

## *Introduction*

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In Carol Gilligan's groundbreaking 1982 book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, she made a revolutionary claim that supposedly "universal" life stages were in fact deeply gendered. The title of her first chapter, "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," is itself a succinct statement of her argument. Assessing the enormously influential developmental schema set forth by Jean Piaget, Bruno Bettelheim, and Erik Erikson, she concludes that their models implicitly assume that "the male model is the better one since it fits the requirements for modern corporate success" (10). In Erikson's aptly named "Eight Ages of Man" chapter, for example, the penultimate life stage, "Generativity," or the guiding of younger generations, is what a man turns to after he's consolidated adult identity and career so that he can guide younger generations that, significantly, usually aren't his own offspring. Men begin that rewarding and rewarded stage at a time when most women are finishing the stages of childbearing and child-rearing that are their embodied "generativity."

Gilligan's refusal of that gendered paradox, in tandem with that of Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978), established a new women's legacy and mapped developmental paths not hitherto traced. As stunningly obvious an identification of a "problem that has no name"—but which affects every woman's well-being—as that Betty Friedan announced in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Gilligan's

and Chodorow's work insisted upon the significance of women's experience in mapping life stages. Simultaneously applauded and reviled for their insistence that ostensibly dispassionate studies were inadequate because of their exclusion of half the population, they changed our understanding of what was developmentally "normal."

Except. . . . Over thirty years later, in 2012, gasps of astonishment were heard throughout the country when Anne-Marie Slaughter published "Why Women Still Can't Have It All" in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Firmly stating, "It's time to stop fooling ourselves," Slaughter explained that nurturing (Erikson's "generativity") and high-level professional achievement aren't compatible for women. Without entering into the maelstrom of debate that surrounds that argument, for the purposes of this collection and to clarify our own assumptions, we note that what remains the same as in 1982 is the normalization of a life path that remains deeply gendered, classed, and raced. Current debates about whether Sheryl Sandberg, the COO of Facebook and author of *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, who is waging a battle for women-friendly workplaces, is (basically) a better woman, mother, or feminist than Marissa Mayer, the CEO of Yahoo! who curtailed workplace flexibility, turn our critical attention to pitting woman against woman as surely as the tediously protracted "mommy wars" of the 1990s. *Staging Women's Lives in Academia* refuses to deflect attention from workplace and institutional practices and instead provides an arena for women to talk not only about how ostensibly personal decisions are shaped by institutions but also about the ways workplaces, not women, must be changed and the identities we perform need to be chosen by us, not others.

In discussing academia, we know that we are tracing a path as privileged as that Slaughter exemplifies, at least in terms of cultural capital. We are also looking at perhaps the most traditionally stratified of all professions. Based on medieval guild conventions, academia's trajectory for the most elevated of its faculty, the professoriate, presumes a linear sequencing as rigid as that of any artisan: seven years as apprentice, an equal time as journeyman, and, finally, the apotheosis of becoming a master. The august progression from assistant professor, through associate status, to assuming the majesty of full professor is as deeply gendered, though, as Erikson's "eight ages of man."

If much has lamentably remained the same since 1982, however, much has also changed. Formation and actual implementation

of policies about Title IX, affirmative action, sexual harassment, family medical leave, LGBTQ rights, disabilities, and violence on campus, to name a few conspicuous instances, are common. The distinguished slate of female “firsts”—president, full professor, dean, provost, and so on—has been filled on many campuses. Women’s centers, committees on the status of women, and offices of diversity are standard entries in many schools’ directories. Nonetheless, even as the percentage of female doctorates exceeds half in humanities fields such as literature and languages, an odd asymmetry often remains between the available pool of talented women and their representation in academic hierarchy, a discrepancy not explained through pipeline theory. One major reason for that discrepancy, we argue, is the often unexamined gender-normative institutionalization of professional life stages.

A number of recent studies have begun to pay attention to the significance of life stages for women in academia. Mary Ann Mason and Marc Goulden’s enormously influential essay, “Do Babies Matter?” (2007), galvanized discussion and policy guidelines such as “stopping the tenure clock” through an analysis of how the timing of childbearing and child-rearing influenced tenure. Since then, feminist scholarship, blogs, essays, and books increasingly address the impact of life stages on women’s lives. As we discuss later, such studies tend to fall into two groups: those that address particular life stages, and those that address particular disciplinary fields. Studies focused on early parenting and retirement, the two poles of the professional life course, are typical of the former, and studies focusing on particular fields, such as the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), of the latter. In addition, many of these studies have an implicitly normative message about how best to negotiate the “standard” trajectory from graduate school through that ostensible academia desideratum, tenure.

Viewing women’s paths in academia holistically, *Staging Women’s Lives in Academia* includes essays that focus on the frequent disjuncture between chronological age and professional age. For example, in exploring the professional apprenticeship of graduate school, which often assumes youthful students monastically dedicated to study alone, we include essays by graduate students who have chosen parenthood (a violation of professional life stage expectations) and students who are in their fifties (a violation of chronological life stage stereotypes). The collection thus implicitly

argues for a more complex connection among the different stages than we usually recognize, and urges that we look ahead (and behind) as we assess who we are and where we are professionally and personally.

In part because of our areas of expertise, this collection focuses on women in language and literature workplaces. Our rationale for that is only in part, however. We view these workplaces as coal mines, and our canary fates as having major implications for all fields. That over 50% of doctorates in these fields are now awarded to women seemed to be cause for celebration a decade ago. The inversion of professorial/contingent faculty since the 1970s from 70% professorial to 70% contingent is not coincidentally related to the feminization of the workforce in the humanities, we argue. As the number of women with terminal degrees in the language and literature workforce goes up, titles, salary, and prestige go down—a sobering signal to other sectors of the academic workforce. In addition, the dilemmas so eloquently traced and sharply dissected in these essays are by no means unique to women in language and literature workplaces: childbearing, elder care, illness, commuter relationships, increasing numbers of students, and burgeoning secondary tasks such as outcome assessment are no respecters of disciplinary fields.

In designing the collection, we further widened its scope by including a range of institutions and a range of women. The workplaces our authors call their public homes range from community colleges to the Seven Sisters, from public to private, from outsourced secondary education sites to exclusive liberal arts settings across the country. Representing different ethnic groups, sexual orientations, ages, and class backgrounds, these women speak about and to all women in academia, as well as to women outside academia. Other women will recognize their own questions as they debate whether to lean in to their professions or bow out, and ponder whether leaning in might not also mean leaning on someone less privileged.

*Staging Women's Lives in Academia* thus sees academia as a springboard for all of its contributors and readers, but not necessarily a final destination. Through widescale publication of calls for papers that specifically encouraged readers to contact colleagues, students, and teachers who no longer participated in these venues, we actively sought scholarship from terminal-degree recipients who did not continue down the academic tenure track. The road not taken was a source of regret for some, a celebration for others.

In asking contributors to think—retrospectively or in light of current experience—about gender, the intersection of professional and personal life stages, and academia, we also asked for much more than a simple memoir or anecdote. Although of course we assumed that many contributors would draw from personal experience, we also asked that they theorize and concretize their essays. In addition, we requested that they think about some basic questions that could help others, such as “Do/did you discover that your experience was typical, but nonetheless didn’t expect it?,” “What would you point out as the key features of this stage to a colleague just beginning it?,” “How do you think your experiences were shaped by the kind of school you worked at and where your school was situated?,” and everyone’s favorite, “What would you do differently if you had it to do again?”

Nan, the coeditor (with Alice Radosh) of *Women Confronting Retirement: A Nontraditional Guide*, and Michelle, coeditor (with Katie J. Hogan) of *Over Ten Million Served: Gendered Service in Language and Literature Workplaces*, were certain that a critical, holistic analysis of the intersections between professional and personal stages over the life course would call to both writers and readers. Our own scholarship, the overwhelmingly positive response to panels based on the topic at conferences such as the Modern Language Association, and renewed attention to the “feminization” of the humanities, as well as the development of age studies as a field, promised lively and strong response. Nonetheless, we were startled when we received over one hundred abstracts whose astute, principled, and passionate analyses made it clear that “the profession” had to do something more than profess its ostensible beliefs about merit and equity.

We have organized the collection according to professional nodal points: graduate school, early career (including pre-tenure), midcareer (including post-tenure), and late career and retirement. That rudimentary and seemingly clear listing masks the complex questions raised within each category and between categories. We have thus chosen contributors who, despite strong and promising doctoral work, chose not to seek academic employment or, more startlingly still, earned tenure and decided to leave academia. We have also included entries that analyze how the implicit expectations of development or promotion in these categories change as academia increasingly becomes a workplace in which the face of contingent labor is that of a woman.

Within each stage, authors contemplate the slipperiness of the very categories we—and they—construct to explain the stages of life. What does it mean to be “senior” when one is a full professor at forty? Are you called a “senior” faculty member if you’re an adjunct at seventy, or just a senior citizen? How do you understand being a “junior” colleague at fifty? A new mother at forty-two? How can middle career mark becoming part of higher education’s sandwich generation for associate professors, so that one’s charge is not just nurturing the young but caring for the elderly in personal and professional arenas? In what ways are women in all stages of academia all too often feeling that, like Goldilocks, they’re never “just right,” but always too young or too old, too attentive to work or too focused on family? This collection signals the need to rebuild the house of academia so that we can have not just rooms of our own but lives of our own. As the table of contents demonstrates, the included authors address a formidable range of current scholarship that, yoked to personal experience, suggests future planning for institutions and individuals.

Exemplary as many earlier trailblazing texts are, most also address a specific demographic group and thus implicitly limit their audience to that group. In addition, almost all implicitly assume a tenured or tenure-track trajectory. The expanded foci of *Staging Women’s Lives in Academia* also expand the book’s readership far beyond groups seeking advice about specific life stages such as how to achieve tenure, balance mothering and paid work, and prepare for retirement.

We hope that by looking ahead as well as behind in terms of both individual life courses and institutional histories, this collection will be a beacon for individual readers rehearsing professional and life stages they haven’t yet entered and for professionals determining what must change in their workplaces to create a better jointure between the stages of women’s personal and professional lives.

## Graduate School

Five authors explore the gendered dimensions of doctoral studies in Part I, “Graduate School.” Heather M. Steffen and Nancy Scott Fox set the tone for the section through “A Job that Gets Old Fast: Age Studies, Academic Labor Criticism, and the Graduate

Employee,” and “Discourse of Aspiration: A Community of Nontraditional Women Students.” Together they outline a graduate school version of Goldilocks’s experience: one writer is “too old” as a nontraditional student; the other fears she is “too young” in a culture that dismisses the demands of students because they are still, after all, just children who don’t need the health insurance, living wage, or workplace policy protections that only adults have a right to expect. In “Uses of My Anger: Negotiating Mothering, Feminism, and Graduate School” and “The Accidental and Ambivalent Academic, or How to Succeed in Academia through Failure and Doubt,” Martha Pitts and Jennifer Ann Ho question the steady and sure progress from undergraduate through graduate work that so many students and faculty seem to implicitly assume, a pilgrim’s progress that all too often sees partners, children, sexual orientation, race, and class as obstacles to be swept aside or stepped over. Pitts and Ho explore what it means to insist on their status as women in what is still frequently a man’s world and as minorities when the majority seems so little aware of their entitled status.

In “The Chaos of Kairos: Conflicting Discourses of Timing, Mothering, and Flexibility,” Jessica Ketcham examines the ways one key decision of adult life—parenting—has become “less a question of *whether* and instead dominated by the *when*, often implying both that there is a correct answer, and that individual women—not the institutions that constrain and influence them—are primarily responsible for making the ‘right’ decision.” Raising issues about policy that emphatically move the discussion from the personal to the political, Ketcham sets the stage for our understanding of equally powerful, equally repudiated life issues in early career, when not only parenting but elder care issues and general assessment of professionalization values can also lead to priorities other than those usually counseled through professional advice venues.

### Early Career (Including Tenure)

The authors in Part II continue to pinpoint the intersections of personal and professional life, where disjuncture is often signaled by the sense that “I’m too young/too old to be doing this,” whether “this” is administrative work begun early in a career or parenting

started later in life. (For example, think about the oddly different valence the age of thirty-five has in each context.) As they consider the supposed desideratum of doctoral life—tenure-track positions—the authors in this section ponder whether they might not be, in early career, what Kheli R. Willetts refers to in the title of her essay as “Square Peg, Round Hole: My Journey toward Professor of Practice.” The job market, self-assessment about professional goals and priorities, and family configurations lead each to calculate the cultural and economic capital earned against what will have to be spent on life-course decisions. As Elline Lipkin notes in her aptly named essay, “Currency,” the coin of the realm varies, but there is always a cost (and sometimes a gain). Lipkin herself chose to move away from the traditional professorial tenure-track path, as did Willetts, in opting to become a newly titled professor of practice.

The authors in this part (and in most of this collection) ponder, like Jessica McKelvie Kemp, about “Settling Down without Settling: Reflecting on Ambition, Agency, and Acquiescence.” Looking back at her decision not to enter the academic job market, Kemp, like Ketcham, questions whether “some awareness that my ‘personal’ preferences are susceptible to influence by restrictive cultural norms would have prompted me to ask more questions of myself and others, and be more skeptical of my choices.” Weighing the age-circumscribed issues of significant others, children, and career, Kemp became a successful executive in the nonprofit sector, determined “to build the rest of my career, according to my own design.”

Other authors in this section pursued a more traditional early career path but found that the groves of academe provided their own challenges. In “Working-Class Women on the Tenure Track,” Lynn Arner identifies the handicap of lost or delayed time, because “Academe places a premium on precocity: the younger a scholar on completion of each stage . . . the more talented that scholar is presumed to be.” Trying to create new families in academia while still cherishing the old is the dilemma poignantly described by both Mariana Past and H el ene E. Bilis. Upon accepting a tenure-track position, Past frankly admits in “My Double Life in Academia, or Extreme Parenting on the Tenure Track” that “this new professional stage involved a process of cultural and personal adaptation whose intensity I had not anticipated”—an intensity multiplied when “other bodies enter into the equation.” Generous in her personal practice as she is in this essay, Past is committed

to “helping other women and colleagues who are new parents to realize that they can be successful.” Remembering the stress, stigma, and financial hardship of her years as a single parent, Bilis also draws on her own experience and that of other women to offer suggestions for both institutions and women struggling to juggle seemingly impossible demands on the home and the department front in “Solo on Stage: The Single Mother’s Solitary Path to Tenure.”

### Midcareer (Including Post-Tenure)

Midcareer can prompt a thoughtful survey of the distance traveled as well as a mapping of the road ahead guided by hard-won knowledge about dead ends and detours. The stereotyped narrative of the academic tenure track can even represent midcareer as a triumphant conclusion to the uncertainties of graduate school and early career. Those midway through life’s journey and/or career may find themselves, however, in a dark place without a guide such as Dante’s, awakened to limitation rather than illumination. The essays in this section run the gamut of responses to midcareer, from memories of feeling lost, through passionate searches for ways out of seemingly insoluble quandaries, to acceptance of the most painful realities rather than yearning for other pasts, other lives, and other roads. These essays demonstrate an ongoing negotiation of central life stage issues: career/relationships, agency/stasis, individualism/community. For some the recognition that actuality may not mirror the potentiality of earlier years brings peace; for others, it’s a gnawing discontent. Midcareer can mark a newfound freedom; it can also be when it becomes evident that the boundaries to mobility and agency aren’t glass ceilings but steel walls. The needs of the “other bodies” that were often those of babies and significant others at earlier stages can shift, as can the needs of one’s own body. Seemingly overnight, the known certainties of bodies can change through disability, death, and age itself, and the habitus of the workplace becomes a foreign country.

In “Lives Like Mine: Notes at Midlife on Career Change,” Cynthia Miller Coffel thinks about the stories we tell ourselves as she explores how her career shift to “TestCo,” rather than the tenure track she anticipated at midlife, prompts questions that say “something about the kinds of support institutions still

fail to provide for the achievement of women” as well as saying “something about the internal lives of women.” The narratives that led her female colleagues to TestCo are as multifarious as those of this collection. She, like Jessica McKelvie Kemp, wonders how a younger self let her story be written for her rather than claiming authorship of her own life until midcareer but is determined “to keep on writing, to keep on telling the true stories of women’s lives.” Rhonda Filipan also remembers stories—those told her by her mother and aunts—in “Voicing Discontent: Gender, Working-Class Values, and Composition Studies.” Working as contingent labor for a decade, Filipan argues forcefully for the activism she recorded in her oral history dissertation about female contingent faculty activists. Revising her life narrative to account for ostensible “choices” that were inflected by gender and class, Filipan claims a future identity in which she will work for herself and others.

Devoney Looser confirms that “more of us need to describe our experiences,” while astutely noting the vicissitudes of first-person narrative, which “seems to fall in one of two categories: the rosy or the tragic.” Holding steadily to a good-enough narrative course that skillfully steers between these extremes, Looser notes the daily and yearly decisions that can add up to a “significant career price in small increments along the way” for the midcareer woman. Unflinching in her assessment of how midcareer decisions will affect family and career, Looser sets a path others will choose to follow in “The Good Enough Academic Mother at Midcareer.”

In “Solitary in the South: Confessions of a Single Academic at Midlife,” Cynthia Port agrees that finding supportive friends, choosing priorities knowingly, and eschewing the guilty sense of not having made “good-enough” life choices is crucial. Port realizes that the “geographical constraints of our profession can lead to a sense of cultural displacement for academics, on one hand, and how it might affect the potential for romantic attachments” on the other. For her, that algebra of attachment means living as a single Jewish woman in a place she never thought was an option, facing a “singlism” as judgmental as the “momism” of Looser’s son’s teacher. But like the other writers in this section (and throughout this collection) Port, while clearly outlining the limitations of social institutions, concludes that her life is also “one I’ve chosen through the decisions I’ve made.”

In “Staging Women’s Live on the ‘Altac’ Track,” Brenda Bethman and Donna M. Bickford give a name to the destination so many of our contributors have reached. Declaring that they “find the altac label valuable in creating visibility for this identity, developing a language to describe our experiences and positionality, and building a community,” Bethman and Bickford call for a new community of scholars, teachers, and activists, a community defined not through who got the tenure-track job but through a conscious affiliation with others who have chosen administrative positions and remain actively engaged in scholarship. They highlight another strand that runs throughout this collection: invisibility. Striving to create identities that fulfill core personal and social values, Bethman and Bickford note how rarely the abstract collective noun *staff* is acknowledged as central to schools’ missions and communities. Intriguingly and troublingly, they argue that “just as the increasing shift from tenure-track faculty lines to contingent faculty disproportionately impacts women, so does the move into altac positions.”

That invisibility envelops Ellen Gil-Goméz in “(In)Visibilities: A Woman Faculty of Color’s Search for Disabled Identity That Works.” Gil-Goméz works at defining and translating the intersections of sex, ethnicity, and disability. Through disability, she painfully gains a new institutional reading skill: “I could clearly distinguish the major differences in the institutional and personal responses to me as disabled versus the responses to me as a woman of color.” Used to embodying ethnicity and sex, she learns to perform disability as well, albeit with an audience that’s not sure what it’s seeing. “Formulating practices of speech and silence parallel to those I have learned as a woman of color,” Gil-Goméz anticipates teaching students how to read disability, as she so ably taught them to read Latina texts.

Kathryn D. Temple questions the very concept of stages in “Gratitude, Agency, and the Reformation of the Stage Approach.” Considering *nodal* as an optical term, conducive to both “fuzzy” and hyperclear focusing, Temple finds the same to be true in viewing life experiences. Addressing the early timing of her husband’s death and of being a departmental chair as an associate professor, she moves gracefully through an argument that counterpoises gratitude and agency to conclude that we must have gratitude *for* agency. Eschewing stages, she argues that we must

accept responsibility for our own accomplishments and urges that we “seize our own agency and use it to leverage our gains for others.”

### Late Career and Retirement

Katie Hogan, cited several times in this collection for her influential essay, “Superserviceable Feminism,” looks at education through a different prism in “The Academic Slow Lane.” A first-generation college graduate, she notes “how grateful I feel about the ‘slow’ educational approaches of my youth” and argues persuasively that “the signature feature of education, from elementary to graduate school, is paying attention.” Hogan turns to P. F. Kluge’s novel, *Gone Tomorrow*, to suggest that as feminist teachers and scholars “we will find ways to transcend the ‘business’ of education to ‘do’ education, drawing on our gifts in the time we have been given.”

In “Relentless Improvising: A Full Professor Struggles to Manage Work, Family, and Health,” Carol Colatrella notes the same tenured privilege that Hogan, Temple, and others point to. Also the working-class beneficiary of Hogan’s “slow teaching,” she “did not think that Ph.Ds. could be unemployed, underemployed, or inadequately compensated.” But like Hogan, she notes that the successful, good job she now holds seems “boundless. . . . In hindsight, I wonder if I should have selected a technical field of study or pursued a better-paying career outside of academe.” An administrator while untenured and before becoming a full professor, Colatrella, like many of our authors, is weary of juggling child care, elder care, health, and finances, concerned, like Gil-Goméz, that not carrying a full work load while ill “might be perceived as slacking.”

Angelica Duran also debates staying in academia and consistently turns down offers for administrative posts at her school. In her case, though, as she parses her “Academic Evolution: From *Chicanita* to *Mamá* to *Abuela*,” she debates leaving academia to reach out for something else. Always “striving to find the right words at the right time,” Duran wonders whether the right word for the future of a British Renaissance scholar might not be *abuela*, or grandmother, whether Angelica Duran might not merge with Angélica Durán. Noting that “Mexican culture . . . tends to view

middle and elder age in a more positive light,” she experiments with a new amalgam of Chicana and professorial identity. Heeding her mother’s order to speak up, Duran also speaks for others.

In “Love’s Labors: Taking Care of Mother,” Ruth Perry explores a new dimension of the caregiving that our contributors struggle with as parents, colleagues, and members of their various communities: elder care. In tracing the last decade of her mother’s life, Perry honestly addresses “how focused and demanding” that second phase of “mothering” was, how many of the pleasures of a senior scholar’s work had to be put aside: “And then, just when you are at the top of your game . . . there you are . . . again, devoting precious mental time to the material minutiae of someone else’s life.” Her lovingly invisible work ensnares her in “the gender trap [that] has caught you and . . . made you a woman once again.” Offering rules to help the rest of us, Perry relishes the sweet spot of time in which she now finds herself.

Lynn Z. Bloom offers “A View of Her Own,” a lens, like Temple’s, that let us see something new. Eagerly grasping what others call retirement, she moves “from an academic life to the life of a full-time writer.” Asking herself, “Would Thoreau have served on committees?” Bloom clear-sightedly advocates that we “concentrate on the essentials,” however defined for each of us. For Bloom, “redirection is all-consuming . . . exhilarating from breakfast to midnight.” Embracing agency, she declares: “I never argue; I simply act.” And act she has. Espousing “alternative models of aging,” whether for midcentury or the new century, Bloom surveys “sourpuss” accounts of age and advocates the pseudonymous Thomas Benton’s “14 Things to Do before You Retire” as she prepares for her greatest accomplishment, whatever it may be.

In “The Work of Retirement,” Deborah Kaplan traces the road not taken, the road she and her colleague husband would have traveled together had he not died in his late fifties. That work also carries the resonance of psychoanalysis’s “working through,” the excruciating labor that creates knowledge and change. As Kaplan simply and heartbreakingly states, “I would have to begin again, to imagine my future, while teaching . . . and then in retirement, alone.” Like Perry, Kaplan experiences the double vision of age as she remembers having been alone as a young woman: “At least I knew how my life had turned out—what I had achieved and been given and what I had lost.” Acknowledging some women’s “fear

of becoming invisible” in retirement, she astutely notes: “The invisibility we may fear as feminists is not extinction.” In reviewing her “work”—the writing and research she has toiled over, anxiously revised, and meticulously crafted for decades—Kaplan seeks a new voice, a new task, a new understanding through creative nonfiction. She waits receptively to learn what that understanding will be.

The final essay in this collection, “Retirement in Two Voices,” by Evelyn Torton Beck and Deborah S. Rosenfelt, brings us into a conversation that has typified this whole collection. Listening to each other and their own thoughts, Beck and Rosenfelt note that even among feminists, responses to retirement run “the gamut of emotions [from] dread and depression [to] relief, excitement, and new or renewed forms of creativity and fulfillment.” Beck has now been retired for more than a decade and assumed a new career as a psychotherapist; Rosenfelt was preparing for the retirement she has now begun. In thinking through the winding paths that are their history, Rosenfelt suggests “one of the ways that feminists in academia can support each other as we age: by letting people have the space to develop new or nascent interests and passions.” Noting how poorly we are prepared for the emotional (as opposed to the financial) tasks of retirement, Rosenfelt prompts Beck to mention the importance of “gratitude practice” and the courage to pursue one’s passions, whether dance (Beck) or dressage (Rosenfelt). Refusing easy comments about feminist community, both note that the question of community in retirement is vexing, a reminder that we must stay “active and visible.” Always ready to learn more, Beck assesses her current status: “Some say a good goal for aging is to accept just ‘being,’ but I don’t think I’m there.” But in calling for “support groups around aging, the way we had consciousness-raising groups in the early years of feminism,” both may have defined new projects for all of us, whatever our stages.

Through this collection, women assess the value of what they’ve taught and what they’ve learned, wondering whether their cultural capital has proven to be fool’s gold or treasures laid up for present and future years. Elline Lipkin wonders what the worth of her piece is. Angelica Duran has a question: “In deciding to contribute to this volume, I again had to ask myself if it was the right time to speak up, and if so, how and

for what purpose?” The authors of these essays have asked these questions; each has arrived at a different answer. Each contributor is a teacher, even if she is not still in a classroom, and we, their readers, learn from all of them. In the call-and-response among these essays, feminists invite us to share the stage and participate in their self-aware performances of gender and age in academia. Their generosity, forthrightness, and intelligence make it an invitation we are bound to accept for ourselves and our students.

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