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Essays

Spatializing Gender Performativity: Ecstasy and Possibilities for Livable Life in the Tragic Case of Victoria Arellano

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This essay argues that spaces where we become ecstatic produce possibilities for subversive performativity. To illustrate, I analyze the case of Victoria Arellano, a transgender HIV positive migrant who died while in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention and the subversive gendered responses other detainees consequently enacted. This case study not only demonstrates how performativity codifies norms in ways that literally prevent survival, but it also highlights the necessity of considering space and ecstasy to understand the subversive potential of gender performativity.

Keywords detention, ecstasy, gender performativity, spatiality, survival

Many communication scholars have utilized Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to facilitate discussions of identity (Bennett, 2003; Cooks, 2003; Fox, 2007; Hasian, 2003; Holland, 2006; Holman Jones, 2005; Sloop, 2000, 2005; Warren, 2001a, 2001b; Warren & Kilgard, 2001; Weiss, 2005). Butler (2004b) suggests, however, that the theory of performativity originally emerged not from an interest in identity but from a question of survival, in particular for gender and sexual minorities. Specifically, she asks, why are some lives considered real while others are unintelligible and "unreal"? This query prompts consideration of how the norms that impose the limits of livability and intelligibility might be rethought and resignified, not to open up an infinite possibility of genders but to become inclusive of the myriad genders that have existed for a very long time (Butler, 2004b). Resignifying norms to make life more livable for those rendered unintelligible through current norms is the ultimate political goal of the theory of gender performativity.

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Despite this political aim, the subversive potential of performativity, in a very material way, has yet to be fully actualized.[1] In part, this is true because resignification and citation not only open possibilities for subversion but also codify the norms of heteronormativity (Lloyd, 2007). The tension between subversion and codification is important, for as Butler maintains, the moment someone is subjected to the restriction of norms, she/he also has agency. When a norm subjects a person, the very act of subjection indicates that other possibilities exist, because if no other possibility existed, there would be no need to impose a norm. This possibility for agency is vital, especially for gender and sexual minorities, as norms place them in a constant ecstatic state.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, ecstasy refers to "the state of being 'beside oneself,' thrown into a frenzy or a stupor, with anxiety, astonishment, fear, or passion." Typically, one enters a state of ecstasy as a result of some extreme event that causes a person to realize that he/she is not autonomous and does not possess complete control over her/his existence. When the norms that govern existence render people unintelligible, however, those "unreal" people perpetually find themselves beside themselves, precarious, as they are vulnerable to the violence of norms but must rely on such norms for protection (Butler, 2004b). Responding to ecstasy can take multiple forms. While some might be apt to choose retaliation or respond in a way that attempts to regain control of self, others, such as many sexual and gender minorities, try to use ecstasy as an impetus to resist norms, as reason to envision other possibilities for reality. And as Butler maintains, "possibility is not a luxury; it is as crucial as bread" (p. 29).

This is an essay about possibility. More specifically, this essay examines the subversive possibilities for gender performativity by bringing together these components of Butler's theories—gender performativity, survival, possibility, and ecstasy. Additionally, as Moya Lloyd (1999) argues, the theory of gender performativity occludes "the space within which performance occurs, the others involved in or implicated by the production, and how they receive what they see" (p. 210). The theory of performativity thus needs to be textured with a theory of spatiality. I argue that spaces where we unravel and become unhinged, where we are ecstatic, produce the material possibility for subversive performativity. In other words, when we are beside ourselves, facing our own mortality or someone else's in a way that pushes past any limit of life and bodily or psychic comfort, we are in a space to subvert the norms of the heterosexual matrix,[2] so enabling the subversive and political utility of gender performativity.

To demonstrate this argument, I analyze the case of Victoria Arellano, a transgender HIV positive Mexican migrant who died while in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention in July 2007 and the subversive gendered responses other detainees enacted as a result. This case study not only demonstrates how performativity codifies the norms of heteronormativity in ways that literally cut off the possibility of survival, but it also highlights the necessity of considering space and ecstasy to understand the subversive potential of gender performativity. I take up this case study in considerable detail in the latter part of this essay. First, I briefly review the theory of gender performativity. I then offer a theory of spatiality. Next, I demonstrate how space can compel ecstasy, which enables performativity's subversive potential through an analysis of Arellano's detention and death and the ecstatic response of her cellmates. I conclude with implications and extensions of this argument.

Gender Performativity

Performativity relies primarily on a temporal logic of repetition and citation where "discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler, 1993, p. 2). Performativity is the citing and reiterating of conventions grounded in historicity. In this rendition of subjectivity and the process of subjectification, it is not a willful subject or a doer who does the gendered deed; rather, there is not a doer behind the deed. The doer is constituted in and by the deed (Butler, 1995, p. 134). As Butler (1999) famously states, "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (pp. 43–44). Within a frame of compulsory heterosexuality, sex-gender-desire all must follow one another so that binary sex leads to the appropriate binary gender, which leads to the appropriate heterosexual object of sexual desire. In the repetition of norms within what Butler calls the heterosexual matrix, something that looks like coherent, interior gender identity comes to be. The reiteration of norms attempts to conceal the repeated conventions. This repetition is not primarily theatrical; that which appears as theatrical occurs through the dissimulation of the discursive historicity that makes the repetition possible and intelligible. Following Jacques Derrida, within the theory of gender performativity, discourse does not determine subjects, but people become meaningful through discourse. A successful performative draws on and recites "a set of linguistic conventions which have traditionally worked to bind or engage certain kinds of effects" (Butler, 1995, p. 134). Such conventions do not determine the subject because signification is never foundational; instead, it is a repetitive process that comes to seem as if it is a foundation (Butler, 1999, p. 185).

The discursive emphasis leads some critics to assume that agency is eliminated in the theory of performativity. Contrarily, construction is the site of agency, or the means by which agency gains intelligibility and can be articulated (Butler, 1999, p. 187). "'Agency' is to be found precisely at such junctures where discourse is renewed" (Butler, 1995, p. 135). The subject is constituted in and not determined by discourse, thereby revealing the possibility of alternative constitutions. The ruptures and the sites where discourses collide, collude, and interact, afford agents the agency to envision differently. Ruptures are constantly present; this makes the repetition so necessary—without the repetition, what seems natural would be shown as otherwise.

As mentioned, the possibility to envision differently is central to the theory of gender performativity. Because drag performance became the primary example that scholars took up in attempting to extend performativity and understand its subversive potential, Butler (2004b) clarifies that she used drag because she wanted to challenge notions of sexual difference and discuss the "transferability of the attribute" (p. 213). The attribute in this case was femininity, and there is something significant about the fact that the drag queens she knew could do femininity better than Butler ever could. These performances, however, were construed at best as merely theatrical; in general, they were not seen as real. In fact, these versions of gender were viewed as violations of the norm, which means, depending on the context, that the possibility of severe and grave consequences always exists. The usage of drag as one example of how to subvert the heterosexual matrix functioned to challenge what is considered "real and true" and what will be deemed unacceptable. Drag helps to conceptualize how gender can be resignified and how fantasy might work to help us

envision otherwise (p. 216). The point is "not simply to produce a pleasurable and subversive spectacle but to allegorize the spectacular and consequential ways in which reality is both reproduced and contested" (p. 218). Though not overtly a part of Butler's discussion, the space of drag's resignification is significant for producing subversive possibility.

Revealing gender as a temporal process and product of repeated conventions within the discursive historicity produced and maintained by the heterosexual matrix compels rethinking and reconsidering how certain lives are deemed livable and others are not. The emphasis on cultural survival within the theory of gender performativity provides an in-road to theorize performativity and space in relation to each other. As I will demonstrate, a space that literally suffocates the possibility of a livable life ironically illuminates the subversive potential of gender performativity. In foregrounding a politics of survival, scholars can ask how to create a world where all can live without the threat of violence and with the sense that all people are real.

The Productive Power of Space

The emphasis on the temporal logics of citation and repetition has led some to question the role of context in the theory of gender performativity (Bell, 1999a, 1999b; M. Fraser, 1999; N. Fraser, 1995a, 1995b; Lloyd, 1999; Meijer & Prins, 1998). Discussions of context and space often appear elusive in Butler's work, perhaps because substantive and spatial conceptualizations of gender identity long dominated feminist thought. Early feminist standpoint theories and theories of sexual difference located women in a fixed place in relation to men, whether biologically, culturally, or economically. Such models, defining gender in terms of boundary or substances, tend to reify and normalize essentialist versions of gender at the expense of other possibilities. Butler challenges the exclusions. In an interview with Vikki Bell, she explains, "What is poststructural in my work is the fact that I want those subjectivating norms to be temporalized and open rather than fixed and determinate" (Bell, 1999b, p. 168). Here, Butler suggests that (re)signification and (re)citation of norms dispute the assumption that those norms are set in structure.

Poststructuralism is premised on the removal of norms from structure. Yet, norms still get reiterated somewhere and are differently compelled within those "somewheres." Raka Shome (2003) contends that spatial logics are among the most prominent modes of producing power, and we can no longer account for space only as a "backdrop" (p. 39). Following scholars such as Doreen Massey (1999a) and Lawrence Grossberg (1996), Shome compels critical communication scholars to understand space as a mode of subjectification, which means deciphering how space produces subjects. Rather than relying on a metaphysics of substance as did early spatializing theories of gender, space is more aptly understood as interrelational, open, and multiplicitous (Massey, 1999a), and not entirely synonymous with physical place.[3]

To explicate the productive power of space, it is necessary to work through its parts. Massey describes space foremost as a "product of interrelations" (Massey, 1999a, p. 28). These relations range in degrees of significance and type. For example, personal relationships between people, political and historical relationships between affiliated groups, and even economic relationships between nation-states are kinds of relationships that constitute space. Thus, a space cannot be understood by simply identifying its physical attributes. If space is relational, it involves multiple relations,

which evidence plurality. Space, then, is also the sphere of multiplicity and possibility. These relationships are not static, as layers of diverse kinds of relationships may constitute a space differently depending on factors such as political or social need, the way a space is being used, or even the time of day or year in which a space is approached. Finally, space is always becoming and incomplete. There is no finality of space. Even spaces that appear to have very fixed relationships and characteristics are never completely fixed as such. Processes such as building restoration, movement of people to and from different locations, and environmental shifts all preclude the closure of space. Importantly, in this figuration, space and time are not opposed. If space is premised on multiplicity, not only does it include and consider temporality, but multiple temporalities. Space is the source of new possibilities for the temporal (Massey, 1999b).

Scholars in communication studies have begun to consider the productive power of space (e.g., Blair, 2001; Blair & Michel, 2000, 2007; Carrillo Rowe, 2004; Dickinson, 1997, 2002, 2006; Dickinson, Ott, & Aoki, 2006; Grossberg, 1996, 1997; Mountford, 2001; Shome, 2003; Stewart & Dickinson, 2008).[4] Shome (2003) demonstrates how space produces power by showing the U.S.–Mexico border as a particular kind of space that produces particular kinds of subjectivities, politics of im/mobility, and possibilities for agency. To understand space as interrelational, multiple, and open, Shome supplies a discussion of the constitution of migrant identities in and by the U.S.–Mexico border region. She reveals how " 'immigrant' identity is produced through material practices of containment and control that constitutes the border" (p. 45). Military style relations including surveillance mechanisms, military vehicles, border checks by uniformed officers, and a generally suspicious environment construct the immigrant body as "out of place" when around the border. The immigrant body is "caught in this web of relations" that not only marks the body, rendering it immobile and inhuman, but also needs those bodies in order to delineate difference and identity (p. 45). In this space of the border, even those who are not migrants, or those who are immigrants with documents can be rendered out of place, calling into question their identity as legal resident or citizen. The very construction of whether one is legal or not is largely a matter of border spatial relations as the arbitrariness of a line in the sand, and one's position on one side or the other can create one as a legal or extralegal subject.[5]

Exploring space as relational helps to divulge how certain bodies get constructed in very particular contexts. Without attending to the long history of relations at the border between certain kinds of bodies, nationalistic discourses, and global relations between nation-states such as the United States and Mexico, the border becomes only a physical place. When the border is construed as a place, it is merely the backdrop to the interactions between different bodies marked by different identities. The spatial perspective calls particular attention to relationality as a constituting force. In addition to being relational, if space is multiple and always in the process of becoming, the current construction of bodies on the border is not a foregone conclusion. Multiple constructions are likely to exist. This point is most clearly evidenced by activity of humanitarian and activist groups such as Coalición de Derechos Humanos, the Samaritans, and No More Deaths/No Mas Muertes on the U.S./Mexico border. These groups challenge both the militarization of the border as well as the construction of the migrant body as an illegal and nonhuman (alien) subject. This is why Shome (2003) suggests that a spatial analysis "invites us to interrogate where and through what spatialities of power identities are in different ways

produced, asserted, enacted and articulated through the constantly changing asymmetries of transnationalism" (p. 55).

One way to interrogate "spatialities of power" is to consider the relationship between spatiality and performativity. Human geographers Gregson and Rose (2000), for example, argue that spaces are performative as they incite discursively constituted performances. Similarly, Blair and Michel (2000) contend that the space of public rhetoric such as the Civil Rights Memorial has a performative function, which enacts multiple possibilities for its agency. In the next section, I affirm and augment the performative function of space by demonstrating how spaces that incite subjects to ecstatic states also enable gender performativity's subversive potential.

Performativity, Space, and Being beside One's Self

I now consider the case of Victoria Arellano, a 23-year-old, HIV positive, transgender undocumented migrant from Mexico who entered detention in May 2007 and died in ICE custody on July 20, 2007. Arellano's death drew attention from several bloggers as well as local and national media outlets that widely covered the story.[6] Analysis of this case study unfolds in two sections. First, I show how space produces immobile subjects and performativity codifies the norms of heteronormativity as Arellano enters detention and in the ways ICE officials regard her. Second, I detail how the space of detention eventually compelled Arellano's fellow detainees to a state of ecstasy whereby they saw their own vulnerability in Arellano and transgressed the norms of the heterosexual matrix. The other detainees' ecstatic responses reveal the subversive possibilities of gender performativity.

The Logics of Heteronormativity and Immobility

Arellano, born "Victor," came to the United States as a child, and died after officials neglected her health at the San Pedro Detention Center known as "Terminal Island," in Southern California. The tragedy of this young woman's death cannot be overstated. Arellano, a former drug addict, worked at a West Hollywood supermarket and volunteered with a local drug and alcohol treatment center. Despite a rocky relationship with her mother, due in part to her mother's difficult time with Arellano's gender and sexuality, the two were journeying toward reconciliation. After being deemed "asymptomatic" by her doctor three years prior to detention, Arellano took antibiotics designed to prevent pulmonary infections that could lead to pneumonia. When taken into ICE custody, officials refused to give her dapasone, the medicine she needed to ward off infection. As Homayoon Khanlou, chief of medicine at the AIDS Healthcare Foundation commented, to take a patient off of that medication often leads to the development of pneumonia that will not respond to treatment (Feinberg, 2007). Arellano became so sick that when finally transported to an intensive care unit at a local hospital, she died two days later while shackled to her bed. The outrage felt by HIV, immigration, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer activists around the country prompted vigils, protests, and calls for investigation for months following Arellano's death.[7] Activists held protests in numerous cities in the Southwest United States including San Diego, Los Angeles, and Tucson. Organizations such as Immigration Equality, publications such as *The Advocate*, and numerous bloggers called for investigations and reprimand. To date, ICE has released no public information regarding an investigation.

When Butler (2004b) asks how the norms that govern gender enable and constrain the possibility of a livable existence, she acknowledges that violations of those norms are not simply a matter of pleasure or play; they are core matters of survival. The heteronormative logics of gender performativity enable the appropriate relationships among sex, gender, and desire within the heterosexual matrix, to serve as the (contingent but very real) foundation for recognition. In the case of Arellano, these logics become painfully apparent from the moment she was taken into custody. Moreover, space reproduces relationships of power that can render subjects literally and figuratively immobile as proper protocols and relationships among actors such as officials and detainees compel the implementation of norms. Despite her outward performance, her self-identity, and the possibility of grave danger, ICE officials placed Arellano in a large men's detention cell with only a handful of other transgender or gay detainees (Ehrenreich, 2008).[8] The ICE officials' decision evidences Butler's (1993) claim that sex is not something one has or a descriptor of what a person is; sex "will be one of the norms by which the 'one' becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (p. 2). In this case, the existence of a penis, indicating the sex of that body, was the grounds, or that which disrupted the performances of Arellano's body. Though a woman, in the space of detention, which relies on rigid gender-sex norms to recognize and name people, Arellano's embodiment was stripped of its historicity: authorities regarded her as unreal. In this normative space, her male body trumped all other signifiers. To immigration officials, *Victoria* Arellano was unintelligible; they perceived *Victor* giving a theatrical performance.

This should not be surprising considering the precedent for LGBT migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers within the U.S. immigration system as a whole. While the United States has one of the most progressive asylum systems for sexual minorities in the entire world, "transgender" identity is not affirmed within this system. Rather, these individuals are legally regarded as part of the persecuted social group of "gay men with female sexual identities" (McKinnon, 2010).[9] On the other hand, gay men have routinely been denied asylum for not appearing to be feminine and, therefore, judged to be capable of passing as heterosexuals (Morgan, 2006). Thus the logics of the heterosexual matrix are built into the U.S. immigration system, and such logics are reproduced by the space of detention centers. The confines of gender norms constitute the marked body of an HIV positive and brown undocumented migrant and produce little possibility for subversion, especially in a detention center. Arellano's queer body, on numerous levels had to be reduced to the easiest and most logical sign—biological sex—in order to be rendered intelligible. As Shome (2003) explicates, space reproduces power to constitute immobile subjects, and the power in this instance was the logic of heteronormativity coupled with the presence of an "out of place" noncitizen body.

The space of detention foreclosed Arellano's survival showing how the spatialities of power can render people immobile and incapable of a sustainable existence (Shome, 2003). Had she not found herself in that space as a queer (HIV positive, undocumented, transgender) person, Arellano would most likely be alive today. That Arellano died in detention clearly reveals that gender performativity codifies the norms of the heterosexual matrix (Lloyd, 2007). Arellano's death is thus not an example of the subversive possibilities of gender performativity. Arellano's death reflects the material reality of many gender and sexual minorities, particularly those who lack citizenship, White privilege, access to resources or mobility, and who

live perpetually beside themselves. The space of detention also rendered the others in the detention cell—many who were not gender and sexual minorities—ecstatic or beside themselves, which did enable the subversive potential of *their* gender performativity.

Ecstasy and Subversive Possibility

ICE detention facilities are divided between federally run and privately owned centers. Additionally, ICE often uses local jail and federal prison facilities to house detainees. Since (but perhaps before) President Clinton signed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) into law in 1996, the number of people detained has continued to grow (Dow, 2004; Welch, 2002). Currently, roughly 300,000 people are detained in ICE facilities every year, and most have no criminal record (Patel & Jawetz, 2007). With these two acts, the grounds for holding asylum seekers and refugees also increased as those in the midst of filing for asylum are now subject to detention due to stricter standards. Although ICE has a set of 38 standards for its detention centers, these function more accurately as guidelines because ICE has no formal mechanism for ensuring implementation of the standards (Patel & Jawetz, 2007). Since 2004, at least 74 people have died while in ICE custody (Ehrenreich, 2008). Detainees across the United States regularly report mistreatment such as shackling; solitary confinement; neglect of basic medical and hygienic needs; denial of outdoor recreation; lack of access to phones, mail, and legal resources; and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse (Patel & Jawetz, 2007; see also Amnesty International, 2009).

Most detention centers are jail-like[10] and often suffer from overcrowding. While prisoners in county jails or state and federal prisons are protected from human rights violations by the 8th and 14th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, as civil detainees, migrants in detention are protected under the 5th Amendment, which only prohibits punishment without due process. Nevertheless, detention centers often refuse basic human rights, and even knowledge of those rights is not freely offered up to detainees (Patel & Jawetz, 2007; Amnesty International, 2009). This means that the space of detention is constructed not just as a space that lacks human rights but often insists on ignorance of those rights as well. Detention centers are generally sex-segregated, with some exceptions for (heterosexual) families, who are sometimes allowed to remain in mother-father-child cells.

An additional dynamic present in the space of detention pertains to the production of detention guards. As Sarah J. Tracy (2003) has shown in her work on emotion and correctional officers, officers are often disdainful of inmates and approach them with an "us–them mentality" (p. 161). Tracy contends that these officers' performances do not suggest that officers are bad people but rather that they are largely constructed by the organizational discourses and norms that produce officer identity. In an ACLU report on detention conditions, Patel and Jawetz (2007) cite numerous incidents of officers engaging in inhumane and violent treatment of detainees, supporting Tracy's findings (see also Dow, 2004). Read in this light, guards' perpetual refusals to assist Arellano should not be surprising as detention norms compel dehumanizing relationships between guards and detainees. Even as detainees' bodies fail, because of the dehumanization, guards can/do not see their own bodies as interconnected to detainees.

According to Tracy (2003), although men and women are detention officers, many of the characteristics officers are expected to uphold, conform to the conventions of masculinity. One might expect this to be especially apparent in a male facility. The hypermasculinity coupled with the implicit homoeroticism and the constant threat of rape inside a prison also constructs the space of detention. Numerous studies have investigated sexual abuse among men in prisons (e.g., Man & Cronan, 2001; Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, Rucker, Bumby, & Donaldson, 1996; Wooden & Parker, 1982). Man and Cronan cite sexual abuse as a "reality" of prison life and one that prison officials often ignore. The authors contend that a subculture that "relies on an aggressive conception of masculinity" promotes this sort of environment (p. 130). While a detention center is arguably a different environment than a prison due to the presumably transitory nature of detention, a report issued by the organization Stop Prisoner Rape (SRP) (2004) details numerous instances of sexual abuse in immigration detention centers that mirror those cited in criminal prison facilities. The report maintains that detention conditions are "prisonlike" and detainees are treated as criminals.

The general prisonlike culture of a detention center is only one dynamic of the spatiality that must be investigated. For this case study, the relationships among other detainees to ICE officials and the immigration system as well as to each other and Arellano also constitute the space. As a young woman whose life as an undocumented transgender migrant was always already constituted by fear—fear of being deported by immigration officials and of being disciplined for her gender transgression—Arellano was confined to a cell designed for 40–50 men, in which roughly 80–105 detainees were crammed, depending on the report (Associated Press, 2008; Schmitz, 2007). While very often people detained share some cultural values as many detainees are from similar parts of the world, diverse languages, values, and presumptions about propriety constitute the relationality between detainees. In light of many of these factors, it would be easy to assume that this space would have only produced the worst kind of treatment for those who transgress normative gender. In an aggressively masculine environment, we might expect performances of heteromasculinity to flourish.

In part, these conditions of heteronormativity did flourish in this detention cell. A report based on interview data with other people who were detained with Arellano before she died suggests that at first some of the nonqueer men (and most of the detainees were not queer) displayed discomfort with Arellano's unabashed performances of gender and sexuality (Ehrenreich, 2008). When she arrived to the detention center, Arellano reportedly constantly danced and sang loudly to songs performed by pop culture "divas" such as Celine Dion and Mariah Carey, much to the annoyance of some others. In addition to Arellano's specific performance of gender, likely for safety reasons, the handful of gay and transgender detainees in this cell also chose to sleep beside one another and shower together. Gender norms undoubtedly impacted detainees' relationality and their decisions about where and how to place their bodies while in detention.

On the other hand, despite the accusation that migrant communities are unabashedly homophobic (not to mention transphobic), the migrants in the cell—queer and nonqueer—were constituted as different kinds of gendered subjects. Compelled to a state of ecstasy within the awful space of detention, detainees abdicated the norms of the heterosexual matrix by identifying with and caring for Arellano once she became ill. Some devoted nearly all of their attention to physically and

emotionally caring for Arellano when her body failed her. Even those who did not engage in the daily, hands-on caretaking of Arellano when she was at her worst, stockpiled their own rations of pain relievers in order to alleviate her immense physical pain (Ehrenreich, 2008).

Reports indicate that detainees repeatedly asked the guards for help, and when none was provided, some of them took it on themselves to caretake. "They used their bath towels soaked in cold water to try to bring down her fever and brought cardboard boxes for her to throw up into. The immigrant detainees cleaned up the blood and vomit" (Feinberg, 2007). When she was too sick to walk, some of her closest friends took turns taking her to the bathroom. The detention cell is a space of survival where the precariousness of one's own life is reflected in the lives of other detainees. This precariousness produced a state of ecstasy for detainees. Because of the severity of Arellano's situation, many detainees found themselves in a position of challenging the very system that indefinitely detained them and undoubtedly would deport them. While detention cells are known to be spaces of collaboration, where detainees help one another with their deportation and/or criminal cases, here, detainees also collaborated for basic survival.

While labors of love between men, or those discursively constituted as men, are not appropriate within the confines of the heterosexual matrix, the space of detention produced these loving relationships. Guards and medical staff repeatedly refused the detainees' pleas to treat Arellano, recommending "Tylenol and water" as remedies for what the autopsy later revealed to be meningitis and other AIDS-related infections (Ehrenreich, 2008). When the situation became so terrible that detainees were sure Arellano would die, reports indicate that at least 55 and perhaps more than 70 of the detainees signed a petition demanding that Arellano receive medical care, and in a last act of desperation the detainees refused to line up for that evening's head count, instead staging an embodied protest where they repeatedly chanted "hospital" (Feinberg, 2007; Schmitz, 2007). The protest finally forced officials to call an ambulance and transport her to a local hospital. When Arellano died two days later, the detainees collected $245 of their money to give to the Arellano family. The night they learned of her death, they prayed together in silence, and 61 detainees wrote a letter protesting Arellano's neglect. The practices of caretaking and protest constituted by detainees' ecstasy, as a result of detention and the relationships the detainees had with one another, Arellano and ICE officials spatially produce the subversive possibilities of gender performativity.

When rendered ecstatic, in the direst spaces, the confines of gender norms become less relevant and rupturing the citationality of gender is possible. As one detainee, Mutagubya Lukyamuzi said, "That day it was Victor[ia],[11] but maybe tomorrow it can be somebody else" (Ehrenreich, 2008). Lukyamuzi's statement evidences his awareness of his own vulnerability and necessary dependence on others who he may not know. This ecstatic state compelled Luykamuzi and others toward subversive gendered relationships. As Butler (2004a) offers, what if we could use these states of ecstasy for political possibilities beyond retaliation? While some of the straight detainees may never have encountered transgender people, several continue to tell the story, forever altered by the ecstatic experience. As one straight detainee, Eugene Peba remarked, "I'm going to keep this story in my mind, and whenever God blesses me with somebody, I'm going to talk about it" (Ehrenreich, 2008). In the repeated telling of the story, perhaps norms get resignified, and subversion is possible.

On the other hand, subversive possibilities always remain tied to the conditions of power. Though the results of their radical acts in the space of detention were not as tragic for other detainees as they were for Arellano, many detainees were immediately transferred out of San Pedro without their families' knowledge or their immigration files. Since many of those detainees were defending themselves in deportation proceedings, they had none of the documentation required to construct their cases. Their spatially produced violation of normativity through a resignification of gendered relationships thus led to significant consequences for all involved. Months after Arellano's death, the San Pedro facility closed indefinitely, and many of the detainees who witnessed her neglect and acted on her behalf remain lost in the ICE bureaucracy. In this way, subversion is fleeting, not like revolution, and yet the very existence of this sort of rupture holds possibility.

Conclusions

If performativity is ultimately a theory concerned with survival, then this essay has demonstrated both the stakes for transgressing normative gender and the necessity of space for compelling ecstasy and enabling performativity's subversive potential. The case of Victoria Arellano provides convincing reason to think about the nature of gender performativity and the spatial limitations and possibilities for it. Her tragic death is only one convincing example of the punishments for border transgressions—national and gendered—in this contemporary moment. Heightened paranoia and fear about boundaries and propriety constitute the U.S. national space. The passage of seven U.S. state ballot measures that define marriage as between one man and one woman in 2006, as well as the more than 80 pieces of state legislation targeted at migrants and migration that same year, evidence such paranoia. In 2008 three more states approved "marriage" measures, one banned gay couples from adopting children, and states enacted a startling 206 pieces of immigration legislation (Hegen, 2009). Such an environment necessitates close attention to processes of subjectification that ultimately and daily lead to literal and figurative death, especially for those who are caught between multiple systems of oppression.

And yet, in such an environment, it becomes crucial to ask about the political possibilities of ecstasy. The term "panic" has been used as a defense of dehumanization and murder throughout time. The "homosexual panic" defense, for example, has been the justification for acquitting and mitigating the sentences of queer bashers and killers (Pei-Lin Chen, 2000).[12] The "moral panic," which Michael Welch (2002) uses to describe the mentality surrounding our current immigration milieu, similarly justifies the deplorable and inhumane treatment of migrants. A "terrorist panic" might very well describe the ecstatic moment Americans experienced in the 9/11 aftermath. Panic clearly evokes ecstasy, and yet too often that ecstasy and vulnerability are used not to subvert what is wrong in the world, but very often to repeat a familiar expectation to retaliate against the perceived threat. The response to threat, in this way, is itself performative in this historical moment. Yet, the detainees who demanded and worked for Victoria Arellano's survival reveal another possible response to ecstasy through their spatially produced violations of the norms of the heterosexual matrix. Their panic thus does not become a defense of wrongdoing, but rather their panic functioned offensively, in a movement toward what is right. This significant but delicate line between death and survival compelled by our[13] panic/ecstasy, especially in relation to the norms of gender/sexuality/race/nation

propriety, may very well be what Butler describes as the site of agency, the "junctures where discourse is renewed" (1995, p. 135). Butler's spatial language, "junctures," points toward the necessity of thinking about the power of space and its ability to, in part, produce our discursive/material agency.

But the precariousness of life, rendered so visible in the competing spaces of detention and the heterorelationality that compels the recitation of norms, demands even more of our attention. Does Victoria Arellano's death point us only toward considering the punishments for violating normativity, or can we find a way to garner from her story a method to live in that precariousness, to create ecstatic experience where we in fact can construct and maintain livable lives? It seems to me that answering this question not only offers us the theoretical promise that many have longed for from a theory of gender performativity, but it also offers us the hope of a world where we cannot not see our own and others' necessary vulnerability. And living there, in that space, may hold the possibility for radical politics and the truly livable life.

Notes

1. Despite nearly two decades of queer theory that have taken up the subversive potentiality of gender performativity, the clearest examples of this potentiality in Butler's writing largely exist in her literary and film analyses. Butler has been more successful at demarcating the materiality of the norms of the heterosexual matrix than the materiality of the subversive potential of gender performativity (Brickell, 2005).
2. In Butler's work, the heterosexual matrix produces compulsory heterosexuality, which will be discussed.
3. The distinction between place and space is important for some scholars. For instance, for Michel de Certeau (1984) a place implies stability and some ordered form of propriety. Places are normative and operate through compelling people to adopt particular norms and enact particular kinds of performances. Alternatively, space "is composed of intersections of mobile elements" (p. 117). Grossberg (1996) blurs this distinction some, arguing that the poles of place and space are in relation and in the process of becoming. As a result of the relationship, space cannot and should not be treated empirically as an objective or experiential reality, yet it is also not adequately understood when articulated as "imaginary" or figurative (p. 178). Following Shome (2003), for this argument, a distinction is not particularly useful. Moreover, if, as de Certeau (1984) argues, "space is a practice place" (p. 117), then maintaining a distinction would, in fact, be counterproductive.
4. A "spatial turn" has greatly influenced other disciplines over the past 20 years by challenging taken for granted notions of modernity, temporality, and relationality (for a review of this phenomenon, see: Thrift, 2006).
5. For a similar sort of analysis of the spatial production of subjectivity and agency in a very different kind of space, see Greg Dickinson's discussion of Starbucks (Dickinson, 2002).
6. By conducting both a general Internet search as well as a search utilizing LexisNexis, I collected all of the available texts pertaining to the Arellano case including press releases, blogs, magazine reports, and newspaper articles. Many of these texts overlapped or repeated the same information, so I utilized only exemplars that contained unique pieces of information to create this case study.
7. I feel that it also needs to be said that some of these same organizations would not help Olga Arellano, Victoria's mother, when she called and asked for assistance while Victoria was alive but mistreated in detainment.
8. Likely, Arellano should have been placed in protective custody with only other HIV positive, transgender, and/or gay detainees, which is often where detainees who are at high risk of being injured by others get placed. However, this facility is not directly an ICE facility but rather a contracted one, which means that not all standards that ICE might normally follow were followed or monitored. All reports indicate that Arellano was placed

in a men's cell, and while there were a few other transgender/gay detainees, they were not given protective custody.

9. Importantly, women are virtually excluded from receiving asylum based on sexual orientation or sexual identity in the United States, which is why I mention only men here.
10. The claim that detention centers are "jail-like" stems from several facts. First, many privately run detention centers, such as those managed by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), exist in former county or city jail buildings. Second, very often, present county and city jails serve a double function as a detention center (WCRWC, 1997). For a list of all the jails that serve a double-function as immigration detention centers see www.detentionwatchnetwork.org. For a virtual "tour" of a detention center that depicts the stark similarities between a detention facility and a prison, visit www.homelandgitmo.com.
11. Many of the straight detainees used masculine pronouns and her male name, "Victor," to refer to Arellano.
12. Importantly, as Pei-Lin Chen explains, the "homosexual panic" defense has shifted to a more nuanced defense, the "nonviolent homosexual advance" defense, which does not pathologize a defendant as being temporarily insane due to the mental condition of latent homosexuality but rather suggests a defense based on "provocation" or "heat of passion."
13. I intentionally use inclusive pronouns such as "we" and "our" in the conclusion to ensure that *we* cannot distance ourselves from our own implication in the materiality of this discussion.

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