

Introduction

**Brigetta M. Abel, Nicole Grewling,
Beth Ann Muellner, and Helga Thorson**

With this book, we honor and celebrate Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres's impact on feminist German studies, her interventions within the field of scholarly writing, and the influence that her teaching, research, mentoring, and writing have had across generations. A celebratory text to honor someone's scholarly contributions, the genre of a Festschrift was once quite common, especially in the twentieth century, and particularly in the field of German studies. However, Festschrift publications are no longer as prevalent as they used to be, and they often lack the quality that one would expect from other academic publications. Sometimes they consist of a collection of random submissions without a thematic focus and at other times they include a number of articles that had been previously rejected during the academic journal peer-review process. This book, in honor of Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, marks a new type of Festschrift.

Similar to the traditional Festschrift, *Cultivating Feminist Choices* is built on relationships that have formed over time with the person being celebrated, and indeed this relational aspect of the book lies at its core. The book came into being not only on account of the individual

authors' relationships with Joeres herself, but also through our own relationships with one another and with the world of feminist German studies that opened up to us during our own studies and careers. The importance of these relationships is emphasized and expressed in the actual (and fictional) dialogues in the book; in the personal reflections and nostalgic remembering of working alongside, collaborating with, or studying under the supervision of Joeres; and in our mutual influence upon one another during overlapping years in Folwell Hall on the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus, at academic conferences, during personal or professional visits with one another, or on social media. Through the collaborative processes of writing and editing this book, explained in more detail below, our relationships with one another have grown even stronger.

Given that Joeres influenced academia in countless ways—helping pave the way for thoughtful, rigorous feminist scholarship at a time when it was still marginalized and challenging the confines of conventional scholarly writing—the editors of this book want this tribute to break traditional conceptions of a *Festschrift*. Therefore, we, the co-editors and authors of this volume, wanted to produce a *FEMINISTSCHRIFT*: a *Festschrift* that is inherently feminist and one that celebrates Joeres through the coming together of many voices in a collaborative manner. We filled this volume with contributions of various types and lengths, including creative writing, personal reflections, scholarly explorations, reminiscences, and expressions of appreciation, gratitude, and friendship. Our *FEMINISTSCHRIFT* presents a bold reinterpretation of the genre through its infusion of feminist thought and approaches.

The discussions of the feminist *Festschrift* began to take shape at a cash-bar reception at the Women in German conference in 2019. In consultation with Cathy Parlin, the Office and Administrative Services Supervisor in the Department of German, Nordic, Slavic & Dutch at the University of Minnesota, the four co-editors sent out the Call for Papers to former graduate program students and to various colleagues who had worked closely with Joeres. In our call, we emphasized that we wanted this book to be different in both content and form, paying tribute to Joeres's own interventions in the fields of academic writing and feminist German studies. The fourteen authors, including Joeres herself (although without her explicit knowledge that we were assembling this volume), and various additional contributors

underwent a process of writing *differently* and of thinking, writing, editing, and creating knowledge together in a collaborative manner.

The writing that is featured in this book is highly personal, and it represents the first time that many of us have attempted to write in this way. Bringing together the personal and the political, reminiscing about the past while detailing aspirations for the future, and developing our first forays into creative writing has revealed a sense of vulnerability for many of us involved in this endeavor. Yet, at the same time, the collaborative efforts that we underwent in the process of putting this book together have also given us the confidence and the support to try something new. Based on common principles Joeres modeled during our graduate studies, such as accessibility and collaboration, the four co-editors decided that (1) the book should be an open access publication, and (2) that we wanted the authors to work together in a collaborative fashion to shape and edit the four sections of the book. After the co-editors had read and reviewed each of the submissions, the authors of each section peer-reviewed the other pieces from the section and collaboratively wrote the section overview, focusing on affinities across chapters. This process has forged new scholarly (and personal) relationships and reinforced previous connections. As contributor Alison-Guenther-Pal stated in an email exchange,

collaboration seems so fundamental to this project. I just loved the way we all worked together. I'm going to miss [my other section authors] neither of whom I knew well before this, but who are absolutely lovely, generous, freakishly smart people.

This collaboratively feminist process, cultivated and modeled by Joeres, has strengthened and inspired each of us to write in a new way and to produce a Festschrift that challenges the genre in both content and form, while simultaneously celebrating Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres's sizeable contributions and bold interventions to feminist German studies.