

# “Except That the Haunted, Hidden Thing Was Me”: Ghostly Matters and Transsexual Haunting

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This paper examines motifs of ghostliness and haunting in representations of transsexuality, both in the violent and oppressive representations of transsexuality within a transphobic culture, and in the self-representation and narration of transsexuals themselves. Using scholar Avery Gordon’s definition of haunting—which characterizes haunting as the “knot” of oppression, self-representation, and knowledge production—this paper argues for the necessity of recognizing transsexual oppression as a form of cultural haunting.

*“I do not believe in ghosts, although I have seen them with my own eyes. This isn’t so strange, really. A lot of people feel the same way about transsexuals.” –Jennifer Finney Boylan*

*“Back then I knew very little for certain about whatever it was that afflicted me, but I did know this much: that in order to survive, I’d have to become something like a ghost myself, and keep the nature of my true self hidden. And so I haunted that young body of mine....” –Jennifer Finney Boylan<sup>1</sup>*

In 2013, Nathan Verhelst, a 44-year-old transsexual man, applied for euthanasia in Belgium after a series of failed transition surgeries. After his death, Nathan’s mother, who in interviews refused to call him by his chosen name or use the male pronouns corresponding to his identity, told Belgium’s *Het Laatste Nieuws*, “When I first saw Nancy, my dream was shattered. She was so ugly. I had a ghost birth. Her death does not bother me” (Gayle).

In 2011, a transsexual author named Coco Papy published a blog post called “Ghosts of D.C.: Violence Against Trans Women in the Nation’s Capital,” detailing the city’s epidemic of unsolved shooting deaths of trans women. For Papy, the D.C. shootings of multiple trans women “[bring] into the light of day” the violence and repression faced by transsexuals. “Much like ghosts, these women’s experiences are continually relegated to the realm of make-believe...that these things just aren’t real. It’s all a ghost story.” Papy’s post ends with a call to action: “in the wake of what is a shamefully violent time in the city of Washington D.C., there is no longer a reason to blindly turn away.”

In her book, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, author Avery Gordon theorizes a complex definition of haunting. Haunting, Gordon claims, is an “experiential modality,” a “sociopolitical-psychological state” characterized by multiple contexts.

## Notes

1. Both epigraphs and the quote in the title are taken from Jennifer Finney Boylan’s book, *I’m Looking Through You: Growing up Haunted: A Memoir*. The passage in the title appears on page 176; the epigraphs appear on page 107 and page 25.

In one aspect, haunting is “an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known” (xvi). Analyzing the historical examples of slavery and the Argentinian Dirty War, Gordon posits that haunting is a shared social and historical condition indicative and expressive of the traumatic violence and oppression of institutional or state power. By creating this condition, Gordon argues, haunting also becomes a tool of abusive systems of power to maintain oppressive control and manage populations through the circulation of fear. In this way, haunting “always registers the harm inflicted or the loss sustained by a social violence done in the past or in the present” (xvi). This unresolved state of social violence and state power is one aspect that defines and interprets the experience of haunting.

However, for Gordon, this is not a complete definition. The repressive violence of state power that generates haunting, by “making itself known,” also forces action; it calls us to “see” what has been violently repressed because “the whole essence of a ghost is that it has a real presence, and demands its due, your attention” (xvi). This call to see and act “out of concern for justice” is also an act that defines the experience of haunting. By registering the presence of social violence, “haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a ‘something to be done’” (xvi). According to Gordon, the presence of both repressive violence and self-representative, resistant action, of “force and meaning,” do not merely exist separately but simultaneously and circularly (xvi). Together they form the “knot” or tension that makes up the experience of haunting itself.

This “knot” of repression and self-representation, of “force and meaning,” makes the social and cultural experience of haunting intimately tied to the production of knowledge. Out of this “knot,” haunting produces “subjugated knowledges” as defined by Michel Foucault. Subjugated knowledge “names on the one hand that which official knowledge represses within its own terms, institutions, and archives,” and on the other hand it also refers to “disqualified, marginalized, fugitive knowledge from below and outside the institutions of official knowledge production” (Gordon xvii). Haunting, the seething tangle of abusive power and resistance, produces similarly tangled epistemologies that respond to and dynamically create one another. Seeing haunting becomes a means by which to access “marginalized, disqualified, denied” and oppressed knowledge forms and also to identify the “modalities of power” of privileged forms of knowledge. “This way of seeing” says Gordon, “is transformative, maybe even revolutionary knowledge” (203).

In this paper I excavate the intersections of transsexuality and cultural haunting. My goals are multiple. Firstly, I address what I have come to view as a critical lack of dialogue between two fields that seem to have quite a lot to say to one another: that of theorizing haunting and theorizing transsexual subjectivity. Scholars of haunting as well as trans theorists and activists have moved concentrically for years, circling and overlapping, hearing each other’s echoes without ever being brought into direct conversation. Secondly, I argue, using the critical framework laid out by Gordon in *Ghostly Matters*, for the recognition of the lived experiences of transsexuality as a form of cultural haunting. I will show that a motif of haunting and ghostliness is imbedded in social, political, and psychological representations of transsexuality. Ghostliness and spectrality can be found in a “knot” of transsexual haunting in both the abusive systems of power that oppress people who identify as transsexual and in the expressive acts of transsexuals that create a “something to be done,” that force action and make meaning from their lives. Finally, I explore the relationship between the “knot” of transsexual oppression and self-representation with new forms of knowledge production. Specifically, I illuminate the ways in which transsexual cultural haunting produces “subjugated knowledge” of transsexual subjectivity—both oppressive forms of knowl-

edge production and new epistemologies that exist “outside” of these abusive institutions of epistemic practice.

In this vein, this paper will explore the etymological implications of the term *trans*, the ghostliness of transsexual time and transsexual space, and the language of both transphobic hate speech and transsexual self-ascription. The paper then further emphasizes the paradoxical “knot” of social violence and calls to action by detailing the institutional systems of repression and abuse faced by trans people. This section illuminates the spectral politics of visibility and erasure lived out through police brutality, corrective rapes, through the denial of access to shelter services, and through transsexual relationships to medical and psychiatric practice. The final section of the paper explore the experience of transsexual cultural haunting through its relationship to knowledge production. This section will explore the examples of transsexual transition photography and the emergence of the transsexual autobiography and memoir.

### **Reading and Writing the Transsexual Body: Transsexual Haunting at the Site of Language**

*“Haunting was the language by which I tried to reach an understanding of force and meaning” (Gordon xvi).*

Some of the clearest representations of transsexuality as an experience of cultural haunting can be found at the site of language. A motif of ghostliness and haunting can be found in transphobic hate speech, an institutional speech used to define and code transsexuality, and can also be found in the speech of trans people to represent themselves. Language is also fundamentally tied to knowledge production, to the way we construct and understand being and the world. In this way, language forms a “knot,” a point of tension like that of haunting.

Language itself is also profoundly ghostly. As the deconstructionist philosophers Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze have noted, language constantly points out the instability of boundaries, doubling, displacing and deferring categories of meaning. What counts as language definition and expression is also bound up in institutions of power. In this way, entering this analysis at the site of language allows us to see the “knot,” to begin to read and write experiences of transsexuality as a form of cultural haunting.

The term *transsexual* fundamentally refers to those whose gender identification does not correspond to their biological or genital sex. The application of this term is also spectral. Transsexuality can refer to “a variety of different identities...cross dressers, drag queens, and transsexuals” (Namaste 1) and is used both interchangeably and distinctly from the term “transgender.” In addition, some have argued that the term “transsexual” excludes gender non-conforming individuals who don’t identify as trans because of their cultural or economic backgrounds (Valentine 4). In addition, it is important to acknowledge that the term transsexual is constituted within Western conceptions of gender, performance, and morality, and is not necessarily representative on a global scale. Indigenous and South East Asian communities, for example, conceptualize gender alterity and non-conformity out of different contexts and specific localities (Reddy 10).

The prefix *trans-* is inherently spectral. *Trans-* means both between and beyond, “to cross” (*Online Etymology Dictionary*) or “go through,” and also refers to being “on or to the other side of” or “into another state or place” (“etymology trans”). The ghostliness of trans can be found within these etymologies. “To cross” or “go through” implies the destabilization and

transgression of a boundary. Similarly, to be both between and beyond is a paradoxical, liminal state, disrupting constructed categories of both time and place. To be both “on or to the other side of” and “into another state or place” also describes multiple states of being. To be “on or to the other side of” implies a state of actualization—a cohesive solidified, realized subject. “Into another state or place” implies a state of movement, a process of going there and getting to—an unrealized state of fragmentation and dissociation from the self.

In this way, the prefix *trans-* alludes to a motif of spectrality within experiences of transsexuality. The word *trans* echoes the way in which transsexual people cross and move through boundaries, destabilizing constructed categories of sex and gender. The prefix *trans-* also hints at embedded paradoxes within trans identification and expression. Transsexuality refers both to those whose gender presentation does not align with their biological sex, and to those who undergo a process of transitioning, including hormones and surgeries, to align their gender presentation with their physical bodies. In this way, transsexuality describes both a state of actualization, cohesion, and realization post-operation as well as a state of fragmentation and dissonance from the self—a state of going to and of transition itself. This is further reinforced by the self-ascriptions of many transsexuals post-operation, who often refer to themselves not only as men and women, but also as transsexual men and transsexual women, and as male-to-female transsexuals and female-to-male transsexuals. Here transsexual identification is rooted both in cohesive actualization of bodily identity in the fragmentation and displacement from the self from one’s gender identity. In this way, to be transsexual is to be both “on or to the other side of,” as well as “into another state or place” (“etymology trans”). To be transsexual is to be both between and beyond categories of sex and gender.

Looking closely at common instances of transphobic hate speech also further reveals a motif of ghosts and haunting. Pushing on slurs like “freaks” unpacks a language of spectrality imbedded in their etymologies and use. The slur *freak* is similarly rooted in spectrality. In its original usage, *freak* meant a “sudden turn of mind,” to “change [or] distort,” and also “to streak or fleck randomly” (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). Here, the meaning of *freak* invokes the transgression of a boundary: to change, to distort, to smear and to fleck, all reference distinctions and categories blurring in and out of one another, altering dimensions and lines. Even the term *randomly* relates to spectrality: to be random is to be outside of or disruptive to order. In this way, the slur *freak* is fundamentally a condemnation of the way transsexuals are perceived to “turn,” “distort,” “change,” and “smear” categories of sex and gender (*Online Etymology Dictionary*).

Slurs themselves exist in the realm of spectrality and haunting. To slur refers not only to abuse through language but also to the blurring together of words, the act of passing over something in order to conceal it. To slur speech collapses boundaries of signification; slurring words blurs together and distorts meaning, changing the meaning of what signs are meant to represent. In this way, the act of slurring parallels the spectrality of transsexual relationships to sex and gender. Transsexual people blur categories of gender and sex, changing the meaning of the signs that are constructed to correspond to them. In this way, transphobic hate speech refers to the slurring of the transsexual body in multiple forms, unpacking transsexual experiences of cultural haunting.

In addition to its presence within transphobic hate speech, a motif of ghostliness and haunting can also be found in the language many transsexuals use to represent themselves and their own lived experiences. Perhaps the most literal representation of the ghostly themes within transsexual self-ascription is the autobiography *I’m Looking Through You: Growing up Haunted: A Memoir* by transsexual author Jennifer Finney Boylan. In her memoir, Boylan

uses the memory of a haunted childhood home to parallel and contextualize her experiences of transsexual identity, which she refers to as growing up in a “haunted body,” and being a ghost herself (30). Boylan’s better-known memoir, *She’s Not There: A Life in Two Genders*, utilizes a similar language of spectrality. As a transsexual woman, the phrase “she’s not there” dictates and narrates an experience of absent-presence. Like Boylan, many other transsexual authors describe the experience of transsexual identity using a language of fragmentation, displacement, and dissociation. Transsexual author Jay Prosser, in his book *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, describes his experience of transsexuality, particularly the process of transitioning, as “a kind of deafening unspoken. In this gendered nonzone, I felt too embodied (only body) yet also disembodied: For what on earth did I embody?” (2). Here, Prosser’s description is inherently ghostly. “Deafening unspoken,” “gendered nonzone,” “too embodied. . . yet also disembodied” are paradoxes that invoke the collapse of boundaries, of being there and not there, visible and not-visible, being and not-being. This spectrality is also reflected in Prosser’s dissociative use of speech. In the sentence, “I felt too embodied (only body) yet also disembodied: For what on earth did I embody?” the presence of the parenthetical “(only body),” the colon, the sudden shift to a question, and the suturing of several sentences, create a sentence that performs the dislocation of the transsexual self from the subject and body. The use of the term *embody* is also spectral. To embody means both to provide with a physical form and also to symbolize (“etymology embody”). In this way, to embody reflects the paradoxical state of transsexual identification as both an actualized, cohesive state brought into physical form and a state of dissociation and fragmentation—the symbol of that identity.

In addition to this spectral language, also common in transsexual representations are descriptions of feeling as if one is in the wrong body. These descriptions are often accompanied by fantasies of excoriation, or to tear off or remove the skin (Prosser 68). Transsexual author Leslie Feinberg describes this in her autobiography, saying pre-transition: “I think how nice it would be to unzip my body from forehead to navel and go on vacation. But there is no escaping it” (qtd. in Prosser 68). Another transsexual author says: “I used to look at my body and think it was a bit like a diver’s suit, it didn’t feel like me inside” (qtd. in Prosser 68). Here, the language of the wrong body also invokes a theme of spectrality, haunting, and ghostliness. The wrong body narrative designates an inner true body within an outer false one, fundamentally displacing the mythic whole of the self, creating profound dissociation and fragmentation: “I am not me,” “I am inside.” Descriptions of the wrong body rupture boundaries of inside and outside, embodied and disembodied, presence and absence, for what does it mean to be in the wrong body? In this way, the common self-representation of the wrong body within transsexual narratives alludes to the haunting of the transsexual body.

Also prevalent in transsexual autobiographies is the appearance of mirror scenes, which, according to Prosser, “perpetuate transsexual narratives with remarkable consistency” (100). In his autobiography, transsexual author Mario Martino describes: “I saw my life as a series of distorted mirrors. . . I saw myself in their crazy reflections as a false image of myself. I was a boy!” (qtd. in Prosser 100). Mirror scenes are also present in *Growing Up Haunted*, in which Boylan describes a life of seeing the “ghost” of a woman in the mirror: “I saw there was someone in the mirror, an older woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white garment like a nightgown. Her eyes were a pair of small red stars. She seemed surprised to see me, and raised one hand to her mouth, as if I were the ghost, as if I were the one floating, translucently, in the mirror” (47). These mirror scenes also foreground the motif of ghostliness embedded in transsexual representation. The mirror scenes of transsexual narratives create a subversion of the Lacanian mirror stage. Rather than feeling united with their image in the mirror, the trans-

sexual person does not recognize their reflected self. Instead of a cohesive image, these mirror scenes reflect dissociation and fragmentation, an absent presence. What is seen in the mirror is simultaneously what is not there and what is not meant to be there. Mirrors themselves are inherently displacing and paradoxical, doubling and deferring the image, reflecting subject as object. In this way, the spectrality of mirror scenes in transsexual narratives literally mirrors that of the transsexual authors themselves. This is further reinforced by Boylan in *Growing up Haunted*. At the conclusion of her memoir, she realizes that the ghost of a woman she had seen in the mirror was the image of her own haunted, secret self.

These examples break analytic ground by allowing us to begin recognizing the knot of haunting embedded in the ghostly motifs of transsexual subjectivity. Entering analysis of transsexual haunting through the site of language also allows us to recognize the structures of institutional power and abuse that further characterize transsexuality as an experience of cultural haunting.

### **Invisible Lives: Transsexual Haunting and Institutional Repression**

*“Erasure is a defining condition of how transsexuality is managed in culture and institutions” (Namaste 4).*

#### *Erasure Through Restricted Access to Social Services*

One important way in which transsexuals experience institutional repression and abuse is through their restricted access to social service resources, particularly homeless shelters and women’s shelters. Transsexuals experience some of the highest rates of homelessness, poverty, and domestic abuse, creating an immediate need for homeless and women’s crisis services. However, transsexuals in immediate need of shelter services are often denied (Namaste 176). Homeless shelters that are willing to accept transsexuals often do so on the basis of the strict enforcement of heteronormative gender codes. Access to resources is contingent upon transsexuals conforming to a gender presentation that is out of alignment with their transsexual identity.

Transsexual women who seek domestic abuse services suffer similar treatment. Women’s shelters typically will only accept transsexual women if they are post-operative. Non-operative or pre-operative transsexual women are often turned away (Namaste 178).

The guidelines for admittance into homeless and women’s shelters implicitly point to transsexual spectrality, to the deconstruction of categories and boundaries. By making access to women’s shelters dependent on post-operative status, institutions deny subjectivity to transsexuals who are more transgressive to gender boundaries, granting partial subjectivity only to those who present sex and gender more cohesively within institutional binary. In addition, by making access to homeless shelters dependent on gender conformity, institutions attempt to recode and resolidify destabilized categories of sex and gender. In this way, the restricted access of transsexuals to social and shelter services further emphasizes transsexuality as an experience of cultural haunting.

#### *Erasure in Medical and Psychiatric Practice*

Transsexuals experience complex forms of erasure within psychological and medical study and methodology. Transsexuality is classified within the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of*

*Mental Disorders* (DSM) as gender identity disorder or gender dysphoria, and is considered a form of mental disorder within the field of psychology. The classification of transsexuality as a mental disorder has subsequently resulted in transsexuals having to submit to a diagnosis in order to begin receiving vital healthcare including hormones and surgeries to meet their health needs. Those who submit to a diagnosis in order to obtain vital health care must, according to Prosser, match a “master narrative” of transsexuality when talking to their doctors about their transsexual identity (104). Even in these cases, doctors will often refuse to administer hormones or will only agree to administer hormones with several documents of authorization from psychiatrists, making them especially difficult to obtain legally.

A lack of trans positive physicians also results in many doctors having a limited knowledge of the effects of hormones with relation to transsexual healthcare. As a result, many transsexuals are far more knowledgeable on the effects of hormones on their own bodies than the physicians treating them. Because of this, transsexuals “often educate their doctors about hormones at the beginning of the patient-doctor relationship as well as throughout their treatment” (Prosser 167).

The status of transsexuals within medical and psychiatric institutions of power creates a complex play of oppression and subjectivity. Transsexuals are forced to submit to a diagnosis of a mental disorder in order to meet their vital and immediate healthcare needs, must submit to a script of transsexuality in order to receive hormones, and are often treated by physicians who know less about the effects of hormones on their own bodies. These structures objectify trans people and are forms of institutional repression, attempts to control and manage their transgressive destabilization of categories of gender and sex. However, transsexuals carefully anticipate and perform this master narrative in order to actualize themselves, and actively instruct their doctors on their healthcare needs, subtly forming and influencing the oppressive institutional structures they must navigate in order to survive. This complex dynamic of erasure and subjectivity is also imbedded in the term *disorder*, which refers both to the breakdown of category as well as to the active, constituting act of disordering itself. In this way, the dynamics of psychological and medical practice reveal complex, knotted plays of visibility and erasure, oppression, and subjectivity that further emphasize transsexuality as an experience of cultural haunting as per Gordon’s definition.

### *Erasure Through Physical Violence*

Perhaps the clearest, most literal examples of transsexuality as a form of cultural haunting can be found in transsexual experiences of violence. Information on violence against transsexual people is inherently ghostly. Due to the oppressive institutional systems in place, few crimes against transsexuals are reported. This can be practically attributed to the high rates of police harassment and brutality suffered by transsexuals, as well as to the shared fear of being imprisoned in a holding cell that does not correspond to their gender identification. In addition, traditional means of assessing rates of violence often do not account for the unique conditions of transsexuality. Surveys of violence against LGBTQ persons, for example, disappear the presence of violence against transsexuals within the data of other groups. Similarly, theorizations of violence against LGBTQ persons, including queerbashing and gaybashing, only take into account motivations for hate crime violence linked to sexual orientation. This also renders violence against transsexuals invisible by not taking into account gender identity and presentation in motivations for hate crimes. However, even with many representations of violence rendered all but invisible, Human Rights Watch estimates that one in twelve transsexuals is murdered, and that other rates of violence, including assaults, rapes, and suicides, are some of

the highest of any marginalized group (Giovanniello 1).

One act of violence that particularly emphasizes transsexual spectrality is that of corrective rape. During hate crimes, corrective rape is often used against female-to-male transsexuals with the intent of “showing them they are women,” such as in the case of transsexual Brandon Teena (Halberstam 66). The heinous violence of corrective rape is a violent solidification of boundaries of sex and gender. The rapist aims to violently impose and reassert categories of sex and gender onto the body (and specifically the female body) that has transgressed and destabilized those boundaries. In this way, corrective rape is a violent, traumatic, and oppressive re-ordering of boundaries of sex and gender that are perceived as having been disordered. In this way, violence against transsexuals exists as a spectral absent-presence with transsexuals literally and figuratively disappearing within the abusive systems that repress them.

### **Subjugated Knowledge: Transsexual Haunting and New Epistemic Forms**

*“The only theory I trust is a story” (Boylan 25).*

Having detailed the knot of institutional oppression and self-representation that makes up cultural experiences of transsexual haunting, we now move into the relationship of transsexual haunting to the production of new forms of knowledge.

One such knowledge form is the representation of transsexual subjectivity in photography. Of particular interest here is the development of transsexual transition photography. In transition photography, the process of physical transitioning is captured in images arranged in sequence. By representing the linear process of transitioning, we recognize the realized transsexual body that emerges post-transition. However, the representation of transsexual identity in transition photography introduces a ghostly paradox. According to Prosser, the effect of transition photography “is double: photographs demand that we concede that transsexuality makes a thorough difference to the body and yet . . . that we discover consistent and continuous identity in that very place of alterity” (75). To recognize the cohesive realization of transsexual subjectivity, we must simultaneously recognize its fragmentation.

The temporality of transition photography is similarly paradoxical. To recognize the supposed linearity of transition requires the presence of the sequence and requires the constant, simultaneous presence of the past. To contextualize and recognize the linearity of transition, one must always look back. In this way, to recognize what is requires the constant deferral to what once was but is no longer there. Transsexual transition photography captures the simultaneous definitions of transsexual identity, representing both the realized, cohesive, actualized form as well as the fragmented, dissociated self. Transsexual transition photography is, in many ways, a method of photographing ghosts, a means of theorizing the ambiguities of transsexual subjectivity.

Another new form of knowledge production is the rapidly growing genre of transsexual autobiography/memoir. According to Prosser—in answer to the question “Why do so many transsexuals write autobiographies?”—“Autobiography brings into relief the split of the transsexual life . . . the difference present in all autobiography between the subject of enunciation and the subject of enunciating. I was a woman, I write as a man, how to join this split? Precisely through narrative” (102). In this way, autobiography creates a paradox similar to that of transition photography, presenting both the cohesive subject and the object of dissociation and presenting linearity through the simultaneous, constant presence of the past. Autobiography itself is a spectral form, blurring categories of fact and fiction, subject and object, past and present and lending itself to the representation of transsexual stories. In many ways, the transsexual



autobiography—in the act of memory—is a literal act of “re-membering” the dissociated, displaced self. This is represented almost literally in Boylan’s *Growing up Haunted*. At the end of her memoir, having completed transition and finally recognized the ghost in the mirror as her own self, she says, “against all odds, I had become solid” (249).

Although no work has previously been done on the intersections of haunting and transsexuality, a prominent motif of ghostliness in conceptions of transsexual subjectivity suggests the presence of something seething and significant at work. Reading transsexual identities and experiences through Avery Gordon’s definition in *Ghostly Matters* as the knot of oppression and self-representation creates new forms of knowledge production; we encounter transsexuality as a form of cultural haunting. There are several reasons why recognizing transsexuality as a form of cultural haunting may be important. Recognizing a haunting gives communities another means by which to recognize abusive systems of power in their lives, to suddenly name and identify oppressions against transsexuals they didn’t realize were being felt, and felt deeply. Naming haunting, seeing ghosts, also provides another way to force action, to create a “something to be done” for transsexual justice (Gordon xvi). In addition, recognizing cultural hauntings creates opportunities for new forms of knowledge production that theorize the complexities of transsexual subjectivity, as well as provide new access to previously existing forms of subjugated knowledge. Finally, as Gordon points out, “the ghostly aspects of social life are not aberrations, but are central to modernity itself” (197). Theorizing transsexuality as a form of cultural haunting and recognizing its ghostly aspects is a key part of understanding our contemporary world. Ultimately, however, the most necessary reason to continue the work of recognizing transsexuality as a form of cultural haunting can be summarized by Gordon herself. It is “because ultimately haunting is about how to transform a shadow of a life into an undiminished life whose shadows touch softly in the spirit of peaceful reconciliation” (208). For transsexuals, the reality of living a shadow of a life is an immediate, violent crisis. The work of creating the means to live an undiminished life is a vital and life-affirming need.

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