affective regulation, narrative substitution, and emotional legibility, conditions that govern which forms of subjectivity can be recognised, and which must remain silent.

6.2 Conclusion

This study set out to explore how the subject position of transracial adoptees in Sweden can be understood through Frantz Fanon's concept of the zone of non-being, and what structural mechanisms become visible in their testimonies. Through the use of two analytical lenses—Body and Affect—this study has examined how lived experience is narrated under structural constraint and how subjectivity is shaped within coloniality. The analysis demonstrates how colonial structures take form in embodied, affective, and narrative registers, delimiting what can be felt, expressed, and inhabited.

The lens of Body showed how the adoptee's body is made legible within the racial order, both as an object of projection and as a container for other people's desires, anxieties, and moral fantasies. The body emerged as a site of exposure and erasure, visible only through frameworks that neutralise its specificity. Here, the zone of non-being appears not as absence, but as a functionalised presence where Blackness and adoptee subjectivity are made usable, but not fully human.

The lens of Affect enabled a close reading of how emotional life is shaped by structural conditions. Affects such as shame, longing, and numbness surfaced not as private emotions but as patterned responses to life in a world that does not recognise the adoptee's full personhood. Fanon's insights into abandonment, negation, and ontological precarity were especially resonant in this context. Emotional states were revealed not as markers of interiority, but as traces of structural inscription.

Across both lenses, three analytic patterns were identified:

1. **Silence** – as both a discursive theme and a structural condition: what cannot be said, what must be omitted, and what remains unspeakable due to the ontological position from which the adoptee speaks.

2. **Adaptation** – not as personal coping but as a demand placed upon the racialised subject to render themselves acceptable through alignment with dominant norms.

3. **An unnamed pattern** – a recurring affective and narrative movement that resists categorisation. It signals something that slips through—moments that do not neatly align with silence or

adaptation, but suggest friction.

This third pattern does not indicate a failure of theory, but marks the ethical and methodological commitment made in the analysis introduction: to let the unspeakable remain visible without being absorbed. Some moments in the material carried intensities that refused capture; they could not be fully explained without risk of flattening their weight. Their presence signals the very limits of legibility within a structure that demands coherence.

The analysis does not claim that Fanon's concept can explain everything. Rather, it shows that when approached with care, the zone of non-being makes certain mechanisms visible, mechanisms that would otherwise be dismissed as personal dysfunction, emotional instability, or individual struggle. It enables a reading of the adoptee not as broken, but as positioned within a structure that both permits and denies subjectivity. To inhabit a zone of non-being is not only negation or capture, but also a space where language falters, where something else insists: a pause, a tension, a refusal.

6.3 Future Research

There is scope to extend the theoretical contributions of this study to further develop how non-being, legibility, and containment function across disciplines and place. In this sense, the study does not only contribute to adoption scholarship, but also to critical race theory, Black studies, and postcolonial critique by centering subjectivity where it is often overlooked, and by conceptualising structural harm beyond the visible event. Future research could explore how the concept of the zone of non-being operates in other transcolonial contexts, or how affective regulation and opacity appear across different forms of displacement, including foster care, undocumented migration, or other kinship disruptions. Comparative studies might trace how racialised subject positions are shaped through differing legal systems, welfare regimes, and cultural imaginaries. Such analyses could illuminate the interplay between structural conditions and everyday lived experience.

Moreover, the absence of dialectical progression is a structural feature of the zone of non being condition. Building on these theoretical insights, future research could explore how power sustains itself through regulation, which forms of resistance remain legible, and who or what is absorbed, demonised, or preemptively silenced.

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