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NOSTALGIA'S *ETHOS* IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	vi
CHAPTER 1: NOSTALGIA: AN ARGUMENT OF <i>ETHOS</i>	1
CHAPTER 2: BETO O’ROURKE AND NOSTALGIC AUTHENTICITY	27
INTERCHAPTER 1: NOSTALGIC METHODS: FANTASY-THEME CRITICISM ...	65
CHAPTER 3: ANN RICHARDS AND NOSTALGIC BODIES	77
INTERCHAPTER 2: NOSTALGIC METHODS: ARCHIVAL RESEARCH	111
CHAPTER 4: JULIÁN CASTRO AND NOSTALGIC AUTHORITY	123
INTERCHAPTER 3: NOSTALGIC METHODS: ANALYZING SPACE	149
CHAPTER 5: WHOSE NOSTALGIA ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?	158
WORKS CITED	169

ABSTRACT

This project argues that nostalgia operates rhetorically as an argument of *ethos* and that its function within public arguments provides the field of rhetoric an opportunity to reimagine how *ethos* is produced within political discourse. To analyze the relationship between nostalgia, argumentation, *ethos*, and home, this project analyzes my own home—Texas. I focus on three Texan Democrats—Beto O’Rourke, Ann Richards, and Julián Castro—and detail what each figure reveals about nostalgia’s relationship to *ethos*. In my chapter on Beto O’Rourke, I argue that O’Rourke becomes authentic for Texans by embracing a nostalgic vision of the “real Texan” in his Senate campaign. The analysis examines how authenticity is a concept deeply rooted in nostalgia and can function as *ethos* when such a nostalgic authenticity proves a rhetor to be an occupant of a specific place—the home—that highlights a group’s values. My case study of Governor Ann Richards pairs feminist analysis and archival methods to argue that her *ethos* in Texas was produced via a nostalgic (re)construction of her body as a Texan “good ol’ boy” based on her speaking style and infamous Southern wit. In perhaps my most methodologically complex chapter, I employ spatial criticism and ethnographic research to examine Julián Castro’s work in San Antonio, reading San Antonio’s downtown as a text that produces its *ethos* through a nostalgic retelling of its Latinx history and traditions—a retelling that creates spaces for stories that expand its borders and look to an ideal future by reimagining an ideal past.

If nostalgia as *ethos* transforms the field’s understanding of political discourse, it should also transform our methodological approaches to such discourse. Thus, following each case study I offer an interchapter that further explicates the research methods used in the previous chapter. In doing so, I comment on how nostalgia gives back to and transforms methods of analysis for public discourse. By blending and creating rhetorical theory, analysis, and methods throughout my dissertation, I construct what I call a *critical nostalgia*. Critical nostalgia suggests that understanding nostalgia as *ethos* can work to highlight dominant and colonial ideologies that undergird visions of home in many political arguments. Critical nostalgia demonstrates how using nostalgia as a critical rhetorical tool can participate in unsettling privileges and (re)building homes that stand in defiance of colonial discourse. Moving beyond Texas politics to implications for the field of rhetoric, I argue that utilizing a critical nostalgia affords us—as scholars and citizens—the opportunity to better respond to, craft, and embody arguments that honor the home we aspire to have.

Chapter 1

Nostalgia: An Argument of *Ethos*

I Want to Go Home

Texas has frozen over. As I write this opening chapter of my dissertation, having quarantined in Texas for 10 months, my gloved fingers can barely type the words and clouds of my breath make it hard to see the laptop screen. It's February 22, 2021, and severe winter weather has attacked the state, exposing the major flaws in our electrical grid and culminating in an unprecedented power crisis for the massive state. I miss my home—a Texas that is sunny and warm and only has power issues when it's too hot in July. This feeling of missing home isn't a new one; I've been missing Texas a lot lately. The past few years have been marked by contentious and unethical politics, gun violence, voter suppression, children separated from their families on our border, the global coronavirus pandemic, and now direct contact with the climate crisis that has left Texas frozen and without power.

I want to go home, even though I'm physically here.

Texans are well known for possessing a kind of obnoxious pride for their home state—a pride I never understood until I moved away to come to the University of Oklahoma for my doctorate back in 2015. Removed from Texas, I found myself homesick and making constant comparisons to the way we did things back home. And back home, things were getting interesting. During my first year at OU, Beto O'Rourke began his Senate campaign in Texas. While Cruz ultimately won the election with 50.9 percent of the vote, what was unusual in this Senate race was how close Beto's campaign came to

defeating the incumbent in a traditionally red state, trailing Cruz by only 2.6 percentage points. I watched closely as a Texas Democrat was able to gain an impressive level of support from Texans who, given the state's recent, conservative history, would not have been inclined to consider a Democratic candidate. Only Beto's mediocre entrance into the presidential campaign allowed me to take a step back and think about why I was compelled by Beto when, removed from a Texan context, he was not a terribly impressive candidate. Something about Texas—both the physical location and the place he conjured in his campaign—was key to his success as a political figure.

As I felt nostalgia for Texas and noted nostalgia in political discourse across the country (most notably in Trump's terrifying "Make America Great Again"), I wondered what the connection might be between nostalgia and *ethos* as they function in public discourse. The origin of "nostalgia" comes from the Greek words "*nostos*"—to return home—and "*algia*"—pain. As an argument from and about home, nostalgia presents an opportunity to consider how such arguments help to produce *ethos*, motivating public groups to certain actions. Moreover, nostalgia can offer a unique entrance point for learning more about how *ethos* really works, particularly as *ethos* is often relegated to mere statements of credibility rather than fully explored as perhaps *the* crux of persuasion. My home state of Texas—a state that is undergoing ideological shifts to embrace more progressive politics while still dedicated to a vision of a lost Texas—provides a unique location in which to ground my dissertation. In it, I argue that nostalgia can operate as an argument of place-based *ethos* and has the capacity to motivate ideological transitions in

the public sphere—such as the move from red to blue—and provide the field of rhetoric an opportunity to reimagine how *ethos* is produced within political discourse.

While significant work has been done in Rhetoric and Writing Studies to study and theorize nostalgic discourse in a way largely separate from political argumentation (Kurlinkus; Dickinson; Phillips), my work examines nostalgia as a form of argument—rather than as a purely affective force, as is colloquially associated with nostalgia—that reveals how effective persuasion occurs in political contexts.¹ I argue for a return to and expansion of pre-Aristotelian conceptions of *ethos* as a location—rather than a mere appeal to authority divorced from people or place—to consider the ways that persuasion actually occurs in the public sphere. Analyzing nostalgia as a desire to return to a lost home affords rhetoricians the space to consider how the home might produce an *ethos* for a rhetor that enables their message to prompt action for an audience. My research engages nostalgia and *ethos* within political discourse as it increasingly becomes necessary to question how compelling arguments are crafted in the public sphere and to identify locations—perhaps figurative and literal—of intervention in troubling, dangerous discourse. By providing

¹ A notable exception is Stephen Depoe's work in "Requiem for Liberalism: The Therapeutic and Deliberative Functions of Nostalgic Appeals in Edward Kennedy's Address to the 1980 Democratic National Convention." In the article, Depoe offers a description of nostalgia within political persuasion, arguing that nostalgic appeals have a therapeutic function or deliberative function. The former he describes as positive, capable of "healing divisions within an audience" (187). In contrast, he argues that the deliberative function is negative because it closes "off realistic opportunities for audiences in the present by advocating a literal return to the past in concrete or legislative terms" (187-188). Similarly, Shawn Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles analysis of political nostalgia in Bill Clinton's commemoration of the March on Washington maintains these two distinct functions. While Depoe, and Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, suggest that these two functions are often at odds in political persuasion, my project instead argues that there is more complexity in the function of nostalgia, allowing for the "therapeutic" and "deliberative" to work in tandem for a progressive future. Outside of the field of rhetoric, Alastair Bonnett (*Left in the Past* and *The Geography of Nostalgia*) offers formative work on the progressive capacities of nostalgia in politics—a view of nostalgia much more closely aligned with this project.

insight into group's values, motivations, and lost homes, nostalgia offers an ideal entry point into an examination of the role of *ethos* in contemporary public discourse.

This dissertation project examines the political discourse of Texas at a time when Texas is moving closer and closer to becoming a Democratic state once again. I focus on three Texan Democrats—Beto O'Rourke, Ann Richards, and Julián Castro—and detail what each figure reveals about nostalgia's relationship to *ethos*. Such a study has implications for how Texans might reimagine their identity in the face of change, looking to past stories and places while also embracing more progressive political stances.² Although my case studies are rooted in Texan political discourse, this research has national implications as the country is currently at a moment of reimagination as a new president attempts to construct an *ethos* that can reunite a nation with deep rifts, many of which are rooted in conflicting nostalgias. As I argue, understanding the ways in which nostalgia functions to provide *ethos* for both regressive and progressive political arguments affords us—as scholars and citizens—the opportunity to better respond to and craft arguments that honor the home we aspire to have.

As I write this, I recognize home as a privilege. Home is also contentious.

Throughout the entire history of this nation, “home” has been a colonial enterprise, built on genocide, “racial purity,” and patriarchal structures. The same is true of Texas history. One of its most famous origin stories—the Battle of the Alamo—is a story steeped

² Memory's role in social cohesion and reimaginings of identity is a rich subject. Theorizing shared pasts, Yael Zerubavel discusses memory's power to focus a group's distinct identity and highlight its historical development (7). Svetlana Boym calls this interpretation of the past an “off-modern nostalgia”—a kind of memory that “veers off the beaten track of dominant constructions of history, proceeding laterally, not literally, to discover missed opportunities and roads not taken” (*The Off-Modern* 5).

in nostalgia, having been rewritten and retold countless times for the sake of a tough, brave, and sacrificial Texas home. The heroes of that colloquial story are Davy Crockett and Sam Houston; the villains are Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and the Mexican army. What this narrative erases, however, are the stories of “Tejanos—Texans of Mexican origin, who fought alongside the Anglo rebels . . . and the origin of the conflict over Mexico’s push to abolish slavery” (Burrough and Tomlinson xix). Often touted as the inspiring tale of the struggle for independence, the Alamo is a place infused with symbolic value for the state, collapsing values of liberty and grit—while erasing the fact that such a telling of the event originated in the late 1800s as a way of supporting Jim Crow legislation—into a single location and narrative. That the place’s relationship with slavery and the Jim Crow South is conveniently concealed only serves to highlight the ideological tensions present in the physical and performed home. These tensions have not gone away in Texas’ nearly 200 years of history. As new voter suppression legislation looms, targeting communities with high BIPOC populations, the colonial conceptions of the Texas home at play in the state cannot and should not be ignored. Home is political.

Just as home is contentious, so is the study of public rhetoric, political discourse, and democratic citizenship. Decolonial scholars have long troubled the terms so central to my project, critiquing democracy and contesting the concept of home (Zepeda 148). In fact, scholars Bidy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty call for the rejection of home, arguing that BIPOC scholars should embrace “not being home,” acknowledging “that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences” (206). In contrast, Badia Ahad-

Legardy's *Afro-Nostalgia* argues the power of the Black nostalgic home, maintaining that the creativity involved in nostalgia works as an important counter to histories that have denied Black communities ideal pasts and longings; for Ahad-Legardy, nostalgia can work "to break blackness out of a narrowly constructed frame of traumatic history" (5). These are the tensions in my project that this research does not shy away from or even hope to solve. Each chapter of this project builds on the last, complicating the home place that each politicians' discourse and interaction with place helps to produce. By the conclusion of this dissertation, I create and employ what I call a "critical nostalgia," suggesting that analysis of the competing ideological commitments to certain constructions of home can draw attention to tensions and erasures in public argumentation that participate in producing persuasive arguments. Through the exploration of my home via a critical nostalgia, I aim to bring to the forefront and explore those tensions. As it exposes the silences within hegemonic ideologies, critical nostalgia provides ways of productively and radically imagining alternative pasts and futures—a capacity of nostalgia as *ethos* that I grapple with in a case study of Julián Castro in particular. I argue in this dissertation that understanding *ethos* as location via a critical nostalgia can work to unsettle privileges, to highlight dominant and often colonial ideologies that can undergird visions of home in a great deal of political argumentation, and to demonstrate how nostalgia can participate in (re)building homes that stand in defiance of such discourse.

Defining Nostalgia: A Radical Enthymeme

To understand how nostalgia can be used as a critical tool to help us understand the role of *ethos* in public arguments, we need a working definition of what nostalgia actually

is. The definition of nostalgia as a longing to return to a home that has been lost is useful but requires complication and refinement in order for us to fully comprehend the critical affordances of nostalgia. Notoriously challenging to succinctly define, nostalgia is comprised of competing forces that open it up to constant redefinition from conflicting disciplinary lenses (Kurlinkus 5-6). Nostalgia is felt by individuals, yet is spawned by social dissatisfaction (Davis); it is temporal in its connection to the past while also spatial in its relationship to a lost home (Tannock 459); it reproduces images of the past as it idealizes those very images (Boym, "Nostalgia" 9-10). Nostalgia is emotional (*pathos*), based in certain logics and lines of reasoning (*logos*), and, as I argue in this dissertation, inherently connected to places and the values that construct those locations (*ethos*). With these tensions and contradictions in nostalgia, it can be easy to lose the distinction between what nostalgia *does* and what nostalgia *is*, both of which are important to understand.

At its essence, nostalgia is a well-crafted enthymeme—an argument about an ideal home that existed in the past and can be recreated in the future. Enthymemes are typically thought of as deductive arguments that do not state a key premise. Many of the arguments that we hear on a daily basis function like enthymemes. For example, when students say, "I got an F on my paper because my teacher hates me," the unstated premise in their argument is that teachers do not fail students that they like. There has been a great deal of work complicating this understanding of the enthymeme and establishing the enthymeme as more than an argument with a buried premise (Fredal; Walker); however, I maintain that there is utility in examining the enthymeme in its simplest form. Asking what is left unstated by nostalgic arguments is important in making nostalgia a tool for interrogating

ideological assumptions that motivate but remain hidden within discourse. For example, when a person experiences nostalgia, they feel a longing for home. This seems simple. But nostalgia functions so effectively as an argument by burying its major premise—the values and beliefs that make a home feel like home. Will Kurlinkus, offering his own broad definition of nostalgia, connects nostalgia and ideological values by linking nostalgia with a group’s pride, maintaining that pride constitutes “a positive sense of past self/community that we build our identities upon today” (6). Connecting the feeling of pride for the past with hope for the future, Kurlinkus situates nostalgia as a force that does not stay stagnant but actively goes to work. I build on his analysis by maintaining that this active force of nostalgia is inherently connected to its status as argument. The significance of understanding nostalgia as an argument is made clearer when we understand nostalgia not just as a thing of the past but as highly connected to the future. Nostalgia—despite its longing for a past, lost home—is inextricably connected to the future home by producing “a longing for a possible future” (Wilson 489). It is in this way that nostalgia separates itself from such emotions or experiences as melancholy and positive memory. As Kurlinkus notes, particularly speaking about nostalgia’s connection to melancholia, “It’s this omnitemporal aspect of nostalgia that differentiates it from a sister emotion, melancholia, which doesn’t build space for new futures but mires itself in the open wound of the past” (7). Because of nostalgia’s connection to the future, what may appear as an indulgent dwelling on the past actually conceals an argument about other moments in time. Nostalgia joins emotions (such as melancholy) and forms of memory (collective and

cultural), uniting these experiences in its purpose of constructing a home for the future based in the ideals of the past.

The past and future home's significance in nostalgia is of import to the analysis of public argumentation because it prompts us to consider the role of home in ideological arguments. As an argument about the ideal home, nostalgia suggests the values that undergird such a nostalgic vision, particularly because it must reshape the past in order for such a home to actually exist. The past and future home's significance in nostalgia is that it asks us to (re)consider the role of the home in all argumentation, but particularly political argumentation. Nostalgia meaningfully navigates the ideological tensions present in public arguments because it is connected to a home imbued with the values and beliefs of a group's ideology. In "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," Svetlana Boym notes, "The promise to rebuild the ideal home lies at the core of many powerful ideologies today, tempting us to relinquish critical thinking for emotional bonding. The danger of nostalgia is that it tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one" (9-10). In considering a nostalgic vision of home in relationship to power and ideology, it is important to understand that while an *individual* can experience nostalgia, nostalgia is a *social* phenomenon. Scholars of nostalgia consistently emphasize its social nature, noting how nostalgia reestablishes social cohesion (Boym 14), drains some of the negative affect generated by identity-jarring change in the public sphere (Davis 450), and provides "sites, materials, and inspiration for meaningful social change" (Tannock 459). The concept of collective memory further explicates this social aspect of remembering. Maurice Halbwachs troubled the notion of

individual memory, arguing that an individual can only remember through the groups of which they are a part. He writes:

[I]ndividual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory, since each impression and each fact, even if it apparently concerns a particular person exclusively, leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that . . . it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu. One cannot, in fact, think about the events of one's past without discoursing upon them. (Halbwachs 53)

The cultures we are a part of and the discourses that those cultures use—and which likely *constitute* those cultures—provide the framework from which individuals are capable of crafting memories, either from their own past or the group's past. Events from the past are “recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them, upon condition, to be sure, that I turn toward them and adopt, at least for the moment, their way of thinking” (Halbwachs 38). Thus, no one remembers alone. For nostalgia, the implication is that individuals envision an idyllic past in accordance with the cultures of which they are a part. What feels like home to me, and what I long to return to, depends upon the values that undergird my cultural group or groups. Nostalgia, then, serves social ends by creating an ideological utopia based on cultural—rather than purely individual—values. When an individual experiences nostalgia, their nostalgic vision of the lost home is inextricably linked to their community's ideological commitments. Thus, as an argument about the ideal home, nostalgia reveals the values that undergird a group's nostalgic vision, particularly as it must reshape the past in order for such a home to actually exist. What is cause for concern—and an opportunity for

critical analysis of public arguments—is that the nostalgic home is always idealized in some way. To achieve this idealized vision of the lost home, features of that home are erased, silenced, and excluded.

Because it does not form an accurate representation of the past and the home, nostalgia’s reconstructions must leave out certain voices in order to create an “ideal,” and must often scapegoat those voices for the undesirable nature of the present (Kurlinkus and Kurlinkus 92). These silences are crucial to understanding the group that produces the nostalgic recollections (Boym, *The Off-Modern* 39-40). In *Unspoken*, Cheryl Glenn argues, “Like speech, the meaning of silence depends on a power differential that exists in every rhetorical situation: who can speak, who must remain silent, who listens, and what those listeners can do” (9). Silence, then, is not merely the nonexistence of discourse, and therefore of power, but rather “like the zero in mathematics, silence is an absence with a function” (4). In order for nostalgia to succeed in crafting a lost home, it has the capacity to forcibly silence voices that might be in opposition to this formulation. Left unconsidered, such a form of nostalgia is troubling, because it fully embraces erasure without contemplating what piece of the nostalgic vision is vulnerable to inclusion—what piece of the ideal home wouldn’t look quite right if all voice and stories were allowed in. This dangerous, uncritical nostalgia represents what Boym calls “restorative nostalgia”—“nostalgia that stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. . . . Restorative nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition” (Boym 13). This is the dark side of nostalgia. It does not address the exclusion of many voices that allow it to exist and unthinkingly advocates for a return to a

location where voices are silenced and troubling power dynamics allowed to remain uncontested. It is this sort of nostalgia, with its propensity to colonize by stripping memories, stories, and powers away from those who could offer a competing ideology, that we must actively work against in political discourse.³ We can do so by employing a *critical* nostalgia.

Critical, or reflective, nostalgia, allows us to encounter idealized memories in productive ways that enable us to work with the past while being mindful about its implications for the future. It is in this capacity that nostalgia becomes an invaluable tool for unsettling public argumentation. Nostalgia can work as a tool for decolonization when it provides “sites, materials, and inspiration for meaningful social change” (Tannock 459). In direct contrast with restorative nostalgia, Boym names this critical form of nostalgia “reflective,” writing, “Reflective nostalgia dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt” (13). Reflective nostalgia exists when we are able to acknowledge the values of the past while also understanding their irretrievability, allowing us to critically encounter nostalgia and consider what aspects of its representations are beneficial as well as those that would be problematic if enacted. In this project, I call for a systematic approach to practicing

³ While this project seeks to expose and counter the hegemonic restorative nostalgia that often exists in political discourse, I do not want to suggest that all projects of restorative nostalgia are necessarily “bad.” For example, the decolonial Land Back Movement seeks a restoration—a return to and reconstruction of the lost Indigenous home. Nostalgia is too complicated to allow for a clean dichotomy between reflective and restorative nostalgia, and so I do not wish to impose such a dichotomy onto it. Rather, for the purposes of this study, I want to critique the restorative nostalgia that protects hegemony and explore the reflective nostalgia that proposes the coexistence of alternative, multiple nostalgias.

reflective nostalgia; I call this *critical nostalgia*. Critical nostalgia offers specific methods that enable critics and citizens to engage in reflective nostalgia when they encounter nostalgic arguments in the public sphere.

Thus, this project seeks to employ a critical, reflective nostalgia in order to understand the function of nostalgia within political discourse. For the purposes of this study, and in acknowledgement of the complex psychologically and sociological factors that are a part of nostalgia, I define nostalgia as an ideological argument about the ideal home. This is what nostalgia *is*. What it *does* is contribute to the production of *ethos* by crafting this argument along with the audience, the location, and the moment in time—marrying its emotive, affective, collective, individual, melancholic, future-oriented affects. Where this becomes more complicated—and consequently more exciting and timely—is when we more closely consider the role of *ethos* within such argumentation, examining how nostalgia expands the field’s understanding of argumentation by conceptualizing how *ethos* actually functions. The threads I’ve established so far in this study—the threads of nostalgia, ethos, place, and argumentation—are further clarified in the following discussion of a place-based, networked *ethos*.

Ethos and Nostalgia

Just as nostalgia is connected to the home, early definitions of *ethos* are also connected to location, making the two natural companions for analysis of how persuasive arguments actually operate. Scholar Todd S. Frobish offers a study in how Aristotelian *ethos* can be best understood when examined for its connections to a Homeric use of the term. In Homer’s *Iliad*, Frobish notes that “the word *ethos* does not refer to some quality of

character but to a haunt or an accustomed place of activity” (19). Nedra Reynolds further demonstrates this notion of *ethos* as she explains the etymology of the term, arguing that the word referred to “an accustomed place” or “abodes of men” (327). Keeping nostalgia in mind, I suggest that accustomed places and abodes of men, might be read more simply as “home.” In his article, “Aristotle’s Concept of Ethos, or if not His Somebody Else’s,” Michael S. Halloran argues that the most concrete meaning given for the term in the Greek lexicon is “a habitual gathering place” (60). He also offers his suspicions “that it is upon this image of people gathering together in a public place, sharing experiences and ideas, that its meaning as character rests” (60). *Ethos* is tied to location because a given location demands those who act within it to maintain certain values.⁴ Character’s connection to place, then, is in accordance with the cultural rules placed upon the location—physically or spiritually occupied—of a discursive exchange.

Indeed, nostalgia as an argument of place-based *ethos* was recognizable in the writings of classical rhetorical theorists—most notably Isocrates. In the *Panegyricus*, Isocrates calls on the Greeks to rise up and wage war against Persia. He begins by sharing the “good ole’ days” of Athens, articulating the city’s service to all of Greece. To do this work, he relies on both emotion and memory—two hallmarks of nostalgia:

When describing the good deeds of Athens towards other Greek poleis, Isocrates urges, one must choose “not those which because of their slight importance have escaped attention and been passed over in silence, but those which because of their

⁴ Scholars of rhetorical space (Mountford; Reynolds; Johnson) suggest that places—be they pulpits, parlors, cities, etc.—are crafted out of relationships and ideas. Operating inside such rhetorical spaces places demands on performance and behavior. A successful performance of the ideological demands of the space results in the production of *ethos*.

great importance have been and still are on the lips and in the memory of all men everywhere.” (Haskins 37)

Isocrates combines the Athens of the past with its brave warriors, showcasing the values that the city embodied in the days when Greece was in power. Following this exposition, Isocrates then contrasts the current state of the city under Spartan rule with its glorious past. Not only does he overtly employ nostalgia in his discussion of Athens, but he also proves himself to be a member of the nostalgic location as he enacts bravery by speaking on the subject of war with Persia under its rule. This classical example of nostalgia as place-based *ethos* demonstrates nostalgia’s persuasive and motivating capacities within public discourse as such discourse is connected to the home.

The interwoven nature of *ethos* and locations like the home is taken up in such recent books as *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric*. In the collection, Ryan, Myers, and Jones invite the field to reconsider *ethos* as a concept that is fundamentally feminist and ecological—reflexively negotiated through shifting power dynamics and community values. Ryan et al. applaud the work of locational feminists in helping us to rethink the work of *ethos*, saying that “not only do these expansive notions of *ethos* provide more complexity than ‘voice,’ ‘persona,’ ‘character,’ and even ‘identity’ offer, but they also privilege some of the moves and ideals [that] ecological thinking values: a focus on relations, locations, and the relationship of ethics and *ethos*” (7). There is clearly an interest in the field in reimagining what we mean by *ethos* and reevaluating its significance in meaning-making and argumentation, including the role that location plays

in its production. I believe nostalgia becomes particularly relevant to the understanding of *ethos*, particularly when we understand *ethos* as situated yet dynamic.

Kendall Leon and Stacey Pigg offer insight into this understanding of *ethos* by drawing broadly from Chicana theory and the concept of *conocimiento* as articulated by Gloria Anzaldúa. *Conocimiento*, “derived from . . . a Latin verb meaning ‘to know’ and is the Spanish word for [both] knowledge and skill” (Anzaldúa 577), is inherently connected to an alternate, feminist way of understanding positionality by demonstrating that knowledge “emerges not from individual intention or authority but from an emergent understanding of how institutions, individuals, and groups are linked and how individual action relates to social action (Leon and Pigg 263). This concept of knowledge offers a paradigm through which we might understand *ethos* in arguments as the layering of positions—or locations—that work in tandem and in tension to produce a suasive rhetorical situation. Leon and Pigg write, “We suggest that *conocimiento* offers a model of feminist *ethos* that is not only positioned within particular environments but also networked across multiple, shifting spaces and stages” (258). Likewise, nostalgia represents a dynamic home caught up in the highly positioned yet constantly shifting beliefs and values of the ideologies that construct it. The nostalgic argument is situated within the home space—for example, Texas—yet its values are in a constant state of (re)production, endlessly rebuilding itself as the ideologies of a group—Texans—restructure, shifting hierarchies of values and beliefs in response to the rhetorical situations of the present, insufficient home, for the purpose of the prospective home. Texas is not a static home, but one that is constantly remaking itself as the different elements that

comprise that home—its people, values, beliefs, material circumstances, etc.—evolve and interact with one another. In building knowledge from the home and remembering the home, nostalgia acknowledges its networked and layered nature. As Kurlinkus makes clear, “Nostalgia is incredibly diverse and conflicting—even internally. We long for *pasts* rather than the past” (7). Such layering of home and memories inherent in nostalgia and in the production of *ethos* emphasizes the affordances of a study that examines the two in tandem. This networked conception of ethotic place highlights nostalgia’s capacity to rebuild our understandings of argumentation, offering a critical approach to examine and explicate the layered, place-based, and dynamic locations that produce persuasive arguments.

Place, playing an important role in *nostos* and classical and nonwestern notions of *ethos*, is the key to understanding the full force of nostalgia and its rhetorical function within public discourse and argument. Nostalgia, as an accustomed place, might serve not only to build *ethos*, but *as ethos*. Rather than operating only as an emotional appeal, nostalgia functions as a location that contains the values of an audience, fully merging *pathos*, *logos*, and *ethos* by recognizing the situated, place-based nature of argumentation. Thus, for a rhetor to develop *ethos* with that audience, she must show that she is an occupant of that location—a rhetorical move that is challenging to control and can be a kind of double-edged sword for those whose bodies might exist outside the ideology of the home being constructed, as I explicate in the chapters focusing on Ann Richards and Julián Castro. Such place-based, embodied arguments are not unheard of in the field. In their study of place and its role in social movement rhetoric, Endres and Senda-Cook state

Rhetoricians have previously discussed what we are calling place-based arguments in which the rhetor invokes a particular place as warrant for a claim. The main contribution of our essay is the discussion of place-as-rhetoric, in which place is not just a discursive resource but is itself rhetorical. That is, the confluence of physical structures, bodies, and symbols in particular locations construct the meaning and consequences of a place. (276)

Their argument, though intended for protest rhetoric, can be adapted to nostalgia because the home that is conjured in a nostalgic vision constitutes a rhetorical space with details and dimension saturated with significance for its occupants.⁵ In this way, the relationship of the rhetor to *ethos* is not one of constructing a personal credibility or integrity likely to resonate with the audience, but rather one of establishing position within a place. The positions one can assume inside of a place are highly dependent upon what values and motives constitute the place itself. Nostalgia, as a social phenomenon that idealizes in order to structure settings, or homes, in ways that materialize the values of a group, is conceptually built with spatial dimensions.⁶ Who gets to be in the nostalgic place and how

⁵ For example, when I feel nostalgia for family holidays I experienced growing up, I remember my childhood home with a the big, brick fire place. In my nostalgic recollection, I'm sitting by the fireplace on a cold night with my parents, brother, aunts and uncles on couches and chairs that surround me (some further away, some closer). I'm listening to my favorite Christmas album, coming from a speaker in the kitchen a room away. Notably absent from the nostalgic creation of this event are family members who caused tension, the overplaying of Kenny G, and the fact that we never had cold Christmases in Texas. This nostalgic space is also a rhetorical one—built out of my values and beliefs—suggesting proper performances for inclusion in that space, otherwise validating a dismissal from it.

⁶ There are historic and deep connections between memory and place. The classic legend of Simonides—who was able to identify deceased bodies following the collapse of a banquet room because of his memories of those bodies in place—suggests the relationship between memory and *loci* as one both mnemonic and inventive. Contemporary memory scholars often focus on this relationship, with much attention paid to sites of public memory (Dickinson, Blair, and Ott; Phillips; Vivian) as well as other sites, like cities (Kalin and Frith).

they are located within it suggests what is most important for a group. These significant values are connected to *ethos* because they come from a group's "home" and their enactment is, therefore, a way of proving a rhetor's membership within that nostalgic location. Modeling nostalgic behaviors that indicate the rhetor is from the same place—in both a physical and emotional sense—as the group with which she is communicating produces the "character" of the rhetor and motivates the group to take up her cause. Thus, considering nostalgia as *ethotic* place has implications for the rhetorical force of nostalgia, its capacity for identity formation, and character building within public arguments. Furthermore, understanding *ethos* through nostalgia, and vice versa, affords rhetoricians the opportunity to better understand what makes arguments persuasive in the political sphere, enabling us to create effective methods of analysis, critique, and activism when confronting arguments. While this dissertation examines progressive ideological shifts via nostalgic *ethos* in Texas, the construction of the home place in argumentation has implications for regressive shifts, as well. Whether progressive or regressive, attention must be paid to the way persuasive political argument rhetorically and physically construct our homes.

Using Nostalgia to Guide the Methods and Methodological Approach

The Practice of "Going Home"

As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, I ground my study of nostalgic arguments in the discourse of my own home—Texas. I chose to root this project in my home state because it offers an ideal location for examining a layered home, with swirling ideological commitments and competing nostalgic visions. At the cusp of "turning blue"

(or at least purple), yet comprised of deeply red political actors and policies, Texas provides a fascinating landscape for analyzing how Texans are recreating their home based on idyllic visions of the past. To interrogate the capacities of nostalgia in progressive Texan politics, I begin with an examination of Beto O'Rourke and Ann Richards' campaign discourse, identifying moments suggestive of nostalgia and arguments about the idealized home that indicate how nostalgia can influence progressive movements. Campaigns, as easily identifiable moments of political change (or stagnation), provide ideal texts for this work. In my analysis of Julián Castro, I go a step beyond examining campaigns to also include an examination of the physical impact of his progressive politics on San Antonio by mapping nostalgia's material influence in the city. If nostalgia works to produce a place-based *ethos*, then studying both campaign discourse and physical locations helps to reveal the multifaceted affordances of nostalgia in the public sphere. While political movements and rhetorical strategies that are successful in Texas cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the nation at large, grounding this study in Texas does allow my research to provoke insight into political discourse beyond the state because of the shifting and conflicting ideological commitments it represents—a situation with wide-reaching implications for nostalgia as *ethos* in public argumentation.

It is also an aim of this project to demonstrate the importance of place in producing *ethos* and rendering arguments persuasive. Because of this, I want to consider those places where I personally am likely to participate in the construction of *ethos* for arguments that I care about. My love and hope for Texas, my memories of my Texas home, my commitment to an idea of what it means to be a “true Texan,” all lead me to root my

arguments in that place. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I comment more on what employing a critical nostalgia reveals about *ethos* in public argumentation and, with that, the implications for tying arguments to place. For now, I will simply say that a nostalgic methodology would make no sense for me if I separated it from my own connections to a home place, as complex and contentious as that connection may be.

Utilizing a Critical Nostalgia

Nostalgia is an ideological argument that is networked and dynamic. Thus, a critical approach to analyzing nostalgia must also be dynamic as opposed to formulaic. Analyzing nostalgia in order to understand a group's ideology requires the critic to recognize the state of constant flux of ideologies. In her chapter on "Beliefs and Commitments" in *Toward a Civil Discourse*, Sharon Crowley details a few of the component pieces that make up a group's ideology, including values, emotions, stories, fantasies, and logics (58-101). She argues that each of these elements of ideology exist in a hierarchy that is constantly shifting in connection with the other elements. The fluctuating nature of ideologies makes nostalgia—a layered and dynamic argument about ideological homes—an ideal critical tool to employ in order to understand ideology and argumentation, however it also means a singular approach to analysis is insufficient. Thus, a nostalgic methodology must be fluid, recognizing shifting narratives, temporal and spatial considerations, and fantasy, idealized visions of reality in tandem with material realities. Utilizing a critical nostalgia requires embracing multiple methods, often at the same time, in order to understand the networked forces at play in nostalgic arguments. Using critical nostalgia as an analytical tool means embracing contradictions, exploring

ideological tensions, practicing reflexivity, and allowing home and the emotion it evokes—positive and negative—to become a part of the research.

Modeling the methodology of this project on nostalgia itself—in its structure as argument and ever-changing, emotive, and community-specific nature—provides the structure for how to analyze it. Thus, each chapter layers different methods of analysis in order to best capture and examine how nostalgia contributes to the production of *ethos* in Texas political discourse. I blend textual, feminist, decolonial, narrative, ethnographic, and spatial analysis to analyze the networked elements of nostalgia functioning in and around the political figures—Beto O’Rourke, Ann Richards, and Julián Castro—that participated in the production of *ethos* in Texas.

Building a Critical Nostalgia for the Field

Because a guiding assumption and commitment of this project is that understanding nostalgic arguments will contribute to an understanding of arguments more generally, I build and employ a critical nostalgia, offering suggestions for how nostalgia can and should shape our methodological approaches to the study of public discourse. If nostalgia as *ethos* transforms our understanding of political discourse, it should also transform our methodological approaches to such discourse. So, following each case study chapter of this project, I offer an interchapter that further explicates the method(s) used for analysis in the previous chapter. In doing so, I comment on how critical nostalgia gives back to and transforms methods of analysis for public discourse. To begin, I explore textual analysis, discussing how nostalgia in texts can be unearthed using fantasy-theme criticism, which allows for an initial coding that then invites other textual analysis lenses (such as feminist,

critical race, and genre criticism) to help further examine the tensions present in group nostalgia. Building off of textual criticism, I also offer a discussion of how a critical nostalgia helps to clarify and expand the work of archival researchers, demonstrating how nostalgia in the archives functions as an analytical and interpretive method for the arguments buried in the archival space. Finally, I explore how nostalgia as *ethos* shapes spatial and ethnographic analysis, offering critical nostalgia as a tool for analyzing the layers of networked spaces that might be erased because of physical location's seemingly temporal limitations. It is my hope that by offering a deeper look at how nostalgia not only changes our understanding of persuasive argumentation but also changes the way we should go about analyzing such arguments I can offer the field blueprints for how to go forward with analysis, using a critical nostalgia as an approach with attendant methods of analysis.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation attempts to answer the following questions: How is the story of Texas and Texan identity retold through a rhetoric of nostalgia? What can this retelling indicate about the possibilities for *ethos* within argumentation, including the importance of group identity and nostalgic place? What can nostalgia teach us about the way *ethos* is produced and evaluated? What can nostalgia's role in public argumentation reveal about national argumentation? How must the field of rhetoric and composition alter its research practices in order to better analyze discourse constructed via networked, place-based arguments? What does it look like to practice a critical nostalgia? It is my hope that this project will answer these questions and, if it cannot, provide insight into how we might ask

more productive questions about nostalgia, *ethos*, and public arguments. To answer these questions, the project consists of five chapters, three of which are case studies of Texas Democrats whose campaigns and careers reveal a great deal about the ways in which nostalgia helped (and helps) to produce *ethos* for their political arguments and demonstrate the networked homes that live in tension within that production. The project also contains three interchapters that speak to the methodology employed in the case studies, commenting on the use of critical nostalgia in textual, archival, and ethnographic analysis.

Chapter 2, “Beto O’Rourke and Nostalgic Authenticity,” builds on the definitions I provide in Chapter 1 to argue that O’Rourke becomes authentic for Texans by embracing a nostalgic vision of the “real Texan” in his Senate campaign. The analysis of O’Rourke is primarily text-based and utilizes fantasy-theme, narrative, and ideological criticism to explore how authenticity is a concept deeply rooted in nostalgia and can function as *ethos* when such a nostalgic authenticity proves the rhetor to be an occupant of a specific space that highlights a group’s values. Following this case study, the first interchapter, “Nostalgic Methods: Fantasy-Theme Criticism,” demonstrates how an understanding of nostalgia as *ethos* necessitates a reconsideration of textual analysis methods and explores fantasy-theme criticism’s capacity to function like critical nostalgia by acknowledging the fantasies of a group while also recognizing the fantasy’s flaws and multiple, concealed narratives.

Chapter 3, “Ann Richards and Nostalgic Bodies” argues that Governor Richards’ *ethos* in Texas was produced via a nostalgic othering of her body based in a nostalgic vision of the sharp-witted grandmother. My analysis of Richards is based on transcripts of

her political speeches and the materials found in the University of Texas' Briscoe Center archive. Feminist criticism and archival research are used to demonstrate how her *ethos* is produced through nostalgia. The second interchapter, "Nostalgic Methods: Archival Research," details how critical nostalgia should be embraced in the archives rather than avoided, highlighting how nostalgia allows archival researchers to embrace ideological tensions inherent in the archival space rather than fighting against them.

Chapter 4, "Julián Castro and Nostalgic Authority," offers perhaps the most methodologically complex of the analyses. My examination of Julián Castro's work utilizes textual analysis of Castro's campaign and mayoral speeches regarding his "Decade of Downtown" in San Antonio and explores its impact on his political success. The analysis then departs from the previous chapters by also analyzing the San Antonio downtown space itself. Relying on cultural theorists and contemporary rhetoricians who interrogate space and race, this analysis employs third space theory and spatial criticism to read San Antonio's downtown as a text that produces its *ethos* through a nostalgic retelling of its history and traditions—one that creates spaces for stories that expand its borders and look to an ideal future by reimagining an ideal past, lending authority to such a vision. "Nostalgic Methods: Analyzing Space," the final interchapter on research methods, articulates the use of nostalgia in spatial analysis and ethnography in allowing researchers to occupy multiple spaces at once—the space (home) that was lost and the future space where a return might be possible.

In Chapter 5, "Whose Nostalgia are We Talking about, Any Way?," I synthesize the themes that emerged from each chapter, explaining nostalgia's capacity for future-

oriented transformation in political discourse and suggesting implications for public argumentation in Texas and the nation. The chapter also ties together the threads of each interchapter, suggesting that if nostalgia as *ethos* transforms our understanding of political discourse, it should also transform our methodological approaches to such discourse—culminating in a proposal for critical nostalgia.

Chapter 2

Beto O'Rourke and Nostalgic Authenticity

*“We’ve been in Houston. We’ve been in Dallas. We’ve been in Austin. We’ve been in Georgetown, DeSoto, Waxahachie, San Benito, Bryan, San Marcos . . . be here again in Amarillo—just human beings, **real people**, making this happen.”*

– Beto O'Rourke, “Showing Up” Campaign Ad

Introduction

On November 4, 2020, the world watched as Joe Biden slowly but surely won the Presidential Election. As much of America began to feel relief for the first time in four years, Beto O'Rourke only felt discouraged. On that evening of Democratic triumph, O'Rourke sent out a message of defeat in an email to his PAC, Powered by People,⁷ articulating the heartache of many Texans who voted blue in the election: “I am deeply disappointed that we did not win Texas.” Long maintaining that Texas could change the nation, Beto's election night email signifies the bitter disheartenment of all progressive Texans who fought for their home state to turn blue and who failed in their efforts. Despite the national progress made in the 2020 election, the home that was on the line for Texans was their state. As Beto wrote on that night, “I can't tell you how inspired I am by all who contributed to the work, knowing the sacrifice entailed and the willing suspension of

⁷ Following his failed presidential run, Beto launched this Powered by People PAC to fight battles for Texan Democrats and increase voter registration and turnout in what he calls the “most voter suppressed state” (O'Rourke, “The Results and the Work Ahead”).

cynicism and fatigue that is required to believe in Texas” (“The Results”). A belief in Texas—and Texans—has been at the heart of Beto’s politics for years, allowing him to be a revolutionary figure despite consistent losses at the national and state level. Beto O’Rourke’s story is one of failure, one of success, and most importantly, one of Texas. Considering O’Rourke’s success and failure alongside his navigation of conservative and progressive Texan identity presents an opportunity to dig deeper into the surface demarcations of nostalgia in the public sphere. In *The Geography of Nostalgia*, Alistair Bonnett argues that “nostalgia has the power to question and challenge categories and this is also true of our notions of left and right, progressive and reactionary” (16). This insight into nostalgia suggests the coexistence of competing forces within nostalgia—that the presence of conservative ideology and/or failure within nostalgia does not preclude it from becoming a progressive social force. O’Rourke’s nostalgic appeals to a “real” Texas have pushed the state to change—even if slightly—by reconfiguring its ideological borders. O’Rourke’s Senate campaign and other political ventures are worthy of study to better understand how a reliance on nostalgia could produce *ethos* for such an underdog campaign and the ways in which that nostalgic *ethos* can promote progressive ends in public discourse, argumentation, and policy.

To understand nostalgia within Beto’s politics, we have to go back to his first breakthrough moment in Texas. The former Democratic congressman for Texas’s 16th district drew much national attention in his campaign against the incumbent Texas Senator Ted Cruz during the 2018 Senate Race. Ultimately, Cruz won the election with 50.9 percent of the vote (Essig, Murphy, and Formby), which came as no surprise given that

Texas has not elected a Democratic candidate to the Senate since 1988 (Essig et al.). What *was* unusual in this Senate race was how close O'Rourke came to defeating the incumbent in a traditionally red state, trailing Cruz by only 2.6 percentage points. O'Rourke was able to gain an unprecedented amount of national attention throughout his campaign. But even with this national attention, perhaps the more remarkable aspect of O'Rourke's race was the level of support he was able to garner from Texans who, given the state's recent history, would not have been inclined to consider a Democratic candidate based on his or her party alone. For example, O'Rourke was able to win Tarrant County, the county previously called the "America's most conservative large county" and which was considered to be "the stronghold that keeps Texas red" (Livingston, "Ted Cruz and Beto O'Rourke"). Such a circumstance presents an opportunity to understand what rhetorical strategies O'Rourke was able to employ to persuade a group of Texas voters in order to make his campaign competitive and what the effectiveness of those strategies reveals about that voter group. I argue that nostalgia was a key—if at times buried—rhetorical strategy that O'Rourke utilized to build his own *ethos* and motivate a traditionally conservative populace to share in his vision for the future. Although a conservative ideology seems to naturally lend itself to nostalgia because of its connection to tradition, more progressive ideologies like O'Rourke's also look to the past with fondness. Whether conservative or progressive, what a group considers desirable is highly revealing of their motivating values. By interrogating the values represented in the nostalgic vision that O'Rourke was able to construct throughout his campaign, we can begin to understand his voters'

motivations and to locate areas where the values of both conservative and liberal groups can be productively engaged to envision a truly democratic future.

In this chapter, I briefly suggest how rhetorical critics might go about analyzing nostalgia and its motivational capacities by incorporating methods from symbolic convergence theory and fantasy-theme criticism. Then, I offer an analysis of O'Rourke's campaign, focusing on the critical components that reveal both how O'Rourke utilizes nostalgia and for what—or *where*—his audience feels nostalgic. Following the analysis, I offer conclusions regarding what O'Rourke's campaign reveals about nostalgia and *ethos*, including how nostalgia, as a kind of ideological utopia, contributes significantly to a rhetorical vision and can spotlight both the best and worst of a group's motivating values. Such insights have implications for the use of critical nostalgia in the analysis of public discourse as well as the field's methodological approaches to political arguments.

Rhetorical Criticism, Fantasy Themes, and Nostalgia

O'Rourke's rhetorical success is the ability of his campaign to motivate a predominately Republican state to seriously consider a Democratic. An examination of the role of nostalgia in the successes—and failures—of O'Rourke's underdog campaign must interrogate group motivation—what spurred such a large number of Texans to an unlikely political action. To uncover the ways that nostalgia produces an *ethos* that motivates Texans to actively vote for a progressive candidate, I blend nostalgia and fantasy-theme criticism. This blending transforms fantasy-theme criticism, making it a tool of critical nostalgia—a process I explicate more thoroughly in the interchapter following this analysis. The fantasy-theme method of analysis, developed by Ernest G. Bormann, affords

the rhetorical critic with a process for determining the shared value of groups and the ways that those values encourage certain actions. Bormann writes, “A recollection of something that happened to the group in the past or a dream of what the group might do in the future could be considered a fantasy theme” (Bormann 397). He pairs this statement with the assertion that this recollection need not be *accurate*—relying on psychological theory, he suggests that this recollection is more akin to a dream of the past, emphasizing its disconnection from “reality” while also asserting its motivational capacity to influence a group’s actions. I argue that nostalgia might take the place of “dream,” as it rewrites the past for the sake of group action rather than “accurate,” historical representation. Such a nostalgic recollection of the past cannot represent an accurate history of the group but is perhaps all the more important because of this reconstruction of the past based on collective desires. Thus, I suggest that nostalgia—as a vision of the idealized, lost home—constitutes what Bormann calls a group’s “rhetorical vision”—“a swirling together of fantasy themes to provide a particular interpretation of reality” (Foss 108).

To uncover this nostalgic vision, a critic will code for fantasy themes, which are presented in a variety of forms through symbolic cues like “a code word, nonverbal gesture, phrase, slogan, inside joke, bumper sticker, or any shorthand way of re-establishing the full force of shared fantasy” (Griffin 251). These cues suggest a group’s nostalgia without overtly narrating it, giving a critic clues about a group’s rhetorical vision of the ideal home that motivates it to action. The fantasy themes that suggest a group’s rhetorical vision of the nostalgic home are found within the narrative elements that are echoed repeatedly by rhetors within the group. The theme’s symbolic cues often bury the

narrative elements of the larger, motivating rhetorical vision of the idealized, lost. In this way, narrative criticism is closely akin to fantasy-theme criticism. Based on Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm, narrative criticism prompts critics to code for settings, characters, narrators, events, structure, audience, distribution across media, mechanics, and themes. All of these features are included in fantasy-theme coding as well, signaling the fantasy themes operating within a group. However, the end goals of narrative and fantasy theme criticism are not the same. The goal of narrative criticism is determining if a narrative employs appropriate strategies to accomplish its objective (Foss 336).

Essentially, narrative criticism seeks to discover the fidelity of a narrative—whether or not it will ring true for a given audience. SCT assumes the fidelity of a narrative for a group, assuming that dramatizing messages will not become fantasy chains if they do not possess a truth quality for the group. Fisher himself acknowledged this, arguing that Bormann's "concepts concern how people come to adhere to particular stories. They do not solve the problem of narrative fidelity because both suggest that narratives are valid by virtue of consensus and provide no criteria by which one can establish that one narrative is more sound than another" (16). Narrative criticism seeks to understand if a narrative is believable to an audience and why, while fantasy-theme criticism dives more deeply into how the beliefs indicated impact a group's motivations and actions. Although it closely considers the narrative elements working within a group's discourse and nostalgic constructions, fantasy-theme criticism also reveals the symbolic cues that signify a group's nostalgia and suggest the ways that nostalgia motivates that group.

To understand what nostalgia reveals about the collective shared values—the ideology—operating in O’Rourke’s campaign, and how those values function in the production of nostalgic *ethos*, I will focus on the various elements of narrative and group consciousness often interrogated in fantasy-theme rhetorical criticism. I do this by examining theme, audience, characters, setting, action, and distribution across media within O’Rourke’s campaign discourse. Ultimately, the analyses provides a sketch of the rhetorical vision—or the nostalgic vision of the idealized home—of O’Rourke’s campaign and make a case for how nostalgia produces an *ethos* for O’Rourke’s campaign that affords him the ability to organize people around that rhetorical vision.

Analysis of Beto O’Rourke’s 2018 Senate Campaign

Theme and Audience

In one of the most viral moments of his campaign, O’Rourke discussed the NFL protests of police brutality in which NFL players kneeled during the national anthem. A social issue surrounding football, a subject taken very seriously by Texans, presented O’Rourke with one of the first ideological challenges of his campaign. Conservative ideology in the state would suggest that the most appropriate response to the NFL protests might be to critique protestors in favor of praising veterans who are “disrespected” when players kneel—in fact, Ted Cruz made this argument throughout his 2018 campaign (Reigstad). Complicit in this argument is a conservative nostalgia for good ol’ boy soldiers and war heroes who bravely took action to preserve the ideal, American home. O’Rourke, representing a more liberal ideology in the red state, offers a counter-nostalgia that honors conservative values while expanding them to include progressive social actions. Praising

the protestors and drawing a connection between their efforts and the efforts of Civil Rights leaders, O'Rourke states:

The freedoms we have were purchased not just by those in uniform – and they definitely were – but also by those who took their lives into their hands riding those Greyhound buses, the Freedom Riders, in the deep south, in the 1960s, who knew full well they would be arrested, and they were – serving time in the Mississippi state penitentiary. Rosa Parks getting from the back of the bus to the front of the bus. Peaceful, non-violent protest – including taking a knee at a football game – to point out that black men, unarmed, black teenagers, unarmed, and black children, unarmed, are being killed at a frightening level right now, including by members of law enforcement, without accountability and without justice. And this problem, as grave as it is, is not gonna fix itself. And they're frustrated, frankly, with people like me, and those in positions of public trust and power who have been unable to resolve this or bring justice for what has been done and to stop it from continuing to happen in this country. And so non-violently, peacefully, while the eyes of this country are watching these games, they take a knee, to bring our attention and our focus to this problem, to ensure that we fix it. (“A Texas Democrat’s Words of Support for the NFL Protests”)

Praising average citizens who take action while critiquing politicians who do not, O'Rourke engages a nostalgic moment for liberals in Texas by looking to the past for models of inspiring social action while also connecting that social action to contemporary public movements. This important moment for his campaign exemplifies a prevailing

narrative surrounding O'Rourke's run for Senate by demonstrating a theme of the glorification of activity and "hard work." Specifically, the narrative represents the theme that hard work produces results. The unstated implication of this theme is, of course, that inactivity produces nothing—a point further explicated in a later discussion of Cruz's character.

Because *something* is superior to *nothing*, in this theme the results produced by hard work are positive, regardless of what the broad impact or implications of those results might be. Hard work is necessary to fight the perils of nothing. The "nothingness" that is the antithesis of hard work is something that O'Rourke's audience—Texans—associates with contemporary politicians. That politicians spout empty rhetoric and accomplish very little is a perception that any aspiring politician must face in Texas, as well as across the nation. Texas 2036, a Dallas-based think tank, released a poll in 2021 that revealed "Texans won't tolerate incivility or inactivity;" 80% of the poll's respondents indicated that the Texas Legislature ought to "get something done" and take more action on the issues facing the state ("In Texas 2036 Poll, Voters Send a Clear Message"). Here, the influence of nostalgia can be observed quite clearly. Successful politicians must prove that they do not conduct politics in the same manner as modern-day politicians and instead approach their work like average, "authentic" people who feel they have to work hard to achieve in life. Appeals to "authenticity" are often a component of a group's nostalgia, as what makes a person authentic is dependent on certain cultural values, rather than inherent genuineness, that are most clearly realized in an idealized past. In a study of nostalgia's role in family histories, sociologist Julia Bennett writes, "Authenticity is not a completely

separate concept but entwines with nostalgia to create a sense of continuity through a direct link back to origins” (453). She adds, “Only the authentic ‘we’ can draw on the nostalgic tropes of memories of ‘our’ past” (453). Perhaps adding more nuance to this understanding of authenticity, diaspora studies scholar Anita Mannur argues that the “larger cultural logic from which . . . suppositions are based almost always polices the line between what can be deemed as authentic . . . citizenship” (Mannur 24). Representative of a group’s ideology—or their cultural logic—nostalgia helps to establish authenticity by policing who and what is considered authentic.⁸ Heritage studies scholars Laurajane Smith and Gary Campbell connect nostalgia’s power of authentication to its relationship with hard work. They write that by selectively remembering, nostalgia produces “authenticity of the emotions invoked and embodied” (617), suggesting that hard work becomes authenticated within nostalgia when it is seen as a necessary component of what made the idealized home possible in the past (618). In group ideologies that maintain hard work as critical to building the ideal home, the loss of that home signals an imposed inactivity by outside forces that make the nostalgic home impossible in the present moment. Thus, hard work—an action that people *used* to perform and real people *continue* to perform—signals nostalgic authenticity by connecting the idealized, valued actions and actors of the past to the unsatisfactory present. Hard work and authentic people are presented as the balm to what ails the current moment. The following sections showcase the specific ways that O’Rourke distances himself from

⁸ Krista Ratcliffe, in *Rhetorical Listening*, defines cultural logic as “a belief system or way of reasoning that is shared within a culture” (10). Replacing “culture” with “group” in this analysis helps to situate the relationship between nostalgia and authenticity. As a representation of cultural logic, nostalgia produces *ethos* for a group’s ideology and, consequently, what is authentic in that ideology by reinforcing its values and suggesting practices for the enactment of those values.

status quo politicians and aligns himself with authentic people by embracing the theme that hard work produces results and building a narrative that conveys that theme. By casting O'Rourke as a hard worker—a nostalgic figure—and the successes of his campaign as the direct result of that hard work, the narrative unmistakably expresses this theme.

Characters

As is likely intuitive, the protagonist in the hard work narrative is O'Rourke himself. O'Rourke's character is the "good guy" because he works hard in order to make an impact on supporters, donors, and voters. The stories that emerge from his campaign always depict him as the definitive insider in the group that he establishes, a logical construction given that the act this group is ultimately motivated to perform is that of voting for O'Rourke. The other insiders in this group also constitute characters. These insiders are "Texans." Of course, not all people from Texas are included in the "Texans" that share in O'Rourke's constructed rhetorical vision. O'Rourke iterates throughout his campaign that true Texans are those who are "just human beings, real people making this happen, regardless of Party or background or geography" ("Beto O'Rourke Releases First Video Ad"). His use of "real people" is suggestive, once again, of nostalgic authenticity. Tests of what makes a person "real" are nostalgic because they point to the past for examples and criteria of "realness," which is actually just an embodiment of a group's values. By "making this happen," O'Rourke means putting in the effort to make his campaign a success. He reiterates this point in his concession speech, saying, "It is the greatness to which we aspire and the work we are willing to put into it to achieve it by which we will be known going forward" (Oldham). O'Rourke and Texans are partners,

sharing the same values and seeking the same ends. Both characters are made insiders in a rhetorical vision by their connection to one another.

Further, voters are characters in O'Rourke's narratives and rhetorical vision because they often represent the results that O'Rourke's efforts are able to produce. In a Twitter video, O'Rourke says that "people are getting off the sidelines and into the game," signifying that their involvement in his story is significant and making parallels between his exertion and theirs, further arguing for his status as an authentic individual (@BetoORourke). O'Rourke constructs a vision, through his language and visuals in the video, that citizens rally to support him with their time and money, indicating that his hard work is paying off for his campaign. Perhaps more importantly, these same people represent votes, the ultimate, ideal result for a Democratic candidate in Texas. The people of Texas are critical characters in the narrative because they afford causality.

O'Rourke's inclusion of Latinx Texans in the broad category of "the people of Texas" is a significant characterization at play in the nostalgic vision of home that operates within his campaign. The history of Tejanos involvement in Texas' origins is an important history, yet one that is often erased in conservative nostalgia surrounding the state. Countering this nostalgia, O'Rourke's discourse demonstrates that Latinx and Spanish speaking Texans are very much "real Texans." Representative of competing nostalgias within Texas, Robert Francis O'Rourke's use of *Beto* (which was labeled the "Hispanic-sounding nickname") lives in stark contrast to Rafael Edward Cruz's nickname *Ted*. Although his use of the nickname "Beto" has come under justifiable scrutiny, the use of the Spanish nickname also suggests O'Rourke's embrace of Mexican and Latin

American's in Texas (and their embrace of him). At a campaign rally in the Rio Grande Valley, U.S. Representative Vicente Gonzalez introduced O'Rourke by welcoming him into a community of "real Texans," rather than the other way around. Gonzalez announced, "Beto is one of us. He's from the border. ... He understands our culture. *El nos conoce*" (Svitek).⁹ While certainly not indicative of a total acceptance of O'Rourke by the Latinx community in Texas, this show of solidarity represents a moment of mutual identification of "real Texans" that is significant in a broader, conservative Texan context. While this is a minor acknowledgment, it is also a substantial one given the anti-Mexican racism that takes place in Texas at every level—from erasures in public education history courses to gerrymandering legislation (Fermoso). O'Rourke attempts to counter this regressive erasure of the Latinx community from "real Texan" status, even calling for two of his debates with Cruz to be delivered in Spanish. O'Rourke insisted, "If you want everyone engaged in our democracy, which I think we all do regardless of your background and regardless of the language you speak, you've got to be able to listen to and work with everyone." Cruz declined O'Rourke's offer for debates in Spanish, citing deficiencies in his knowledge of the language and adding, "Democrats sometimes do this when they want to be cute" ("Hispanic Identity is Shaping the Race"). Where Cruz's dismissal is suggestive of his own nostalgic visions of the Texan home, O'Rourke's embrace of the Latinx community in campaign rallies and ads suggests that in his more progressive nostalgic vision, Latinx Texans are "real Texans" as they too engage in the activity and hard work that defines that group.

⁹ In English, "He knows us."

Here, the antagonist character comes to the surface and warrants discussion. Ted Cruz—as O’Rourke’s opponent—constitutes the primary antagonist. Although O’Rourke rarely directly addresses his adversary, when he does it is to indicate that Cruz has not been able to produce results during his time in office, allowing the audience to make the connection that this is because Cruz has not been hard at work. Cruz is constructed as the embodiment of forces that prevent the nostalgic home’s realization in the contemporary moment—he represents the loss felt in O’Rourke’s group nostalgia. For example, in their live television debate, O’Rourke says to Cruz, “If you have a special relationship with president Trump, where is the result of that? You are all talk and no action” (“Beto O’Rourke Lays into Ted Cruz”). This declaration of Cruz’ inaction—and inaction in the contemporary political moment alongside other contemporary political actors—places him in stark contrast with O’Rourke and other Texans, the figures of authenticity, and further serves to establish O’Rourke’s *ethos*. Not only does O’Rourke maintain the nostalgic virtue of hard work, but he is also the only candidate to do so, indicating that he is more authentic than his opponent. While Cruz is seldom overly mentioned as the narrative of hard work is crafted, the nature of O’Rourke’s character—in addition to the setting of the story—makes him a character even in his absence.

Setting

Two settings emerge within which the characters act. The first setting is Texas itself. If only because O’Rourke was vying to be the state’s Senator, Texas plays a critical role in the nostalgic fantasy themes surrounding his campaign. However, Texas is more than just a state in Beto’s stories. Texas is a nostalgic location, constructed from memories

and emotions. It represents home and, more importantly, it represents the values of the characters who reside there—namely Texans and O’Rourke himself. This setting is constantly evoked in O’Rourke’s repetition of the phrase “254 counties,” representing the number of counties in the state of Texas, each of which he visited (@BetoORourke). The repetition of this number in O’Rourke’s videos, speeches, social media posts, and website is a reminder of O’Rourke’s connection to Texas and relates strongly to O’Rourke’s actions, which will be discussed in the next section. Rather than centering policies in his campaign, O’Rourke centers Texas itself, allowing his audience to imbue that setting with certain values based in nostalgic loss and idealization of their home. Texas is further emphasized as a setting because of the emphasis placed on O’Rourke’s hometown of El Paso. While Cruz was born in Canada and later moved to Texas, O’Rourke was born and raised in El Paso, a Texan city with deep roots in the state’s history (Barragan). O’Rourke’s hometown chained out in the media,¹⁰ even surfacing in articles that might not overtly support O’Rourke, such as *Dallas News*’ “Defiant Ted Cruz in Beto O’Rourke’s Hometown, El Paso.” The setting of Texas, as home, indicates a nostalgic theme that is further emphasized by the physical locations O’Rourke occupies while campaigning. Within the state of Texas, O’Rourke holds campaign events in bars, coffee shops, races, and Laundromats. These micro-settings within the broader setting of Texas are nostalgic in their separation from D.C. politics and their connection to the idealized Texas being

¹⁰ A fantasy chain is a dramatizing message that explodes throughout the group, causing members to “grow excited, interrupt one another, blush, laugh, forget their self-consciousness,” indicating that they are all participants in the drama (Bormann 397). Researchers have found that a dramatizing message is more likely to “chain out” within a group when said group is experiencing dissatisfaction with their situation or facing a problem that they do not know how to solve (Griffin 250).¹⁰ Likewise, Bormann suggested that a fantasy chain occurs when a “dramatic theme might relate to the repressed psychological problems of some or all of the members and thus pull them into participation” (Bormann 397).

constructed. The micro-settings are reminiscent of the days when politicians personally met with constituents, shaking hands, experiencing the same problems and desires of locals—rather than residing in D.C. and maintain separation from the home place.¹¹ Because these micro-locations represent places where authentic folks perform their authenticity—maintaining the values that once were important and still should be—they further contribute to the understanding of Texas as a critical setting for O’Rourke’s narrative. By acknowledging the hometowns of supporters, the state’s history, his own hometown, and his travels, O’Rourke consistently makes reference to the fact that the setting for his story is in Texas, as opposed to elsewhere.

This “elsewhere” provides another setting for the nostalgic fantasy themes at work in O’Rourke’s campaign, working as a contemporary contrast to the nostalgic construction of Texas. While the setting for O’Rourke’s story is Texas, the setting for Cruz’s story is Washington D.C. The nation’s capital is the hub of politics in the country and a place constructed as completely dissimilar to Texas. While O’Rourke and Texans reside within the state—and with each other—Cruz is shown to reside amongst politicians in a place far from home that does not have the same values as Texas. O’Rourke often reminds his insider group of Cruz’s setting by drawing a contrast between his location and the Senator’s. In a campaign ad released by his Twitter account and recirculated by supporters and members of the media, O’Rourke says, “I want to anticipate the question that they’re gonna ask me in the years to come: ‘Where were you when everything that mattered to us

¹¹ This is, of course, nostalgic because it is not necessarily accurate. One would be hard pressed to find moments in Texan—or American—history where those in political power “authentically” shared the experiences of their constituents.

was on the line?”” (@PatrickSvitek). As he says these words, the video shows images of Texas towns, landscapes, and citizens. The merging of the words and images offers a clear answer to the question O’Rourke anticipates. He will be in Texas—an idealized home, created from the merging of his supporters’ memories and emotions. What is unstated, yet also implied, is that his opponent will not be in Texas. A similar message can be found in O’Rourke’s response to the second debate he was meant to have with Cruz. The University of Houston cancelled the debate after it seemed Cruz would be unable to attend due to votes connected to Kavanaugh’s confirmation, causing him to stay in D.C. (Livingston, “Second Ted Cruz-Beto O’Rourke Debate Postponed”). In the end, those votes were delayed, and Cruz’s team attempted to reschedule the debate but was unsuccessful because O’Rourke’s team had already planned a live stream for O’Rourke to address the people of Texas out of his El Paso home, **pictured in Image 1 below.**



Image 1: O’Rourke Livestreams from His Home in El Paso (Solomon)

The image shows O’Rourke, casual in his home, slicing up some Texas barbeque—a symbolic cue of authentic Texan identity. This further reiterated the two different settings of the campaign—one, the distant land of disingenuous politicians, and the other, a place that looked like home and was devoid of pretense.

Actions

The actions that take place within the settings of Texas and D.C. have been hinted at throughout this analysis but can now be more thoroughly examined. O’Rourke persistently enacts hard work while in Texas—merging nostalgic place with nostalgic action. In a campaign video, O’Rourke states, “The only way for me to deliver for the people of Texas is to show up in every single community, in every county” (“Commercial Appeal”). O’Rourke enacts this goal of showing up for and in Texas throughout his campaign. He travels to 254 counties *in Texas*. He conducts 328 town hall meetings *in Texas*. In his campaign ads and livestreamed videos, he does his laundry, loads his truck, runs with crowds, and sweats through his shirts *in Texas* (@BetoORourke). These actions chained out across the country, popping up in national headlines that reported on O’Rourke and referred to his sweat and travel. An example of this chaining out can be seen in the headline, “In Praise of Beto O’Rourke, the Sweaty Man.” O’Rourke does not perform these actions in isolation; Texans are with him every step of the way. His campaign ads and speeches make note of the Texans who give their support to O’Rourke and help him to accomplish his work. Such an example can be seen in his “On the Road Again” video where he states, “People are getting off of the sidelines and into the game,” connecting hardworking Texans with his campaign while using a football reference—another

symbolic cue to Texan identity. He further adds that together, he and Texans are “meeting the divisiveness that dominates our politics today with a courage, a strength, a big heart that could only come from Texas.” Establishing himself and exclusively Texan values as a cure for the problems of “today” further highlights the nostalgic nature of the Texas being constructed—a place that existed in the past and continues to exist owing to authentic actors. O’Rourke connects the values that he and Texans share with their actions by showing that their mutual work for his campaign produces uniquely Texan results.

In contrast, inaction itself defines Cruz’s activities in modern-day Washington D.C. As referenced earlier, Cruz quite literally did not show up in Texas for the original date of the second debate, marking a stark contrast between his actions and O’Rourke’s. Senator Cruz’s actions are depicted most clearly in the Senate debates, where O’Rourke addresses Cruz directly. O’Rourke comments on Cruz’s time in D.C., saying, “It’s really interesting to hear you talk about a partisan circus, after your last six years in the U.S. Senate” (“Beto O’Rourke Lays into Ted Cruz”). The implied action is that Cruz participated in an institution known for accomplishing very little and did nothing to change the status quo. This point is further emphasized in the exchange referenced earlier, in which O’Rourke asks of Cruz, “If you have a special relationship with president Trump, where is the result of that? You are all talk and no action.” The message is clear that in D.C., Cruz accomplishes nothing. Not only does he not produce any tangible change, he cannot be taken at his word. O’Rourke returns to Trump’s label for Cruz during the 2016 presidential race, saying, “He’s dishonest, and it’s why the president called him ‘Lyin’ Ted,’ and it’s why the nickname stuck — because it’s true.” This accusation draws a connection between

Cruz’s setting—D.C.—and his disingenuous actions. It also serves to reiterate that Cruz had not been connected to Texans or the Texas setting for some time, as he has been attempting to gain positions like the presidency that would remove him even further from Texas.

Distribution Across Media

The narrative is told across numerous platforms and is, therefore, crafted in such a way that it can be effectively communicated through each of these unique media channels. The most obvious way the narrative is distributed is by O’Rourke to his supporters at campaign events. In such circumstances, O’Rourke can directly tell his audience about the hard work that he is doing by physically performing that work for them. He shakes hands, drives from location to location, answers questions, rolls up his sleeves, and sweats, as **pictured in Image 2 below.**



Image 2: A Sweaty O’Rourke
(Chamberlain)

By rolling up his sleeves and allowing his sweat to show, he visually signals to his immediate audience that he is exerting a great deal of effort in order to be with them. The result of this effort is evident in the audience's very presence. Through his hard work in traveling to his audience and putting on campaign events, he is able to produce supporter turnout and enthusiasm.

The sweat that sends a message to his immediate audience also allows the narrative to cross mediums. Local and national media outlets latched on to the visual of O'Rourke, sleeves rolled up and sweating through his shirts. Numerous opinion editorials about the campaign verbally referenced and visually represented O'Rourke's sweatiness. Articles like *Politico's* "Beto-mania Sweeps Texas" reference the sweat pouring off of O'Rourke's frame as he jogs with his supporters (Schreckinger). Here, O'Rourke is shown physically working hard, which results in more supporters joining his cause. In an opinion editorial for *The Cut*, Dan Chamberlain states, "Decades of Gatorade commercials weren't lying about sweat as key signifier of an idealized 'hustle'— O'Rourke has raised \$38.1 million in small donations over the last three months." This editorial reiterates the narrative by demonstrating O'Rourke's hard work through his sweat and immediately sharing the results of that effort by communicating the unprecedented amount of money raised by O'Rourke's campaign. In an article for *Vox*, Rachel Sugar overtly contributes to the hard work narrative, writing, "We want authenticity in all things, including our politicians, and what is more authentic than sweat? It is not an implication of hard work; it is physical evidence." Each of these articles includes images of O'Rourke in a sweat-stained shirt, speaking to the people of Texas. Many more articles like these circulated, focusing on

O'Rourke's sweat and gesturing towards its meaning. Each contribute to the narrative that O'Rourke is a hard-working man whose efforts yield results by showing O'Rourke engaged in hard work that produces crowds, donations, and (presumably) votes. His sweatiness is dually nostalgic. O'Rourke's sweatiness invokes what Julián Castro has called the "rugged individual," a nostalgic figure in the Texan imagination that suggests the state's admiration for and felt loss of the strong, gritty individual that the Texan landscape (ought to) make necessary ("Julián Castro's DNC Keynote Address"). Relatedly, O'Rourke's sweat suggests that he can fill the role of the lost political leader that sacrifices, battles, and puts in significant effort to protect the values of Texans. Mythic Texan leaders like those who took an active role in Texan myths about the Alamo—a troubling point I return to in the next section—dedicated blood and sweat to the Texan cause, and O'Rourke signals that he is a member of such a group.

The narrative of authentic Texan identity is also communicated through videos posted on social media. This medium allows the audience to engage with the narrative by actually watching it play out. A prime example of these videos is one posted by O'Rourke's Twitter account. Captioned, "On the road to all 254 counties of Texas," the video depicts O'Rourke loading up his truck, traveling across Texas, running through crowds while giving high-fives, gassing up his truck, and speaking to massive crowds. While showing these video sequences, phrases pop up, such as "254 counties visited," "328 town halls," and "No PACS, just people." Through videos on social media, O'Rourke creates the narrative by actively showing himself doing work and achieving results, namely in the form of crowds and funding. In the background of many of these videos, Willie

Nelson's famous tune, "On the Road Again," can be heard. This song operates as an aural component of the narrative, serving as a reference to O'Rourke's hard work on the road, traveling from county to county. Apart from its lyrics, the song itself produces nostalgia for many of the intended recipients of O'Rourke's narrative. A Texan himself, Willie Nelson and his music are deeply connected to the history of Texas' favorite music genre. Writing on outlaw country and nostalgia, a group of southern sociologists argue that "with emotionality, repeated performance and ritual, there is an affective embracement of a perceived shared heritage that informs these [Texan and southern] identities in significant ways. Actively engaging the musical performance as either creator or listener creates a distinct but important nostalgia for community" (Holyfield et al. 459). Connecting to affective experiences of Texans, Nelson's music represents the good old days of country music and the experience of many in O'Rourke's rhetorical community who fondly recall listening to his music while living in their home state. Nelson is aural authenticity. Even in videos that do not directly make mention of O'Rourke's cross-Texas journey, the use of Nelson's song indirectly tells the story of O'Rourke's hard work—casting him as an authentic person rather than just another politician—and of his connection to the values of the past.

The Rhetorical Vision of the Senate Campaign

Ethos is produced for and surrounds O'Rourke's campaign because supporters' values are tied to the locations where they dwell and where he dwells, too. By emphasizing the concept of home in his campaign through visual cues and his physical presence in that home location, Beto is able to tap into a Texan nostalgia and cast himself as a part of that

nostalgic vision of home. This nostalgic home is progressive in many ways, countering the erasures of a more conservative nostalgia by demonstrating that Texan values are performed within liberal political stances and by an inclusive group of “real” Texans. While it is a more progressive view of the ideal home, its rootedness in the past is often mingled with conservative visions of home. For example, some of O’Rourke’s nods to nostalgic leadership—such as his proud display of excessive sweat that harkens back to rugged, rebel myths about Texan origins—reads as a highly masculine performance of authenticity. Similarly, his relationship with the Latinx community in Texas is a positive move for the state, but perhaps not *as* inclusive as stepping to the side and putting resources behind a member of the community who might be better fit for that office. These are the tensions present in the ways that nostalgia produces *ethos* for O’Rourke in his campaign. Yet, the nostalgic vision of the campaign is revelatory for understanding the way that progress can begin in a deeply conservative state. Part of this is the simple focus on location—on the home. Although people value hard work everywhere, but O’Rourke is seen enacting that value *in* Texas. In this sense, the visual, and at times aural, rhetoric of O’Rourke’s campaign is critical to producing *ethos* because it provides supporters with visual cues that they associate with home, paired with visual confirmation of O’Rourke interacting with those images. Seeing O’Rourke driving a truck on real Texas highways conjures memories of personal experiences for many Texans, from going to work to making the classic summer road trip with stops at Buc-ee’s. Similarly, hearing Willie Nelson’s “On the Road Again,” rather than a generic patriotic tune, inspires feelings of home because of the artist’s connections with Austin and the state’s love of the “Texas

Country” genre. It is in this area of distinctively Texan symbolic cues where the contrast between O’Rourke and Cruz is perhaps most stark. For example, in all of Cruz campaign videos, he shows stock images of Texas and clips of himself in D.C. (or in Texas, but alongside other politicians, like Paul Ryan); in comparison, O’Rourke runs, eats, laughs, and sweats with Texas citizens *in* Texas, making reference to experiences that feel uniquely Texan along the way.

Together, these nostalgic fantasy themes reveal the rhetorical vision that motivates this group’s action. The rhetorical vision of O’Rourke’s campaign is that O’Rourke is a better choice for Texas than Ted Cruz. O’Rourke uses nostalgia to organize a group around this rhetorical vision by appealing to feelings of authenticity and home. As made clear by the fantasy themes, for this group “real people” are nostalgically defined Texans and their hard work is defined by genuine effort that amounts to more than just insincere words and blind ambition. Because the nostalgic fantasy themes show that O’Rourke works hard for the betterment of his home, he is the superior candidate to Cruz, who does little work and has largely given up his connection to home state. The following section further interrogates nostalgia and connectiveness to home by examining O’Rourke’s performance on the national stage, where a connection to home is necessarily different.

A Texan Goes to Washington: The 2020 Presidential Campaign

A challenge of analyzing rhetorical visions—and indeed a criticism levied at fantasy theme analysis itself—is that it is nearly impossible to predict what will happen to the vision when it is forced onto a larger or different group (Griffin 256). For this reason, the *ethos* produced by nostalgias of a real Texas and real Texans is unlikely to translate to

a national scale. The values that imbue the lost home for Texans are not necessarily the same as those of the lost American home—there may be overlap, but the different location necessarily demands a different hierarchy of the values. In simpler terms, what works for Texas doesn't work for America. O'Rourke's disappointing Presidential run seems to be proof positive that rhetorical visions must be reconstructed based on the group and location rather than unilaterally applied—that *ethos* must be *produced* rather than simply *possessed*, based in place and memory.

Analyzing the first Democratic debate for the 2020 Presidential Election offers an excellent example of this critical difference.¹² In a debate marked by underwhelming responses and cautious candidates, O'Rourke's performance stood out from the crowd of candidates, but not in a positive way. After being asked if he would support a 70% tax rate on America's highest earners, O'Rourke responded in both the English and Spanish language. He said, "This economy has got to work for everyone and right now we know that it isn't, and it's going to take all of us coming together to make sure that it does. *Necesitamos incluir cada persona en el éxito de este economía*" ("Transcript from Night 1").¹³ Almost immediately, the moment went viral. Twitter users, like @semioclastia began joking, "Beto O'Rourke is like if gentrification was a person," and immediately labeled Beto's answer as "classic hispandering" (qtd. in Sacks). Memes of Cory Booker and Elizabeth Warren's surprised reactions to O'Rourke's Spanish message circulated

¹² Owing to the number of candidates, the first Democratic debate was split in two, with Beto going up against such national names as Elizabeth Warren and Cory Booker, along with more local figures like Julián Castro. Castro's involvement in the debate will be analyzed in my fourth chapter, focusing on Castro's work with San Antonio's downtown district.

¹³ In English, "We need to include every person in the success of the economy."

widely, and Cory Booker was further dragged into the fray for his own attempts at speaking Spanish later in the same debate. At the heart of all the joking was the same disappointment—this was a moment of *inauthenticity* because it was a clear ploy to attract minority voters and to avoid answering a question that may alienate wealthy supporters. Where the “chaining out” in O’Rourke’s Senate race was largely positive because of the shared values at the heart of those rhetorical moments, what chained out from this debate was a joke about the cringe-worthy nature of politicians pandering for a minority vote while also dodging direct questions. The moment reinforced the value of authenticity, as it might have in Texas, but did so by showing Beto as inauthentic. While an in-depth analysis of national fantasy themes surrounding presidential elections in the United States is a task for another study, the reaction to this moment of the debate implies certain values and beliefs from the American people that are similar to those of Texans, but manifest in almost entirely different ways. Both Americans and Texans are drawn to authentic people, but what is necessary to construct them as “authentic” is not the same at all, because the home is different. In Texas, this event might have played out much differently. Pairing the Spanish language with a reminder that a healthy economy must consider more than upper-class, white Americans, O’Rourke’s message might have been read as an authentic moment in the rhetorical vision constructed by his Senate campaign, demonstrating how “*everyone*” should include the Mexican Americans whose heritage is so significant to the real Texas. A boy from El Paso, he reiterates his status as a real Texan by speaking the language of real Texans, of the average Texas citizen whose material realities must be addressed by often inauthentic, distant politicians who likely have no connection to their

real lives. In fact, his hometown of El Paso—a town with a predominately Mexican American population—and their acceptance of and pride in O’Rourke is a component of his produced, place-based *ethos* that allows him to speak Spanish in Texas without being unilaterally shamed. His perceived connection to his hometown and its language serves to contribute to his “realness,” his separation from distant, elite politicians who do not speak the language of real people. Removed from such a location and its accompanying rhetorical vision, however, O’Rourke’s Spanish message taps into fantasy themes surrounding national politics and the national vision of an ideal, lost home. An authentic person—rather than a typical politician—would not engage in such obvious pandering to a minority population. At the national level, authenticity must be proven differently, tapping into the values at the heart of national nostalgias, of a national loss.

In contrast to this (negative) standout moment for O’Rourke was his response to the El Paso mass shooting, which occurred towards the end of his presidential run. Although his harkening back to a Texas-based strategy in the Democratic debate failed to translate to a national audience, O’Rourke’s anger at the senseless shooting in his hometown was a moment of triumph for his short-lived campaign. On August 3, 2019, less than three months after O’Rourke’s first presidential debate, a gunman opened fire at a Wal-Mart in El Paso, killing 23 people and injuring 23 more. O’Rourke—who served the city both as a Congressman and City Council member—returned home and delivered several speeches about the disaster. His speeches expressed his heartbreak and the necessity of stricter gun control laws in the country, directly drawing a correlation between Trump’s incitement of racism and the mass shooting enacted against Mexican Americans in his city. But it was a

particularly “candid” moment that chained out and captured national attention. Deviating from the now infamous standard line of “thoughts and prayers” often offered by politicians in the wake of unthinkable tragedy, O’Rourke got angry instead. After a vigil for the victims, a reporter called out to O’Rourke from a crowd and asked, “Is there anything in your mind the President can do now to make this any better?” A visibly angry O’Rourke responded:

What do you think? You know the shit that he’s been saying. He’s been calling Mexican immigrants rapists and criminals. I don’t know...like members of the press, what the fuck? Hold on a second! You know, it’s these questions that you know the answers to. I mean, connect the dots about what he’s been doing in this country. He’s not tolerating racism, he is promoting racism. He’s not tolerating violence, he’s inciting racism and violence in this country. So, you know, I just don’t know what kind of question that is. (Knowles)

This statement and expression of anger drew the eyes of the nation, with many applauding O’Rourke’s authenticity. Posting a video of O’Rourke’s response, Twitter user @susiedrapes wrote, “Watch it. Share it. Why aren’t YOU this unfiltered, honest & pissed off about the #WhiteSupremacistInChief? This is not a reality show. Stop acting like it is. #Beto2020.” In contrast to the first Democratic debate, during which O’Rourke appeared to many to be pandering, unwilling to take a firm stance on issues, and categorically inauthentic, his response to the El Paso shooting and questions surrounding control demonstrated honesty and a commitment to a staunch position.

The rhetorical strategies O'Rourke used in Texas did not prove effective in a national presidential run, separated both physically and ideologically from his state. However, the rhetorical "success" of O'Rourke's seemingly passionate response to the mass shooting in El Paso demonstrates how the home can still have national appeal. His reaction to the mass shooting was one of the only moments of his presidential campaign where O'Rourke actually shined because his home was under attack and, back in the physical context of his home place, an *ethos* was produced that enabled him to approach the moment as a Texan, not a candidate. Back in his home state and hometown, O'Rourke was once again in a rhetorical position for a place-based *ethos* to be produced by his love of home and loss of home—in other words, for a nostalgic vision of home to produce an *ethos*, an authenticity that signals to his rhetorical community to participate in the rhetorical vision of which he is a part.

Simply put: in Texas, Beto O'Rourke makes sense.

When Texas Freezes Over

In the opening chapter, I referenced writing my dissertation during the time of the Texas power crisis. I don't know a single person in Texas who was not affected by the crisis, from boiling water to dealing with flooding from burst pipes to being unable to receive needed healthcare during a pandemic that didn't take a break for a winter storm. This nightmarish time brought out the best in the people of Texas, who went above and beyond to take care of their neighbors as they fought against the elements and inept governmental planning and regulations. While Governor Abbott blamed renewable energy sources for the crisis and Ted Cruz literally fled the country—more on that in the following

section—countless Texans showed up for each other to share what little resources they had to help each other out during a tough time. One of those Texans was Beto O’Rourke.

As unprecedented, freezing temperatures struck the state and the vulnerabilities of Texas’ independent electric grid—managed by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT)—were exposed, O’Rourke was one of the few leaders in Texas who was seen *actively* helping the people of Texas.¹⁴ O’Rourke mobilized his Powered by People PAC to do welfare calls, home welfare checks, distribute water in areas under boil advisory, and provide nonperishable foods to those without power for 10+ days. O’Rourke himself took off across the state, using Twitter and Facebook live to stream another cross-Texas road trip much like he had during his senate campaign. Early in the storm, O’Rourke “drove nine hours from his home in El Paso, which was spared the worst of the storm’s effects, to Austin, and by Tuesday was in the Rio Grande Valley, bringing water to people and checking on them at their doors” and named his drive to Austin the “El Paso to Austin straight-shot telethon,” as he and an advisor updated viewers on what small towns they were stopping in and how much money had been raised by Powered by People along the way (Siders). The money raised by the PAC went to immediate disaster relief but also helped Texas towns after the worst of the crisis was over. On March 19, 2021, exactly one month after the worst of the storm, Mayor of DeSoto Rachel Proctor announced that the “Powered By People organization has provided a \$15,000 grant to offset close to \$40,000 in housing expenses that have been accrued while the necessary repairs were made to make

¹⁴ The word “seen” is important, because I am confident that many local leaders worked hard during that time to help their cities and regions weather the storm. But Beto’s work was designed to be broadcasted, to be seen by as many Texans as possible, to go to work for the state but to also make a political statement about who was helping and who was not.

[DeSoto residents'] dwellings habitable again" (Harper). She went on to offer her thanks specifically to O'Rourke, saying, "Thank you to former Congressman Beto O'Rourke for stepping in to help some of DeSoto's most vulnerable residents and we encourage others who are interested to consider doing the same." Deploying his group of "real" Texans and working directly with Texas towns, O'Rourke sent the message that he was part of the state, in good times and bad.

While many conservatives in Texas tried to defend Governor Abbott and Cruz's inaction during the crisis, maintaining that those men couldn't do much to prevent a crisis after it had already happened, few could argue that only O'Rourke had developed a network of people and donors who could be mobilized in an instant—an investment in the Texas people that other Texan leaders had not thought or cared to take the time to create. In an interview with *Vanity Fair* and in response to a question about the impact of his PAC during the power crisis, O'Rourke states,

Just for me, it reinforces how good the people of Texas are—not necessarily the folks in office and the people in power—but the people of Texas. We had 120 folks join us [Wednesday] night for this essentially statewide welfare check-in where we were calling senior citizens across the state, make sure they have electricity, make sure they have water, make sure they have food. And for those who don't, to connect them with help that they need. (Hagan)

Once again, O'Rourke draws from the nostalgic fantasy theme developed during his senate campaign—that *real* Texans roll up their sleeves and get to work, while most politicians are stagnant and ineffectual. Taking to the road yet again to physically show up in real

towns across the state and to physically work next to average citizens, O'Rourke relies on a rhetoric of nostalgia to help him construct the argument that he—and folks like him—are authentic members of the Texas home while others are not. The power crisis provided the perfect opportunity to remind the public of this message as there had rarely been such a chance to see the stark difference between the people (quite literally freezing to death) and politicians (flying to Cancun)—another stunning occasion of visual symbolic cues that mirrored the visual work in O'Rourke's Senate campaign. The people of Texas—and the media—noticed the difference. This event, with its horrific experiences caused by frigid temperatures and widespread power outages, will live in the minds of Texans for decades. Some may even, one day, think of the storm nostalgically, tapping into a deeper Texas nostalgia, and remembering how *real* Texans showed up for one another, helping their neighbors and surviving together while those in power left them behind. O'Rourke has positioned himself to stand amongst the *real*, authentic Texans.

Ted Cruz: A Case of Inauthenticity

As O'Rourke continues to develop the nostalgic fantasy themes he utilized during his senate campaign, so has Ted Cruz continued to be the villain in the group's rhetorical vision. Cruz went viral during the 2020 power crisis for being caught flying to Mexico to escape the winter storm. Liberals and conservatives alike took to social media to critique the Senator for abandoning Texas in its hour of need, pulling no punches. *Vanity Fair* summarized the coverage, reporting,

L'affaire Ted Cruz has ruled the news this week and for good reason: Cruz, a man as unctuous in personality as he is successful in trolling the libs, donned his skinny

jeans and went on vacation to Cancún while his home state of Texas was reeling from a freak snowstorm that stranded millions without power, heat, and access to food and water. The groveling interviews Cruz gave upon his swift return, blaming his daughters' need to escape their cold home for warmer climes (later refuted by now infamous group texts), hasn't helped his cause. (Hagan)

And in contrast to Cruz's emotionally disconnected and physically removed behavior was O'Rourke. The contrast was pointed out by the media, with *Politico* commenting, "While Ted Cruz was getting clobbered for fleeing Texas amid its historic winter storm, the Democrat he defeated in 2018, Beto O'Rourke, was already deep into disaster relief mode — soliciting donations for storm victims, delivering pallets of water from his pickup truck and once again broadcasting his movements on Facebook Live" (Siders). While the word "clobbered" may denote a certain amount of sympathy for Cruz, the comparison signals the heroic fantasy themes that O'Rourke himself was attempting to play into as it highlights Cruz's detachment from the Texas people and O'Rourke's status as a real Texas worker—down to mentioning the pickup truck.

Beyond their responses to the Texas power crisis, O'Rourke constantly reminds his audience of this contrast between himself and Cruz to demonstrate Cruz's inauthenticity. A notable example was O'Rourke's response to the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol that Cruz helped to incite. The day after the riot at the Capitol, O'Rourke sent out a message through Powered by People, citing George Will who claimed the architects of the riot were Trump, Senator Hawley, and Ted Cruz. But O'Rourke comes down hardest on Cruz, writing in an email, "But of the three, it is Cruz who is singled out for giving the

effort to overturn the Presidential election the ‘cloak of larger purpose’ while ‘nurturing the very delusions that soon would cause louts to be roaming the Senate chamber’” (“In Light of What Happened Yesterday”). He adds, “There must be accountability and there must be consequences for Cruz’s role in the insurrection and his cynical, self-serving sedition which inspired the terrorists and coup plotters who stormed the halls of our nation’s government.” His message was accompanied with a call for volunteers to participate in phone banks to call and register Texas voters to vote Cruz out of office. In the wake of the February 2021 power crisis, O’Rourke was asked if he feels he is doing the job of Cruz, and O’Rourke again took the opportunity to reference Cruz’s involvement in the Capitol riot. He responds, “Well, there are a lot of people in Texas who are trying to do that job and to help out. And you’ve got folks in government, Ted Cruz, a great example, who don’t believe in government or don’t believe in our form of government” (Hagan). O’Rourke went on to add, “[Cruz] tried to overturn a lawfully, legitimately, democratically decided election, conspired with seditionists, was very responsible for those who were killed in the insurrection, in the coup attempt on the sixth of January. That guy wants nothing to do with government, or at least our form of it” (Hagan). While the nation at large was (and is) enraged about Trump’s incitement of violence at the Capitol, O’Rourke continuously remarks on how the problem that Texans are poised to solve is Cruz’s problematic politics. Rather than focusing on the beliefs of Cruz, which many in Texas may find sympathetic, O’Rourke roots his criticism of the politician in his actions or lack thereof, making the argument that the actions Cruz takes are not the same as what an authentic Texan would take, as felt in the nostalgic vision of real Texans. Thus, O’Rourke

continuously reiterates that if the heroes in Texas are the Texas people, Cruz is one of the top villains due to his inauthenticity as a Texan in the rhetorical vision.

It is important to consider the consistent villains in the rhetorical vision reinforced by Beto as we examine the role of nostalgia in producing *ethos* for political arguments. We might assume that in reiterating fantasy themes in which he is constructed as a hero, O'Rourke sets himself up to be elected in Texas, as Governor or Senator. However, argumentation is not so linear. The nostalgic rhetorical situation produces *ethos* for O'Rourke's movement and produces *ethos* for the argument that Cruz—and other villains such as Governor Abbott or entrenched politicians like John Cornyn—are not an authentic Texans and therefore not the right people to participate in the state's leadership. As fantasy theme criticism prompts us to consider how the messages of fantasy themes chain out and invite others into the group fantasy, the villains are just as important as the heroes in provoking groups to take action.

A Nostalgic Authenticity

What a fantasy theme analysis makes clear is that the values that O'Rourke's targeted community—Texans—hold dear are embedded in its nostalgic fantasy themes and rhetorical vision. Values such as hard work, honesty, and progress can be readily identified when focus is given to the ways nostalgia contributes to the rhetorical vision of O'Rourke being Texas' best choice for Senator and leader, constructing a place-based *ethos* surrounding O'Rourke as politician and as a movement. However, O'Rourke's leadership in Texas also demonstrates that the production of *ethos* and its role in argumentation is not a linear connection. Just because O'Rourke is nostalgically authentic in the rhetorical

vision of this group does not mean that the argument being crafted is that O'Rourke is the right man for the job in Texas. In fact, so far, O'Rourke has not been "successful" in making that argument. What nostalgia as *ethos* prompts us to reconsider is how and where arguments are made persuasive; this circumstance suggests the need to engage spatial rhetoric in the analysis of nostalgia, a project that is undertaken more thoroughly in the case studies on Richards and Castro. The rhetoric of nostalgia *produces ethos* for a rhetorical situation, but O'Rourke does not *possess ethos*. O'Rourke may never be a Texas Senator or the Governor of the state, but by drawing from the fantasies and nostalgia of Texans, he has participated in the production of *ethos* surrounding a vision of the ideal Texas home—one that stands in contrast to the home of the present. O'Rourke may not be "successful," but the *ethos* produced can invite others into that argument about the ideal Texan home. As Mikal Watts, a San Antonio lawyer and Democratic fundraiser said in the wake of the Texas freeze, "It's a different state of Texas than it was two weeks ago" (Siders). O'Rourke may have participated in an increasingly successful argument that recreates what counts as "authentic" in Texas and weakens the argument of conservatives in the state, allowing the field to be open to other progressive candidates.

O'Rourke's "failures" and "successes" demonstrate the veracity of the nostalgic vision that is only effective when based in a place—when tied to a home. Analyzing nostalgia and its connections to fantasy-theme criticism reveals how significant a player nostalgia is in motivating groups' actions and provides a way of distilling what is most important for communities and how those communities envision their ideal homes. As divisiveness reigns in the political sphere, such studies can help to locate areas where

headway might be made on issues of public importance by discovering what is truly at stake for groups as they craft their arguments. These areas may be metaphorical, but they may also be physical. Learning from the ways in which O'Rourke's identity and *ethos* is produced via a rhetoric of nostalgia that emphasizes the shared, lost home, rhetors should begin to ask not just *how* we can make effective public arguments, but *where*. Where is my home and who can I argue to within it? The next two chapters of this dissertation offer insight into these questions, complicating and explicating them as we continue to consider the role of nostalgia in producing place-based *ethos* in public discourse.

Interchapter 1

Nostalgic Methods: Fantasy-Theme Criticism

A goal of this project is to model a critical nostalgia—a systematic way for the field of rhetoric and writing studies to go about analyzing nostalgic arguments and *ethos* in the public sphere. With this aim, I take the space to further explicate the methods used in the project's analyses and suggest the ways that nostalgia both contributes to and transforms those methods. The interchapters, in tandem, serve to provide areas where critical nostalgia offers needed intervention in rhetorical research methods as rhetoricians increasingly must attend to nostalgia's productions of *ethos* in arguments about home.

This interchapter offers a deeper explanation a nostalgic method employed in the study of Beto O'Rourke in the previous chapter—fantasy-theme criticism. Although it has recently been overlooked by many scholars in rhetorical studies, fantasy-theme criticism offers critics a way of engaging in textual analysis of complicated, layered nostalgia—particularly when an understanding group identity and motivation is critical to fully teasing out the rhetorical workings of that nostalgia. Moreover, bringing nostalgia to the forefront of a fantasy-theme criticism can transform the method into a useful tool for determining what other research methods might contribute to an understanding of the unique ideological tensions at play within a particular argument of nostalgia. In this small chapter, I provide a quick discussion of the theory and processes of fantasy-theme criticism and suggest how it can be used as an approach to meaningfully analyzing a group's nostalgia as that nostalgia functions to produce *ethos* in public arguments.

Symbolic Convergence Theory and Nostalgia

Attendance to interdisciplinary theories of nostalgia transforms fantasy-theme criticism into a tool for implementing critical nostalgia in textual analysis. This transformation provides rhetoricians another means by which to understand and approach the particular workings of nostalgia and *ethos* in discourse. Ernest G. Bormann is credited with the development of symbolic convergence theory (SCT)—the theory behind the fantasy-theme critical approach—expanding the work of social psychologist Robert Bales (Foss 105). The impetus for Bormann’s work was his desire to determine how small groups form shared identities, develop a group consciousness, and are motivated to collective action. Based on his research on small groups, as well as Bales’ insights, Bormann came to the conclusion that the “process of sharing group fantasies” was the reason for the “union of the participants’ symbolic world” (Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, “Three Decades” 276). Collective memory theorists have long argued the existence of shared memories—memories that are based in a group’s ideological commitments and can produce an identity for the group (Halbwachs). Groups collectively experience nostalgia when there is overlap in individuals’ consciousness as a result of sharing a common, idealized memory. In this way, nostalgia *is* symbolic convergence. In Bormann’s own words, “To understand SCT, it is necessary to see how concepts such as dramatizing message, fantasy, fantasy chaining, fantasy type, and rhetorical vision are interrelated” (Bormann, Knutson, and Musolf 254). If nostalgia demonstrates a moment of symbolic convergence for a group, then a detailed process for understanding SCT can become a tool for employing critical nostalgia in pieces of discourse deeply connected to group identity.

If we were to reflect on moments of group cohesiveness—or group bonding—in our own lives, it is likely that we would think about moments in which inside jokes were developed, unexpected events took place, or off-topic conversations overtook the required task of the group. These are the kinds of speech that constitute *dramatizing messages* in SCT. Drawing on Kenneth Burke’s dramatism, SCT understands dramatizing messages as “creative interpretations of the there-and-then,” meaning they are messages that utilize imaginative language to communicate about events that are not immediately happening within the group (Griffin 248). Bormann explains that the content of these messages “consists of characters, real or fictitious, playing out a dramatic situation in a setting removed in time and space from the here-and-now transactions of the group” (Bormann 397). This element of fiction is important to SCT’s suitability for investigating nostalgia, as a group need not reflect on events that actually took place in the manner presented in the group’s communication. It is not important that the messages are “accurate,” but rather it’s important that the group embraces these messages—that messages produce *ethos* by indicating how participation in a dramatic message is possible. In the previous chapter, O’Rourke communicates a message that Texans embrace action and work in a uniquely Texan way. This message is likely inaccurate, or at the very least challenging to prove, as the actions that seemingly constitute that hard work are possible and valued across America. People sweat, drive trucks, and engage in grassroots politics everywhere. However, it does not matter if that message is accurate so long as the group feels that it is so. O’Rourke’s message carried *ethos* for his voters because they felt its accuracy; this feeling was rooted in their ideological construction of their idyllic home.

For *ethos* to be produced for these messages, the group must first feel a dissatisfaction with an element of their present situation. Sociology scholar Vanessa May argues, “Nostalgia almost invariably relates to a sense of unhappiness with the present, against which the past, or rather, an idealized version of the past, is favourably compared, and thus involves an awareness of the distance between now and then” (May 404). Critical nostalgia within fantasy-theme criticism reveals that SCT’s *fantasy chains*—dramatizing messages that explode throughout the group, causing members to “grow excited, interrupt one another, blush, laugh, forget their self-consciousness,” indicating that they are all participants in the drama (Bormann 397)—are rooted in collective dissatisfaction. In fact, researchers have found that a dramatizing message is more likely to “chain out” within a group when said group is experiencing dissatisfaction with their situation or facing a problem that they do not know how to solve—a situation ideal for breeding nostalgia, as nostalgia relates to “unhappiness with the present” (Griffin 250; May 404). By foregrounding nostalgia, SCT’s potential as a method of critical nostalgia can be seen in its transformation of Bormann’s depiction of fantasy chains as a “dramatic theme might relate to the repressed psychological problems of some or all of the members and thus pull them into participation” (Bormann 397). I want to suggest that critical nostalgia prompts us to rethink the “repressed psychological problems” of a group as the rhetorical needs of a group—particularly, the group’s difficulty in enacting its ideology in a given situation. Without this felt loss, it is likely that a group member’s dramatizing message will fall flat—an insight into the function of SCT that critical nostalgia makes possible. We have all experienced being in a group situation where someone attempted to crack a joke or shared

a speculation and the group failed to respond. The group did not interpret the dramatizing message in an enthusiastically positive manner, making the dramatization an individual event that will contribute nothing to the group's consciousness (Bormann, Knutson, and Musolf 255). If progressively-minded Texans were not dissatisfied with Cruz's political performance, O'Rourke's narrative surrounding authentic Texan identity would not have chained out and become motivational for that group.

According to Bormann, Cragan, and Shields, a *fantasy* is a "creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events" that fulfills a group's rhetorical needs ("Three Decades" 282). Sonja Foss writes that a group's fantasy, or fantasies, "articulates the group's mind or worldview, encompassing a common experience of the group and shaping it into shared knowledge" (106-107). A fantasy is composed of *fantasy themes*, which provide insight into that fantasy for outsiders and allow group members to maintain the collective fantasy. For SCT to help us analyze nostalgia and *ethos* in group's ideologies, nostalgia must be treated as a type of fantasy theme, because it functions as a way for group members to express their ideology and find others who do so as well. Bormann argues that a group's recollections and dreams serve as fantasy themes (397). As recollections and dreams function as past, future, and hypothetical narratives, nostalgia can serve as a fantasy theme because of its connection to stories from the past and desires for the future, inviting outsiders to participate in the production of *ethos* via participation in that ideological story, including the spaces and places that live within the fantasy.

Fantasy themes can present in a variety of forms through *symbolic cues*—"a code word, nonverbal gesture, phrase, slogan, inside joke, bumper sticker, or any shorthand way

of re-establishing the full force of shared fantasy” (Griffin 251). For example, Beto’s use of the song “On the Road Again” functioned as a symbolic cue for the nostalgic fantasy theme operating in their rhetorical vision by collapsing the narrative of the ideal, lost Texas home into a song that represents its lifestyle and aesthetic while also gesturing towards Beto’s participation in that vision via his physically being “on the road” in that home place through his cross-state travels. Fantasy themes, as indicated through symbolic cues, reveal the emotions, values, and beliefs that constitute a group’s ideology—or rather, the shared, component pieces of their individual ideologies that motivate their collective responses and actions to specific events. Using SCT to analyze the nostalgic fantasy themes of a group indicates what symbolic cues connect to a group’s nostalgia and gestures to how individuals can participate in and propagate that nostalgic fantasy theme by adopting and performing those cues. The performance of the symbolic cues—such as Beto’s sweatiness—in conjunction with the underlying ideological stances represented by the symbolic cues produces *ethos* for what Bormann calls the *rhetorical vision* of the group by showing membership and ideological compatibility. Considerations of nostalgia reveal that this vague *rhetorical vision* might be thought of as the group’s idealized vision of home.

The merging of the group’s fantasy themes constructs and reveals the details of a group’s ideal home. Foss says this rhetorical vision is “a swirling together of fantasy themes to provide a particular interpretation of reality” (108). The rhetorical vision “unifies various scripts to give participants a broader view of things” (Zanin et al. 440). While fantasy themes, on their own, reveal responses to specific events in a group’s shared experience, taken collectively they build a rhetorical vision of the lost home that accounts

for the group's motivations more broadly. The group's collective idealized home offers a more thorough picture of the networked rhetorical elements—including places, stories, bodies, and histories—that work together to produce *ethos* for a group's fantasy by creating places where authentic and valued action is legible. Writing on the import of piecing together a group's rhetorical vision, Bormann writes, "Most importantly, motives are in the messages. The rhetorical vision of a group of people contains their drives to action. People who generate, legitimize and participate in a public fantasy are, in Bales' words, 'powerfully impelled to action' by that process" (406). Providing a systematic way to determine the rhetorical vision of a group is SCT's greatest contribution to the field of rhetoric, allowing for a means to uncover a group's ideology and, what Sharon Crowley calls "ideologies." In *Toward a Civil Discourse*, Crowley refers to the component pieces of ideologies as an *ideologic*, stating, "I use the term ideologic to name the connections that can be forged among beliefs within a given ideology and/or across belief systems" (75). It seems likely to me that groups form around these ideologies rather than having to share an entire ideology in order to achieve cohesion. Ideologies allow for people to respond to events in the same way, without having to have an entirely uniform view of the world. Krista Ratcliffe, in *Rhetorical Listening*, uses a similar term—*cultural logics*. For Ratcliffe, a cultural logic is "a belief system or way of reasoning that is shared within a culture" (10). Cultural logics, like ideologies, cannot be held only by an individual but must form out of the shared beliefs or values of a given group. These logics dictate how members of the group or the group as a whole will respond to issues and events. I consider ideologies more important to understanding what motivates groups than attempting to

understand the entirety of a group's worldview. Such an undertaking would seemingly oversimplify the nuances of how individuals respond to the world and are constantly evolving their ideology based on environmental feedback. However, examining the ideologics of a group can reveal what unites that group and its collective response to certain issues. For example, the nostalgic fantasy themes in O'Rourke's campaign discourse constructs a rhetorical vision of home; in order to reclaim that lost home, O'Rourke becomes an ideal leader for Texas as he demonstrates shared feelings of loss and embodies the value of that home. The rhetorical vision of the idealized home importantly indicates the component pieces of the ideology—values like hard work and strong action paired with images and experiences from home—that motivate O'Rourke's supporters to conclude that he is, in fact, ideal. Employing critical nostalgia within fantasy-theme criticism helps to uncover what those ideologics might be for a group and how location may serve as an ideologic, producing *ethos* for the vision of home by allowing group members to participate and perform their group identity in places both hypothetical and physical.

Nostalgia provides SCT with new relevance to rhetoricians studying political discourse because it suggests areas in which understanding symbolic convergence might be useful in analyses of political arguments. If SCT offers a methodical way of interrogating the ideologics of a group, nostalgia should certainly be a part of that theory because of the insights it provides into shared ways of viewing the world. The underlying concepts of SCT also lend themselves well to accounting for the complex nuances present in nostalgic stories and visions. As discussed in Chapter 1, nostalgia is at once individual, social,

temporal, spatial, and emotional. The tension between nostalgia's individual and social nature is addressed in a basic tenet of SCT that "symbols not only create reality for individuals but that individuals' meanings for symbols can converge to create a shared reality or community consciousness" (Foss 105-106). Nostalgia constitutes a social force, then, when these symbols converge and the group collectively desires an idyllic past, because its ideology—shared values, emotions, and beliefs—cannot be easily acted upon in the present time. Similarly, nostalgia's fixedness in a certain time and space, with no need to be grounded in actual experiences of the group, can be easily accounted for in SCT because it is not concerned with accuracy but rather with understanding the ideology of a group through its rhetorical vision of the idealized home. By embracing critical nostalgia while performing fantasy-theme criticism we can determine the role that nostalgia plays in a group's identity and ideology, gaining a clearer picture of the *ethos* that motivates the group to action.

Fantasy-Theme Criticism and Other Critical Approaches

The fantasy-theme method of rhetorical criticism that emerged from SCT provides a way of identifying and analyzing the fantasy-themes at play within a group. Owing to the dramatic nature of fantasies, a critic first examines a group or group member's use of the three types of themes "necessary to create a drama: setting themes, character themes, and action themes" (Foss 107-108). These initial means of interrogation—or coding tools—are closely connected to those of the Burkean pentad: act, agent, agency, purpose, and scene. Although there is overlap in the coding strategies for fantasy theme and pentadic criticism, in the former, setting, character, and action themes are located for the purpose of finding

fantasy themes rather than for the purpose of determining the perspective of an individual rhetor or discovering what aspect of the rhetorical situation a rhetor finds most motivating (Foss 371-372). The focus of fantasy theme criticism is ultimately to discover the ideologics that cause a group to coalesce and perform unified action, lending itself well to understanding the motivations that are clarified in a rhetorical vision. While motive is a key consideration for both fantasy-theme and pentadic criticism, SCT clearly articulates that motive is found in the message, and that the message is not created by a single rhetor. Bormann, Cragan, and Shields argue, “Although SCT posits that the loci of meaning, emotion, value, and motive for action are in the message, it also posits that the message is co-created with the audience” (“Three Decades” 273). Because nostalgia is a social phenomenon, rooted in the collective values and beliefs of a group, it is much more easily analyzed through a method designed to interrogate groups rather than one that often focuses on individual rhetors. The social production of meaning and motive is an assumption of SCT that separates fantasy theme from a great deal of pentadic criticism, while still sharing certain underlying approaches and goals.

Perhaps one of the main benefits of employing fantasy theme criticism to analyze nostalgia, as well as other components of group communication, is its flexibility to incorporate coding strategies from numerous critical approaches. It can *and should* also incorporate methods from feminist, decolonial, metaphoric, generic, and place-based criticism. Metaphors can reveal fantasy themes because they function as the “concepts that govern our thought” and “structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people” (Lakoff and Johnson 3). In many ways, metaphors serve as

symbolic cues, pointing to expansive narratives and shaping the way we think about given topics (Sheehan 59). Metaphors can suggest nostalgic visions when the unspoken narrative that a metaphor refers to connects to idyllic stories of the past. Likewise, genres can indicate fantasy themes by signaling that certain actions should be taken in order to produce a genre-conforming action (Foss 180; Miller 152). The form often conceals the message, but the message is there nonetheless. A group's nostalgia may be contained in its adherence to the performance of certain genres, making genre a discursive feature indicative of fantasy themes. Place-based criticism, too, can provide strategies for locating fantasy themes by drawing attention to the locations, and their dimensions, that groups dramatically habituate. As Roxanne Mountford notes in her work on rhetorical space, "Spatial distinctions are the foundation of Western thought: we use 'here' and 'there,' 'outside' and 'inside' in philosophical discourse and on street corners to put ideas—and people—where we think they belong" ("On Gender" 41). She later adds, "To make such a claim is to argue that rhetorical spaces carry the residue of history upon them, but also, perhaps, something else: a physical representation of relationships and ideas" ("On Gender" 42). Nostalgia, as a social phenomenon that idealizes in order to structure settings, or homes, in ways that crystalize the values of a group, is built around this concept of spatial distinctions. Who gets to be in the nostalgic place and how they are located within that space can constitute a fantasy theme and suggest the ideologics that bind the group together. The units of analysis in each of these critical approaches can be utilized in order to discover the fantasy themes operating within a group in more productive ways than merely examining discourse for characters, settings, and actions. Because fantasy themes

are produced by the unique beliefs, values, and experiences of a group, it is helpful to have multiple modes of inquiry that might reveal buried, yet important, themes. After coding for these fantasy themes, a critic would then note which themes appear most prevalent, and from there would piece together the rhetorical vision of the group based on the fantasy types revealed.

Moving Forward

Fantasy-theme criticism—and how it allows us to consider nostalgia in connection to groups' rhetorical visions—enables us to find new ways of locating and critiquing the nuances of the production of *ethos* that work to influence and persuade. Such work is particularly needed in the public sphere, where the divisiveness of language poses an immediate threat. While this interchapter has focused on the uses of enacting a critical nostalgia through fantasy-theme criticism, numerous other research methods are enriched by embracing critical nostalgia. In the following chapters and interchapters, additional nostalgic methods emerge that heighten our practices of interrogating nostalgia and *ethos* within public argumentation.

Chapter 3

Ann Richards and Nostalgic Bodies

*“I know that it is within families that we learn
both the need to respect individual human dignity
and to work together for our common good.*

Within our families, within our nation, it is the same.”

- Ann Richards, at the 1988 Democratic National Convention



Image 1: Ann Richard Delivers the 1988 DNC Keynote Address
(S. Smith)

Introduction

The year is 1988 and a silver-haired woman takes the stage at the Democratic National Convention. Her Tiffany blue dress and white pearl jewelry sparkle against the dark backdrop of the convention stage. She smirks and tilts her head—from a distance, you’d think she was winking at you—and thanks the crowd for their tumultuous applause,

cracking her first joke of the evening: “I am delighted to be here with you this evening, because after listening to George Bush all these years, I figured you needed to know what a real Texas accent sounds like.” The crowd goes wild. They roar, and she chuckles, a creator of and participant in the joke she’s crafted. The crowd quiets down, and she moves on, noting the last time a woman was on that famous stage. “Twelve years ago, Barbara Jordan—another Texas woman—Barbara made the keynote address to this convention, and two women in 160 years is about par for the course.” She grins, “But, if you give us a chance, we can perform. After all, Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels.” Once again, the crowd explodes as she stands there and grins, basking in the energy of the room that she’s ignited. It’s her first moment in the national spotlight, and she’ll make it a memorable moment for the people in the crowd and for the history of the convention. This witty woman is Ann Richards.

The 1988 keynote address at the Democratic National Convention catapulted Ann Richards to national fame. A woman who had hitherto only been involved in state politics, her sharp wit and downhome speaking style made her address unforgettable and solidified her as a political dynamo. Her speech was riddled with witticisms that have now become infamous—such as George Bush was “born with a silver foot in his mouth”—and relied heavily on southern slang, like “that old dog won’t hunt” and “we’re going to tell how the cow ate the cabbage.” A central theme in her speech was an appeal to the troubles of “real people” versus the lives of the political elite, emphasizing that real people “talk straight” and presenting narratives from hardworking Texas citizens like herself. This nod towards authenticity mirrors much of what was discussed in the previous chapter about Beto

O'Rourke. A key difference, however, is that Ann Richards is a woman—a person whose embodied identity must factor into the ecology of the nostalgic production of *ethos* in a way entirely different from Beto's identity.

Richards would go on to become the first woman elected as Governor of Texas.¹⁵ Although Democrats regularly served as Governor at the time—a contrast to O'Rourke's contemporary situation—a woman Governor in 1990 was nearly impossible to imagine prior to Richards' campaign. Richards' political success is significant in Texas, a place with machismo written into its cultural DNA, “a state where even the road signs—‘Don't Mess With Texas’—are macho” (Morris 37). Although she would only serve one term as Governor, losing in 1994 to a young George W. Bush, the ways that Richards navigates a hostile political landscape in Texas, where “what is ‘difficult’ for women elsewhere seems impossible,” are worthy of analysis (Shropshire and Schaefer 51). Investigating Richards' gubernatorial campaign provides a way to consider the role that nostalgia played in producing *ethos* for her campaign and, especially, her abilities as a woman to occupy a traditionally masculine space.

In this chapter, I engage in an analysis of Richards' campaign for Texas Governor by focusing on her most famous speech and the embodied performance of her campaign via images in order to gain a better understanding of the nostalgic production of her *ethos*. I argue that nostalgia contributed a great deal to the *ethos* surrounding Richards by

¹⁵ Miriam “Ma” Ferguson was the first woman to serve as Texas Governor in 1924; however, many do not consider her to have been properly elected because she openly campaigned as a “puppet candidate” (Huddleston). She ran for the position following the impeachment of her husband, James “Pa” Ferguson, with the campaign promise that she would run the state exactly as he did. Ferguson is a unique political figure deserving of her own rhetorical history, which is beyond the scope of this project.

constructing her as a woman rooted in the past, providing a nostalgic justification of her body in masculine rhetorical spaces and therefore making her body acceptable in a position of power in the conservative state. A critical stance on the nostalgic rhetoric surrounding and constructing Ann Richards as figure and movement takes into account what (embodied) arguments she is able to make and how nostalgia impacts the way her body is read and the *ethos* she can produce. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how nostalgia functioned to produce *ethos* for her body and progressive public arguments while also placing her in the past and thus limiting her work. Exploration of such competing ideological tensions affords this chapter the ability to reveal implications for the progressive and regressive effects of nostalgic *ethos* as a tool for women in the public sphere. Because of the gendered, textual, and temporal nature of Richards' nostalgic body, I blend feminist analysis and archival research to accomplish an understanding of the embodied nature of her *ethos*. In this chapter, I first explain how feminist rhetorical criticism can be used to analyze nostalgia as it works to gender political performances. Then, I offer an analysis of Richards' campaign, focusing on the ways that nostalgia functions to construct her *ethos* for Texans of the past as well as the ways that nostalgia operates to construct Richards' *ethos* in the present. Finally, I offer implication for what Richards' political endeavors reveals about rhetorical and critical nostalgia—namely how a group's nostalgia shapes bodies in accordance with their motivating ideological values.

Nostalgia and Feminist Criticism

In my analysis of Beto O'Rourke, I rely on fantasy theme criticism to understand the symbolic convergence taking place through nostalgia in O'Rourke's campaign. I also

indicate that fantasy theme analysis can reveal what forms of analysis are also needed to better evaluate groups and fantasies with unique features. Using feminist analysis highlights the ways that nostalgia affects gender identity and perceptions of gender performance, enabling the critic to best interrogate the gendered quality of nostalgia operating around Ann Richards. Feminist analysis is deeply concerned with the body as it constructs and negotiates rhetorical, ideological situations. Rhetorical scholar Karma Chávez writes, “Feminists reveal that, at its heart, the abstract body and actual bodies are about power: who and which bodies matter, become material (important and present), in this field” (245). Employing feminist analysis reveals the power dynamics of bodies in space; such analysis offers a critical way of understanding nostalgic spaces—constructed through the materialized values of a group—and the ways that excluded or silenced bodies navigate those spaces to assert their own rhetorical power.

Feminist analysis is also temporal, making it ideal for interrogating performance—bodies acting in both space and time. Roxanne Mountford argues that paying attention to physicality and space within gendered rhetorical performance brings the temporal components of rhetoric into sharper focus, offering a feminist approach to analysis that counters theories of rhetoric that exclude gendered bodies’ rhetorical performance (*The Gendered Pulpit*, 152). Merging space, time, and bodies, analysis of gendered performance becomes a key focus of nostalgic feminist criticism. Scholars like Lindal Buchanan have argued the import of the temporal in rhetorical performance, citing a performance’s social and historical context as necessary to interpret its significance in relation to the “larger cultural currents that envelop and affect it,” including “offstage” components not often

associated with performance (3). I argue that an analysis of nostalgia within a gendered performance requires attention beyond the historical context of a communicative event. It also necessitates an interrogation of idealized, past times that are drawn into a rhetor's performance and hold significance for the group experiencing that performance. The layered temporal elements of nostalgia in rhetorical performance are further complicated by layered rhetorical spaces. Rhetorical spaces provide "a physical representation of relationships and ideas" (Mountford, "On Gender," 42). Rhetorical spaces, then, provide a physical form of the values and ideology of the group that creates and occupies that space. Considering nostalgia within gendered performance involves an examination of the rhetorical space of the immediate communicative event—podiums on political stages—as well as the more theoretical rhetorical space of the idealized home. To successfully perform nostalgia in the public sphere, women like Richards must negotiate ideologies that resist her existence in the immediate temporal space as well as the ideologies that construct the nostalgic home space. Examining gendered performance by attending to the multiple temporal and spatial elements at play provides feminist criticism a way of better understanding the relationship between gender and nostalgia in the public sphere.

There are four categories of analysis for gendered performance—bodies, dress, space, and time—that offer a rhetorical critic means of examining and presenting full accounts of women as rhetorical agents (Jack 300). Going a step further, women making public change often rely on these four categories as areas of rhetorical agency. Feminist criticism identifies strategies women use to shift ideological commitments while also accounting for the rhetorical demands placed on bodies at the same moment. Considering

time in conjunction with space as we employ feminist analysis allows us to “better account for why existing gender arrangements are so difficult to dislodge through rhetorical action—it is not only ideas or beliefs that must change but also material arrangements of bodies, spaces, and times” (Jack 300). If nostalgia rhetorically functions as an argument about the ideal home that can be recreated in the future, a feminist analysis of nostalgia must assess the embodied ways in which women both utilize and resist that argument while also negotiating the arguments of their contemporary rhetorical spaces. Ann Richards’ success as a woman in Texas politics requires her to perform in two rhetorical spaces at once—the physical spaces she occupies on the campaign trail and the nostalgic, idyllic home place of the past where her credibility is established.

The home place is a complex location when evaluating nostalgia’s relationship with the body. Arguing that incongruities exist in feminist nostalgia, Eichhorn notes, “Feminists are not nostalgic for a home that has been lost or radically altered. Indeed, feminism has long been premised on the desire to leave the home – to unmoor ourselves from its shackles and in some case, from its memories too” (262). This chapter examines the tensions of home in Richards’ political performance, exploring how Richards can utilize nostalgia in her embodied performance in a way that enables her to leave the home place at the same time that she predicates this progressive move by demonstrating her role in the nostalgic home.

To analyze the elements of bodies, dress, space, and time in Richards’ political performance, I selected artifacts best able to provide insight into those feminist categories of analysis. The first artifact is a recording of Richards’ 1988 DNC keynote address. The

speech kickstarts her campaign for governor, making it relevant to understanding the nostalgia operating in the race for governor. It also offers a fully embodied performance where one can note the interplay of her body and dress as well as the rhetorical space and time of the rhetorical event. Following an in-depth analysis of her speech, I move to an analysis of photographs from Richards' gubernatorial campaign. These artifacts, found in the Briscoe Center for American Study's Ann Richards archival collection, provide another way of analyzing feminist, feminine, and nostalgic themes that propelled her campaign and produced her *ethos* as a woman in Texas government. Archives, as houses of memory, are a rich ground for analyzing the rhetorical function of nostalgia within discourse; in the interchapter following this chapter, I explore the process of engaging in feminist archival research through nostalgia.

Analysis of Richards' 1988 DNC Speech

In 1988, Richards was invited to deliver the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention by Democratic leader Ron Brown. The second woman to have ever been invited to give the DNC's keynote address at that time, the speech was a significant moment for the history of the Democratic Party but also for Richards' own political career. Ahead of the DNC, Richards had formally announced her run for Governor of Texas in 1990, making her DNC speech the kickstart to her campaign. Thus, her speech presents a unique rhetorical situation to analyze as Richards must meet the rhetorical demands of a DNC keynote address while also signaling her own qualifications for governor back in Texas. A feminist analysis of Richards' address reveals three elements of her gendered performance that nostalgically construct her body in a way that produces her *ethos* during

the speech and move forward into her gubernatorial campaign: lessons from home, witty humor, and physical presentation.

Lessons from Home

Nostalgia functions so seamlessly as *ethos* in part because it is able to outsource the production of credibility to the group participating in the nostalgic rhetorical vision. As noted in the chapter on O'Rourke, a rhetor's authenticity can be proven by embodying the values of that group and participating in its valued narratives; such "proof" is dependent on the group assessing and accepting that performance as credible. Scholars have long noted the import of testable credentials in persuasive communication, arguing that the "testable credential" can be used unethically when deferring to the understandings of an unethical audience (Heath and Heath 6). However, the use of testable credentials can be a highly feminist form of communication as women try to navigate a male-dominated rhetorical situation, like the one faced by Richards in 1988. To build *ethos* for her message in the 1988 DNC address, Richards carefully relies on personal and anecdotal stories connected to the home in order to create testable situations for her audience that ultimately prove her credibility on the political stage (Dow and Tonn 289). Her use of domestic analogies provides a standard for evaluation of political situations, of which she is a master because of her own—and the audiences—personal experiences within homes and families.

The first instance of a testable credential can be found early in her speech as she tells about the way she was raised during the Great Depression. In her story, she connects her own political party to the lessons and values she learned at home. She begins, "Where I grew up there wasn't much tolerance for self-importance — people who put on airs. I was

born during the Depression in a little community just outside Waco, and I grew up listening to Franklin Roosevelt on the radio.” She goes on to discuss the values she learned during that time and place, saying that it was in her childhood when she “came to understand the small truths and the hardships that bind neighbors together—those were real people with real problems and they had real dreams about getting out of the Depression.” Richards constructs a narrative where “real” people are those who face economic hardships and must rely on each other to navigate their struggles. She then goes on to describe the qualities of the real folks—specifically the men—who she learned from as a child. Mentioning sitting on a “Baptist pallet” and hearing the sounds of dominoes clicking and men laughing, she tells what the men spoke of: “They talked about war and Washington and what this country needed — they talked straight talk, and it came from people who were living their lives as best they could. And that's what we're gonna do tonight -we're going to tell how the cow ate the cabbage.” This personal anecdote functions in Richards’ speech to 1) connect domestic places with “real,” credible experiences, 2) establish an experiential standard by which political and personal issues can be tested, and 3) create an association between Richards and men by demonstrating their shared enactment of the same values in both the personal and public sphere.

Following this narrative from her childhood, Richards provides a contrast to the positive standard set by her own political party and domestic experience by reading a letter from a young mother in Lorena, Texas. The letter shares the hardships of a working mother, who says her “worries go from payday to payday, just like millions of others” as she fears the rising cost of insurance, food, clothing, and education. The letter concludes,

“We’re the people you see every day in the grocery store . . . we plod along trying to make it better for ourselves and our children . . . we aren’t vocal anymore—I think maybe we’re too tired. I believe that people like us are forgotten in America.” Richards affirms this experiential, home-based narrative by asserting, “Well course you believe you’re forgotten, because you have been!” Richards goes on to critique the Republican Administration for consistently telling Americans that their issues are not legitimate and that the problem resides with the American people themselves, specifically focusing on the rising costs of food, clothes, and schools amidst a decrease in jobs and rise in single, working mothers. She concludes this vignette with the quip, “We want answers, and their answer is that something is wrong with you. Well, nothing's wrong with you — nothing wrong with you that you can't fix in November.” Richards creates a testable argument—and in doing so, a way of testing her own credibility—by deferring to the audience and general public’s lived experience and demonstrating how the Republican Party fails to live up to the standards people live with at home.

Richards further proves this point by drawing a connection between children and the Republican Party in one of her most memorable quips of the speech. She introduces a discussion of Iran-Contra and Republicans’ foreign policies by first praising the leadership of Jesse Jackson, highlighting his “capacity for caring” and his focus on domestic public issues, including crime, education, and drugs. She immediately critiques Republican leaders who do not live up to this standard by shifting to foreign policy issues. Richards states,

Now, in contrast, the greatest nation of the free world has had a leader for eight straight years that has pretended that he cannot hear our questions over the noise of the helicopter. We know he doesn't want to answer. But we have a lot of questions. And when we get our questions asked, or there is a leak, or an investigation, the only answer we get is, "I don't know," or "I forgot." But you wouldn't accept that answer from your children. I wouldn't. Don't tell me "you don't know" or "you forgot."

Creating an analogy between foreign policy and managing children in the home, Richards anchors political understanding in domestic understanding. By establishing behavior that she—and members of the audience—accept in their own homes, she develops a way of testing acceptable responses in the public sphere. Republicans fail this test of credibility, while Richards is able to pass.

Richards continues her critique of the Republican Party and their international policies by asking the audience to test the financial decisions made by Republicans. She draws a comparison between mothers and families who must be fiscally savvy in their daily lives with the debt accrued by the Republican Party. Beginning with a domestic anecdote, Richards jokes, "We fought a world war on less debt than the Republicans have built up in the last eight years. It's kind of like that brother-in-law who drives a flashy new car but he's always borrowing money from you to make the payments." She further emphasizes the irresponsible nature of Republican spending by noting its ineffectiveness, stating, "But when we pay billions for planes that won't fly, billions for tanks that won't fire and billions for systems that won't work, that old dog won't hunt." Ensuring that the

domestic comparison is apparent, Richards adds, “And you don't have to be from Waco to know that when the Pentagon makes crooks rich and doesn't make America strong, that it's a bum deal.” Once again, Richards argues that domestic work and real experiences of the general public should serve as the standard of behavior in the public sphere and that a focus on inefficient foreign policies does not live up to the standard set in homes across the nation.

Throughout her speech, Richards sets up testable scenarios rooted in domestic experiences that establish herself and her party as credible while also demonstrating the failures and lack of credibility of the Republican Party. She selects anecdotes and narratives where she can reasonably be seen as a political expert, over men and women alike. For a Texan woman in the late eighties, the home is a place where she can assert credible authority and create situations that further assert this position as a mixed audiences tests her claims. Rooting her expertise in the home and in her upbringing, Richards uses nostalgic views of her gender identity as an asset in the political arena. Rather than resisting a nostalgic, traditional understanding of the roles of women in America, she merges that nostalgic impulse with nostalgic values to demonstrate her own aptitude for making meaningful political change. Examining her use of humor and her physical presentation during the speech will further explicate her interaction with nostalgic arguments in one her most pivotal political moments.

Witty Humor

Since her 1988 DNC keynote address, Richards has become infamous for her humor. No analysis of Richards' communication style and political prowess would be

complete without an evaluation of her wit in political settings. In an article about the humor of Ann Richards, rhetorician Diane M. Martin argues that Richards skillfully employs humor to “negotiate socially constraining gender roles and political outsider/insider status” (277). Martin goes on to note a difference between *feminine* humor and *feminist* humor, contending that the latter is a hopeful humor that attempts to affirm women’s strength, reify group relationships, and subvert mainstream cultural expectations (276). With such a definition, Richards’ use of humor in her DNC keynote address qualifies as feminist humor as she carefully inserts humor in order to negotiate two significant hurdles for women political leaders. The first affordance her humor provides is allowing her to critique men in a palatable manner to her audience and Texans of the time—a challenge given the risk of being perceived as “unfeminine, shrill, and nagging” (Jamieson 1988). Second, Richards’ particular style of humor can be considered masculine, lending credence to her body in a traditionally male space. Through her use of humor, Richards affirms the strength of women and thwarts cultural expectations while at the same time being aware of those expectations. Understanding prevailing nostalgic views of women as socially and politically ranked beneath men, as well as confined to home and family work, Richards enacts a feminist humor that allows her to avoid offense while also affirming her own political capabilities.

As seen in the previous section, Richards pairs her critiques of men in power with humor. Richards begins her address by calling George Bush’s authenticity as a Texan into question. She quips, “I am delighted to be here with you this evening, because after listening to George Bush all these years, I figured you needed to know what a real Texas

accent sounds like.” At the conclusion of this joke, the audience roars, having been made temporary Texan insiders able to laugh at the failings of Bush. Where leveling ostensibly “harsh” denunciations of Bush’s policies may have created resistance to Richards’ political credentials, by jokingly making fun of his status as a Texan, Richards is able to build a rapport through which she can deliver softened—yet not undermined—criticism.

Following her joke about Bush, Richards then moves into a critique of her own party for the lack of women invited to deliver the keynote address at the DNC, saying,

Twelve years ago Barbara Jordan, another Texas woman, Barbara made the keynote address to this convention, and two women in 160 years is about par for the course. But, if you give us a chance, we can perform. After all, Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels.

In referencing Barbara Jordan, Richards casts herself and Jordan as simultaneous outsiders in national politics, yet insiders in Texas. Her use of a familiar duo—Fred and Ginger—strengthens her joke by allowing the audience to recognize its validity while not rejecting its message. Here again, she softens but does not undermine her own position.

While Richards’ speech is filled with jokes, perhaps her most famous moment of humor came late in her speech and was again directed at George Bush. Following her critique of Republican foreign policy, she connects foreign policy failures with Bush’s ineptitude to be president. She jokes about his lack of familiarity with the issues facing Americans, owing to the platform of his party as well as his upper-class upbringing.

Richards jokes,

For eight straight years George Bush hasn't displayed the slightest interest in anything we care about. And now he's after a job he can't get appointed to, he's like Columbus discovering America—he's found childcare, he's found education. Poor George, he can't help it—he was born with a silver foot in his mouth.

Beyond casting Bush as an outsider because of his wealth, her joke solidifies Bush as an outsider because of his inexperience with issues commonly thought of as family or women's issues. She suggests he only "discovered" these problems in order to appeal to women and left-leaning voters. By joking that Bush's wealth has been a hindrance to him in his attempts to communicate with regular Texans and Americans, Richards performs a feminist humor that highlights class and sex as major differences between the Democrat and Republican Parties.

It is also important to note the style of Richards' jokes. Richards employs colloquial Southern phrases that display her insider-status as an authentic Texan and politician, as well as her comfort with masculine joking. Her use of familiar, working-class witticisms serves to reduce the possibility of her being misunderstood—a substantial issue for women attempting humor in male dominated spaces (Barreca 88)—and demonstrates her ability to perform like a man. Phrases like, "We're going to tell how the cow ate the cabbage," "That old dog don't hunt," and, "He was born with a silver foot in his mouth" operate nostalgically in Richards' speech, harkening back to familiar sayings uttered in the family home. Repeating those phrases in her speech works in conjunction with her selected narratives and physical presentation to both utilize and subvert nostalgic perceptions of her body, producing an *ethos* for her as a politician.

Physical Presentation

A feminist analysis of Richards' DNC address must also consider her physical body within the space. Richards' body is famous in and of itself, regardless of her humor and political stances. A great deal of attention was, and is, paid to her hair and clothing. In fact, Richards often joked about the obsession with her white, bouffant hairstyle, regularly commenting, "I get a lot of cracks about my hair, mostly from men who don't have any." With her keen sense of gender in politics and Texas culture, it is worth analyzing her physical presentation during her address to best understand how she attempted to use her physical performance to her political advantage. As she occupies spaces traditionally occupied by men—both as a politician and a speaker at the DNC—Richards' considerations for producing a place-based *ethos* are more fraught than those of, say, Beto O'Rourke. O'Rourke's use of nostalgia to produce a place-based *ethos* for his campaign is relatively uncomplicated because few would question his body's presence in a nostalgic vision of Texas or in contemporary political spaces, providing him a simpler route to proving his belonging in that nostalgic home place. In contrast, Richards must do double the work to prove her belonging in contemporary political spaces by reconfiguring the values of the past to alter that nostalgic home. She manages this rhetorical challenge by signifying her belonging to another space—the Texas home—and demonstrating the similar ideologies of both places. Richards use of narrative and humor aids in this performance, but her appearance, gestures, and speaking style offer the audience a manifested performance of a shared ideology that contributes to her credibility in a space that would seek to undermine her.

Appearance

In 1988, Ann Richards was not an old woman. With her hairstyle, clothing choices, and frequent references to her grandchild (more on this in the next section), it would be easy to assume the opposite, however. Based on appearance, the Richards delivering the 1988 DNC keynote address easily passes as a woman in her seventies. This was not the case. At the time of her keynote speech, Richards was only 54.¹⁶ The way Richards chose to style herself certainly contributed to her appearing older than she was, a choice worthy of consideration in an analysis of her navigation of a male-dominated rhetorical space. In *Appropriate[ing] Dress*, Carol Mattingly argues that because women's bodies have historically been so closely observed and disciplined, women rhetors are keenly aware of audience expectations for their appearance and can use this understanding to their advantage in rhetorical performance within seemingly hostile or masculine spaces. Mattingly writes,

Women took with them knowledge gleaned from watching themselves being watched, making use of the abundant lesson they had absorbed. They often understood both intuitively and consciously the effect their appearance would have on an audience. They were thus able to use dress and appearance to their advantage.

(140)

¹⁶ For reference, Richards was slightly over 10 years older than Hillary Rodham Clinton at the time, who was viewed as a young mother of an elementary child. Clinton turned 54 during the final year of the Clinton presidency, before becoming a Senator for 8 years, the Secretary of State for 4 years, and running for President twice.

A key component of Richards' gendered performance during her speech is the purposeful decisions she made about her dress and appearance. The images below suggest her attempts to emphasize her age—an important point to understanding the nostalgia she negotiates in her performance.



Image 2: Close-up on Ann Richards at the 1988 DNC Keynote Address
("1988: Ann Richards")

In Image 2 above, two components of her appearance immediately stand out. The first is her hair. Her hair, certainly not "in style" for the late 1980s and early 1990s, did not change throughout her political career. The bouffant hair was a style popularized over 20 years earlier in the 1960s. Moreover, this bouffant hair is a startlingly bright shade of white, made all the more prominent by the bright lights and the darker background of the DNC stage, as seen in Image 2. The dated hairstyle combined with the white color of her hair work to construct Richards as an older woman, one who has been around for a while and perhaps gained the wisdom of age. In addition to her hair, Richards' pearls form a

significant component of her physical presentation. Image 2 reveals the starkness of Richards' white pearl necklace and earrings. Much like her hair, these pearls add to her age while also serving as a symbolic reference to wisdom. In conjunction with her constructed age, narratives, and presentation style, her pearls conjure the old phrase “pearls of wisdom” and contribute to production of Richards' credibility.

Gestures

During her speech, Richards uses her full body to punctuate her points, making her delivery boisterous and large—a delivery perhaps in contrast with the image of an elderly woman that her clothing and style choices created. In a particularly rowdy moment for both Richards and the crowd, she announces, “I want to announce to this nation that in a little more than 100 days, the Reagan-Meese- Deaver-Nofziger-Poindexter-North-Weinberger-Watt-Gorsuch-Lavell-Stockman-Haig-Bork- Noriega-George Bush will be over.”



Image 3: Richards Gestures Widely
(Jahnke)



Image 4: Richards Mimics a Helicopter
 (“Convention Speeches in History”)

Her arms open wide as she finishes saying every name, as **pictured above in Image 3**, causing her to repeatedly fill the stage’s space with her body. Filling space—embracing large gestures and broad occupation of the stage—has traditionally been labeled as a masculine performance style. Lindal Buchanan notes that women speakers in the suffrage movement often remained seated and used small gestures while delivering arguments, making themselves small in order to navigate their rhetorical spaces (8). In contrast to this approach, Richards uses big gestures throughout her speech, often to accentuate her jokes. This often results in large gestures that mock Republican leaders. For example, **Image 4 above** shows Richards raising an arm and waving it in a circle as she states, “The greatest nation of the free world has had a leader for eight straight years that has pretended that he cannot hear our questions over the noise of the helicopter.” She also uses gestures to invite the audience into her “we” and “you” statements, physically connecting herself to the

audience as insiders, and indicating those that are outside of the gesture to be outsiders. This move can be seen **below in Image 5**, where Richards can be seen commenting on Republican leaders intentional misrepresentation of the nation's economy.



Image 5: Richards Gestures to the Audience
(Humphrey)

She opens her arms wide to the audience, directly addressing their personal experiences as she says, “Now they tell us that employment rates are great and that they’re for equal opportunity, but we know it takes two paychecks to make ends meet today, when it used to take one, and the opportunity they’re so proud of is low-wage, dead-end jobs.” These are the testable moments that work to build her credibility, and she physically signals this to the audience by gesturing for them to consider the validity of the situation they have been presented. With such large gestures, Richards is able to both cast a doubt over the credibility of men while also utilizing a delivery style that commands and fills space.

Speaking Style

Richards' vocal performance in her DNC address is significant component of how her *ethos* is produced as she seeks to navigate that rhetorical space. Rather than trying to conceal a Texas accent, she exaggerates the accent, particularly emphasizing her drawl when critiquing the Republican Party. As seen in **Image 6 below**, Richards often speaks out of the side of her mouth, contributing to a slurring effect that accentuates her voice's Texas twang. Richards relies on slang and informal conjunctions as she highlights flaws in Republican leadership. For example, in Image 6, Richards is in the middle of saying, "We're not *gonna* have the America that we want until we elect leaders who are *gonna* tell the truth – not most days, but every day. Leaders who don't forget what they don't *wanna* remember" (emphasis added). Her use of informal language gives her speech a Texas swing—a rhythm different than traditional politicians of the 1980s. More importantly, she utilizes the kind of speech that one might hear in the home. Her speaking style mimics the men who "talk straight" that she mentions early in her speech.



Image 6: Richards' Accent on Display
(Maddow)

While connecting her speaking style to the home place, she also argues through her speech that she can perform the language and “straight talk” of men. A component of Richards’ speaking style worth noting is the dry nature of her delivery. Her facial expressions and laughter are often muted in the speech, in direct contrast with the size of her gestures. She does not smile, but she grins. She does not laugh, but she chuckles. Richards delivers many of her jokes with a straight face, allowing herself a grin or a chuckle during the audience’s large response. As she grins and chuckles, she often nods her head, as if signaling that she and the audience are all in on the joke—that they share a mutual, superior understanding of the political landscape. Her often deadpan performance further constructs her as a no-nonsense person whose previous (domestic) experiences allow her to see the truth of public situations. In conjunction with her gestures, appearance, narratives, and humor, Richards navigates the rhetorical space through a production of credibility that roots her experiences in the home while also forming parallels with male speakers.

Nostalgic Trope of the Tough, Texas Grandma

Following her address at the 1988 DNC, Richards was widely labeled as a “female Texas good ol’ boy” (Applebome). While the feminist analysis of her narratives, humor, and physical presentation perhaps supports some of the sentiment behind this label, I believe considering the role of nostalgia in the ecology of these elements goes a step further in identifying a role that Richards steps into during and after the speech. In her performance, Richards must navigate the competing expectations of performance in the political sphere and the performance of women in domestic spaces. Much like O’Rourke could understand and participate in his target group’s nostalgia, Richards also understands

the nostalgia—the ideological construction the ideal home—that pervades her Texas audience’s ideology. Although women have always been integral to public life in Texas, the conservative state’s nostalgia surrounding gender performance rewrites that history for the sake of a narrative that places women squarely within the home space. A state with conservative and regressive views of women’s roles in society, the Texan political landscape provides a challenge for Richards as she faces a nostalgic view of women that would discredit her participation in political leadership. Because the ideology represented by this nostalgia is so deeply ingrained in Texans of the late 1980s, Richards must construct a nostalgic performance that allows her to occupy layered spaces and homes, modeling the values of Texan ideology and producing her credibility in government leadership by bringing the domestic sphere into the political sphere.

To navigate the nostalgia in Texan ideology, Richards’ performance builds a credibility in keeping with the “tough granny” trope—a trope at once progressive and regressive as it asserts the power of older women while also adhering to traditional women’s roles. In a recent article on mediated family roles, Barnwell et al. argue that the “tough granny” or “badass grandma” is defined by her unique strength, wisdom, and “cool factor” in connection to her family; this “cool factor” is often produced by performing in traditionally masculine spaces (15-16). Richards’ speech makes moves towards enacting this trope as she makes direct and indirect references to her grandma status—showing herself performing in the nostalgic construction of home while connecting that construction to a future-oriented vision of home. Richards concludes her speech by returning back to the scene of home she began with, this time emphasizing her new role as

grandmother. In this narrative, she models the merging of nostalgic values and progressive goals that her embodied performance has argued throughout the speech. In a moment uncharacteristically devoid of humor, Richards states,

I'm a grandmother now. And I have one nearly perfect granddaughter named Lily. And when I hold that grandbaby, I feel the continuity of life that unites us, that binds generation to generation, that ties us with each other. And sometimes I spread that Baptist pallet out on the floor and Lily and I roll a ball back and forth. And I think of all the families like mine, and like the one in Lorena, Texas, like the ones that nurture children all across America. And as I look at Lily, I know that it is within families that we learn both the need to respect individual human dignity and to work together for our common good. Within our families, within our nation, it is the same.

In this narrative, Richards occupies the role of grandma and in doing so fills the space of the men from her previous story. She is the “straight talker,” modeling valued behaviors for children. She again makes the parallel that government and families are essentially the same, burying the argument that she is fit to govern because she is the embodiment of the nostalgic woman. Her physical appearance, tales from the home, and Southern sayings contribute to an establishment of her age and status as a grandmother, but go a step further to rooting her in the Texas home. She performs the tough granny trope by constructing herself as a domestic figure, incorporating elements of the tough granny performance through her humor, gestures, and vocal delivery. Through her jokes, speaking style, and consistent reference to her Texan home and origins, she performs the role of a *tough*

granny by incorporating Texas to strengthen her “cool factor”; she is a *tough, Texas granny*. Nostalgia, placing her body both in the past and in an idyllic home, encapsulates the various rhetorical moves being made in her speech and produces an *ethos* and political argument on her behalf that might, on the surface, go recognized only as humor and twang.

Analysis of Campaign Photographs

The themes from Richards’ DNC keynote address continued into her campaign in Texas. Texts of her campaign speeches are nearly impossible to find, but a great deal of campaign photos have been archived by the Briscoe Center for American History in Austin, Texas. The images provide an embodied argument that continue to produce her *ethos* in the same manner it was produced on the DNC stage. Through an evaluation of a selection of images, it can be analyzed that Richards maintains her status as the tough, Texas granny by offering Texans visual cues that connect her to the nostalgic Texas home as she occupies a traditionally male space. On the campaign trail, Richards’ hair, physicality, and proximity (or lack thereof) to white men aid in producing an *ethos* for her candidacy by asserting authority in domestic situations that translate to the public realm.



Image 7: “Ann Richards Speaking During Campaign Visit to Fort Worth”
(Dickey)

In Image 7 above, Richards is seen utilizing broad gestures again as she holds her arms out while delivering her speech. Her hair is also still in its bouffant style, starkly white against her green skirt suit. Richards is also surrounded by women that the image description explains are government employees at the Tarrant County Courthouse. Richards offers an embodied argument that the work of governing is the work of women in her accentuation of her age, commanding physical presence, and inclusion of other bodies in her space.

In **Image 8, pictured below**, shows Richards again embracing a traditionally masculine largess in her gestures, suggesting a departure from the historical efforts of women to make themselves small in the early temperance and suffrage movement (Buchanan; Johnson). In her physical performance, Richards instead widens her body, occupying a great deal of space on the stage. This large physicality is also blended with more traditionally feminine elements. The hand placement on her hip is reminiscent of a motherly gesture. The description of the image also confirms that Richards is shown holding her hand to her ear. Such a gesture is evocative of age, reminiscent of an elderly person requesting that someone speak up. Yet, she resists appearing frail by maintaining the hand on the hip and widening her presence on the stage. Her physicality in the images constructs a message that she is an older woman and that she is also in control. She towers over those sitting on the stage with her, as she fills up the space provided.



Image 8: “Ann Richards at Scholz Garden”
(Dickey)

Image 9, pictured below, is one of the final images of Richards campaign collected in the Briscoe archives. The image shows Richards shaking the hand of her opponent, Republican candidate Clayton “Claytie” Williams. Throughout his campaign, Williams used offensive language to discuss Richards and women at large (Richardson). The image showcases Richards’ embodied response to her male competitor, displaying her performance of the “tough, Texas granny.” Rather than avoid Williams’ aggressive stance, Richards maintains eye contact with him and seemingly ignores his finger in her space. Richards does not orient away from him in a moment where it seems he is trying to exert physical dominance, but instead squares off with him. On her face, she wears an expression of calm, in contrast to his mocking or amused look. Also important is that she avoids smiling—a trait often expected of women’s performance around men (Hess et al. 520). Instead, she her calm and resolved expression communicates her “tough” nature.



Image 9: “Ann Richards Speaks with Clayton ‘Claytie’ Williams on Election Night” (Dickey)

Image 10, pictured below, is unique amongst her campaign photos because it shows her surrounded by a number of men, rather than women, on a walk to an absentee voting site for a local election. It seems significant that most of these men are BIPOC. Notes on the image reveal that these men were religious and educational leaders in North Texas. While Richards is shown physically leading men, the professions of these men are still in some way connected to the home place where she has a great deal of authority. The men's race goes further to reveal the ideological tensions present in the nostalgic home that offers Richards' *ethos*. While she is able to subvert certain expectations of the nostalgic home so that it offers her a rhetorical advantage, other bodies remain on the outskirts of the nostalgic rhetorical space. The question of whose bodies have power, and why, is prevalent in this image as we simultaneously see the complexities in the nostalgic argument about the idyllic home as it produces *ethos* for bodies to advocate for progressive ends, while also anchoring those same bodies to certain erasures.



Image 10: “Ann Richards Campaign Visit to North Texas”
(Dickey)

Implications

For Ann Richards, being successful as a woman in Texan politics required her to perform in two spaces simultaneously. The first was the physical spaces she occupied on the campaign trail, or the campaign trail itself. The second was the nostalgic construction of the home place. Navigating a Texan ideology with narrow views of the roles of women in domestic and public life, Richards had to engage in a nostalgic performance in order to embody the values of that ideology in a traditionally masculine space. Countering an ideology that would nostalgically read her body and place her in falsely “historic,” gendered roles, it was Richards’ performance in the nostalgic home that established her credibility to perform in the contemporary political sphere. In order to occupy a space that challenges the nostalgic home of her Texan audience, Richards utilizes that same nostalgia in order to justify her body and expertise in the political realm. Feminist criticism of Richards’ rhetorical performance in her campaign for governor suggests that her embodiment of a nostalgic trope—the place-based cool grandma or the tough, Texas granny—contributed to the production of her *ethos* as a gubernatorial candidate and political leader by enabling her to embody the values of the past in a future-oriented manner.

Such a finding is complicated, showing at once the progressive and regressive capabilities of nostalgia as a rhetorical tool. As this analysis has looked to a Richards of the past, it is important to note that Richards maintains a hold on the present. Several films—such as *Ann Richards’ Texas* (2012) and *All About Ann: Governor Richards of the Lone Star State* (2014)—and a Broadway production—*Ann* (2018)—have been created in the

past few years, maintaining Richards' status as a political icon. More recently, during the Texas power crisis in February 2021, Ann Richards was trending on Twitter and news outlets took to citing her in their criticism of Greg Abbott and Ted Cruz's response to the crisis.¹⁷ A critical nostalgia prompts us to consider the competing temporal elements at play in understanding her as a political figure. Richards is a figure whose body and body of work exist in the past and can therefore be considered "complete," whose *ethos was* constructed, whose body *was* nostalgically constructed. She is also a figure whose body is *being* constructed through nostalgia, whose *ethos* is changing and evolving as she is reread by contemporary publics. The nostalgia that constructed her body *then* is not necessarily the same as the nostalgia that constructs in *now*. The complexity of such a political identity—and its relevance to the contemporary political moment in Texas—is best parsed out through a critical nostalgia that embraces the tensions in these competing nostalgias and notes the ideological commitments buried within the layered nostalgic constructions of her body.

Where a consideration of Ann Richards complicates the nostalgia at play in O'Rourke's campaign, so too will Julián Castro's discourse and material constructions complicate Richards' nostalgia. Feminist understandings of the body necessitate an intersectionality that consider race, gender, and class in tandem. The nostalgia that can be "identified in white popular feminism is particularly troubling because we are in a moment when there is increasing awareness and engagement with intersectional thinking and

¹⁷ An example of these citations can be seen in an op-ed piece for *Forbes* that was published nearly a month after the power grid crisis during another energy scare. One section of the article read, "ERCOT felt the need to send out a notice of potential emergency conditions, citing a 'stalled cold front' as the partial reason. . . as former Texas Governor Ann Richards might say, 'That cat don't flush'" (Blackmon).

praxis” (Evans and Bussey-Chamberlain 364). The nostalgia that “liberates” politicians like Richard can be exclusionary to other bodies as the rhetorical space of the nostalgic home place is reconfigured. If the production of O’Rourke’s identity and *ethos* via a rhetoric of nostalgia prompts us to consider *where* effective public arguments can be made, Richards’ nostalgic production of *ethos* encourages us to ask *who*. Who can function within the nostalgic home and how can they reshape that space when regressive ideological structures would narrowly define their capacity for action? In the following chapter, these questions will be further complicated by interrogating race, competing histories, and the material realization of conflicting nostalgias in the same home location.

Interchapter 2

Nostalgic Methods: Archival Research

When I decided to analyze Ann Richards for this project, I immediately wanted to see what the Briscoe Center for American History could offer in terms of Richards artifacts. The Briscoe Center boasts of maintaining one the most impressive collection of materials on Texan history and politics, including a comprehensive collection on Richards. Don E. Carleton, director of the Briscoe Center, summarizes the collection by saying, “The Richards Collection represents not only the long, distinguished career of Ann Richards as an elected official, but also a comprehensive overview of the politics, culture and social change in Texas during the latter half of the twentieth century” (“In Memoriam”). He adds that Richards’ “achievements, as well as the record of her life and career, are fully documented in the extensive papers and memorabilia” found in the collection. I entered the archives excited to dig into artifacts that might offer insights into how Ann Richards’ gendered performance during her campaign was received in Texas and how her performance as governor coalesced with her political legacy. Richards’ is well-known for her creation of the Texas Ethics Commission and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, as well as her work on prison reform, economic revival, and unprecedented appointment of women and people of color to political office. With this reputation, I anticipated finding materials in that collection that offered insight into this legacy and Richards’ contribution to Texas. Despite the Briscoe Center’s framing of the collection as a “fully documented” look at her achievements, I found myself questioning if

the materials I was combing through actually represented a thorough account of Richards' significance. When I really began to explore the archives, what I felt was *uncomfortable*.

In my exploration of the Ann W. Richards Collection, I was discomfited as I encountered the sharp juxtapositions in the materials collected, all of which were described as commentary on the ways that Richards helped shape a contemporary Texas.¹⁸ The photographs collected in a conjunction with drafts and notes of policies demonstrated an unsettling contrast. The images of Richards displayed a gendered performance that showed her embodying feminist and progressive stances—going toe-to-toe with physically domineering men and appointing women and people of color to critical government positions. The documents collected about her actual policy advocacy, however, focused much more on conservative legislation than Richards' progressive policies. For example, very little material was collected on Richards' anti-gun proposals while several boxes were dedicated to her signing the re-codification of the Texas Penal Code that contained anti-homosexual laws—a law that she campaigned against during her run for Governor (Shannon).

When I encountered these vastly different artifacts, what made me uncomfortable was the workings of nostalgia—of a longing for and pride in the “way things used to be”—both within myself and within the archival institution. The feeling of nostalgia often romanticizes the past, making it a much better place than it actually was, and this troubled

¹⁸ It is worth noting that over the course of my analysis, the Ann W. Richards Collection was separated into multiple collections, including the Ann W. Richards Papers, 1933-2007, the Ann Richards Oral History Collection, and the Karen Dickey Photographic Archive. An archivist at the Briscoe Center told me that the push to digitize collections during the COVID pandemic prompted them to separate major collections into smaller collections.

me as I experienced the archive's nostalgic argument surrounding Richards' participation in the forming of a modern Texas (as seen in images of Richards) alongside a kind of nostalgia surrounding "authentic" Texas legislation. The Briscoe Center, through its curation and presentation, was shaping Richards' artifacts to make an argument about the history—and the future—of Texas that seemed largely to neglect Richards' embodied experiences and the complexities surrounding the decisions made during her time as Governor for the sake of preserving a particular story about the growth of Texas during that time. The argument constructed by the collection as a whole felt incomplete, with ideological tensions operating under the surface of a cohesive, nostalgic vision of Texas' history. This circumstance was particularly troubling as I contemplated the implications for the production of *ethos* within the archival space, questioning which narratives and bodies were afforded nostalgic authenticity and authority.

A natural reaction to encountering nostalgia in the archives is to resist it, focusing only on the facts of the past rather than the past's emotional retelling. However, by resisting nostalgia's role in archival research, we miss out on an opportunity to deconstruct the complex layers of ideology and *ethos* that exist in archival spaces. Closely examining nostalgia—conceptualizing nostalgia not just as a longing for the past but also as a tool with which to dissect constructions of the past—can afford archival researchers the opportunity to better understand and analyze seemingly competing ideologies. By choosing to view nostalgia as an asset in the archives, I argue nostalgia can function as a critical tool in archival research that can serve researchers and archivists as we interrogate the ideological tensions present in many institutional archives and consider what it might look

like for archival work to become even more instrumental in unsettling patriarchal and colonial structures within and without the archives. In this interchapter, I comment on how nostalgia can be used in feminist archival research, particularly when conflicting ideologies are present. Reaching backwards to the chapter on Ann Richards and forward to the chapter on Castro, I argue how nostalgia serves to unsettle archival research, helping to produce *ethos* for efforts to feminize and decolonize the archival space.

Archival Homes

The origin of “nostalgia,” coming from the Greek words *nostos*—to return home—and *algia*—pain, is useful to rearticulate here in connection with archives. Like “nostalgia,” the origin of “archive” is also rooted in the concept of home. Jacques Derrida famously traced the origin of “archive” to the Greek *arkheion*, meaning a home; the powerful *archon* resided in this home and it was their privilege to interpret the documents held within the archive—determining the components needed to produce *ethos* for the home and thereby further consolidating their power (1-2). *Home* is a concept integral to the work of archival research, as archives function as “houses of memory” that, at their best, protect and nurture memories so that they can one day leave the home to do good in the world (Cook 95). However, what we learn from Derrida’s discussion of the archive is that the *archon*’s patriarchal and colonial ideologies often determine what is allowed within the archival home and what that material “should” mean, despite the views of those whose lives and work are collected. The work of the *archon* is quintessentially nostalgic, because nostalgia rhetorically builds homes. As the notion of the home “lies at the core of many

powerful ideologies today,” it is the home-building capacity of nostalgia that makes it both useful and dangerous within the archives (Boym, “Nostalgia” 9).

Because nostalgia does not form an accurate representation of the past and the home, nostalgia’s reconstructions leave out certain voices in order to create an “ideal,” and must often scapegoat those voices for the undesirable nature of the present (Kurlinkus and Kurlinkus 92). These silences are crucial to understanding the group that produces the nostalgic recollections. In order for nostalgia to succeed in crafting a lost home, it has the capacity to forcibly silence voices that might be in opposition to this formulation. This is why when I encountered the selected photographs of Richards alongside her selected political documents I felt ill at ease, feeling her silence in tension with her embodied performance and with archival voice speaking for her.¹⁹ The power dynamics of the *archons*—of who gets to tell the stories within the archives and what stories were omitted to maintain a cohesive argument—can be felt palpably within many institutions’ archival spaces. The *ethos* of such an argument should be interrogated because it can divorce voice from body, an act in opposition to feminist work in the archives that seeks to reclaim people’s embodied experiences and rhetorical practices. This is the nostalgia I felt from the archives as I poured over Richards’ materials, which I *felt* were commandeering her story for the sake of a different telling of home. It is this sort of nostalgia—the nostalgia of the

¹⁹ Richards was, herself, familiar with such silences in historical accounts of Texas. In her autobiography, *Straight from the Heart*, Richards shares a moment of ideological tension that she experienced in 1976 when taking her family to the Institute of Texan Cultures to see a show called “Faces and Places of Texas.” When the show was over, Richards’ daughter asked, “Where were all the women?” Richards’ states, “How were little girls like my daughters going to come up with any understanding of who they are or where they’d come from, if they had no history? I knew that my sons, in watching that show, must have felt very proud, but my daughters would certainly not come away with any sense of themselves as Texans” (190-191). In response to this experience, Richards went on to reform the Institute of Texan Cultures, becoming a founding board member of the Texas Foundation for Women’s Resources (Jones).

archon—with its propensity to strip memories, stories, and powers away from those who could offer a competing ideology, that we must actively work against in the archives.

Reimagining the Archival Home

Analyzing Nostalgia in the Traditional Archive

Archives, much like nostalgia, often function through exclusion. Archives cannot contain *everything* and therefore must make decisions about what to maintain and how to present it. The collected materials on Richards' signing of the Texas Penal Code is the perfect example of how nostalgic exclusions function in traditional archival spaces. Through its groupings and its omissions, the archive does not offer Richards' previous campaigns against anti-homosexual legislation, nor does it provide materials that document her other interactions with the LGBTQ+ community in Texas, for example her appointment of the first openly gay judges in Texas (Shannon). Here, a critical nostalgia can intervene by allowing us to encounter such erasures and "idealized" memories in productive ways that enable us to work with the past while being mindful about its implications for the future. In this capacity, nostalgia becomes an invaluable tool for unsettling archival research, providing "sites, materials, and inspiration for meaningful social change" (Tannock 459). In direct contrast with restorative nostalgia, and the *archon's* truth, a critical, reflective nostalgia "dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity. Restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt" (Boym, "Nostalgia" 13). When we use nostalgia to acknowledge the values of the past while also understanding its irretrievability, we can consider what aspects of the

nostalgic representation are beneficial as well as those that are problematic when enacted. A reflective, critical nostalgia provides researchers the chance to effectively determine those areas where erasure is likely in the institutions that often house the archives. Employing nostalgia as an analytical tool presents an important opportunity for feminist critics to examine bodies and voices by analyzing the beliefs and values of the groups from which it emerges—both the archiving body as well as those whose experiences are archived. Within the materials on Richards’ policies, this use of nostalgia as a critical tool requires archival researchers to reconsider her narrative as it is presented to us and to interrogate the conflicting memories presented in her artifact—to do what Victor Villanueva calls a reclamation of “a memory, memory of an identity in formation and constant reformation, the need to reclaim a memory of an identity as formed through the generations” (Villanueva 12). When archivists reflectively consider the competing nostalgias—and their associated values, beliefs, and identities—that motivate ideologies and produce *ethos* for arguments entangled in the archives, they can call into question the underlying values of dominant ideologies and develop productive avenues of conversation and change within and without the archives.²⁰

If I had engaged in critical nostalgia immediately upon entering the Briscoe Center, I would have found that my discomfort in that space was due to the conflicting ideologies between what the archive was arguing, what the materials themselves communicated, and what I *felt* about the person I was researching—between the archival body, the embodied

²⁰ In doing so, archival researchers can continue the work of critical archival scholars like Michele Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, T-Kay Sangwald, Marika Cifor, and Jamila J. Ghaddar (to name a few) who question and resist colonial ideologies surrounding archives and activism.

experiences of those represented in the archives, and my own embodied experience within the archives. Collected materials about the legislation Richards signed into law were at odds with artifacts like her photograph collection, causing me to question and feel unsettled by the story of Richards—and Texas—being crafted within the archival space. Unlike the nostalgia surrounding Richards Era legislation, the photographs felt nostalgic for a way that I felt Texas politicians *used to be* and *ought to be* because of their presentation of diversity and social change. Embracing this nostalgia for “real” Texas politicians—noting the felt “loss” of such figures and what was compelling about Richards “back then”—I am afforded alternative access to the values and beliefs that undergird the prizing of a particular narrative about Richards. Relying on critical nostalgia to analyze the artifact, archive, *archon*, and my own emotions highlights conflicting viewpoints and makes clear that powerful Texas women are not, in fact, lost but can *feel* that way at times because of competing ideologies that would place women’s value in the past. Further, critical nostalgia requires me to dig deeper into the form—photographs of political events—and recognize that such images of her rhetorical performance represent her embodied response to sexism in politics; that nostalgic performance was designed to offer a motivating argument to those entrenched in sexist and colonial ideologies, prompting me to question my own feelings surrounding authenticity. In that same vein, critical nostalgia highlights issues of structure within the archival space and prompts me to question if I am unfairly imposing my own, present structures of knowledge onto that space in a way that minimizes what knowledge can emerge. Rather than simply critiquing the archive’s argument, critical nostalgia suggests the question—what can be learned because the values

of the past and present are not in alignment? Critical nostalgia unsettles these layered tensions not by trying to resolve them, but by bringing these tensions to the forefront. While the Ann Richards Collection as a whole appears to make an argument about the formation of Texas, women's personal experiences—as well as the experiences of the BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and disabled community who are pictured but not given a “voice”—refuse to fit neatly into that telling of history.

Finding a New Home

Looking forward to an analysis of Julián Castro and San Antonio, embracing nostalgia in the archives becomes an even more important tool for detangling the competing ideologies surrounding race in the origin stories of a city. With the city as an archive, housing the layered memories of its citizens (Sheringham and Wentworth 517), nostalgia becomes a tool for negotiating archival spaces beyond the traditional, institutional or academic archive. Embracing a critical nostalgia in all archival spaces can enable us to effectively note “a logic of settlement whereby white Europeans come to believe they supplanted Indigenous peoples as the first inhabitants”—a nostalgic revision that rearticulates Indigenous experience for the sake of a version of a Texas origin story that values white gain over Indigenous loss (Ghaddar 19). Critical nostalgia reminds us of the difference between what nostalgia does, prompting idealizations and erasures, and what it actually is—an argument about the future. By better understanding the nostalgic enthymeme in both the traditional and nontraditional archive—noticing the unspoken premise and its accompanying ideology—I can find ways of separating arguments from the

evidence and *ethos* they rely on and more fully engage with the brilliant pieces of imagery, writing, music, and sound that are collected in that space.

Embracing nostalgia in the archives also allows for critical assessment and imaginative futures, bearing witness for archives and the communities they represent. The nostalgias that unsettled me in the Richards archives—highlighting the competing ideologies operating within what was meant to be a single archival home—can aid in unsettling the structures that it helps to expose. Nostalgia’s potential as a feminist and decolonial force is to become a “liberatory praxis” that centers communities “in the transformation of society, the articulation of new cultural forms, new ways of being, and new ways of ordering the world and its people” (Ghaddar and Caswell 72). Critical nostalgia places communities at the heart of society’s transformation by creating a space for the reconsideration of the home that was lost and how it can be gained in the future—an act of resistance that revises cultural memories and recreates “*asegi* memories in [the] imaginations of both colonizers and the colonized” (Driskill 7). This move towards embracing and reimagining memory is at the core of critical nostalgia. When feminist archival researchers reflectively consider the nostalgias—and their component values, beliefs, and desires—that motivates ideologies and produces arguments’ *ethos* in communities’ histories, they can create a space for nostalgia to be instrumental in developing productive avenues of conversation and change alongside communities that stand in defiance of patriarchal and colonial structures.

Moreover, nostalgia calls us to reimagine new homes for the archives themselves, those that counter traditional structures. Community archives are an imperative for

ensuring that “new ways of ordering” are enacted in the archival space and beyond. Such archives not only provide a space where communities are empowered to craft their own arguments about the past and the future, community archives are critical in maintaining activist efforts to truly bring about the longed-for home. Instrumental in shaping of the future, community archives “can be an important and unique connection for activists to their histories and a source of effective ideas and tactics” (Cifor et al. 93). The critical nostalgia at play within the archives can directly impact the future experiences of communities as archivists and activists partner to confront forces of inequity, racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and ableism not merely in word, but in practice.

Archives to Activism

There is a great deal of urgency for archival researchers to pay attention to nostalgia—both reflective and restorative—as they enter the archival space. We must analyze nostalgia’s movement within and shaping of the archives in order to envision futures that are built around the values we want to guide society rather than the concealed beliefs that, unnoticed, carry *ethos* and prompt troubling public action. Nostalgia offers a port of entrance for us to engage such work when we remember that it is ultimately an argument about the kind of home we want to live in, the kind of world we want to see. The archival home, at its best, does the feminist work of protecting and nurtures memories so that they can one day leave the home to do good in the world. Through critical nostalgia, we can reimagine the ideal future home, but we cannot be content to stop at reimagination. We cannot stop at criticizing sexist and colonial structures. Ghaddar argues, “Revisiting the past, acknowledging and apologizing for historic wrongs, exposing or describing

colonial violence and atrocities, or reflecting on one's racism and privilege are not necessarily anti-colonial, anti-racist, or decolonizing acts" (20). Analysis is not change. Living in discomfort—feeling unsettled—is not activism. Engaging in critical analysis of our discomfort and the ideological tensions at the heart of that unease only affords us the opportunity to highlight the tactics of sexist, colonizing arguments and, hopefully, to better understand how to go about dismantling them. Communities, researchers, and activists invested in the archives can do more to truly unsettle archives and their attendant arguments. The stories the archives contain should be used to demand feminist public spaces, a “‘real democracy,’ where power is distributed more equitably, where white supremacy and patriarchy and heteronormativity and other forms of oppression are named and challenged, where different worlds and different ways of being in those worlds are acknowledged and imagined and enacted” (Caswell et al. 6). When I enter the archives again and feel unease at its nostalgia—at its argument for a future home—rather than resisting discomfort, I can use critical nostalgia to bear witness to the ideological tensions that have made me uncomfortable and seek others who I can learn from and partner with to address those wounding forces, actively building a better future home, not just for the archives, but for the communities whose right to a home has been denied.

Chapter 4

Julián Castro, San Antonio, and Nostalgic Authority

“My grandmother, when she was young, would've walked past shops where some folks had out a sign that said ‘no Mexicans or dogs allowed.’” - Julián Castro, in an interview with All Things Considered

Introduction

Victoria Castro immigrated from Mexico to San Antonio, Texas in the 1910s. At the time, San Antonio was not a welcoming place to Mexican immigrants, and she found it challenging to find work and housing in the city. When Victoria became pregnant in her early thirties, she was abandoned by the father of her child and found work cleaning homes in San Antonio’s wealthy neighborhoods. Victoria’s daughter, Rosie Castro, grew up feeling the injustice of disparities between the places where her mother worked and the neighborhood her family lived in. Rosie dedicated her life to fighting this injustice, pursuing a life of political activism. Rosie worked for Lyndon B. Johnson, the Mexican American Unity Council, the “Free Angela Davis” campaign, Partido Nacional de La Raza Unida, and even ran for San Antonio City Council in 1971 (Sanchez). While she never held public office, Rosie Castro created a legacy of social justice activism in San Antonio that her sons, Julián and Joaquin Castro carry on today. To understand Julián Castro and the City of San Antonio, we must first understand that he is a product of generations of women working to make San Antonio a home for the Latinx community.

In 2001, Julián Castro became the youngest San Antonio City Council member in the city’s history at the age of 26. In 2005, Castro ran for Mayor of San Antonio, only to

lose the election to lawyer Phil Hardberger. Four years later, Castro ran again for mayor and succeeded in winning the election; he would win reelection twice more before joining Barack Obama's cabinet as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in 2014. During his first term as mayor, Castro introduced his plan for the "Decade of Downtown," which would revitalize San Antonio's downtown district, bringing people back to the heart of the city to live and work. Strategically connecting pieces of San Antonio's past with a purposeful and modernized organization of Downtown San Antonio, Castro's revitalization initiative is worthy of consideration through a nostalgic lens. If an examination of Ann Richards highlights the importance of considering the body in nostalgic public arguments, examining Castro's downtown indicates the need to go a step further by considering race and class as it shapes nostalgic discourse. More specifically, in its connection to San Antonio, this examination prompts questions about the arguments offered by a place and bodies' function within that place when the argument's *ethos* and authority is produced via competing nostalgias.

Shifting away from campaign politics to political policies, this chapter asks the question: how does nostalgia operate to construct authority for policies, once politicians have already succeeded in being elected? Enactment of policy provides more than a narrative that the public must accept but has physical ramifications on their public spaces. A city's policies—particularly those that propose a reimagination and reconstruction of a local area—are manifested into an argument about the past and future of the city. What inspires the success of a campaign also shapes the home place, which will then shape what is persuasive in future campaigns. Place-based *ethos* is constantly shifting, not only in

verbal discourse but in physical discourse. Analyzing the nostalgia in a campaign and its physical manifestations provides insight into the ways that the layered nature of places impacts—and in fact constitutes—arguments in the public sphere. This examination of Castro’s Decade of Downtown, as it restructures space and rewrites local history, provides an opportunity to understand how nostalgia can produce an *ethos* that imbues a place with a unique authority—an authority with the capacity to shape the arguments that emerge from that place in the future.

In this chapter, I engage in visual and spatial analysis of the public arguments offered by the physical space created by Castro’s “Decade of Downtown” in order to offer a rhetorical historiography of San Antonio as a rhetorical place. Traveling to San Antonio to physically map Castro’s work in restructuring Downtown San Antonio, I utilize nostalgia to analyze the swirling forces of place, history, race, and class at play in San Antonio’s downtown district. Walking and reading the city as a text that produces its *ethos* through a nostalgic retelling of its history and traditions, I argue the city authoritatively asserts the past as a place where Latinx bodies were—and consequently *are*—a critical part of Texas’ origins. This construction offers a powerful counter-story to the one told by the famous Alamo that occupies a position in the downtown area, creating spaces for bodies and stories that expand Texas’ nostalgic borders and look to an ideal future by reimagining an ideal past.

Historiography, Space, and Race

This chapter presents a rhetorical historiography of San Antonio that attends to race, space, and class within the city. This historiography project argues for San Antonio

itself being a rhetorical actor, rather than an artifact of a rhetor. While Castro's policies and projects strategically alter the city, the city offers an argument independent of his intentions; San Antonio's layers of history, memory, and spatial representation produce *ethos* for its place-based argument. As I will argue, San Antonio, as a rhetorical space, constructs an argument about its history, identity, and future through its material structure.²¹

Detailing the rhetorical histories and practices of material places is an important move for the field to consider as it is increasingly apparent that the material carries rhetoricity. In *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, Michelle Bailiff argues that “historiographical methods have privileged the ‘literary’ or textual and in the process overlooked material artifacts” that result in histories that are limited in their ability to account for the rise of rhetorical practices (4). Place functions as a rhetorical object whose histories and practices should be investigated in order to best generate theories for the ontological, epistemological, and suasive nature of rhetoric in the world. Re-writing or reclaiming the rhetorical tradition of a place interrogates the ways in which that space—in this case a city—offers rhetorical theories that have not traditionally been included in the rhetorical tradition. This shift in perspective from Castro as rhetor to San Antonio as rhetor allows an alternative way of accounting for the nostalgic production of *ethos* for arguments

²¹ It would be reasonable to question my choice in this section to focus on San Antonio as rhetor rather than engage in a spatial analysis more similar to the kind done by scholars of regional rhetorics. While this dissertation project as a whole may cross into the area of regional rhetorics, this chapter's local focus prevents an exploration of regional rhetorics. In an article for *Rhetoric Society Quarterly's* special edition on regional rhetorics, Dave Tell argues that regions are defined by the way that specific geographic locations connect with broader configurations of locations and culture, specifically separating regions from individual cities; he writes, “There is nothing local about regions” (228). This chapter might have implications for regional rhetorics, but the analysis itself only examines the histories and material configurations of a single city.

about the home. Analyzing San Antonio and writing its rhetorical history requires approaching the city as both a monument and archive. The city documents the competing ideologies at play in Downtown San Antonio and offers an argument about the origins of the city that maintains ideological tension rather than eliminating it.

To do this work, I draw on scholarship that models and theorizes rhetorical analyses of place. In my case study of Ann Richards, I briefly offered a discussion of rhetorical space to offer nuance to Richards' negotiation of nostalgia in her gendered performance on the campaign trail. Rhetorical space and rhetorical analyses of place become even more significant in an examination of the nostalgic argument offered by San Antonio, a physical place with a unique cultural geography. The interchapter that follows this chapter offers a deeper examination of the affordance of critical nostalgia in spatial analysis, but here I provide a brief review of rhetorical analyses of place. Rhetoricians like Roxanne Mountford, Nan Johnson, and Jessica Enoch provide analyses of rhetorical space that reveal how specific places materialize group values.²² Rhetorical spaces “reinforce social values and habits of behavior” (Johnson 20) and give “value to the activities that happen inside that space and by suggesting or prescribing the kinds of occupants that

²² Memory studies scholars also devote a great deal of scholarship to analyses of place, particularly sites of public memory like monuments and memorials. Demonstrating this connection between memory and place, Edward S. Casey argues that public memory must occur in particular, public places that serve to solidify a public's values and prompt it to maintain those values in the future (33-35). Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian Ott echo this understanding of public memory in their edited collection, *Places of Public Memory*, stating, “Public memory is typically understood as relying on material and/or symbolic supports—language, ritual performances, communication technologies, objects, and places” (10). In countless analyses of monuments and memorials, scholars of public memory model suggest the ways that public spaces function as materialized pieces of epideictic rhetoric by praising and correcting a public's values and beliefs. For this project, I treat the entirety of San Antonio as a place of public memory that the public walks through and lives within. As a rhetorical space designed by Castro and other public leaders, and navigated by the public, the city delivers an argument about its past and future. The entire city is a site of public memory and its material dimensions can be examined in order to understand the argument it makes for the public.

should (and should not) move into and out of that space” (Enoch 276). Place—a specific location made up of rhetorical space—imposes a group’s ideology onto those who enter it. That is not to say that people are powerless in their interactions with place. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau famously discusses “walking in the city,” describing the act of walking the city as a tactical practice that allows the walker to construct the place in a way unforeseen by the city’s creators (93-95). In this way, as Jenny Rice suggests in her study of urban development, *Distant Publics*, “much like the city street scene, culture is comprised of manifold stories and shaping fragments. This is the textualizing of place” (10). Stepping away from de Certeau ever so slightly, I would suggest that the city—as a rhetorical agent itself—persuades its walkers to navigate it in a particular way that is perhaps separate from the intentions of city planners. Thus, to analyze the rhetorical space of San Antonio—its history and arguments—I needed to walk it and experience its rhetoricity.

Walking in the city and navigating its rhetorical space is a dynamic and complex practice. In *Geographies of Writing*, Nedra Reynolds highlights an important complication in spatial analysis, arguing that “geographical locations influence our habits, speech patterns, style, and values—all of which make it a rhetorical concept or important to rhetoric” (11). Her statement emphasizes an analytical challenge. If locations influence values, yet values shape locations, then the relationship of place and ideology is reciprocal and subject to constant restructuring. A city like San Antonio—undergoing revitalization and reimagination—is representative of this complexity. San Antonio offers an argument about its identity through layers of nostalgic retellings of its origin and history, suggesting

unique relationships between nostalgia, bodies, places, and *ethos*. A nostalgic argument like the one made by San Antonio necessarily constitutes a rhetorical space that disciplines the bodies that dwell within that place; those bodies then go on to help reshape the city—through both tactics and strategies.²³ The reciprocal, reinventive nature of rhetoric and arguments is emphasized by writing a rhetorical analysis and historiography of a place.

Analyzing San Antonio in such a way also necessitates an interrogation of the relationship of race to nostalgic arguments, as the city provides a way of visually understanding the location of BIPOC in the nostalgic home and in the vision of a future home. Critical nostalgia prompts a consideration of which bodies are present in and absent from the idealized home. In this way, nostalgia can be an in-road to what Chicana feminist Sonia Saldivar-Hull calls “nontraditional places”—places that represent Third Space (46). Third Space, in Candace Zepeda’s scholarship, functions as “a place that provides access to a different way of conceptualizing history—a place for uncovering the hidden and/or silent voices of the marginalized” (137). Such a space allows for the rejection of prevailing stories of “otherness.” Employing a critical nostalgia to physical places—like San Antonio—can serve as a way to access this Third Space and provide meaningful interventions in public discourse that would attempt to relegate bodies of color to certain histories. Discussing race and nostalgia, Badia Ahad-Legardy states,

²³ Michel de Certeau uses “tactics” and “strategies” to describe differing ways of practicing life and, in the case of the city, navigating place. de Certeau gives the example of political, scientific, and economic rationality as that which has been constructed based on strategy. In contrast, tactics are inherently “other” tools. They are used during specific opportunities and to create specific opportunities for the benefit of the individual employing the tactic. Many everyday practices—what I would call *homely* practices—are of a tactical nature (xix).

The creativity enabled by nostalgia's indeterminacy is central to black nostalgic-gestures, which are less about recovering lost pasts than about evoking ambient associations through food, clothes, and music. More riffing than citing, black nostalgia's suggestions, indeterminacies, flavors, and fleeting moments constitute a broader contemporary black aesthetic that works to break blackness out of a narrowly constructed frame of traumatic history. (5)

Breaking from narrowly constructed histories of trauma, nostalgia can function to creatively remember and celebrate moments from the past that are cherished in a group's identity. When we consider the way that nostalgia physically impacts a place, Downtown San Antonio's material structure can be analyzed to discover how Latinx, Indigenous, and Black peoples navigate and contribute to the idealized home of the past and future. In San Antonio, mapping the ways that the Latinx community is integral to its structure and nostalgic argument about its past reveals how nostalgia can be a critical tool in imaging and building inclusive communities.

To write an analysis and account of the city, suggesting the ways the nostalgia functions to produce *ethos* for its structure and argument, I offer histories of four places in Downtown San Antonio that represent projects completed by Castro's Decade of Downtown. I analyze La Villita, El Mercado, San Fernando Cathedral, and the Alamo as four major areas within Downtown San Antonio that function with and against each other to create an argument about the history of the city. In conjunction with walking, I incorporate photographs that map the "hidden spaces that do not typically feature in public (or academic) imaginations of the subject," borrowing a method from cultural geography

studies for creating geographies of home (Brickell 235). I share images of the four locations—some that I took while walking and reading San Antonio, others taken professionally—in order to best represent the way that San Antonio crafts and constitutes an argument about its origins and the ways that nostalgia produces an *ethos* for that argument.

Re-Remembering the City

La Villita

History

One area revitalized in Castro’s Decade of Downtown is La Villita—the first neighborhood in San Antonio (“History”). The village was officially started in 1809 as “the Villa de San Fernando,” although it was in actuality founded decades prior in 1722 when it functioned as the site of an Indigenous village for the Coahuiltecan. La Villita played an important role in the origins of Texas, with it becoming a site of revolutionary activity during the Texas war for independence from Mexico, with Mexican General Martin Perfecto de Cos formally surrendering to Texan forces inside the village (“History”). After the formation of the Republic of Texas and during the early years of Texan statehood, La Villita operated as a multicultural hub of activity in the city. Located just off of the San Antonio River, La Villita was an ideal location for people to live and raise crops and cattle in a protected area of the city; the different groups that lived in the village—mostly Tejanos, Germans, and white Americans—brought their cultural practices to the neighborhood and transformed it into a thriving commercial area. As time passed

and San Antonio grew, La Villita was largely abandoned in favor of larger areas within the city, leaving it in a state of dilapidation (Magruder).

In 1939, San Antonio Mayor Maury Maverick sought to restore the neighborhood with funding from the Depression-era Works Progress Administration. He said that the restored village would be “a symbol and monument to those simple people who had made possible the great city which had grown up around it” (“History”). Mayor Maverick dedicated the restoration to the “promotion of peace, friendship, and justice between the United States of America and all other nations in the Western Hemisphere” (“History”). Through the restorative efforts made via his city ordinance, La Villita was preserved as a historical site for San Antonio. A great deal of attention was paid to restoring the traditional aesthetics of the neighborhood, with the “authenticity of even small details” making “the restoration project a demonstration of the development of Southwestern architecture” (Magruder). Over time, La Villita grew into an arts community for local artists to sell their jewelry, pottery, copperware, paintings, etc. Each year, “La Villita is the site of the annual Night in Old San Antonio celebration,” a night of San Antonio’s famous week-long Fiesta, “as well as numerous other festivals, meetings, and fairs” that showcase the artisans of the community and their works connection to the history of the village (Magruder). Castro’s Decade of Downtown sought to revitalize La Villita by embracing its new identity as a hub of local artistry. The construction projects currently underway in La Villita seek to restore old buildings and protect historic features, while also connecting the village more overtly to the rest of Downtown San Antonio. This restorative work is set to

be completed in the summer of 2022, on the 300th anniversary of the neighborhood. I discuss this restructuring in the following section on La Villita’s physical space.

Place

There are presently two easily accessible points of entrance to La Villita. The first is from the River Walk, through the Arneson River Amphitheatre. The other is from a side street—Presa Street—that is next a paid parking lot marked for River Walk parking. A sign at the bottom of the amphitheater steps, shown in **Image 1 below**, indicates that there is an additional entrance on Alamo Street; when I visited San Antonio, this area was under construction and therefore not in use.



Image 1: Sign Outside of La Villita
("History")

Image 2 below reveals the construction along Alamo Street, showing how the point of entrance is temporarily blocked. While presently limiting access to La Villita, the construction project actually will serve the opposite affect by connecting La Villita to the surrounding area and drawing people in off the street. The renovation project will work to

build out pedestrian walkways, which currently only run through the middle of the village, to also surround the neighborhood. This work will enable pedestrians in San Antonio to access La Villita from multiple sides rather than a few, concealed entry points.



Image 2: Construction Outside of La Villita
(Sakian)

Additionally, the revitalization projects taking place in La Villita seek to restore pieces of its history by preserving and replicating architectural features. The cobblestone streets are a prime example of this work. **Image 3 below** displays the cobblestone streets that are in some places original to the village and in other places designed to appear original.



Image 3: Cobblestone Streets in La Villita
(Sakian)

Image 4 showcases an area of La Villita where new cobblestone streets are being laid. The end result of this renovation will be a village that feels cohesive in its connection to Old San Antonio. Similarly, the recently completed project of moving the San Antonio African American Community Archive and Museum (SAAACAM) to La Villita demonstrates a structuring of contemporary San Antonio with implications on the structure of Old San Antonio.



Image 4: Construction Inside La Villita
(Sakian)

Image 5 below shows the newly renovated home of SAAACAM, which occupies a house in the heart of La Villita. The showcase exhibit in this museum is called *Their Contribution, Our Legacy*; the timeline exhibit focuses on the contributions African Americans to San Antonio's history and culture, including Black Lives Matter efforts in contemporary San Antonio.



Image 5: San Antonio African American Community Archive and Museum in La Villita (Lenamond)

The reshaping of La Villita contributes to the rhetorical argument being made by Downtown San Antonio about its past, present, and future. By building pathways that physically connect La Villita to the rest of downtown, an argument is constructed that “Old San Antonio” and modern-day San Antonio are not separate entities but are layered on top of each other. Upon completion, the restructured La Villita will connect almost directly to the modern Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, which was expanded and updated in 2016 as a result of Castro’s Decade of Downtown (**pictured in Image 6 below**).



Image 6: Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center (“Henry B. Gonzalez”)

The Convention Center project won several design awards in 2016 for its excellence in civic structure, owing to the challenges of its expansion, which including reshaping the Center in order for other downtown projects to extend into areas that it formally occupied (“Henry B. Gonzalez”). The proximity of old and new reiterates a nostalgic narrative about the history and origins of the city, while physically and rhetorically connecting the values of the past with the city’s future horizons, nostalgically producing *ethos* for that future . The projects taking place within La Villita to accentuate its Southwestern architecture and showcase diverse histories within San Antonio more broadly further construct the nostalgic argument of place occurring within the city. By creating places where locals and tourists can physically encounter the past and observe the appearance of authenticity, the city argues for El Mercado’s identity as a critical in the origins of San Antonio.

El Mercado

History

On the west side of Downtown San Antonio stands El Mercado or the Historic Market Square. Gifted to Spanish colonizers by King Philip V of Spain in 1730, El Mercado was a market place where vendors could sell meats, produce, and other goods (“Market Square’s History”). While El Mercado originally occupied Plaza de Armas, by the end of the 19th century it was relocated to its current location west of Santa Rosa Street in order to accommodate the increasing number of settlers flocking to San Antonio. This displacement is an important piece of El Mercado’s history. A European King takes a piece of land from Indigenous peoples and gifts it to fellow colonizers; a hundred years later, once that market has become a fixture for those who have long been established in San

Antonio, colonization and gentrification sweeps through the area again and causes another sudden restructuring of place. El Mercado's history reveals how layers of colonization function within the same spot over a relatively short time period. In the 1900s, El Mercado was revitalized, transformed into a pedestrian-only area, and remade into a place where the "emphasis was on retaining the unique character of a working market, a place for both residents and tourists to shop" ("Market Square's History"). Once again, race and class were present in the physical, rhetorical reshaping of El Mercado as its "unique character" was utilized in order to attract locals and tourists to spend money in the city—a direct appeal to place-based *ethos*.

Today, El Mercado boasts of being the largest Mexican market outside of Mexico ("Market Square"). With over 100 locally owned shops and stalls in its three city blocks, El Mercado serves as a touchpoint for the San Antonio's Mexican culture. In addition to the shopping experiences it provides daily, El Mercado is home to Fiesta de los Reyes every April. An official event of San Antonio's annual Fiesta, Fiesta de los Reyes offers live performances from multiple spaces throughout the Market Square, including "the best Tejano and Conjunto, Latin jazz, and Country Western" music of the festival ("About Fiesta de los Reyes"). While El Mercado is known for this annual event, it offers live Tejano music every day, providing a unique spot in Downtown San Antonio for someone to encounter its Mexican heritage and culture in an entirely sensory way. If La Villita contributes to San Antonio's argument about its origin and futures through nostalgic appeals to historicity, El Mercado contributes to the same argument through its connection to the tastes, sights, and sounds of Mexico.

Place

El Mercado is something of a maze, covered with indoor and outdoor stalls and narrow passage ways through restaurants and shops. When I first entered into the pedestrian block, I noticed the colorful flags overhead and the multileveled shops, as pictured in **Image 7 below**.



Image 7: Entrance to El Mercado

Immediately, I was hit by a wave of delicious smells that drew me into the market and invited me to peruse its many offerings. Food, in fact, plays a key role in El Mercado, providing a way to navigate and experience the place. As shown in **Image 8 below**, savory foods and sweet treats occupy the most space amongst the markets. Conversations take place surrounding the food, amongst visitors and local vendors alike.



Image 8: Pastry Vendor in El Mercado
("Market Square")

As I walked through the market, I heard phrases like, "My grandmother had a recipe for these candies," and "Dad would have wanted a michelada." While the place itself is historic, the food in El Mercado aids the market's rhetorical construction of its nostalgic authority as a critical part of the city's history. The senses are engaged in the argument of the market. Writing about a similar rhetorical event amongst Latina street vendors in Los Angeles, food scholar Lorena Munoz writes:

For Latina vendors, selling nostalgia from "back home" is embedded in the process of taking care of the customer's emotions, needs, and wants in which the vendor's entrepreneurial labor practices can be analyzed at the scale of the body. I argue that productive nostalgia, while it serves as an entrepreneurial strategy for some Latina vendors to keep their food sales up, also produces wounds through the collision of

the customers' consumption of nostalgia and the vendors' constant negotiation of their own emotions attached to the nostalgia they are selling. Vendors use productive nostalgia by selling typical foods to customers who consume nostalgic imaginaries of home through food while activating memories of "back home" that are then discussed with the food vendors. (296)

Munoz's analysis of Los Angeles similarly captures the nostalgic tensions at play within El Mercado. Nostalgia functions within the market to produce *ethos* for its important in the city in large part through food and other goods—products of the labor of mostly Latinx locals. Observing the layers of nostalgia at play in El Mercado highlights the differing ideological stakes that construct the place. Race, class, tourism, and memory swirl together to craft an ostensibly cohesive argument that contains an abundance of incoherence. While food, clothing, and decorative goods, like those pictured in **Image 9 below**, comprise the place's nostalgic *ethos*, the nostalgia experienced by the varied bodies in that space—Tejanos, white Texans, Black Texans, non-Texans, tourists, locals, vendors, etc.—is necessarily different. Yet, the fact that nostalgia exists within that place rhetorically produces its *ethos*, its authority as a part of the city, in addition to its physical proximity.



Image 9: Goods in the Covered Market at El Mercado (Lunong)

*San Fernando Cathedral***History**

In 1730, Spanish designers built a plan for a plaza in “New Spain.” Relying on Spanish architecture and city planning, the designers constructed two interconnected city blocks containing a cathedral and public square into what is now known as San Antonio’s Main Plaza. The plaza’s cathedral—San Fernando Cathedral—is the oldest continually operated church in Texas (“Main Plaza – Plaza De Las Islas”). Like many of the locations that comprise Downtown San Antonio, the cathedral’s history is complicated. It was designed by Spanish colonizers, later beloved by Mexican and Latinx Catholics of the city, and embroiled in the Battle of Alamo as both headquarters for the Mexican army and the ultimate internment place of Tejano and Anglo Texans who died in the famous battle (“Our History”). Living at the heart of the city, in the center of San Antonio’s downtown, the cathedral is a touchpoint for the long and messy history of city. At the end of the 19th century, the San Fernando Cathedral began to lose prominence in the city as industrialization moved people away from the core of the city. Restoration projects from 2003-2011 brought people back to the church, both as a place of worship and as a cultural artifact of the city, with a museum, archive, and even a gift shop. In 2014, in response to the newfound attention being paid to the cathedral, artist Xavier de Richemont made the cathedral the backdrop for his ongoing project titled, “San Antonio | The Saga.” The next section discusses the art installation in conjunction with other spatial components of San Fernando Cathedral.

Place

With La Villita to the east, El Mercado to the west, and the Alamo to the north, San Fernando Cathedral truly stands at the heart of Downtown San Antonio. Recent renovations of the cathedral transform it into a public place rather than a religious sanctuary. Its religious history is intact and *felt*, with the religious spaces within the cathedral provoking a kind of reverent pilgrimage through its museum. But the cathedral makes a public argument, rather than a purely religious one, as it enacts authority over the telling of Texas history. “The Saga,” a lightshow that is projected on the exterior of the cathedral every evening, suggests that San Fernando Cathedral is in fact *the* keeper of the city’s history. Pictured in **Image 10 and Image 11** on the follow page (page 144), the lightshow narrates a story of Texas and San Antonio. This lightshow constitutes “a visual feast,” presenting a kaleidoscope of images, from “rain falling, shimmering cave paintings of Indigenous ancestors, oil wells rising majestically from the ground, sacred and secular, Indians and the Spanish, natives and colonizers, Dixie, Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, the Mexican Revolution, the Battle of the Alamo and the present day” (Erfurth). As the images flash across the cathedral, music swells in the background—thunder, twangy guitars, Indigenous drums, Christian hymns, flamenco, and Mexican conjunto. In this place—the heart of the city—the numerous stories of San Antonio are told alongside each other. The nostalgic place—steeped in religious and historical traditions—is also the site of both harsh and aspirational conceptions of the city. San Fernando Cathedral rhetorically crafts an argument about the city’s past and future by exposing the myths and mess of its past while also suggesting its triumphant future. Both materializing nostalgia and critiquing that

same nostalgia, the cathedral functions in San Antonio to tie together the disparate pieces of downtown, producing an *ethos* for the multiplicity of narratives.



Image 10: Opening Image at The Saga
(Erfurth)



Image 11: Additional Image during The Saga
(Erfurth)

Forget the Alamo

It is completely possible to visit Downtown San Antonio and not see the Alamo. This fact is something that a 5th grade version of myself could not have thought possible, as childhood trips to San Antonio always revolved around the old Spanish mission. In 2022, the Alamo is far and away the least interesting component of Downtown San Antonio, yet its presence and the weight of its narrative is hard to ignore. In the opening chapter of this dissertation, I gave an account of the troubling history and myth of the Alamo. The landmark is often touted as a “shrine to Texas” and cited in mythic stories of a Texan battle for freedom that depicts white men showing bravery in the face of Mexican avarice (“Remember”). This myth erases the presence of Mexican and Indigenous bodies in the Alamo’s history, from the Tejanos who fought alongside white Texans, to the original purpose of the Alamo as a location for converting Coahuiltecan to Christianity. It also erases the impetus for the battle for independence, which was spurred by Mexico’s efforts to abolish slavery (Burrough and Stanford). San Antonio does not attempt to erase this troubled past. Implementations of Castro’s Decade of Downtown will connect the Alamo even further to the downtown space, extending its grounds to directly connect to the River Walk and drawing it into other projects in the area (Bustamante et al.). San Antonio does not attempt to rewrite the history of the Alamo in a way that denies its significance to the city. Rather, by directly connecting the Alamo with other historical landmarks that more overtly celebrate the contributions of Latinx and Indigenous communities, the city argues against the erasures buried within the Alamo’s space and myth.

However, Downtown San Antonio makes an argument about home, and that argument is one of multiplicity and inclusion. Looking to the differing narratives of the pasts, Downtown San Antonio serves as an argument that its history has always been complex and that the competing histories stand alongside each other in the formation of that home place. By utilizing nostalgia in its physical structuring, San Antonio's retelling of the past in a way that forefronts the role of the Indigenous, Tejanos, and Black people in Texas history is afforded authority. Nostalgia produces San Antonio's *ethos* by remembering the ideals of its multiple origins, finding values that stretch across those histories, and allowing the pieces of conflicting ideologies to lie next to each other and foreground that tension. As nostalgia produces authority for San Antonio's history and identity, it further legitimates arguments that might stem from San Antonio about its diverse and inclusive future because its physical space reifies the structure of that nostalgic home place.

Conclusion: History Under Construction

A rhetorical historiography of San Antonio reveals the reciprocal nature of *home as argument* and *arguments about home*. Both arguments, rooted in nostalgia, serve to produce *ethos* for each other as they expand what can be authoritatively claimed on behalf of the home place. If a place is arranged in accordance with a group's hierarchy of values, beliefs, and ideas, then that place's arrangement should evolve as its values evolve. Conversely, the reshaping of physical place present a new hierarchy of values that impacts what arguments can be based in that place in the future, what kinds of *ethos* it can produce, and the level of authority it can offer to the different bodies that walk through it.

Embracing nostalgia in the reading of Castro's Decade of Downtown and Downtown San Antonio also highlights the tensions that continue to be at play within that place. These tensions go beyond the conflicting ideologies that exist together in that place to the conflicting ideologies behind the expansion of San Antonio's ideological borders.

Castro's revitalization of Downtown San Antonio helps to create the city's nostalgic argument about its diverse origins and its diverse future. At the same time, through Castro's revitalization, the city also participates in gentrification, pricing many ethnically and economically diverse locals out of the place that would ostensibly argue for their inclusion. Many of the projects approved and funded during Castro's Decade of Downtown have recently been canceled, owing to fears that the revitalization taking place in the heart of the city is contributing to San Antonio's housing crisis (Barajas). In the final years of his mayorship, Castro expressed ethical concerns with some of the material realities of his project. He attempted to correct the forces of gentrification in San Antonio that developed as a result of the financial incentives his own proposals set in place, establishing a gentrification task force, voting against rezoning measures, and arguing that downtown projects no longer needed to be incentivized because life had returned to the area. During his time as HUD secretary, Castro said, "I'm convinced that if San Antonio does not take bolder steps now to enhance housing affordability, then in a few years this ... will give rise to a decade of displacement" (qtd. in Barajas). Several people that I met while walking in the city commented on the projects taking place downtown. The owner of a leather goods shop in La Villita told me that construction had been bad for business by temporarily restricting access to the village. A vendor in El Mercado told me, "They're

renovating old, historic buildings all over downtown. It's exciting to see what new shop or restaurant will come into an old building. We get to keep the feel of San Antonio *and* get more business." Much like the city itself, their thoughts on San Antonio's revitalization demonstrate a multiplicity of perspectives on what home should look like.

In the pursuit of an ideal home, neoliberal ideology adds further complexities to an enactment of home that restores in order to reclaim. In discussing Latinx nostalgia, particularly in mediated venues, Melissa Villa-Nicholas highlights these racial and class tensions, saying, "For Latinx memory . . . nostalgia is productive in multiple directions: as a political signifier, a mode of impermanent identity, and as a site of consumption that works with US capitalism" (6). Once again, we are reminded of the capacity of nostalgia to produce *ethos* for regressive arguments right alongside progressive arguments. A critical nostalgia calls for the analysis of both forces at once. Nostalgia offers a way of mapping the constant shifting and reconfiguration of values and ideologies for a group of people. The nostalgic home is always already under construction. A critical nostalgia calls for a constant analytical state, re-evaluating the ideologies that shape the nostalgic home and the manifestations of that nostalgia in the future home. If values materialize in the home in troubling ways, then critical nostalgia can indicate alternative futures that might more ethically enact and allow for multiple ideologies.²⁴

²⁴ This affordance of critical nostalgia echoes Malea Powell's call to action for the field when she argues against the narrow, Western history of rhetoric. She writes, "We have to learn to rely on rhetorical understandings different from that singular, inevitable origin story" ("Octalog III," 122). Her call for multiplicity and the capabilities of critical nostalgia to foster multiplicity in origin stories and narrative of home suggest that the field might attend to its own nostalgia as it perpetually looks to the future.

Interchapter 3

Nostalgic Methods: Analyzing Place

Asserting a valuable relationship between nostalgia (as an argument about the home) and place-based *ethos* necessitates a thoughtful consideration of rhetorical space. Scholars of rhetorical space make clear that the physical structures, the material spaces where communicative events take place, are constructed via the physical encapsulation of values and beliefs. This “residue of history” and structure of group ideologies makes space an important area of critique for rhetoricians as they attempt to understand how space helps to shape, police, or discipline bodies and the ways that those bodies navigate such constraints (Mountford, “On Gender” 42). In the previous chapter on Julián Castro and San Antonio, I argued for the consideration of a single place—San Antonio—as a rhetorical space, one that not only impacts the kinds of arguments that can be made within it but can itself be considered an argument. In this interchapter, I delve further into the ways that a critical nostalgia can aid rhetorical scholars in their attempts to both analyze and write about specific places. I propose that employing critical nostalgia to analyze rhetorical space affords researchers another way of identifying and interrogating the competing tensions of time, space, and emotion at play within a place. I suggest that embracing nostalgia while *being there* meaningfully connects place-based analysis to ethnographic and personal writing by providing a framework through which to understand and complicate the personal, the temporal, and the spatial. Throughout this interchapter, I

return to San Antonio to provide examples of the affordances of critical nostalgia in *being there*.²⁵

Incorporating Ethnographic Strategies

Although I went to San Antonio for this project and practiced *being there*, I did not complete a traditionally ethnographic study of the city because I did not—and in many ways *could* not—engage in sustained researcher immersion (Geertz) in community work (Angrosino 740) that resulted in a detailing of cultural rhetoric (Cobos et al. 143-144) or an embodied advocacy (Hess 129), all of which are critical to ethnographic research.

Ethnography and spatial analysis are two separate research methods, despite certain overlapping practices. This is not to say that traditional ethnographic research cannot be transformed by an attendance to critical nostalgia. In fact, in the final chapter of this project I suggest rhetorical research methods that deserve to be reconsidered from the stance of critical nostalgia. Such methods were not included in this project because they fell outside of its scope and the demands of its artifacts. Because my goal in Chapter 4 was to analyze the argument of a place—rather than engage in immersive, descriptive community work—ethnographic research in its purest sense was not the most appropriate method for examining the nostalgia found in the city. However, embracing a critical nostalgia while conducting that analysis of place affords an opportunity to incorporate

²⁵ In their 2018 collection, *Inventing Place: Writing the Lone-Star State*, rhetoricians Casey Boyle and Jenny Rice propose a research method for rhetoric and writing studies called *being there* (2). The practice of *being there* that they describe is very closely akin to traditional ethnographic research; however, I borrow this term in order to suggest the ways that critical nostalgia can meaningfully incorporate ethnographic research practices into spatial analyses that enrich those examinations of rhetorical space. This form of *being there* is notably different than the kind of presence required for ethnographic studies—a point that I discuss in this interchapter's section on ethnography.

critical stances and practices from ethnographic research into a textual analysis, such as the concepts of the researcher *in situ* and the reflexive researcher. Emphasizing *in situ*, “field-based, and context-driven studies of human activity,” ethnographic researchers acknowledge and utilize the insights that “emerge from the ground up” as a result of their being situated within a place/community (Sheridan 83). This placement in the field necessitates a stance of reflexivity—of the researcher constantly question the ways that their presence in that place affects it. While reflexivity is important for all research methods, ethnographers have often modeled the ways that blending description, analysis, and personal narrative enriches understandings of communities and places.

This *poesis* of bodies in place, then, becomes the ultimate goal using critical nostalgia to practice *being there* in spatial analysis. Rather than focusing only on description or a purely textual analysis of a place, employing a critical nostalgia provides a strategy for incorporating *in situ* knowledge and focusing on the “*poesis* of a body-place assemblage, which is another way of describing the joint (but frictional) relationship of a body in a place” (Boyle and Rice 2). Researchers analyzing place often ask how a place shapes the function of bodies within it and how those bodies navigate such constraints; critical nostalgia goes a step further and prompts the researcher to consider what knowledge they have gained by being there—feeling and remembering—themselves. Incorporating critical nostalgia in spatial analyses is as inventional as it is analytical, asking questions about the production of knowledge through the collision of a body and a place. While it is certainly not the *only* means of practicing *in situ* and embracing the personal, critical nostalgia offers an additional path forward for rhetoricians to both

understand and account for their emotions, embodied experiences, influence, and memories as they research places. Utilizing a critical nostalgia provides much needed nuance to *being there* by creating a way of analyzing a place by allowing the researcher to occupy multiple spaces at once—to feel the layers of memory and history that construct a place. Feeling nostalgic within a place conjures a past place—or places—each of which communicate ideological commitments and rhetorical constraints of both the past and present. By embracing the multitudes of place that exist in a single moment of *being there*, critical nostalgia allows rhetoricians to *feel* and better understand the swirling ideologies at play in the construction of a place and its *ethos*.

A Personal Narrative

When I visited San Antonio to engage in *being there* and analyze its structure and history, I traveled with two long-time friends. My friends—twin sisters named Morgan and Natali—were born and raised in Guadalajara, Mexico and came to the United States for their college at the age of 17.²⁶ As we walked, talked, and ate in San Antonio, their relationship to that place was much different than my own. While we physically occupied the same place, the nostalgia they experienced was not the same as mine, and so they navigated the space differently. For example, when we visited El Mercado, I enjoyed wandering the stalls and talking to vendors, feeling a nostalgia for the origins of my home state and a kind of pride in the argument about home being crafted through the market's entanglement with other facets of the Texan origin story. My friends, however, were pulled through the stalls by an eagerness to see items from their past. They found Christmas

²⁶ Morgan and Natali gave me permission to include their names and story in this chapter.

decorations that were “just like the ones mom had growing up.” They tasted the candies that their grandparents gave them every year on their birthday. They held tiles that reminded them of the tiles that lined the hallways of their childhood school. As they moved through that place, its structure and objects prompted a nostalgia for a home from which they are now removed.

As a white woman born and raised in Plano, Texas, I was invited to explore the Mexican heritage and memory of San Antonio and feel pride for the diverse origins of the state. At the same moment and in the same place, Morgan and Natali felt the pull of family home. They experienced nostalgia for childhood and Mexico, while also navigating a place-based nostalgic argument for the ideal Texan home. The nostalgia that propelled me through El Mercado and shaped the way I engaged with that place was not the same nostalgia—or at least not the singular nostalgia—that shaped how my friends interacted with the space, yet we each experienced nostalgias that provided *ethos* for El Mercado and San Antonio, by extension.²⁷

Time and Space

My personal narrative of an experience in San Antonio demonstrates the capacity of critical nostalgia to help situate *being there* in spatial analyses. Critical nostalgia suggests that when we enact *being there*, we are not only occupying a single place at a

²⁷ The line between a unique visitor and a typical visitor in ethnographic research is blurry when nostalgia enters the research method. In the scenario I write about in this section, I occupy the space of a unique visitor. I bring to my research my own unique understandings of nostalgia, Texan identity, and the spaces I occupied; another researcher likely would not have depicted those events in an identical manner. However, employing critical nostalgia in such research highlights how unique experiences in such a location *are* typical, demonstrating the ways that nostalgic structures invite what feels personal while utilizing emotion, memory, and place for an overall experience that is shared by many.

single moment in time. Layers of history, memory, and emotion impact the multiplicity of places present as we physically encounter one place. Let us consider first consider temporality in *being there*. Discussing the challenge of temporality in nostalgic constructions of place, anthropologists Olivia Angé and David Berliner note that, for some, “nostalgia is regarded as a dangerous misuse of history, trading on comfortable and conveniently reassuring images of the past,” thus suppressing the past’s “variety and its negative aspects” (4). Similarly, in his study of a single building in Texas, Casey Boyle writes, “We often adhere to nostalgic vision of a place, and our adherence to that vision ruins a place” (61). As these scholars argue, looking to the idyllic past negatively impacts our ability to build embodied knowledge within a place because it removes us from that place. I would suggest that a critical nostalgia helps to reframe this understanding of time and place by indicating the inevitability of layered emotions and memories. In my personal narrative, my friends and I experienced the residue of differing times all at once as a result of being in that place—El Mercado. Embracing nostalgia while *being there* reveals that embodied knowledge within that place is dependent on those bodies encountering the layers of personal and public history that structure the place itself. Such a move incorporates the *in situ* knowledge and reflexivity so crucial to ethnographic research into rhetorical analyses of place.

The argument of a place—and the knowledge that can be created by bodies dwelling in that place and enacting that argument—is successful in as much as it relies on a multiplicity of times existing in a single place. In the previous chapter, I discussed an interview in which Julián Castro shared his grandmother’s experience in San Antonio. At

that time, people of Mexican descent were not allowed to enter certain establishments in the city. That period of time leaves a mark on San Antonio, in the same way that its more inclusive history leaves a mark. As the twin's walked downtown, they occupied spaces that would have been closed to them, as Mexican women, at different times in the history of the city; I occupied places that would have been off-limits for me, as well, but not in the same ways. The experience of embracing nostalgia while being there, of feeling this history while also defying it, affords insight into the multiplicity of times and spaces at play in the nostalgic arguments offered by a place. This multitude of times present in a place should not be ignored when rhetoricians practice *being there* in their spatial analyses, but should instead expand the kinds of questions and insights that a place can reveal about race, history, and bodies. Embracing a critical nostalgia during analyses of rhetorical spaces means more than considering what is going on at the moment that the research is "actually there." Experiencing nostalgia while *being there* means carrying emotions and memories from across temporalities into an understanding of the place in the present. Using nostalgia in this way enables rhetoricians with another way of doing the work Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline Jones Royster call for when they argue for "tacking in" or looking "beyond the immediate moment to suggest the importance of taking a longer view of tales twice (or even more) told" (104). Perhaps most crucially, partnering a critical nostalgia with spatial analysis produces a method that enables rhetoricians to ask questions about time and memory's role in the construction of place, including the ways that embodied knowledge is reliant on layers of time in place.

Nostalgically *Being There*

Practicing *in situ*, *being there*, in spatial analyses like my examination of San Antonio does not afford the same insights as it does for a full ethnography. Walking, remembering, and feeling in the city is not the same method as sustained community engagement. This kind of critical nostalgia in spatial analysis that I suggest might be considered a “weak theory”—one that “does not aim to build conclusions about place so much as it aims to listen for the new problems created by the encounter” (Boyle and Rice 4). Rather than offer solid conclusions about a place, the kind of *being there* that I propose is strong in its capacity to express theories of embodied experience and knowledge. The benefit of *being there* is the generation of better questions about the rhetorical nature of place, memory, and identity. If place-based *ethos* is always shifting as the place constantly restructures and reinvents itself, then a method of analyzing place by *being there* should also account for these constantly moving tensions. If nostalgia and place are ceaselessly in flux, it makes sense that analyzing them by *being there* can produce no solid conclusions. Approaching *being there* through a critical nostalgia highlights these shifting and swirling tensions by suggesting emotion, time, and space as different points of engagement with a place, further highlighting the fluidity of any place. We should embrace *being there* by examining beyond our present surroundings and embracing a nostalgia that can complicate our understandings of “now.” By *being there*, and being nostalgic while we are *there*, we can select better places to engage and ask better questions about the embodied knowledge that comes from existing in those places. Such considerations allow our interrogations of

material spaces to unfold in a way that honors community, place, and self as we work to understand and intervene in the nostalgic construction of homes in the public sphere.

Chapter 5

Whose Nostalgia are We Talking about, Any Way?

Two Scenes

As I reflect on this project, there are two scenes I come back to again and again, desirous of a conclusion I have not yet found. The first scene is at the Briscoe Center, combing through Ann Richards materials in an attempt to better understand her legacy in Texas. I continue to find it troubling that the performance and policies she is most famous for are rarely, sporadically documented in that archival space. The archival moment is one of tension in this project, which prompts questions about nostalgia beyond Richards' relationship with it. If an archive in Austin, the most progressive of Texan towns, can reshape or ignore an important political legacy for the sake of crafting a certain history of Texas, what hope does the rest of the state have in resisting regressive nostalgic visions of the Texan home?

The second scene I return to is my conversation with the shop owner in La Villita who expressed frustration with the impact of Julián Castro's "Decade of Downtown" on her business. San Antonio itself offers a compelling origin story of Texas by materially embracing multiple nostalgias and histories, yet its citizens' material realities were impacted by that move in potentially harmful ways. Although late in his time as mayor, continuing to the present moment, Castro has expressed the need to wind down revitalization projects in order to prevent gentrification from gripping the city, the racial and economic tensions in the city remain. Although the nostalgia in the city presents an inclusive vision of home, the exclusionary component of nostalgia is at play materially in

the city. Considerations of gentrification, neoliberalism, and identity in San Antonio prompt the questions: What can be sacrificed to achieve the ideal home? Perhaps, *who*.

The tensions in and across these two scenes suggest a problem for a reflective nostalgia—the problem of power.

Power and Nostalgia

Beto O'Rourke is notably absent from these scenes of tension, but he is an important figure to dissect in a consideration of power and nostalgia. While there are ideological tensions that O'Rourke must navigate in his campaigns—for example, the competing nostalgia of conservatism alongside racial and class tensions—his status as a wealthy white man in Texas gives him the opportunity to build an *ethos* based in an embodiment of the nostalgic past that is not troubled by the same issues of space. The stakes for O'Rourke are lower. The loss of home he mourns is more minimal. Also, O'Rourke *lost*. O'Rourke's appeals to nostalgia and the way that nostalgia functions to produce his *ethos* for a subset of Texas suggest a difference in nostalgia as luxury and nostalgia as lifeblood. While I have argued that nostalgic productions of *ethos* contributed to O'Rourke's level of success in Texas, such a production would not have been necessary for his body to occupy space in the Texan political realm. Where Richards needed nostalgia to justify her existence in that space, O'Rourke's body requires no such justification. Where San Antonio relies on nostalgia to do the delicate work of incorporating and questioning competing histories and identities, O'Rourke participates in a nostalgic vision of home that can exist as a counter to Cruz's nostalgic vision without needing a complex negotiation of history. For O'Rourke, whose material, embodied gain

or loss from an encounter with nostalgia will be minimal, nostalgic arguments and production of *ethos* are a low-risk, high-reward venture. In this way, nostalgia favors—and at times enables—wealthy white men. O’Rourke has the privilege to more casually interact with nostalgia because his *ethos* has always already been produced via structures of power legitimized by a broader, deeper nostalgia.

In *Geographies of Nostalgia*, Alastair Bonnett argues the impossibility of divorcing nostalgia from power and vice versa. Rejecting the idea that the concept and process of power is only a future-looking topic, thus separating it from nostalgia, Bonnett instead reiterates the future-oriented nature of nostalgia in his discussion of power. He writes, “Nostalgia mobilises, enables and structures power. Terms such as ‘agency,’ ‘resource,’ ‘capital’ and ‘capability’—the forms and processes of power—can usefully benefit from an acknowledgment of the way they are shaped and enabled by nostalgia” (7). Badia Ahad-Legardy, in *Afro-Nostalgia*, also discusses the reciprocal relationship of nostalgia and hegemony, arguing that nostalgic memory “is often catalyzed by a more pressing and sinister desire for racial and class hegemony” (19). This relationship to power presents a potential problem for the ethics of utilizing a reflective and critical nostalgia to intervene in social issues. If nostalgia—or what we might think of as “dominant nostalgia” or the “nostalgia of the powerful”—is used to produce *ethos* that sustains structures of power and social norms, can it ever truly be more than a trap of conservative white male longing? Is nostalgia always an emotion of privilege?

I say no, or at least it is not always an emotion of hegemonic privilege. In their work, both Bonnett and Ahad-Legardy go on to assert that nostalgia’s establishment of

power makes it a useful force of progressive, radical change—a point this project attempts to demonstrate and argue. While nostalgia has historically been associated with the traditionally powerful (white men) as a way of maintaining their power, I suggest that nostalgia's relationship to power is also one of agency for individuals and communities that experience the conceptual reshaping of the home place. Literary theorist Linda Hutcheon proposes that nostalgia is the “unexpected twin evocation of both affect and agency.” Expanding on this point, Svetlana Boym writes, “Nostalgia . . . is not a property of the object itself but a result of the interaction between subjects and objects, between actual landscapes and the landscapes of the mind” (*The Future of Nostalgia* 354). In making this claim, Boym speaks to the agency of the nostalgic—of all who experience nostalgia—by suggesting that the idealized vision of home is a product of agential creativity. Those who participate in the structuring of the nostalgic home, different from those who are placed or erased by others in that home, maintain an agency over that vision. This agency is for all who are nostalgic, not just for the traditionally privileged, and this agency creates a space for imaginative reworkings of memory/ies and history/ies about the home. Much like we do not have a choice in the existence of power, we do not have a choice in nostalgia—it swirls around and within us. A critical nostalgia prompts and enables us to question the agencies buried within nostalgia and to interrogate for what or who that nostalgia produces *ethos*. Whose nostalgia is in play? What power do they have? What is the effect of that power on others? In some situations, such a critical stance will result in an understanding of the modes and means of power that must be “delinked,” unlearned, resisted, and stripped (Alvarez 27). In others, this critical stance reveals the

strength and agency that communities find in their nostalgic visions of their home. Ahad-Legardy attests that nostalgia can do healing anti-racist, decolonial, and feminist work in its ability to offer an idealized version of a community's past that delinks that past from narrow hegemonic framing, such as the narrow frame of trauma often placed on BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and disability communities (109). Nostalgia's relationship with power can be progressive rather than hegemonic when it writes historical and home-based moments in ways that privilege decolonial, feminist agency (Ahad-Legardy 58).

So, what is the endgame, the desired outcome of utilizing a critical nostalgia as we analyze and invent arguments about our home places? As I have argued throughout this project, nostalgia does not provide a singular path forward. We cannot simply replace one brand of nostalgia for another in the public sphere, lest we enact new erasures. An understanding of nostalgia's *ethos* at its best allows us to better identify what makes certain arguments about home persuasive and utilize those persuasive strategies to recraft the home place. This process is ongoing. As a way forward, nostalgia serves as a critical stance rather than a cure-all rhetorical force. Critical nostalgia—as it unearths the workings of idealized homes that produce *ethos* for future homes—helps us to generate vocabulary, in the Burkean sense, that creates new categories of identification. Burke contends that we must always struggle within the war of words and that the best we can strive to do is create new vocabulary, allowing for more identifications to be formed that allow for “a more orderly approach to them, permitting them to be contemplated with less agitation” (195). Embracing critical nostalgia, in essence, takes up Burke's call to action and can serve to separate the message from its forms, exposing motivations and unconscious identifications.

In the face of little evidence that the troubling divisions in the world will give way to totalizing, positive unifications, we must go to work enacting hope and taking action to combat unethical and violent behavior wherever and however we can. Enacting a critical nostalgia has the capacity to help us build such a vocabulary, to find new ways of locating and critiquing the identifications that work to influence and persuade. Such work is particularly needed in the public sphere, where the divisiveness of language poses an immediate threat.

Building a Critical Nostalgia

I suggest that employing “critical nostalgia” is a way of interrogating the nostalgias that produce credibility for public arguments about the ideal, future home and is a tool for developing this rich vocabulary. Critical nostalgia, as I argued in the opening chapter, is a method of approach for utilizing Boym’s reflective nostalgia as we—as scholars and citizens—attempt to analyze the nostalgias that swirl around public discourse. Throughout this project, I have demonstrated ways that critical nostalgia transforms the field of rhetoric and writing studies’ research methods, making nostalgia an inventive and analytical tool as rhetoricians study texts, bodies, and communities that are entangle in public arguments. My interchapters do not represent an exhaustive list of nostalgic methods, but instead model ways that rhetoricians can utilize critical nostalgia in their methodological approaches. Critical nostalgia can meaningfully expand innumerable methods, as nostalgic arguments operate within an array of rhetorics. Will Kurlinkus does this work extensively in *Nostalgic Design*, where he presents a method of analysis for digital, technical, and material rhetorics. Future work can be done with ethnographic research, suggesting ways

that a critical nostalgia might afford ethnographers with new vantage points on community identity, literacy, and activism. Growing subfields like disability studies could incorporate critical nostalgia to expose the tensions between the ideal home from the embodied experiences of people with disabilities. While certainly outside the scope of my expertise, I rhetorical projects reliant on quantitative research might benefit from implementing a critical nostalgia that could introduce emotion, memory, and the home into considerations of statistics. A more substantive critical nostalgia will be built as more research is done that presents methods of grappling with nostalgia and its production of *ethos* for arguments, people, and places.

Implications for Our Rhetoric and Writing Programs

So far, I have focused the implications of my research by suggesting areas where the field of rhetoric and writing studies might be strengthened by utilizing a critical nostalgia as it seeks to analyze and intervene in political discourse. I would be remiss, however, if I did not take a moment to suggest implications outside of political discourse for the “houses” of our field—for our programs, departments, and universities. Across the nation, the field of rhetoric and writing studies—or English, more broadly—is experiencing a moment of nostalgia. We are nostalgic for the way we “used” to be valued by our universities. We are nostalgic for the way our students “used” to read and write. We are nostalgic for the days when we did not have to teach our courses in virtual classrooms. We are nostalgic for the ways that beloved scholars and mentors ran their programs in the past. The list could go on. After all, nostalgia blossoms out of a dissatisfaction with the present moment. It is no wonder that those of us who study rhetoric and writing are

wishing we could go back home. The contemporary moment is a hostile place for our field and for higher education in general.

I suggest that we as a field might embrace a critical nostalgia as we grapple with our present moment and look to the future. Rather than ignore the nostalgic arguments present within writing programs and pedagogies, I propose that we make use of nostalgia as we attempt to better understand the ideological commitments buried in our nostalgias and ascertain which of those commitments must be carried into the future and which we are comfortable leaving behind. The buried commitments that construct our programs and pedagogies are often in tension with the field's future-oriented priorities. The field's recent recommitment to anti-racist pedagogy might be an area where critical nostalgia might prove generative as the field navigates conflicting ideological commitments. A future project that examines nostalgia and rhetoric or writing programs could easily engage in this important subject, as critical nostalgia has the capacity to unsettle writing programs by interrogating resistance to anti-racist practices and the arguments inherent in idealized visions of a "home" writing program. I anticipate that applying critical nostalgia to writing program administration and compositional theory could inform the field's understanding of our programs as stakeholders in social justice issues and have implications for how we design first-year writing programs that teach our students how to critically engage in public arguments.

The analytical and inventive quality of rhetorical nostalgia has the capacity to intervene in public arguments perhaps most importantly through our students as they compose arguments in their beginning writing, technical communication, and advanced

composition courses. In my own classes, I believe that teaching students to utilize nostalgia as both a tool for analysis and invention can inspire them to craft effective arguments that imagine a more ethical future. This use of nostalgia engages “a critical longing for pasts that could have been” that offers writing students an opportunity to engage the various layers of memory and identity construction at odds in argumentative exchanges (Kurlinkus and Kurlinkus). Teaching students to embrace nostalgia as they write encourages them to first, pick topics and social issues that hit “close to home,” where they are physically poised to enact change within a *place*. Second, it teaches students to identify the ideological tensions present in persuasive exchanges and arguments about the ideal home. Tensions between the various rhetorical constructions that surround persuasion—including what counts as *logos*, who can generate *pathos*, and how to produce *ethos*—reveal conflicting traditions and identities in public and professional issues, yet these tensions are often unconsidered by students when they try to write persuasively on such issues. Understanding the ways in which nostalgia functions to provide *ethos* for political arguments affords our students and ourselves—as scholars, citizens, and writers—the opportunity to create more ethical arguments that honor our aspirational homes.

Back to Texas

The deeply conservative ideology in Texas presents a considerable challenge for progressives in the state to overcome. Since 2020, new anti-transgender directives, abortion-banning bills, anti-critical race theory pledges, and voter suppression laws have been implemented in the state, making seemingly progressive moments in Texas (like O’Rourke’s success in 2018) feel even weaker. What might be the future of Texas as

O'Rourke runs for Governor of Texas against incumbent Greg Abbott? A critical, reflective nostalgia indicates substantial conflicts that O'Rourke will need to negotiate to be successful in his 2022 campaign. As my discussion of his presidential campaign suggests, O'Rourke has not historically done well outside of Texas; while his 2022 campaign is back in the state, he now must face the potential problem of having ideologically left the state. It is possible that his run for president will have aligned him with the politicians he attempted to distance himself from in the minds of Texans. Moreover, he returns to Texas having taken up political positions on the national stage that feel particularly distant from Texas. For example, O'Rourke's assertion during his presidential run that, "Hell yes, we are going to take your AR-15" is potentially damning for a state with so much of its identity rooted in nostalgia surrounding gun ownership, liberty, and the Wild West. Even for nonconservative Texans, such statements by O'Rourke might not suggest that he has the capacity to lead a state that still loves its guns, regardless of whether his supporters agree with him on this point. Applying a critical nostalgia to these tensions suggests that the nostalgically produced *ethos* for O'Rourke in 2018 may not extend to his gubernatorial candidacy, indicating a rhetorical shift that may have occurred when he physically and ideologically left home in 2020.

Yet, while this project might not suggest a happy ending for O'Rourke's future in Texas, I think it can indicate a more hopeful future for Texas generally. There is a great deal of hope in nostalgia's capacity to *produce ethos*, pushing back on the idea of *ethos* being a possession of an individual rhetor. O'Rourke, Richards, and Castro's San Antonio demonstrate the ways that nostalgia can be negotiated and utilized in Texas to push its

ideological borders in more inclusive, progressive directions. None of those rhetors owned their nostalgic *ethos*, but the *ethos* surrounding their campaigns and visions of the ideal home was made possible by the participation of their audiences in that vision. I believe that nostalgia's *ethos* in Texas outlives the campaigns and policies where it is ignited.

Nostalgically produced *ethos* can make a progressive Texas possible when more people and places embrace a critical nostalgia as they envision their future home by reimagining the past home. Building vocabulary and new categories of identity, nostalgia can change what is possible within Texas. As Texans continually rewrite their home, responding to present dissatisfactions and reorganizing the hierarchy of their ideological values, nostalgia can restructure the state's future and produce *ethos* for such a vision.

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