

Monsters Among Us: In What Ways Can the Viral Jubilee's Trans Debate Video Contribute to Educational Discussions?

Monstruos entre nosotros: ¿de qué maneras puede el video viral del debate trans de Jubilee contribuir a las discusiones educativas?

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Abstract

This article leverages Jubilee's viral YouTube video featuring conservative and liberal trans individuals debating as a means to promote the integration of e-materials in discussions about the entitlements and human worth of trans communities, with special attention to vital rights like toilet access and including nonbinary persons. Using perspectives informed by hauntology and monster theory, I contend that educators can benefit from these conceptual frameworks. Hauntology is a philosophical concept introduced by Jacques Derrida, focusing on the idea of the persistence of the past within the present and the impact of forgotten or repressed histories on contemporary culture. It explores how the «spectres» of past events and ideologies continue to influence and haunt current social and cultural contexts. Monster theory, on the other hand, is a framework developed by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen that examines how monsters in literature and folklore serve as symbols for societal anxieties and cultural conflicts. It interprets monsters as embodiments of societal fears, otherness, and transgressions, bringing to light key elements

of cultural norms and human psychology. Both present viewpoints on looking into how the past and cultural anxieties shape our present realities. The discussion in this paper includes pedagogical tools that address transgender experiences, such as the seven facets of Socratic seminars designed to foster conversations on cosmopolitan ideals of diversity. Additionally, the value of guiding students to consistently question «who, where, and why» is emphasised, with a focus on how a monstrous lens can contribute to the enhancement of developmental learning experiences. This article addresses both educators and enthusiasts of gender perspectives, advocating for teaching environments that enable students to explore a world beyond societal expectations. It also appeals to those interested in hauntology and monstrous lens theory, encouraging the integration of these theories to advance educational development.

Keywords: educators; trans communities; e-materials in education; ideological differences; pedagogical tool; hauntology; monster theory; monstrous other.

Resumen

Este artículo aprovecha el video viral de YouTube de Jubilee, que presenta a individuos trans conservadores y liberales debatiendo, como un medio para promover la integración de materiales digitales en discusiones sobre los derechos y el valor humano de las comunidades trans, con especial atención a derechos vitales como el acceso a baños e incluyendo a personas no binarias. Utilizando perspectivas informadas por la hauntología y la teoría de los monstruos, sostengo que los educadores pueden beneficiarse de estos marcos conceptuales. La hauntología es un concepto filosófico introducido por Jacques Derrida, que se centra en la persistencia del pasado en el presente y en el impacto de historias olvidadas o reprimidas en la cultura contemporánea. Explora cómo los «espectros» de eventos e ideologías pasadas continúan influyendo y acechando los contextos sociales y culturales actuales. La teoría de los monstruos, por otro lado, es un marco desarrollado por Jeffrey Jerome Cohen que examina cómo los monstruos en la literatura y el folclore sirven como símbolos de ansiedades sociales y conflictos culturales. Interpreta a los monstruos como encarnaciones de los miedos sociales, la otredad y las transgresiones, destacando elementos clave de las normas culturales y la psicología humana. Ambas perspectivas permiten analizar cómo el pasado y las ansiedades culturales moldean nuestras realidades presentes. La discusión en este artículo incluye herramientas pedagógicas que abordan las experiencias transgénero, como los siete aspectos de los seminarios socráticos diseñados para fomentar conversaciones sobre ideales cosmopolitas de diversidad. Además, se destaca el valor de guiar al alumnado a cuestionar constantemente «quién, dónde y por qué», centrándose en cómo una lente monstruosa puede contribuir al enriquecimiento de las experiencias de aprendizaje en desarrollo. Este artículo está dirigido tanto a educadores/as como a entusiastas de las perspectivas de género, abogando por entornos de enseñanza que permitan al estudiantado explorar un mundo

más allá de las expectativas sociales. También apela a aquellas personas interesadas en la hauntología y la teoría monstruosa, fomentando la integración de estas teorías para avanzar en el desarrollo educativo.

Palabras clave: personal docente; comunidades trans; materiales digitales en la educación; diferencias ideológicas; herramienta pedagógica; hauntología; teoría de los monstruos; la otredad monstruosa.

1. TRANS CONTEXTS: CONSERVATIVES VS LIBERALS

On 8 October 2023, Jubilee, a digital media company specialising in fostering human connections through thought-provoking YouTube content, released a compelling video titled «Trans Conservatives vs Trans Liberals | Middle Ground» (Figure 1). The video quickly went viral, igniting intense debates across the Internet (Morishita, 2023). Jubilee has established a reputation for its «Middle Ground» series, wherein they bring together individuals from opposing sides of various contentious topics, such as LGBTQ+ and former LGBTQ+ members, capitalists and communists, and Israelis and Palestinians. Their videos' objectives are to foster constructive dialogue and seek common ground amid differing perspectives. In this article, I aim to look into Jubilee's trans debate video, highlighting the educational insights gleaned from the conversations among these transgender individuals featured in the video. This article uses an interpretative approach, analysing the video through a conceptual framework informed by relevant studies on the topics discussed. It asserts that the dialogues depicted in the video furnish lessons and perspectives pertaining to the dimensions of transgender identities, alongside the broader societal and gender discourses enveloping them.

Figure 1. Trans Conservatives vs Trans Liberals | Middle Ground



Source: Jubilee, 2023: https://youtu.be/wSar7j_1MtM?si=E2AmUU-cPP-mBoZ2

A survey by the Pew Research Centre highlights a lack of public consensus regarding the societal implications of increased social acceptance of transgender individuals, despite a growing number of United States adults reporting knowing someone who is transgender (Brown, 2022). The survey, part of a comprehensive study covering various social and political issues, found that approximately 38% of Americans view greater acceptance of transgender people as beneficial for society, while 32% perceive it as detrimental, and 29% hold a neutral stance. Notably, there exists a significant disparity in opinions between Republicans and Democrats, as well as within key demographic groups. Democrats and those leaning towards the Democratic Party support greater acceptance, with 59% viewing it positively. Conversely, a majority of Republicans and Republican-leaning individuals (54%) regard it negatively. Ideological differences further exacerbate this divide, with 75% of liberal Democrats seeing increased acceptance as positive, compared to only 45% of moderate or conservative Democrats. In contrast, 65% of conservative

Republicans consider it harmful, contrasting sharply with the 6% of liberal Democrats who share this sentiment.

Acknowledging that trends in the United States may not align with global patterns, a survey conducted by Flores et al. (2016) sheds light on attitudes towards transgender rights across 23 countries, involving 17,105 adults. Spain, Sweden, and Argentina emerged as leaders in supporting transgender rights, while Russia, South Korea, and Poland ranked lowest in this regard. The study also revealed that younger individuals, women, those with higher education levels, and individuals with higher incomes tend to be more supportive of transgender rights.

Hauntology, a concept popularised by Derrida (1994), examines the enduring presence of the past within the present. This notion suggests that the past continues to «haunt» and, as argued by scholars such as Bauserman (2023) and Lorek-Jezińska and Więckowska (2017), greatly influences contemporary social, cultural, and political dynamics. From a hauntological perspective, the fluctuating attitudes towards transgender individuals throughout history can be interpreted as a manifestation of societal anxieties and uncertainties surrounding gender identity and expression. Touching upon the societal inclusion of transgender individuals, the Pew Research Center survey illustrates a haunting absence of consensus regarding the societal implications of increased acceptance of transgender individuals in the United States. Despite a growing familiarity with transgender communities among the populace, a significant portion remains ambivalent or resistant to their integration into society. This lack of unanimity is underscored by the divide between political affiliations, with Democrats generally supporting greater acceptance while Republicans tend to oppose it. Within the Democratic Party itself, ideological differences further fracture opinions, revealing a haunting spectre of discord within the ostensibly unified front.

Additionally, the monstrous perspective, from Cohen's theory (1996), examining the formation and interpretation of the «monstrous» within cultures, encompasses individuals, collectives, or concepts deemed abnormal, menacing, or deviant. This lens illuminates how societal divisions forge «others», portraying transgender individuals as disruptive or alarming to the established norms and structures. Moreover, Flores et al.'s 2016 survey provides a global perspective on attitudes towards transgender rights, revealing

a spectrum of acceptance that varies widely from nation to nation. This survey highlights demographic trends, indicating that individuals in younger age brackets, women, and those with elevated educational attainment and income levels are more likely to embrace transgender rights. This suggests a generational shift towards a more inclusive worldview, albeit one that is still haunted by the spectre of prejudice and discrimination. Ultimately, these surveys serve as spectral echoes of societal attitudes towards transgender individuals, revealing the lingering presence of fear, uncertainty, and resistance alongside the gradual emergence of acceptance and understanding.

Returning my focus to the United States, as this video unfolds within its borders, there exists a disquieting reality for LGBTQ+ individuals residing in regions characterised by staunch conservatism. According to the World Population Review (2024), regions such as Wyoming and West Virginia are characterised by sentiments of stigma and alienation that pervade social landscapes. This sense of displacement, as documented by Lick et al. (2012), is palpably felt in conservative states, where prevailing attitudes favour the prohibition of same-sex marriage and the exclusion of non-heterosexuals from public education spheres. The haunting spectre of societal rejection prompts a form of selective migration, compelling LGBTQ+ individuals to seek refuge in locales where acceptance and a sense of belonging are more attainable—a phenomenon elucidated by Motyl et al. (2014). There is also a spectral exodus occurring, with LGBTQ+ individuals metaphorically fleeing the confines of conservative communities in pursuit of more inclusive environments, as hinted at by Smart and Klein (2013). However, this spectral migration perpetuates a disheartening cycle, as the departure of LGBTQ+ individuals from the conservative enclaves exacerbates the dearth of opportunities for meaningful cross-cultural interaction within these communities, further entrenching ideological divides.

Examined through the lens of the monstrous, the concept of ideological migration unfolds as a disconcerting phenomenon. It involves the transition of individuals or groups from one ideological position to another, typically influenced by shifts in societal norms, political landscapes, or personal convictions. This migration underscores the fragmentation of societal unity along what Vannoy and Dubeck (1998) termed «ideological fault lines» (p. 49), as individuals seek out communities or belief systems that better

resonate with their values or identities. From these readings, it can be concluded that ideological migration signifies a major societal shift, highlighting the altering context of beliefs and values and the resulting polarisation within communities. The distinction between Red America, representing conservative ideologies, and Blue America, emblematic of liberal ideologies, becomes increasingly clear as individuals participate in self-segregation. This phenomenon, as elucidated by Schmader and Sedikides (2018), describes the voluntary tendency of individuals to segregate themselves into groups or communities that share similar political and social beliefs. This process results in the creation of increasingly homogeneous social circles that are aligned with specific ideologies. This monstrous polarisation not only perpetuates the marginalisation of LGBTQ+ individuals within conservative strongholds but also exacerbates the socio-political fragmentation of the nation. The rejection of divergent perspectives creates a monstrous «othering» of those who do not conform to prevailing norms, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and division that corrodes the fabric of society.

Drawing from Cohen's perspectives (1996), it would seem that the haunting spectres of ideological intolerance and societal rejection play an important role in the monstrous transformation of the American landscape. Cohen's seminal work enquires into the knottiness of societal perceptions of the monstrous, exploring how societal anxieties and fears manifest in the form of ideological intolerance and social rejection. By applying Cohen's framework, I propose that we explore how these haunting phenomena not only perpetuate division but also worsen existing ideological divides, ultimately leading to increased social discord and alienation within American society. Hence, incorporating Cohen's perspectives contributes to a more complete grasp of the tangles involved in the monstrous reshaping of the American landscape, underlining the importance of tackling these issues and their widespread implications without delay.

2. EXAMINING THE CONVERSATIONS IN THE DEBATE THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

After providing contexts, I aim to go deeper into the conversations within the debate, using educational perspectives. In the Jubilee trans debate video,

the dialogue usually follows a structure involving participants taking turns to articulate their sentiments regarding statements pertaining to public perceptions or personal beliefs, such as «I support the transgender military ban» (16:46) or «doctors are manipulating trans medical care» (59:06). At times, the atmosphere becomes charged with intensity as certain participants express views that vehemently oppose those of others, prompting interruptions from those who strongly disagree and feel compelled to interject. In the subsequent discussions, I will focus on four sections of conversation clips between conservative and liberal transgender participants to explore how educators across all levels of education can use these exchanges, or the debate video itself, as educational resources to facilitate discussions on gender perspectives, ideologies, and attitudes.

2.1. Global openness in defiance of dominant systems

The initial thematic discussion, beginning at 10:07, centres on the assertion that «it is a safety concern for trans women to share a female restroom»:

Blaire (conservative): No, it's just interesting. I thought this was a trans debate. That's what I thought.

[The participants talk over each other]

Blossom (liberal): Non-binary people are– Fall under the transness umbrella.

Alexander (liberal): Yeah, so I don't know. Maybe you could educate yourself a little bit on that.

Blaire (conservative): I think I could educate you.

Alexander (liberal): And maybe then you would figure out– You know, what the reality is and what transsexual means so. ... Well, because it's not a debate about who is really trans and who is not.

Blaire (conservative): It can be.

In this exchange, illuminated through the monstrous lens, we witness the unfolding of power dynamics and ideological tensions between Alexander and Blaire within the transgender community. Alexander asserts the inclusivity of non-binary individuals within the transgender umbrella, emphasising the many-sided elements of gender identity and advocating for a

broader understanding and acceptance of gender expressions. However, Blaire's response reveals a manifestation of normative monstrous constructs, wherein non-binary identities are systematically marginalised and excluded. Blaire's reluctance to acknowledge the validity of non-binary experiences as integral to the transgender narrative underscores the perpetuation of hegemonic power structures that prioritise binary gender norms, while dismissing the lived realities of non-binary individuals as inconsequential deviations from the normative framework upheld by conservative ideologies.

Examining the marginalisation and exclusion of non-binary identities through Cohen's monster culture theory reveals a firmly established cultural prejudice that perpetuates intersectional systems of oppression. Cohen (1996) argues that monsters are cultural constructs that embody societal fears, anxieties, and taboos. They exist at the boundaries of what is considered normative, and their existence is a direct challenge to the established social order. Non-binary individuals, whose identities transcend traditional gender binaries, can be seen as «monstrous» figures in this context, not because they are inherently frightening, but because their existence disrupts the rigid, binary understanding of gender that underpins much of Western society. Moreover, critical voices in feminist and queer theory provide additional explanation for the mechanisms behind these monstrous constructs. For instance, Butler (2006) argues that gender is performative, meaning that societal norms dictate the acceptable ways of performing gender. Non-binary individuals, by refusing to conform to these norms, are positioned as outsiders, or «monsters», within this framework. Butler's concept of performativity aligns with Cohen's notion of the monster as a cultural body that challenges and destabilises normative boundaries.

To further explore the connection between monsters and marginalised narratives, Halberstam (1995) in *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* expands on Cohen's ideas by exploring how societal fears are projected onto marginalised bodies. Halberstam contends that the representation of monsters in literature and film often reflects deeper anxieties about race, gender, and sexuality. The portrayal of non-binary individuals as monstrous in contemporary culture can thus be seen as a reflection of societal fears about the fluidity and ambiguity of gender. Furthermore, Wilchins (2010) in *Queer Theory, Gender Theory* emphasises that the marginalisation

of non-binary identities is not merely a spin-off of misunderstanding or fear but is a deliberate outcome of intersectional systems of oppression designed to maintain the status quo. Wilchins' work highlights the importance of deconstructing these systems and advocating for a more inclusive understanding of gender that goes beyond binary classifications. In light of these critical perspectives, the systematic marginalisation and exclusion of non-binary identities are revealed to be the result of deeply entrenched interlocking layers of injustice. These systems work in concert to maintain hardline gender dichotomies and to exclude those who do not conform. The concept of monstrous constructs should therefore be well-argued and substantiated with an understanding of both Cohen's monster theory and the broader context of intersectional oppression.

Going back to the individual at the Jubilee trans debate video, Blaire's insistence on restricting the debate to a limited scope serves as a manifestation of normative monstrous constructions, wherein inflexible definitions of transgender identity are enforced to maintain hierarchical power dynamics and uphold conservative ideologies. By trying to omit non-binary people from the transgender spectrum, Blaire perpetuates the harmful idea of a strict binary gender system, where those who don't fit into the conventional male-female categories are consistently pushed aside and delegitimised. Blaire's interruption and condescending tone towards Alexander further spotlight the power interactions in effect, wherein conservative voices seek to assert dominance and control over the narrative surrounding transgender identities, while marginalising dissenting voices and perpetuating exclusivist ideologies that prioritise normative constructions of gender. The occurrences featured in the video are reflective of broader societal phenomena. For instance, Gillig et al. (2018) underscore the influential role of entertainment narratives in shaping attitudes toward marginalised transgender groups, emphasising the significance of emotion in contentious discussions and exploring their broad social, political, and public health ramifications. Hughto et al. (2021) reveals that combatting the negative impact of widespread media messages on transgender mental health and stigma demands comprehensive interventions operating at multiple levels. Also, Flores et al. (2023) propose that narratives possess a capacity to influence policy attitudes and beliefs, suggesting a departure from traditional framing-based

explanations and hinting at distinctive causal mechanisms underlying attitude shifts.

In contrast, Alexander's insistence on the inclusion of non-binary individuals challenges normative monstrous constructs by advocating for a more expansive understanding of transgender identity. By emphasising the importance of recognising and validating gender expressions, Alexander disrupts the hegemonic power structures perpetuated by conservative ideologies and challenges the hierarchical binary system that routinely marginalises non-binary voices. However, the resistance encountered from Blaire highlights the nature of conservative ideologies within the transgender community and underlines the ongoing struggle to dismantle normative monstrous constructs of exclusion and marginalisation. The engagement between these two is markedly essential, as Davidson (2007) observes: «the contentious politics of inclusion and exclusion expressed by activists who rejected the unity of the category transgender remain significant for assessing what is at stake for trans activism and the trans movement» (p. 67). It can be inferred that as long as Blaire and Alexander's narratives and rebuttals engage, conversations will persist, fostering potential progress. As a result of Alexander's work, we glimpse the potential for change within the transgender discourse, as efforts to challenge normative monstrous constructions pave the way for greater inclusivity and recognition of diverse gender identities within the broader social fabric. The lynchpin of this proposition resides within the scholarly discourse established by Berlant (2009). In conversations within trans communities about navigating societal normativity, Berlant (2009) captures the fraught relationship between normativity and well-being, stating that we «assume our position as subjects in a normative social world and therefore it is in us as a structuring condition for apprehending anything, and our literacy in normativity constitutes the measure of our competence at being humans» (p. 263). This standpoint emphasises the struggle trans individuals encounter as they manoeuvre through a societal environment where their comprehension and approval are dependent on conventional norms. Berlant also looks deeper into the notion that societal norms have a multifarious twofold nature, potentially endangering well-being while concurrently offering what appears to be a stable framework for navigating existence. This highlights the knotty relationship transgender individuals have with societal

norms, wherein the same structures that pose risks to their well-being can also provide a sense of stability in their lives (Roen, 2019).

Here, I pause to contemplate how «monstrous constructions» differ from the application of an intersectional framework within this article and in the context of transgender discourse. While both engage with identity formation and social stratification, they diverge in their conceptual underpinnings and implications. Embedded within the discourse of monster culture are narratives that frequently reinforce binary dichotomies and uphold normative constructs of identity, relegating marginalised communities to the periphery of monstrosity due to their divergence from established societal norms. This representation often serves to essentialise and dehumanise these communities, therefore fortifying prevailing power differentials and perpetuating «acts of demonisation, marginalisation, victimisation, invisibilisation, or exclusion» (Beyer et al., 2019, p. 12). Conversely, the adoption of an intersectional standpoint engenders a more sophisticated perception of identity and social inequity. Rooted in the acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of axes of identity—including race, gender, sexuality, and class—intersectionality recognises the dimensions of individuals' identities that influence their societal encounters. By prioritising the experiences of marginalised groups and acknowledging the complicatedness of identity, an intersectional framework challenges the oversimplified and exclusionary narratives perpetuated by monster culture. Furthermore, it endeavours to dismantle structures of power and privilege by identifying and addressing the amalgamated features of oppression experienced by marginalised individuals (Collins, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2015).

Enquiring deeper into the discourse surrounding these concepts, the historical and cultural contexts in which they emerge and operate play a role in shaping their trajectories. Monster culture, with its roots in folklore, mythology, literature, and popular media, has long served as a repository for societal fears, anxieties, and prejudices. These cultural narratives yield considerable authority over how individuals perceive themselves and others within society, reinforcing hierarchical structures—«individual interactions thus reinforce the social roles that individuals occupy and perform» (Strand & Cohen, 2021, p. 12). Conversely, the emergence of intersectional theory represents a critical intervention within academic disciplines, challenging

existing modes of knowledge production and offering a skeleton for understanding and addressing identity and inequality within contemporary society. In navigating identity and social inequality, it is necessary to deal with the tensions between these two frameworks. While monster culture reflects and reinforces existing power dynamics and social hierarchies, the adoption of an intersectional standpoint offers a lens through which to deconstruct these systems of oppression—galvanising one to question «what knowledge is and how it is produced to organise all endeavours to understand the social world, whether we recognise the epistemological underpinnings of our efforts or not» (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 15). By interrogating the intersectional nature of oppression and privilege, one is then pushed to engage in ongoing dialogue and critical reflection, with the aim of contributing to more equitable social change.

2.2. ECHOES UNDER THE TRANSGENDER UMBRELLA

Barad's «undoing the future» perspectives (2017) propose a concept that challenges linear notions of time and causality, suggesting that the past, present, and future are entangled and co-constituted through ongoing intra-actions. During their presentation at the Barnard Center for Research on Women seminar (2018), at the timestamp of 1:24:43, Barad argues that the future is not predetermined but emerges from the entanglements of social, cultural, and material forces. In this article, I advance the idea that in education, undoing the future invites educators to examine how present actions and discourses shape and constrain future possibilities, while also recognising the potential for change through intentional interventions. Within this educational framework, students can be guided to scrutinise the interactions among the participants, discerning the ways in which normative monstrous constructs perpetuate exclusion and marginalisation within the transgender community. Educators can encourage students to reveal the core hegemonic power structures at play, spotlighting how conservative ideologies reinforce binary gender norms while simultaneously marginalising non-binary identities.

Echoing and transitioning forward, Sasha asserts their opinion on the notion that «non-binary individuals should not be considered under the transgender umbrella» at 49:33:

Sasha (liberal): I think it would be really hard for a cis person to truly imagine what it's like to be trans and what it's like to live with that and be born that way. And I'm not non-binary and so I really cannot picture what it would, 'cause I'm a binary trans person (meaning a transgender person who identifies strictly as either male or female). I can't imagine what it's like to be in between that. But just like how the cis person can't really truly understand that it doesn't mean that it's not a thing and it's not real. And I really believe that we have like, 85 years, like, on this Earth and like so many people spend so much time being like, sad and uncomfortable in their bodies. And if we were just all comfortable, like, if somebody like wants to go by a name and like, dress a certain way and they are saying, «This makes me so comfortable, this is what makes me happy», there is no reason they shouldn't do that. And my God, there is no reason why we should say, «Well you're not a part of this 'cause like, this is us and like, this is whatever». ... And yeah, like, let's be a happy family. My God let's all just be happy. That's my vibe.

Through hauntological viewpoints, Sasha's opinion on the inclusion of non-binary individuals under the transgender umbrella offers an enquiry into gender identity and the haunting spectres of societal norms and expectations. Sasha begins by acknowledging the built-in challenge for cisgender individuals to fully grasp the lived experiences of transgender individuals (Moolchaem et al., 2015), emphasising the challenge of empathising with identities that fall outside the binary framework. Sasha's recognition of their own limitations as a binary transgender person highlights the haunting absence of understanding and recognition for those who exist outside traditional gender norms. Furthermore, Sasha looks into the spectre of societal expectations and the pervasive sense of discomfort and sadness experienced by many individuals who do not conform to societal gender norms. The haunting presence of societal pressures to adhere to binary gender roles perpetuates a cycle of anguish and disconnection from one's authentic self. Sasha's plea for acceptance and affirmation of individuals' autonomy to express their gender identity reflects a recurrent desire for liberation from the constraints of normative gender expectations.

In Sasha's vision of a harmonious «happy family», there is a haunting longing for inclusivity and acceptance, where individuals are free to authentically express themselves without fear of judgment or exclusion. This vision echoes the spectres of societal norms and expectations that have historically marginalised and silenced non-binary individuals, relegating them to the periphery of the transgender community. Sasha's call for unity and celebration of diversity embodies a haunting aspiration for a future where all individuals are embraced and affirmed in their identities, transcending normative gender binaries. Ultimately, Sasha's opinion serves as a sobering reminder of the ongoing struggle for recognition and acceptance faced by non-binary individuals within society. Through their reflections, Sasha invites us to confront the spectres of normativity and exclusion, urging us to envisage a future where all individuals are free to live authentically and joyfully, unfettered by the lingering constraints of societal expectations.

Cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 2007), a philosophical concept rooted in the idea of embracing global citizenship and promoting universal human values, offers a compelling basis through which educators can engage with Sasha's notion of inclusivity and acceptance within society. At its core, cosmopolitanism advocates for the recognition of the dignity and worth of all individuals, transcending cultural, national, and ideological boundaries. In teaching principles, educators can use Sasha's perspective as educational material to foster discussions on the notion of «order» in society and the feasibility of achieving a «happy family» outlook. By incorporating cosmopolitanism into the curriculum, educators can encourage students to critically examine the societal norms and structures that dictate notions of order and belonging. Sasha's advocacy for inclusivity challenges the traditional boundaries of identity and belonging, prompting students to question the hierarchies and exclusions within societal systems. Through dialogue and reflection, students can explore the ways in which cosmopolitan ideals of diversity and tolerance intersect with notions of societal order and cohesion.

Experiential learning methods, which involve learning through active participation and reflection, such as Socratic seminars, debate discussions, and collaborative projects, can be used to facilitate critical engagement with Sasha's notion and its implications for society. Socratic seminars, as demonstrated by Polite and Adams's research (1997), provide a platform for students

to engage in open-ended dialogue, questioning assumptions and exploring perspectives on the feasibility of achieving a «happy family» outlook. Debate discussions allow students to articulate and defend their viewpoints, fostering critical thinking and argumentation skills as they navigate cosmopolitan ideals in the context of societal order. Collaborative projects also enable students to research and analyse real-world examples of cosmopolitanism in action, demonstrating how communities can coexist harmoniously despite cultural, ideological, and social differences.

From the perspective of educational theory, and building on Mangrum's contribution (2010), the view presented is that seven aspects of Socratic seminars are capable of producing conversations about cosmopolitan ideals of diversity:

1. **Choosing texts:** Select texts that explore perspectives, with a focus on cosmopolitan ideals and transgender experiences relevant to education. Ensure these texts encourage multiple interpretations and provoke discussions about diversity and inclusivity, specifically addressing the experiences and challenges faced by transgender individuals. Additionally, consider incorporating forms of media, not just written documents, to enrich the dialogue.
2. **Preparation before the seminar:** Educators should engage with the text before the Socratic seminar. This involves reading and reflecting on the content, particularly considering its relevance to cosmopolitan ideals of diversity in education and transgender perspectives. Such preparation ensures that participants are ready for in-depth discussions during the seminar.
3. **Establishing objectives:** Educators should establish personal objectives to enhance the quality of the discussion. Examples of these objectives include listening, giving everyone an equal opportunity to speak, and posing questions to the group. Additionally, the group should set collective goals based on previous seminar experiences to improve overall participation and engagement.
4. **Guiding queries:** Queries are crafted to be open-ended, reflective, and succinct. Three types of queries are employed: introductory, pivotal, and reflective. Typically, a single introductory query initiates

the dialogue, drawing out key themes related to diversity and transgender experiences. Subsequently, a minimum of three pivotal queries follows, prompting participants to explore the text through a lens of diversity and inclusivity, particularly addressing transgender angles. Finally, a reflective query encourages educators to personalise the conversation, considering how it relates to their own teaching practices and understanding of diversity in education.

5. **Leading discussions:** The educators prompt discussions, explore deeper understanding, bridge concepts, and propel the conversation forward. This role may be assumed by a member of the local school community or district administration, or through collaboration with transgender communities to allow direct engagement of transgender individuals with students.
6. **Reflection:** After the discussion concludes, each participant evaluates their personal objectives related to behaviour. Furthermore, group members deliberate on their progress towards the collective goal, identifying areas for improvement. One of these identified areas will be chosen as the group's objective for the next Socratic seminar.
7. **After-discussion contemplation:** Students interact with the dialogue through homework assignments, typically in written form. These tasks encourage contemplation on the subject of cosmopolitan diversity and transgender inclusion, requiring some form of action.

As «Socratic seminars are structured conversations about selected texts and the important ideas imbedded within them» (Mangrum, 2010, p. 41), it can be a useful approach in fostering discussions about cosmopolitan ideals of diversity and transgender inclusion within educational settings. By engaging participants in exploration of perspectives within texts, Socratic seminars provide a platform for examining tangled issues related to diversity and transgender experiences.

Next, in their discussions on the same topic, when Alexander (liberal) is speaking, Blaire (conservative) once again engages in a brief verbal altercation with them, leading to the following conversation:

Alexander (liberal): So, I mean, sometimes it's like the power that needs to hold me back because-

Blaire (conservative): I mean, you're appropriating a medical condition. That's what you're really doing.

Alexander (liberal): I exist. I am proof that non-binary people exist and that it is a thing. And because I'm sitting right here in front of all of you, all of you, I'm a real person. This is my experiences just as yours. Sorry. Just as yours is a trans experience that as a trans woman, as a trans man or as whatever. But I'm not here to belittle your experience or to tell you that you don't exist. And that's the difference between you and I, that you're trying to cancel, you. And when I say you, I'm talking about conservatives. [Blaire raises her hand] And maybe it is you (referring to Blaire). You're part of the thing.

Blaire (conservative): Okay, so another complete, I don't wanna say the word lie, but I guess that's what it is, about what I've said here, right? I never said you don't exist so we can add that to the long list of things y'all have said I've said that I didn't. We know you exist. You're here. You're not fictitious, right? My point is, you're different than me. And I don't even think you deny that. But yet when I say it, it's an issue, right? The same way that he [points at Andrew (conservative)] said he can't take that off. You can, right? It's different. At the very least, it's different. And when we have a community that there are so many categories, demigirl, demiboy, astrosexual, all this shit, but y'all can't fathom that maybe that would be a different category than what I am when we have such different, as you keep saying and everyone keeps saying, experiences? It doesn't make sense. A bisexual is different than a gay man.

The discourse between Alexander and Blaire unfolds within a charged ideological milieu, each participant wielding their respective epistemological frameworks as cudgels in a battle of perceptions. Their dialogue transmutes into a veritable battleground where the monstrous lens serves as an analytical prism. Here, it can be seen that the concept of monsters goes beyond physical boundaries and influences how ones see themselves and their beliefs. When someone is seen as different, they can be seen as monstrous. Alexander, emblematic of a liberal paradigm, positions themselves as a resolute assertion of existence, audaciously challenging entrenched societal paradigms and taxonomies. Their affirmation of non-binary identity encounters skepticism and resistance from Blaire, who, epitomising a conservative perspective, perceives this affirmation as a menacing incursion into categories and norms. In

this dialectical dyad, each faction envisages the other as monstrous, embodying ideologies deemed fundamentally divergent and irreconcilable.

Blaire's accusation of Alexander appropriating a medical condition unmasks a viewpoint of the other as transgressing and distorting established boundaries. This act of appropriation is looked at through the perspective of monsters, where things that are strange or different are seen as a threat to how society stays together. Similarly, Alexander's indictment of conservatives endeavouring to «cancel» them depicts the conservative ideology as a malevolent force seeking to obliterate or delegitimise their existence, framing it as monstrous in its endeavour to stifle divergence. The dialogue escalates as Blaire challenges Alexander's contention of shared experiences, accentuating the intrinsic disparities between them. This insistence on differentiation as a foundational premise for discord echoes monstrous taxonomies, where the «other» is delineated by attributes that diverge from the norm. Blaire's enumeration of heterogeneous identities within the LGBTQ+ community elucidates identity and the infeasibility of universal categorisation.

In this interchange, the monstrous lens exposes how ideological disparities materialise as perceived monstrosities, with each faction projecting their apprehensions and anxieties onto the other. The refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of alternative perspectives reinforces the monstrous schism, perpetuating a cycle of reciprocal vilification and dehumanisation. Ultimately, the conversation exemplifies how the monstrous operates not merely as a corporeal entity but also as a conceptual schema through which individuals construct and negotiate their identities and ideologies.

One practical teaching method for facilitating discussions around monster culture here is the use of small group discussions or «fishbowl» exercises (Han & Hamilton, 2023; Zhang, 2013), where students are divided into smaller groups to analyse specific excerpts from the dialogue. This allows for more intimate and focused conversations, where students can explore the nuances of each participant's perspective and the intersecting identities in action. Educators can guide these discussions by posing open-ended questions that encourage critical thinking and reflection, such as: What social identities are evident in Alexander and Blaire's arguments? How do these identities intersect to shape their perspectives? How might their differing lived experiences influence their viewpoints?

Additionally, incorporating mixed-media materials such as videos or podcasts featuring voices and perspectives can provide students with a broader understanding of the issues at hand. By exposing students to a range of viewpoints, educators can encourage them to evaluate their own assumptions and biases, fostering a more inclusive and empathetic learning environment. Furthermore, educators can use role-playing activities where students are assigned to embody different perspectives within the dialogue. This allows students to inhabit alternative viewpoints and acquire knowledge about ideological differences.

Ultimately, by using the discourse between Alexander and Blaire as a springboard for discussion and exploration, educators can empower students to navigate ideological differences with empathy, critical thinking, and respect for the intersecting identities that shape our perspectives. Through these pedagogical approaches, students have the capacity to cultivate the skills necessary to engage in constructive dialogue and foster a more inclusive and understanding society.

2.3. ON THE FRONT LINE

At the 23:10 mark of the Jubilee trans debate video, participants are discussing what it means to dedicate themselves to working for trans communities, considering that they work in different fields and have their own vehicles and methods.

Shane (liberal): Blaire, have you ever worked directly with trans people?

Blaire (conservative): I am right now; I am right now. We're surrounded by that.

Shane (liberal): No, directly in services in terms of non-profits and actually getting clientele.

Blossom (liberal): She (referring to Blaire) is not a grassroots person.

[The participants start interrupting each other]

Blossom (liberal): Trans-led organisations that are ran by trans people. I really wanna see what you've done for those organisations 'cause I don't see any of y'all on the front line.

In scrutinising this from a hauntological perspective, one can immerse oneself in the spectral dimensions of identity and activism, where meanings and realities oscillate between presence and absence, clarity and obscurity. Blossom's intervention introduces a haunting ambiguity, as she interrogates Blaire's proximity to grassroots activism and the frontline of trans advocacy. Here, it is observable that the hauntological lens illuminates the spectral presence of activism, where the demarcation between direct engagement and indirect support becomes nebulous, and the delineations of what constitute constructive input to trans communities are shrouded in uncertainty.

Blossom's assertion that Blaire is not a «grassroots person» summons forth a spectre of authenticity and legitimacy, intimating that genuine engagement with trans communities mandates direct involvement in grassroots initiatives led by trans individuals themselves. This question reverberates through the discourse, challenging conventional understandings of activism and advocacy. What delineates one's position on the frontline of trans activism? Is it solely directing participation in trans-led organisations, or can support and advocacy manifest in different manifestations?

The hauntological perspective prompts further enquire into the spectral dimensions of activism, unsettling fixed notions of presence and absence. While Blaire avers to be «surrounded by» trans people and asserts her current engagement, the ambiguity lingers concerning the nature and depth of this involvement. What constitutes direct engagement with trans communities? Can indirect forms of support, such as advocacy through mainstream platforms or political channels, be deemed valid contributions to trans activism? Moreover, Blossom's challenge incites enquiries regarding visibility and recognition within trans advocacy spaces. The notion of being «on the frontline» conjures images of conspicuous activism and direct action, yet the spectral presence of those who toil behind the scenes or advocate through less conspicuous means complicates this narrative. Does visibility equate to efficacy in trans advocacy, or are there modes of activism that remain unseen yet impactful? The hauntological perspective compels us to interrogate the spectres of recognition and invisibility that haunt trans activism, shaking up traditional categories and demanding a reevaluation of what it truly means to be on the frontline.

In the discourse on gender, scholars like Boellstorff et al. (2014) and Pearce et al. (2020) engage in discussions regarding the hauntological aspects of «working on the frontline» in transgender advocacy and activism. As we go into the lives and experiences of trans individuals to generate critical insights and knowledge, a spectre emerges—a glaring disparity between the academic endeavours and the tangible improvement in the lives of trans communities. Predominantly occupied by non-trans researchers, academia often reaps intellectual dividends from its exploration of trans matters and identities, while the lived realities of the majority of trans individuals worldwide remain characterised by disempowerment, disorganisation, and socio-economic precarity (Boellstorff et al., 2014). This disjunction beckons an interrogation, a spectral enquiry into the ethico-political implications of our scholarly pursuits within gender conversations. It becomes important to navigate this hauntological terrain with reflexivity, resisting the temptation to simply dismiss academic knowledge production as ineffectual or reactionary. Such a reductionist stance fails to illuminate the issue at hand. Rather, our enquiry must transcend simplistic dichotomies, probing the entanglements between knowledge production and socio-political praxis. Amidst this critical engagement, we are compelled to confront uncomfortable questions regarding who precisely benefits from the dissemination of academic insights and how these dynamics perpetuate or challenge existing power structures.

Furthermore, situating the enquiry within the broader discourse of queer and trans production and consumption unveils a network of appropriations, co-options, and commodifications. The spectres of capitalist exploitation haunt the margins of trans existence (Gržinić, 2016), where elements of queer culture and politics are assimilated into the hegemonic apparatus of global capitalism. This dual process of commodification simultaneously mirrors and subverts the analytical frameworks employed in queer scholarship, engendering unexpected tensions and paradoxes within the socio-economic fabric of trans existence.

Educators can deploy a hauntological lens to look into Blossom's conceptualisation of the «frontline» within the conversational dynamic between Shane, Blaire, and Blossom, leveraging it as pedagogical material to prompt students to analyse the concept of working on the frontline

within trans advocacy and activism. By framing the discussion through a hauntological perspective, students are impelled to navigate activism, where meanings and realities oscillate between tangibility and intangibility, visibility and elusiveness. Blossom's invocation of the frontline as a marker of authentic engagement with trans communities introduces a haunting ambiguity, challenging conventional understandings of activism and advocacy. This ambiguity incites students to question the criteria for delineating the frontline, inviting them to explore activism beyond visible manifestations. Students could then potentially interrogate the spectral dimensions of engagement, considering how forms of support and advocacy, both visible and invisible, contribute to the empowerment and advancement of trans communities.

One practical teaching method to facilitate this exploration is through guided discussions that prompt students to analyse Blossom's notion of the frontline. By posing open-ended questions that encourage reflection, such as «What constitutes working on the frontline within trans advocacy?» and «How can individuals contribute to their communities even if they are not on the frontline?», educators can stimulate dialogue and debate, promoting a greater comprehension of activism and advocacy. Additionally, educators can incorporate case studies or guest speakers from heterogeneous backgrounds to provide students with empirical cases of different forms of engagement within trans communities. By showcasing a range of experiences and perspectives, students are encouraged to consider the characteristics of activism and the ways in which individuals contribute to social change.

Furthermore, collaborative projects or experiential learning opportunities can offer students a hands-on approach to exploring frontline engagement. Through group projects or community-based initiatives, students can apply concepts to practical contexts, uncovering information about challenges and opportunities in activism and advocacy work. Finally, by leveraging Blossom's concept of the forefront as a starting point for dialogue and investigation, educators have the means to enable learners to explore the facets of activism and support within transgender communities.

3. FINDING THE MONSTERS: WHO, WHERE, AND WHY?

The use of a monstrous lens within educational contexts becomes imperative when guiding students to discern the latent «monsters» within societal structures, particularly in discussions pertaining to gender issues such as transgender rights, mirroring the approach used in platforms like Jubilee's debate videos. Carroll (1990) and other scholars posit that monsters, beyond their frightful visage, evoke a visceral sense of repulsion, often stemming from their intersectionality across multiple categorisations. For instance, the werewolf embodies both human and animalistic traits, while the zombie occupies a nebulous realm between life and death. Through the exploration of these monstrous archetypes, educators can prompt students to scrutinise not only the physical threats posed by these constructs but also the underlying disruption they instigate within societal norms and conceptual frameworks. By way of example, examining vampires can lead to discussions about fear of the unknown and the demonisation of outsiders, while zombies can prompt conversations about loss of individuality and societal collapse.

In the pedagogical landscape, monsters serve as quintessential embodiments of the other—the foreign and unfamiliar to our own tribe. Drawing parallels to narratives like *Beowulf*, where Grendel lurks beyond the Anglo-Saxon settlement (Grafius, 2017), educators can encourage students to identify the «monsters» existing within the margins of societal acceptance, including transgender individuals. By examining how societal constructs designate certain groups as monstrous others, educators can foster critical dialogue surrounding gender identities and challenge the dichotomous thinking perpetuated by hegemonic power structures. Asma's comprehensive analysis (2011) unveils the historical precedent of vilifying outsiders as monstrous entities, resonating with contemporary debates on transgender rights. Educators can also leverage Asma's insights to illuminate how transgender individuals have been historically othered and marginalised, paralleling the monstrous depictions found in literature and cultural narratives. By guiding students through an exploration of these representations, educators can cultivate empathy and understanding towards transgender experiences while dismantling societal constructs that perpetuate marginalisation and discrimination.

Within Freud's concept of the «unheimlich» (Freud et al., 2003), which denotes the eerie amalgamation of the familiar and the unfamiliar, lies a revelation that resonates within educational contexts. Scholars such as Girard (1977) and Cohen (1996) have further expounded on this notion, highlighting the unsettling realisation that the monstrous other is, uncomfortably, not entirely dissimilar to ourselves. These narratives serve as reflections of our collective psyche, urging educators to look into discussions surrounding identity, belonging, and societal constructs within educational settings. This paradox of the monstrous other, straddling the boundaries of otherness and similarity, serves as a powerful pedagogical tool for educators seeking to foster critical thinking and empathy among students. Wood's assertion (1986) that horror narratives typically follow a basic formula—«normality is threatened by the monster» (p. 71)—resonates within educational contexts. By deconstructing the notion of «normality» and interrogating societal constructs, educators can guide students to recognise the complications in human identity and societal norms. Furthermore, this exploration provides a fertile ground for discussions on diversity, inclusion, and social justice, encouraging students to challenge normative frameworks and embrace the plurality of human experience.

In educational settings, the application of this monstrous lens can serve as an accelerator for developmental learning experiences. By examining the societal constructs that delineate the monstrous other from the self, educators can prompt students to confront their own biases and assumptions. Moreover, by enquiring into gender norms and identities, particularly in discussions related to transgender issues, educators can aid in the development of discussions on inclusivity, acceptance, and social change. Through guided exploration of these themes, students can cultivate empathy, critical consciousness, and an elevated appreciation of the hermeneutic subtleties of human existence (Kerdeman, 1998). By engaging with narratives that challenge societal norms and confront the interrelatedness of identity, educators can empower students to become active participants in shaping a more equitable and inclusive society. Through exploration and dialogue, students can transcend the boundaries of otherness and embrace human diversity, paving the way for a more compassionate and empathetic future.

In recent years, there has been a palpable surge in right-wing discourse globally, notably targeting gender studies, feminism, and LGBTQ+ rights. This discourse often employs terms like «anti-gender» and «anti-genderism», accusing these fields of propagating gender ideology or genderism (Tudor, 2021). The notion of gender ideology posits that gender studies, along with queer, trans, and feminist movements, cultivate an ideology that antagonises and opposes the beliefs of the majority, while portraying heterosexuality and a stable gender binary as natural and devoid of ideology (Hark & Villa, 2015). This landscape of gender studies criticism has multiple dimensions. These opponents often advocate for maintaining a stable sex and gender alignment, employing arguments that range from portraying gender studies as feminist or antifeminist, colonising or postcolonial deconstruction gone awry, to secular attacks on traditional family values (Bracke & Paternotte, 2016).

Amidst this turbulent discourse, educators are tasked with navigating discussions surrounding gender issues, particularly those related to transgender rights. Using a monstrous lens within educational contexts can provide a composition for prompting students to examine the underlying power dynamics, ideologies, and biases in these debates. By encouraging students to constantly question «who, where, and why» in various scenarios, educators can enhance comprehension of the societal constructs that perpetuate discrimination and marginalisation, particularly within transgender communities. Through this critical lens, students can explore the origins and implications of gender ideologies, dissecting the motivations behind anti-gender rhetoric and interrogating the systems of privilege and oppression that underpin these narratives.

Within the context of transgender rights advocacy, the necessity to always ask «who, where, and why» takes on added weight. Educators can guide students to interrogate the identities and affiliations of those who perpetuate anti-transgender sentiments, shedding light on the vested interests and power interactions at work. By examining the geographical and cultural contexts in which these discourses emerge, students can broaden view of the intersectional nature of transgender oppression and the ways in which it intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and classism. Moreover, by enquiring into the motivations behind anti-transgender rhetoric, students can uncover the underlying fears, prejudices, and

misconceptions that drive such discourse, thus empowering them to challenge and dismantle harmful stereotypes and misconceptions.

In conclusion, the adoption of a monstrous lens within educational contexts offers a powerful tool for prompting students to critically engage with gender issues, particularly those related to transgender rights. By encouraging students to constantly pose queries in different scenarios, educators can refine grasp of the societal constructs that perpetuate discrimination and marginalisation, while also empowering students to advocate for inclusion, compassion, and social fairness within their communities and beyond. Through this critical lens, students can develop the skills and awareness to challenge oppressive ideologies, dismantle systemic barriers, and contribute to the creation of a more even-handed and accommodating society for all individuals, regardless of gender identity or expression.

4. PROSPECTIVENESS

In Picornell's article (2010), she argues that transgender identities serve as a monolithic symbol for celebrating subversion and deconstructing the influence of Francoist power in the construction of identities. Francoist power refers to the authoritarian regime led by General Francisco Franco in Spain from 1939 to 1975, exhibited by its oppressive policies and suppression of dissent. Under Franco's regime, strict gender norms were enforced as part of a broader strategy to maintain social control and perpetuate traditionalist values. By contrast, transgender identities by their nature contest these stringent standards, representing a form of resistance against «forms of violence, abjection, and marginalisation that seem largely invisible to many of the nontransgendered» (Stryker, 1998, p. 154).

Building on Picornell's argument, it can be stated that embracing monstrous lens and hauntology in education is a means of celebrating and supporting transgender communities. Monstrous lens theory allows ones to view transgender identities not as aberrations, but as symbols of resistance that expose the fragility and artificiality of normative power structures. These identities challenge the notion that power exists «to legitimise and privilege certain existences over others» (Herman, 2015, p. 77). Hauntology speaks to the persistent presence of historical injustices in contemporary

society. By using hauntology, educators can help students understand how the legacy of Francoist repression continues to influence current attitudes towards gender diversity, making visible the «ghosts» of past authoritarianism that still haunt modern Spain. Educators can also critique standard power systems and encourage critical engagement with the construction of identities. For example, integrating texts that highlight the experiences of transgender individuals during Franco's regime can provide historical contexts, showing how these identities were marginalised and yet managed to survive and resist. Furthermore, examining contemporary Spanish films and literature that depict transgender characters can illustrate the ongoing struggle for recognition and equality, demonstrating the progress made since Franco's time while acknowledging the remnants of past prejudices. Such topics are explored in works like those by González-de-Garay et al. (2023) and Roig Mora (2017).

Looking back to 1:25:03 in the Jubilee video, at its end, Shane (liberal) wraps up by stating:

Shane (liberal): It's just, I'm hoping that folks will be able to understand why the activism is there and what it is because generally there may be mistakes made in that light, but at the end of the day, we are, as trans people, trying to gain access to society in a healthy, safe way and also see a future for ourselves, which is something that I never had access to with the way that I grew up and a lot of that ideology [pointing at the conservative participants] of not being allowed to do things when I was 18, even though I knew exactly who I was.

Gazing into the future, Shane accentuates the significance of comprehending the activism within the framework of transgender individuals striving for inclusion and safety in society. Despite potential misinterpretations along the way, the end goal is to carve out a future where trans people can thrive—a future that was often denied to Shane and others due to restrictive ideologies. By embracing monstrous lens and hauntology in education, there is an opportunity to explore narratives and reclaim agency and visibility for transgender individuals, paving the way for a future epitomising heightened inclusivity and empowerment, fostering egalitarianism and self-actualisation.

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