

Section 2

**Feminist
Scholarship
Revisited**



The contributions in this section creatively engage with various forms and theories of feminist writing practice. The authors of the first two essays engage directly with the specific subjects of their dissertations through collage and letter/image/text, respectively, while the author of the third essay branches out from the dissertation in dialogue form. In their engagement with Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres's work and her academic persona, the authors each convey a desire for an overdue chat with their one-time mentor while meditating on and inscribing their own intellectual and professional journeys. Paying homage to Joeres's feminist writing practice of intertwining the personal and the scholarly, the essays offer close readings of the meaning of words and the struggle to understand words, contexts, and translations. In different ways, each essay ponders female friendship, creativity, and intellectual engagement and seeks to explicate the self through reading and dialogic writing.

Martina Anderson's contribution is a multi-genre reflection on the personal archive, including letters, photographs, ephemera—a scrapbook of sorts—as narratives of subjectivity that their creators use/d to write themselves into history. This reflection draws on her dissertation, *Addressing Epistolary Subjects*, archival projects taken on during graduate work in library and information science, and her recent participation in the translation of a friend's poem. The epistolary approach enables “approximations, limitations, indirect, skeptical reading” (*Respectability*, xxii), stressing the fragmented intellectual process and sharing insights on the processes of reading, writing, thinking, and negotiating ideas across time and space—and how we often navigate this terrain in collaboration with others.

In a travel narrative that blends vignettes of personal experience with inspirational quotations, Monika Moyrer shares the story of how she became a better “theorist of her own life.” Her journey aimed to reconcile a deep-seated interest in travel and feminism with academic writing. Joeres challenged Moyrer in these efforts, modeling the feminist approaches of skepticism, relentless self-critique, and increased complexity through her own work. Moyrer read Joeres's intellectual pursuits as inspiration and applied them to her feminist study of Christa

Wolf's writing and later to her dissertation on the Romanian-German author Herta Müller. Moreover, Moyrer adopts Müller's collage approach to thinking and writing for her essay, a mirror for the fragmentation of the self, as well as an aesthetic reclamation of piecing the self back together. In her academic search for insights on how the writing process can help come to terms with political violence, Moyrer's current work in the field of reconciliation and peace reflects a seamless blend of the personal and the scholarly.

A reflection on mindfulness frames the three-way imaginary dialogue on the subject of intellectual labor in Beth Ann Muellner's essay. Modeling Joeres's practice of weaving the personal with the professional, Muellner draws Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres and the poet-queen Carmen Sylva, the subject of Muellner's current book, into dialogue. Channeling her former advisor to interrogate the queen directly with pointed questions and comments, Muellner uses direct quotes from Sylva's numerous autobiographical texts, allowing Sylva to speak for herself on topics such as childbearing, child loss, infertility, women in leadership positions, and the power of writing. Like the other pieces in this section, this essay meditates upon the specific meaning and interpretation of words. In considering class via the notion of labor, Muellner's essay ultimately ponders why scholarship about a nineteenth-century queen, a subject often viewed as powerful and privileged, should be considered within the framework of intersectional feminist analysis.

The essays in this section connect through their expression and interrogation of the *how* of scholarly writing. The power of the feminist essay, as championed and modeled by Joeres, is evidenced in their attempts to push the boundaries of genre, in their claiming ownership over the ways in which categories and definitions are used and passed on. In form and content, the essays here manifest the meaning and importance of the feminist work of writing and reading.

Works Cited

- Joeres, Ruth-Ellen B[oetcher]. *Respectability and Deviance: Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers and the Ambiguity of Representation*. The U of Chicago P, 1998. Women in Culture & Society.