In the fourth chapter, Tetrault evaluates the herculean efforts of Stanton, Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage in publishing the first three volumes of the *History of Woman Suffrage*. These volumes, each more than 800 pages in length, constructed a narrative history that emphasized the accomplishments of the NWSA, while virtually ignoring Stone and her followers. The *History* remains the definitive account of the early women’s movement, despite its obvious rhetorical purposes and biases.

The final chapter describes the lengthy negotiation behind the reunification of the women’s movement under the banner of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in 1890. The “merger was anything but harmonious,” Tetrault notes, as Stanton barely won election as its president, and disagreements over goals and strategies remerged. Increasingly disenchanted with politics, Stanton soon shifted her attention to writing her most controversial work, the *Woman’s Bible*, and her memoir, *Eighty Years and More*. The backlash against the *Woman’s Bible* and Stanton’s autobiographical self-portrait further alienated Stanton from the mainstream movement. In the epilogue to the book, Tetrault reflects on the legacy of the “myth of Seneca Falls” in later debates over women’s rights.

*The Myth of Seneca Falls* is meticulously researched and well written. It contributes to an understanding of how history is constructed rhetorically through narratives and myths, and it illustrates how savvy Stanton and Anthony were, not only as political activists but also as rhetorical historians. By selectively recalling the history of woman suffrage, Stanton and Anthony downplayed the factionalism that plagued the movement, and they shaped collective memories of the suffrage cause for centuries to come. At the same time, Tetrault reminds the reader that other women also made important contributions to the early suffrage movement. Her book provides inspiration for recovering their memories as well.

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Many students of American women’s history encounter Progressive Era protective legislation as *the* example for exploring tensions between equality and difference in white feminists’ quest for political and economic rights.
Nancy Woloch’s *A Class By Herself* reveals this important but vexing example in a new light. Crafting a narrative history of the rise and fall of single-sex protective legislation over the course of the twentieth century, she explores the “crossroads where women’s history and legal history converge” (1). Her twinned focus on storytelling and the interplay between law and activism transforms what might easily have been a dense or overwhelming account of cases, debates, and arguments into an important reminder of the contingency that drives social movements in general and historical change more broadly. Simply put, Woloch retells the history of protective legislation as a scholarly page-turner, complete with “close calls and near misses, false hopes and unintended consequences (262).” Just when one thinks she has identified the “good guys,” the historical and legal contexts shift and new heroes step to the fore. The resulting narrative leaves readers with a deeper appreciation for both the messiness of feminist politics and the power of history as a tool for helping us see the world fresh.

Woloch’s study is bookended by two Supreme Court cases, *Muller v. Oregon* (1908) and *UAW v. Johnson Controls* (1991). The first upheld Oregon’s 10 hour law of 1903 and placed the woman worker legally “in a class by herself.” The second marked the final demise of single-sex laws and repudiated the rationales of sexual difference that had sustained them. In between, Woloch traces hundreds of state laws and explores the variety of protections provided to women workers including: maximum hours laws; regulation of factory conditions and industrial homework; requirements that employers provide chairs, meal breaks, or rest periods; prohibition of night work; exclusion from employment in dangerous jobs; and, finally, minimum wage legislation. Woloch embraces the complexity of her material, resisting the impulse to generalize or to create too tight of a framework. Instead, she uses the chronology of the long twentieth century to structure her story with the Progressive Era legislation, the Nineteenth Amendment, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act serving as signposts for the major twists and turns in her narrative.

Like all good stories, Woloch’s has an engaging cast of lead characters. Florence Kelley and the National Consumers’ League play significant roles as champions of protection in the opening chapters, and Josephine Goldmark and Louis Brandeis take up their familiar roles as Kelley’s allies. In the 1920s, the work of preserving and advocating for protection moved to the Women’s Bureau, whereas Alice Paul and the National Woman’s Party were impassioned in their opposition to protection and their advocacy for equality. But whereas strong leads carry the narrative arc, a supporting cast provides much of the complexity. For example, economist Elizabeth Faulkner Baker first appears in the text as part of a consideration of the historiography of women-only protective legislation, yet becomes an actor in Woloch’s account: a de facto Greek chorus commenting on the unfolding
plot in real time. In her 1925 dissertation, Baker spoke of women workers who opposed protective legislation because they labored on “industrial frontiers” in trades dominated by men. She understood “protective laws were an asset to women workers in fields they dominated but were a liability in fields in which they were a minority” (141). By the 1960s, Baker takes stock of social and economic changes since World War II and concludes, “Protective labor legislation may play a smaller role in the future than the past [189].” Of course, she was right.

Fittingly, A Class By Herself offers a challenge more than an easy moral or tidy conclusion. Woloch opens with the big questions that run throughout her narrative: “Does classification by sex invariably stigmatize those so classified and increase disadvantage? Alternatively, does gender-neutral law run the risk of denying difference, increasing inequality, and requiring conformity to standards set by men” (3)? These questions emerge again and again, growing familiar over the rise and preservation of protective legislation, and then in the final and sudden end of protection, these same questions of difference, equality, and risk take on a slightly recalibrated urgency. By the time Johnson Controls establishes women’s right to choose whether they should labor in hazardous workplaces, equality is gained, but the threat to workers’ health remains. The contingency of the past becomes ours as we still struggle with safety regulation, minimum wage, parental leave, and equal pay. Having demonstrated the necessity for complexity, nuance, and humility when demanding legal and economic equality for women in the past, Woloch leaves her readers to figure out how to face these complex issues in the twenty-first century.

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It is a time-honored cliché to claim that a book defies overview, its elegance and erudition invalidating the very idea of a concise assessment. In most cases, such claims amount to little more than rhetorical flourishes. The present book is a rare exception, presenting the reviewer with the unenviable task of having to convey in a limited space the full scope of an argument that sweeps across two decades and four continents to marshal an enormous quantity of previously untapped archival material.