

## **Otherwise that Analogy: The Paralogous Relations of Transgender, Ethnicity, and Color in Regimes of Biopolitical Racialization**

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Alright, can you hear me? We're good, alright. Thank you for that introduction. I would also like to say thank you to the representatives of the Maori community who welcomed us this morning and Holly and the rest of the organizing committee for putting on this conference. I do apologize that I haven't been able to go to more of the panels today, but I have had a lot of admin work I've needed to get done, that I have to get done by Monday morning in the US. So I've done that and I really look forward to going to more of the panels and being a little bit more participatory and collegial for the next couple of days, but I thank all of you for coming tonight.

I just have to say that it was really a pleasure to listen to Joseph Pugliese opening keynote this morning and I hope a lot of you were able to come to that. I never fail to be amazed at his (3:35) and passion, and I really feel like his work is a big inspiration for my own. We didn't discuss our papers beforehand with each other and as I was listening to his remarks earlier today I was really struck by how theoretically similar the presentations were in spite of being about completely different topics and taking diametrically opposed approaches. So I would be really interested if there's conversation that comes out of the two keynotes, or maybe we can talk about what they might have in common.

The immediate context for this paper is that, as Melanie said I spent more than 20 years at this point, working to build up trans-gender studies as a recognized field and that the pace of this work has really been picking up rapidly in the last year or so. As you heard there's a new journal, *TSQ*, published by Duke University Press, which started publishing in April of this year. And then at the University of Arizona where I teach I've had the opportunity to lead a faculty cluster-hire-process in Transgender Studies. We've been able to hire three tenure tracked faculty members in the past year and currently hiring another. And that's in consequence of this rapid institutionalization, now that there's some actual academic turf to fight over, we're watching the turf battles begin, you know, in all of the quotidian ways that you can have controversies and conflicts in a department or at a university. What I've really seen is an intensification of the sometimes acrimonious struggle of how to best understand the relationship between emergent transgender identities and communities often unmarked as white and longer established racial and ethnic minority formations. These sorts of struggles around identity politics are nothing new, and I think they're more characteristic of US-based scholarship than elsewhere, but they are burning particularly fiercely in this moment of rapid institutionalization and consolidation in my field. So engaging with that and rethinking those relationships occupies a large part of my working life right at the moment. And my remarks today draw on this current preoccupation. One final prefatory remark is that I gave this same paper today last Friday in Wollongong at the Cultural Studies Association of Australia, of Australasia Annual Meeting, so if you heard it there I apologize for the re-run. So let me start things off with a story.

I remembered something not long ago. Something I had remembered before, before forgetting it again. It was 1978, or 1977 maybe, in my hometown of Lawton Oklahoma, and looking back at it now I see myself loafing on a hood of a car parked

alongside some country road with a friend from high school drinking Seagram's whisky and 7-Up from a Styrofoam cup, maybe smoking a little weed listening to Lynyrd Skynyrd or maybe Steve Miller on the A-Track, and watching the Wichita mountains rising from probably the southern plains of the Central United States begin to silhouette themselves against a golden summer sky. My friend's name was Don and he wasn't somebody I was super close to, he was just a decent guy from high school who was easy to hang out with every now and then. His parents were psychologists or maybe social workers who ran a private social services organization called The Human Ecology Learning Project. It was the 1970's after all. Abbreviated HELP with offices in a location downtown, which they called the HELP Center. The HELP Center offered anonymous group therapy sessions and support groups, Alcoholic Anonymous meetings, that sort of thing, and also run some kind of counseling program at the Fort Sill Indian School, or maybe it was the Fort Sill Indian Hospital, which was right next door to the school, I really don't remember. But that evening back in 1977 or 78, after Don had gotten a buzz on and loosened up a little, he confessed a secret knowledge that apparently weighed heavily on him. He said that his parents worked with transsexuals. He said that after people had had their sex change operations they were supposed to start new lives moving to someplace where nobody knew them before their transition, someplace where they can disappear. His parents helped run a program that could help transsexuals vanish into the woodwork of our small city in South-western Oklahoma. Wasn't that weird. No shit I said, or maybe that is pretty weird. Doing my best to remain nonchalant, never letting on in the least about my lifelong transgender feelings. I had discovered the word transsexual a few years before in the nationally syndicated Dear Abbey advice column that ran in our local newspaper. And I had studied up on the topic as best I could at the public library, hoping to learn more about what I thought could be myself. I didn't know a lot but I did know that the goals of medically-assisted gender transition was for transsexuals to pass as non-transsexual and to disappear. How else would people accept us as the people we considered us to be. How jolting, never haven't ever met a transsexual or hearing the topic of transexuality spoken of by people I actually knew. To think that perhaps there was transsexuals secretly in my vicinity. It terrified me. To confront the fact that acting on my feelings and calling them by name ... calling them by their name that sounded most accurate could result in me being ripped away from the only life, the only world, I had ever known. That to continue being myself could perversely culminate in losing myself, to become a stranger with no connection to my owned lived past. I let the moment pass without further comments and allowed my newfound knowledge to slip into forgetfulness, perhaps to be retrieved again at some future date.

I remembered the story most recently in the Spring of 2014 while preparing a keynote address at an international conference on transgender archiving at the University of Victoria in Canada. Knowledge (10:28) attention to transgender issues had changed considerably over the four intervening decades. Along with my own position in the world. Not only had I come out as transsexual and changed my social gender, I had also become a historian who studied the history of transsexuality and who theorized transgender phenomena on the basis of those formal and experiential knowledges. I know that in both modalities how precarious transgender lives can be. The high rate of violence, unemployment, familial abandonment, substance abuse, alcoholism, suicide, incarceration, lack of access to social services and culturally competent health care, and stigmatizing associations with crime and mental illness, all rooted in the problem transgender bodies pose fitting into the normative orderings of

society. I remember that anecdote from my teen years while trying to think of a good story to illustrate the idea that archives are significant for not only what they contain but for what they omit. How can we face the gaps in the records of marginalized peoples lives and enable those very omissions to motivate the production of critical knowledge of the structures and practices that produce silence and invisibility, isolation and ignorance. When the memory of what I learnt on that Oklahoma summer night at last welled up to the surface of consciousness, I not only remembered it but remembered forgetting it and remembering it again and again. And in doing so layered anger, sadness, regret and doubt atop that recollective encounter with the supposedly therapeutic violence directed against transgender subjects with the ostensible goal of making such lives livable. I've encountered this kind of anoxia elsewhere and I've heard it described as a post-traumatic symptom. It can be difficult to hold onto knowledge of an event when the corroborating evidence of its very existence is not confirmed and reflected back by its broader context, rendering it stray to dominant patterns of the experienced world, and an easily ignored loose thread against a tightly patterned background. Forgetting can be a solution of encountering knowledge too painful to bare. Was the memory even real? Did it actually happen? It seemed so improbable. But what would it have meant to me for it to have been true? That elders and kin who could have hailed me had walked about me unseen and unknown at a time that I could have used that recognition and support. Could it possibly be true that a deliberately enacted policy of geographical relocation directed at a category of minoritized persons, which intended for that minority to be invisibilized and absorbed into a larger body politic and which fostered institutions that actively taught the pedagogies of disappearance had cut me off from other people like myself who might have imparted invaluable wisdom of which my very survival could well have depended. Maybe it's just because I was thinking of something that happened in Oklahoma whose history is Indian Territory and whose history is inseparable from the forced relocation of indigenous people from the Eastern United States who became concentrated there. Or maybe it was because the HELP Center actually worked with both transsexuals and the settlers population and Native Americans at the Fort Sill Indian School, where students taken from their families were instructed in the knowledge forms of the dominant culture, but for whatever the reason I couldn't help but say to myself in that moment "I too, live in the shadow of stolen generations."

Now I know, I know I'm not supposed to say such a thing and with a good reason. In spite of those words leaving to mind. The phrase stolen generations has a very specific association with a policy of moving children from aboriginal families in Australia throughout much of the 20th century, raising them in boarding schools, orphanages, asylums and white foster families with quite deleterious affects. I have not been the subject of that history. I am not a member of an indigenous, ethnic or tribal group. I have not been racialized or inculturated as indigenous within a particularly colonial context. I have not been subjected to the same institutions or forms of institutional violence. I have not been displaced from my land by conquest and occupation. These are simply not my experiences to mobilize. Since the upsurge of identity based social movements in the 1960's, in particularly since the rise to prominence of Intersectionality critique in the 1980's, it's become quite difficult to talk about how some emergent form of social oppression is like some already existing form and it has become instead 'de rigeur' (15:34) to say that race is not sex is not gender is not disability is not class, that each operates along its own axis, has different roots, requires different analytics, and is not substitutable for any other thing. This has

been particularly apparent when people recorded white privilege within systems of racial hierarchy who also experience social oppression because of their status as members of emergent forms of minoritization and marginalisation makes self-serving comparisons to the historical experience of racialized groups, such as recent appeals in the struggles for same sexed marriage to the history of the struggle for interracial marriage. Or in my own leap, from the erasure of the transsexual lives to the history of stolen generations. Even more pointedly, homosexual and transgender imaginaries within white settler colonial societies have a decades long history of fictive identification with an appropriation of indigenous gender statuses, finding in the gender diversity of some non-western cultures an analogue for queer people's own sense of difference from insubordination within the dominant culture. The problem lies I think in understanding these comparisons as analogies. Analogies attempt explanation or clarification based on comparing corresponding structures or partial similarities to argue that similarities in known respects can imply similarity in as yet unknown respects. The prefix A N A hyphen ana, in loan words from ancient Greek means to be up against or to refer back, thus analogy can be further understood as a form of argumentation and a mode of comparison in which an understanding of one object leans on or cites a prior example or source. This prior referent is deemed to be the better understood of the pair while the matter compared to it is less well known or insufficiently described and is in need of fuller description or more adequate conceptualization derived from reference to the source. This understanding of analogy supplies a basis for the just criticism of 'like race' arguments used by emergent forms of subordinate identities calling to attention the fact that similarities between one form of oppression and another can be more apparent than real arise from different causes, operate through different means or have different consequences and hence do not supply readily exchangeable descriptions.

A further critique of this naive comparativism involves the insight that the comparison of injustices experienced on the basis of different classifications and categorizations of bodies and persons and of the history that result from them, relies on concepts of calculability and fungability. When in fact injustices incalculable in its attainment is specific to the sites in which its demands are articulated. Such comparisons of social injury point back to falsely universalized notions of humanity in which the human is figured as generic Man, capital M, and too often conflated with the rational white masculinist subject of post-enlightenment European modernity, which leaves intact hegemonic standards for adjudicating who warrants recognition and belonging that preserve Euro-centric white masculinist privilege, precisely through relegating some categories of ostensibly human beings, to the status of which being less than human. In practice, comparing forms of social subordination often result in a ranking of oppressions based on spurious reference to punitively universal human characteristics with those deemed to adhere most closely to those criteria being the most deserving of redress. The task then, for radical projects that seek to understand, undo and do otherwise, and the many different extend forms (19:43) of socio-political and economic violence predicated on the unjust hierarchization of kinds of bodies and subjects is to develop a critical body of framework that rejects naive comparison while also recognizing that NOT to somehow bring about similarities into relation with one another conspires with the divide-and-conquer strategies through which contemporary governmentality plays minoritised and marginalized identities against one another. If we are to mobilize the suffering that results from political violence as a conduit to new forms of life how can we better

comprehend the relationality of different embodied experiences of subjugation without implying the sameness in substitutability of that subjection.

My own method for addressing this problematic has been to begin with a concrete auto-ethnographic instance that both stages the problem of comparison while also providing an opportunity to articulate in a non-analogical mode seemingly similar phenomena that transpire in desperate and seemingly unrelated contexts. In this case remembering an early encounter with the management of transgender lives and being struck by a phrase describing the experience of another category of people, and then to work from there towards an explanatory framework and a more generalizable conceptual operation. In his recent *Habeas Viscus racializing assemblages, bio-politics and black feminist theories of the human*, Alexander Weheliye begins to orchestrate a conversation across a desperately biologized social formations and configurations of contemporary tested personhood that gets a closer to that explanatory framework. Weheliye argues that within our current episteme what he calls “dysgenic humans”, a category he describes as being comprised in the contemporary United States of blacks, latinos, indians and other such groups as the poor, the incarcerated, the disabled and transgender people are similarly, quote “constituted as aborations from ethno-classed man by being subjected to racializing assemblages that establish so-called natural differences between the selected and the deselected.” In his attention to racializing assemblages what Weheliye adjoins scholars of race and ethnicity such as Jasbir Puar and Mel Chin, who increasingly turn away from Intersectionality critique, via Deleuze and Guattari, towards more flexible accounts of the ways in which phenotype and morphology become invariably, and variously enmeshed with language, culture, ethnicity and political economy, and are taken up within bio-political regimes that target problem bodies and problem populations either to render them normative citizens and subjects or else to contain, exclude or eliminate them principally through categorizing them within animacy hierarchies as fully human, not quite human, and inhuman, and thus closer to or farther from value and life or worthlessness and death. Central to Weheliye is an argument is a notion cogently expressed by disabilities scholar Alan Samuels that within modernity all bodies are subject to what Samuels has called bio-certification, an ever shifting ensemble of techno-cultural practices that attempt to fix different embodiments into hierarchized social categories according to fantasies of identification authorized by medical scientific discourse and enacted through a eugenic logic. Well any given discreet fantasy of a identification or technique of bio-certification may come or go the overarching master fantasy of the biological verifiability of social identity continues to circulate flexibly, producing perceptions of the self evident commonsensical truth of what bodily difference means. Racialization understood as a system of marks that creates socio-political hierarchies by fastening onto particular aspects of embodiment has been a perniciously persistent strategy of bio-certification. But to follow Weheliye in characterizing the poor, the incarcerated, the disabled and transgender people as being racialized requires us to either rethink what race can mean, or else to develop another more expansive term for the processes that have heretofore have been characterized by concepts of race alone. Foucault’s acute or somewhat underdeveloped account of race and racism in his lectures on bio-politics provides an important opening for expanding our usual sense of what race means. In describing the processes through which some bodies within in a given population are cultivated for life while others experience neglect, disinvestment or outright killing, Foucault is unequivocal saying that the bio-political population is bifurcated along the border of life and death by race, which he describes as quote “the

basic mechanism of power”. However Foucault critically disarticulates race and color to enable an inferiorization of racism capable of doing more than pointing out that people of color tend to suffer more injustices than whites. He too understands racism as an artificial biologization of social, cultural, linguistic or economic differences within a population. That is, as a selective revolutionary process of speciation through which new kinds of social entities emerge that are considered biologically distinct from one another. The racism through which bio-power operates can be described as a somatechnical assemblage for what Weheliye describes as racializing assemblage that brings together a hierarchizing scheme of values and preferences, sets of life affirming or death making techniques that enact those values and preferences, and a variety of phenotypic, morphological, and other bodily qualities and characteristics upon which those techniques fasten and begin to operate. Race and racism are therefore broadly understood as the enmeshment of hierarchizing cultural values with hierarchized biological attributes to produce distinct categories of beings who are divided into those rendered vulnerable to premature death, and those nurtured to maximise their life. Race thus construed conceptually underpins a range of binarized discriminations not only from color from whiteness but of abled bodied from disabled and of cisgender to transgender, to the extent that a body on one side of any of these binaries is conceptualized as biologically distinct from a body on the other side. In this understanding of race, transgender is not like race, it is race. Given however the tight associations between concepts of race and concepts of color and ethnicity it might be prudent to use some other term to name the common processes bio-certifying unjust hierarchies of different bodies. Well I find it increasingly difficult to think of transgender persons and transgending processes as anything other than emergent manifestations of the same bio-political processes that racializes, I find it more useful to say processes specieate living materiality as hierarchized.

How then, in light of these revised concepts of racialization and transgending as particular kinds of specieating processes might we similarly reassess the impoverished vocabulary we tend to deploy when we imagine that one kind of social oppression is ‘like’ another. How can we begin to restore to the word ‘like’, the sense of non-identical similarity that would seem to be it’s most obvious meaning, but whose utterance seems so utterly policed. Herein lies my interest in exploring frameworks such as bio-politics and racial assemblage for expressing similarity otherwise than analogy and in deploying or more accurately redeploying the concept of paralogy.

Paralogy in it’s most basic definition is a method or process of reasoning either psychopathological or merely erroneous that contradicts the rules of logic or that is formulated on faulty premises. It is beside logic in much the same way paranoia is beside knowledge. In this sense, analogical “like race arguments” considered paralogies to the extent that yet uncomprehended or poorly described features of an emergent target object’s social oppression are not in fact accurately modeled by the supposed source object, they are faulty comparisons. But paralogical error quotes “can never the less harbor useful critical capacities” and in his no longer fashionable post-modern social theory Jean Francois Leotard proposed paralogy as a method of moving against conventional ways of thinking and reasoning. This version of the concept merits revisiting en route to an even more novel theorization. Broadly construed, paralogy in Leotard’s lexicon could be thought of as that imaginative not-quite-logical turn that good conversations always take. Paralogical thinking diverges from established norms, operates out of bounds of strict rules of argumentation and departs from a pre-established consensus. It makes new moves in language gains, or

even changes their rules or invents new games all together. When Leotard formed his new concept of paralogy in the 1970's he did so specifically in relation to the question of how contemporary knowledge is legitimated under what he called post-modern conditions, of which we may now re-label as being under regimes of neo-liberal governmentality. In a deft, yoking together of speech-act theory with cybernetics, Leotard critiqued the knowledge through the principle of performativity or true performance enhancement, which he characterized as the maximization of a systems speed and efficiency. Legitimation of knowledge through performative criteria inevitably tends, in his view, to subordinate all statements of the operative logic of the system and to reduce dissensus? through the terroristic elimination of speaking positions, speakers and utterances deemed to create drag or to introduce noise rather than allowing argumentation and dissensus?, which slows things down to take place. He proposed instead that the status of knowledge could be legitimated better through paralogy, which points beyond closed cybernetic systems characterized by the principal of performativity, and opens dynamically towards an unrealized future state thereby allowing for revelations that can articulate desire for justice with a desire for the unknown.

That reflexive or reactive rejections of 'like race argumentation' can actually collude with the agonistic logic of performance enhancement that Leotard criticizes the "you can't say that" move, partially motivates my desire to find new modes of addressing similarity and the concept of paralogy offers yet another opportunity for doing so. In biology, a paralogy is a particularly kind of homology at the level of the organism homologous structures derive from a common ancestor but are adapted to different purposes through modification over time. The wings of bats and the flippers of dolphins, for example, developing over revolutionary history of mammals from the same precursor structures. Homologies also operate at the molecular level of genes and chromosomes. Molecular homologies are said to be 'orthologous homologies', if they are directly descended from a single ancestral genetics sequence that existed prior to a speciation event resulting in two subsequent species with copies of the same genes. Paralogueous homologies on the other hand, are created when a gene is duplicated within the same genome and comes to occupy different positions within it. Such duplications can result from DNA replication and repair errors, as well as through the action of retro-viruses that insert their own protein sequences into an organisms genetic code. Because the resulting paralogues do not all experience selective evolutionary pressure in the same way as the original paralogueous copies of genetic sequences are freer to mutate and to acquire new functions and thus provide an important mechanism for molecular revolution.

In thinking analogically, through biological metaphor, I find a way to rethink the similarity between racial and transgender formations with resulting - resorting to inappropriate and inaccurate direct comparison as well as a way to think differently about the processes of artificial biologization or bio-certification that underlie the formation of both racialized and transgender collectivities. It's possible to see race and transgender as not as analytically isolate and inappropriately analogized, but rather as homologous entities related by means of precursor functions having to do with how bodily differences taken up by socio-political and economic systems that depend on creating hierarchies of bodies and fixing those bodies in hierarchal ordered places. These homologues need not arise orthologically, in direct descent from a precursor, but rather paralogueously through duplication and transition from one part of an assemblage to another through viral transmissions and molecular politics that

mutate bodies' politic, transform the rules of the game and open onto futures that are not known in advanced.

So let me now briefly return, in closing, to the anecdote that I began with to explicate some of the methodological choices that I made and re-narrate analogy between the history of transsexual erasure and the history of stolen indigenous generations as a productive paralogy. First, through thick description of layered rememberings and forgettings I wanted to link the recollections of a personal experience to the recognition of structural violence. For transsexuals of my generation there was perhaps no more prevalent trope then that our very identity was programmed to disappear. In keeping with a more pervasive logic of the individualization of the responsibility under regimes of neo-liberal governmentality this disappearance into passing was usually conceived up and narrated as a personal act undertaken by the individual transsexual as a solo performance. We should each shoulder alone the hard work of our collective's social erasure. What I saw instead of a personal act was a bureaucracy, policies, a set of mechanisms, a network of institutions that actually facilitated and orchestrated the disappearance of a category of people. I saw that through a benevolent discourse of care, rescue, recuperation and rehabilitation the social assemblage perpetrated injustice against the people it targeted. Against me. I saw that where there could have been connection and continuity between peers and generations of trans people the management of our difference produced instead isolation and disconnection. I wanted to describe the feelings associated with that recognition as a potential point of commonality with others who have experienced similar feelings about how they themselves have likewise been acted on.

Second, I wanted to give that analogy breathing room and not pass so quickly over that which cannot be said, surely something important must be at stake if the prohibitions are so strong. So let us slow down and allow dissensus a foothold. My thought process did indeed begin with a recognition of similarity between my experience of transsexuality's social management whose history is not well known and another better known history. The task then was not to accept the analogy as sufficiently explanatory but to turn instead to the actual material history of the social formation in which I was embedded. I know a lot more now about the history of transsexuality than I did when I was 16. I can tell you how a complex medio-judicial and psycho-therapeutic apparatus took shape over the course of the 19th century that addressed itself to atypically gendered bodies and subjects and constructed them as biologically distinct entities to be operated on and how this apparatus expanded rapidly in the mid-20th century to shore up effective gender binary. I know that Oklahoma was indeed a center of medical sex reassignment in the mid 1970's. There were 7 or so major transsexual surgery programs and that time, including ones at Baptist medical hospital at Oklahoma City between 1973 and 1977 and at Oklahoma Memorial Hospital between 1977 and 1981. Although both programs eventually closed due to increasing evangelical Christian opposition to transsexuality. I know that transsexual medicine had been concentrated during the 1960's and early 1970's in big university based research programs and teaching hospitals and gradually, as more standardized treatment protocols developed, devolved onto a geographically dispersed second tier of small clinics with a hand full of regional surgical centers. By the 1980's the medical management of transsexuality had become thoroughly routinized, when gender identity disorder formally entered the diagnostic institution manual of the American Psychiatric Association that year, there were 40 or so gate way clinics nationwide that evaluated the suitability of transgender people for surgical and



endochronological? treatment and provided psychological and support services for them. Teaching them how to disappear, which were usually staffed by peer councilors and mid-level practitioners with Masters level instead of doctorate level training. Programs housed in multi-service agencies like the HELP centre, run by people like my friends parents, were actually common. They were typically funded by government grants to provide services to marginalized populations that the state itself increasingly did not provide services for directly, at a moment in history when states were increasingly shifting the responsibility for managing populations to the private sector.

Finally, identifying the strategies that actually work and the management of transsexual populations provides an opportunity for discovering transversal connections and paralogous relations between the collective experiences of differently minoritized and marginalized populations, allowing us to see how particular bio-political techniques and strategies might function as precursors that operate within many forms of embodied identity, how such techniques might be transposed from one group to another and what possibilities for mutation and transformation might emerge in the viral infection of one history by another. Sandy Stone concludes her 1992 post-transsexual manifesto, often considered a point of origin for the contemporary transgender political movement as well as for transgender studies, by asserting that “in the transsexual’s erased history we find a story disruptive to the accepted discourses of gender, which originates from within the gender minority itself, and which can make common cause with other oppositional discourses.” I’ll conclude there as well, in hope in faith that a critical engagement with transgender phenomena can bring something of use to the larger project of rectifying historical injustices and building more habitable futures. Thank you.