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Martin, J. R. (2000) *Coming of Age in Academe - Rekindling Women's Hopes and Reforming the Academy*. Routledge.

Jane Roland Martin's book *Coming of Age in Academe - Rekindling Women's Hopes and Reforming the Academy* from 2000 revisits academe and its changes due to the emergence of Women's Studies. In the writings of Women's Studies' history Martin emphasises women's lives and socially ascribed tasks as the point of departure for the whole discipline of Women's Studies, a perspective that is now out of focus for feminists in academe according to Martin. The book is written in an easy manner, taking the reader by the hand to join Martin on her excursions through the academic field. To make sense of Martin's first priority, her point of departure and motor of argumentation, one has to start with the book's conclusion. There we are told about the television documentary on the US-American suffrage movement that inspired her to make a comparison between the outrageousness the suffragettes represented in their own time – and the view on women's right to vote as something completely natural in our time. Change is possible, this is Martin's conclusion. But it is not for free and it takes a pro-active attitude to make change possible.

Martin starts her excursions questioning the well-spread assumption that women have achieved equality in academe. To make change happens, she argues, we have to acknowledge that women still have problems entering, working and being successful in academe. Furthermore, women live in divided worlds entering the university described as an environment that neglects the outside world. Women and feminist scholars must change the academe from within, rejecting the distanced approach towards the world that men in the university have developed and maintained in academic culture. Coming from the philosophy of education Martin analyses concepts taken from the discussion on women's education from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* and onwards. In Woolf's spirit she does not only see education as a matter of individual development but as a tool for changing social reality. The book is a passionate vindication of education as the main path to

equality between men and women. One may also see it as a part of a critique against the fundamentally conservative education-system loosely labelled “feminist pedagogy” which challenges traditional approaches to education both in elementary school and at universities. This critique seems to coincide with the fact many of the founders and pioneers of women’s studies now have reached positions in academe that allow them to engage in a new feminist approach to education as a system but also in the everyday situations of meeting students and junior researchers.

Martin uses an analogy between immigrants coming to America and women entering the academic field. The question of assimilation and changes are at the centre of the discussion and Martin is sketching a rather dark picture of women scholars in today’s universities. Education and its integrated curricula for men and women has developed a new form of gender tracking, a division of educational paths and professions between men and women. According to Martin this situation has put women in a crisis much like the one immigrants experience coming to an environment where neither the old customs nor the new ones are of any use or comfort. Martin traces the crisis for women back to the loss of traditional gendered divisions of labor. “The brain drain” as understood by Martin is an overall loss of “the 3 Cs”; care, concern, connection, qualities that Martin does not see in academic practice or class rooms. She argues that the 3Cs are what complete knowledge production and make it mean something outside of the university. But how does she track down the loss of care, concern and connection? Using yet another analogy, that of the adolescent girl who is losing her self esteem and “herself”, Martin traces the loss of the 3Cs to the “coming of age”, a stage in the development of Women’s Studies characterised by self-criticism and self-awareness. This should lead to an unjust hostility among women scholars. Both within and outside of women’s studies environments Martin sees women turning to each other with harsh criticism in a manner that male colleagues would not. One example is the lively debate on power structures intersecting with gender, such as class, race and sexual orientation, but instead of seeing this as a necessary and vital development of gender studies Martin describes it as we “accuse women scholars of racism, classism, and heterosexism” (p. 68). This is all, to a certain extent, true. Of course one can see the development of an intersectionality perspective in this manner. But, one may ask, does not the criticism towards an altogether women-oriented Women’s Studies discipline have any legitimacy? On this Martin does not touch, and that’s the book’s weakness. Instead of taking up the complex issue

of power relations between women Martin insist on the singleness of women's experiences, arguing that women have the most to gain from each other and to keep up practices associated with traditional femininity.

The use of a discipline specific language, unspeakable and incomprehensible for anyone outside of the subject area is her main example of how women scholars distance themselves and their work from other women's everyday life. What Martin calls the education-gender system rewards women scholars who are able to adjust to the male dominated academic field. This process also includes the use of language. However, Martin argues, this creates a split and a loss in women, the loss of contact with everyday life and the concrete problems that women face.

Martin's own use of language is often informal. She tends to refer to women outside of academe as our mothers, sisters, half-sisters, aunts and female cousins. This may seem like an innocent stylistic mode - or in a more radical interpretation - as a way to corrupt and change the academic language characterized, in Martin's opinion, by an aerial distanced and exclusion. However, I am not sure if that intimization of the use of language is the right way to go. Even if one avoids the traps of essentialism, universalization of women's experiences and the construction of a non-conflictual women's togetherness based on consensus seldom helps when it comes to describing the actual problems of women - whether outside or inside of academe.

The same problem occurs in Martin's use of empirical material. Since she is looking for the real situation of girls and women at colleges and universities she is using a large number of reports and surveys but also her own observations and experiences both as a student, a teacher and a professor. Her material, even when it is interesting and/or upsetting is not systematized geographically or historically. This also gives the impression that the university and the elementary school is organized in the same way all over the world, inhabits the same problems and offers the same - insufficient - solutions. At least Martin should comment on the problems of comparison between such diverse empirical materials as autobiographical texts, such as Richard Rodriguez' *Hunger of Memory*, fiction such as *Pygmalion* and strictly numerical counting, which in the end becomes Martin's main method for proving her point. The quantitative survey of the number of female professors, the number of feminist courses in the universities' curricula and the number of students that can enrol for

these courses; all this is to prove that the battle of the university is far from won and women can still not enter the academe on equal footing.

What is Martin's solution to these problems? In the last section of the book "Actions Great and Small" women's togetherness is once again emphasised. To have coffee together, talk and exchange experiences is a way for feminist and women scholars to keep up close relations to other women and the everyday life and tasks that traditionally are carried out by women. The coffee break should represent both the idea of togetherness but also a resistance against the university's overall demands on its employees to be hard working, career chasing, ambitious and in constant competition with each other. The coffee break should thus offer an alternative way of looking at the world in another perspective, in a small scale. Beyond the coffee breaks, the small scale solution of the isolation of individual women scholars Martin sees women joined together in *Lysistrata*-inspired protests against sexism, harassments and chilly classroom climate for women students and teachers.

On an interesting note, Martin gets her inspiration to this coffee break utopia from Sweden that happens to be my own academic environment – I find it important to include my own opinion. Not so much for her visionary ideas, which are quite refreshing, but for the one-sidedness of her view. She is so obviously turning to a US-American audience, in an almost fairytale telling manner: "In a country far far from here scholars are living in a happy community with no hierarchal problems: professors are having coffee with their student and the administrative staff! They are talking about giving birth, and having domestic problems, just as if they where all equal!" True, the Swedish educational system is characterized by an informal approach to each other, including several coffee breaks and everyday-life issues as part of the conversation. However, this does not in any way mean that the system is free from hierarchical relations. The informal/formal system makes, in the worst case scenario, students and junior researchers dependent on their professors and teachers appreciation – based on personal liking and disliking. However good intentions one may have, I should be very careful calling this an ideal way of dealing with the education-gender system.