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Chapter 3

(Im)mobile Metaphors: Toward an Intersectional Rhetorical History

Carly S. Woods

Metaphors not only “structure our experience”¹ but “by organizing reality in particular ways, our selected metaphors also prescribe how we are to act.”² As the opening chapter of this volume notes, feminist scholars have long grappled with the figurative language of intersectionality in order to find the conceptual framing that best accounts for varied relationships between power, oppression, and privilege. Similarly, rhetorical historians have an obligation to think critically about the metaphors we use. One cluster of metaphors, in particular, characterizes both intersectional and rhetorical-historical research: the spatial and geographic. Moreover, critiques of both research approaches essentially point to the same problem; that the language of intersections and maps suggests a fixed location that does not fully account for the fluidity and shifting of human relationships.³

In her overview of feminist perspectives on the history of rhetoric, Kate Ronald notes that there has been an “explosion of research in women’s rhetoric over the last decade and a half.”⁴ Much of the early research in this area concentrated on the primary analytical category of “woman” in documenting, recovering, and interpreting rhetorical texts.⁵ Since then, major methodological debates have centered on the question of how best to ensure that feminist rhetorical historians do not focus too narrowly on a single axis of identity (woman) to the exclusion of others.⁶ This chapter uses common critiques of the metaphors of intersectionality and rhetorical history as a starting point to articulate a forward-looking vision for intersectional rhetorical history. To that end, I offer a way for

communication scholars to animate our methodological and conceptual metaphors with an eye toward motion and mobility.

In line with contemporary feminist theorizing that favors a coalitional (relational) rather than individual (locational) politics, I argue that an intersectional approach to rhetorical history should be concerned with shifting webs of relationships rather than singular articulations of identity in historical contexts. The first section identifies overlapping spatial and geographic language in key texts on intersectionality and feminist rhetorical history. I then suggest how metaphors that capture motion and mobility better address the relational complexity of the historical practices and people we study. Finally, I offer examples of the themes of coalitional belonging, movement, and travel in the life of politician Barbara Jordan to demonstrate the possibilities of intersectional rhetorical history. In taking mobile metaphors seriously, intersectionality can inform rhetorical-historical research, while feminist rhetorical history can explore innovative spaces for the extension of intersectionality studies.

INTERSECTING SPACES AND PLACES

Theorists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty have persuasively argued for consideration of how the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, geography, religion, and ability create unique modes of being in the world. In their germinal works, these theorists have relied on the language of space and geography to attend to the multidimensional aspects of identity. In her pioneering work on critical legal theory, Crenshaw demonstrates the necessity of the “intersectional thesis” as an alternative to simplistic identity politics in the context of violence against women of color. Crenshaw maintains that when identity-based activism forces a choice between embodied allegiances to multiple identity groups, it becomes ineffectual and forgoes possibilities for coalitional politics. To force such choices is to “relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling.”⁷ Crenshaw offers instead, “Mapping the Margins,” a geographic metaphor that lays the groundwork for her intersectional thesis and allows for complexities of identities. Similarly, Hill Collins discusses the interlocking systems of race, gender, and class oppression as a “matrix of domination.” She borrows from Nira Yuval-Davis’s concept of transversal politics, in which individuals are rooted in their own experiences but shift to exhibit empathy for a range of perspectives in order to advance coalitional strategies

for African American women's groups.⁸ Taken literally, a transversal line on a graph or a map is visual representation of an intersection: a line that cuts through two parallel lines.

Spatial and geographic metaphors are also extended in the work of theorists considering nation and ethnic origin as fundamental axes of identity. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* highlights the shifting and manifold identities of living on borders and in margins. As her poem "To Live in the Borderlands Means You" states, "to survive the Borderlands / you must live *sin fronteras* (without borders) / be a crossroads."⁹ Mohanty works with the metaphors of home as well as borders in her reconceptualization of transnational feminist practice.¹⁰ She draws on the imagery of borders, explaining that,

Feminism without borders . . . acknowledges the fault lines, conflicts, differences, fears, and containment that borders represent. It acknowledges that there is no one sense of a border, that the lines between and through nations, races, classes, sexualities, religions, and disabilities, are real—and that a feminism without borders must envision change and social justice work across these lines of demarcation and division.¹¹

These scholars advocate an intersectional approach that acknowledges difference and works to transcend borders that separate and divide. It enables, rather than restricts, research by feminist scholars wishing to attend to the particularities of communication in transnational contexts.

Similar language shapes critical approaches to rhetorical history. Many studies in rhetorical history could be charged with focusing on elite individuals; often famous, powerful, white, class-privileged, and heterosexual men. Historical studies of oratory and public address have attended narrowly to the rhetorical contributions of the "great white straight male,"¹² and, as such, reify the notion that there is a singular and fixed rhetorical tradition.¹³ Pivotal debates in feminist rhetorical historiography center on the issue of whether such work should similarly create a canon of great women orators, employing a type of academic "affirmative action" to rectify an unjust tradition.¹⁴ Since those early exchanges, feminist rhetoricians have argued for expanded thinking about what counts as legitimate evidence of rhetorical performance and the spaces where we can look for that evidence. Instead of solely attending to traditional rhetorical situations, we are now encouraged to pay attention to "gendered rhetorics of bodies, clothing, space, and time."¹⁵

Indeed, this growing body of literature indicates a fruitful interdisciplinary intersection. Roxanne Mountford suggests that feminist approaches to rhetorical history offer a promising "prospect of rapprochement" between like-minded scholars in English and communication because they have the shared experience of being "routinely marginalized," are committed to paying attention to differences across communities, and have a history of "reading one another's work."¹⁶ Another striking aspect of this subfield is the pattern of metaphors used in order to articulate the goals of feminist rhetorical history.

Spatial and geographic metaphors are used both to describe the role of the contemporary researcher *and* to describe the historical people we study. Feminist rhetorical historians are positioned as cartographers, called on to map the silences or "rema[p] rhetorical territor[ies]."¹⁷ Cheryl Glenn uses the language of replacing the "neatly folded history of rhetoric" with "new, often partially completed maps that reflect and coordinate our current institutional, intellectual, political, and personal values."¹⁸ Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford urge the refiguration of "canonical mappings," urging scholars to "stan[d] at the border" of rhetoric and feminism, and ultimately, to traverse those borderlands.¹⁹ Lindal Buchanan and Kathleen Ryan's recent compilation of crucial feminist rhetorical texts is an endeavor to "walk and talk feminist rhetorics" where there are "no established paths to follow."²⁰

At the same time that scholars inhabit the role of mapmakers, we describe the people we study as explorers of rhetorical space, border-crossers, and navigators of difference. Feminist rhetorical history creates a space to study the way that marginalized populations in history both literally and figuratively traversed boundaries meant to limit public discourse. Historian Mary P. Ryan uses the language of navigation in her work on the sometimes unorthodox ways that nineteenth-century women found avenues to enter public debates. She refers to these avenues as "circuitous routes"²¹; an influential metaphor that is taken up by rhetorical historian Susan Zaeske to describe women's antislavery activism through petitioning in the antebellum period.²² Lisa A. Flores describes how the experience of living on literal borders has prompted Chicana feminists to "cross rhetorical borders through the construction of a discursive space or home."²³ Indeed, some rhetorical historians have been able to extend such analysis in a variety of overlooked people and spaces, including but not limited to nineteenth-century women's rhetorical performances in the domestic space of the parlor,²⁴ literacy practices among African American women,²⁵ teachers of African American,

Native American, and Chicano/a students,²⁶ post-Mao women writers,²⁷ and “queer figurations” in rhetorical history.²⁸

Feminist rhetorical history, in borrowing and extending spatial and geographic metaphors, *intersects* with the aims of intersectionality studies. In drawing from the intersections of feminisms and rhetorics, it comes as no great surprise such texts would employ similar metaphors. As Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek note, such metaphors “consider the milieu present at the intersection of differing ‘realities’ while recognizing the variance within each of the ‘realities.’”²⁹ The language of space and location—and especially, seeing oneself as a critical cartographer of underexplored territories—is evocative. It grounds our historical explorations and provides a motivating purpose for our research endeavors. The ability to see ourselves as active participants in such metaphors forges a connection with the historical people and discourses we study; we would like to see ourselves as fellow travelers.

My aim is not to reject such points of identification by abandoning spatial and geographic metaphors. Intersectionality functions as an important instrument of critique. However, like feminism itself, intersectionality is sometimes misinterpreted as a punishment or an unavoidable land mine (“Sure, you considered X identity, but you didn’t consider Y identity”) rather than an affirmative discussion of available possibilities going forward. What we now need are well-developed ways of “doing” intersectional rhetorical history.³⁰ To gain a wider appreciation for the synergistic relationship between rhetorical histories and intersectionality, we must consider how common metaphors of space and place can be shifted to better analyze the dynamics of historical experience in motion.

METAPHORS IN MOTION

Since the first “generation” of groundbreaking work, usually theorized through the metaphor of interlocking oppressions, metaphors of identity and intersectionality have been questioned in light of numerous critiques. Such critiques trouble representations of identity as a “closed, bordered, and fixed entity” seeking instead to recast it as “open, flexible, and changeable.”³¹ As Anna Carastathis argues, the conceptual model of intersectionality always places individuals at a crossroads, where “the claim that the identity of the Black woman produced by the intersection of gender and race is viable only if we can think ‘Black’ without thinking ‘woman,’ and if we can think ‘woman’ without thinking ‘Black.’”³² Indeed, the idea of an “intersection” is a spatial/locational metaphor. Though cars can

move through, there is the danger (as with traditional approaches to identity) that an intersection will have stoplights, where individuals are forced to decide if they want to turn “right” into their gender, “left” into their ethnicity, or “straight” into their sexuality (pun intended). In later articulations of her theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw reminds readers that we are not dealing with one four-way stop. Instead, we should envision “*multiple intersections* that often cross each other, creating complex crossroads where two, three, or more of these routes may meet in overlapping dimensions.”³³ Intersectional affiliations are thoroughfares that individuals and groups move through; traffic is the “activity of discrimination”—those decisions and policies that slow movement and cause collisions.³⁴ The metaphor of the intersection works only insofar as we see it not as a static space where paths diverge or get jammed, but as a fluid and multidimensional space of travel that facilitates the mobility of disparate individuals and groups.

Conversations about the best way to integrate feminist perspectives into rhetorical history also question the value of spatial and geographic metaphors. Barbara E. L'Eplattenier suggests that there are two problems with the now-dominant metaphor of mapping and remapping the history of rhetoric to include women. First, the mapping metaphor may fail to adequately account for the messy process of doing rhetorical history—it “implies that we have a complete map—a complete picture to discuss, present, and interpret.”³⁵ We may be cartographers, but we need to acknowledge the gaps and silences that accompany any historical narrative. Furthermore, L'Eplattenier argues for metaphors that “give us a way to include and consider the external pressures which occur both systematically and intermittently and push/pull on the people we study.”³⁶ In other words, historical actors deploy rhetorical strategies based on a wide range of intersectional tensions and concerns—and our metaphors for conducting research ought to take these into account. Instead of just locating women on a map of the history of rhetoric, we must theorize how they moved through the intersections of class, race, sexuality, ability, and other axes of belonging.

It is possible and desirable to attend to these critiques and do intersectional rhetorical history without abandoning spatial and geographic metaphors. Mapping and remapping can be useful in conceptualizing feminist rhetorical work, but the missing link is motion—the ability to capture the ways in which the historical people we study were complex, multifaceted beings. No matter what historical period is being studied, an intersectional rhetorical history must acknowledge that the people we study may have navigated

“routes” into public culture, but they were also always negotiating their “roots.” Roots imply being tied to a particular space. If people are rooted, they have identity-based affiliations; they may feel the pull of their roots toward a home. Routes, of course, indicate motion and travel, the ability to move between spaces, affiliations, and homes.³⁷

Aimee Carrillo Rowe offers a compelling case for replacing a politics of location with a politics of relation. A politics of location, as demonstrated by Adrienne Rich’s essay, articulates an individual sense of self with “a notion of identity that begins with ‘I’—as does the inscription ‘I-identity,’ which announces itself through its fixity: ‘I am . . .’” By contrast, a politics of relation acknowledges the ways in which “the subject arrives again and again to her own becoming through a series of transitions—across time and space, communities and contexts—throughout the course of her life . . . constituted not first through the atomized self, but through its own longings to be with.”³⁸ The body in motion is the representative metaphor for a politics of relation. To imagine the body—like the subject—in motion underscores the ways in which the self is constituted through “a shifting set of relations that we move in and out of.”³⁹

What does this focus on movement—on roots and routes, bodies in motion—mean for intersectional rhetorical history? It answers Crenshaw’s call by asking scholars to consider the multidimensional movement of people and discourses rather than discovering or locating them on a map. First, it encourages feminist rhetorical historians to resist seeing the people we study as similarly frozen in time. Instead, we should recognize the ways in which historical research affords us the ability to study relational movements and shifts over time. How did an individual’s early life experiences as part of a particular community shape her later rhetorical performances? When and how did they establish affiliational ties, and were those ties strategic or fleeting? How are their longings to be with particular people and communities articulated “behind the scenes” and what does this tell us about the rhetorical choices made in public fora? Instead of making claims about fixed identity, we can focus on those moments where a sense of affiliation, love, or belonging influenced communicative practice within a particular historical moment.

Second, it bears on the very way that rhetorical historians select relevant materials to study. Carrillo Rowe argues that a politics of relation can function to “reverse, or better, to multiply the sites of power that hail us, urging us to consider the ways in which power becomes intelligible through a politics of love.”⁴⁰ As rhetorical historians, what power do we wield? Are we hailing the dead based on

a particular articulation of identity—Black, woman, lesbian, able-bodied, working class? If so, we fail to “interrogat[e] the *conditions* that enable[d], or would potentially disrupt, those communal sites which hail [their] affective investments.”⁴¹ Without the fluidity that an intersectional approach allows, rhetorical historians too easily use stable identity categories as terministic screens that direct our attention toward certain types of archival materials and away from others. In our quest to study the history of women’s rhetoric, for example, we may focus exclusively on correspondence between women, overlooking the ways they shifted in and out of in a complex web of other relationships, coalitions, and alliances that help us to understand their lives and rhetorical choices.

By focusing on historical bodies in motion, this approach has much to bring even to the most-studied figures in rhetorical history. Instead of asking how Barbara Jordan became the first and only African American woman to accomplish so many political feats,” the next section demonstrates the possibility of mobile metaphors by asking how Barbara Jordan’s multiple and shifting relational belongings and longings shaped her rhetorical choices and performances.

BARBARA JORDAN: POLITICS IN MOTION

The first African American woman to serve in the Texas state legislature and the first African American woman from the South to be elected to the U.S. Congress, Barbara Jordan is famous for her political savvy, oratorical fireworks, and legislation to help the underprivileged. As Molly Ivins states, “the words, the first and only, came before Barbara Jordan so often that they almost seemed like a permanent title.”⁴² Indeed, media commentary so often focused on the two primary ways that Jordan was an anomaly in politics—her sex, her skin color—that she had to craft a savvy rhetorical strategy for discussing those aspects of her identity in public interviews and speeches.

Past rhetorical scholarship has focused on Jordan’s 1976 keynote address to the Democratic National Convention (DNC). Most noted is this part of the speech’s opening:

But there is something different about tonight. There is something special about tonight. What is different? What is special? I, Barbara Jordan, am a keynote speaker. When—A lot of years passed since 1832, and during that time it would have been most unusual for any national political party to ask a Barbara Jordan to deliver a keynote address. But tonight,

here I am. And I feel—I feel that notwithstanding the past that my presence here is one additional bit of evidence that the American Dream need not forever be deferred.⁴³

In this brief articulation, Jordan accomplished the necessary task of commenting on her “first and only” status at the DNC. However, instead of providing a verbal taxonomy of the ways that she was different and special, the invocation of her name and the visual cues of her very presence on the stage were enough to fill in the argument. This has been theorized as a prototypical moment of *rhetorical enactment*, in which a person is an incarnation of her argument: “the very fact that she, a black woman, had achieved the stature to be asked to give the address was proof that blacks and women can reach the highest levels of achievement in America here and now.”⁴⁴

Some conventional rhetorical analyses of the speech attempt, in limited ways, to comment on Jordan’s identity. However, because such commentary is limited to the immediate rhetorical situation of the address, it falls short in providing a more complex understanding of intersectionality. Wayne Thompson, for example, argues that the speech was successful because Jordan balanced the dual purposes of affirming her “Blackness” and “womanliness” without speaking too much about them or invoking unfavorable stereotypes. Indeed, he even goes so far as to comment on her status as an unmarried woman: “Never having married, Barbara Jordan lacked some of Ella Grasso’s opportunities to capitalize on womanliness. The next best course was to keep the quality from being a liability.”⁴⁵ This interpretation unquestioningly links the assumption of compulsory heterosexuality to Jordan’s communication of a static gender identity. It suffers from a narrow view of what constitutes relevant evidence for rhetorical criticism. Published in 1979, Thompson’s analysis is historically time-bound in itself.

By contrast, an intersectional rhetorical history approach to studying Barbara Jordan benefits from a broader, longitudinal view. This approach provides greater insight into how Jordan’s lived experiences may have precipitated her communicative choices and complicates public commentary that focuses too narrowly on singular or dual articulations of her identity. Scholars need to broaden our ratio of text-to-context, looking to those behind-the-scenes machinations that made rhetorical performances possible.⁴⁶ Jordan acknowledged this necessity herself, stating, “People always want you to be born where you are. They want you to have leaped from the womb a public figure. It just doesn’t go that way. I am the composite of my experience and all the people who had something to do with it.”⁴⁷ In

what follows, I offer evidence of the complexity of Jordan's experience and relationships during two periods in her life, highlighting travel, motion, and (im)mobility as literal and conceptual themes.

The first way that intersectional rhetorical history can aid in understanding Jordan's case is through an exploration of her participation on the debate team at Texas Southern University (TSU) in the 1950s and how it helped to cultivate her rhetorical sensibilities. Beyond just honing her speaking, writing, and reasoning skills, Jordan's desire to travel to debate tournaments is an apt case study for the negotiation of difference in a historical setting. First, she had to gain access to TSU's traveling debate team, which did not allow women to attend intercollegiate debate competitions out of a sense of gendered decorum: they did not want to risk ruining the reputations of the women students who would have to "ride in cars with boys" in order to attend.⁴⁸ Jordan had been a stand-out competitor on the speech and debate team at Phillis Wheatley High School, and she viewed the traveling college team as an important activity to challenge her where her college classes did not. In order to convince TSU's debate coach that her presence on the team would not risk impropriety, she

gave up the scoop-neck dresses and costume jewelry of high school, cropped her waved hair short above her ears, affected bulky, boxy jackets and flat shoes. Gaining twenty pounds, her buxom figure took on the squared lines of androgyny. She became a no-nonsense presence, someone it was all right to take across the country in a car full of males and not worry about chaperonage.⁴⁹

In doing so, Jordan altered her body so that she could ensure its mobility through travel to debate tournaments. If we consider her desire to be on the intercollegiate debate team as an articulation of a desire to belong, we see that Jordan was able to play with, queer, and transgress modes of gendered expression in order to enable affiliation with a particular community. The decision to forgo more conventional signs of heterosexual femininity was one that she maintained throughout her career in state and national politics, and her boxy paint suits were often commented on in descriptions of her physical appearance.

Jordan gained access to the intercollegiate debate competition, and her experience within "the debate community" was largely shaped by her race, class, and geographic ties. Once she overcame this instance of sex-based discrimination by convincing her debate

coach to allow her to travel, Jordan was able to literally travel outside of her neighborhood in Houston, seeing firsthand the realities of the racially segregated world. As one of few historically Black colleges participating in interracial debates at the time, TSU debaters experienced both the exhilaration of travel and the sting of racist discrimination as they traveled through the South to other parts of the country. Speech and debate were literal and figurative vehicles that allowed them to travel across communities. The ability to travel to competitions created a space of encounter where those axes of difference were constantly negotiated. In 1956, TSU made history by participating in the first integrated speech and debate tournament in the South at Baylor College. Glenn Capp, the director of debate at Baylor, was a proponent of the race and sex-based integration of debate, but many in the Waco, Texas, community disagreed with the decision to admit TSU to the tournament.⁵⁰ The team had to stay outside of town because there was no place that would lodge them. This discrimination, however, seemingly did not carry over to the competition at Baylor: Jordan won the junior division's first place prize in oratory and third place in extemporaneous speaking. Pitted against white students in speaking and debate competitions and emerging victorious time and again, Jordan began to see herself as a star in both worlds. She thought, "why, you white girls are no competition at all. If this is the best you have to offer, I haven't missed anything."⁵¹ Because of her participation on the debate team, she was able to cultivate longings for a future beyond the world she knew in Houston, a desire that led her to pursue law school at Boston University after she graduated from TSU.

The second representative anecdote comes from Jordan's later political career. As one of few African American women in national politics, her policy positions and affiliations were closely monitored, especially with regard to civil rights, women's rights, and legislation benefiting her Texas constituency. She rooted her advocacy for social change in her affiliations: as a person born and raised in Texas, as a legal scholar who believed in equality through legal change for racial minorities, and as a woman who believed in women's ability to make choices for themselves.⁵² Intersectional rhetorical analysis and access to Jordan's own accounts in her autobiography, *Barbara Jordan: A Self Portrait*, provide crucial insights on how another aspect of her experience came to bear on her shifting and mobile affiliations.⁵³ Jordan developed multiple sclerosis in 1973, but, realizing that she was already marked with the visual cues of a large, dark-skinned, female body, she kept her medical condition under wraps until later in her life when she required a wheelchair. One

cannot fully understand Jordan's role as a political figure without acknowledging the way that Jordan's disability shaped her rhetorical choices—and the ensuing public commentary.

In Washington, Jordan chose a seat in the center aisle of the House floor rather than with the liberals or the congressional Black Caucus, stating that she wanted to be in the line of vision of the presiding officer.⁵⁴ She rarely left her seat to talk to others, instead waiting for her colleagues to approach her. As journalist Walter Shapiro put it in his cover story for *Texas Monthly*,

Much of her day is spent just sitting on the floor of the House, listening and waiting for people to come to her. (She rarely leaves her seat to talk to someone else.) Originally this may have been a mechanism for quick digestion of the rules of the House, but now it is a more convenient way for her to hold court. There may also be physical reasons for her staying close to the floor during a legislative day: she simply isn't nimble enough to be sure of getting from her office to the chamber in the fifteen minutes allotted for a roll call vote. Her administrative assistant confirms that she has "a damaged cartilage behind the knee which causes her to limp when she doesn't have time to get to therapy." Her sheer bulk also limits her mobility, although she has lost at least 50 pounds since the beginning of the year on a strict diet.⁵⁵

Although this account acknowledges her physical limitations, it links them to Jordan's large bodily size. Like other commentators, Shapiro largely interprets her immobility as a queenly power move of political royalty, a way to "hold court," a point framed and underlined by the *Texas Monthly's* cover image that month: a drawing of Jordan with a crown on her head, buttressed with the words, "Is Barbara Jordan for Real?" Jordan's biography reveals that the actual reason for her stationary position in the House was linked to her struggle with multiple sclerosis: "she had begun to feel an occasional numbness in her feet and a weakness in her legs that she thought might be the beginning of arthritis. . . . Jordan always wanted to be physically comfortable."⁵⁶ The intersectional dynamics of this choice are rich: Jordan's choice not to physically share space with possible coalitional allies among liberals and in the Black Caucus was mediated by an axis of her personal experience that was not immediately and visually legible. Power and privilege are manifested in multiple ways in this example. Jordan wished not to lose power by speaking publicly about her physical ailment, and so she played

with the ambiguity that came along with her immobile body; public commentators read her stationary position on the House floor as one imbued with power.⁵⁷ This account resists an easy telling, in which Jordan was deliberately attempting to shirk her coalitional bonds. It demonstrates how consideration for multiple axes of identity can manifest in public spaces. Ironically, then, Jordan's physical immobility provides one other example of her movement across communities. Jordan never existed as, and never could be, simply an African American, a woman, a liberal.

There are, of course, many other examples emanating from Jordan's personal experience that are relevant to her rhetorical contributions and deserve further complication beyond static articulations of identity. So far, an intersectional analysis prompts us to study the ways that Jordan transgressed gender, race, and ability/disability systems. Like many political figures, Jordan spoke publicly about certain aspects of her life and valued her privacy on others. In a public communication strategy that paralleled her treatment of her multiple sclerosis diagnosis, Jordan rarely discussed her romantic relationships in political contexts. Though her long-term relationship with educational psychologist Nancy Earl is narrated in the language of love, companionship, and home building in her autobiography,⁵⁸ mainstream media outlets only began to raise questions about Jordan's sexuality when covering an incident that demonstrates the inextricable link between her personal experience and everyday (be)longings. It was not until 1988, after Jordan retired from national politics, that Earl was mentioned in the media. Jordan nearly drowned as she was doing physical therapy exercises in a pool and Earl jumped in to save her. Media accounts described Jordan and Earl as "housemates" at that time.⁵⁹ After her death in 1996, the *Advocate* published a cover story titled, "Barbara Jordan: The Other Life—Lesbianism Was a Secret the Former Congresswoman Chose to Take to Her Grave." This public outing explained that "Jordan's attitude about discussion of her sexual orientation paralleled her attitude about talking about her health. . . . [Jordan's friend said] 'She was not defined by her physical conditions, her sexual orientation, or the color of her skin. If you were to define her by any of those areas, Barbara Jordan would roar.'"⁶⁰ The *Advocate's* next issue published letters to the editor showcasing readers' conflicted views on the article: some were outraged about the violation of Jordan's civil liberties and personal privacy, while others lamented that she did not use her public position to more vociferously advocate for LGBTQ rights. Most illuminating for our purposes is a letter from Josh LaPorte, one of Jordan's former students at the University of

Texas, who wrote about doing a presentation on the ethics of outing in Jordan's political ethics course:

Professor Jordan agreed with my premise that outing is a clash of values between freedom of speech and the right to privacy. She also agreed with my conclusion: that the right to privacy supersedes freedom of speech except when it is in the public interest to know. Gay and closeted public officials who actively pursue an antigay agenda need to be outed because they are misrepresenting themselves to voters and to the public. Jordan never pursued that kind of agenda, so her outing is only fodder for the public appetite. . . . What your publication did was un-ethical.⁶¹

This brief exploration of Barbara Jordan's public life has shown that she is far from a one- or two-dimensional figure: her experience can be read as a queer engagement with public life. Her journeys—into pant suits, into politics, and into the public sphere—harnessed the power of the supposedly incongruous to form the rhetorical power that she yielded. Jordan played with expectations at every turn, gaining access to and power within exclusionary institutions. Without an intersectional approach to rhetorical history, these insights have been obscured, the richness of her behind-the-scenes personal experience left to gather historical dust. Rather than locating Jordan's "true identity," we ought to view Jordan as an intersectional rhetorical figure who, as she notes, was the composite of multiple experiences, affiliations, and relationships. As such, we gain fuller understandings of the complicated choices (and the influences on those choices) that make up rhetorical history.

MOVING FORWARD: TOWARD AN INTERSECTIONAL RHETORICAL HISTORY

How do multiple, overlapping oppressions affect rhetorical performances? This chapter has argued for the synergistic relationship between rhetorical history and intersectional research, first highlighting common spatial and geographic metaphors and then suggesting that we shift our focus to account for the unique dynamics of mobility and immobility that historical figures navigate. Rhetorical historians are not simply cartographers who locate women frozen in time on an already-printed map of rhetoric. We are travel companions who study the movement of people and discourses across rhetorical space and time. We search for those roads untaken, seeking

to better understand the queer aspects of rhetorical-historical figures and of ourselves as researchers intimately tied to the people and subjects we study. This conceptualization is full of possibilities: by refusing to narrow the focus of research to a single axis of identity, we can open ourselves up to more serendipitous findings⁶²; by focusing on movement across and between communities, we can better account for the complexity of intersectional experience and integrate critical insight about the value of relational politics; by understanding aspects of mobility and immobility, we can better explain the choices individuals make or are forced to make.

Communication scholarship in general, and rhetorical history in particular, provides new spaces and materials from which to extend and study intersectionality. As my analysis of Barbara Jordan demonstrates, rhetorical-historical research brings with it the benefit of longitudinal analysis and the ability to gain broader perspective through acknowledgment of articulations of belonging to particular communities. This means that in addition to telling the stories of those everyday people whose voices were lost in the history of rhetoric, we can also revisit the rhetoric of prominent public figures with an intersectional lens. Rhetorical history and feminist intersectional work have much to contribute to each other: a blending of perspectives and goals that travel together to better understand the people and discourses we study.

NOTES

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1. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 158.

2. Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1989), 189.

3. For example, Anna Carastathis critiques intersectional models in her "The Invisibility of Privilege: A Critique of Intersectional Models of Identity," *Les Ateliers de L'Ethique* 3, no. 2 (2008): 23–38, while Barbara E. L'Eplattenier draws attention to the problem of static geographic metaphors in feminist rhetorical history in "Questioning Our Methodological Metaphors," in *Calling Cards: Theory and Practice in the Study of Race, Gender, and Culture*, ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Ann Marie Mann Simpkins (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 133–146.

4. Kate Ronald, "Feminist Approaches to the History of Rhetoric," in *The Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 140.

5. This is not to say that all rhetorical histories overlook intersectional dynamics. Indeed, as this chapter highlights, rhetorical historians have led the charge in studying the situated communicative practices of a variety of marginalized groups that might otherwise be obscured by the dominant narrative of a rhetorical tradition.

6. Barbara Biesecker and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's exchange in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* about the value of studying the individual speaking subject as opposed to a radical contextualizing of collective rhetorical practices remains a significant methodological rift in feminist rhetorical history. See Biesecker, "Coming to Terms"; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her Either," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 26 (1993): 153–159; Barbara Biesecker, "Negotiating with Our Tradition: Reflecting Again (Without Apologies) on the Feminization of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 26 (1993): 236–241. Kate Ronald identifies the exchange as one of two major methodological issues in the development of feminist rhetorics, while Lindal Buchanan and Kathleen J. Ryan feature Biesecker's original article and Campbell's reply as a landmark controversy in their volume, *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics* (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2010). Hui Wu has extended this troubling of singular identity focus, urging methods that better address the experiences of Black and Third World rhetorical women in her "Historical Studies of Rhetorical Women Here and There: Methodological Challenges to Dominant Interpretative Frameworks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32 (2002): 81–97.

7. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *Identities: Race, Class, Gender and Nationality*, ed. Linda Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 175.

8. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 245. Nira Yuval-Davis develops the concept of transversal politics in *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997).

9. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007), 217.

10. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), chap. 3, "What's Home Got to Do With It?"

11. Mohanty, *Feminism*, 2.

12. Charles E. Morris III, "Introduction: Portrait of a Queer Rhetorical/Historical Critic," in *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, ed. Charles E. Morris III (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 3.

13. Kathleen J. Turner's edited volume *Doing Rhetorical History* articulated the need for a more critical approach, casting rhetorical history as a

process of social construction. See her "Rhetorical History as Social Construction: The Challenge and the Promise," in *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 1–18.

14. See the Biesecker-Campbell exchange discussed in note 6.

15. Jordynn Jack, "Acts of Institution: Embodying Feminist Rhetorical Methodologies in Space and Time," *Rhetoric Review* 28 (2009): 286.

16. Roxanne Mountford, "A Century After the Divorce: Challenges to a Rapprochement Between Speech Communication and English," in *The Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, 419.

17. A phrase borrowed from Cheryl Glenn's "Remapping Rhetorical Territory," *Rhetoric Review* 13 (1995): 287–303 and her book, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1997), especially chap. 1.

18. Glenn, "Remapping Rhetorical Territory," 287.

19. Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford, "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism," *Rhetorica* 12 (1995): 401–402.

20. Buchanan and Ryan, *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics*, xiv.

21. Mary P. Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Feminism, the Public and Private*, ed. Joan B. Landes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 218.

22. Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 5.

23. Lisa A. Flores, "Creating Discursive Space Through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft a Homeland," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 143.

24. Nan Johnson, *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866–1910* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002).

25. Jacqueline Jones Royster, *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Amongst African American Women* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

26. Jessica Enoch, *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865–1911* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).

27. Hui Wu, "The Alternative Feminist Discourse of Post-Mao Chinese Writers: A Perspective from the Rhetorical Situation," in *Alternative Rhetorics: Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Laura Gray-Rosendale and Sibylle Gruber (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 219–234.

28. Morris, *Queering Public Address*.

29. Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 291–309.

30. The title of this chapter plays on Carrie Crenshaw's work in laying out an intersectional approach to rhetorical criticism. See her "Women in the Gulf War: Toward an Intersectional Feminist Rhetorical Criticism," *Howard Journal of Communications* 8, no. 3 (1997): 219–235.

31. María Martínez Gonzáles, "Feminist Praxis Challenges the Identity Question: Toward New Collective Identity Metaphors," *Hypatia* 23, no. 3 (2008): 23.

32. Carastathis, "The Invisibility of Privilege," 27.

33. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Traffic at the Crossroads: Multiple Oppressions," in *Sisterhood Is Forever: The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Washington Square Press, 2003), 47, emphasis in original.

34. Crenshaw, "Traffic at the Crossroads," 47.

35. L'Eplattenier, "Questioning," 138.

36. L'Eplattenier, "Questioning," 141.

37. In her discussion of locational feminism as "narratives of encounter," Susan Stanford Friedman stresses the interplay between routes and roots. See her *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 151–178.

38. Aimee Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 27. See Adrienne Rich's "Notes toward a Politics of Location," in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979–1985* (London: Little, Brown, 1984), 210–231.

39. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 27, 25.

40. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 26.

41. Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines*, 28.

42. Molly Ivins, "The First and Only," interviewed by Charlayne Hunter-Gault, *Newshour* with Jim Lehrer transcript, PBS, January 17, 1996, accessed March 1, 2010 http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/remember/jordan_1-17.html.

43. Barbara C. Jordan, "1976 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address," *American Rhetoric*, 2010, accessed September 1, 2010 <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barbarajordan1976dnc.html>.

44. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Rhetorical Act* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982), 273.

45. Wayne N. Thompson, "Barbara Jordan's Keynote Address: Fulfilling Dual and Conflicting Purposes," *Central States Speech Journal* 30 (1979): 276.

46. E. Michele Ramsey elaborates on this argument in her article, "Addressing Issues of Context in Historical Women's Public Address," *Women's Studies in Communication* 27 (2004): 352–376.

47. Barbara Jordan and Shelby Hearon, *Barbara Jordan: A Self Portrait* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 2.

48. Ann Crawford Fears, *Barbara Jordan: Breaking the Barriers* (Houston: Halycon Press, 2003), 20.

49. Jordan and Hearon, *Barbara Jordan*, 78.

50. Capp received irate letters and reports that there were editorials published against the integration of the tournament. See his *Excellence in Forensics: A Tradition at Baylor University* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 1986), 49.

51. Mary Beth Rogers, *Barbara Jordan: American Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998), 55.

52. Jordan explains in her autobiography that though she had not experienced the legal restrictions of "chattel status" that married women faced, and "not having borne infants, she did not interpolate how it might feel to have no control over whether or not your body reproduced" she "intellectually endorsed" women's rights. See Jordan and Hearon, *Barbara Jordan*, 213–214.

53. The case for studying the rhetorical dynamics of autobiographies has been made by Martha Watson in *Lives of Their Own: Rhetorical Dimensions in Autobiographies of Women Activists* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), especially chap. 1.

54. Jordan and Hearon, *Barbara Jordan*, 180–181.

55. Walter Shapiro, "What Does This Woman Want: Is Barbara Jordan Really Worth All the Fuss?" *Texas Monthly* (October 1976): 204.

56. Rogers, *Barbara Jordan*, 184.

57. Disability has been slowly integrated into feminist rhetorical and rhetorical-historical work. See Jay Dolmage and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, "Refiguring Rhetoric: Linking Feminist Rhetoric and Disability Studies," in *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*, ed. Eileen E. Schell and K. J. Rawson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 23–38; Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe explore the carefully orchestrated treatment of FDR's disability and its relationship to the body politic in their text, *FDR's Body Politics: The Rhetoric of Disability* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2003).

58. See Jordan and Hearon, *Barbara Jordan*, 237–240. As other scholars have noted, the goal of rhetorical-historical scholarship is not to prove a figure's "true sexuality" but rather to see how that aspect of their identity is negotiated and remembered in public culture. See especially Dana Cloud and Lisbeth Lispari's contributions to *Queering Public Address*.

59. J. Jennings Moss, "Barbara Jordan: The Other Life: Lesbianism Was a Secret the Former Congresswoman Chose to Take to Her Grave," *Advocate*, March 5, 1996, 44–45.

60. Moss, "Barbara Jordan," 42.

61. Josh LaPorte, "Je m'appelle Barbara." *Advocate*, April 16, 1996, 8.

62. For tales of serendipity and dead ends in historical research, see Gesa E. Kirsh and Liz Rohan's *Beyond the Archives: Research as Lived Process* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).